

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF ECOTOURISM: AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

John SAE*^{*}

Abstract. *In 2002, the United Nations declared the International Year of Ecotourism, whose peak event was the World Ecotourism Summit, held in Quebec, Canada in May of that year. Ecotourism has since presented many formidable challenges including the following: many of the world's natural areas remain under threat; there has been a further loss of biodiversity and resources for conservation remain inadequate; world tourism arrivals have grown by 23% and are forecast to double by 2020; climate change has increasingly become a major threat affecting the very resources on which ecotourism depends – natural areas and local and Indigenous communities around the world; this has helped raise awareness of the contribution of current and future tourism operations and services to global climate change; the role of tourism in supporting sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium; development Goals, notably the alleviation of poverty, has become recognized as a critical industry responsibility; ecotourism has articulated the core principles of sustainability in the travel and tourism industry and therefore plays a leading role within the industry as a whole (The International Ecotourism Society, 2007). With this mind, this research article deals with problems and emerging Trends associated with the Australian ecotourism marketing and how they are impacting Australia's tourism patterns and also future trends for Ecotourism.*

Key words: *climate change, sustainable development, Australian, ecotourism marketing*

Introduction

Ecotourism has emerged as a significant phenomenon in recent decades and “is probably equally due to the widespread and growing interest in the natural environment and a corresponding recognition of the importance of conserving natural environmental quality” (Orams, 1995).

Richardson (1993) points out the specificity of ecotourism. It is not only nature-based and participatory, but it has a strong emphasis on the interpretation and understanding of the environments. Ecotourists try to comprehend the cultures visited in order to achieve conservation of those environments and cultures.

^{*} Swinburne University of Technology PO BOX 218, Hawthorn, Melbourne, Australia

As a general term it is called nature-based travel. Hector Ceballos-Lascurain, (1988) a known architect, environmentalist and international ecotourism consultant from Mexico defined ecotourism as follows: "...travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specific object of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both of the past or present) found in these areas..." (Richardson, 1993)

According to Oram (1995), based on a range of definitions, ecotourism refers to forms of tourism that are:

- a. based upon relatively undisturbed natural areas;
- b. non-damaging, non-degrading;
- c. a direct contributor to the continued protection and management of the protected areas used;
- d. subject to an adequate and appropriate management regime.

The basic objective of ecotourism is to control interaction between tourists and the natural environment by:

1. Protecting the environment from detrimental impacts
2. Provide for and promote enjoyable tourist experiences

Taking all the above into account, one observes that a typical form of Australian ecotourism is bushwalking. According to Russell Blamey: "The average annual growth rate in visitation of bushwalkers was 11% over the period 1989-1994, only slightly higher than the average annual growth rate of 10% for all international tourists, and less than the equivalent growth rate of 13% for those indicating holiday as main purpose of visit. The number of bushwalkers increased by 66% over the period. The average annual growth rate for participation in outback safari tours was 11%, corresponding to an increase of 70% over the period 1989-1994. For the period 1989-1993, participation in scuba diving/snorkelling increased at 11% on average each year, an increase of 53% over the period".

It is interesting that many of the bushwalkers are not Australians, and the number of foreign tourists coming into Australia for bushwalking increased steadily. Between 1989 and 1993, data proves that the growth rate for bushwalking is particularly high among visitors from Japan (32% a year), other Europe (28%), Germany (20%), and Asia (19%). The growth rate for all inbound visitation over the period 1989-1993 is 9%, and for visitation with the main purpose of holiday, it is 11%, therefore bushwalking is an important attraction.

Taking into account other forms of nature-based tourism that foreign tourists prefer in Australia, particularly high growth in participation in outback safari tours is apparent among visitors from Germany (47% a year), other Europe (44%), and Japan (37%). With respect to scuba diving / snorkelling, outstanding growth is found among visitors from Japan (32% a year), other Europe (27%), and Germany (19%). (Blamey, 1995).

It is bushwalking, outback safari tours and scuba diving/snorkelling that are perhaps most relevant to ecotourism in Australia, both for local tourists and foreign ones. Nevertheless, the results for these three activities provide little support for the claim that ecotourism growth exceeds that for tourism in general.

As a result of the high growth rates in inbound tourism we must be more diligent to look after our environment as it is our future in Australia for generating income for a significant part of the economy.

To provide a holiday for the guest or client we must know what their needs are so we can accurately sell the product and service to them. There are many issues, problems and emerging trends that need to be considered as ecotours of Australia market experiences these will be discussed further in this report.

Issues associated with Australian ecotourism marketing

Ecotourism is complicated by the special experiential qualities of the product and the diversity of opportunities for nature-based experiences. Part of tourist agent job is to set up various forms of communication used to inform people about the tourism product, to stimulate their interest in taking a trip and to convince them to commit their time and money to going on the trip. Murphy explains (1995) that successful marketing is the sum of the processes which enables the travel product to meet or exceed the expectation of the client.

Stressing the importance of tourist experiences, Murphy (1995) argues that the ecotourism product is not only a holiday. Extremely important is the personal experience, when people willingly allow themselves to be exposed to processes which will bring them closer to nature and it takes more energy on the client's part than a relaxing holiday.

When designing the marketing strategy, it is therefore necessary to take into account the experiences tourists might have. Experience has to be somehow represented for tourists. The difficulty is in expressing this intangible heightened travel encounter which can vary from client to client and between trips, yet is nature-based and contains experiences which bring people into a closer frame

of mind with nature. (Murphy *et al.* 1995). Murphy shows further that marketing should concentrate on individual product promotion, but it is important to associate the product with familiar experiences. Doing this, trying to easily perceive brand or to position it alongside similar experiential products would help to strengthen the image.

Focus must be placed on the benefits to the client and communication centred on the users' inclinations rather than primarily on the attributes of the product. Marketing can be facilitated for ecotour operators by linking into an advertising "brand". A brand brings to a focus the salient aspects of the travel sector, pinpointing the benefits or focus to the consumer and tying together an otherwise disparate ecotourism industry in the eyes of the public.

Ecotourism can be marketed by using public relations, product promotion and sales. The public relations officer can create a lasting impression of the particular company, a trip or experience. An association can be made between the regular use of a logo, the company or trip name, colours or paper style used in printed material, or positioning in the market place. This can be done by for example making the company name widely known by the use of media articles, press releases, and the distribution of business cards or a more complex system of initiatives based on market research and client feedback. Public relations starts with a clear understanding of the exact nature of the product including its suitability for clients.

Product promotion can also be used to market ecotourism by the use of printed brochures, sales kits, leaflets, advertising layouts, Internet web pages, newsletters, posters and other forms of visual information such as slide and video presentations. Other avenues used for promotions can include feeder organisations such as accommodation venues and restaurants, or can be as elaborate as TV coverage, network marketing, or brochure in wholesalers catalogues.

The message to the style of promotion being used needs to be tailored. The needs of a wholesale agent acting on behalf of a company are quite different to the needs of the consumer in the way the information is received. The promotions need to incorporate the concept of the trip or travel opportunity with the practical details in a style that is tailored to the audience receiving it and the product needs to be "right" for the client, by both content and price. Sometimes before the product will sell on its own needs to be "packaged" with some complementary products such as transfers and accommodation.

Sales is very important for marketing. It is what runs the business operation. It is imperative that the business has an appropriate telephone/fax and email system. Response time to an enquiry and accuracy of departure details, tour information and travel style is critical as is availability of prices, tour flexibility, and commission rates.

Secondly, encouragement must be given to the person making the enquiry. It is important to visualise the client travelling on a particular trip and to present a positive and enthusiastic response to prospective "visitors" as ecotourism is a very personal experience and clients need to feel reassured that they will be looked after, and be safe and happy on their holiday.

Thirdly, it is absolutely essential that the product, the price and the client are congruent and any loopholes in this configuration will undermine the whole marketing system. Negative feedback if given a chance will slowly creep through the system breeding an air of unreliability and doubt thus undoing the best of product promotion.

Issues associated with Australian ecotourism marketing include:

1. Environmental Impact Statements

Should Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) be required for major tourism developments. "There are arguments in favour of this course of action, although there are alternative approaches. First, the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act requires environmental assessment of all developing applications, but the EIS is the mechanism that ensures that most detailed consideration of effects. Second, the EIS procedures provide for public participation on a project basis. Third, an EIS helps to educate the development industry and may assist in generating solutions which produce economic as well as environmental benefit" (NSW Tourism Development Strategy, 53-55).

2. Regional Planning Framework

A Regional Planning Framework is essential for effective planning. It is a development control document. Past cases have indicated to make regional plans more strategic and to assess the implications of alternative scenarios of future development patterns.

3. Public Participation

"Public participation should be expected for major projects. Affected communities have a right to be informed and to express their views" (NSW Tourism Development Strategy, 54).

4. Baseline Information

"The EIS performs an important role by contributing to the stock of baseline information. The paucity of information on natural systems is a problem in impact assessment as well as the decision-making process. The stock of base-line information can be improved through the investigation carried out for environmental impact assessment" (The NSW Tourism Development Strategy, 54).

5. The Task of Assessment

The task of assessment by the determining authority is also an issue. As already mentioned, local authorities may have limited inhouse expertise. However environmental assessment has become technically more demanding, the assessment task has become more difficult.

The above-mentioned strategy provides: "One solution is to engage consultants to assist in or undertake the evaluation. It is clear that local government bears the greater burden of the decision-making process in relation to development. This is a recognition that the hardwork of assessment, judgement and mediation occurs at the local level. Consequently it is the local authority that must consider the detail. There is a responsibility for State Government to recognise this and be supportive. State Government can also co-ordinate the information systems which local government may need to tap into". (The NSW Tourism Development Strategy, 54).

6. Environmental Awareness

Educating and raising the level of environmental and cultural awareness of visitors of visitors to our national parks is a high priority. Effort should be made to hasten environmental awareness of developers, investors, operators, government authorities and the public. "Public awareness and environmental education are ongoing priorities, as are the various campaigns which come under three broad action areas: global change, biodiversity and sustainable use of natural resources" (Caswell, 1995).

This can be achieved through education programmes and dissemination of the Australian Tourism Research Institute's Code of Environmental Conduct when it becomes available.

Conservation of the environment by having an ecologically sustainable development. That is development that does not jeopardise the future productive box of the industry's resources and which sustains ecological processes necessary to maintain quality of life for present and future generations.

Other ways to assist conservation is by:

- limiting environmental damage for uncontrolled visitor access
- providing a source of revenue (e.g. park entrance fees for conservation management)

It is estimated that ecotourism generates at least \$250 million in revenue, given the attractiveness of the Australian ecotourism product to the inbound market. It is estimated that ecotourism generates three percent of Australia's tourism export earnings. (Richins *et al.* 1995)

7. Environmental Impacts

Environmental impacts need to be properly managed and restricted through the adoption of appropriate planning and management practices.

Impacts include:

- excessive erosion of coastal dunes by building, vehicle and pedestrian activity
- introduction of high numbers of plant and weed species
- general wear and tear of sites, littering and vandalism
- high levels of energy use by transport operators and air pollution from exhaust fumes
- erosion of walking tracks and bush tracks by four wheel drives and compaction of vegetation in alpine areas
- impacts on coral reefs from mainland agricultural practices and fishing and recreational activities
- run off from construction activity and disposal of waste developments resulting in nutrient build-up in marine environments
- destruction of limited mangrove and rainforest ecosystems from development airports, marinas and resorts with consequent impacts on marine breeding grounds and fauna habitats.

The cost imposed by increased restriction on tourist use is more than compensated for by the enhanced enjoyment of the area.

8. Ecotourism is growing and thus the demand for new resorts in faraway and pristine lands.

9. The Way Ahead

"Responsibility for environmental assessment involves all parties in the tourism industry-developers, investors, operators, government, and the public" (The NSW Tourism Development Strategy, 54).

Current Issues include:

- The Budget's 500% increase in visitor taxes. In particular the \$6 per person per day Reef tax on the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland for use of the waters and other facilities. The tax has been increased from \$1 a day to offset a \$6 million cut to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Budget.

Operators warn that they refuse to collect the \$6 tax and that the Government would lose up to \$6 million a year from the increase. "The increase would make the reef a less attractive destination and force some operators out of business" (Roberts 1996). Operators include chartered boats that ferry people from island to island and for day trips.

- The battle for land for logging versus conservation. The Greens want the 670,000 hectares of State owned land converted to wilderness or national park but have received 320,000 hectares. The Timber industry and Unions want the land to survive and for logging and the Carr government in conjunction with the Federal Government "intends to spend about a third of the \$120 million timber industry restructuring package to buy private forests to supplement the wood supply to the industry" (Ripley and Humphries, 1996).

In regards to ecotourism marketing in Appendices 5 is the summary of the July 1992 Federal guidelines of the Environmental Protection Agency and government which passed laws regulating environmental claims made in advertising and labelling.

Problems associated with Australian ecotourism marketing

There are many people who come to Australia to see its unique landscape. "Australia has a distinctive environmental character which is recognised and appreciated, both within Australia and internationally" (NSW Tourism Commission, 47).

With so many tourists coming into the country, problems with maintaining the environment are bound to occur. The *destruction or modification of habitats, destruction of landscapes, destruction of vegetation, threats to wildlife, air, water, and noise pollution* are all some serious consequences of having so many tourists and tourist attractions.

The mentioned strategy recognises that environment provides many of the characteristics which draw tourists to particular locations (NSW Tourism Commission, 47). Australia has many environmental and natural aspects that

attract tourists such as the Great Barrier Reef and Ayers Rock. Such attractions are ideal vacation spots for today's travellers of who are looking for something that is exciting and educational (Burns, 1996).

This is what is known as 'Ecotourism'. There has been a lot of *confusion over this word* however. Burns (1996), for instance, points out that some of the problems occur because the word ecotourism is not clear to all those using it. In order to simplify what exactly ecotourism means, many tourism operators are now using the term "nature-based tourism" (Burns, 1996).

Operators are hoping that the term nature-based tourism will clear up any confusion and attract the people who are interested in the environment and are looking for adventure. When it comes to marketing of ecotourism or nature-based tourism there are *ten major problem areas that organisations wishing to attract tourists should avoid*. They are:

- 1) Avoid nebulous slogans
 - 2) Don't invent "a tradition" of environmental excellence
 - 3) Watch your language
 - 4) Give the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
 - 5) Pick your numbers carefully
 - 6) Build credibility
 - 7) Be a partner, not a teacher
 - 8) Show relevance
 - 9) Don't tout the trivial
 - 10) Make eco-marketing part of a sustained effort
- (Bennett et al, 1993)

These *problem areas are known as the 10 Laws of Eco-Marketing*. If avoided, companies will be better able to attract customers more effectively.

The *destruction or modification of habitats* is a major problem of ecotourism. Marine habitats like wetlands are very sensitive, but are usually developed a lot because they are close to the coast and are easy to develop (NSW Tourism Commission, 50). Developments for hotels, golf courses, and other tourist attractions are also destroying forests. Fortunately, people are beginning to gain greater appreciation of forests and rainforests. Many forests are now protected by National Parks, Natural Reserves, and State Recreation areas. The preservation of all these habitats is essential if we are to continue living in the world which we know.

The tourism commission is concerned that “Landscapes may be destroyed or modified by the size or the siting of a tourism development” (NSW Tourism Commission, 51). Size refers to roads, walkways and carparks while siting refers to where the actual building is for example, in the city or on the coast.

Australia has incredible biological diversity. It is considered that the species of flora and fauna in Australia’s Royal National Park are more numerous than in all of the British Isles (NSW Tourism Commission, 52). There are continued threats to rare and endangered species of both plants and animals that are cause for concern. Almost 30 species of mammals and birds are now extinct and a further 59 species of mammals, birds, reptiles, frogs and fish, plus hundreds of invertebrates, are on the endangered species list (McCaughy, 1995).

Tourists and visitors can cause tremendous amounts of damage to the flora and fauna. “Tourist activities such as bushwalking and horseriding can destroy vegetation, and some areas are particularly sensitive” (NSW Tourism Commission, 52). It is inevitable that humans would have some impact on the environment, and not all change is bad. However, some changes that are forced and unnatural such as the clearing of lands or the introduction of foreign animals, have adverse impacts on the environment and are usually irreversible and damaging to the environment.

Resorts and other tourist attractions can generate many waste products that are harmful to the environment, and can create all kinds of pollution, such as sewage or hairdressing solutions which are environmentally harmful to water quality. Water and air can be polluted by “nonpoint source” pollution. This type of pollution is set apart from other types of pollution that are visible and come from traceable points. A few examples of nonpoint source pollution are grease, oil, and litter in parking lots. “The water picks up whatever people have left in its path-residues from the production of food, the manicuring of yards, the use of motor vehicles, the construction of roads and building-and, following gravity’s directions, transports these contaminants to the nearest stream, lake, estuary, or aquifer” (Mitchell, 1996).

Air pollution is a problem that has been around for quite some time. If you look at the horizon in most major cities around the world you’ll see a yellowish haze. That haze is better known as smog. Smog results from car exhausts, and other activities that are involved in tourism. As you well know, air pollution has caused a hole in the ozone layer, so it’s not something that can be ignored.

All of these types of pollution to our environment are *enhanced by tourism and tourist operations*. Unfortunately, many tourist operations and tourists don't realise what they're doing to pollute the environment. This makes it quite difficult to solve the problem of pollution since people aren't even aware that they could be helping to lessen it.

In 1990, many consumers of goods and services grew sceptical of environmental claims after a few well known marketing disasters such as Mobils degradable trash bags. Marketeers of that time predicted that environmental consuming was just a passing fad. However, a survey taken in 1992 showed that 63% of consumers were more likely to purchase a product based on its environmental qualities (Bennett, 1993).

The only problem was, and still is, that consumers weren't sure how reliable and environmentally friendly the product labels were, including those labels put on holiday packages and tours. A 1992 survey revealed that 20% of consumers believed that product labels were not very believable, 8% said they were not at all believable, 62% said the claims were somewhat believable, and only 8% felt that the claims were very believable with the remaining people being unsure (Bennett, 1993). So although consumers and travellers are demanding that goods and services be more environmentally responsible, the companies putting out the advertisements aren't doing their job as best as they could be. *Organisations need to be aware of what not to do and what to do with regards to eco-marketing.*

There are ten laws they should follow. The following *Ten Laws of Eco-Marketing* point out the major problem areas that can ruin an organisations efforts to have a successful eco-marketing plan (Bennett et al, 1993).

1) **Avoid nebulous slogans.** Today's consumers aren't impressed with empty, general messages. It is more important to be specific, then to launch general comments and ideas (Bennett et al, 1993: 96).

2) **Don't invent "a tradition" of environmental excellence.** What your company has done in the past with regards to environment is irrelevant. More important for the audience is what it is done *today* (Bennett et al, 1993).

3) **Watch your language.** Terminology is very tricky for companies and tour operators using eco-marketing. There are many definitions and strict guidelines for what terms may be used and when. Organisations should be careful when using terms such as "earth friendly" or "environmentally friendly". These terms tend to make consumers very suspicious (Bennett et al, 1993).

4) **Give the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.** This law of eco-marketing basically explains itself.

5) **Pick your numbers carefully.** Numbers and scientific data can be twisted around to suite either side in environmental debates. Before using any figure in a marketing or advertising campaign a company should compare their data with that of the media and environment groups because, consumers get their information from the media, while the media gets their information from environmental groups. "If your numbers or facts are out of sync with those commonly cited in the press, then find a resolution before using them in your campaign" (Bennett *et al.* 1993).

6) **Build credibility.** "The key to successful eco-marketing is credibility, credibility, credibility" (Bennett *et al.* 1993: 98). It is a good idea to have third parties that are well known to back up the companies claims. This should build up the consumers' confidence in the company that they are doing what they say they are.

7) **Be a partner, not a teacher.** Don't try to be an expert on anything but the most basic concepts because someone out there will be ready to attack your position (Bennett *et al.* 1993).

8) **Show relevance.** Don't waste time and money on irrelevant information in advertising because consumers don't pay any attention to it.

9) **Don't tout the trivial.** Basically, a company shouldn't mislead consumers or try to distract them from the facts. A good example to explain this law is when in 1990 several airline companies put out ads telling about how they recycle their soda and beer cans (Bennett *et al.* 1993). That's nice, but pretty pointless when you consider that how much air pollution planes create.

10) **Make eco-marketing part of a sustained effort.** "Successful eco-marketing reflects a company's overall environmental philosophy" (Bennett *et al.* 1993). Be consistent with advertisements that show that you are genuinely concerned about the environment.

By using these Ten Laws of Eco-Marketing as a guideline, tourism operators and all companies, should be able to effectively market their products and services.

Some problems of ecotourism in marketing are:

- * Understanding consumer expectations and behaviour, and delivering the necessary level of hospitality, interpretation, and group management in a natural setting. People need social considerations, client service and sensitivity. Each client is unique and has their own special needs.

- * Other things to check regarding client expectation include the quality of equipment, the suitability and preparation of food, the setting for eating the minimisation of both physical and emotional risk and the times of day to start and finish- for example setting up camp in the dark or rushing constantly. It is a holiday. It needs to be fun, have elements of excitement and the unknown, and be seen to provide value for money.

Is the trip fine-tuned to the expectations of your target clientele? This process of fine-tuning the product is actually a vital marketing tool as it is fundamental to all three aspects of marketing and enables the operator to firstly communicate accurately the nature of the product and then to deliver it so as to generate positive feedback from happy satisfied customers.

- * Ecotours offer a personal experience - clients have opportunities to become involved, to impress new experience on their own value system and perhaps even change their ways. There are so many variables that need to be taken into consideration in an ecotour. Variables include the level of content, style of travel, type of accommodation, size of the group, amount of physical activity, type of skills to be used, degree of ruggedness, suitability for age/mobility, balance between content input and holiday fun, and the opportunities for hands-on involvement. There could be a problem if the client is quite selective in finding the right trip.

- * With so many different trips and experiences possible how can operators convey the true benefits of any one experience?

- * Ecotours offer so much diversity in experience, if they are provided by small, little known operations they generate elements of doubt concerning the quality and value for money of the tourism experience. Such questions as the following need to be addressed: will they be well looked after, safe in remote and rugged circumstances, be served appropriate food and drinkable water, carried in safe/suitable vehicles, taken on manageable walking routes, and accompanied by personable, knowledgeable guides?

These are some problems that have to be considered when Marketing for Eco-Tours

Emerging trends of Australian ecotourism marketing

"The current and projected trend for Australian and New South Wales tourism is towards a dynamic *growing inbound market and a stable proportionately decreasing domestic market*" (NSW Tourism Commission, 91)

Ecotourism is undergoing *rapid growth and popularity* and has become an *effective marketing buzzword* (Richardson, 1993). The *increased demand for nature-based holidays and ecotours* has seen many general tour operators jumping on the bandwagon, and others are bound to follow. Ecotourism is growing because of:

- the general increase in community *environmental awareness*
- *media exposure* of natural Australia
- the *cost* of city-based tourism as well as the *degree of satisfaction* gained from non-urban recreation activities
- degree of *promotion*
- degree of *controversy* associated with an area
- the *range of accommodation and other service opportunities available*

Moore and Carter (1993) consider that the elements above suggest that, despite the quality of the natural attraction, *growth of visitation will be slow unless a range of facilities is provided*. They consider that the trends mentioned show that without a range of facilities and services, only the adventurous tourist will be attracted. However, with *facilities, the market is broadened considerably and visitor rates grow rapidly with associated economic benefits to the community*.

Ecotourism has the potential to generate foreign exchange earnings, employment and other economic and social benefits. It can also provide resources for environmental conservation and sustainable use of public and private resources. However, unless carefully managed, the nature-based tourism can result in damage to, or even loss of, the resources on which it depends.

According to Amdal's presentation on Marketing by adding Value (1991) there are several consumer trends in Australia which are influencing the marketing of ecotourism they are:

1. With the economy in turmoil, people are rapidly reassessing their values, and what they look for in a holiday and leisure. The fastest *tourism growth is in specialist markets, with highly distinctive and responsive products*. The 'choice-saturated' mass travel market is stagnant.

2. The vast majority of tourism developments are not distinctive. Many were supposedly built for 'international' appeal, forgetting that travellers come here to see Australia, not some shadow of their own cities.

3. Australia is losing its distinctive culture, which is the heart of Ecotourism. Australia's cities are identifying more with the global Western Society rather than with our vast Outback. Sydney has more in common with Manhattan than with Bourke.

Ecotourism may be a means for urbanities to reconnect with the Outback and outdoor heritage of Australia. There's a special magic in discovering Australia, in the evidence that we're both the newest and oldest continent in the world.

4. A major trend influencing leisure is that our lives are out-of-synch with nature. 'Nature' has become an adversary, to be prepared for when leaving the house. Vacations on the beach with fears of skin cancer and water pollution have become a threat not a treat.

5. Today's economy requires that you cut costs and sell harder. A new customer responsiveness is vital for recovery. Customers create jobs. A new job will only come from responding to these changing emotional needs of your customers.

6. According to National Trends "Australia is undergoing considerable change in social, economic and demographic terms which will have important and long-term applications for domestic tourism. The last few years have witnessed slowing growth in out bound travel coupled with a new awareness among Australians of the value of holidaying in their own country" (NSW Tourism Commission, 94).

7. There also appears to be a greater demand for variety and experiential holidays such as skiing, national parks, beaches, camping and river cruises.

8. There is also a further trend in relation to domestic tourism it is the return to traditional values and a renewed focus on the family. There is growing interest in the idea that holidays can be a precious time for family inter-action and communication.

9. A State trend for New South Wales is that of a decreasing number of country New South Wales residents to visit Sydney, due to a perception that Sydney is too big, too congested, too dirty and difficult to get out of.

“There are a number of future challenges that will face governments, natural area land managers, and the ecotourism industry, these include:

- * encouraging increased tourism access to Australia’s unique natural attractions through the adoption of effective environmental management practices
- * adopting best practice principles to the management of tourism in protected areas and ensuring that there is a national approach to tourism by protected area managers
- * continuing to incorporate ecologically sustainable development principles in the planning and management of tourism
- * encouraging environmentally responsible tourism planning and development at the regional level
- * facilitating the development of agreed industry standards and an industry-led national accreditation scheme for ecotourism
- * implementing the National Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity and exploring linkages between ecotourism and biodiversity conservation
- * providing opportunities for indigenous people to participate in ecotourism and regional tourism development
- * developing new initiatives for sustainable management of tourism that complement and build upon existing programs, particularly in management of increased visitor numbers” (Richmond, 1995: 246).

10. Other emerging trends, referred to by Moore (1993) include providing facilities and recreation opportunities near the site, as well as *information on the opportunities available and their related infrastructure be provided.*

Australia will experience an upswing in domestic and international tourism. It is also evident that the recent trend in environmental tourism will continue to grow well into the 21st century. It is important that we are collectively able to establish a vision for future resource protection and presentation of its values. Part of this vision will be acknowledging the likely changes in visitation and visitor needs and planning for these changes.

At the global level, the international Ecotourism Society (2007) has in the light of Oslo statement on ecotourism made four significant recommendations for international agencies, governments, and all those engaged in the planning and delivery of ecotourism which are worth-quoting here:

1. Recognize the valuable role that ecotourism plays in local sustainable development

Ecotourism, often occurring in regional, rural and remote areas where alternative sources of livelihood are scarce and levels of poverty are frequently high, can provide a much needed addition to local income from an activity that values and supports conservation in both developed and emerging economies. Attention must be paid to sound business practices and market access if it is to be economically sustainable. Local and Indigenous communities should not only be involved in the planning and benefits of ecotourism products, but must also be recognized and supported as equal stakeholders and business leaders in the continued development of sustainable enterprises.

Actions should include:

- To develop strategies to engage and empower local and Indigenous communities in planning, decision making and enterprise ownership for the sustainable management of tourism through stronger cross-sectoral partnerships.
- To ensure that more benefits are made available to poor people, through employment policies, the local supply chain, assistance with enterprise formation, and support for local services and infrastructure.
- To stimulate sustainable farming and livestock practices that support mutual economic advantage by encouraging creative links between ecotourism and other forms of innovative land use, such as sustainable agriculture and agroforestry.
- To encourage innovative product development and fair trade through strengthening links with the arts, handicrafts, and local and Indigenous heritage, and integrate the principles of fair trade into the working definition of ecotourism and operational guidelines.
- To promote sustainable partnerships between private and public sectors to address the role of tourism as a development tool, and the need for international organizations, governments and development agencies to support natural and cultural heritage sites so that they can meet the challenge from an increasing growth in tourism worldwide.

2. Maximize the potential of well managed ecotourism as a key economic force for the conservation of tangible and intangible natural and cultural heritage.

Ecotourism depends on fine landscapes, abundant wildlife and richly diverse culture. Therefore, ecotourism development and the revenues it can bring should be seen as a strong ally and tool for the respect and conservation of natural and cultural heritage. Indeed, the definition of ecotourism requires that positive conservation benefits should result from it, and that all ecotourism activity should be well designed and managed to minimize any adverse impacts on the environment and local and Indigenous communities while maximizing all potential benefits.

Actions should include:

- To strengthen the knowledge, skills and resources of protected area authorities in developing and managing ecotourism, in order to help deliver benefits to local and Indigenous communities, raise visitors' awareness of conservation issues, and encourage sustainable financial contribution to conservation.
- To strengthen research and monitoring programs for coastal areas and oceans, recognizing their special needs owing to their sensitive habitats, scarce resources, popularity for tourism, and the changing pressures on their communities.
- To promote innovative approaches and mechanisms of using ecotourism to finance conservation initiatives and research projects monitoring the impacts on wildlife, and to support socially, culturally and environmentally sustainable development of destinations.
- To engage local communities and utilize local design forms and materials to build ecotourism facilities in total harmony with their surroundings both aesthetically and culturally, leaving minimal footprints, and combining the forces of creativity and new environmental technology with sustainable economic development strategies.
- To increase efforts to implement the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Guidelines on Biodiversity and Tourism Development globally, by addressing sensitively the direct interaction between visitors, local inhabitants and wildlife, and by seeking a net gain to conservation.

3. Support the viability and performance of ecotourism enterprises and activities through effective marketing, education and training.

The business of ecotourism can be as fragile and sensitive as the environments in which it occurs. Owing to its nature, many ecotourism products are provided by micro or small enterprises, and many of the people involved in ecotourism

businesses are not necessarily experienced in finance or knowledgeable about markets and handling visitors. People in the sector should be encouraged and supported to work together in capacity building.

Actions should include:

- To increase access to practical and high quality training and education in ecotourism, whether delivered locally or remotely, to provide individuals and businesses with fair opportunities to enhance key business skills and sustainable business management performance.
- To make up-to-date information and research available about ecotourism markets, and strengthen access to them through the most effective channels, including websites, online forums and groups, mailing lists, web media, and in more remote areas, radio broadcasting.
- To establish sound environmental and cultural interpretation as a key component of high quality, authentic ecotourism by increasing innovation and funding for education centers and training programs, whose effectiveness should be assessed based on visitor numbers and desired experience.
- To cooperate with the media and utilize its role as an effective educational tool for promoting accurate and informative reporting of ecotourism, avoiding green-washing, raising the profile of the sector, and encouraging adherence to the principles of ecotourism.
- To strengthen local, national and regional ecotourism associations, and their links to TIES, in order to create an even stronger network that will serve as the nucleus of the global ecotourism community.

4. Address some of the critical issues facing ecotourism in strengthening its sustainability

The definition of ecotourism makes a high claim for its positive impact on society and the environment. It is important that these principles are properly implemented and continue to show the way for others. Various issues need to be addressed, reflecting current trends and external circumstances, including new opportunities to strengthen the benefits of ecotourism and new challenges to meet.

Actions should include:

- To promote adherence to recognized, linked and audited certification schemes and industry guidelines that help enhance environmental management, assist in minimal impact operations, protect cultural sites and intangible culture, and provide for land management strategies.

- To harness new trends towards corporate social and environmental responsibility by making business measurable according to approved standards that support and empower local and Indigenous communities, increase conservation efforts, and minimize ecological footprints.
- To actively address and combat tourism's impact on climate change by encouraging adapted travel patterns (e.g. increase length of stay per trip), promoting more energy-efficient, alternative or non-motorized transport options, utilizing reduced and zero-emission operation technologies, and increasing participation in reliable high-quality carbon offsetting schemes.
- To promote adherence to sustainability principles in other parts of the tourism industry by enhancing ecotourism's role in changing the attitudes and practices of the mainstream tourism sector, and encouraging synergetic efforts to positively influence tourism stakeholders.
- To encourage the ecotourism industry to operate with integrity to protect and promote tangible and intangible cultural heritage and living cultures, and to preserve and celebrate the multitude of unique cultural, social, religious and spiritual elements of local and Indigenous communities around the world.

Conclusions

This article has identified several issues, problems and emerging trends arising from the Australian ecotourism including:

- Destruction or modification of habitats, destruction of landscapes, destruction of vegetation, threats to wildlife, air, water, and noise pollution
- Confusion over the word "ecotourism"
- Tourists and visitors cause tremendous amounts of damage to the flora and fauna
- Resorts and other tourist attractions generate many waste products that are harmful to the environment
- Air pollution
- Pollution to environment enhanced by tourism and tourist operations
- Organisations need to be aware of what not to do and what to do with regards to eco-marketing.

There are ten Laws of Eco-Marketing that point out the major problem areas that can ruin an organisation's efforts to have a successful eco-marketing plan. Elements that should be taken into account by this plan refer, but are not limited to:

- Understanding consumer expectations and behaviour, and delivering the necessary level of hospitality, interpretation, and group management in a natural setting

- Ecotours offer a personal experience, different to everyone, but with so many different trips and experiences possible it is extremely difficult for operators to convey the true benefits of any one experience
- There are many variables that need to be taken into consideration in an ecotour.
- Tourists are extremely environmental aware. In the same time they are exposed to different media.
- Attractivity is related to many different variables, such as the degree of promotion, degree of controversy associated with an area, the range of accommodation and other service opportunities available, all sorts of facilities provided
- Tourism growth is in specialist markets, with highly distinctive and responsive products
- Australia is losing its distinctive culture. Generally, vast majority of tourism developments are not distinctive, while there is greater demand for variety and experiential holidays. In the same time, there is new awareness among Australians of the value of holidaying in their own country, domestic tourism returns to traditional values and a renewed focus on the family.

Finally, it is inevitable over time that ecotourism opportunities will change. Natural area land managers will need to expand the knowledge base and understanding of the natural resources to develop a more diverse range of ecotourism opportunities to meet the challenge of providing a balance of small-scale and mass tourism opportunities to cater to market forces.

Current practices in managing tourist activity have, in some cases, led to a depletion of natural resources and a destruction or fragmentation of important representative habitats. The achievement of ecological sustainability will require decisions to phase out unsustainable practices, rehabilitate existing tourism sites and, in the most extreme cases, prevent tourism in certain areas of high conservation value and/or those areas which remain unaltered. In addition, ecotourism within this clean-green environment is further being hampered by the very patchy standards of visitor facilities across Australia's protected areas. There appears to be a general lack of appreciation by government across Australia of the critical role played by national parks and protected areas in the tourism industry".

Ecotourism will always remain a segment of the Australian tourism industry. As long as we focus on a natural and cultural heritage, ecologically sustainable practices, commitment to interpretation and education, involvement and respect for local communities and the development of a conservation ethic. Meanwhile, it is imperative that Australian governments at local, state and

Federal levels, as well as all those engaged in the planning and delivery of ecotourism need to adopt the foregoing recommendations made by the International Ecotourism Society.

REFERENCES

- AMDAL, D. (1991), *Marketing by adding value, Ecotourism, incorporating the global classroom*, Conference Papers, University of Queensland, Australia.
- BEATTIE, A. (1995), *Biodiversity Australia's Living Wealth*, Chatswood: Reed Books, NSW.
- BENNETT, J.S.; FRIERMAN, R. and GEORGE, S. (1993), *The ten laws of eco-marketing. Corporate Realities and Environmental Truths*, New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc, 91-110.
- BLAMEY, R. (1995), *Profiling the ecotourism market*, Ecotourism and Nature-Based Tourism: Taking the Next Steps, 5-6.
- BURNS, J. (1996), *Ecotourism: what's in a word? confusion for a start.*, Travelweek, May, 869, 33.
- CASWELL, P. (1995), *The Business of Ecology: Australian Organisations Tackling Environmental Issues*, St Leonards: Allen and Unwin Pty Ltd, 12-16.
- CHARTERS, T. (1995), *The state of ecotourism in Australia*, Ecotourism and Nature Based Tourism: Taking the Steps, 11, 12, 17.
- International Ecotourism Society (2007), *The International Ecotourism Society Report*.
- JELLEFSON, J. (1992), *Tourism and the Environment*, Australian Tourism, 28.
- MCCAUGHEY, W. (1995), *Turning environmental problems into economic opportunities*. L.Cato (ed.) *The Business of Ecology: Australian Organisations Tackling Environmental Issues*, 41-45.
- MITCHELL, J.G. (1996), *Our polluted runoff*, National Geographic, 189 (2). 101-125.
- MOORE, S. and CARTER, B. (1993), *Ecotourism in the 21st century*, Tourism Management, 14 (4), 126-127.
- MORAN, A. (1995), *Rational, not sensational, economic strategies for ecological issues*. L.Cato (Ed.) *The Business of Ecology: Australian Organisations Tackling Environmental Issues*, 12-16.
- MURPHY, B. (1995), *Ecotourism marketing*, Ecotourism and Nature-Based Tourism: Taking the Next Steps, 143-145.
- NSW Tourism Commission, *Environmental impact of tourism, The NSW Tourism Development Strategy: A Plan for the Future*, 47, 53-55.
- ORAMS, M.B. (1995), *Towards a more desirable form of ecotourism*, Tourism Management, 16 (1), 3-8.
- RICHARDSON, J. (1993), *Ecotourism and Nature-Based Holidays*, Marrickville: Choice Books. 1, 8.
- RIPLEY, M. and HUMPHRIES, D. (1996), *Battle continues over new quotas and reserve land*, Sydney Morning Herald, September 24, 4.
- RICHINS, H.; RICHARDSON, J. and CRABTREE, A. (1995), *Ecotourism and Nature-Based Tourism: Taking the Next Steps*
- ROBERTS, G. (1996), *Angry Barrier Reef tour operators may scuttle \$6 tax collection plan*, Sydney Morning Herald, August 23, 5.
- SHUNDICH, S. (1996), *Ecoresorts: Dollars, Sense and the Environment*, Hotels: The Magazine of the Worldwide Hotel Industry, 30 (3), 35-40.