EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY PLACEMENT OF THE TAPESTRY TOURISM FUTURES MODEL

Diane Lee, Stephanie Chok, Jeremy Northcote and Aggie Wegner
Technical Reports

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# CONTENTS

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ........................................................................................................ VI

**SUMMARY** ...................................................................................................................... VII

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

**BACKGROUND OF THE INITIAL PROJECT** ...................................................................... 3

*The Tapestry tourism region* .......................................................................................... 4

*Stakeholders* .................................................................................................................. 5

*Challenges* ..................................................................................................................... 6

## CHAPTER 2 CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

**THE ETHICAL DIMENSION** ............................................................................................ 7

**THE TECHNICAL DIMENSION** ...................................................................................... 8

*Data* .................................................................................................................................. 8

*Analytical tools* .............................................................................................................. 8

*Theory* ................................................................................................................................ 9

**THE POLITICAL DIMENSION** ......................................................................................... 10

**EVALUATION AS A COMPONENT OF THE POLICY AND PLANNING PROCESS** .............. 10

*Limitations or challenges of evaluation* ......................................................................... 10

**SUMMARY** ..................................................................................................................... 11

## CHAPTER 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

**EVALUATE THE PLACEMENT OF THE TFP IN THE TAPESTRY REGION** ......................... 12

**DETERMINE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TFP APPROACH TO OTHER REGIONS** .................... 12

**NOTE ISSUES OF PLACEMENT OF THE TTFP** ................................................................. 12

**NOTE EXAMPLES OF CAPACITY BUILDING OF THE TTFP PLACEMENT** ...................... 13

## CHAPTER 4 STUDY 1—EXPERT PANEL

**APPROACH** .................................................................................................................... 14

**RESULTS** ...................................................................................................................... 15

*General background* ...................................................................................................... 15

*Data set* .......................................................................................................................... 15

*Simulator* ....................................................................................................................... 16

*Utility* ................................................................................................................................ 16

*Attitude changes* ............................................................................................................ 16

**SUMMARY** ..................................................................................................................... 16

## CHAPTER 5 STUDY 2—INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

**DEVELOPMENT** ............................................................................................................. 17

**DATA ANALYSIS** ....................................................................................................... 18

**RESULTS** ...................................................................................................................... 18

*Background of participants* ............................................................................................ 18

*Interest in the project* ...................................................................................................... 18

*Financial sustainability* .................................................................................................. 20

*Establishing relationships with operators* ..................................................................... 20

*Planning* ........................................................................................................................ 22

*‘Champion’ of the cause* ............................................................................................... 24

*Data set* .......................................................................................................................... 24

*Simulator* ........................................................................................................................ 27

*Utility* ................................................................................................................................ 27

*Attitude changes* ............................................................................................................ 29

**LIMITATIONS** .............................................................................................................. 32
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Project and report structure diagram including their timeframe ........................................ 2
Figure 2: Map of the Tapestry region in Western Australia ................................................................. 4
Figure 3: Is it important to establish relationships with operators? ..................................................... 21
Figure 4: Is it important to establish relationships with LGA personnel? ........................................... 21
Figure 5: Is it important to establish relationships with visitor centre staff? ................................... 22
Figure 6: Has the TTFP changed the way you think tourism planning should be undertaken? .......... 23
Figure 7: Is a project such as the TTFP is dependent on a ‘champion’ of the cause? ......................... 24
Figure 8: Did you participate in the development of the survey forms? ............................................. 25
Figure 9: Do you agree that the benefit you have gained from visitor surveying were worth the time/cost of contributing to data collection? ........................................................ 26
Figure 10: Do you agree that your involvement in the TTFP has changed the way you view tourism? 30
Figure 11: Do you agree that the TTFP helped individuals to see tourism from a systems perspective? 31
Figure 12: Do you agree that the TTFP helped individuals see how their area of interest, and changes that they propose in that area, may adversely impact on other sectors? ........................................ 31

LIST OF TABLES
Table 1: Responses to key objectives of the TTFP ................................................................................ 19
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SUMMARY

Objectives of Study

This technical report was based on sustainable tourism principles; more specifically, the need for an ‘evaluation’ phase in tourism policy and planning, and an understanding of the multifaceted nature of the tourism industry. This report focuses on an evaluation of the three-year Tapestry Tourism Futures Project (TTFP), which addressed the issue of tourism resource management in the South-West Tapestry Region of Western Australia.

The research phase of the TTFP was carried out between 2000 and 2003, and in April 2003 the project was handed over to the Tapestry community for application to tourism issues within the region. The project included the design of the Tapestry Tourism Futures Simulator, a scenario modelling software program which took regional data and produced possible future outcomes for tourism in the region, based on assumptions from past trends.

The key aims of the overall TTFP were to:
1. Explore and educate the tourism community about the notion of a ‘systems’ approach to sustainable tourism;
2. Develop a timely, reliable and useful data set unique to regional requirements; and
3. Make available a locally specific computer simulation model that could provide trend information for planners and policy makers in response to ‘what-if’ scenarios.

This report is an evaluation of the implementation phase of the TTFP. During this phase, the TTFP was handed over to stakeholders within the tourism community for practical use within their specific context. The aim of this report is to determine the advantages and disadvantages of the implementation of the project and suggest recommendations for the future success of the project.

Methodology

Two studies were developed to undertake the evaluation. Study 1 involved the selection of a panel of experts from within the tourism industry, to develop a set of questions to ask participants of phase two of the TTFP. Their questions covered the following areas:
1. General background of the participants of the TTFP (involvement and interest in the project);
2. Experience with the data set to input into the simulator;
3. The value they derived from the simulator, and how it could be improved;
4. Utility: Strengths and weaknesses of the project, areas for improvement and application of the project in other regions;
5. Whether the participants’ attitudes towards tourism had changed, and whether they see their activities as part of a larger tourism ‘system’.

The method of recruiting an ‘expert panel’ was found to be an effective and resource-efficient way of incorporating wider input from stakeholder views by making use of their varied knowledge and experiences within the tourism community.

Study 2 consisted of an interview schedule, where regionally involved stakeholders of the TTFP were asked the questions formulated in Study 1. Key results from the interview schedule are summarised as follows.

Key Findings

- Most respondents had been involved in the TTFP since its inception as a research project (75%).
- In terms of participants’ involvement in the project, 67% of respondents were involved in distributing survey forms to collect data.
- Reasons for initial interest in the project included: the resulting data (66%), being invited to participate (34%), involvement in tourism (22%) and the simulator (16%).
- Respondents perceived the key objectives of the TTFP to include:
  - Utilisation of outcomes for marketing/planning/promotion (74%);
  - Developing a local data set (56%);
  - Building community capacity (30%);
  - The ability to monitor tourism trends (18%); and
  - Determining economic impact (10%).
- A total of 48% said their interest in the project had not changed since its inception. However, 52% said their input had changed, and reasons for this included: the evolution of the project, becoming self-sufficient,
moving out of the tourism industry, the lack of benefits from the project, lack of value demonstrated, the project not working to full satisfaction, and simply being not willing to participate.

• Most respondents disagreed that their attitude towards tourism had changed as a result of their participation in the TTFP; however, many of these respondents also stated that they already considered tourism issues important, and the project merely reinforced these views. Most respondents, however, indicated that their involvement in the TTFP helped them to view tourism from a ‘systems’ perspective.

• When asked which components of the TTFP are important in planning for tourism:
  o 38% of respondents stated that the data was the most important component;
  o 30% said ‘community capacity’;
  o 14% stated the ‘simulator’ (for future prediction scenarios); and
  o 10% said the ‘processes’.

• Respondents were asked whether they thought the relationships between operators, LGA personnel and visitor centre staff were important:
  o 83% strongly agreed or agreed that it is important to establish relationships with operators;
  o 81% strongly agreed or agreed that it is important to establish relationships with LGA personnel; and
  o 85% strongly agreed or agreed that it is important to establish relationships with visitor centre staff.

• The most successful aspects of the project were considered to be:
  o The outputs of data and information;
  o The fostering of linkages with stakeholders and the local community; and
  o Promotion of awareness of regional tourism issues.

• In order to improve the financial stability of the project, respondents suggested three options:
  o Charging for data was suggested by 34% of those surveyed;
  o Commercialisation of the simulator and its outputs was suggested by a further 22%; and
  o The need for more government and corporate funding was stated by 12%.

Recommendations

Overall, the TTFP has been declared a success in its practical application. However, a holistic perspective recognises that there are areas for improvement. Recommendations for the future application of the TTFP to other regional areas include:

• Updating the base data for the simulator on a regular basis;
• Conducting a realistic assessment of community capacity, and technological as well as resource requirements of the simulator;
• Providing incentives for visitors and operators to participate in data collection, by making the survey process more user-friendly;
• Greater realism in determining the long-term needs of the project in resource terms—both financial and human;
• Greater education and awareness-raising of stakeholders and the broader community, in order to increase and maintain support for the project and its participants;
• Improvement of communication and feedback lines; ensuring that all stakeholders are kept regularly updated of project developments and are educated about the project’s capabilities;
• Recruitment of a leader or ‘champion’ within each region; and
• Establishment of a position within the state tourism organisation to provide a state-based expert with skills, knowledge and interest to oversee a number of similar projects.

This evaluation of the TTFP has presented a realistic assessment of the key challenges faced throughout the project’s implementation. Its strong community focus has been useful in highlighting the complexities involved in promoting sustainable tourism in regional areas.
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC) is to link researchers, government agencies and the tourism industry with applicable research outcomes (STCRC 2008). In line with this mission, the STCRC provided funding from 2000-2003 for the Tapestry Tourism Futures Project (TTFP) in the south-west of Western Australia. It was developed in partnership with the Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to explore the application of the Port Douglas Tourism Futures Model to wider regional tourism development (Walker, Greiner, McDonald & Lyne 1999). The aim was to examine a ‘sustainable tourism’ modelling approach with the capacity to be maintained at the community level by a variety of tourism communities—regional, national and global. This report focuses on a part STCRC-funded project with the aim of evaluating the outcomes of the project in terms of the aims of the STCRC.

A considerable amount of financial and human resources were invested in the project. The TTFP was resourced with cash funding of over $300,000 and in kind support of over $400,000 (Pedersen & Lee 2002). Tourism stakeholders’ commitment to the project was represented by over 280 workshops, forums and meetings. A steering committee to guide the research project consisted of representatives from all shires.

A highlight of industry recognition of the TTFP was the Tourism Minister’s Encouragement Award, presented in 2001 at the Tourism Council of Western Australia’s (TCWA) Annual Tourism Awards Ceremony. The project was informally acknowledged as being successful due to a reliance on a top-down knowledge-based (Jafari 1990) input into a bottom-up request for input (D. Lee, 2005, pers. comm). In effect, the community presented the questions and a highly resourced group of experts provided the research and direction required to answer the regional questions.

The ‘expert’ group of researchers (CSIRO, Murdoch University and Edith Cowan University (ECU)) focused on a systems approach to tourism development (Carlsen 1999; Mill & Morrison 1998) and the aims of the TTFP became three-fold:

1. To explore and educate the tourism community about the notion of a ‘systems’ approach to sustainable tourism;
2. To develop a timely, reliable and useful data set unique to regional requirements; and
3. To make available a locally specific computer simulation model that could provide trend information for planners and policy makers in response to ‘what-if’ scenarios.

During the course of the three-year TTFP, it became apparent that the aim to explore and educate the tourism community was a key but unquantifiable outcome of the continued input of ‘experts’. However, this was given recognition by the aforementioned TCWA Encouragement Award. The database was valued as a useful systems approach to the diverse and competitive nature of the tourism industry at the regional level. The computerised model (the Tourism Futures Simulator) was regarded as a useful modelling tool for planners who had previously operated on instinct and unsupported knowledge.

In April 2003 the TTFP project team handed the project over to the community. A handover ‘ceremony’ was attended by a wide range of representatives from the region, including researchers, shire CEOs, tourism industry managers, marketing and public relations officers, government representatives and other industry stakeholders.

A commitment to continue the project for a further three years was given by each of the six local government areas (LGAs) involved in the Tapestry region at $3,000 for each LGA; a total of $18,000 in cash contributions. ECU Bunbury was elected as the prime place to ‘house’ the community operation since it provided an avenue for ‘expert’ analysis whilst maintaining a systems approach (i.e. the ECU focus is on wider regional issues, not tourism alone).

In effect, as of April 2003, the ‘expert’ research team stood back. This report aims to evaluate the success of the project since the community hand-over—in particular to explore the process of transition from a ‘research project’ to a community-based modelling tool appropriate for building ‘community capacity’.

For years, academic discourse has included the need for an ‘evaluation phase’ as a key component of planning (Gunn 1994), policy (Hogwood & Gunn 1984; Sanderson 2002) and wider research design (Jennings 2001; Veal 1997). The researchers involved in this evaluation adopted a multidisciplinary approach to the specialisation of tourism (Pearce 2004). A multidisciplinary approach to addressing tourism issues is emphasised by Reid (2003). Areas of research expertise among the evaluation team include a tourism specialist, a sociologist, a sustainable development specialist and an environmental scientist, all with a strong commitment to exploring tourism for sustainable development. In accordance with Macbeth (2005), the researchers believe it is important to acknowledge their multidisciplinary and ethical stance in this evaluation. This report will evaluate the TTFP in terms of its application at the regional, national and global potential.
The following chapters will establish the background for this evaluation. They will explore relevant theoretical issues in terms of modelling, evaluation and methodologies. Details of the evaluation techniques will be provided. Results of the evaluation process will be presented and discussed and recommendations for the appropriateness of future applications will be suggested. Resource commitments will remain the key theme, reflecting the diversity of community capacity to meet and build upon these requirements.

A remaining sub-theme of this project is that an evaluation phase of planning policy and research has been espoused as a key component of research but exists only in the rhetoric of funding opportunities. Given the widely lauded funding input into the TTFP (Pedersen & Lee 2002), this current project supports the notion that further applications of projects should include funding for evaluation. Whilst current research resources do not include such a focus, this report will examine and explore the STCRC need for such a commitment.

The overall framework for the stages of the TTFP and the current evaluation study is presented in Figure 1. Figure 1 provides a timeline of the TTFP, reflecting stages of the project and where each stage fits within the presentation of this report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Project Structure</th>
<th>Report structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000 – 2003</td>
<td>Research project</td>
<td>Chapter 1 &amp; Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Placement</td>
<td>Introduction &amp; Background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation project</td>
<td>Conceptual issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert panel (Study 1)</td>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Applied Study (Study 2)</td>
<td>Aims, Objectives, Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Study 1 Results Expert Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Study 2 Results Interview Schedule</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July – Sept 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2005</td>
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**Figure 1: Project and report structure diagram including their timeframe**
Background of the Initial Project

As the concept of sustainability (or sustainable development) continues to gain popular currency, the tourism industry is increasingly pressured to embrace sustainability principles. Sustainable development, which involves the integration of economic, social, cultural and environmental imperatives (Beder 1996; Newman & Kenworthy 1999; Dale 2001), demands a systems approach that recognises complex and adaptive systems (Farrell and Twinning-Ward 2005). This systems perspective recognises the causal interdependence of sustainable development imperatives (Dale 2001) and views complex problems holistically (Walker, Lee, Goddard, Kelly & Pedersen 2005). Sustainable tourism development thus requires an informed consideration of economic, environmental, social, cultural and political factors and how these variables both affect and are affected by tourism growth and development, in the short and long-term (Lee & Chok 2005).

Tourism is a resource-dependent industry and resource management is a contested issue in the Tapestry tourism region (Walker et al. 2005). It is therefore important to identify potential impacts from economic, environmental and social perspectives to facilitate appropriate planning and management strategies. The TTFP aimed to do this through the development of a computer model for testing future tourism opportunities. This model is called the Tapestry Tourism Futures Model (TTFM) (Walker et al. 2005). The project embraced a holistic approach to regional development through input into a modelling process whilst concentrating outputs on outcomes arising from tourism development options (Lee & Chok 2005).

The TTFM was modelled after a complex futures simulator developed by the CSIRO to aid regional planners in their understanding of potential tourism impacts (Sofield & Pedersen in Richardson & Fluker 2004; Walker et al. 2005). A prototype of the CSIRO simulator was tested in Port Douglas between 1997 and 2000. The ‘what-if’ scenarios generated by the simulator illustrated the interactions between environmental, economic and social factors as well as inter-sectoral activity. The simulator (also referred to as the TFM) aimed to encourage a broader systems perspective within the community as it illustrates relational dependencies between sectors that many may not traditionally associate with tourism, e.g. health and security services. It was anticipated that this would facilitate a precautionary policy and planning approach among planners and managers, another key aspect of sustainable tourism development.

The TTFP also involved an intensive data collection component and the establishment of a tourism database to provide relevant information to the industry and local government. It was foreseen that this would be administered and maintained by local stakeholders (Walker et al. 2005). The TTFM is also reliant on up-to-date information in order to generate meaningful results for its users in the region.

Between 2000 and 2003, the STCRC, CSIRO, Murdoch University and ECU significantly expanded the database process initially developed in Douglas Shire. Data collection processes included extensive community consultations and focus groups involving various sectors of local and regional communities within the six LGAs, as well as a series of local industry-administered visitor questionnaires and other specialised questionnaires (e.g. tours, festivals). Existing planning and research material was also included (Walker et al. 2005). An employment survey was undertaken by ECU in October 2001 and conducted in each of the six LGAs (Pedersen & Lee 2002), contributing to base data for the TTFM. Overall, the database that resulted from this data collection process provided locally relevant data, input to the TTFM as well as useful information for industry and local government for planning purposes (Walker et al. 2005).

As a cooperative research project, the TTFP aimed to facilitate participatory planning and involve local communities in shaping tourism futures in their region. Extensive community consultations were held with a wide range of stakeholders, from land-use agencies to local retailers, transport operators, community groups and, of course, tourism operators. Their diverse views were sought on perceived benefits and costs of tourism development in their region (Walker et al. 2005). Generating dialogue among a variety of stakeholders was seen as an important part of the process in galvanising the community to seriously consider tourism within a broader systems framework. It was also seen as a key way of soliciting and airing key differences in stakeholder views in the search for workable solutions.

The project was also concerned with fulfilling the longer-term objectives of sustainable tourism development through the delivery of timely, reliable and regionally specific outputs, as these provide an incentive for continued participation (Lee & Chok 2005). Empowering the community through capacity-building and meaningful involvement in the project was also a related objective.

Whilst built on the pioneering Port Douglas project, the TTFP broadened its scope and complexity with the inclusion of six LGAs and significantly expanded the data collection processes. As an innovative, industry-driven, community-based project, the TTFP aimed to contribute to a regional umbrella strategy for tourism development in the region. It was anticipated that this would lead to an enhanced understanding of the value of tourism as well as its potential impacts and shape a shared community vision for the region’s future (Sofield & Pedersen in Richardson & Fluker 2004).

Within this umbrella strategy, LGAs were expected to devise strategies that were consistent with the overall framework but also specific to the distinct characteristics of their local area. It was expected that the project would include an implementation plan for each LGA to transfer strategy principles to its policies and planning.
regulations (Sofield & Pedersen in Richardson & Fluker 2004). A brief overview of the six LGAs that participated in the TTFP will now be provided.

**The Tapestry tourism region**
The Tapestry Tourism Region is located in the southwest of Western Australia and includes the six LGAs of Bunbury, Harvey, Collie, Dardanup, Donnybrook-Balingup and Capel (see Map 1). The physical landscape of the Tapestry region includes 201,000 hectares of state forests, national parks, coastal stretches and hinterland (Sofield & Pedersen in Richardson & Fluker 2004). The region has a combined population of some 75,000, as well as 3,813 businesses and 218 tourism businesses. Located midway between Perth and the popular Margaret River wine-growing region, this area is considered relatively under-developed in tourism terms. However, local stakeholders in the region view tourism as an actual and potential key sector of a varied regional economy that includes agriculture, dairy, fishing, forestry, mining and energy (Sofield & Pedersen in Richardson & Fluker 2004).

![Map of the Tapestry region in Western Australia](image)

**Figure 2: Map of the Tapestry region in Western Australia**

Source: Bunbury Wellington Economic Alliance 2005

The City of Bunbury is a fast-expanding port city located 175 km south of the Perth metropolitan region. It ranks as one of Australia’s top 10 ports in terms of tonnage and is proud of its maritime heritage. The third fastest growing city in Australia, its current population of 50,500 residents is expected to grow to 130,000 by the year 2030. The coastal town promotes itself as a ‘waterfront playground’ and cosmopolitan epicentre for visitors to the Tapestry tourism region with the development of its own cappuccino strip. It offers a range of accommodation facilities and a growing interest in tourist attractions such as the Dolphin Discovery Centre (City of Bunbury 2005).

Closer to Perth is the Shire of Harvey, which sits approximately 120 km south of Perth and encompasses an area of approximately 1,766 sq km. The rural farming community relies strongly on its local dairy, beef and citrus-growing industries; it also contains CALM-controlled forests rich in bauxite for the State’s aluminium refinery industry. The shire also has 43 km of virtually uninterrupted beach. The total population of the Harvey Shire—including the localities of Australind, Binningup, Myalup, Brunswick, Yarloop and Roelands—was 18,058 in the year 2003 (Shire of Harvey 2004).

206 km south of Perth and 36 km south-east of Bunbury, the Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup includes the townships of Donnybrook (population 3,393), Balingup/Mullalyup (population 800) and Kirup (population 270) (Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup 2005). While Donnybrook is known most famously as Western Australia’s oldest apple-growing region, it is also a centre for local timber, sandstone quarrying, viticulture and dairy. This
diversity has made Donnybrook one of the fastest growing rural shires in the area and tourism is considered a growing and important contributor (Shire of Donnybrook-Balingup 2005).

Characterised by a strong industrial base, the Shire of Collie is a significant coal and power provider to Western Australia. The shire houses a population of 9,079 (2003 Census) within a 1,685 sq km area and is located about 200 km from Perth (Shire of Collie 2005). There are inland and coastal attractions within the shire precincts including national and state forest as well as a conservation park; varied waterways offer water-based activities such as canoeing, fishing, and white water rafting (Collie River Valley Visitor Centre 2003). Keen to exploit its mining heritage and natural attractions, maximising Collie’s tourism potential is cited as a key goal for the area, with a tourism reserve fund set aside for this purpose (Shire of Collie 2005).

Capel sits 212 km south of Perth and counts among its tourism assets its coastline and Jarrah and Tuart forests. This shire’s boundaries include Boyanup, Stratham, Gelorup, Elgin, Gwindinup, Capel River Valley, and the beachside estates of Peppermint Grove and Dalyellup (Shire of Capel 2005). The population of Capel Shire as of June 2004 was 8,905 (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2004). Its economy continues to be bolstered by its early farming industry and now also includes agricultural industries such as viticulture, dairy, dairy processing and blue gums. Mining mineral sands is another economic booster. Tourism and sport are considered important enterprises and the shire is keen to ‘brand’ Capel as a key tourist destination (Shire of Capel 2005).

The Shire of Dardanup is located 185 km south of Perth and extends across an area of 518 sq km (Bunbury Wellington Economic Alliance 2005). Its current population is approximately 9,805 (ABS 2004) and local industries include beef cattle, sheep, timber, brickworks, saw mills, road transport, dairying and wool scouring. The Ferguson Valley has been gaining a reputation as a wine-growing region; another better known attraction in the area is Gnomesville, a dynamic community-inspired attraction of garden gnomes.

The Tapestry tourism region within the South-West therefore encompasses six diverse LGAs with a shared interest in promoting tourism within the region and boosting visitor numbers. Tourism Western Australia (previously known as the Western Australian Tourism Commission (WATC)) also views tourism as a key economic resource and is keen to promote tourism within the South-West (SW) region (WATC 1999). The Tapestry tourism region sits within this SW boundary but statistics and predictions for the SW region as a whole extend beyond Tapestry boundaries right through to Albany (Tourism Western Australia 2005) and are not necessarily reflective of the Tapestry. However, these tourism statistics indicate broader trends and appear somewhat influential in directing industry and LGAs in tourism development-based policy and planning. In the South-West Region Tourism Study (WATC 1999), it is clear that tourism is seen to bring potential economic and social benefits through the creation of employment and the injection of financial investments and the generation of new businesses; there are also the multiplier effects from tourism on related businesses such as service stations and restaurants (WATC 1999). It is noted, however, that the effects of tourism are not spread uniformly throughout the region, with coastal LGAs enjoying a greater share of visitor stays and expenditure than inland areas (WATC 1999). Other observations include a substantial (and growing) domestic Perth market and concern over service gaps and infrastructural deficiencies. These appear to be congruent concerns within the Tapestry tourism region.

**Stakeholders**

In addition to the six LGAs, the three-year research phase of the TTFP benefited from extensive input from CSIRO, Murdoch University and ECU. CSIRO Canberra designed the futures simulator (the TTFM) and also provided input into the data collection processes, while Murdoch University staff coordinated the three-year research project. ECU also assisted with transferring research expertise to local industry and communities. The project, which began in 2000, continued to the end of 2003 under the supervision of Murdoch University (Pedersen & Lee 2002). The project required significant financial and in-kind investment and total project contributions over the three-year period are estimated to total $765,784 (Cash: $338,534 and in-kind $427,250) (Pedersen & Lee 2002).

Cash contributors included the STCRC as well as the six LGAs involved, and other key organisations such as the South-West Development Commission and government departments such as the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business. These contributors also made in-kind contributions; other in-kind contributors include institutions such as the SW Regional College of TAFE, private sector bodies such as the Water Corporation as well as tourism industry contributors including accommodation providers within the region (Pedersen & Lee 2002).

Key stakeholders include the region’s more than 200 tourism operators, related businesses, local government councils and community interest groups. Non-residents with vested interests were also included, e.g. tour operators who work within the designated Tapestry tourism boundaries, the state government and potential investors (Sofield & Pedersen in Richardson & Fluker 2004).
Challenges

The TTFP has two key phases. The first phase, the research phase, ended in April 2003, when the project was formally handed over to the community. ECU Bunbury was selected to spearhead this process and ensure a consistent and smooth handover. This marked the beginning of the implementation phase of the TTFP. No formal evaluation of the project has been conducted and this current evaluative study attempts to analyse the community placement of the TTFP.

Anecdotally, there were indications that the project was beginning to face difficulties due to a decline in resource support and tenuous participation rates from key stakeholders. While the innovative approach of the TTFP is lauded as a pioneering project, it is important to investigate such concerns before the project is replicated in other regions. To do so, a detailed evaluation was considered necessary rather than relying on a random feedback process.

It is important to establish that this current evaluation is a study of the implementation phase of the project rather than an attempt to review the research design of the TTFP as it was conducted in 2000. However, evaluation findings could lead to reconsideration or refinement of the original project framework as processes and outcomes are intimately linked.
Chapter 2

CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

The principal objective of the overall Tourism Futures Project (TFP) is to promote sustainability within regions. Sustainability refers to a set of principles concerning a balanced approach to development that takes into account the present and future economic, social and environmental needs of people. Its principles are primarily ethical in nature (Macbeth 2005). In the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987) report, Our Common Future, emphasis is placed on development that meets the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is also clear that sustainability involves a technical dimension related to its implementation. The technical aspect is most evident in terms of the knowledge required to best maintain resources over the long term, which includes three principal features: indicators and data for determining progress; an analytical framework for making sense of this data; and a theoretical perspective for placing findings in a wider conceptual framework. Finally, there is also a strong political component to sustainable planning, in that it often requires strong community support to be carried out (often against interests that would prefer short-term gains despite long-term consequences). For example, an integrated stakeholder approach has been the focus of recent sustainable tourism approaches (Bramwell & Lane 2000), which is at least partly concerned with garnering popular support for development.

All three key components of sustainability—the ethical, technical, and political—underlie the TFP’s design and implementation. The simulator represents the technical dimension. The emphasis on community involvement points to an ethical orientation (in terms of the participatory action model), a technical model (for it is the community who possesses the ‘knowledge’ that underlies the simulator), and a political rationale (as support for the TFP is deemed to be stronger if the ‘community’ is actively involved in the project). The theoretical/analytical component in sustainable planning is particularly pronounced in the TFP, with the emphasis placed on a systems understanding. In a systems view of development, every component is dependent on each other, and the preservation of one component entails preservation of the whole system that sustains it. The systems theoretical/analytical component formed the basis of the simulator (Walker et al. 1999), and the participatory framework also centred on developing a systems understanding. The data requirements were also given a great deal of emphasis in both the simulator and the stakeholder workshops, and it was postulated at the outset of the evaluation that tourism operators themselves might find the data-generating aspect of the project the most useful resource in the TFP. Finally, the political aspect of implementing the TFP was an important aspect of its design and implementation, particularly in the community placement phase when it was the ‘community’ itself that took a key role in its ongoing management.

Given that the three key components of sustainability are strongly evident in the TFP’s design and implementation, it is worthwhile examining the body of research surrounding these components in a little more detail in order to fully determine where the TFP fits in with respect to these fields.

The Ethical Dimension

The TFP is intended not only to be a decision support system, but also an ethical decision support tool. That is, it is meant to assist tourism planners to assess the possible impacts of their decisions on the surrounding community, so that negative effects can be avoided. The TFP is oriented toward a ‘Limits of Acceptable Change’ (LAC) model, which focuses on the way that communities designate the extent of development, particularly in terms of avoiding negative impacts on the community. Walker et al. (1999, p. 60) remark: “The core concern of the TFS is to explore how tourism in a region can grow in such a manner that the limit to the growth of tourism is not the adverse effects of the growth itself, but something of the region’s choosing.”

However, the ethical component is not an in-built feature of the TFP, but is dependent on how it is employed. In other words, if users decide to employ the information they receive in an unethical manner, there are no mechanisms within the TFP to prevent this. Therefore, how users employ the information they receive is important as an evaluation question.

Macbeth (2005) discusses the way that sustainable planning needs to incorporate an ethical platform for tourism research. According to Macbeth (2005), tourism researchers need to be reflexive about their ethical position, as every position entails certain assumptions regarding right and wrong behaviour. Sustainability itself is an inherently ethical orientation, but it has tended to be presented in a blind manner with respect to its ethical basis. The extent to which the TFP makes its ethical position explicit (e.g. through the system workshops) is an important issue, particularly given the ‘open’ manner in which the information can be employed by users. However, the simulator model provides a list of ‘conditions of use’ that must be agreed to prior to activation of
the computer simulation. The list of conditions includes that the user agrees with assumptions built into the model, and understands that the model is not a predictor of actual visitor patterns.

The Technical Dimension

There is also a technical dimension to sustainability, which concerns the way in which development can be managed so that resources are properly preserved for future generations (which is by no means a straightforward task). It is not always the case that environmental or social degradation results from a lack of concern for these matters—too often, planners lack the technical knowledge on how development will impact on surrounding populations and the environment.

The development of technical knowledge is seen to be comprised of three aspects: the data which forms the basis of that knowledge; the analytical tools employed to interpret that data (whether quantitatively or qualitatively); and the theoretical model that guides interpretation of the data. In the TFP, the data is drawn from a variety of sources. The simulator is the analytical tool that aids in interpreting the data. Finally, a systems model of tourism processes is the theoretical model that guides interpretation of the data. All three are necessary to make informed decisions about tourism planning, and each will now be discussed with reference to the research literature.

Data

According to Walker et al (1999), a key component of the Tourism Futures Model (TFM) is to integrate existing data sets rather than develop new ones (p.65). A range of factors are deemed important. Walker et al. (1999, p.65) note:

The TFM needs to include information on external factors affecting tourism demand (including exchange rates, income growth), types and quantity of accommodation provided (e.g. backpacker to five-star resorts), destinations and infrastructure to support land and marine tour operations, environmental factors, as well as a set of economic and social indicators.

The TFM draws on the knowledge of tourism operators and local planners in order to develop regional systems models. This knowledge is acquired through system workshops. The use of workshops for devising systems models employed in scenario modelling was pioneered by the University of Georgia and the University of British Columbia in the 1970s (US National Research Council 2000, p.156).

The establishment of a knowledge-base to inform decision-making is an essential aspect of the technical dimension. The TFM draws on the notion of ‘learning organisations’ (Walker et al. 1999)—i.e. an approach to knowledge-building that draws on the capacity of organisations to effectively draw on their knowledge-base and to build on this knowledge through ongoing assessment. The workshops convened for the TFP are an important component of the learning organisation approach. Assessing their value to the TFP is therefore an important matter for evaluation.

Analytical tools

The TFM employs a scenario modelling software program that takes regional profile data and links it to core assumptions of the regional system are interrelated. The simulated output is a set of scenario outcomes that postulate possible impacts from tourism development.

The TFM is intended as a Decision Support System (DSS) to assist (first and foremost) planners and (secondly) business operators in managing tourism development in their region. While DSSs can refer to a wide range of approaches, the TFM employs scenario modelling as the key method for assisting planning decisions. The notion of scenario modelling in tourism planning is not new (Georgantz 2003), but it is certainly an area that is still in its infancy. While scenario modelling has been employed for a variety of task-specific purposes (such as economic scenario modelling and environmental scenario modelling), the use of this approach more generally as part of a triple bottom line approach to the economic, social and environmental spheres is a potentially powerful yet under-explored area for tourism planning.

Lawrence and Shaw (2002, p.2) contend that effective DSSs need to have input from stakeholders, and that ideally this should occur at every step of the process, including problem identification, determining decision criteria and feasible alternatives, the selection of weights and scenario analyses. Consequently, an effective DSS needs to be flexible to accommodate the needs of different users and groups. Lawrence and Shaw (2002) intend these remarks to apply to the process leading up to the design of the DSS as well as the implementation of the DSS itself. They note that the success of the DSS is enhanced when it is “built in collaboration with the users” (p.3). The reasons they give for such collaboration are primarily technical, concerning the need for user input for: identifying the interrelationships between information streams and decision criteria; spanning discipline boundaries; and integrating information sources.

Simulators have been employed most extensively in environmental management. The use of computer-based simulation is seen to be more precise than alternative methods, such as the Delphi technique that relies on opinions from expert advisors in order to model scenarios (see, for example, Kaynak, Bloom & Leibold 1994;
constitutes good or bad scenarios (as previously pointed out with respect to the ethical dimension). Henderson (1981, p.1309). This means, however, that users must make their own determination regarding what (DSS), which are “not to replace the decision maker, but to enhance his or her effectiveness” (Alavi &

decision aid rather than a decision making tool. This accords with the function of Decision Support Systems or bad (i.e. sustainable or unsustainable) scenario outcome. In this sense, it leans much more towards being a important ways. Unlike the sensitivity model or ITY approach, TFM makes no assumption about what is a good
time. However, more recently, there has been a more concerted effort to introduce systems thinking into tourism management. While much of the focus is on the economic system, as characteristic of computable general equilibrium (CGE) models (e.g. Alavalapati & Adamowicz 2000; Cooper & Wilson, 2002; Dwyer, Forsyth, Spurr & Vanho 2003), there is growing interest in tourism as part of a wider social, economic and environmental system generally (Farrell & Twining-Ward 2005).

Chan and Huang (2004) present a ‘sensitivity model’ for scenario modelling, based on Vester and Hesler’s (1982) model. Through group discussion and consultation, the key features of the local social, economic and physical environment and its systematic relationships are defined, and a model is constructed that outlines the ‘sensitivity’ of components to change by other components. The result is a ranking of ‘critical variables’ that are key drivers of the region and a measure of their degree of resilience to change. ‘Partial’ scenario modelling is undertaken by postulating what would happen if certain components in the system were to change. Such predictions are derived through group consultation (e.g. with planners, interest groups and local resident representatives) and are then incorporated into the integrated scenario model.

Northcote and Macbeth (2006) outline an integrated tourism yield (ITY) framework for conceptualising the costs and benefits of tourism in terms of a systems approach that, in contrast to Chan and Huang’s (2004) model, emphasises ongoing change. Yield refers to the returns that are possible from tourism activity. While yield is often measured in a financial or economic sense, Northcote and Macbeth argue that yield can also be applied to social, cultural and environmental aspects. It is the balance in the gains and losses sustained from tourism in each of these areas that determines the overall value of tourism yield in a destination. The interest of the ITY framework is not how sensitive variables are to influence by other variables, but to what extent being influenced by other variables would be problematic in terms of certain defined limits. While their model is not principally concerned with scenario modelling, it is intended to incorporate trade-off decisions into tourism planning that might usefully build on the outcomes of scenario modelling. Northcote and Macbeth are reluctant to outline indicators for yield levels or sustainable parameters, pointing out that indicators are best left to be defined by planning authorities in accord with available data and their particular interests. In terms of their model, the TFM might assist in understanding the upper (i.e. potential) and lower (i.e. required) limits of visitor, financial, economic, social and cultural yields in order for a tourism region to function within sustainable limits (as defined by the limits of acceptable change). In scenario modelling, such limits are normally seen to constitute the degree of resilience/sensitivity of local features to change. However, according to the ITY model, change is inevitable, and it is a matter of specifying at what point such change moves from being acceptable to being unacceptable.

The systems model underlying TFM resembles certain aspects of these approaches, but also differs in some important ways. Unlike the sensitivity model or ITY approach, TFM makes no assumption about what is a good or bad (i.e. sustainable or unsustainable) scenario outcome. In this sense, it leans much more towards being a decision aid rather than a decision making tool. This accords with the function of Decision Support Systems (DSS), which are “not to replace the decision maker, but to enhance his or her effectiveness” (Alavi & Henderson 1981, p.1309). This means, however, that users must make their own determination regarding what constitutes good or bad scenarios (as previously pointed out with respect to the ethical dimension).

Chan and Huang (2004) note the demands that sensitivity models places on planners to undertake extensive consultancy, and Northcote and Macbeth (2006) indicate the demands that ITY modelling places on planners to
consult with relevant experts. The TFM also relies on expert knowledge where the ‘experts’ are seen to be the community of planners and operators who are central to tourism development.

The Political Dimension

Terms such as ‘community capacity’ and ‘social capital’ are now commonplace in the tourism literature (e.g., Macbeth, Carson & Northcote 2004), and complement terms such as ‘participatory development’, promoted by organisations such as the World Bank. The involvement of community members in tourism planning is becoming a growing trend (Tosun & Timothy 2003). However, the extent and form of community participation advocated in participatory initiatives varies.

The TFP was intended to be used by a broad range of people from both the private and public sector (Walker et al. 1999), although input into the model was limited to tourism business operators and planning authorities (Walker et al. 1999). These participants are what might be referred to as tourism sector stakeholders—i.e. those individuals and organisations that most directly shape the form of the local tourism industry. However, the scope of the TFP is actually intended to be much broader than direct stakeholders, and includes other planning authorities such as police and health workers. This is consistent with the growing shift away from a focus on a ‘tourism industry’ to viewing tourism-related practices in terms of clusters (Jackson & Murphy 2002) or networks (Morrison, Lynch & Johns 2004), centring on common interests and alliances.

How the TFP succeeds in drawing on the tourism sector cluster is an important matter for evaluation. The importance of ‘champions’ in drawing this cluster together needs to be acknowledged and assessed. Without the active participation of community members, the knowledge-base for the TFP would suffer and the ability of TFP users to implement the decisions arrived at would be curtailed.

Evaluation as a Component of the Policy and Planning Process

Evaluation is a key but often overlooked stage in the action research cycle. It is also often a time-consuming and resource-heavy process. There are compelling reasons, however, for encouraging evaluation to be adopted as a critical feature in any project cycle. Evaluation debates have widened considerably beyond the notion of sifting out “what is good and what is bad” (McGuire 2002, p.1) to a broader approach that recognises the benefits of encouraging regular analysis and reflection. The benefits of evaluation are generally categorised into three areas and relate to:

1. Evaluation for accountability (e.g. the measurement of results or efficiency)
2. Evaluation for development (e.g. the provision of evaluative help to strengthen institutions)
3. Evaluation for knowledge (e.g. the acquisition of a more profound understanding in some specific area or field)

(Cheliminsky & Shadish 1997, p.10)

These benefits are also linked to notions of ‘learning from experience’, a key principle in the UK Government’s new approach to policy making (Boaz & Hayden 2002, p.440). This recognises policy as a “continuous, learning process, not as a series of one-off initiatives” (Cabinet Office 1999) and research is to be used as a way of better understanding the problems policy is attempting to address. This is not to stymie creativity but encourage innovation within an environment of accountability and reliable feedback loops.

As Boaz and Hayden (2002, p.441) further point out, “complexity theory undermines the assumption that policy systems are rational linear processes”. The challenge this issues to research communities is recognised and this study recommends broadening traditional preoccupations with method and design to an equally rigorous attention to utility and effectiveness. This is important if an evidence-based policy making environment is to be encouraged (Boaz & Hayden 2002, p.440).

In line with the systems perspective the TFTP aimed to engender in the broader community, evaluations are also keeping in line with an acknowledgement that processes and outcomes are intimately linked. A systems approach means recognising the dynamism inherent in complex systems and the flexibility required for projects and policy to evolve to reflect changing needs. The evaluation process is also beneficial for the changes in individual and group thinking as a result of involvement in evaluation activity (Patton 1999, p.108).

Limitations or challenges of evaluation

Managing expectations

When opinions are sought, there can be an inflation of expectations that changes will happen (and happen swiftly). This is dependent, however, on a complex mix of factors—from political will and available resources—that lie beyond the scope of an evaluative study. The inability to meet expectations generated by evaluations can cause disillusionment with the evaluation process, which might be subsequently viewed as a token exercise
rather than a genuine attempt to encourage greater accountability and strengthening knowledge bases. There is therefore a need to be clear about an evaluation’s aims and limitations.

**Long-term commitment**

Just as projects and policy systems should not be seen as linear, one-off initiatives, neither should evaluations be seen as one-off projects. Evaluations should be viewed as part of the regular feedback loops that are integral for healthy and dynamic systems to flourish. This evaluative study should not be viewed as a definitive conclusion on the TTFP but one contribution to what should be an ongoing debate surrounding sustainable tourism development in the region.

**Value-based judgments**

The success of an evaluation relies on the professionalism and expertise of the research team. The methodology employed for this evaluative study is outlined in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, and attempts have been made to ensure adherence to ethics requirements and respect for respondents’ views and privacy. It must be acknowledged, however, that ‘bias-free’ objectivity in social science research is unrealistic and a more honest approach would be acknowledging subjectivities in value-full scholarship (Macbeth 2005). The recommendations that accrue from this evaluation are based on the survey results but qualitative and quantitative studies are also dependent on subjective value judgments which will colour interpretations. This study has attempted to mitigate distortions through the employment of an experienced multi-disciplinary team committed to maintaining high research standards and providing as much detail as necessary regarding research processes and procedures.

**Summary**

A review of the literature emphasises that effective tourism decision-making requires attention to the ethical, technical, and political dimensions of planning if sustainable outcomes are to be achieved. An evaluation of the TTFP, therefore, needs to assess its ability to perform successfully in each of these areas if its claim to being a useful planning tool for sustainable development is to hold weight. The methodological design of the evaluation therefore required careful attention in light of these areas, so that the formative process of its implementation in the South-West region of Western Australia could be properly assessed. It is the matter of the evaluation design that is presented in the following chapters.
Chapter 3

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

The main aim of the project was to evaluate the placement of the Tapestry Tourism Futures Project with a view towards further implementation, should the project be regarded as worthwhile. The specific objectives of the project were to:

1. Evaluate the placement of the TFP in the Tapestry region;
2. Determine opportunities for TFP approach to other regions;
3. Note issues of placement of the TTFP; and
4. Note examples of capacity building of the TTFP placement.

Each of these aims shall now be discussed in more detail.

Evaluate the Placement of the TFP in the Tapestry Region

This current research aims to determine how successful the implementation of the TFP in the Tapestry region has been. It is important to distinguish two aspects of this particular issue, for there is an evaluation of the TFP itself, and evaluation of its particular implementation in the Tapestry region. Distinguishing which elements of the project are due to the research phase of the TTFP and which elements are due to its particular implementation in the Tapestry region is no easy matter. This is complicated by the fact that the TFP has not been evaluated before, and so it is not possible to isolate the features that are associated with the TFP design and those associated with regional characteristics and project management based on a comparison of implementation sites.

There are a number of factors that an evaluation of the regional placement needs to consider. Previous implementations of the TFP (such as the Douglas Shire) covered a small geographical zone and population, so the issue of how well the TFP works at larger regional scales is an important one. Scale is not the only factor to be considered in this respect, as maturity of the destination (in terms of its stage of development in the tourism life cycle), destination characteristics, historical relationships within the destination, and the particular project management structure of the Tapestry placement will affect the results of this evaluation. Such factors need to be taken into account in determination of the second aim—the potential for implementation elsewhere.

Determine Opportunities for TFP Approach to Other Regions

The TFP was designed as a planning framework that could be administered in any Australian destination. Beyond the particular successes or failings of the TFP in the Tapestry region, there is a need to understand whether the TFP would work in other regions, particularly if any of the successes are to be applied or the shortcomings corrected. There is great difficulty in generalising results from one region to another, unless the factors for the success or failure of a project in one region are well understood, and the characteristics of other destinations and how they compare to the initial region are known. For this reason, careful identification of the factors that contributed to the success or otherwise of the TTFP is important, which brings us to the third aim.

Note Issues of Placement of the TTFP

This project aimed to determine the issues surrounding the community placement of the TFP in the Tapestry region. This refers to the factors that account for its successes and failures. Factors include barriers, opportunities, unexpected developments, and a myriad of other elements that contribute to the achievement or non-achievement of the project’s objectives. The outcome of such analysis is a model of good practice, which can inform future implementation of the project to both the Tapestry region and elsewhere.

One of the problems in examining issues of placement, however, is in distinguishing between issues associated with the project phase of the TTFP (2001-2003) and those associated with the community placement phase (2003-ongoing). In the minds of tourism operators and LGA personnel who participated in both phases of the project, there may be little distinction between the two phases. Furthermore, the issues that characterised the project phase would likely have had an impact on the community placement phase. One question that needs to be considered in the context of this report is whether it is legitimate, analytically speaking, to distinguish between the two phases.

Not only are there difficulties in distinguishing between the project and community placement phases, but also with the design phase of the TFP under the auspices of CSIRO. Issues concerning how the simulator was
designed, how the systems workshops were structured, and how the data was designed to be gathered, all have an impact on the success of the community placement. Being able to distinguish what factors are attributable to the design of the TFP, and what factors are attributable to the implementation of the TFP in the Tapestry region, is an important evaluation matter.

**Note Examples of Capacity Building of the TTFP Placement**

The TFP is intended as a capacity building aid. The principal aim is to help operators and LGA personnel plan for future sustainable tourism development—i.e. to build their capacity to plan tourism responsibly. Questions that require answers include:

1. How well has the TTFP performed in this respect?
2. How well has it helped participants think about tourism as a system?
3. How well has it helped participants view the economic, social and environmental dimensions of their region as an integrated whole, and to see their tourism practices as having effects on all three dimensions?
4. How much has the TTFP enabled them to not just think about visitor patterns in terms of how it can help them financially or economically, but how it can help develop the region in many ways?

It needs to be kept in mind that capacity building refers not only to the ability to plan ahead as a community but also to be able to build capacity within the community in order to address future needs. Further information is needed to answer the questions of:

5. How well has the TTFP assisted in the promotion of social capital?
   1. Has it achieved an integrative function in bringing operators, LGA personnel and local tourism industry leaders together as a community?
   2. Has its workshops and, more importantly, shared knowledge about each other, promoted a sense among participants in the TTFP that they are working together to achieve a better future for their region?

Chapters 4 and 5 will now explore the two main studies involved in this project.
Chapter 4

STUDY 1—EXPERT PANEL

Given resource limitations, the broad nature of the evaluation brief and the varied array of interests and concerns that might be expected to frame the evaluation, it was decided to set up a consultation committee in order to determine the content and form of an interview schedule for Tapestry stakeholders. The consultation committee consisted of key regional tourism planners and other tourism experts who had an interest or stake in the community placement of the TTFP. Participants included representatives from CSIRO, STCRC, Tourism WA and ECU.

The expert panel process was loosely based on what is often referred to as the Delphi technique. The Delphi technique was first developed by the Rand Corporation in the United States as a forecasting tool, but has been subsequently employed to describe the process of consensus decision-making that the Rand Corporation employed in its forecasting projects. Delamere, Wankel and Hinch (2001), for example, employed a modified Delphi technique for item selection in their resident attitude scale for measuring tourism social impacts. In their study, the original item pool was generated through a workshop procedure (referred to as the Nominal Group Technique), with the Delphi panel then reviewing these items in a three-stage process, resulting in a final list of items. In contrast, the present evaluation relied on the expert panel to generate the initial items for the interview schedule as well as reviewing a compendium of the selected items for final selection in the interview schedule.

An additional task allocated to the expert panel was to derive a list of potential interviewees. The potential interviewees were defined as stakeholders who had participated in some way in the project, either as a tourism operator, an LGA planner or a coordinator in a participating organisation. The expert panel was vested with this task because certain panel members had extensive involvement in coordinating the community placement of the TTFP and so had knowledge of persons of interest to the evaluation. A detailed description of the procedure involved in item selection and designation of the interviewee list shall now be presented.

Approach

Interview item selection was undertaken by a panel of experts who represented various industry partners with an interest in the outcomes of the evaluation. Panel members were selected from a list compiled by the principal researcher. Their inclusion was based on either their interest in the program as key members of industry partner organisations (e.g. Tourism Western Australia and STCRC) or their involvement as project designers, leaders or coordinators of the program (e.g. CSIRO and ECU). Of the ten people invited to participate, seven were available or willing to serve on the expert panel. The panel was coordinated by a member of the evaluation team and communication took place via email. Participants were completely anonymous vis-à-vis one other, with their dealings being carried out unilaterally with the panel coordinator.

In the first round of communication, each member of the expert panel was asked to devise a list of eight to ten questions that they would like to be presented by the evaluation team to the participants involved in the project. Panel members were also asked to briefly justify the relevance of each question and to state what type of participant the question was to be directed towards (i.e. tourism operator, LGA authority, or other participant). The justification of questions was intended to assist the evaluation team in determining the objective being sought by the interview item, so that similar themed questions from the total item pool could be grouped together and redundancy among the questions identified. From the pool of questions that resulted, a compendium of items was compiled and it was left to the evaluation team to identify which questions were redundant and could be removed. In some cases, one question among several similar questions was nominated to represent the particular item. In other cases, a new question was formed out of the overlapping questions.

It was during the first round of communication that members of the expert panel were asked to nominate individuals who might be of interest to the evaluation as potential interviewees. Only two members of the expert panel were directly involved in the implementation of the project, and one of these members largely deferred to the other member to provide the evaluation team with a list of potential interviewees. Given that the latter member had an extensive list of participants involved in the TTFP workshops, this was a logical outcome, and the evaluation team was duly supplied with a substantial list of potential interviewees. The procedure by which the evaluation team employed this list in their sample selection and interview process will be discussed in the next chapter.

In the second round of communication, panel members were sent the compendium of interview items (see Appendix A) and asked to reduce the list to 30 items (approximately half of the compendium list) by indicating their individual selection with a tick. Members were informed that their individual selections would be tallied
and ranked to determine the final list. While it was expected that most members would nominate their own questions for inclusion, the request to nominate up to three to four times the number of questions they had individually devised themselves meant that they would also be giving preferences to many questions devised by others. The tally system would ensure that the effect of self-bias would be cancelled out.

The panel’s nominations were tallied, with 30 responses receiving level 5 support (i.e. a tally of five ticks). The items with level 5 or above support were automatically included, but after examination by the evaluation team, it was felt that some of these responses could be combined to remove further redundancy. Some remaining items that had received level 4 support (i.e. four ticks) were included in their place.

The panel was sent the final interview schedule for comment. Based on the feedback, some items were modified and when it was recognised that some flaws and gaps were present in the interview schedule, further items were added.

Results

The outcome of the expert panel process was an interview schedule that was grouped by the evaluation team into five sections centred on key areas: general background information; the data set; the simulator; utility; and attitude changes. These areas tended to reflect the different aspects of the technical dimension of the TTFP outlined in the previous chapter: data (i.e. the data set); analytical tools (i.e. the simulator); and theory (i.e. attitude changes) (refer to Appendix B for final interview schedule).

One limitation noted with the Delphi technique is that key questions that might not seem obvious at the outset of the study do not get asked (Linstone & Simmonds 1977). This was a concern also raised by one member of the expert panel. For this reason, the evaluation team exercised some degree of arbitration in the final selection of items (but notably only on items that were redundant) and, further, added a number of their own items in order to fill perceived gaps in the interview schedule.

General background

The general background items that were selected through the consultation process concerned overall features of the TTFP, including: identification of key objectives; costs of being involved (both financially and in terms of time); the importance of different types of relationships (e.g. with operators and LGA); the benefits of the TTFP in terms of tourism planning; the importance of project leadership/promotion by a ‘champion’ of the project; and the extent to which the TTFP accorded with local and regional tourism planning bodies (including local government). It was felt by expert panel members that these questions appropriately addressed the main objectives of the TTFP, and so would constitute a good general evaluation of its success in meeting these objectives.

The evaluation team added three items to this section. The first was a question addressing involvement in the workshops and with potential interviewees being largely selected from records of workshop participants, it was not expected that many, if any, would not have been involved in the workshops. However, it was decided that this could not be assumed, and that non-involvement in the workshops would have an important effect on the nature of the remaining responses. Another item added by the evaluation team concerned the stated interest of participants in the TTFP, which was felt to be an important item for measuring the intent of users. The team aimed to determine whether their initial interest was guided by using the TTFP for sustainable planning purposes or for maximising the returns of their business. It was also felt that it was important to ask whether their interest in the TTFP had changed since their initial involvement.

Data set

The next section was concerned with assessing the extent of participation in data-gathering and the value of the data received. The expert panel viewed the data sharing component of the TTFP as a key area for measurement, which supported the evaluation team’s hypothesis that the TTFP was being primarily valued by its users for its data on wider tourism trends. The first question in this section asked respondents if they had participated in developing the survey forms, primarily through the workshops, and the second question asked respondents if they had distributed survey forms. Having tourism operators and other personnel actively involved in gathering survey data was defined as a key feature of the TTFP’s success, for the usefulness of the system was dependant on the quality of the data gathered in the field by the operators themselves. The next set of questions asked respondents about the information they received back from the surveys, including the uses to which they put the information, and the time and cost of being involved in the data-gathering process. Obviously, if participants in the TTFP were not obtaining information that they deemed sufficiently useful, particularly if participation was taxing in terms of money and time (and for some operators, time is money), then involvement in the TTFP could be expected to be rather unenthusiastic.

The evaluation team decided to include a few questions in this section that had been suggested by some members of the panel but had received lower levels of support. The first of these questions asked respondents if they had received information from the surveys, as it could not be assumed that all participants had, and the
second asked respondents how they had received the information, for it could not be assumed that all participants were receiving information via the survey reports.

**Simulator**
While the simulator was the central selling point of the TTFP when it was initially introduced, it was evident before the evaluation began that its adoption by participants in the TTFP was limited. The questions posed by the expert panel with regard to the simulator concerned what value had been derived from those who had used it and how it could be improved.

**Utility**
The section concerning the utility of the TTFP mainly addressed the strengths and weaknesses of the project and areas for potential improvement. It was here that respondents’ overall assessment of the delivery of the TTFP was to be measured, as opposed to specific components of the TTFP’s placement. A question was also asked about the utility of implementing the TFP in other regions.

**Attitude changes**
One of the objectives of the TFP was to change the way that people think about tourism. Beyond the concerns of individual operators for financial gains and of local governments with economic gains, it was the desire of those promoting the TFP that participants would come to see their activities as part of a larger system with social and environmental—not just economic—consequences. The evaluation team therefore felt that a section that addressed such attitudinal changes would be important from an evaluation point of view. No particular attitudinal question in the compendium of interview items found wide agreement among panel members, but most panel members agreed that one or another of the questions should be posed. The evaluation team decided to add a few items on this matter, including a question on whether involvement in the TTFP had changed their views on tourism, and a series of questions on what they understood about the notion of tourism as a system.

**Summary**
Within the resource limitations of the study, the expert panel process was deemed to be the most satisfactory way for incorporating a wider input from stakeholders’ views and interests in the survey design, as well as making use of their varied knowledge and experiences in tourism research and the tourism sector. Representing multiple organisations who have worked in partnership in bringing the TTFP to fruition, the expert panel members were able to highlight issues and areas they felt should be addressed in the evaluation. The iterative, consensual nature of the expert panel process ensured the issues that were reflected in the final interview schedule were those that were shared among partners, and did not reflect the interests of one party alone. The role of the evaluation team in moderating the process ensured the final schedule served the best interests of an effective interview schedule that was concise and cohesive.

It should be emphasised that the evaluation team did not feel at any stage compelled to modify the proposed questions in any way that deviated from the basic substance of those offered by the expert panel, but merely sought to enhance the interview schedule by improving wording, removing redundancy and addressing any gaps. The lack of need for substantial intervention undoubtedly reflected the basic concordance between the partner organisations and the evaluation team in terms of their overall objective in undertaking the evaluation. In this respect, both the expert panel and the evaluation team shared the goal of producing a comprehensive evaluation of the TTFP that was oriented towards assessing its value for sustainable tourism planning in Australia generally. The manner in which the evaluation team proceeded to implement the interview schedule will be examined next.
Chapter 5

STUDY 2—INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Development

To acquire a rich set of research results, a combination of various methods complementing each other are needed (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1992; Creswell 1994; Strauss & Corbin 1998; Babbie 1999; Denzin & Lincoln 2000; Neuman 2000). Using several methods as part of one research project provides a balance between the different components that may otherwise be difficult to achieve.

To achieve the aims and objectives of this research, an exploratory study design was chosen. As Neuman (2000) stated, an exploratory approach is proposed in order to become familiar with the basic facts, setting, and concerns of those being studied. In exploratory research the variables are unknown whilst the context is very important (Creswell 1994).

This study used the purposive sampling technique, occasionally referred to as judgement sampling. This method is very useful for gaining a deeper understanding of the selected individuals. Purposive sampling was regarded as the most suitable approach because it involves the subjective selection of the sampling units (respondents) by an expert (Patton 1990; Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1992; Creswell 1998; Neuman 2000; Babbie 2001). The aim of the sampling process was to select information-rich respondents with experience in participating in the TTFP.

The qualitative component of this study (Study 2—the exploratory research phase) was based on a purposive sampling approach as described in Chapter 3. Once the decision to use purposive sampling was made, key stakeholders from all six LGAs of the Tapestry region were identified through the input from the expert panel in Study 1, and discussions with experts involved in the 2000-2003 research phase. The groups from which stakeholders were selected included LGA personnel, operators, visitor centre staff, representatives from the regional development commission, chamber of commerce and industry, and a TTFP implementation officer. Individuals from these sectors were identified and selected as potential respondents with the aim being to gain a range of perspectives and insights into factors influencing the community placement of the TTFP. All individuals selected for interview were involved in the project. Thus, the purpose was not to generalise to a larger population but rather to the groups from which respondents were drawn (Neuman 2000).

The majority of data collected during this research was through personal interviews. These face-to-face and telephone interviews based on focused, open-ended questions provide the primary data source for the project. Probing was used to help respondents elaborate on or clarify an answer or to explain the reason behind an answer (Frankort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1992). Despite the fact that the interview was structured, the respondents had considerable liberty in expressing their views, definitions and perceptions of a situation. The focused interview permits the research to obtain details of personal perceptions, reactions, and the like (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias 1992; Neuman 2000).

The interviews were carried out from July to September 2005. As a requirement by the Human Ethics Committee, Murdoch University, each respondent was requested to sign a letter of consent prior to the interview. All interviews were transcribed and mailed back to the participant to read and sign off, when in agreement with the transcript. This step was undertaken in order to ensure that all the information provided was correctly recorded. Each participant was interviewed once, with the same procedure used for each interview, with the aim of encouraging consistency and reliability of interpretation.

The questionnaire covered a range of sections, from the participants’ background with respect to the project, the data set, simulator, utility to attitude change (Appendix B). The initial section on the background of interviewees (Questions 1-12 Appendix B) aimed to determine the participants’ interest and level of involvement in the project, their understanding of the project’s key objectives, the costs of their contribution to the project both in terms of financial and in-kind outlays, and their views on tourism and tourism planning. The next section of the interview schedule addressed issues of the data set (Questions 13-22 Appendix B) in terms of the participants’ degree of participation in the surveys and interest in resultant tourism data. A section of questions relating to the simulator (or TTFM) followed, in an attempt to identify the level of knowledge and/or use of the TTFM (Questions 23-26 Appendix B). Through a series of questions addressing the utility of the TTFP (Questions 27-33 Appendix B), the study aimed to determine participants’ views on the most successful aspect, the most difficult aspects and suggestions for improvement of the project. The final section of the questionnaire aimed to find out about attitude changes arising as a result of their involvement in the project (Questions 34-36 Appendix B).

As a result of the input from the ‘expert panel’ in Study 1, an initial group of 72 potential respondents were identified through the purposive sampling technique. These stakeholders were approached and invited to
participate, as part of this initial contact. The research project and objectives were outlined and the potential participants were encouraged to participate. A total of 50 people agreed to participate in the study and all participants signed off the transcripts to be used in the evaluation process.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this research was conducted primarily after the data collection was completed. However, during the process of data collection, ongoing analysis occurred while reviewing and summarising the interview responses, in order to explore emergent themes. The responses to the interview were analysed question by question. To analyse the responses, coding was used to label, separate, compile and organise the information from the interview transcripts (Miles & Huberman 1994; Strauss & Corbin 1998). To assist analysis, pattern coding was used to illustrate emergent leitmotifs or patterns. During coding, eminent key words and phrases were selected and grouped together. These key words and phrases formed patterns, which developed and showed discernible themes or relationships. Codes emerged from the interviews and were derived and labelled from concepts in symbolic interactionism (Strauss & Corbin 1998). The codes identified an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation and pulled together ‘like’ responses into more meaningful categories. It is important to group concepts into categories as this process allows a reduction in the number of units, creating an index tree, which builds a hierarchy ranging from main categories to subcategories of lesser to greater complexity. Some of the codes changed and developed as analysis progressed. Each new code was compared and contrasted with preceding ones and either assigned to an already existing category or kept as a stand-alone code until a new category was formed.

During coding and categorising, the naming of the categories occurred simultaneously. The selected names were based on the concepts already discovered in the transcripts, or descriptive names based on their properties. Some codes, such as emergent codes for the question relating to the need for a ‘champion’ of the cause (Question 11a, Appendix B) changed and developed as analysis progressed. Patterns built and complemented previous codes whereby the next higher level emerged. Coding was conducted by two key researchers who reviewed the transcribed interviews question by question and line by line. This procedure enabled the researchers to group the responses into similarities and differences, which allowed comparison between responses and respondents.

Results

Background of participants

All respondents were asked questions about their initial involvement and interest in the project, their level of involvement, their knowledge of the objectives of the initial project and their input into the project (Questions 1 to 5, Appendix B). These five questions obtained background information on the respondents. The majority (73%) were involved in the initial TTFP workshops which were conducted throughout 2000 – 2003. Several respondents could not answer yes or no as they could not remember exactly due to time lapse.

Interest in the project

The main reasons given by respondents for their initial interest in the project were: the resulting data (66%); being invited to participate (34%); their involvement in tourism (22%); and the simulator (16%). The main driver for people’s interest in the TTFP was their desire to obtain data and statistics for tourism in their region. Reasons provided with respect to the importance of the data were: to determine their customer base; to aid planning; to gain an overview across the whole region; for comparison purposes; that data is useful for grant applications; to assess the economic value of the region; and to gain an understanding of tourism activities in a broader sense, including the interactions between different aspects of tourism. Data, as a key aspect of interest, was noted by respondents from all stakeholder categories. The following excerpts highlight the relevance of the data: “to find out from where and why our customers are coming, get customer data, and for the overall resultant data from the project” (operator), and “I thought it was a good way to get information about visitors to the region” (visitor centre staff).

Those who noted their involvement arising from being invited to participate noted that they were part of a larger stakeholder group, e.g. from the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM), or the Health Department, or that they were invited to participate as a result of their existing role or new job. Of those who recorded their interest in the TTFP as arising from their involvement in the industry, responses included: owning and operating a business; involvement being part of the participants’ role, e.g. LGA personnel’s portfolio; or having a vested interest in the industry. Many respondents who highlighted that their initial interest stemmed from their involvement in the industry also stated that they were invited to participate. As one participant stated, “being the LGA representative and my interest in the simulator”.

Responses mentioned primarily by LGA personnel when asked about their initial interest in the project were that they were interested in the TTFP for marketing and promotional purposes to boost tourism potential and
tourist numbers and to be able to monitor tourism impacts. Operators further stated that they were interested in participating in the project to build up a bank of knowledge; the aim to further their understanding of tourism and various aspects of the industry they work in.

Respondents were asked whether their interest in the project had changed from the initial period of the TTFP until the present. The results to this question were almost evenly divided, where a total of 48% said their interest had not changed, and 52% stated that there interest had changed. It should be noted that some respondents had difficulties in distinguishing between interest in the initial project and issues of the placement of the project. Even though respondents initially said their interest had not changed, after probing they qualified their responses by including comments such as: “still interested but wish for more training”; “still interested in the project but want to get more training on the simulator”; and “still interested but prefer to get more feedback”. These responses were taken as an indication that their interest had not changed, as the additional comments refer to operational activities of the project.

Of those who responded that their interest in the project had changed, probing by the researchers revealed several reasons for this. Examples given were: “moved out of the tourism business/industry”; “lower interest due to the lack of benefits [of the project] and little value demonstrated”; “the simulator is not working to full satisfaction”; “respondents do not participate any more”; “operator’s unwillingness to participate”; that the “whole project evolved from the initial start up”; and that “respondents became self sufficient”. This suggests that several operators started to develop their own surveys applicable to and used exclusively for their own business.

It is interesting to note that all interviewees from visitor centres stated that their interest had changed. Some of the reasons provided for their change in interest were due to the survey forms, lack of participation, and the general perception that the project had changed. Some of the staff’s perception was that the whole project and direction of the project had changed; one commented that “over the last year we were refining the process and the survey forms—the last survey round was the first one after the changes”. LGA representatives, in answering this question, focused on their shift in interest from the initial project to their growing interest in the financial viability of the project and how to make it commercially successful. None of the operators included this reason for their change in interest, but it can be explained through the divergent interests and role of LGA personnel and operators. For operators, change in interest for the project was primarily based on the survey; included here were comments with respect to the survey forms being too long, too hard to understand, too difficult to complete; unwieldy processes in administering the surveys (e.g. the timing for the surveys); and it being too difficult to encourage customers to complete the surveys.

**Key objectives**

The interviewees were asked what they considered to be the key objectives of the TTFP. Table 1 provides a selection of key responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Objective of TTFP</th>
<th>% of responses*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Utilisation of outcomes for marketing/planning/promotion</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a local data set</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building community capacity</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario building (simulator)</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ability to monitor tourism trends</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining economic impact</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*responses (%) not mutually exclusive

The perceived key objectives are well aligned with the actual key areas which the project aimed to achieve (refer to Chapter 1), which included education and building community capacity, collection of relevant, timely and reliable data, and development of a decision support system—the simulator.

Analysis of responses suggested that respondents did not clearly distinguish between marketing, planning and promotion in the answers they provided; hence they were aggregated into one category. Most respondents from all stakeholder groups considered marketing and promotion of the region as one of the project’s key objectives. It is a voiced expectation by the participants interviewed in this study that the project will aid the tourism industry with marketing and business planning for operators and the LGAs. Improved marketing and promotion for the whole of the Tapestry tourism region was highlighted as very important, mainly by operators and LGA personnel. Furthermore, respondents from the South-West Development Commission and the LGAs.
emphasised the planning possibilities for assisting local government to develop opportunities with respect to tourism.

In direct link to marketing/planning/promotion, obtaining regional data was considered to be the second most important key objective of the project. This category includes several aspects of ‘data’, e.g. the ongoing acquisition of local and regional statistics, the involvement of the tourism industry in the process of data collection, the aim to use the acquired data for funding submissions, and the improvement of both the quality and quantity of tourism data collected. In effect, the data was seen to support the marketing/planning/promotion objective.

Another key object of the project highlighted by the respondents was to build community capacity. Responses with this focus included: “community capacity building”; “increase awareness of the way tourism affects the region”; “to build a sense of community support system”; “to bring stakeholders together”; “information and responsibility sharing with other regions”; “to educate and raise the awareness of stakeholders of the value of data”; and “tourism opportunities and their role in tourism”.

Almost a quarter of responses (22%) considered the simulator as a tool for future scenario building as being another key objective of the project. To be able to predict future trends was mentioned primarily by respondents from the Development Commission and LGAs. This may be due to the exposure the simulator itself received during the original research phase, as its use was aimed towards LGA personnel and development commission personnel to aid their strategic planning. Only one operator included future trends as a key objective of the project. Interestingly, none of the visitor centre staff interviewed mentioned the capacity to predict future trends as an objective, even though they had received training on the simulator.

Monitoring the effect of tourism development was mentioned by operators, LGA personnel, the project team and respondents from the Development Commission. This category included being able to monitor and assess tourism impacts and trends in the region. It should be noted that the key objective of development of a data set is closely linked to ‘monitoring’ as the collection of regionally specific baseline data acts to provide a foundation on which future monitoring may be based. Determining economic impacts, as a key objective, was only mentioned by LGA interviewees, the project placement team and a governmental department. The following statements were included in this category: “spreading tourism dollars”, and “determine the economic implications of tourism in the region”.

Costs

In Question 5 of the interview schedule, the research team aimed to gain an understanding of the costs of the participants’ involvement in the project, both in financial (5a) and in-kind (5b) terms. Answering this question resulted in great difficulties for the respondents. The vast majority of interviewees were not able to provide an answer with respect to their financial involvement. In terms of determining their human, in-kind, input the time factor played a significant role. It was difficult to recall approximately how much time they spent attending workshops, information sessions, discussions, data collection, travelling and other activities.

Financial sustainability

Asking the participants to respond to the question, ‘How can the TTFP can be developed to become more financially sustainable?’ (Question 6), various answers were put forward including distinct proposals to the comment that they were unable to comment. The main suggestion was to charge for the data (34%). This included a fee for use of the data by potential developers, investors, other tourism regions, for marketing purposes outside of the region, research agencies, non-participating operators, and consultancies to name a few. Respondents from all stakeholder groups suggested this ‘fee for data’ concept as an option. The second option considered by respondents was to commercialise the simulator and its outputs, in the form of reports (22%). However, for them to be able to successfully use this option respondents said that in their opinion the simulator had to be more user-friendly. A total of 12% of respondents believed that to gain financial sustainability, more government (state and/or federal) and corporate funding is required. The following options were mentioned in less than 10% of responses: “greater involvement from industry operators” (this point was highlighted by LGA and visitor centre staff); “subscription service” (this option was outlined by an operator and project team member); “development of an interactive CD for marketing planning which also includes the simulator as scenario setting” (an option stated by a project placement leader); and “more effective marketing of the project’s potential” (an option mentioned by an operator).

Establishing relationships with operators

A series of statements were posed regarding the level of importance of the individual interviewee in establishing relationships between operators (7i), LGA personnel (7ii), and visitor centre staff (7iii). Figures 3-5 graphically display the level of agreement with the statements.
The majority (83%) strongly agree or agree that it is important for them to establish relationships with operators, followed by 12% who are neutral with respect to this question. Only 5% disagree, suggesting that for them it is not important to establish relationships with operators. No one strongly disagreed with this statement and none of those interviewed recorded the option of "not sure" in response to this question.

With respect to establishing relationships with LGA personnel, the majority (81%) agree or strongly agree that it is important for them. When asked about the importance for them to establish relationships with LGA personnel, 10% were neutral. Overall two respondents said that they disagree and whilst no one strongly disagreed, and a further two were unsure if it is important for them.
The last part of this question, 7iii, focused on the importance the interviewee placed on establishing relationships with visitor centre staff. Following the trend in responses, this relationship was regarded as being important to the great majority of those interviewed (85%), while 7% were neutral, two people (5%) disagreed, no one strongly disagreed and a single respondent (2%) was not sure of the importance of this relationship.

![Figure 5: Is it important to establish relationships with visitor centre staff?](image)

NOTE: (N=41)

**Planning**

A series of questions in this background section (Question 8-10 & 12 Appendix B) had ‘planning’ as their focus. This section proved difficult for some respondents as, whilst their general ideas about planning were clear, many did not know the existing research plans for their LGA or the Tapestry Region. The responses below are presented in terms of general planning issues leading to more specific LGA related issues.

Initially participants were asked which processes involved in the TTFP are useful in planning for tourism. The main responses provided can be grouped into data set development (38%); community capacity building (30%); the simulator for future prediction scenarios (14%); and general processes (10%). A minority of respondents indicated that this was difficult to judge due to their lack of knowledge of the processes of the TTFP; that the underlying theory was good but, according to their perception of planning, the project is not fully successful in attracting new businesses to the region.

The importance of data for planning was noted by respondents from the Development Commission, LGAs, and government departments. Their focus was on using the resulting data from the surveys for planning and for marketing activities, and their responses also included statements relating to the data collection, such as the surveying techniques, which were designed to gain information and therefore an understanding of tourism patterns and trends.

The next key concept contributing to planning was community capacity building, with views being expressed primarily by LGA personnel and project officers. This included the notion of bringing stakeholders together and generating dialogue and building community relations; raising stakeholders awareness of tourism’s linkages and possible impacts with other sectors including their role; and highlighting the importance of the interrelationship between the region and the different authorities. These responses acted to support the importance of relationships emphasised in the previous section.

The notion of the simulator as being capable of creating ‘what-if’ scenarios was considered to be another useful planning aspect of the TTFP. LGA personnel, respondents from the Development Commission and government agencies highlighted this; a single operator mentioned the simulator as being useful for planning. (It should be noted that operators did not attend the training sessions on the simulator during the initial research phase.) The category of ‘general processes’ included answers such as: “the mapping of the process”; “using the media to raise key points of interest to the public regarding tourism”; and “the possibility and processes of feasibility studies was useful for tourism planning”.

22
A statement that ‘the TTFP has influenced the way you think tourism planning should be undertaken’ was posed, with a response scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’, and with a further question providing for an explanation of their level of agreement with the statement (Question 9a & 9b, Appendix B). Figure 6 graphically depicts the level of agreement with the statement.

![Figure 6: Has the TTFP changed the way you think tourism planning should be undertaken?](image)

NOTE: (N = 35)

In providing an explanation for the level of agreement selected, the data was yet again the main source of influence. Whilst the data was regarded as having a limited participation rate, it was seen as being useful as it provided information which previously was not available on a local and regional scale. Other explanations included: that the TTFP showed linkages in tourism previously unknown; raised the profile of tourism in the region; provided feedback at a local grassroots level; and encouraged thinking and analysis based on the information provided rather than making decisions on an ad hoc basis. It should be noted that some respondents indicated that they were unable to comment due to the lack of feedback they had received as well as their lack of involvement in the project.

A further survey question relating to planning asked respondents to suggest what would need to happen for shires in the Tapestry region to devise a single set of planning regulations affecting tourism development (Question 10, Appendix B). Almost half (46%) of the respondents stated that this scenario is highly unlikely as each LGA operates on its own; that this is not a good idea in the first place; that there is an existing competitiveness between the LGAs; and that the LGAs work autonomously with different planning policies in place. Responses which considered the options for a single set of planning regulations affecting tourism development included: “the requirement for strategic planning being included into the overall planning schemes of each LGA”; “the need for a common goal”; “open communication”; to “work and engage with key stakeholders”; to “put forward key attractions within each shire”; “the need for shire amalgamation”; and “the need to share the financial burden to gain greater equity and to take tourism more seriously”.

A specific question asked those interviewed whether the TTFP project ‘fits’ within existing plans undertaken by the LGAs, regional tourism organisations and local tourism organisations (Question 12, Appendix B). Answering this question proved most difficult for many respondents, particularly operators, as many indicated that they did not know what the existing research plans of these authorities and organisations are. The follow up to this question asked for a brief comment. Answers ranged from: “the project [TTFP] needs to be integrated with existing research plans”; “it [TTFP] is not part of the ‘normal’ planning”; “the resulting data is valuable and will be useful for planning purposes”; “it [TTFP] complements what other organisations are doing and it will provide them with new perspectives, the micro scale to complement the macro scale research”; and “the Tapestry region is the only one which is doing any planning in this area, there is a lack of capacity in this field”. In analysing the statements given to this question it is necessary to take into consideration the lack of knowledge of existing research plans by respondents in their aim to answer the question on the basis of their expectations and
assumptions. Such responses as these suggest that building community capacity, in terms of their understanding of local planning requirements, could be regarded as an unquantifiable outcome of the process of the TFP.

**‘Champion’ of the cause**

Tourism literature is increasingly recognising the importance of a ‘champion of the cause’ for sustainable tourism planning (Lee & Chok 2005). In response to the statement that a project such as the TTFP is dependent on a ‘champion’ of the cause (Question 11, Appendix B), over 90% of respondents from all stakeholder groups agreed. Figure 7 reflects the level of agreement with the statement, with almost 80% indicating a ‘strongly agree’ response.

![Figure 7: Is a project such as the TTFP is dependent on a ‘champion’ of the cause?](image)

The three respondents who disagreed with the statement were representatives from LGA and visitor centre groups. When asked for their reasoning, they stated that operators should be motivated and the motivation should come from them, that if there is a lack of motivation from the operators’ side a project like this is doomed to fail, and that a champion can be good but lack of participation means the project will fail. Statements made by respondents’ who strongly agreed included: “a project like this one needs someone to run and drive it”; “the more time and energy can be dedicated to the project, the higher the chances of success”; “it is important for a project to have a person with continuous passion, motivation and leadership skills. But also, a champion to educate people of the concept of the project”; “help stakeholders to understand the objectives of the project”; “encourage people to participate”; “to work within a strategy”; and “to focus on clear outcomes”. An important point was raised by representatives from all groups in relation to the notion of ownership: “the champion should be a person from within the community, a local, as it is expected that a local champion will have the community’s respect and be able to increase the community’s ownership, has an already established network which might help to encourage different key stakeholders to participate in the project”. Other suggestions were to appoint or determine a champion in each of the six LGAs to ensure even more of a sense of community ownership. Various ideas were brought forward by the respondents on the concept of a champion of the cause, e.g. a full-time appointment, or two or more people as champions rather than a single person, where one can act as a figurehead with the associated network and the other person as the project manager.

**Data set**

The next section of the interview schedule focussed on the data set arising from the TTFP process, with the extent of participation in data-gathering and the value of the data received being the focal point. The first question in this section (Question 13, Appendix B) aimed to reveal if the respondent participated in the development of the initial survey form which was conducted during the initial research project from 2000 to 2003. Figure 5 outlines the distribution of the answers provided by the respondents.
There was an almost even division of respondents who had been involved in the development of the survey forms and those who had not. One participant was not sure whether they had been involved or not, citing the time lapse since the research phase of the TTFP as the reason for lack of recall. When asked if they had been involved in distribution of the survey forms (N = 42), the majority answered yes (67%). This can be explained by the background of respondents participating in this evaluative study. For example, LGA personnel and representatives from the Development Commission are involved with the TTFP but do not contribute to the administration and distribution of the survey forms.

Timely and reliable feedback to operators was regarded as an important aspect of the development of the data set. The initial research phase provided participants of the TTFP with individual business level, LGA level and regional Tapestry level reports based on the results of the surveys. Therefore a question in the interview schedule addressed whether the interviewees had received information from the surveys on which the data set is built (Question 15, Appendix B). The majority (82%) stated that they had received information from the surveys whilst 14% responded that they had not received any information. Interestingly, a further 5% indicated that they were not sure if they had received any information arising from the surveys; again, the time lapse was noted as playing a significant role as many respondents’ struggled to remember if they received any information.

From those who indicated they had received feedback from the surveys, a question was posed to determine whether they had found the information useful, by asking how they had used the information that had arisen from the TTFP (Question 16, Appendix B). A total of 28% of respondents indicated that they had used the information for internal purposes; e.g. to make changes in their business in the case of some operators, for funding applications as a representative from the LGA stated, as part of their work as a consultant mentioned, and for committee meeting reports in the case of staff from visitor centres. Marketing was another way in which the information was used, with 12% of participants reporting that through the information they received they had gained a greater market understanding and therefore were able to use it for the marketing of their business.

Representatives from the Development Commission mentioned that they used the information for third parties. They supplied the information on request to potential investors and business developers. However, 30% said that they had not used the information yet, with some respondents stating that there was no need for them to use it but that they considered it beneficial to have the information available when needed. Only 22%, primarily LGA and visitor centre personnel, viewed the information as not being completely reliable due to the low response and participation rate of the surveys. Other statements relating to the use of information arising from the data set included: “I have only limited use for the information due to my role in the organisation’ and ‘the results [information] are not directly relevant to my business’.

In relation to the level of use of the information provided by the data set, a question was posed relating to the main form of feedback; the reports sent to participants. This question asked respondents to rate the usefulness of reports as a form of feedback in terms of understanding their own business, their LGA and the Tapestry region on a scale from ‘very good’, ‘good’, ‘average’, ‘poor’, ‘very poor’ and ‘unsure’ (Question 17, Appendix B). With respect to the usefulness of the report for understanding their own business (N = 20), 25% said it was very good, 25% said it was good, 25% agreed it was average, 25% were unsure, and 5% stated that the information was poor for understanding their own business. With respect to the usefulness of the report for understanding their LGA (N = 29), 35% said very good, 28% said it is good, 14% were agreed, 14% were unsure, and 10%
considered it as poor. The usefulness of the report for understanding the Tapestry region was regarded as very
good by a quarter of those interviewed, 41% indicated the report was good for this purpose, 9% agreed it was
useful and 9% felt it was poor for understanding the region, whilst 16% remained unsure of the usefulness of the
information in the reports. It should be noted that none of those interviewed recorded a ‘very poor’ level of
usefulness for the reports for the purposes of understanding their business, their LGA and the whole region.

Whilst the responses above indicate that the stakeholders interviewed in this study found the report format of
data set feedback to be relatively useful, a question on the interview schedule aimed to elicit suggestions for
improving the way data set feedback can be provided (Question 18, Appendix B). Interestingly, 12% said that
they cannot think of any improvements as they consider the way the information is provided as good and no
changes are required. A number of suggestions were made, with a key strategy being through the use of
‘technology’ (18%); email communication and access to online information (e.g. on a website) were mentioned.
Making changes to the reports (16%) was identified as another means to improve information supply; respondents said they preferred the reports to be tailored to suit the needs of operators; breaking up the
individual LGAs into discrete areas within the LGAs (e.g. coastal areas and inland areas); and improving the
overall appearance of the reports as they are inadequate for understanding the region, a point highlighted by a
LGA representative. A key strategy being through the use of ‘technology’ (18%); email communication and access to online information (e.g. on a website) were mentioned. Making changes to the reports (16%) was identified as another means to improve information supply; respondents said they preferred the reports to be tailored to suit the needs of operators; breaking up the
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In an attempt to evaluate the overall effect of the data set, questions were developed to determine whether the
respondents had made any changes to the way they run their business or organisation as a result of the visitor
surveying and resultant data, and what those changes were (Questions 19 & 20, Appendix B). The majority
(64%, N=33) stated that they had not made any changes, 24% said they had made changes, and 12% were
unsure. Changes to marketing was mentioned by 12% and internal changes by 6%. Marketing included focused
and more structured retail processes; information collected, used and passed on to visitors Participants used the
information internally to create their own surveys based on the TTPF, and to develop contingency plans for
events.

Given the resource commitment required to be involved in the development of the data set, participants were
asked to provide their level of agreement with the statement that the benefit they had gained from the visitor
survey was worth the time/cost of their contribution to collecting the data (Question 21, Appendix B). Figure 9
shows the distribution of responses, on a scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’. Almost two-thirds of
the interviewees felt that the benefits of collecting the data set outweighed the costs to them, with less than 8%
finding the imposition of data collection to be higher than the reimbursement.

![Figure 9: Do you agree that the benefit you have gained from visitor surveying were worth the time/cost of
contributing to data collection?](image)

NOTE: (N = 34)
Whilst most respondents saw benefits outweighing costs, the interview schedule included a question seeking suggestions for improvement of the data collection method (Question 22, Appendix B). A multitude of suggestions were provided. These can be grouped into survey, administration, incentives, general comments, and no changes. The category with most responses overall (50%) considered that changes to the survey form itself would improve the data collection. These changes included: a shorter survey form; a more focused form; and including only closed response options in the form of tick boxes. The second most frequently mentioned category, administration (16%), included suggestions such as: greater flexibility of the survey periods; the possibilities of electronic surveys; administering the surveys in a central location where visitors stop rather than at individual businesses; and utilising mainly visitor centres for conducting the survey. Incentives were mentioned as another way to improve data collection. At the latest survey round, May to June 2005, incentives for visitors and operators were introduced and generally taken up favourably. The general comments category included statements rather than actual improvement suggestions, e.g.: “people hate filling out surveys”; “all visitors to the region need to be surveyed, also people visiting national parks and to this point no surveys were conducted in national parks”; “the emphasis of the data collection should be on outcomes”; and “the data collection needs to be more responsive over time to new issues”. Finally, several respondents (18%) stated that they do not have any suggestions for the method of data collection.

**Simulator**

Following the data set section of the interview schedule was a section relating to the TTFM (the simulator) component of the TTFP. This section was not applicable to all respondents as the use of the simulator was targeted towards LGA personnel, visitor centre staff and representatives from government organisations. An initial question aimed to identify those who use the simulator (Question 23, Appendix B), with the result that only 39% (N = 39) of those responding to this question were identified as users of the TTFM. The majority of respondents (59%) indicated that they did not use the simulator, with a single response (2%) indicating that they did not know about this component of the overall project. Interviewees cited the main reason for their use of the TTFM as being that it was as part of the training session offered during the research phase of the TTFP (2000 – 2003). Two other comments were made, which were: “to be able to understand complex interactions in the region”, and “I designed the simulator”. These statements were both given by project implementation team members.

Those who had used the simulator (N=12) were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statement that the simulator was useful and then give reasons for their level of agreement (Question 25, Appendix B). Fifty-eight percent agreed with the statement, 7% indicated a neutral response, 14% were not sure about the usefulness of the simulator, and 7% (one respondent) strongly disagreed with the statement. When asked to expand on the reason why they did or did not find the simulator useful, respondents focused on the data, with the following statements: “the data is too generic to be meaningful”; “the results are unreliable as it is still operating with data from 2001”; and “we want local level information rather than regional”. Ease of use of the simulator was also a reason for the perceived level of usefulness of the simulator, with respondents noting that the simulator was not user-friendly enough, and that there was a need to simplify it. However, other statements included in explaining how useful the TTFM was included: “it [the simulator] is a unique and handy tool”; “there is the potential to be useful but yet to deliver”; “it exposes themes of underlying agreement between stakeholders”; and “it is a great prediction and scenario model”.

The last question in this section asked respondents what changes they would recommend for the simulation model to be used as a data generation tool with respect to a) informing tourism operators or developers, and b) as a planning tool for LGAs and local government authorities (Question 26, Appendix B). Two key areas emerged from the responses received. These were improved user-friendliness and reliable, updated and localised data. Additional individual comments included: “the need to re-examine the model’s underlying assumptions”; that “the simulator is not useful for operators, rather [it is useful for] planning”; “only limited long-term use”; that “the focus on the simulator should be promoted as a one-off tool for training purposes rather than as an ongoing part of the project”; and that “it should remain mysterious to the wider community [in order] to be able to commercialise it”.

**Utility**

The interview schedule contained a section on the ‘utility’ of the TTFP which aimed to determine participants’ views on the most successful aspects, the most difficult aspects and areas of improvement for the project (Questions 27-33, Appendix B). It should be noted that respondents had difficulty in distinguishing between the most successful aspects (Question 27, Appendix B) and the strengths (Question 29, Appendix B) of the TTFP. In the same way, areas for improvement of the TTFP (Question 30, Appendix B) and suggestions for changes if starting over again (Question 32, Appendix B) were regarded, by respondents, as posing very similar questions.

**Success of the TTFP**

The most successful aspect of the TTFP for the majority of respondents (50%) was the resulting ‘data and information’, followed by ‘linkages’ (34%), which in this context encompasses bringing stakeholders together and working together for a common cause, building of customer relations, and stimulation of dialogue and cross
pollination of ideas. The next category was ‘awareness’ (14%), e.g. greater awareness of tourism linkages, greater awareness of tourism issues in the region, and introducing a broader framework and getting local government authorities together to consider potential social and economic impacts of tourism. Minor categories included ‘marketing’, with statements such as, “the identification of our market, and ‘technology’ focussing on the simulator to aid decision making”.

Difficulties of the TTFP
The most difficult aspects of the project identified by respondents can be grouped into the following key categories:

- Participation (62%);
- Operational (26%);
- Communication (24%);
- Data (20%);
- Resources (18%);
- Simulator (18%);
- Survey Form (10%);
- Awareness (10%); and
- Administrative (8%).

Lack of participation was considered by far the most pronounced difficulty of the TTFP in respondents’ views. Lack of participation included: lack of participation by operators, which was highlighted by LGA personnel and visitor centre staff; and lack of participation of visitors, a concern raised by operators administering the surveys. Operational difficulties were experienced by respondents from all groups. These included getting to meetings and workshops, time constraints, and conflict of interest—time is money in the tourism business and the surveys were not a top priority. Communication and the lack of feedback was an important aspect in the perceived difficulties of the TTFP. Primarily respondents from the group of operators and government agencies highlighted lack of communication as being a serious issue. The data was again put forward as a difficult aspect, mainly by operators and LGA personnel. Respondents stated that they considered the data to be skewed, unreliable and inaccurate due to low numbers participating in each survey round. Lack of resources, both financial and human, was cited as a further constraint of the project. Statements made were: “lack of funding and resources”; “lack of support from the different LGAs”; “pledges of funding not followed through”; and “problems with the ongoing financial viability”.

The simulator and associated difficulties in its use was mentioned in 18% of the responses, e.g. having difficulties in using the simulator to answer specific questions. The survey form and associated perceived problems of being too long, too complicated to complete, and too detailed, was the next category, followed by the lack of awareness of the project’s aims and objectives among stakeholders. Some of the respondents replied that they did not fully understand the project and what it set out to do. The last emergent category of difficulties with the TTFP can be summed up as administrative constraints, including the lack of designated roles and management as part of the project, and also problems associated with the task of administering the surveys.

Strengths of the TTFP
In determining the perceived strengths of the project, respondents regarded the ‘data’ (40%) as the most important aspect. They noted the following aspects as strengths: the data being specific to tourism and its ability to assist in planning; data being available free of charge for participants in the project; and being able to obtain data on a regional level which is useful for regional representativeness. A further 18% noted the strength of the data set in terms of its application to improving marketing and planning strategies. Another identified strength of the project was the notion of ‘linkages’ (26%), with statements including bringing stakeholders together and forging relations for cooperative efforts, and linking the six LGAs in the region. Raised community awareness was identified as a key strength (14%), followed by the belief that a ‘champion’ of the cause was a key aspect of the strengths of the TTFP (10%). The category of raised awareness was based on comments made by respondents that they did not fully understand the project and what it set out to do. The last emergent category of strengths with the TTFP can be summed up as administrative constraints, including the lack of designated roles and management as part of the project, and also problems associated with the task of administering the surveys.

Areas for improvement of the TTFP
In the response to suggestions for areas for improvement of the TTFP (Question 30, Appendix B), some overlaps with previous questions were noticed. Better communication with improved feedback was the key concept which was mentioned by respondents from all groups. Suggestions included in this category were regular updates, a possible newsletter and email contact. Other areas suggested for improvements were: the survey including survey form (similar to the responses provided for improving data collection (Question 22)); administrative; improved flexibility of survey periods; the simulator, also here, improvement of its user-friendliness and regular training sessions; a champion, possibly a local, driving the project; incentives for participation for both operators
and visitors (again, similar to responses for Question 22); improved resources, both financial and human; and the accumulation of more reliable data.

Other areas outlined for improvement of the TTFP not previously mentioned were: “greater industry involvement”; “broader group of stakeholders involved”; “working towards specific timetables, e.g. in accordance to shire’s calendars and dates”; “the need to boost morale”; and “the concept of knowledge transfer, the ‘tools’ should remain within the communities, hence, training and education should come from within and remain within”. Further points that were raised referred to ‘The Tapestry’ as a brand for the region and the suggestion that a more appropriate ‘brand’ name be developed, where the name was descriptive of the region and could be directly linked to the region, thereby improving the region’s identity.

Support mechanisms for facilitation of the TTFP
Interviewees were asked what support mechanisms could be offered to facilitate implementation of the TTFP (Question 31, Appendix B). Improved resources, both financial and human; incentives for participation in surveys; a champion; better promotion of the simulator; and better promotion of the project were the categories outlined by the respondents. The greatest support mechanism for facilitation of the project was regarded as being more resources. In accordance with this statement, employing a full-time paid champion was viewed as facilitating the likelihood of achieving the goals and objectives of a project such as the TTFP. Respondents saw a close link between the availability of a full-time champion working on the project and the rate of participation. In their opinion, a personalised approach by the champion would act to build relationships with operators, as the champion could offer advice, encouragement, reassurance and bring a greater sense of ownership. The potential of the simulator was also viewed as an area which could facilitate the implementation of the project. Suggestions for improvement of the simulator as a facilitator included the development of a website in the form of a discussion forum where users of the model can communicate with each other and exchange ideas, and also maintenance of regular training sessions on the use of the simulator.

Suggestions for ‘starting over’
When asked what the respondents would do when ‘starting over again’ (Question 32, Appendix B), key sets of responses emerged which belong to the notion of community capacity building. The first set of responses related to the provision of better education of the projects potential and includes individual responses such as: to ensure ongoing feedback; promote the project; and demonstrate the simulator as a decision aiding tool. A second set of responses reflected the need for empowerment of the stakeholders and included comments such as: emphasise skill development within the community; and ensure collaboration and empowerment of stakeholders within the community. A third set of responses was more general with statements that respondents would: revise the survey forms to be more relevant to their individual business; revisit the ‘Tapestry’ name; develop a strategy that included key performance indicators; and manage the expectations of individuals with regards to the overall project—specifically the simulator and of what it can or cannot do.

Suitability for adoption by other regions
When respondents were asked if they agreed that the project’s visitor surveying techniques and reports should be adopted by other tourism regions (N = 42), the majority (36%) strongly agreed and 31% agreed—a positive response of two-thirds (67%) altogether. The reasons provided were that a project such as the TTFP generates useful data and that it would be beneficial to have access to uniform data across different tourism regions. In addition, respondents thought that access to collective statistics across a region would be more effective than individual statistics for promoting a specific region.

A total of 14% of respondents disagreed and 2% strongly disagreed. Comments made by these respondents were: “it depends on the needs of the region”; “the way the current project is set up is not working for large tourism regions, they are too hard to coordinate, it will work better for one big local government area or several smaller local governments”; and “it is not working here, why suggest extending it to another region”. The remaining respondents were neutral (7%) or unsure (10%).

Attitude changes
The last section of the interview was concerned with any attitudinal change of respondents as a result of the TTFP. The first question in this section, Question 34a, aimed to determine if respondents felt that their involvement in the project had changed the way they view tourism. Figure 10 outlines the responses provided on a scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’.

Just over one-third (39%) considered that the project had not changed the way they view tourism. Comments made were: “no, I always advocated tourism and thought tourism as important”; “it did not change how I view tourism but it [the project] gave me valuable information I can use in planning”; and “no, it did not change my views but it raised my awareness of our region”. Thirty-nine percent agreed that the project changed the way they view tourism, according statements were: “yes, now I have a better understanding of the complexities and linkages of tourism to other areas”; “yes, it raised my awareness of the disjuncture between various stakeholders, which is a challenge”; and, “yes, I gained a better understanding of the needs and challenges of working collaboratively with various stakeholders”. The remaining respondents were neutral (20%) or unsure (2%).
EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY PLACEMENT OF THE TAPESTRY TOURISM FUTURES MODEL

The TFP uses a ‘systems thinking’ approach for modelling for tourism. In order to evaluate the educational aspect and of the TTFP and resultant attitude changes, a question on the interview schedule asked respondents who had been involved in the initial research phase of the TTFP to provide a brief comment on what ‘systems thinking’ or ‘systems view’ meant to them (Question 53). The interview team noted that answering this question posed the greatest difficulty for the respondents. The majority of respondents from all stakeholder groups reported that it did not mean anything to them, that they were unsure what it meant, and that they had not heard about it at all. After prompting from the interviews and providing respondents with a definition, respondents agreed that they had heard of the approach and sometimes re-phrased the statement into their own words. The following statements reflect how the notion of systems thinking is interpreted by those interviewed in the Tapestry region: “looking at the complete interactions and variations of impacts on and from tourism and looking at patterns and relationships in order to predict future outcomes”; “a structure that is multi-faceted and measurable”; “to have a system in place that will provide background data for future planning”; “thinking systematically through the tourism process and understanding impacts, not just economic but also social and infrastructural issues”; and “there are direct and indirect players, changes in one area impact on others, everything is connected and everyone has a role to play in the industry”.

The last question of this section and the interview schedule provided the respondents with the TTFP’s four key objectives and asked if they thought the objectives had been met (Question 36, Appendix B). Answers provided were on a scale from ‘strongly agree’ to ‘strongly disagree’, with the option of choosing ‘unsure’. Figure 11 shows the responses to the first objective, that the TTFP helps individuals see tourism from a systems perspective. The majority (46%) of the respondents agreed that this objective had been met.

The next objective, to help individuals become more aware of the underlying knowledge base that currently exists and that is required for monitoring development, and for identifying how this data can be used in decision making, is considered as being met in the opinion of 59% (‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’) of respondents. A total of 19% thought this objective had not been met, with 8% neutral and 14% unsure.

The next objective of the project, to help individuals see how their area of interest, and changes that they propose in that area, may adversely impact on other sectors was considered as being met by 41% (‘agree’ and ‘strongly agree’) of the respondents (Figure 12).

Figure 10: Do you agree that your involvement in the TTFP has changed the way you view tourism?

NOTE: (N = 41)
The last key objective of the project, to help individuals realise there is no single answer to the problems of the region, but that the solutions lie in the balance achieved between economic, environmental and social outcomes over both the short-term and long-term, was also viewed as being met by the majority (49%) of the respondents of this study. Those who disagreed (27%) thought this objective had not been met, with 11% neutral and 14% unsure. Overall it can be stated that all the key objectives of the TTFP were considered by the respondents as having been met.

This section has presented the results of the interview schedule from a small but relatively high impact group of stakeholders of the TTFP.
Limitations

This study did not seek to determine the population of users of the TTFP and therefore the sample of respondents cannot be claimed to be representative of all users. However, it may be suggested that the sample provides expert opinion from the Tapestry tourism community on their experiences with the TTFP.

A question could have been asked of those who had not used the simulator as to why they had not done so, as this would have possibly revealed a great deal about the reasons for why it was not more widely employed. The importance of this question was unfortunately missed by both the expert panel and the evaluation team at the time of the schedule design.

A further consideration is that this report aimed to evaluate the ‘placement’ of the TTFM. It was observed by the authors of this paper that interviewees had difficulties distinguishing between the initial research phase and the placement phase, i.e. the research phase was an important part of placement. Therefore it is important to note that approaches adopted in the initial stages of community based research may influence the success or otherwise of the community placement of similar sustainable tourism models.
Chapter 6

EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TTFP—DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study has attempted to evaluate the implementation of the TTFP. As far as possible, this discussion will focus on aspects most related to the implementation phase of the project. It must be recognised, however, that these two phases critically influence each other, as research design potentially shapes implementation outcomes and such outcomes are part of the feedback loop that should lead to a refinement or re-evaluation of the research design where necessary. It is important that evaluation be seen as part of a constructive exercise that contributes to sustainable tourism development.

This discussion is divided into six key sections, including education, decision support system (simulator), data collection, community capacity, resource limitations, and organisational structures. While they may have been divided into sections, a holistic approach recognises complex interrelationships and it is important to consider the causal interdependence of the various issues that are raised in this discussion. This may include, for example, attempting to understand the links between resource limitations and the challenges faced in data collection, as well as implications for community capacity building. There will therefore be overlaps in certain sections. Recommendations that accrue from this discussion will be elaborated in the concluding chapter.

Education

A key objective of the TTFP was to educate the tourism (and wider) community about a ‘systems’ approach to sustainable tourism development. A systems perspective views a complex problem holistically; it recognises the interactions between various factors (the feedback loops) and how these impact on and react to change within complex systems. A systems approach is also concerned with stakeholder or community learning as part of this process (Walker et al. 2005).

The research as well as implementation phases of the TTFP attempted to facilitate systems thinking in stakeholders’ minds through their continued involvement. The evaluation Interview Schedule (Appendix B) sought to determine the extent to which participants have adopted systems thinking through the section ‘attitude changes’ (see Appendix A).

The second question in this section asked respondents what the terms ‘systems thinking’ or ‘systems view’ meant to them. A large number were unsure or had no idea. The broad consensus was that these terms were not familiar through the project and a few hazarded a guess. A few alluded to systems thinking through mention of linkages, interactions and impacts from and on tourism. It is difficult to conclude, however, that ‘systems thinking’ has not been facilitated in participants simply because they were unfamiliar with the jargon. One respondent, for example, spoke of how a ‘horrendogram’ workshop (Walker et al. 2005) during the early TTFP research phase displayed tourism’s knock-on effects and opened people’s eyes to the fact that tourism had many linkages; at the same time, this respondent did not fully comment on the term ‘systems thinking’. Another respondent spoke of the simulator’s role in getting people to look at variables and gain a basic knowledge of cause and effect—yet was unsure what the term ‘systems thinking’ meant. Some assumed it meant a systematic way of viewing or doing things.

One question in the TTFP (Appendix B) addressed whether the respondent’s involvement had changed the way they view tourism. For some, their involvement had clearly made an impact. One respondent, who strongly agreed, that their view of tourism had altered, said: “My whole outlook has changed. I view it a lot more seriously... [and] can see how [tourism] affects so many more different areas, its linkages and flow-on effects.” Other participant who also strongly agreed said involvement in the project led to an understanding of the complexities involved in driving tourism and broadened the participant’s mindset to working collaboratively with other LGAs in the region. This greater understanding of linkages and flow-on effects was also mentioned by a respondent not directly involved with the tourism industry, who said the TTFP was useful in outlining issues of collaborative planning; it gave tourism a broader scope, including the role of government agencies (e.g. health services) within this.

Generally, in evaluating the adoption of systems thinking, the question previously discussed (i.e. the term ‘system’) had to grapple with the difficulty of determining what the respondents’ view of tourism was prior to involvement in the TTFP. Some, who disagreed that their involvement had changed the way they view tourism, generally put forward that they had always been strong promoters of tourism. However, this does not give an
indication to their view of tourism and whether it embodies a systems perspective. One respondent said that participation in the project may have led to a better understanding of tourism issues but this did not lead to attitudinal change—the respondent had always advocated a cautionary approach to tourism, and involvement in the TTFP appears to have confirmed the wisdom of this approach for this respondent.

The last question, in which the various TTFP objectives were broken down, attempted to assess if respondents believed these objectives had been met in the implementation phase of the project. Assessing the extent of ‘attitudinal change’ through these questions is problematic. There was a high level of subjectivity as each respondent had to make value judgments on whether the wider Tapestry tourism community adopted a systems perspective. Moreover, this depended on whether the respondent had a clear understanding of what ‘systems perspective’ meant.

Attitudinal change, as a qualitative indicator, is a difficult thing to measure. It is probably something that is demonstrated more through action than through rhetoric; something that falls beyond the scope of this evaluation. Through respondents’ views, anecdotes and illustrative examples, however, it is probably fair to say that a significant percentage of those interviewed displayed an awareness of the complexities of tourism development in the region. This was evident in their mention of linkages, flow-on effects or the wider involvement of other industries and sectors. Whether this awareness (and how much so) was a direct result of involvement in the TTFP was indeterminable through the interview schedule.

**Decision Support System (TFM Simulator)**

As a decision support tool, the TTFM, or simulator, is generally regarded as potentially useful by stakeholders, but after two years has yet to demonstrate its use value in real terms. None of the stakeholders interviewed are currently able to utilise the simulator for its intended role as a decision support tool to guide planning. Various reasons were cited for this: the model was too complex and not user-friendly; base data was outdated, thereby leading to questions about the reliability of results; there was a lack of adequate and consistent training. Results were also regarded as being generated at a regional level, while some LGA personnel expressed a desire for more local, LGA-specific data. This was interesting given that shire information is available in the simulator and data sets.

As the simulator was a major selling point of the Tapestry Tourism Futures Project (TTFP) to key stakeholder groups—e.g. LGAs and regulatory bodies such as the South-West Development Commission—there appears to be a disjuncture between stakeholder expectations of what the simulator was meant to do, and current outputs to date. There are several key issues to consider with respect to this observation.

**Education and awareness**

The TTFP had multiple objectives and the simulator was a tool designed to facilitate a systems perspective of tourism. At the same time, an over-emphasis on the simulator led to undue expectations being hoisted onto the project and the outcomes it was expected to generate.

Walker et al. (2005) indicate that the simulator was not meant as an exact predictor, but rather as a predictive model useful for extrapolating trends and indicating broad patterns of change—these predictions are embedded with a level of uncertainty. It is unclear if this mandate was clearly understood by stakeholders, who expressed discontent with the unreliability of data, which was seen as skewed and not entirely relevant to their local area. One project team member involved in the design of the simulator raised the difficulty of expecting a generic model to answer very specific questions. Yet many stakeholders were disappointed with their inability to generate more specific outcomes from the simulator.

This is not to downplay the concerns of stakeholder users over genuine technical issues related to the simulator. Generally, most users felt a need for the simulator to be made more user-friendly and for base data to be updated for relevance, with one stakeholder expressing a need to ‘protect’ the simulator as it had clear opportunities for commercialisation.

**Resource constraints**

It is a financial reality that the simulator is an expensive tool to maintain and constantly improve on. Resource constraints—in terms of lack of financial support and therefore technical expertise to support and update the system—will impact on the ability to maintain regular training sessions as well as make technological changes to the simulator as required or requested. The CSIRO has provided a commitment to update the model with new data but with an associated financial cost.

**Communication**

Generally, communication lines were viewed to be lacking with regards to the simulator. There was insufficient follow-up to feedback given by users on the problems encountered during their simulator training workshops. One respondent requested a website or forum be established, where users could exchange news and tips on how to use the simulator. Training sessions appeared to be ad hoc and a few respondents requested more regular
training sessions as the simulator was a complex tool that required a greater familiarity with it before it could be used with confidence.

**Appropriate technology**

One user pointed out that the principles and underlying assumptions of the simulator as a complex tool required greater explanation, for there were indications that some users were struggling with these. Some stakeholders also voiced views that the training sessions were frustrating as errors were evident and it was unclear how to input certain elements and/or make the necessary corrections. This has implications for the capacity-building objective of the project. It raises questions of the technological fit of the TTFM with community capacity in terms of the ability to maintain and run this complex model locally within clear resource constraints.

A project implementation team member suggested that the simulator’s economic bias should be corrected. The TTFM currently has a strong economic focus but does not adequately consider environmental and social impacts. A more holistic framework would necessitate a greater consideration of these concerns. This would also require modifying data collection processes to suit these broader concerns. The feasibility of such a modification—in terms of technological changes to the simulator as well as data collection processes—needs to be considered.

Overall, there appears to be general consensus that the theory behind the simulator provides for a useful and unique tool with great potential. Some view this potential in commercial terms—in the commercialisation of its outputs—while others believe its predictive modelling techniques encourage a broader framework for viewing tourism and its impacts.

In practical terms, however, stakeholder interviewees expressed varying degrees of difficulty in actually using the simulator. In this respect, those who associate the TTFP as being solely about the simulator may well determine that the project has stalled or failed. There are varying degrees of understanding and patience with regards to the cited technical shortcomings of the simulator. Not all who are unable to use the simulator have dismissed it as a tool but instead wish for more feedback on how these shortcomings have been rectified; most are keen to use it if it delivers meaningful results. It remains a matter of interpretation as to what these ‘meaningful’ and ‘reliable’ results should consist of and how they might be derived.

There appeared to be some reflection on the initial emphasis on the simulator as a selling point for the TTFP. When asked what they would change if they were to ‘start over again’, a project implementation team member and a stakeholder involved in the design of the simulator expressed that a lesser focus on the simulator may be preferable. Reservations were raised over the long-term prospects of the simulator as an ongoing project. It was suggested that the simulator may be more useful during a one-off training session to generate discussion, highlight certain critical issues or develop a general strategy, but then ‘packed up’ after it has attained its objective, given the level of expertise and resource intensity required to develop a regional simulator. These suggestions will be discussed further in the final chapter of this report.

**Data collection**

Data collection is a key component of the TTFP and the main area of involvement for tourism operators, who hand out surveys to their visitors during the two survey periods in a year. The completed surveys are then returned to the TTFP project team, analysed, and the results returned to the participating operators either in the form of written reports or feedback workshops. These written reports are also sent to the six LGAs within the Tapestry tourism region and organisations such as the South-West Development Commission, Tourism South-West and Tourism Western Australia.

Regardless of stakeholder groups, almost all respondents agreed that data collection, leading to the acquisition of up-to-date, localised data, was necessary and valuable. At the same time, data collection was acknowledged as one of the most difficult aspects of the project, with one respondent labelling it a ‘necessary evil’ and another acknowledging that survey periods were much dreaded. Most respondents also pointed out that visitors generally dislike filling out surveys, and recommendations centred on ways to potentially combat this, including shortening surveys and giving (short-term) incentives that domestic and international visitors could also benefit from.

Several key issues emerged from the evaluation with regards to data collection—these include a lack of feedback, low participation rates, the reliability of results from data collection, duplication of data collection efforts and the relevance of data collected. When discussing these issues, it is important to highlight not only the commonalities but the divergence of views between as well as within stakeholder groups. The results of this study highlight the notion that a local tourism community is not a homogeneous group.

**Stakeholder participation**

It was mentioned frequently that the project suffered from a ‘lack of participation’—in general, this was in reference to the tourism operators who provide for collection of data. The perception of some respondents was that operators were either not interested in contributing to data collection or unable to do so due to resource
constraints and/or an unwillingness to ask visitors to fill out surveys. This was a common view voiced by LGA personnel and other stakeholder groups such as visitor centre staff and other tourism-related organisations.

Interestingly, operators also voiced their frustration over a ‘lack of participation’—with a focus on the fact that their despair was directed at visitors’ general dislike and suspicion of surveys. Operators are reliant on visitors to provide the data—visitors are, in effect, the primary source of information that is fed back into the TTPF (and the TTFM).

The problem of visitor unwillingness to fill in surveys was an issue for all operators, from larger resorts to small bed and breakfast outlets, wineries and wildlife parks. However, the diversity among operators must be noted as this impacted on their ability/inability to get surveys filled out in various ways. Accommodation operators, for example, had the advantage of more time—their visits could bring the surveys back to their rooms and return them at the end of the stay. This was still dependent on visitors’ willingness to do so (and whether they remembered to return the surveys). Among accommodation operators, there were smaller owner-run establishments where full-time operators were responsible for every aspect of the daily running of the business—remembering to hand out surveys on top of their multiple daily chores was a problem; they were also reluctant to push visitors into filling them in if they seemed unwilling. Privacy was quoted as an issue by one operator, who said that visitors selected their chalets because they offered seclusion and privacy and hence a number were unwilling to share personal details. A few operators also noted that certain questions, especially those related to expenditure, were potentially intrusive.

What did work in the favour of a few accommodation operators was the opportunity to chat with their customers and build up a rapport before presenting them with the survey. This opportunity was generally lacking for non-accommodation operators. In wineries, for example, customers generally stayed in the cellars for short periods of time. Also, unless there was an attached café or gallery area, it could be logistically unfeasible to have groups of visitors filling out surveys within a small space. It could also be problematic if customers were doing a wine tour and ended up being asked to fill in the same survey at different stops.

These anecdotal examples are not exhaustive but they indicate a need to consider the differential capacities of varied stakeholders which constrain or facilitate their ability to participate fully. This needs to be considered in addition to the general difficulties involved with getting visitors to fill in surveys that plague all stakeholders, from hoteliers to caravan park staff, winery owners to visitor centre staff.

**Communication**

The lack of feedback and irregularity of reports was a major issue for most respondents—this included operators as well as LGA personnel. A project implementation team member also cited feedback lapses as a problem, acknowledging that, given current resource constraints, it can take up to 12 months after survey forms have been returned before operators receive any feedback.

In terms of forms of feedback, one operator preferred workshops and suggested that presenting information in a verbal format can make it easier for operators who may not understand ‘jargon’ or know how to apply the data presented in a report. However, it should be noted that this respondent worked in a larger establishment and held a managerial position. Smaller operators, particularly those of owner-run establishments, cited difficulties getting to feedback workshops and prefer to have written reports or even email newsletters and updates. This issue reiterates the notion of a non-homogeneous tourism culture.

A project implementation team member confirmed that, as of September 2005, no official paper reports had been distributed to stakeholders since implementation commenced. A report that was anticipated to be distributed in October 2005 would contain results for the entire three-year implementation period, involving four survey periods. Feedback workshops were held in October and November 2004 in Harvey, Balingup, Collie and Bunbury, presenting preliminary results from data collected. The Bunbury workshop included attendees from Capel and Dardanup.

Receiving timely results from data collection remains the main benefit for operators’ participation and the lack of feedback is problematic. It removes the main incentive for operators to contribute to data collection efforts. With ‘lack of participation’ cited by many as a problem with regards to data collection, it is important to consider the relationship between falling or lacklustre participation rates and the lengthy feedback lapses. As one respondent commented, the time lapse between reports “led to a lapse in impetus”. Financial resourcing is a key issue here.

**Reliability of data**

The reliability of the results gathered from data collection periods was another key issue. There were concerns that the data was unreliable and skewed towards the few operators that returned survey forms, due to the low response rate within already small sample sizes. This would have been particularly acute in smaller LGAs. This concern over data reliability was voiced by a number of LGA personnel (who subsequently have been reluctant to use it for planning purposes) as well as operators. One LGA staff member—who was heavily involved in encouraging operator participation in data collection—said the data in the last report received was biased towards one particular operator who had managed to complete the most surveys. This led to a misrepresentation
of visitor patterns to the area (it appeared that the majority of tourists favoured five-star luxury accommodation but this was regarded as being unreflective of the diversity of visitors to the area).

The disparity in response rates between LGAs was also viewed as problematic by one LGA staff member, who pointed out that the overall regional end product may be skewed if different LGAs have different response rates, particularly those with already small sample sizes. Overall, the view that the data was biased meant that a number of LGAs felt “unable to draw conclusions that are robust enough to direct planning”.

Several operators also expressed concern over the reliability of data, which was viewed to be heavily skewed towards the few operators who returned survey forms. On top of that, the data would only be representative of visitors who filled in the surveys. For example, one respondent mentioned that because no international visitors had filled in the survey forms for one accommodation operator who returned the forms, the resulting data indicated a low international visitor base. This was erroneous as the operator and a few others in the area were beginning to receive a steady stream of international tourists. For some operators, results from data collection were therefore seen as “unreflective of what we saw from our own experience”. The initial research phase endeavoured to provide each participant with a business shire and regional report to overcome this concern.

Relevance of data
Congruent with some concerns raised over the simulator, some participants said they would prefer more targeted information on localised LGA areas along with the current focus on broad sketches of the Tapestry tourism region. While the latter was appreciated in terms of giving a broader view, reliable, localised data was also required to assist in decision-making processes—whether in business planning for operators or funding and infrastructural planning for LGAs at a local government level.

A few operators also expressed the view that the survey forms were useful in painting a broader picture of visitor trends in the region but were not always directly relevant to their business. Some operators had their own survey forms which requested information such as how the visitor had heard of their establishment, what they thought of the level of service, and suggestions for improvement. The feedback from these surveys was used directly to aid decisions on where to advertise and how to improve the operation.

This tension between macro and micro data deserves attention for it reflects the needs of participants and what they wish to gain from their involvement. As pointed out by Lew and Hall (1998, p.201), a central contradiction that impedes sustainable tourism development efforts is the acknowledgegment that, while tourism may be a tightly interlinked global phenomenon, “most of us behave within the confines of our local communities”. In this instance, there appears to be a tension between attempts to contribute to regional planning and development while also looking after local interests and needs. As a six-LGA project, the diversity between and within these areas must be acknowledged. However, it should not be assumed that their needs are necessarily in conflict; it is in fact in their interest to work together collaboratively in order to move towards sustainable development. Stakeholders, whether LGA staff or operators, therefore need to work towards ways of synthesising local and regional needs in their data collection efforts. Participation rates in data collection appear to increase where the benefits of the data set arising from collection have a direct impact on the participant. The data has to be of direct use to those participating in order to maintain interest and commitment to data collection.

Duplication of data collection efforts
A number of respondents from mixed stakeholder groups raised the issue of duplication of data collection efforts. This occurred as some operators had their own survey forms (although these forms were more directly associated with the operators’ own business), or else obtained data on their clients through means such as online booking forms. Another operator also filled in surveys for the Australian Bureau of Statistics and pointed out that some information could be gleaned from this source (ABS data was utilised in initially populating the simulator).

It was also mentioned that some tourist information could be obtained from operators without their customers having to fill in surveys. Some operators, for example, might be able to provide information on the nationalities of their visitors through booking information or interaction with guests after they had checked in. One respondent from a regional tourism organisation pointed out that “there are ways to surreptitiously collect data without putting it on the survey”. This is not to suggest that survey forms should be abolished but relates to the concern that surveys were too long and taxing on visitors who were generally reluctant to fill them in. Information which could be ‘surreptitiously’ collected could be omitted from survey forms, leading to a more concise survey. It must be noted however, that not all operators have the same ability to ‘surreptitiously’ collect data; moreover, different operators would be collecting different forms of data in such a manner. This has implications for what can or cannot be left out of survey forms if a standardised form is to be distributed to all operators, regardless of whether they own a winery or farm-stay or work in a large resort.

It was also suggested that organisations and institutions involved in data collection could build up better communication lines and collaborative working relationships to minimise duplication of data collection efforts. This would include local government offices in the region as well as research-based institutions such as universities, regional tourism organisations and business associations such as Chambers of Commerce. While there may be certain intellectual property issues that may prevent a full sharing of information across these
groups—e.g. if consultancies are paid to conduct market research for commerce groups, or research institutions are bound by copyright restrictions—it is worthwhile to consider the extent to which greater collaboration is possible. The objective of minimising the duplication of data collection efforts, acknowledged by most as a difficult process, is one that would be shared by most of these stakeholder groups.

Despite the acknowledged difficulties and visible declarations of despair, it was strongly expressed that local data is valuable. Data collection, therefore, remains a vital activity. The challenge that presents itself is how the limitations. It needs to be considered how much the lack of community capacity to ensure the effective project—not just to project stakeholders but to the broader Tapestry community. In fact, several stakeholders identified a need for greater education about the other tourism projects in the region. In fact, several stakeholders identified a need for greater education about the data collection. These are challenges that need to be acknowledged and discussed in order to contribute to improved data collection methods in the long term. It is also imperative for there to be continuing collaborative data collection efforts. As one respondent pointed out, the TTFP is crucially dependent on the participation of its stakeholders, and their participation needs to be facilitated and encouraged.

**Community Capacity**

At a fundamental level, it needs to be debated whether the issue of community capacity was adequately assessed before the project was launched, and to what extent there existed a misfit of community capacity with project needs and objectives. In terms of the TTFM (simulator), local stakeholder groups have been unable to utilise it as intended. There are various reasons for this, as discussed earlier, but in terms of community capacity it appears that there are clear asymmetries between what is required for the simulator to be maintained in the long term and the ability of the six LGAs to meet this need through their local resources. As mentioned in the discussion on resource limitations, the technical know-how and expenses involved in updating and modifying the simulator in the long term are considerable and dependent on CSIRO involvement. This does not appear to be apparent to project stakeholders, who express discontent with current simulator outputs and are requesting modifications and updates in order for them to be able to use the simulator as they expected.

As Lee and Chok (2005) noted, a successful community-based project should remain a community-driven initiative, which runs on the support and expertise of a committed local base. It is acknowledged that education and training are central in this process. This will empower local stakeholders with the necessary skills to continue the project as community needs evolve. This is the capacity-building element of the project and should not be taken to indicate that the community is inadequate or lacking in any way. The intention of capacity building is to strengthen a community’s social and political capital so they can direct their collective future with a certain degree of control and autonomy.

From the suggestions and recommendations made by respondents, it appears that the capacity-building objective of the TTFP has been only partially fulfilled. A large number of respondents mentioned the lack of communication about the project as an issue. Stakeholders involved in using the simulator cited irregular or inadequate training sessions as problematic. Another often-voiced complaint related to the lack of regular feedback—this relates to feedback lapses after survey periods for participants as well as the lack of feedback after stakeholders make suggestions for improving the simulator. Through interviews with respondents, it was also apparent that a number of stakeholders were unclear about TTFP objectives and/or confused the TTFP with other tourism projects in the region. In fact, several stakeholders identified a need for greater education about the project—not just to project stakeholders but to the broader Tapestry community.

It should be acknowledged that closely linked to the issue of community capacity is that of resource limitations. It needs to be considered how much the lack of community capacity to ensure the effective implementation of the TTFP was affected by resource constraints, which may have led to the lengthy feedback lapses and irregular training sessions. There is also the issue of the nature of the tourism industry, which sees a high turnover rate. This potentially limits capacity-building efforts, which need to be consistent over a certain period of time to meet the TFP’s objective of empowering its stakeholders. The need to constantly hold new training sessions and education programs as stakeholders come and go places a greater strain on resources as well as having consequences for stakeholder relations.

Further, the extent of the transience of expert involvement impacts on capacity building. One respondent pointed out that research teams from outside the area only stay for a certain period of time. The respondent saw the consequences of this on community ownership of the project and highlighted that the project would stay on the agenda longer if it were driven by someone local. While this was mentioned with regards to the issue of a local champion, it also has implications for capacity building. Capacity building, particularly for regional communities, is largely reliant on outside expert knowledge and assistance. As their fees are considerable, budgetary constraints can lead to a situation of short-term and ad hoc expert involvement; again, the relationship between such expert involvement and resource limitations must be explored. Turnover rates can also be
problematic as expert team members are often in high demand for disparate projects in other destinations. This has consequences for continuity in terms of project familiarity and maintaining strong stakeholder relations.

One operator-stakeholder mentioned that there appeared to be some resentment from a few operators in the area that outside experts were hired to “tell them what to do when they already knew”. It was deemed that the money could have been better spent on other aspects of the project. Given that outside expert knowledge and assistance can be costly and take up a substantial portion of a project’s budget, it may be useful to assess budgetary allocations and to raise awareness about the need for such services and their long-term benefits to stakeholders and the broader community. Certainly, such benefits also need to be demonstrated to stakeholders and the wider community in the long term; i.e. the notion of sustainable tourism is long-term.

Resource Limitations

The TTFP was generally recognised as resource-heavy and requiring a large input of resources, both financial and human (e.g. technical expertise or time spent maintaining stakeholder relations). While this was explicitly outlined by some—particularly those more intimately involved with the implementation of the project—it was also evident in other comments and suggestions; e.g. the popular recommendation for a full-time, local champion in each LGA, which would mean greater funds are required to pay a full-time staff member in each locality. Currently, there is one main project officer who is contracted on a part-time basis. In light of the nature and quantity of work involved to keep the TTFP running smoothly—from organising feedback workshops to distributing surveys to stakeholders in six different LGAs and maintaining regular communication through face-to-face contact with various stakeholder groups and individuals, among others—this allocation of human hours appears insufficient. As one respondent who was heavily involved in the research phase of the TTFP commented, the anticipated project workload was underestimated. There are significant time burdens associated with the project and resources need to be significantly increased to match this need.

Generally, the ability to meet the evolving, long-term needs of the project as recommended by respondents from various stakeholder groups appears to be largely reliant on the capacity to significantly increase resource inputs. From the need to increase participation rates and for greater education of stakeholders to the provision of regular feedback, there is a corresponding imperative to increase financial and human resources (which are usually somewhat reliant on adequate funding) in order to satisfactorily meet these requirements effectively. This is particularly pertinent to the TTFM (simulator).

Updating the base data of the TTFM and making it more user-friendly and relevant requires specific technical expertise and therefore financial inputs to pay for such services. There are heavy resource requirements involved in maintaining and updating the TTFM. Trained personnel are required to interpret and understand outputs from the TTFM. The CSIRO or other people involved in regional simulation modelling would likely be involved in this. According to a member of the TTFM design team, updating the model would require specific modelling skills and it is recommended that this be undertaken as a new project involving stakeholder engagement and CSIRO input. For such a project, the minimum cost for CSIRO involvement is estimated to be $20,000, depending on how extensive model modifications are. The annual TTFP project budget of $18,000 may be considered inadequate for the long-term maintenance of the TTFM.

It is important to recognise the intimate connections between resource limitations and the various issues that have arisen. These include understanding the implications of resource constraints on the various aspects of the TTFP, such as the ability to provide timely feedback and regular training sessions. It is also important to critically assess the ongoing resource needs of the project if it is to be maintained in the long term and raise awareness of what these resource needs are so that stakeholders can come to a decision about how best to deal with the issue of resource limitations.

This should not take the attention off the fact that other modifications beyond raising resource limits are required. Adequate resource support is a necessary input to the successful running of a community-based project but it is only one aspect. One LGA staff commented, “I can’t see LGAs committing more financial and human resources if we don’t get any results... we need more viable results”. Attempting to determine cause-and-effect relations between resource limitations and the lack of viable results may lead to a chicken-and-egg conundrum but the links need to be acknowledged in determining a way forward for the TTFP, as well as other projects which aim to duplicate its procedures. The challenge lies in determining to what extent ‘viable results’ are dependent on obtaining additional resources (and what these may be). It is also important to identify the structural changes that may be required, along with outcomes and additional resources to ensure a more balanced relationship between resource needs and satisfactory outputs for the project’s diversity of tourism community stakeholders.
Organisational Structures

The TTFP is a six-shire project that took its lead from a single shire initiative in Queensland’s Port Douglas, and many stakeholders brought up the diversity between LGAs as a stumbling block in devising a single set of planning regulations affecting tourism development (Question 10; Appendix B). As stated in the previous chapter, the majority of respondents believed that this was not possible. The diversity between LGAs was mentioned by most LGA respondents. One LGA staff member suggested that planning regulations be centred around areas with similar geographical attributes (e.g. coastal regions or inland areas), rather than divided along LGA boundaries.

The concern over diversity was also linked to equity issues. One LGA staff member indicated that financial burdens need to be shared more evenly between LGAs, regardless of diversity. Others highlighted that disparities created uneven burdens, with some LGAs less able to effectively contribute to, or maintain certain aspects of, the project (not just financially but also in human resource and capacity terms).

One respondent highlighted that a ‘one-size-fits-all approach’ may be counter-productive. In fact, it may not be necessary (or desirable) for all LGAs to share the same set of planning regulations as they have diverse needs. The respondent pointed out the differences between the planning needs of a more urbanised locality such as the City of Bunbury population and the Shire of Dardanup/Balingup population, which would need to consider their rural setting. The respondent therefore recommended that LGAs and cities can have similar or complementary planning regulations rather than ‘a single set’.

Respondents who focused on how to facilitate shared planning brought up the need for greater communication between LGAs and a more collaborative (rather than competitive) relationship. The need for strategic planning in each LGA was another aspect that was voiced, particularly with regards to strategic tourism planning. Some respondents appreciated the fact that the project involved six LGAs—for these respondents, the generation of dialogue between LGAs was important and valuable. Overall, building stronger inter-LGA relations was viewed as important, regardless of whether or not respondents felt a single set of planning regulations was possible.

Generally, the TTFP has to grapple with the challenges of transposing a single shire initiative (Port Douglas) into a larger and inherently more complex six-shire project. One of the key challenges involved in this relates to the TTFM (simulator). As was raised in earlier sections, many TTFP stakeholders were expecting more specific localised outputs from a generic model that had to accommodate a six-LGA perspective. This was also evident in requests for more specific outputs in feedback reports. Since they had in fact received these, their requests are somewhat puzzling.

Enlarging the scope from a one-shire to a six-shire project means processes need to be modified accordingly to accommodate differential stakeholder capacities and needs. The resources required to run a larger six-LGA project are also considerable. A systems thinking approach suggests that it is far from a linear calculation (e.g. it would not be fair to simply multiply the costs of running the Port Douglas project by six). At a fundamental level, the long-term feasibility of such complex demands needs to be realistically assessed.

The handover process from research to implementation team has also had a bearing on certain aspects of the TTFP. The impacts of high turnover rates have previously been discussed. However, a point to note with respect to this is the lack of continuity in organisational procedures that are challenging for effective implementation. For example, with regards to feedback lapses, one explanation from a project implementation team member was the need to modify certain inherited processes from the research phase. When the implementation team took over the TTFP, there was a need to reconfigure the backlog of retrospective data and streamline survey forms (seven different survey forms were used in the research phase of the project, a unique survey for each shire and one for the region). There was also a move to semi-automate the analysis process; with survey forms currently partly machine readable. At present, a statistician is hired by the implementation team to analyse the data returned from survey periods. It was felt that there was a need to modify feedback reports to include more strategic analysis; this was viewed as useful to aid stakeholders in planning. Generally, the view from a key respondent on the implementation team is that this new system has been a working process throughout the last three years.

It is important that these comments are not construed as a ‘finger-pointing’ exercise between stakeholders. Rather, it needs to be seen within the context of a project cycle and the needs that arise in different phases of a project’s life cycle. A systems approach recognises that needs evolve and evaluation leading to a continual refinement of procedures is a necessary element of any project. Handing over to the community also means that they are ultimately responsible for directing the project towards their perceived needs and changes, big or small, which will be a part of that process. However, lessons can be learnt from the challenges that arose in the handover from research to implementation phases so that they will not be repeated unnecessarily. It is also important to consider the implications of these changes for other aspects of the project, e.g. in terms of increased resource demands and community capacity building opportunities.
Conclusion

There is no definitive way to determine if the TTFP is a success or a failure and this evaluation does not aim to come to that conclusion. Rather, this discussion of the evaluation’s results is meant to give a realistic assessment of some of the key challenges faced throughout the project’s implementation, and is a further reflection of the need to evaluate STCRC research projects in terms of their community applications. As it is a community-based project, it is important for stakeholders to debate these issues and work collaboratively to determine its future direction. For researchers, policy-makers and industry stakeholders interested in regional tourism planning, this evaluation is useful in highlighting the complexities involved. It is anticipated that this will contribute to a growing—and constantly evolving—body of work surrounding sustainable tourism development with particular regards to regional or peripheral areas.

The final chapter of this report aims to summarise key findings and make recommendations for improved delivery of TTFP outputs and suggestions for the further application of the TFP.
Chapter 7

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarises the key discussion points arising throughout the interview processes. The recommendations provided by interviewees were sometimes in conflict with each other, e.g. more succinct surveys compared to the need for further information. The recommendations detailed below have taken a number of responses into account using a holistic approach aimed to acknowledge the complex interrelationships and the causal interdependence of the various opinions expressed by interviewees.

In the manner of the previous discussion section, the recommendations are divided into six key sections: education, decision support system (simulator), data collection, community capacity, resource limitations, and organisational structures.

Education and Communication

- Greater education and awareness-raising of stakeholders and broader community required to increase and maintain support for project and participants.
- Communication and feedback lines need to be improved. Need to ensure stakeholders are kept regularly updated of project developments and educated about the project itself. For example, one respondent mentioned a need to help stakeholders ‘understand the purpose and the benefits of the project and how it can be used’.
- Feedback workshops are not always convenient for operators. Regular email newsletters are quick and convenient.
- Project needs to be kept on the forefront of people’s minds or they lose interest, particularly for LGAs.
- Data collection participants need to receive feedback reports from each survey period within a reasonable time frame.
- Provide a TFP forum, for community members and stakeholders to meet and exchange ideas and views on the project.
- Stakeholder relations are a crucial part of the project’s success. Regular communication can help facilitate this.
- Support for operators—e.g. morale-boosting by project team; networking among operators so they can exchange ideas/tips on what works/what doesn’t. Stakeholders appreciate constant updates and face-to-face contact.

Decisions Support System—TTFM

- Simplify the software and make it more user-friendly.
- Hold regular and consistent workshops to ensure users are familiar with the simulator and gain confidence in using it to predict various scenarios. Regular workshops are also an opportunity for users to exchange ‘how-to’ tips and ideas in a shared environment.
- Update the base data of the simulator on a regular basis.
- Correct the economic bias of the data populating the simulator, to embody a more holistic approach.
- Manage stakeholder expectations over what a simulator can or cannot deliver. This might require a clear articulation of the simulator’s limitations along with the perceived benefits.
- Guide users on how to apply ‘generic’ outputs—in terms of broader trend predictions—to suit planning needs.
- Provide realistic assessment of community capacity and technology as well as resource requirements of the simulator.
- Fundamental re-evaluation—one project team member says scenario-building was probably a step too far; perhaps the traditional input-output model would have sufficed at the initial stage and would have been more understandable for local governments.
- Another project team member suggested that modelling is better used around a problem-based issue. Perhaps the simulator can be used to generate discussion or skills development in certain areas but not as a long-term core aspect of the project that requires constant maintenance and updating (at considerable costs) to remain meaningful for the community.
Data collection

- Shorter survey forms—include only what is critically important for all businesses who would be handing out surveys.
- Incentives for visitors—short-term incentives so that interstate/international visitors can also benefit these may be in forms of vouchers for regional services, e.g. restaurants, accommodation or entry fees to attractions.
- Incentives for operators—to put in extra effort to get surveys filled out. This also relates to timely feedback and reliable as well as relevant results that can benefit their business and/or local government area. For example, consider ways to tailor surveys so that they are more beneficial and relevant to participants/operators.
- Flexibility—not all operators can attend workshops. Some may only be able to participate in one survey period—how can these operators participate?
- Be sensitive to other data collection approaches within the area of the model. The TFP offers the potential for reliable, regionally relevant and timely data for regional Australia. Where successfully organised this provides a one-stop shop for data.
- Establish a centralised data collection point—e.g. utilising a tourist bureau or visitor centre, instead of various operators.
- Generally, data collection methods had to be less intrusive, less time-intensive (for operators as well as visitors, who were generally reluctant to fill in surveys) and appear ‘rewarding’ (in the short term for the visitors and in both the short- and long-term for the operators).

Community Capacity

- Provide regular workshops interpreting the data and clearly reflecting how the information can be used at the operator, shire and regional levels. Collection of data may be useful but there is also a need to educate stakeholders in application of collected data and results. For example, one respondent said there is a need to support the community in terms of implementation of data and how to use the data in planning. This would help stakeholders see the value of the information.
- Provide consistent skills training opportunities for using the simulator, to ensure appropriate knowledge transfer to community.
- Provision of forums for the facilitation of collaborative efforts within the community and between community stakeholders.
- Overall, the TTFP tends to support the ‘gut feeling’ of stakeholders and the community in terms of future predictions and acts to build confidence within the community.

Resource Limitations

- Greater realism is required in determining the long-term needs of the project in resource terms—both financial and human. In the case of the TTFP, the project appears to have been under-resourced during the implementation phase. Time and financial burdens were underestimated.
- There is a need for commitment from the local development commission.
- A full-time, remunerated, local champion is necessary. Remuneration should recognise the level of commitment and skills required in order to provide the level of coordination required for a comprehensive approach to regional data collection.
- Aim to maintain a ‘steering group’ or team who can act to maintain the project on the community agenda. The Steering Committee could then act to encourage more community based in-kind support. For example, one respondent recommended that, when it came to commercialisation issues, local business experts could give their in-kind time and advice and therefore alleviate some of the resource limitations of regional areas.
- Resource limitations for individual LGAs could be alleviated where the local development commission is seen to take an active and supportive role in the TFP. The local development commissions could act to enhance institutional resources.
- Inform the participants of the real costs of data collection and reports. It is common experience that if something is ‘free’ it is not valued. Provide the community with comparable cost details.
Organisational Structure

- Some voiced the need to change administrative structures. There is a need for a clear focus and agenda. One respondent suggested streamlining the project to focus on a few issues or themes.
- Need for greater business planning and feasibility studies.
- Need for sub-region tourism planning policy.
- Greater collaboration between six LGAs.
- Consideration of whether project would work better at a single LGA level.

Conclusion

In evaluating these recommendations, it is important to consider the needs and resource constraints of stakeholders and the communities in which they are based. The capacity of the community to develop and build upon the TFP is a key consideration. Where there is a mismatch of capacity available and capacity requirements, there is a need to build community capacity. Building of community capacity requires resources and commitment. There is a need to build community capacity whilst managing community expectations.

Overall, the following points are emphasised as providing key support for the development of a TFP in regional Australia:

- A local champion is required and needs appropriate remuneration.
- A data entry service for all areas wishing to utilise the TFP method of data collection.
- Relevant, comparable reports, with rapid turnaround provided for those involved in the data collection.
- A single state-based expert, with skills, knowledge and interest to oversee a number of similar projects. The skills of this ‘expert’ should include data analysis, which would enable the development of specialised reports.
- Specialised reports should be provided on a user fee basis. The fee needs to be determined and participants in the data collection should be provided with a discount.
- Information needs to be provided on the commercial value of such reports.
APPENDIX A: COMPENDIUM OF INTERVIEW ITEMS

In the first round of communication, each member of the expert panel was asked to devise a list of eight to ten questions that they would like to be presented by the evaluation team to the participants involved in the project.

In the second round of communication, panel members were sent the compendium of interview items and asked to reduce the list to 30 items (approximately half of the compendium list) by indicating their individual selection with a tick.

The table below shows the number of expert ‘tick’ associated with the original list of questions derived from Round 1. Appendix B replicates the final set of questions derived from this compendium.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>No. of ‘ticks’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1  Do you know what the Tapestry Tourism Futures Model is? Yes No</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  What do you regard as the key objectives of the TTFP? [List them]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  How well were the objectives of the TTFP met in the project implementation? [Likert scale—very well to very poorly]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  What collateral/material was developed and how was it used to meet the objectives? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  What were the costs of delivering the program, both in financial and human terms? a) Financial [List] b) Human [List]</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  How can the TTFP be developed to become more financially sustainable? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7  What commercial opportunities exist? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8  Should a fee for reports be introduced when developing projects of similar nature in other regions? Yes No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9  Should the data be made available to commercial users? Yes No If yes, how should this be done? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 How important is it in establishing and maintaining substantial relationships with operators, shire personnel and visitor centre staff? [Likert scale—very important to not important at all]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 What has been this project’s experience in this area? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 What processes do you think the TTFM project involved that are useful for planning tourism? [List]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Has the TTFM project influenced how you think tourism planning should be undertaken? Yes No If ‘yes’, how? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Based on the TTF research, what would need to happen for shires in your region to devise a single set of planning regulations affecting tourism development? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 How much is a project such as this dependent on a ‘champion’ of the cause? [Likert scale—very important to not important at all]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 What objectives other than those listed [show them Paul’s list] did the project involve? [List]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 What objectives other than those listed should the project have sought? [List]</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Did the TFM project accord well with existing research plans undertaken by LGAs, RTO, LTOs? Yes No</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DATA SET

The TTFM established a process to collect regionally specific tourism data. The following set of questions relate to the collection and use of the data obtained.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>No. of ‘ticks’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 Did you participate in the development of survey forms? Yes No</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Did you distribute survey forms? Yes No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Have you received information from the surveys? Yes No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In what form did you receive information? (circle option)</td>
<td>Reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on your experience in interpreting the report regarding its usefulness in understanding:</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your own business</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Likert scale response 1=easy, 5=difficult]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your shire</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Likert scale response 1=easy, 5=difficult]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the Tapestry region</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Likert scale response 1=easy, 5=difficult]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What changes can you suggest to the presentation of data in order for it to be more useful to you? [List]</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What, if any, changes have you made in your business as a result of the visitor surveying and resultant data? [List]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the benefit that you have gained from visitor surveying worth the time/cost of contributing to data collection? [Likert scale 1=SA, 5=SD]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can you suggest improvement for the method of data collection? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are there better ways to tap into operators’ existing market collection efforts? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often are you able to contribute to data collection? [regularity or number of occasions?]</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In your opinion, does the gathered data indicate particular advantages (or strengths) that the Tapestry region has?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No (if ‘no’, go to next section)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, what needs to be put in place for the region to take advantage of these in terms of:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative marketing advantages</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Themed trail developments</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business clusters</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other aspects</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMULATOR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The TTFM produced a regionally specific Tourism Futures Simulator. The following question refers to the application of the simulator</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you use the simulator?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No (go to next Section)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How useful do you find the simulator? (Likert scale from extremely useful to totally useless)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why/Why not? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are the assumptions, formulas and relationships used in the simulator model accurate?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What changes would you make to the simulation model to use this as a vital data generation tool with respect to the following:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- to inform intending tourism operators or tourism developers? [List]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- (as a planning tool for your own shire/LGA? [List]</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTFP UTILITY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This research is about evaluating the TTFP as a potential model for application in other regional areas at the state, national and global levels, any comments you have will be useful. In evaluating your experience with the TTFP:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has been the most successful aspect of the TTFP? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What has been the most difficult aspect of the TTFP? [Brief comment]</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the strengths of the TTFP? [List]</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are areas for improvement of the TTFP? [List]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What support mechanisms could be offered to facilitate implementation of the TTFP? [List]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What changes would you make if you were ‘starting over again’? [List]</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Can the TTFP be adapted to other regions, and if so, what would be the criteria for selecting other regions? [Brief comment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Are there attributes of the South-West where the project was carried out which may not be easily replicated in other regions of the state? [Brief comment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>What would need to change for you to recommend the TTF visitor surveying techniques and reports be adopted by other tourism regions? [Brief comment]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ATTITUDE CHANGES**

These questions ask you about your experience with the original TTFP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Were you involved in any of the initial TTFM workshops (2000-2002)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>If yes what does ‘systems thinking’ or ‘systems view’ mean to you? [Brief comment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Who would you include as part of the tourism industry? [List]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>What do you understand by the statement that “tourism operates as a system”? [Brief comment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Please respond to the following statements Likert response 1=SA 5=SD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>“Good tourism planning should involve comparing alternative development strategies and seeing their consequences in both the short term and the longer term”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>“Tourism policies that are good in the short term may undermine your longer term objectives”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: <Participant>, Interviewed <Date>

TTFP Interview Schedule

1. Were you involved in any of the initial TTFP workshops (2000-2003)?
   - Yes □  No □  Unsure □

2. What was your initial interest in the TTFP? (Brief comment)

3. Has your interest in the TTFP changed at all? (Brief comment)

4. What do you regard as the key objectives of the Tapestry Tourism Futures Project (TTFP)? (List)

5. What were the costs of being involved in the project, both in financial and human terms? (List)

FINANCIAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount ($)</th>
<th>How was money spent?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HUMAN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time (hrs)</th>
<th>How was time spent? (e.g. travelling, data collection)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. How can the TTFP be developed to become more financially sustainable? (Brief comment)

7. In order to operate the TTFP, do you agree that it is important for you to establish relationships with:
   i) operators □ SA □ A □ N □ D □ SD □ Unsure
   ii) shire personnel □ SA □ A □ N □ D □ SD □ Unsure
   iii) visitor centre staff □ SA □ A □ N □ D □ SD □ Unsure

8. What processes did the TTFP involve that are useful for planning tourism? (List)

9a. Do you agree that the TTFP has influenced the way you think tourism planning should be undertaken?
   - SA □ A □ N □ D □ SD □ Unsure

9b. Why? [Brief comment]

10. Based on the TTFP research, what would need to happen for Shires in your region to devise a single set of planning regulations affecting tourism development? [Brief comment]
11a. Do you agree that a project such as this is dependent on a ‘Champion’ of the cause?

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ N ☐ D ☐ SD ☐ Unsure

11b. Why? [Brief comment]

12a. Do you agree that the TTFP project fits in with existing research plans undertaken by Local Government Authorities (LGAs), Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs), Local Tourism Organisations (LTOs)?

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ N ☐ D ☐ SD ☐ Unsure

12b. Why? [Brief comment]

Data Set

13. Did you participate in the development of the survey forms? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

14a. Did you distribute survey forms? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

14b. If so, to whom? ☐ Visitors ☐ Tourist operators ☐ Unsure

14c. If not, why not? [brief comment]

15. Have you received information from the surveys? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

16. In what ways have you used the information that has come out of the project? (List and specify in the check-boxes on the right-hand side where that information came from)

☐ reports ☐ workshops ☐ other ______

17. How would you rate the usefulness of the report for understanding: (VG = very good; G = good; A = average; P = poor; VP = very poor)

a) Your own business ☐ VG ☐ G ☐ A ☐ P ☐ VP ☐ Unsure

b) Your shire ☐ VG ☐ G ☐ A ☐ P ☐ VP ☐ Unsure

c) About the Tapestry region ☐ VG ☐ G ☐ A ☐ P ☐ VP ☐ Unsure

18. What changes can you suggest to the way information is provided? [List]

19. Have you made changes to the way you run your business/organisation as a result of the visitor surveying and resultant data? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

20. If yes, what changes? [List]

21. Do you agree that the benefit that you have gained from visitor surveying was worth the time/cost of contributing to data collection?

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ N ☐ D ☐ SD ☐ Unsure

22. Can you suggest improvements for the method of data collection? [Brief comment]
Simulator

23. Did you use the simulator? □ Yes □ No (go to the next section) □ Unsure

24. If yes, what did you use the simulator for?

25a. Do you agree that the simulator is useful? □ SA □ A □ N □ D □ SD □ Unsure

25b. Why/Why not? [Brief comment]

26. What changes would you make to the simulation model to use this as a data generation tool with respect to the following:
   a) to inform tourism operators or tourism developers?
   b) as a planning tool for your own shire/LGA?

Utility

27. What has been the most successful aspect of the TTFP? [Brief comment]

28. What has been the most difficult aspect of the TTFP? [Brief comment]

29. What are the strengths of the TTFP? [List]

30. What are areas for improvement of the TTFP? [List]

31. What support mechanisms could be offered to facilitate implementation of the TTFP? [List]

32. What changes would you make if you were 'starting over again'? [List]

33a. Do you agree that the TTFP visitor surveying techniques and reports should be adopted by other tourism regions? □ SA □ A □ N □ D □ SD □ Unsure

33b. Why? [Brief comment]

Attitude changes

34a. Do you agree that your involvement in the TTFP has changed the way you view tourism? □ SA □ A □ N □ D □ SD □ Unsure

34b. If so, how? [Brief comment]

35. In terms of tourism planning, what does ‘Systems Thinking’ or ‘Systems View’ mean to you? [Brief comment]

36. Do you agree that the following objectives of the TTFP are generally being met in the implementation phase of the project?
   a) To help individuals see tourism from a systems perspective. □ SA □ A □ N □ D □ SD □ Unsure
b) To help individuals become more aware of the underlying knowledge base that currently exists and that is required for monitoring development; and for identifying how this data can be used in decision making.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ N ☐ D ☐ SD ☐ Unsure

c) To help individuals see how their area of interest and how changes that they propose in that area may adversely impact on other sectors.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ N ☐ D ☐ SD ☐ Unsure

d) To help individuals realise that there is no single answer to the problems of the region, but that the solution lies in the balance achieved between economic, environmental and social outcomes over both the short-term and long-term.

☐ SA ☐ A ☐ N ☐ D ☐ SD ☐ Unsure

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.
REFERENCES


GLOSSARY

*CALM*  Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australia now known as DEC
*CEO*  Chief Executive Officer
*CSIRO*  Commonwealth Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation
*DEC*  *WA Department of the Environment and Conservation*
*DSS*  Decision Support System
*ECU*  Edith Cowan University
*ITY*  Integrated Tourism Yield
*LGA*  Local Government Area
*STCRC*  Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre
*TAM*  Technology Acceptance Model
*Tapestry Region*  A marketing name for the Bunbury/Wellington Alliance of LGAs: Bunbury; Capel; Collie; Dardanup; Donnybrook/Ballingup; and Harvey.
*TCWA*  Tourism Council of Western Australia
*TFM*  Tourism Futures Model (the simulator)
*TFP*  Tourism Futures Project
*TFS*  Tourism Futures Simulator
*TTFM*  Tapestry Tourism Futures Model (The simulator, populated with regional Tapestry data)
*TTFP*  Tapestry Tourism Futures Project
*WATC*  Western Australian Tourism Commission, now Tourism Western Australia
AUTHORS

Dr Diane Lee
Diane Lee is a Program Chair of the Murdoch University Tourism Program. The concept of sustainable tourism development, incorporating the environment in all its aspects, underpins all areas of Diane’s research interests. This covers the areas of host community attitudes and the social representations of tourism. Diane is interested in sustainable tourism development that includes research of cultural tourism, nature based tourism and resource economics where tourism resources are valued in the same manner as the resources of other industries. Diane coordinated the last two years of the Tapestry Tourism Futures Project. Email: d.lee@murdoch.edu.au

Stephanie Chok
Stephanie Chok is an international PhD scholar at Murdoch University. She recently obtained a Masters degree in Development Studies, where she completed a research thesis on pro-poor tourism, critically analysing the use of tourism as a poverty reduction strategy in developing countries. An ex-journalist with an undergraduate degree in Mass Communications, Stephanie maintains a keen interest in sustainable tourism issues and aims to utilise her background as writer, tourist, student and activist to contribute meaningfully to the discourse. Email: littlemiswrite@yahoo.com

Dr Jeremy Northcote
Jeremy Northcote is a lecturer in leisure sciences at Edith Cowan University, a research fellow at Curtin University of Technology, and a project officer at Murdoch University for a STCRC project examining the regional socio-economic impacts from sanctuary zones in the Ningaloo Marine Park. His research interests concern the social and cultural aspects of leisure practices among a variety of social groups including tourists, nightclubbers and paranormal enthusiasts. His recent work has involved developing conceptual frameworks for sustainable tourism management, including social impact assessment and measuring tourism yield. Jeremy has also been involved in several community evaluation projects, including evaluations of a homeless hostel in Perth, respite care services in Western Australia and social services in Carnarvon. Email: j.northcote@ecu.edu.au

Dr Aggie Wegner
Aggie Wegner has a tourism and environmental science degree and worked in the industry prior to her environmental science studies. She conducted a PhD project looking at interactions and working relationships between managers and tour operators in protected areas. Her PhD project allowed her to combine her two passions, tourism and environment. For her project, she is working in the Kimberley, the Mid-West, and the South-West of WA. At present Aggie is working as a postdoctoral research fellow on various national projects relating to protected areas. Her interests are nature-based tourism, the management of natural resources with respect to tourism but also human dimension of interactions within natural settings. Email: a.wegner@murdoch.edu.au
EC3, a wholly-owned commercialisation company, takes the outcomes from the relevant STCRC research; develops them for market; and delivers them to industry as products and services. EC3 delivers significant benefits to the STCRC through the provision of a wide range of business services both nationally and internationally.

**KEY EC3 PRODUCTS**

- Travel and tourism industry
- Academic researchers
- Government policy makers

**INDUSTRY PARTNERS**

- TTF
- Parks Victoria
- Tourism Victoria
- Qantas
- Tourism Queensland
- AFTA
- Gold Coast City Council
- Tourism Tasmania
- Tourism Australia

**UNIVERSITY PARTNERS**

- University of Technology Sydney
- University of New South Wales
- University of Tasmania
- James Cook University
- Griffith University
- Murdoch University
- UNSW
- UTAS
- ECU
- La Trobe University
- Charles Darwin University
- University of South Australia

**COMMERCIALISATION**

- New products, services and technologies
- Uptake of research finding by business, government and academe
- Improved business productivity
- Industry-ready post-graduate students
- Public good benefits for tourism destinations

**COMMERICALISATION**

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- Chief Executive: Ian Kean
- Director of Research: Prof. David Simmons
- CRC For Sustainable Tourism Pty Ltd
- Gold Coast Campus Griffith University
- Queensland 4222 Australia
- ABN 53 077 407 286
- Telephone: +61 7 5552 8172
- Facsimile: +61 7 5552 8171
- Website: www.crctourism.com.au
- Email: info@crctourism.com.au
The Sustainable Tourism Cooperative Research Centre (STCRC) is established under the Australian Government’s Cooperative Research Centres Program. STCRC is the world’s leading scientific institution delivering research to support the sustainability of travel and tourism – one of the world’s largest and fastest growing industries.

Introduction
The STCRC has grown to be the largest, dedicated tourism research organisation in the world, with $187 million invested in tourism research programs, commercialisation and education since 1997.

The STCRC was established in July 2003 under the Commonwealth Government’s CRC program and is an extension of the previous Tourism CRC, which operated from 1997 to 2003.

Role and responsibilities
The Commonwealth CRC program aims to turn research outcomes into successful new products, services and technologies. This enables Australian industries to be more efficient, productive and competitive.

The program emphasises collaboration between businesses and researchers to maximise the benefits of research through utilisation, commercialisation and technology transfer.

An education component focuses on producing graduates with skills relevant to industry needs.

STCRC’s objectives are to enhance:
• the contribution of long-term scientific and technological research and innovation to Australia’s sustainable economic and social development;
• the transfer of research outputs into outcomes of economic, environmental or social benefit to Australia;
• the value of graduate researchers to Australia;
• collaboration among researchers, between researchers and industry or other users; and efficiency in the use of intellectual and other research outcomes.