PERCEIVED CONSTRAINTS OF ADOPTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM BUSINESS PRACTICES: A VIEW FROM GUEST HOUSES IN THE EDEN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY, SOUTH AFRICA.

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ABSTRACT

There is a need for tourism organisations who would like to adopt sustainable tourism practices to change their existing operations. However, the change of operations with the focus on expected benefits for tourism organisations remains challenging. The adoption of sustainability principles in the tourism industry has gained prominence and therefore tourism accommodation establishments need to follow suite and implement sustainable tourism practices in their businesses. This study examined the perceived constraints of adopting sustainable tourism practices by guest houses in the Eden District Municipality. Convenience sampling of 128 (51.2%) of the targeted 250 owners, managers and locums) was employed, using multiple choice questionnaires, to investigate perceived constraints in adopting and implementing sustainable tourism practices in their guest houses. The study revealed that the most common responses highlighted the importance of initial cost and time and energy as the main constraints to practicing sustainable tourism practices. The results of the study also infer that lack of interest to the concept of sustainability was a barriers to the implementation of sustainable business practices by the guest houses. Staff opposition was not considered to be a major constraint by the respondents.

INTRODUCTION

Shaped by the Report of World Commission on Environment and Development 'Our Common Future' (Brundtland Report) from 1987 and Agenda 21, the concept of sustainability has permeated every human activity since its introduction quarter of a century ago. According to Eusebio and Caravalho (2014) in the field of tourism, sustainability has been embraced as a guiding principle in the management of destinations, tourist enterprises in general and accommodation establishments. The aim of the study examined the perceived constraints of adopting sustainable tourism practices by guest houses in the Eden District Municipality. According to Ivanov (2005) the accommodation industry of the tourism industry is responsible for waste pollution, increased water and energy consumption in destination areas, creating many (low paid) jobs for local residents, consumption of products and materials produced by the local community. Tyrrell and Johnston (2012) stated that sustainable practices in this sector are of crucial importance for the reduction of the negative impacts on the nature, and their better integration into the economic and socio-cultural environment of local communities. Sustainability is key for the future of the tourism industry, but if not practically embraced by companies, consumers, public authorities, and society as a whole, the future of the industry will remain under threat. This paper contributes to a specific contribution of sustainability in the accommodation sector, with focus on guest houses that are privately owned establishments. It aims specifically to answer the

question of what these guest house consider barriers to effective implementation of sustainable business practices to their guest houses.

PROBLEM INVESTIGATED

The main aim of this research was to investigate the perceived constraints of adopting sustainable business practices by managers, owners and locums of guest houses in the Eden District Municipality, South Africa.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Stemming from the main aim of the research, the following research objective was identified:

- To investigate the challenges facing the guest houses in adopting and implementing sustainable business practices.

TOURISM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

According to United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) (2014: 3) tourism is in a special position in the contribution it can make to sustainable development and the challenges it presents. Firstly, this is because of the dynamism and growth of the sector, and the major contribution that it makes to the economies of many countries and local destinations. Secondly, it is because tourism is an activity which involves a special relationship between consumers (visitors), the industry, the environment and local communities. This special relationship arises because, unlike most other sectors, the consumer of tourism (the tourist) travels to the producer and the product. This leads to three important and unique aspects of the relationship between tourism and sustainable development:

- Interaction: The nature of tourism, as a service industry that is based on delivering an experience of new places, means that it involves a considerable amount of interaction, both direct and indirect, between visitors, host communities and their local environments.
- Awareness: Tourism makes people (visitors and hosts) become far more conscious of environmental issues and differences between nations and cultures. This can affect attitudes and concerns for sustainability issues not only while travelling but throughout people lives.
- Dependency: Much of tourism is based on visitors seeking to experience intact and clean environments, attractive natural areas, authentic historic and cultural traditions, and welcoming hosts with whom they have a good relationship. The industry depends on these attributes being in place.

ENCOURAGING CHANGE TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES

The topic of Sustainable Tourism (ST) has proven appealing to researchers, tourism practitioners, and policy-makers. The concept of sustainable tourism can be traced back to the 1983 United Nations Commission on the Environment and Development, the Brundtland Commission. The Commission popularised the idea that sustainable development 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987). A second and related concept at the foundation of many definitions of sustainable tourism is the 'Triple Bottom Line' (TBL). The term was first attributed to Elkington (1997) and proposes that organisations consider three distinct 'bottom lines' - the economic bottom line, the people's bottom line which concerns social responsibility, and a 'planet' bottom line that concerns environmental impacts of any given activity. Elkington proposed that only a company that produces a TBL is taking account of the full cost of doing businesses. The same notion and views were supported by (Hindle, 2008). The two core fundamental concepts - sustainable development and TBL - are clearly evident in the United Nations World Tourism Organization's (UN WTO's) definition of sustainable tourism. The UN WTO claims that 'Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability' (UNWTO,

2009: 2). During recent years, there has been increasing understanding of the key components of effective sustainability programs, yet a variety of challenges to implement that knowledge to action remains. Some possible reasons for the failure have been identified. Ruhanen (2008), for instance, has noted the failure of knowledge management strategies to support the implementation of sustainable tourism. Despite considerable examination of what constitutes sustainable tourism, there has been little examination of what it takes to encourage tourism businesses to change from traditional business practices to those that are considered more sustainable.

The implementation of sustainable tourism (ST) practices within the tourism industry presents many challenges for destination managers and policy makers. Although there is evidence that ST provides significant benefits to both communities and individual companies and although there are resources available to companies motivated to change, the adoption of the practices has been far from universal. The challenge for those assigned the task of implementing comprehensive ST programs across the tourism businesses that comprise a destination are complex. The change agents typically charged with the responsibility of encouraging tourism businesses to change from traditional to sustainable tourism practices tend to be National Tourist Authorities (NTA) and destination management organisations (DMOs). As noted by the WTO: 'NTAs have been responsible for marketing, planning, and advising central government on travel and tourism issues. In this capacity, it is likely that many of the tasks required to facilitate the transition to sustainable tourism will fall to them' (UNWTO, 1997: 37). Consequently, many NTAs and DMOs have adopted organizational commitments to the development of sustainable tourism in their mission statements and strategic goals. At the destination level, this requires the creation of appropriate policy frameworks and destination-based programs designed to promote sustainable practices. However, the achievement of the goals set by these DMOs requires change across the tourism system itself and adoption by both companies and individuals within the system. In his study, Buhalis (2000) found that destinations are 'amalgams of tourism products, offering integrated experiences to customers that act freely and independently of the DMO. He further noted that destinations have responded to a decline in visitor numbers by increasing their marketing expenditure. In most cases, NTAs/DMOs have little authority to enforce change and must rely on programs that include education, encouragement, and persuasion to achieve system-wide change.

Stakeholders in sustainable tourism

Many different interests can benefit from tourism being made more sustainable, UNEP (2014: 13), the various stakeholders that can benefit from sustainable tourism are:

- Tourism enterprises, while seeking long term profitability, should be concerned about their corporate image, the relationship with their staff, and their impact on the global environment and that immediately around them.
- Local communities are seeking increased prosperity but without exploitation or damage to their quality of life.
- Environmentalists are concerned about the harmful impacts of tourism but also see it as a valuable source of income for conservation.
- Tourists are seeking a high quality experience in safe and attractive environments; they are becoming more aware of the impacts of their travelling.

Environmental dimension of sustainable tourism

According to Ivanov, Ivanova and Iankova (2014) the environmental dimension of sustainability has received an overwhelming attention in hospitality research. This notion is further supported by Candrea and Bratucu, 2012 whose study focussed on tour operators' perceptions of sustainability issues, the general understanding of the concept of sustainable tourism as well as examining their interest in eco-certification and the practical application of different sustainable initiatives. Renewable energies incorporation in hotels' daily operations, the smarter water use, recycling and waste management are

the main initiatives that policymakers and stakeholders put emphasis on, in order to secure the sustainability of destinations.

According to Iankova (2011) results from a recent study about the use of alternative energies in Bulgaria show that the primary reason for installation of solar systems is the high profitability hoteliers achieve during the high tourist season (the average savings from electricity bills are reported to be 30-40 %). The same author further indicated that "the installation of solar systems in the studied destination (the town of Sozopol) is somehow chaotic: solar panels market, producers, and product specifications are not well researched in advance". The decision making process is rather spontaneous subordinated some times to irrational factors – it is accompanied by false beliefs, and some degree of ignorance about the functioning and efficiency of the system, as well as, in some cases, wrong installation. However, the "solar fever" is continuing to spread around Bulgarian Black Sea coastal resorts based on hoteliers' belief that this is moneywise, worthy investment; it is "fashionable" and creates a positive image of the hotels, Iankova (2011).

In the study done by Tortella and Tirado (2011) they found that while it is true that tourism is one of the main driving forces behind economic growth in several world regions, it is also true that tourism can have serious negative environmental impacts, especially with regard to water resources. The tourist water demand can generate big problems of sustainability, mainly in those regions where water is scarce, as occurs in most coastal and small island destinations where a large part of world tourism is concentrated. Water use, its consumption patterns in tourism destination and solid waste disposal are another area closely connected with sustainable practices in tourist accommodation. In another study done by Gösling, Peeters, Hall, Ceron, Dubois, Lehman, and Scott (2012), they found that there was increasing self-generated solid waste from the visitors in the hill towns, trails and expedition tops is one of the most adverse forms of human impacts in mountain environments. Results in a research done by Radwan, Jones, and Minoli (2012) about managing waste in small hotels, they found that hoteliers' behaviour towards solid waste and water management are non-univocal and in many cases hoteliers show a neglecting attitude towards these matters. The study further found that collectively, small hotels constitute a significant solid waste management (SWM) problem. In a study done by Charara *et al*. (2012) evaluating water consumption in Barbados, and the efforts to reduce it, showed that the destination's hotels consume high level of water (in terms of liters per guest night when compared with international benchmark figures. One of the main reasons for high water consumption in the hotel sector is guest behaviour. Hotel guests tend to have a "pleasure approach" to shower or bath, using more water than they normally would at home Charara *et al*. (2012). The study by Charara *et al*. further found out that water conservation practices in the accommodation industry are driven mainly by potential financial benefits and guests' satisfaction. Possible measures for water use reduction would be increasing awareness, outsourcing some of the water-consuming activities, essentially laundry services, and increase the financial attractiveness of water conservation measures.

In a study done by Jackson (2010), he suggests that the construction of new generation buildings or the upgrading of the existing ones should integrate the newest environmental materials and technologies using solar or water energy, which will reduce the environmental footprint of the accommodations. According to the author studying the green lodges in United States (US), effective green lodging should be inclusive of all functional areas within a lodging facility as well as the services offered. It is essential to help the property save energy, by choosing energy efficient facility designs, select and install energy-efficient fixtures and equipment. In order to mitigate indoor air quality, the use of eco-friendly chemicals and equipment as well as installing and maintaining appropriate filtration systems, composting and recycling are compulsory for the green lodges. Based on research done by Ars and Bohanec (2010), they recommend similar measures for the high mountain huts in Slovenia – installation of photocells in all huts for providing electricity and hot water with no emission to the environment. Solid waste, which is transported by helicopters, must be composted, and the non-organic packed for recycling, and air transport should be restricted, in order to reduce the carbon footprint and minimise the disturbance of the wildlife.

BARRIERS TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES.

The implementation of sustainable practices in tourism related companies is an object of discussions by many academics. There are various researches made about incentives and obstacles while switching towards sustainable business model. The study done by Le and Hollenhorst (2005) about the potential factors that influence Vietnamese tourism businesses' likelihood of adopting (LOA – or intention to adopt, interchangeably) sustainable tourism practices (STPs) as an effort to establish a sustainable tourism program, they found that overall, tourism firms perceive adopting STPs as a risk-taking action as they are very concerned about the disadvantages of innovations, while their benefits are not explicit. However, there was evidence that Vietnamese tourism companies are beginning to perceive certain benefits, especially strengthening the company's image by the adoption of STPs. However this differs from the study done by Higgins-Desbiolles (2009) who questions if sustainability is a trend, a way to gain more profit or moral duty. Moreover, the doubts are being expressed towards the existence of sustainability in tourism while being a very complex industry.

The decision to adopt sustainable practices presents many challenges for tourism related enterprises. It leads to a long process of change. Although the benefits to communities and individual companies are evident and the recourses are available the motivation to change is far from universal (La Lopa *et al.* 2011). Business managers knows that introduction of innovations usually takes a lot of time, effort and often causes destruction in organizational climate (La Lopa *et al.* 2011). Each organization has its corporate culture, composed of values, beliefs, attitudes (Graci, 2010). Since environmental issues are usually isolated from a corporate values, the attempts to implement them doesn't function (Graci, 2010). The successful accommodation of sustainability practices is largely related to personal believes. Graci (2010) states that unsupportive management can be a great limitation towards the development of sustainability. If people do not see the necessity for a change, they refuse it and they don't stand for it, any attempt to introduce the novelty is most likely to fail (La Lopa *et al.* 2011). According to Le and Hollenhorst (2005), before making any decisions managers evaluate the resistance of employees. The attempts towards a changes tend to work faster, if it is easy for employees to understand the benefits (Le and Hollenhorst, 2005). The particularity with tourism products is that in most cases the quality cannot be tested before the consumption. Therefore, if employees do not understand the necessity for adopting innovations, they won't be able to perceive this sustainable tourism image to their costumers (Le and Hollenhorst, 2005).

The other barrier towards sustainability is a lack of knowledge (Graci, 2010; La Lopa and Day, 2010). Graci (2010) emphasizes, that environmental awareness of managers is rather low and it leads to a slow uptake for future initiatives. However, most of the managers, in this case in hotels, knows about the existence of solar power, waste battery collection as a means to save costs, but the knowledge how to dispose them is inadequate (Graci, 2010). Implementation of sustainability requires long term thinking. In contrary, capitalistic environment of tourism businesses leads to short term goals. The main problem noted by Graci (2010) is that without increase in general environmental awareness there is no incentive for tourism enterprises to implement sustainable ideas, except the ones who bring fast economic gain.

One more limiting factor for innovations, is that sustainable practices are considered to be expensive. La Lopa and Day (2011) suggest that businesses should be educated about the purchasing costs being lower, than benefits of being sustainable. Companies do not realize that once they invest, the economic gains in a long term will be bigger. Therefore, financial recourses is defined as another limitation for implementing sustainable business approach. Rojo (2009) notes that natural recourses are considered to be public goods, therefore, investing in their preservation does not bring direct economic benefits to

the company. The recent economic downturn made companies to revise their expenditures. Hence, increase of sales at any costs becomes a primary goal, while any socially or environmentally friendly activity is considered to be less important. Since in the times of economic crisis dropping sales is one of the major concerns, the companies could try to sustain their income while adopting yield management schemes. Such type of management focuses on profit made per customer and not on growth of clients. Yield management principles are mostly used by airline companies, large hotel chains and lately by destination management organizations (Macbeth and Northcote, 2005) but it could be also adopted by a smaller scale businesses, like guest houses.

Businesses can be limited in their implementation of sustainable tourism practices by external factors that are beyond their control such as government policy or the attitudes of stakeholders and their lack of interest. But also internal obstacles within the company might exist. The main barriers with the implementation of sustainable tourism practices outlined are the involved costs, the complexity of the concept and the lack of information and support (Bohdanowicz and Martinac, 2003). These barriers are now briefly described below:

Costs

One major concern of all businesses is the cost involved in implementing sustainable tourism practices. Many fear that the change towards more sustainable tourism practices is prohibitively expensive (Bohdanowicz and Martinac (2003). Butler (2008) admits that first generation energy-saving or alternative technologies were expensive and relatively inefficient. Today technologies have evolved and buildings designed according to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards are cost-neutral and less expensive to operate than conventional approaches (Butler, 2008). Although this refers to the building of new establishment; initiatives in established buildings can also provide eco-efficiency and thus cost-saving benefits. However, once initial steps have been taken, environmental problems may arise that require new investments which may not provide a financial return (Tilley, 2000).

Complexity of concept

Another problem is expressed concerning the definition of sustainability and sustainable tourism practices. The imprecision in definition makes the concept difficult to understand and hard to translate into meaningful action and measures (Berry and Ladkin, 1997; Horobin and Long, 1996). This 'lack of an accepted model of what sustainable tourism actually means in reality' and the 'lack of in-house expertise on relevant issues' have been highlighted by Swarbrooke (1999) as a limitation on the tourism industry action in sustainable tourism.
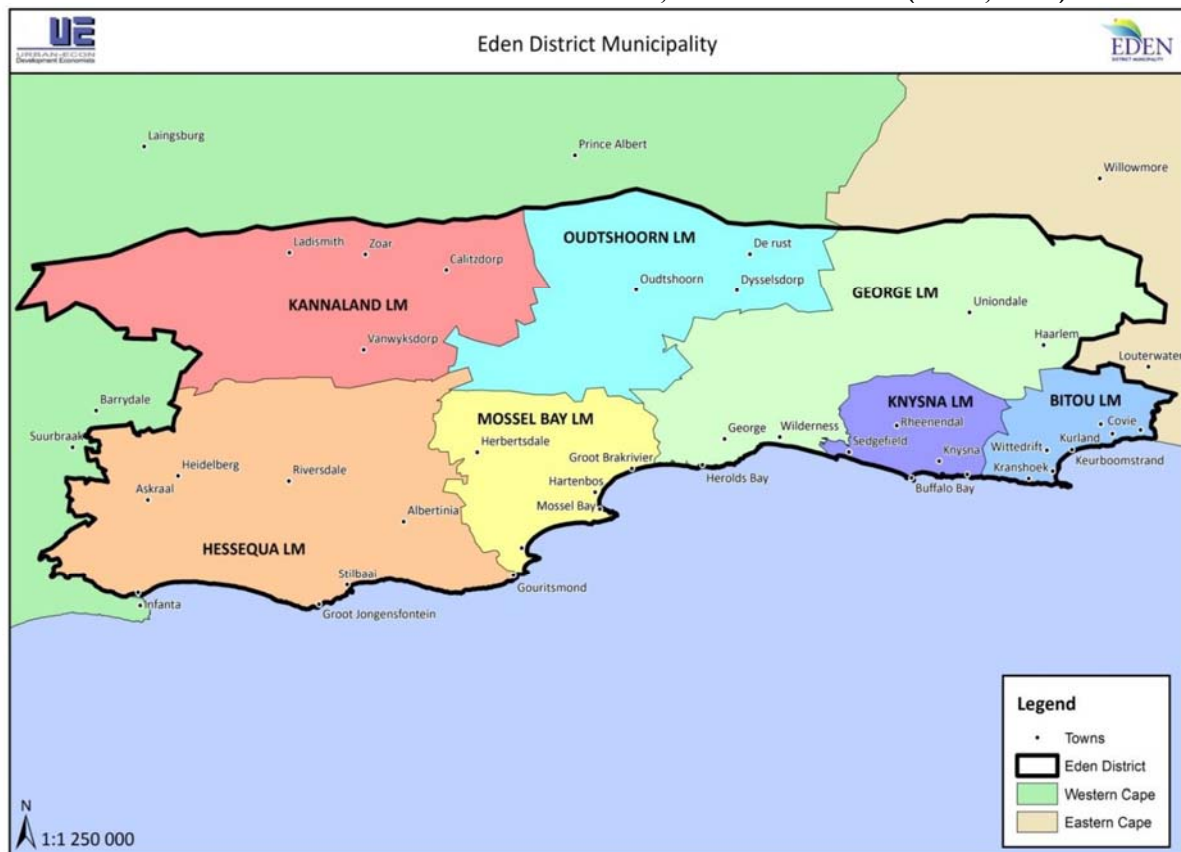
Information and support

In order to overcome the difficulties businesses face concerning the complexity of sustainability, information and support from the public sector is required. However, Sloan et al. (2003) criticise that the communication of environmental concerns by governments is ineffective. Several other authors raise a similar concern. Berry and Ladkin's (1997) findings reveal that the roles of the people responsible for development and management of infrastructure and regulation were not understood and a more active role of the public sector as a co-ordinator was demanded. The information provided by the United Kingdom (UK) government, such as good practice handbooks or manuals, was largely unknown to participants of various studies (Dewhurst and Thomas, 2003). This shows the importance of involvement of all stakeholders in participatory approaches to sustainable tourism development.

Empirical context

According to the official data by Eden District Municipality (2011), there were 250 guest houses in the district in 2013. These guest houses are highly geographically concentrated, distributed amongst the various local municipalities in the district municipality – 38.3% in George, 33.6% in Mossel Bay, 16.4% in Oudtshoorn, 6.3% in Hessequa, 2.3 in Plettenberg bay and Kannaland respectively and 0.8% in Knysna. Below is the map showing the locations of the different local municipalities within the Eden District Municipality (Eden district municipality, 2014).

FIGURE 1
EDEN DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY MAP, SOUTH AFRICA (EDM, 2011)

METHODOLOGY

This section highlights the research methodology adopted in this study. It describes the instrument used for primary data collection as well as the targeted respondents.

Sample

A questionnaire survey of guest house establishments in the region was undertaken to assess the sustainable tourism business practices by the guest houses in the EDM. The questionnaire obtained information relating to the importance of the environment to the tourism industry, the adoption of sustainable practices and the characteristics of the respondents (position of the person completing the questionnaire, owner's involvement in running the business, number of years of business existence, and type of business. The sampling strategy was based on the 'EDM database' which detailed accommodation units registered with the EDM Local Economic Development and Tourism Department. Initially, the guesthouses listed were contacted by an email in order to ascertain their willingness to take part in the survey.

Of the 250 guest houses listed in the EDM database, 128 (51.2%) agreed to participate. The survey took place over the period 15 June to 18 July 2014. This period proved to be advantageous because it was low season and guest house managers, owners and locums could afford the time to answer questions.

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire included several sections of questions. The first section examined the biographical information about the guest house as shown in the first section of the data analysis, and the second section examined the importance of the natural environment to the tourism industry and the third section examined the perceived constraints of adopting sustainable tourism practices. The list of sustainable tourism practices was derived from the review of literature (elaborated in the literature review section of this paper).

Data analysis

Due to their nature, data on the perceived constraints on adopting sustainable tourism practices were collected on Likert scale type questions which had five scales were respondents were asked to agree or disagree with statements derived to test their agreement or disagreement with the perceived constraints in adopting sustainable tourism practices. The results were analysed using Statistica software program version 12.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This section provides the results of the study in relation to biographical information of the guest houses and the perceived constraints of adopting sustainable tourism practices.

Demographics of the business

TABLE 1
POSITION OF THE PERSON COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

	Frequency	Percent
Owner	85	66.4
Manager	39	30.5
Locum	4	3.1
Total	128	100

The majority of the questionnaires (66.4%) were completed by the guest house owners, followed by managers (30.5%) with only (3.1%) being the locums. Since many guest houses fall under the definition of SME's, it is not unusual to find small businesses being run by the owner. Owner involvement is typical of entrepreneurial organisations found in SME's. This is supported by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) (2012: 40) which states that many SME's are either managed by the owner or by the appointed manager.

TABLE 2
INVOLVEMENT OF THE OWNER IN THE BUSINESS

	Frequency	Percent
Full-time	100	78.1
Part-time	28	21.9
Total	128	100

The results show that of the owners, more than three quarters were involved full-time in the business whilst less than a quarter were involved on a part-time basis. Once again, since the industry is characterised by SMEs, it is not unusual to find small businesses being run by the owner because they are survivalists as well (GEM, 2012: 43). Owner involvement is typical of entrepreneurial organisations found in SMEs.

TABLE 3
GUEST HOUSE NUMBER OF YEARS IN EXISTENCE

	Frequency	**Percent**
More than 10 years	61	47.7
6 - <10 years	41	32.0
4 - <6 years	14	10.9
1 - <4 years	12	9.4
Total	128	100

The majority of the guest houses have been in business for more than 10 years followed by those who have been in existence for between six and 10 years. The least number of years of existence in business is for guest houses that have been in existence one and four years. The length of time in business is important for local economic development of the region as reported by the GEM (2012: 45) with regard to failures of start-up SMEs. GEM reported that South Africa has a relatively high rate of start-up failures. Failure rates are obtained by determining the ratio of start-up firms to new firms, which in South Africa amounts to 2.4 to 1 compared to an average of 1.6 to 1 in developing countries (GEM, 2012: 45). A high failure rate among start-up firms would result in a low number of businesses being younger than four years old. The results of this study show that most of the guest houses in the Eden district region have passed the stage where many SMEs fail (four years) as many of them have existed for ten years and more.

Environment as a key resource base for the tourism industry

The results in table 4 indicate that there was a general agreement that the environment is a key resource base for the tourism industry with the majority of respondents in strong agreement with the statement. If the strongly agreed and agreed are combined, it makes the total of those in agreement with the statement, it makes more than a third of respondents in support of the statement that the environment is a key resource base for the tourism industry. Interestingly, no respondents disagreed with the statement.

TABLE 4

ENVIRONMENT AS A KEY RESOURCE BASE FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

	Frequency	**Percent**
Strongly agree	92	71.9
Agree	28	21.9
Neutral	7	5.5
Strongly disagree	1	0.8
Total	128	100

This outcome is similar to that of Stabler and Goodall's (1997) who indicated that the environment is a key resource base for tourism and that there is a general awareness of the role it plays in the accommodation sector. This was further supported by Page (2009: 287) who stated that "Many accommodation providers have also had to respond to global concerns associated with environmental

issues. Some hotels have embraced the principles of sustainable development to mirror customer concerns with the energy consumed by their stay". For example, recycling, and re-using linen and towels, are minor measures that hotels have introduced. Increasing environmental awareness among travellers is a positive contribution towards accommodation sustainability.

Perceived constraints in adopting sustainable tourism practices

The respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with statements about the perceived constraints adopting sustainable tourism practices and results are shown in table 5 below.

TABLE 5
PERCEIVED DIFFICULTIES IN ADOPTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM PRACTICES

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Initial financial cost	37.8%	26.1%	33.6%	2.5%	0%
Time and energy	25.4%	33.9%	37.3%	3.4%	0%
Customer opposition	12.8%	28.2%	39.3%	17.1%	2.6%
Staff opposition	12.8%	27.4%	35.9%	21.4%	2.6%
External restrictions on business operations	22.2%	19.2%	38.3%	17.5%	.8%
Lack of information and support	23.9%	28.2%	28.2%	18.8%	.9%
Lack of interest in the concept of sustainability	24.3%	20%	34.8%	16.5%	4.3%

The results in Table 5 show the views of the respondents in as far as the difficulties of adopting sustainable tourism practices by guest houses were evenly spread from neutral, agree and strongly agree in all the factors listed with few percentages on disagree and strongly disagree. The most common responses highlighted the importance of initial cost, time and energy as well as lack of interest as barriers to implementation. The initial financial cost as a difficulty accumulated (37.8%) of those who strongly agreed whilst (26.1%) agreed that initial financial cost is a difficulty in adopting sustainable tourism practices. These findings are in line with the finding of the study done by Bohdanowicz and Martinac (2003) were they found that many fear that the change towards more sustainable tourism practices is prohibitively expensive. One more limiting factor for innovations, is that sustainable practices are considered to be expensive. These findings are further supported by the findings of La Lopa and Day (2011) who suggested that businesses should be educated about the purchasing costs being lower, than benefits of being sustainable. If the results of those who agree and those who strongly agree that initial cost is a constraint are combined together, it represents a total of (63.9%) which is more than half of the respondents.

The other highest selected constraint was time and energy with a combined total of (59.3%) of those who strongly agreed and agreed and this indicates that guest house owners, managers and locums does not have enough time and energy to invest in sustainable tourism practices in their guest houses. This finding is supported by the results of the study done by La Lopa and Day (2011) where they found that business managers knows that introduction of innovations usually takes a lot of time, effort and often causes destruction in organizational climate

It is also interesting to note that a combined (44.3%) of the respondents agreed that they lack interest in the concept of sustainability which is a worry for the industry that should be governed by the concept for its long term survival. The same can be said for the respondents who agreed (52.1%) that lack of

information and support around sustainability is a constraint. These findings are in line with the findings of Sloan *et al.* (2003) who indicated that in order to overcome the difficulties businesses face concerning the complexity of sustainability, information and support from the public sector is required. However, they criticised that the communication of environmental concerns by governments is ineffective. Several other authors raise a similar concern. Berry and Ladkin's (1997) findings reveal that the roles of the people responsible for development and management of infrastructure and regulation were not understood and a more active role of the public sector as a co-ordinator was demanded.

For the rest of the factors percentages are evenly spread throughout from (28.2%) to (39.3%) with respondents who were neutral with all the perceived difficulties. Very few respondents neither disagreed nor strongly disagreed with the perceived difficulties with the highest percentage recorded for those who disagree with staff opposition as a perceived difficulty (21.4%). These results suggests that guest houses could take advantage of supportive employees in adopting and implementing sustainable tourism practices in their businesses. Staff support is vital in attaining sustainability because if there is opposition from staff, then managing change in the business becomes time consuming.

The highest percentage overall for the perceived difficulty in adopting sustainable tourism practices was (39.3%) for those respondents who are neutral about customer opposition as a perceived difficulty in adopting sustainable tourism practice. These findings are in line with difficulties/challenges identified by UNEP (2005:16) were it was stated that "accommodation providers as members of the tourism industry will be faced with various challenges in implementing sustainable tourism practices ranging from lack of understanding of the concept to financial costs".

CONCLUSION

Sustainable tourism practices comprise environmental, social and economic aspects. In achieving its aim to identify the degree of application of various sustainable practices, this paper investigated the perceived constraints of adopting sustainable tourism practices by guest houses in the Eden District Municipality. Truly, accommodation establishments might consider adopting some sustainable practices as expensive because they require huge investments and lead to increased costs in the short run which the establishments might not be able to bear due to competitive pressure, while other practices might be perceived as having only marginal impact on their customers. However, requirements of tourism demand can serve as a stimulus for accommodation establishments to adopt sustainable practices. Therefore, by adopting sustainable practices, guest houses in the Eden District municipality could appeal to the more sustainability conscious tourists that could ultimately lead to higher revenues and profits for the establishments.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

From a managerial perspective, results show that in general guest houses considers the initial cost involved in adopting sustainable tourism practices as a main barrier. It is important for managers, owners and locums to understand the limitations to sustainability in order to move forward the intensions from attitude to action. Travel industry is focused on natural resources and the negative impacts caused by tourism provokes attention to change management strategies of tourism businesses. The sustainability "movement" put the tourism enterprises into the spotlight, therefore we can claim that the industry has the moral obligations to spread good examples of sustainability. Two of the main

perceived barriers to adopting sustainable tourism practice found in this study were the initial costs as well as time and energy. Managers should educate the staff about positive aspects of sustainability before switching to different business model. The establishment of educational programs about advantages of sustainability would help to overcome another barrier of lack of interest in the concept of sustainability.

Nevertheless, there are various limitations, staff opposition is the least of the problems for guest houses in adopting sustainable tourism practices in the Eden District Municipality. Therefore guest houses should take advantage of supportive employees in adopting sustainable tourism practices as the biggest incentive towards sustainability.

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