

An Environmentally Based Approach To Tourism Planning

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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any university.

R K Dowling
Ross K. Dowling

Dedicated to my mother

Ruby Emily Dowling

whose unfailing love and encouragement

have helped shape my life.

Sections of this dissertation have already been presented as conference papers or have been published in conference proceedings, book chapters or in national or international journals. They are:

1. Dowling, R.K. (1989) *Integrating Tourism and Conservation*. Paper presented to the Institute of Australian Geographers 23rd Conference, The University of Adelaide, 13-16 February. (Chapters Two and Three). The conference paper was later published as:
2. Dowling, R.K. (1990) *Integrating Tourism and Conservation*. In *Environmental Protection - A Movement*, S.R. Verma, S. Singh and S. Kumar, eds: 5-25. Nature Conservators, Delhi. (Chapters Two and Three).
3. Dowling, R.K. (1991) *An Ecotourism Planning Model*. In *Ecotourism: Incorporating the Global Classroom - 1991 International Conference Papers*, ed. B. Weiler, 127-133. Bureau of Tourism Research, Canberra. (Chapter Six).
4. Dowling, R.K. (1991) *The Ecoethics of Tourism: Guidelines for Developers, Operators and Tourists*. In *Ecotourism: Incorporating the Global Classroom - 1991 International Conference Papers*, Weiler, B. ed: 237-241. Bureau of Tourism Research, Canberra. (Chapter Ten).
5. Dowling, R.K. (1991) *Tourism and the Natural Environment: Shark Bay, Western Australia*. *Tourism Recreation Research* 16 (2): 44-48. (Chapters Seven and Nine).
6. Liu, J. and Dowling, R.K. (1991) *Integrating Tourism Development and Environmental Conservation in China*. In *Ecotourism: Incorporating the Global Classroom - 1991 International Conference Papers*, Weiler, B. ed: 148-155. Bureau of Tourism Research, Canberra. (Chapter Ten).
7. Dowling, R.K. (1992) *Resident and Tourist Opinions on the Environment - Tourism Relationship in Western Australia* Paper presented to the Inaugural Joint Conference of the NZ Geographical Society and the Institute of Australian Geographers, University of Auckland, New Zealand, 27-31 January. (Chapter Nine).

8. Dowling, R.K. (1992) Environmentally Compatible Outdoor Recreation Developments and Activities. *Recreation Australia* 3 (4): 1-5. (Chapters Seven and Nine).
9. Dowling, R.K. (1992) Public Views on Natural Area Tourism: North West Cape, Western Australia. *Australian Parks and Recreation* 28 (2): 36-41. (Chapters Seven and Nine).
10. Dowling, R.K. (1992) An Environmentally Compatible Approach to Tourism Development Planning. In *World Tourism...World Peace*. Proceedings of the International Seminar on Tourism Development, Shanghai, China, 12-17 July, McDonald, M. and Pappas, P. eds: 225-234. Northern Arizona University, Arizona. (Chapter Six).
11. Dowling, R.K. (In Press) Tourism and Environmental Integration: The Journey from Idealism to Realism. In *Progress in Tourism, Recreation and Hospitality Management*, Vol 4, Cooper, C.P. ed. Belhaven Press, London. (Chapter Two).
12. Dowling, R.K. (In Press) Tourism Planning, People and the Environment in Western Australia. *Journal of Travel Research* 31. (Chapter Nine).
13. Dowling, R.K. (In Press) The Environment - Tourism Relationship in Western Australia: The Perceptions of Tourists and Residents. *GeoJournal* 26 (3). (Chapter Nine).

In addition the Gascoyne Region Case Study research findings have been presented in the form of twelve reports submitted jointly to the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management and the Western Australian Tourism Commission. These are listed in Appendix 1. Two of the reports contain descriptions and evaluations of the region's environment and tourism and underpin the summaries presented in this dissertation. They are:

14. Dowling, R.K. (1991) *The Environment - Tourism Relationship in the Gascoyne Region, Western Australia*. Report No. 11, Environmental Science, Murdoch University, Perth. (Chapter Nine).
15. Dowling, R.K. (1992) *The Gascoyne Environment: A Regional Description of the Natural and Cultural Environment*. Report No. 12, Environmental Science, Murdoch University, Perth. (Chapter Seven).

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the evolving relationship between the environment and tourism and argues for a new environmentally based regional tourism planning approach. In environmental planning the major aim is to foster environmental protection and conservation, whereas the goals of tourism planning are to engender tourism promotion and area development. This study seeks to determine whether or not the two approaches can be combined to institute both environmental conservation and tourism development, that is, to bring about sustainable tourism development. It is argued that the two can be integrated through a traditional tourism planning approach underpinned by environmental planning methods. The research then proposes a new environmentally based tourism planning model which is tested in Western Australia.

The evolution of the environment - tourism relationship is traced over the last four decades. The advent of mass tourism since World War II is related to growing global environmental awareness. Two aspects of the environment - tourism relationship are identified and described. The first is that the environment and tourism have symbiotic and even synergistic possibilities in which the relationship is mutually beneficial. The second is that they are in conflict and that tourism is destroying its very foundations. The conclusion is drawn that elements of both symbiosis and conflict are ever-present in the environment - tourism relationship. Therefore it is suggested that the symbiotic or ideal view be tempered by the realistic acceptance of tourism and the environment's potential and actual conflicts. This in itself leads to an integrative approach which minimizes adverse impacts and enhances positive outcomes through integrated planning and management.

Having established the integrative link between tourism and the environment, tourism and area development planning models are then briefly reviewed as well as those applicable to environmental conservation and protection planning. Parallels are drawn between the two planning approaches especially in relation to social and spatial components. It is then argued that the future of environment - tourism planning is based on environmental conservation, the incorporation of community and tourist views, and the recognition of functional differentiation. It is asserted that the planning of natural areas for tourism should begin from an

environmental base and work forwards towards the identification of tourism opportunities; include the views of community groups and tourists, especially in regard to the environment - tourism relationship; and conclude with a plan which embraces the spatial features of both environmental and tourism nodes, corridors and hinterlands.

A new regional sustainable development framework called the Environmentally Based Tourism (EBT) Planning Model is described. It is grounded in environmental conservation and seeks to advance environmentally compatible tourism through the identification of 'significant features', 'critical areas' and 'compatible activities'. Although incorporating aspects of the rational approach to planning, the role of people as part of the ecosystem is emphasized, and the opinions of tourists and the host community are included as an essential part of the process. Zoning is used to maintain environmental and tourism values and includes the following zones: sanctuary, nature conservation, outdoor recreation and tourism destination.

This thesis is explored on two levels: by the generation of the environmentally based tourism planning model and then through its application to a regional case study in Western Australia (WA). The model was tested in the Gascoyne Region of WA from 1989-1991. Extant environmental and tourism data were combined with face-to-face surveys of residents and tourists. Following analysis, the central conclusion is that the model is a useful tool in integrating environmental and tourism goals. Limitations of the study include the contextual integration of environmental and social values, the lack of comprehensive environmental data, and the attempt to bring together disparate planning approaches. However, overall the model helps bridge the rational - values oriented planning gap and assists in the identification of environment - tourism planning parameters. Finally, further research opportunities are identified especially in relation to the selection of appropriate data.

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