Utrecht University

'Community participation' and 'community involvement in the benefits' among ecotourism operators:

Comparing theory with practice by means of an in-depth case study in the Daintree Coast, Australia

Source: Rainforest Rescue (2008)

November, 2012

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PREFACE

Ecotourism is a concept that I was unfamiliar with until one and a half year ago. I came across this topic during my studies at Utrecht University although I do not know how this happened exactly. What I do know is that in light of my study (Sustainable Development: Environmental Policy and Management) it sounded as a concept that could truly combine the economic, social and environmental pillars so often discussed in the sustainable development literature.

I feel very honored and privileged for the opportunity to conduct research on this topic in Australia. Therefore I would like to make acknowledgements to the people who helped me and without whom this study would not have been possible.

First I would like to say thanks to the ecotourism operators[1] for their time and hospitality. Without your participation, this research would not have been possible in the first place. The same gratitude goes out to the representatives of the community groups and others[2] that were interviewed for this research.

Thanks to everyone at Wet Tropics Management Authority for your kindness, collegiality and showing me what makes the Wet Tropics special. Special thanks to you Paul for being my counterpart in this project.

Frank and Clare, thank you both for our nice consultation moments these last nine months and supporting me throughout the whole process.

For the rest, I can only say if you ever get the possibility to visit the Daintree Coast, Wet Tropics or Tropical North Queensland as a whole, please do so, it's beautiful!

Erwin Smits, 1-11-2012

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[1] *Billy Tea Safaris, Cooper Creek Wilderness, Daintree Discovery Centre, Down Under Tours, Jungle Surfing, Mason's Tours, Ocean Safari, Paddletrek Kayak Adventures, Tropic Wings.*
[2] *Conservation Volunteers Australia, Ecotourism Australia, Mungalla Aboriginal Business Corporation, Terrain NRM, Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, and those given or preferring anonymity.*

ABSTRACT

Tourism can spark social, cultural, ecological and economic change that negatively affects local environments and their communities. To combat these issues 'ecotourism' emerged to overcome the negative issues and providing positive contributions to both. In order to reach that objective it is claimed in the (scientific) literature that host communities should receive benefits and be engaged in the decisions that affect their living area.

The majority of the scientific literature surrounding this topic discusses the government as the main actor able to achieve these goals. However, there is an increasing expectation by policy makers that the private sector should contribute in delivering policy objectives and private businesses are expected to take more responsibility concerning their social and environmental impacts. Regarding community participation, this topic is treated as a panacea in the literature while hardly any information exists how community participation actually occurs in practice in relation to ecotourism operators. This in-depth study tries to fill part of this knowledge gap by yielding descriptive knowledge on how community participation is shaped in practice by ecotourism operators and how they involve a community in the benefits. In addition, a comparison is made between theory and practice. The following research question lies at the heart of this study:

In what ways and to what extent do ecotourism operators in the Daintree Coast allow the community to (1) participate in their decision-making and (2) get involved in benefit sharing, and what is the concurrence and discrepancy between theory and practice?

Answers to this question are provided by conducting a literature research and a qualitative case study in the Daintree Coast community in Queensland, Australia. This area is chosen because of the favorable context one would expect to find community participation. Nine ecotourism operators are investigated by means of qualitative interviews to illuminate how they engage their local community in participation and provide benefits.

The findings show that no operator truly engages the 'community' in participation (involvement in decision-making). Only the tourism sector is involved to a minor extent (consulting or informing) although no examples are found that involve changes in the environmental or social sphere. The remaining five non-tourism stakeholder groups are not engaged in community participation (ignoring) and do not see it as the responsibility of ecotourism operators to do so.

Concerning the benefits, every operator contributes, although varying in type and size. Creating employment, indirect revenue distribution and providing room for increased tourism spending is performed by every operator. Other benefits involve contributions to the school and health center (six operators), supporting conservation initiatives (five operators) and providing education (three operators). These benefits primarily arise by a reactive approach of operators which is deemed appropriate by community stakeholders. Operators that do not reside in the host community provide fewer benefits compared to local operators.

The level of concurrence between theory and practice is quite large regarding the provision of benefits to a community and non-existent concerning community participation. In order to satisfy a community it is necessary to provide benefits to some extent. The claims about community participation in the scientific literature do not apply to this research area. This study shows that participation in ecotourism is not a given and is not always deemed necessary by ecotourism operators and a local community.

Key Concepts: *ecotourism, community participation, community involvement, decision-making, benefits*

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide the reader with a general background on the subject matter and clarify why this research is conducted. Further, the research objective and its related questions and framework are presented followed by the scope and content of this study.

1.1 BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM DEFINITION

In Western societies people increasingly perceive vacations as a necessary compensation for a growing stressful working life (West and Carrier, 2004, p. 483). Although there is a global financial crisis, the tourism sector keeps growing annually and is projected to reach one billion international travellers in the year 2012 (UNWTO, 2012). In addition, there is a growing demand to visit rural areas with a rich environment. This is because these places are perceived as being increasingly under threat by profit-seeking growth, and it is thought that one should visit them now before they might be lost in the future (West and Carrier, 2004, p. 483).

With constant growth of the tourism sector, tourism itself is increasingly deemed notorious for its potential to disturb, disrupt or, in another way, cause damage to natural habitats and their local communities (Stronza and Gordillo, 2008, p.448). Particularly in rural areas there are numerous situations where tourism sparked social, cultural, ecological and economic changes. These alterations to the living environment of affected communities are often not easily managed by the local residents (ibid, p.448-449). The consequence is that only individual businesses benefit from tourism destinations and that the majority of the local residents only experience the social and environmental costs and rarely receive a fair share of the benefits created (ibid, p.449).

1.1.1 EXPLAINING ECOTOURISM AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

'Ecotourism' is a concept developed to overcome the negative consequences of 'ordinary' tourism, meaning that tour-operators put a higher emphasis on guiding tourists more carefully during their encounters with ecosystems and communities. As such, ecotourism aims to provide a positive contribution to nature conservation and to the local community involved (Blamey, 2001, p.6). In order to reach these outcomes or increase chances to do so, it is claimed in the available literature that the local community should participate in the decision-making and management of an ecotourism destination (Garrod, 2003; Kruger, 2005; Xue-Mei and Ji-Gang, 2004). Support of tourism activities increases when locals actively participate in the operation and ownership of a tourism business (D'Amore, 1983 in Timothy, 1999, p.372; Beetin, 1998 in Garrod 2003). Also, participation increases chances for the local community to get involved in benefits generated by ecotourism (Brandon, 1993 in Garrod, 2003, p. 34). The goal to bear in mind is that participation provides an opportunity for these communities to address their needs with the aim to create harmonious and beneficial relationships.

The vast majority of (scientific) literature surrounding this topic discusses the role for governments to involve the local community in decision-making and management of an ecotourism destination, highlighting the notion of community consultation or participation (Garrod, 2003; Timothy, 1999; Bao and Sun, 2006). While there are many insights on how governments should engage an ecotourism community in participation, the role of other actors has rarely been focused upon. This study fills this void by addressing a different side of community participation, namely the role that ecotourism operators (private sector) need to take to involve local communities in their decision-making.

A recent development is increasing attention by policy makers towards the private sector to fulfill policy objectives (Manteaw, 2007, p. 431). There is also a growing expectation of civil society that private businesses take on more responsibility concerning their social and environmental impacts (ibid). These expectations giving a new role to private parties are also present in the ecotourism industry and have led to a paradigm where operators should ensure benefits to the local community and make an effort to engage the community in participation (Ecotourism Australia, 2003; State of Queensland, 2002; Kruger, 2005; Xue-Mei and Ji-Gang, 2004). Specific emphasis is placed on involvement in the decision-making process by which a community can influence the decisions that affect them. An example is to consult with representatives from a local community on how tours affect the respective community and in what ways the community might benefit from conducted tours in their living area.

1.1.2 KNOWLEDGE GAP

Although the scientific literature has identified a need for ecotourism operators to involve the local community in the operator's decision-making, hardly any information or examples are found to what extent the literature paradigm reflects reality and how participation (decision-making) is shaped by ecotourism operators in practice. So which individuals, groups or businesses in a community are actually engaged by ecotourism operators in this process, to what extent do they influence the decision-making process, how do they experience participation and does it really make a difference for the outcomes? Furthermore, it is desired that ecotourism operators do not only use (the surroundings of) a local community for their business operations but also to provide benefits towards that community. How these flows of benefits may occur in practice and whether these are the result of participation in decision-making is another aspect that can be clarified by conducting this research.

Ecotourism is the fastest growing sector of the tourism industry (West and Carrier, 2004, p.483) and a demand is identified for community participation and involving such a community in the benefits to increase positive outcomes. Therefore, conducting research on this topic addresses a considerable knowledge gap and could benefit ecotourism operator and community relationships in ecotourism destinations.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The objective of this research is to yield descriptive knowledge on the ways and the extent that ecotourism operators engage in community participation and involve a community in the benefits. Following, a comparison is made between theory and practice to illuminate the concurrence and discrepancy.

Aim 1: Describe in which ways community participation and involvement in the benefits is discussed in the literature, how this takes place in practice and to illuminate the concurrence and discrepancy between both.

This study encompasses research on (scientific) literature regarding community participation related to the ecotourism sector and guidelines from the literature regarding corporate social responsibility, corporate community involvement, co-management and community participation in general. It also includes in what ways benefits can be provided to local communities by ecotourism operators. This information relates to the roles and responsibilities by ecotourism operators regarding local communities where operations take place. The yielded knowledge is applied by investigating individual ecotourism operators on these two topics of participation and benefits to reveal possible similarities and differences between theory and practice.

Although not the main aim of this research, some recommendations will be generated which is understood as the added knowledge to the scientific literature (for future research), and providing recommendations to the stakeholders involved in the research area (ecotourism operators, government bodies, community groups).

The literature claims that community participation and providing benefits to a community are two crucial aspects of ecotourism (Beetin, 1998 in Garrod 2003; Brandon, 1993 in Garrod, 2003; D'Amore, 1983 in Timothy, 1999; Garrod, 2003; Kruger, 2005; Xue-Mei and Ji-Gang, 2004). Queensland, Australia is identified as a prime ecotourism destination with yearly revenue exceeding four billion Australian dollars in this sector and having over 1300 National Parks and five World Heritage Areas (Sustainable Tourism CRC, 2008). The Queensland government is considered a pioneer in regard to ecotourism by being the first state to create an environmental tourism department and implementing several ecotourism plans consisting of guidelines for ecotourism operators to engage in community participation and to create benefits for local communities (State of Queensland, 2002). Furthermore, Queensland holds the largest number of operators that are ecotourism accredited (one third of Australia) (Ecotourism Australia, 2012b), meaning that they should embrace community participation and involving a community in the benefits (Ecotourism Australia, 2003). It is now time to see how these ecotourism operators actually behave in practice by investigating a local community called the 'Daintree Coast', an ecotourism community located in Queensland, Australia, where several accredited ecotourism operators conduct their tours.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

In what ways and to what extent do ecotourism operators in the Daintree Coast allow the community to (1) participate in their decision-making and (2) get involved in benefit sharing, and what is the concurrence and discrepancy between theory and practice?

SQ1   How does the literature in general conceive community participation, and what does the ecotourism literature provide concerning involvement in the benefits of ecotourism?

SQ2   In what ways do ecotourism operators shape community participation and involvement in the benefits in practice in the Daintree Coast?

SQ3   What is the concurrence and discrepancy between theory and practice regarding community participation, and involvement in the benefits in ecotourism?

1.4 RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Figure 1.1 shows the research framework of this study. The first column (a) depicts the necessary literature study in order to analyze the ecotourism operators. The upper part of the first column depicts the preliminary research and the literate that is (further) investigated to identify claims and examples of how an ecotourism community may receive benefits from ecotourism operators. The lower part of the first column first shows the literature that is consulted to clarify the theoretical claims that community participation is necessary or beneficial. This also involves finding out how community participation should take place and to review theories to operationalize community participation. As a whole, the first column (a) yields the criteria to compare with the ecotourism operators in the Daintree Coast regarding community participation and involvement in the benefits (b). An analysis is conducted between the theoretical findings and the results in practice to illuminate the possible concurrence and discrepancy (c). Finally, the results of the study can be used as added knowledge to the scientific

literature, options for future research, and as recommendations for ecotourism operators and community groups in the Daintree Coast, and organizations involved in ecotourism in Australia, namely: Daintree Marketing Co-operative, Department of Environment and Resource Management Australia, Ecotourism Australia, Tourism Queensland, and Wet Tropics Management Authority.
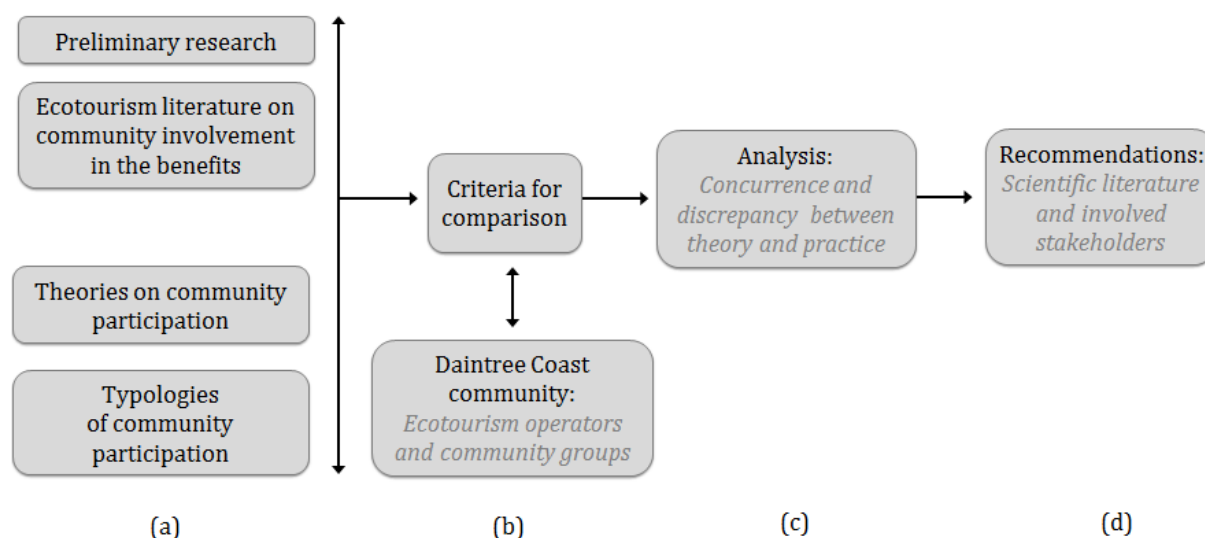
Figure 1.1: Research framework of this study

1.5 SCOPE OF THE PAPER

Ecotourism is a fast growing sector and is part of the tourism sector in many countries around the globe with differences in historical, political, cultural, environmental, and socio-economic characteristics. Also, the ecotourism sector as a whole includes a variety of experiences and is subject to a varying number and types of stakeholders depending on the scale and geographical location. This study is aimed at one region within the State of Queensland, Australia. The aim is to generate results that are applicable to higher levels of abstraction. Also, the ecotourism operators in this study provide tours in a natural area where there is an inevitable interaction between the local community, the operator and the eco-tourists visiting the area. A local community involves all groups in an ecotourism destination such as residents, businesses and other interest groups.

1.6 CONTENT

This paper is composed of six chapters. The first chapter consists of a small introduction to the subject matter, explains for what reasons this research is conducted and includes the theoretical framework that guides this study. Chapter two is the theory section which provides the reader with the current state of knowledge on the research topic. Next, chapter 3 describes and justifies the method applied in this research. Chapter four displays the background of the research area including the (policy) guidelines regarding the behavior of ecotourism operators. The fifth chapter shows the results of the study followed by a comparison between theory and practice in chapter six. Chapter seven and eight provide the conclusion and discussion of this research followed by the references and appendices.

2. THEORETICAL CLAIMS

The aim of this chapter is to clarify the concepts used in this research, namely; 'ecotourism', 'community' and 'community participation'. Also, a literature review is presented to provide the theoretical claims why community participation and involvement in the benefits is considered necessary by ecotourism operators. This involves part the first column (a) in the research framework (figure 1.1).

2.1 CLARIFYING THE CONCEPTS USED IN THIS RESEARCH

2.1.1 PROVIDING A DEFINITION OF ECOTOURISM

The origins of the term ecotourism are not entirely clear but its characteristics appeared first in Hetzer's (1965) four pillars of responsible tourism, and the first 'eco-tours' appeared in the mid-1970's in Canada (Blamey, 2001, p.5). Ecotourism developed in the 1970s and 1980s within the environmental movement due to increasing dissatisfaction with mass tourism. At the same time developing countries began to realize that nature-based tourism could provide foreign income and simultaneously serve as an industry less destructive than agriculture and logging; which turned ecotourism into a tool for development and conservation goals (ibid).

The concept of ecotourism (or eco-tourism) began to appear regularly in the scientific literature late 1980s and grew into a niche product in the tourist sector 20 years later. The United Nations even declared an International Year of Ecotourism in 2002 (Weaver and Lawton, 2007, p.1168). Ecotourism is sometimes referred to as nature tourism but there is a clear difference between the terms. Nature tourism only involves visiting natural attractions and does not explicitly seek environmental or social protection (Kiss, 2004, p.232). In a study by Fennell (2001), 85 definitions of ecotourism are identified that show an increasing attention towards the value-based dimensions of ecotourism as the concept evolves in time. Examples of these dimensions are sustainability, ethics, education, conservation and community benefits. It is acknowledged that there is a near-consensus on the criteria that ecotourism encompasses, namely that it involves: nature based experiences (1), environmental education or learning for visitors (2), and an experience or product management which includes ecological, economic and socio-cultural sustainability (3) (Blamey, 2001, p.6; Weaver and Lawton, 2007, p. 1170).

The first criterion relates to the fact that there is a primary concern with enjoying a relatively undisturbed phenomenon of nature itself (Valentine 1992 in Blamey 2011, p.7). However, there is the question what does or does not relate to a nature-based experience. If a person drives through a forest does that count, or should one walk through a forest? Also, is it applicable when an experience takes place in a regenerated forest? It appears there is no clear-cut meaning of the term nature-based and it includes an arbitrary component which makes nature-based tourism and thus ecotourism 'fuzzy' concepts (Blamey, 2001, pp.7-8).

For the second criterion definitions are more elaborate, as such education can encompass two functions. There is environmental education during an experience where an eco-tourist learns about plants, animals and landscapes unique to the area. The other function is to be educated in a broader way involving including advice on how to minimize adverse impacts on the local environment during the visit of the natural area and insights on the natural relationships (ibid, p.9).

The third criterion can be described as a sustainably managed ecotourism product and is a derivative of the 'sustainable development' concept brought by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). In their report 'Our Common Future' (1987) the term is defined as *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p.8)*. Without going to much in discussion on the exact interpretation of the concept it should include ecological, economic, and socio-cultural aspects to reflect the sustainability concept in its entirety (Weaver and Lawton, 2007, p.1170).

Looking at the clarification of what ecotourism can include as a concept, it comes as no surprise that definitions of 'ecotourism' can vary greatly, depending on what one perceives as a 'more important' criterion over others. Another outcome is that definitions of ecotourism become so vague that the definition itself can be interpreted in different ways. The scientific literature generally uses the definition of The International Ecotourism Society (TIES) which reads as follows: *"Responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people" (TIES, 1990)*.

In line with this study it is further addressed by TIES that those who implement and participate in ecotourism experiences should provide a positive experience for the host community and provide financial benefits and empowerment for the local people involved (TIES, 2012). Regarding the latter aspect several authors conclude that higher emphasis should be put on community participation; for example, Subramaniam (2008) states that ecotourism should include meaningful community participation in order to capture its essence (Subramaniam, 2008, p.246). In this study ecotourism is defined using the definition by TIES, outlined above.

2.1.2   WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?

Sometimes a 'community' is referred to as a 'myth' due to the diverse and complex structures that can be present in a community and the room it provides for conflict (Sustainable Tourism CRC, 2005, p.43). The term 'community' encompasses a wide spectrum of meaning and for that reason it is viewed as a problematic term when studying communities. This is especially the case when the term is combined with 'participation' (Leksakundilok, 2006, p.55). In general, a typology is made by either talking about 'communities of place' or 'communities of interest' (Harrington et al., 2003, p.202). Where the former considers geographical boundaries (e.g. a neighborhood, region, or nation), the latter considers a boundary by interest and identities such as groups with common interests, values or concerns that are spatially diffuse (e.g. social movements, or non-governmental organizations) (ibid, pp.202-205). Based on a comprehensive study by MacQueen et al. (2001) the most important aspects of a community were categorized adopting the following definition: *"A group of people with diverse characteristics, who are linked by social ties, share common perspectives, and engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings" (MacQueen et al., 2001, p.1929)*.

The scope of this study involves one research area that experiences the effects of being an ecotourism destination. In this sense, a local community is seen as a group of people in a geographic location who are the host for the ecotourism experiences offered by ecotourism operators. Therefore the definition of the term 'host community' is used to define a 'local community' in this research, namely: *"Groups in a destination... such as permanent residents, local businesses and other interest groups" (State of Queensland, 2002, p.29)*.

2.1.3 DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Community participation can be viewed as a carrier towards sustainable development by creating a sense of ownership for community members and empowering them to solve their own problems (Leksakundilok, 2006, p.255). However, in real life it is deemed impossible that all individuals in a community actively participate (ibid, p.256). In congruence with the term 'community', no single definition applies for the term 'community involvement' or 'community participation' and both terms are used interchangeably in the scientific literature. Most authors are not clear on what involvement or participation actually means and how they apply the term. Therefore the characteristics that show a clear difference between the terms are elaborated upon in this paragraph.

The author Garrod (2003) states that 'involvement' is an approach to participation which refers to gaining cooperation of local people, while 'participation' itself implies a higher form of collaboration in ecotourism planning, management and/or decision-making (Garrod, 2003, p.34). The definitions that are known vary with the *degree* or *type* of participation taking place (Leksakundilok, 2006). Types of participation can be categorized as: development processes; perceptions; interest of stakeholders; participants (ibid, 2006, p.259); and mediums of communication (ibid, p.276). Most of the literature however discusses the degree of participation in which the terms informing, consulting and active participation are frequently found (Sanchez, 2009). Informing is known as a one-way relationship, consultation is a two-way relationship where an opinion is sought after, and active participation generally acknowledges a higher level of involvement compared to consultation alone (Sustainable Tourism CRC, 2005, p.44). This reflects that any 'true' form of participation should represent a meaningful participation that mutually exchanges views and information. Also, meaningful participation should include a collection of diverse values and views from a broad spectrum of society (ibid). A definition of participation that builds on tourism is that of France (1998), namely: *"A process that involves local people in the identification of problems, decision-making and implementation which can contribute to sustainable development"* (France, 1998 in Sanchez, 2009, p.14).

Taking the story back to the literature referring to 'community involvement', a clear demarcation is visible within the concept. Community involvement in ecotourism is often categorized into involvement in the benefits and involvement in decision-making (Li, 2006; Bao and Sun, 2006; Timothy, 1999; Tosun, 2000; Garrod 2003; and Mbaiwa et al., 2011). Involvement in the benefits can relate to: providing employment; aiding conservation (Jenkins and Wearing, 2003, pp.214-215); improving infrastructure, facilities and communication systems; medical care; (Braman & FAA, 2001; Cottrell, 2001; Koningen, 1996; Place, 1998; Scheyvens, 2000; Tisdell, 1996; WTO, 1992 in Koens et al., 2009); providing room for increased tourism spending (Taylor et al., 2006) training opportunities; utilizing local products, services or materials; (Ecotourism Australia, 2003). While involvement in decision-making refers to any involvement in management or planning and thus influencing decisions on an operational level or in selecting and distributing benefits (Garrod, 2003; State of Queensland, 2002).

With regard to the insights on involvement outlined above another demarcation can be made between a lower degree of involvement which does not necessarily require any form of participation (involvement in the benefits), and a higher degree of involvement that does require a form of participation in order to be meaningful (involvement in decision-making).

Thus, participation is generally seen as a higher degree of involvement and involvement may encompass both lower and higher degrees[3].

A definition of community involvement for this study is constructed by combining partly the definition by France (1998) on participation and the definition of a local community (§ 2.1.2) derived from the State of Queensland (2002). Community involvement in this research is hence defined as: *"Involving groups in a destination, such as permanent residents, local businesses and other interest groups, in the benefits of ecotourism, planning, decision-making and/or management aspects."*

'Community participation' or 'participation' uses the definition of community involvement without 'involvement in the benefits' and only refers to a higher form of collaboration. In other words, this concerns the extent to which a local community is allowed to participate in a decision-making process (by ecotourism operators). Thus, 'community participation' or 'participation' in this research is defined as: *"Involving groups in a destination, such as permanent residents, local businesses and other interest groups in ecotourism planning, decision-making and/or management aspects."*

2.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE CO-MANAGEMENT LITERATURE

There is an increasing body of literature discussing the (possible) linkage between social and ecological systems in order to advocate sustainability. These studies can be grouped into two categories; one elaborates on the management approaches of common-pool resources (CPR) and the other concerns construction of management systems that comply with the criteria for sustainable use (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005, p.65). The concept of 'co-management' (CM) plays a fundamental aspect in these studies and translates into a division of influence between stakeholders involved in CPR such as forests (ibid) or ecotourism destinations (e.g. Islam, 2009; Mohd et al., 2008; Selin, 2009; Yates et al., 2010). CM can be defined as: *"A situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define, and guarantee amongst themselves a fair sharing of the management functions, entitlements and responsibilities for a given territory, area or set of natural resources"* (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996 p.7).

CM is typically used for protected areas but can be applied to all areas and types of natural resources and is especially relevant when local interests are strongly affected by the (complex) operations that take place (ibid, pp.12-13). Furthermore, CM is not limited to environmental issues, but encompasses socio-economic issues as well. It is seen as part of the social development towards a more direct and participatory form of democracy which ensures that the interests and rights of local stakeholders are guaranteed (ibid, pp.24). In principle, CM may vary in participation from exchanging information up to involvement in formal partnerships in which actors engage in decision-making or problem-solving related to a natural resource (Carlsson and Berkes, 2005, pp.66-71). A situation of CM may involve a commercial private sector as one stakeholder that tries to learn from its actions and changes its behavior according to perceptions and desires from a local community (or groups from that community) as the other stakeholder(s) (ibid, p.67).

Several reasons are given in the literature why CM needs to take place and why the local community as necessary stakeholders should be involved in the decision-making process. First,

[3] In this study involvement in decision-making will also be referred to as 'participation' (in decision-making) since any meaningful relation with a decision-making process should require a mutually exchange of views and information.

the capacity (which is not defined by Borrini-Feyerabend (1996)) of the involved stakeholders is assumed to be enhanced due to communication and dialogue (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996, p.24). Secondly, if well-functioning CM arrangements are in place it enables the protection of the resource at stake (e.g. environmental damage) and provides more inclusive decision-making (Pinkterton, 1989 in Carlsson and Berkes, 2005, p.72). Third and most importantly, it is generally agreed upon that better decisions arise when driven by all stakeholders. Such decisions lead to more success and reduced conflict between the stakeholders involved (Voinov and Bousquet, 2010, p.1268) (e.g. conflict between ecotourism operators and the local community). Thus, CM is viewed as necessary in a sustainable approach to problems and can improve communication, avoid conflict and lead to better decisions.

2.3 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY LITERATURE

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or corporate citizenship is a trend adopted by an increasing number of companies (Cramer, 2005; Manteaw, 2007). The term itself reflects a higher emphasis on the responsibilities companies have towards the surrounding environment in which they operate (Cramer, 2005, p.255). In this sense, instead of interpreting the overall net profitability as a money figure (economic), it expands to include the social and environmental characteristics of business operations as well (Manteaw, 2007, p.429).

An approach towards CSR may contain a number of ingredients that can refer to internal or external measures. Internal measures can relate to establishing a code of conduct for employees or to implement an environmental management system. However, it is also deemed important to interact as a company with external stakeholders in the societies where operations take place (Cramer, 2005, p.262). In order to behave and operate in a sustainable way it is considered necessary to have the knowledge about the actors who affect or are being affected by the company's activities (ORSE, 2008, pp.5-6). Doing so allows a company to (better) understand expectations and needs of stakeholders, can clarify engagement and goals towards local issues, and strengthen community development (ibid, p.6). The stakeholders should be engaged through dialogue which can result in consultation or even partnerships involving co-decision (ibid).

Keeping a long term development perspective in mind, companies employing a CSR policy behave responsibly towards their neighborhood and assure a contribution is given to community development through their activities (ibid, p.37). This implies that engagement takes place in favor of the local communities such as supporting socio-economic development, respecting the environment and setting up communication processes with other local stakeholders (e.g. residents, businesses or NGO's). It is stated that these pro-active dialogues are essential for a company in order to establish good relations, enable communication, and to be aware of a community's needs and expectations (ibid). Consulting with local communities is seen as a way to build 'a local culture of sustainable development' (ibid, p.40). Thus, corporate engagement with local communities, as part of CSR, is considered a key issue for companies for creating acceptance from their local stakeholders in the community and for acting as a sustainable business in itself (ibid). It appears there are remarkable differences between interpretation and approaches that companies have within the context of CSR (Manteaw, 2007, p.429). This is illustrated by looking at the definition of CSR by the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, in which CSR is defined as: *"Commitment of business to contribute to sustainable development, working with employees, their families, the local community and society at large to improve their quality of life"* (WBCSD, 2000, p.10).

It is stated by Manteaw (2007) that if sustainable development concerns people and their quality of life, then companies should engage these local communities in action programmes and collaborative learning. The motivation behind these decisions is to empower these communities so they can decide over their own needs. In order to accomplish this goal, CSR by companies needs a bottom-up approach where local people can influence a company's decision-making and activities (Manteaw, 2007, p.441)

In sum, looking at the literature on CSR it can be claimed that there is a need to engage in dialogue with the local communities impacted by company activities. The expectations and demands of stakeholders within that community need to be addressed by companies who acknowledge the necessity to engage in community consultation or community participation to address their needs by allowing community members to influence decision-making and thus increasing the control over their living environment.

2.4 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE CORPORATE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT LITERATURE

Another part of the scientific literature discusses the term 'Corporate Community Involvement' (CCI). Where CSR refers to corporate activities that are compulsory to 'uphold' a CSR status, CCI involves a more philanthropic attitude of benefitting a society where one operates (Muthuri et al., 2009, p.431). CCI can be defined as: *"Corporations supporting the community by providing financial, material, or human skills through modes such as corporate donations, strategic philanthropy, employee volunteering, and community driven development" (Moon and Muthuri, 2006 in Muthuri, 2007, p.178).*

The term CCI is growing in importance as local communities are increasingly identified as important corporate stakeholders (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2003 in Muthuri, 2007, p.177) due to changes in the shifting roles that business and governments employ and the increasing responsibilities and expectations to companies by civil society (ibid). CCI is used by companies to demonstrate their goodwill towards the communities (or global society) affected by their operations by giving them something in return through benefits. It is stated in the CCI literature that there is a need for community participation in decision-making (Wheeler and Sillanpaa, 1997 in Muthuri et al., 2009, p.431) if communities truly want to benefit and avoid becoming a potential victim of placation of community needs (Rajak, 2006 in Muthuri, 2007, p.185). In this sense, community participation refers to the processes, mechanisms and opportunities in which the community as a stakeholder shapes decision-making in CCI programmes (Muthuri, 2007, p.186). Participatory approaches are considered important in order to develop capacity within a local community (ibid, p.188).

Although CCI is a concept often connected to companies in developing countries it is in general a scientific term for philanthropy towards a community one operates in and is also applicable to situations elsewhere such as this study's topic. In other words, an area visited by eco-tourists which is home to a local community and a public good. If an area becomes a tourist destination there will be inevitable effects on its local residents, businesses, and organizations. Although these effects differ between locations, the response from the affected community that follows may vary greatly depending on two aspects. First, there is the provision of benefits by an ecotourism operator to compensate for the effects caused by its operations. Second, and more importantly, there is the extent to which an ecotourism operator allows that community to influence its decision-making and thus listen to and integrate community demands and expectations in its operations.

If ecotourism operators choose not to re-distribute some of their benefits this could lead to a rejection by that community of tourism (development) which in turn negatively affects the tourist sector and the company itself. On the other hand, the choice for provision of benefits and opening consultation can lead to a host community that recognizes the advantages of the operator's presence, feels involved by participating and embraces the tourism activities which then positively affects an ecotourism operator and the tourist sector as a whole (Tourism Queensland, 2003). Due to these reasons, an ecotourism operator would ideally wish to grant benefits to a host community and consult with that community how they experience the effects of its operations on the environment (protecting the resource at stake) and on the community itself. To summarize, there are two reasons to engage in CCI. First, providing benefits and community participation is deemed 'smart' from a business point of view to prevent conflicts with locals and to ensure longevity. Second, in order to behave sustainably and thus socially responsible towards a community the business operates in, it is likewise essential to involve local stakeholders and the community in particular.

2.5 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND BENEFITS IN THE ECOTOURISM LITERATURE

In the reviewed scientific ecotourism literature, community involvement in decision-making mainly discusses involvement in decision-making by the government and not involvement in decision-making by the ecotourism industry (Bao and Sun, 2006; Timothy, 1999; Tosun, 2000; Garrod 2003; and Mbaiwa et al., 2011). Relevant government bodies seem to give more attention to these types of tasks that the ecotourism industry would fulfil (State of Queensland, 2002; Tourism Queensland, 2010).

Community involvement in the benefits also differs in the literature. A large part of the reviewed literature discusses the benefits that should arise if a community is marked as an ecotourism destination and mainly relates to the economic benefits and training opportunities which may result in more jobs (Pratwi, 2006, Timothy, 1999, Garrod, 2003). Another segment of the literature has a narrower scope and discusses how the established ecotourism sector should involve the wider community in the benefits, changing the scope from a community focus to a sector in that community. This form of benefits is usually more common in the ecotourism certification literature (Wood and Halpenny, 2001).

Two articles in the scientific literature are found that relate closer to the topic of this study as it addresses that the ecotourism industry should surpass involving the local community in the benefits of ecotourism alone (Kruger, 2005; Xue-Mei & Ji-Gang, 2004). It was found difficult to examine whether certain articles discussing community involvement also relate to the private sphere (the tourism industry). This is because authors often do not make it clear if the research addresses involvement by public actors, private actors (ecotourism operators) or both. With regard to this matter it should be noted that another part of the ecotourism literature concerns community-based ecotourism in which the community as a whole is usually the owner of one umbrella organization managing an ecotourism destination (Sproule, 2001; Kiss, 2004).

A comprehensive literature study in ecotourism is carried out by Kruger (2005) which explores 188 ecotourism case studies to determine how many of these contribute to environmental conservation and socio-economic benefits (ibid, p.586). The results show that the most important attainment of these two main goals is involving the local community during planning, decision-making or as a labor source which reduces the need for consumptive land-use by means of more revenue and a changing attitude towards conservation (ibid, p.593). The types of involvement and the extent to which these take place by certain actors are not described

thoroughly. The given types of involvement are very broad and range between being an employee in an ecotourism company to the point of shaping tourism in a destination. It is also unclear in which cases 'management and planning' relates to involvement in governmental decision-making or to the tourism industry as well. A strategic plan that displays the number of maximum tourists to be attracted and how the resources gained are distributed is given as the second most important reason for sustainable cases after community involvement (ibid pp.593-594). This can be interpreted as the necessity of community involvement in decision-making, for instance in how a business should cope with visitor numbers and how resources should be distributed towards the community.

Xue-Mei & Ji-Gang (2004) state that all stakeholders should analyze issues together in order for ecotourism as a concept to succeed and for all parties to adequately comprehend all potential advantages and disadvantages (ibid, p.83). Contrary to the other sources mentioned so far it makes a clear demarcation between the roles of each main player: government, tour operators, the local community, and eco-tourists (ibid). Thus, there exist precise ideas how tour operators should interact with the local community, and how the government should interact with the local community. A division between involvement in the benefits and involvement in decision-making is made and it is said that both play a necessary role (ibid, p.85). Regarding tour-operators it is mentioned that when these operators and their eco-tourists enter a natural region where a local community lives, the tour-operator becomes the main beneficiary of the environment while the community might endure negative impacts. In order for ecotourism operators to behave in a sustainable way and in accordance with the affected community they should not only benefit themselves. Also, if they choose to benefit the whole community it can avoid possible conflicts in the future (ibid, p.87). More precisely, operators should strive for a harmonious relationship with the local community, enable most of the employment locally and enable training opportunities (ibid, p.88). However, striving for a harmonious relationship is a broad concept. In order to reach a harmonious relationship you need to be aware of the opinions of community stakeholders and exchange views to explore how a harmonious relationship can be established. Thus, participation (involvement in decision-making) would seem necessary to accomplish this. It is further mentioned in their framework that the problems of unqualified community participation, contribution to the local community and education and information should not only be addressed by local governments but also by tour-operators for ecotourism to succeed (ibid, p.89).

2.6 SUMMARIZING THE LITERATURE ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

Table 2.1 provides an overview of the different types of literature discussed in this chapter and clarifies why community participation by ecotourism operators is thought of as a necessary (or beneficial) aspect.

Table 2.1: Overview of the literature concerning community participation		
Type of literature	**Author**	**Why participation is necessary or preferred**
Ecotourism	Leksakundilok (2006)	To create a sense of ownership and empower a local community's problem solving
	D'Amore (1983) in Timothy, (1999); Beetin (1998) in Garrod (2003)	To increase support of tourism activities
	Brandon (1993) in Garrod (2003)	To Increase chances to get involved in benefits
	Xue-Mei and Ji-Gang (2004)	To comprehend potential advantages and disadvantages

Table 2.1: Overview of the literature concerning community participation (continued)		
Type of literature	**Author**	**Why participation is necessary or preferred**
Ecotourism	Xue-Mei and Ji-Gang (2004)	To resolve unequal decision-making and strive for harmonious relationships
	Kruger (2005)	To reduce consumptive land-use and change the attitudes of locals on this matter.
Collaborative management	Borrini-Feyerabend (1996)	Because local interests are strongly affected by the operations taking place
		To enhance the capacities of local stakeholders
	Pinkerton (1981)	To protect the resource at stake
	Voinov and Bousquet (2010)	To create decisions with more success and less conflict
CSR	ORSE (2008)	To operate in a sustainable way
		To better understand expectations and needs of stakeholders
		To clarify the goal towards local issues
		To strengthen community development
		To establish good relations
	Manteaw, 2007)	To empower communities to decide over their own needs
		To increase responsibility regarding the social and environmental impacts of businesses
CCI	Muthuri (2007)	To demonstrate goodwill towards communities affected by their operations
		To create benefits that truly matter for the community at stake
	Rajak (2006) in Muthuri (2007)	in order for communities to truly benefit and avoid being a victim of placation of community needs

Summarizing the literature above into key components, several main claims are extracted explaining for what reasons participation is important or preferable:

1. To behave responsibly and in a sustainable way (RSE, 2008; Manteaw, 2007, Muthuri, 2007).
2. To decrease conflict (by creating harmonious relationships, understanding needs and generate support of tourism activities) (D'Amore, 1983 in Timothy, 1999; Beetin, 1998 in Garrod (2003; Xue-Mei and Ji-Gang, 2004; Voinov and Bousquet, 2010; ORSE, 2008).
3. To increase (the importance of) benefits for the local community: Brandon, 1993 in Garrod, 2003; Muthuri, 2007; Rajak, 2006 in Muthuri, 2007).
4. To empower local communities (Leksakundilok, 2006; Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996; ORSE, 2008, Manteaw, 2007
5. To protect the resource at stake (Kruger, 2005; Pinkerton, 1989)

3. METHOD

This chapter discusses the methodological aspects of this study. First the qualitative approach is discussed followed by the variables and their operationalization (the typology of community participation in the first column (a) of the research strategy is addressed here). Next, the selection and description of the case and research units is given. To conclude, it is made transparent how the research data is collected, which research ethics are considered and the research strategy and data analysis deployed.

3.1 CHOOSING A QUALITATIVE OR QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH STRATEGY

Much is written about the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. It is frequently debated in which case the one is more suited than the other, and there are arguably also circumstances where a combination of both is considered as necessary. With regard to a clear distinction among the two terms and its situation-specific use there is ambiguity as some writers regard it as a fundamental contrast and others see the comparison as something which is not useful or false (Bryman, 2008, p.21). Nevertheless several reasons are given in this paragraph to justify the research strategy (the general orientation for conducting social research) (ibid, p.22) of this study which applies a qualitative method.

The most obvious difference between the two strategies is that quantitative research tends to be concerned with numbers and qualitative research with words. In broad terms quantitative research emphasizes quantification in collecting and analyzing data and entails a deductive approach with an accent on testing theories (ibid). It also incorporates the practices and norms from the natural scientific model, particularly positivism. Furthermore it views social reality as an objective and external reality (ibid).

Qualitative research is a strategy that emphasizes words rather than quantification when collecting and analyzing data, entailing an inductive approach with an emphasis on generating theories rather than testing theories (ibid). It rejects the practices and norms of the natural scientific model, especially positivism, but places an emphasis on how individuals interpret their social world. Furthermore, it holds a view of social reality which is constantly shifting (ibid). Contrary to quantitative researchers looking for causal claims, generalization and predictions, qualitative researchers seek understanding, illumination and extrapolation to situations which are similar (Golafshani, 2003, p.598). Qualitative research in that sense is useful if only limited research is available on a certain topic.

A qualitative case study is chosen for this research since the main aim of this study is to illuminate how ecotourism operators shape community involvement. This type of research is deemed necessary since hardly any information exists about how this phenomenon occurs in practice. The case study in itself is chosen due to the profound and full insight that a case study can offer (Verschuren en Doorewaard, 2010, p.178) which is necessary to understand and illuminate how involvement takes place. This case study uses an 'embedded case study' with one local community as the 'case' in which several 'sub-cases' (ecotourism operators) are investigated. A strategic sample is used in selecting the case and research units which is discussed in paragraph 3.3.

3.2 THE VARIABLES AND THEIR OPERATIONALIZATION APPLIED IN THIS RESEARCH

The goal of this study is to investigate how ecotourism operators shape community participation and involvement in benefits arising from ecotourism in practice. It is not aimed to establish causal claims. As such, the terms 'dependent variable' and 'independent variable' do not apply in this research context.

3.2.1 OPERATIONALIZING ECOTOURISM OPERATORS

Ecotourism operators can employ a variety of experiences and interests. An 'ecotourism operator' in this study is an operator conducting ecotourism tours. A definition of an ecotourism operator is constructed which reads as follows: *"A business which provides tours with a focus on nature where there is an inevitable interaction between the local community, the operator and the eco-tourists visiting the area."*

3.2.2 OPERATIONALIZING A LOCAL COMMUNITY

In paragraph 2.1 the definition of a local community is already introduced, namely: *"Groups in a destination... such as permanent residents, local businesses and other interest groups (State of Queensland, 2002, p.29)".* In order to gather data which represents responses from the local community it is necessary to operationalize a local community. Doing so requires a subdivision of (local) stakeholders that have an interest in that community. A stakeholder is in this research is defined as: *"A person, group, or organization that has a direct or indirect stake in an organization because it can affect or be affected by the organization's actions, objectives, and policies" (Business Dictionary, 2012).*

It will be elaborated upon in paragraph 3.4 that the local community in this research is composed of seven stakeholder groups. One group comprises the tourism businesses (including the ecotourism operators themselves). Another group consists of two tourism associations present in the Daintree Coast. These two groups are referred to as the 'tourism industry' of the Daintree Coast. The remaining five groups are not part of the tourism industry and represent the non-tourism community in the Daintree Coast.

3.2.3 OPERATIONALIZING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
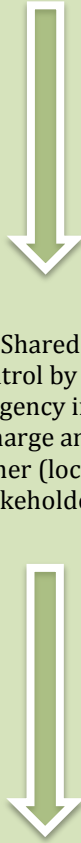
In paragraph 2.2 the following definition of community involvement is given, which reads: *"Involving groups in a destination, such as permanent residents, local businesses and other interest groups, in the benefits of ecotourism, planning, decision-making and/or management aspects."* For the operationalization of community involvement a division is made between two dimensions: 'involvement in decision-making' and 'involvement in the benefits'. As previously stated, this division is common in the scientific literature (Li, 2006; Bao and Sun, 2006; Timothy, 1999; Tosun, 2000; Garrod 2003; Mbaiwa et al., 2011). The former implies a higher degree of involvement where people in a community are involved in the decision-making process by the ecotourism operator and can play an influencing role on these matters. The 'involvement in benefits' on the other hand implies a receiving role with a lower degree of involvement which does not necessarily require any form of influence by the community contrary to involvement in decision-making. Although the word 'involvement' encompasses both, the term 'participation' is only applied if there is a higher form of involvement (Garrod, 2003, p.34). Therefore involvement in decision-making is also referred to as 'participation'.

Operationalizing community participation

Participation is operationalized by looking at the various degrees or types of influence that an ecotourism operator provides for local stakeholders that in sum represent a community. Several typologies are identified in the scientific literature representing a 'ladder of participation' (e.g. Arnstein, 1969; Leksakundilok, 2006; Pretty, 1995). However, these typologies are more applicable when analyzing a situation from a governmental decision-making point of view contrary to one of an ecotourism operator. Therefore, a typology suitable for private actors is applied, namely Borrini-Feyerabend's (1996) typology of collaborative management which is used in other (eco-) tourism studies as well (Islam, 2009; Mohd et al., 2008; Selin, 2009; Yates et al., 2010). In this research this 'ladder of participation' is used from the ecotourism operator's point of view to determine the degree of participation per local stakeholder. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the degrees of participation that can take place and their operationalization.

Table 3.1: A typology of participation (Source: Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996, pp.16-23)			
Form of participation (low to high)	**Terms**	**Meaning**	**Operationalization**
Full control by the agency in charge ⬇ Shared control by the agency in charge and other (local) stakeholders ⬇ Full control by other (local) stakeholders	Ignoring	Ignoring capacities and interests of (local) stakeholders and minimize the relationship with the area of concern	Are (local) stakeholders ignored as potential stakeholders in the ecotourism operator operations and decision-making?
	Informing	Informing (local) stakeholders on relevant issues and decisions	Are (local) stakeholders provided with information on the events that take place by the ecotourism operator in their operational area?
	Actively consulting	Consulting with (local) stakeholders on the relevant issues and decisions	Are (local) stakeholders actively consulted on the relevant issues and decisions from the ecotourism operator? (e.g. by means of annual meetings or forums)
	Seeking consensus	Seeking consensus on the relevant issues and decisions	Is it attempted by the ecotourism operator to establish a general agreement with (local) stakeholders regarding the relevant issues and decisions from the ecotourism venture?
	Negotiating	Negotiation takes place on an open basis (effective involved in the decision-making process) and specific agreements are developed.	Do negotiations take place where (representatives of) (local) stakeholders are involved in a decision-making process in which the goal is to develop specific agreements on how the ecotourism operator operates, and thus affecting authority of the ecotourism operator
	Sharing authority and responsibility in a formal way	Other (local) stakeholders have authority. A full range of management matters are discussed, and take place in a formal way such as seats in a management body.	Do (local) stakeholders share authority (and responsibility) in a formal way, in which they can influence all aspects of the ecotourism operator management?
	Transferring authority and responsibility	Other (local) stakeholders control (most or) all of the decision-making affecting management and responsibility.	Do (local) stakeholders have the majority or full control over management and responsibility decisions within the ecotourism operator?

Another way in which participation is determined is by looking at the types of activities (methods) used to facilitate participation. Examples are to use local forums, council meetings or establish meetings or workshops themselves where community members are invited to participate (Ecotourism Australia, 2003).

Operationalizing involvement in the benefits

Involvement in the benefits may encompass a variety of actions in which an ecotourism operator positively contributes to a local community. It is common in the ecotourism literature to use indicators for such assessments (Ross and Wall, 1999, p. 126). The same method is applied here by using the indicators found in the scientific literature to operationalize 'involvement in the benefits'. An overview of these indicators is provided in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Indicators and operationalization of the variable 'involvement in the benefits'	
Indicator	**Operationalization** (by finding examples shown below)
Employment	Increased employment opportunities
Direct revenue distribution	Projects or regulations regarding direct distribution of revenues
Indirect revenue distribution	Utilizing local products, services or materials and providing room for increased tourism spending
Infrastructure	Projects to improve the local infrastructure e.g. transportation, communications, access to and provisions of goods and services
Healthcare	Projects to improve (access to) local healthcare
Education	Projects to improve (access to) local education
Training	Providing training opportunities
Intercultural	Projects to enhance intercultural relations between tourists and the local community.
Increasing self-sufficiency	Project to increase the capacity of (local) stakeholders to benefit and participate without support in the ecotourism sector.
Nature	Aiding conservation initiatives

The information from table 3.2 is derived from: Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1994, pp. 19-22; Buckley and Pannell, 1990; Pigram and Jenkins, 1999; Buckley, 2000 in Jenkins and Wearing (2003); Braman & FAA, 2001; Cottrell, 2001; Koningen, 1996; Place, 1998; Scheyvens, 2000; Tisdell, 1996; WTO, 1992 in Koens (2003); Koens et al. (2009); Kruger, (2005); Ross and Wall (1999); Subramaniam, (2008); Taylor et al. (2006).

3.3 SELECTING THE CASE AND RESEARCH UNITS

This research is quasi-experimental since several control variables are applied to select the case and the research units. This is done in order to locate a research area which indicates the most favoring characteristics of an area where ecotourism operators would engage in community participation and provide benefits to that community. Several reasons are given below for the selection of the country (Australia), state (Queensland), and community (Daintree Coast).

First, a number of criteria are taken into account regarding the country to conduct this research. This country should be known for a leading role in ecotourism best-practices by serving as an example for others to follow. Also, government guidance in ecotourism is said to play an important role as a foundation for ecotourism to result in success (Wearing and Neil, 2009). By choosing a country in which clearly defined government roles and coordination are presumably already in place, a clearer link can be established with the importance of community participation by ecotourism operators. Australia is deemed most suited as a country resembling these favoring characteristics for several reasons. To begin with, Australia has its own National

Ecotourism Strategy stating that the natural environment should be managed in an ecologically sustainable way and that appropriate returns to the local community and assuring their welfare is a long-term goal (Herath, 1997, p.442). Furthermore, Australian ecotourism operators seem to serve as a best practice example for ecotourism in developing countries in the Pacific region (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2009).

Second, with regard to the motivation for the choice of the specific area within Australia, a state was selected that shows a leading role by being an eco-tourism frontrunner. Particularly, best practice cases were examined that indicated the presence of operators who engage in community participation and involving them in the benefits. The State of Queensland is presumed most suited for several reasons. It is the first state to develop and commence an ecotourism plan in 1997 and currently has an ecotourism plan developed in consultation with the ecotourism sector and communities (State of Queensland, 2002, p.6-8). This plan contains several responsibilities for ecotourism operators to involve the local community in decision-making and benefits (ibid, p.31). Also, a new ecotourism plan is currently being developed showing its commitment to ecotourism best practices (DestinationQ, 2012). Furthermore, ecotourism is an important sector of this state's economy and it aims to create long-term partnerships between ecotourism operators and local communities (ibid, p.7).

Third, a local community is chosen based on several criteria as well. Most importantly, there need to be sufficient ecotourism operators conducting tours in order to increase the likelihood of finding sufficient data on community participation and benefits. It is also important that the community experiences effects of ecotourism products, as being affected guarantees that the community could be considered a main stakeholder that the operator would to take into account. Preferably ecotourism is an important sector in order to increase chances for salience (Kruger, 2005) and harmonious relationships. Based on these criteria a suitable location for this study is selected with help of Ecotourism Australia, an Australian organization specialized in certifying players from the ecotourism industry. In order to maximize the chances of finding the requested research units, one criterion is added to this list; only ecotourism operators which hold an eco-label certificate are selected as research units. This is due to the certification requirements involving the need for participation and provision of benefits. The Daintree Coast community fulfills all these criteria and is thus selected as the case to conduct this research. By applying all these criteria it is expected that if participation occurs in practice, this would be the place to look.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

A literature review and qualitative interviews are the two methods used in this research to generate the necessary data to answer the main research question.

3.4.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

A wide collection of literature is reviewed in order to identify the knowledge gap that is the foundation of this study and to explore cases related to community involvement and ecotourism. First, scientific literature is examined to identify the theory current state of knowledge regarding community participation and ways in which a community can take part in an ecotourism experience. Also examples of how a community can receive benefits are investigated to operationalize this variable. The electronic databases of *Scopus* and *Google Scholar* are used to find this information. Second, the database of *Sustainable Tourism CRC* is used to increase knowledge on examples in practice regarding how ecotourism is shaped as a sector in Australia

and which examples of community participation are known. The goal is to get familiar with relevant issues and the language used in the field which can be applied in the interviews.

3.4.2 QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

Conducting interviews is the primary research method for data collection in this study. Guidelines for interviewing in qualitative research are adopted from Bryman (2008). Qualitative interviews are less structured compared to quantitative surveys and allows greater room for respondents own perspectives. The emphasis is on the interviewee's point of view and the researcher needs to be flexible and able to respond in the direction the respondent takes the interview (ibid, p.437). The overall aim is to generate rich and detailed answers. Since the topic of this research is clear, namely community involvement, it is advised to use semi-structured interviews that provide in-depth knowledge (ibid, p.439). This type of interview covers a list of questions related to the topic in which the respondent has room to reply. This is also referred to as an 'interview guide' where questions not included in the original questionnaire may be picked up in the conversation as a reply to answers given by a respondent (ibid, p.438).

A list of basic elements proposed by Kvale (1996) is taken into account to prepare the interviews. Examples are to use words which are known to the respondents, being familiar with the focus of the interview, not to ask leading questions, be clear and gentle, purchasing a good-quality recording machine, and most importantly listening to the respondents in an active way without being too intrusive (Kvale, 1996 in Bryman, 2008, pp.445-447). In order to generate a proper semi-structured interview several types of questions are taken into account based on Kvale (1996). Each interview starts with a short introduction for what reasons the interview is conducted and that if preferred anonymity is guaranteed. Next, an introducing question is asked to allow the respondent to tell about his or her business such as *"How did your interest in X come about?"* The order of the following types of questions varies depending on the interviewee responses. In each interview the closing question is asked *"Is there something you would like to add or something which I missed to ask?"* to decrease chances that relevant information is missed.

Approach and characteristics regarding ecotourism operators

An email was send from the Netherlands to 15 ecotourism operators conducting tours in the research area, comprising the reasons for conducting this study, getting a short glimpse of how participation is shaped and the question to participate in an interview. Eight operators responded of which four operators were willing to participate. Eventually, five other operators also participated which were contacted by telephone in Australia. The questionnaire for ecotourism operators is divided into four sections; an introduction, a section about community participation, a section about how the community receives benefits, and closing questions to conclude the interview. In collaboration with a local expert familiar with ecotourism and the research area, the original questionnaire was revised in order to conduct these interviews in a timeframe of 1.5 hour and still generate the necessary data. This questionnaire is attached in Appendix 1. Time was invested to make sure interviews took place face-to-face. This type of interview is better suited in situations where more time is needed and allows the possibility to observe body language in response to questions (Bryman, 2008, p.457). A possible downside is that prompting sensitive questions can be less effective since the interviewer is physically present (ibid). Conducting face-to-face interviews succeeded in all nine cases and the length of these interviews varied between one hour and three hours, dependent on the time given by an ecotourism operator. In seven cases it took about 1.5 to 2 hours. In six cases interviews are conducted with the owner of the ecotourism venture. In three cases it involved an employee familiar with the relations between the ecotourism venture and the local community.

Furthermore a list to learn about the general characteristics of the operator and its business is used to help contextualize the answers that people give. This list is attached in appendix 2. In order to provide a certain degree of anonymity it is not possible to link each operator individually with these characteristics. However some general statements can be given. Of the nine operators, six operators started operating in the Daintree Coast between 1981 and 1990 and three operators purchased an already existing ecotourism business and started their operations between 2003 and 2010. Two operators can be described as performing "ecotourism coach-tours" and these are larger organizations that transport eco-tourists to the Daintree Coast next to providing the tour itself. However, most of the operators (seven) are considered small businesses with a fulltime workforce varying between three and seven people. Six have their business located within the Daintree Coast community and three operators are located in Cairns, which is a larger city about 120 kilometers south of the region. Every operator considers itself an ecotourism operator and conduct one or more tours within the borders of the Daintree Coast community. These tours vary between experiences in public areas (five) and those in private areas (four). Seven operators provide experiences to eco-tourists based on land and two operators offer water-based experiences. In each case the Daintree Coast community experiences to some extend the effects of being an ecotourism destination whether it is by public areas being used as part of a tour or by eco-tourists visiting their community before or after a tour takes place.

Approach and characteristics regarding community groups

There are two reasons why representatives of community groups that reside or have a stake in the community are interviewed. First, it allows to check whether statements made by ecotourism operators concerning participation and benefits are trustworthy. Second, it provides the opportunity to learn from community groups how they experience the way participation takes place, whether they are happy with the benefits they receive and it enables to get a hold of their opinion about ecotourism as a sector in general. The set-up of these interviews is similar to those of ecotourism operators. A small introduction is given followed by an open question about that group or organization. Next, it is asked in what ways they benefit from ecotourism (operators) and to verify claims (about re-distribution of benefits) made by ecotourism operators. After that, questions are prompted how participation takes place, how this is experienced and if these community groups would like to see it differently. To conclude a closing question is asked if there is something to add to this interview. This questionnaire is attached in Appendix 3.

Apart from the tourism industry, five stakeholder groups are involved in this research. Two groups relate to public services within the community and comprise a primary school and a health center. Two conservation groups are found that operate within the Daintree Coast. One is a local environmental group conducting operations in the region and the other is a larger national group located in the area and conducting several programs. One non-profit organization is also identified which is involved in natural resource management in the Daintree Coast regarding land-management. In each case one representative with local experience and awareness of the relations with the tourism industry is interviewed. In this research, these five groups combined represent the non-tourism community in the Daintree Coast. Each community group is identified by results from interviews with ecotourism operators, suggestions from colleagues or by exploring the research area. From each group one representative is interviewed. Every respondent is contacted by telephone first to ask for the willingness to participate. Four face-to-face interviews are conducted and in one case two telephone interviews due to time constraints of the respondent. These groups are referred to as 'stakeholders' in the remaining part of this study.

To clarify, in total the Daintree Coast community represents seven groups in this research. Five groups relate to the non-tourism community in the Daintree Coast, and two groups comprise the tourism industry, namely, tourism businesses (including the ecotourism operators themselves) and the tourism associations. The people who are a member of these associations or those acting as head of these organizations are also interviewed as they comprise the ecotourism operators in this research.

3.5 CONSIDERED RESEARCH ETHICS

Conducting this research in an ethical way towards respondents is seen as an important aspect of any scientific study, since it is impossible to conduct this study without the willingness of respondents to participate. Every respondent is informed about the purpose of this study and has the right to choose whether he or she participates or not. Each interview starts with stating that if preferred anonymity is guaranteed to protect personal data. Further, it was communicated (to the interviewee) that collected data through interviews is used for this research alone.

3.6 ANALYSING THE DATA

It is common for qualitative data derived from interviews to represent a large bulk of unstructured textual material which is not straightforward to analyze (Bryman, 2008, p.538). Clear rules to analyze this data do not exist, but some general approaches do (ibid). The important factor to take into account is avoiding to be captivated by the wealth of collected data which limits the ability to conduct a true analysis, (Bryman, 2008, p.538). Therefore approaches found in grounded theory, namely coding and iterative analysis, are used in this study to overcome these issues. Each interview is recorded into a digital format and is investigated again at least once. Software is used to increase efficiency in transcribing data. All the data useful for this study is written down in fragments consisting of one or multiple sentences. To make sense of the data 'coding' is used when converting audio into textual material. 'Coding' in qualitative research is the process where the data is broken down into components that each have a specific name (ibid, p.691-692).

3.6.1   ANALYSIS REGARDING ECOTOURISM OPERATORS

Table 3.3 depicts the 'codes' applied to the data retrieved from ecotourism operators in this study. It is common in qualitative data analysis to use an 'iterative approach', meaning that there is interplay between collecting and analyzing data (Bryman, 2008, p.539) which also occurred in this study. Four codes were already in place for the first three interviews. After these interviews the data is analyzed resulting in five additional codes (seen in table 3.3) as they appeared to play an influencing role to the study's topic. A second document is made containing every exact sentence discussing community participation and involvement in the benefits by ecotourism operators. The reason for this is to avoid misinterpretation in time due to altering these sentences and it allows a quick way of investigating statements multiple times. It also provides an opportunity to use quotes to strengthen the analysis. After interviewing three additional ecotourism operators another analysis is conducted that resulted in no additional coding. Finally, the remaining three operators are interviewed and a third and final analysis is made.

Table 3.3: Coding in the interviews from ecotourism operators	
Initial codes	
Code	**Content**
Community participation	Ways in which individuals, groups or businesses in the Daintree Coast receive a possibility to influence decisions by ecotourism operators
Community involvement	Examples where individuals, groups or businesses from a community receive benefits from an ecotourism operator
Ethos	Statements that represent how an ecotourism operator thinks about how it should behave towards a community and the natural environment and why
Certification	All the data relating to why an ecotourism operator is certified. Influences due to certification and the opinion about the certification product in itself.
Added codes	
Code	**Content**
Government	All the data referring to government actions affecting an ecotourism operator
Global financial crisis	All the data referring to (changed) experiences which were given as the effect of the financial downturn by an ecotourism operator
Mutual benefits*	A situation in which an individual, group or business from a community receives a benefit and where the ecotourism operator acknowledges it helps them as well.
Pro-active*	A situation where the ecotourism operator takes a first step to engage in community participation or community involvement
Reactive*	A situation where the ecotourism operator reacts to a individual, group or business from the community to engage in community participation or community involvement

*In this sense, the codes 'community involvement' and 'community participation' were subdivided into three other codes (mutual benefits, pro-active, and reactive, to allow a deeper analysis of the data.

3.6.2   ANALYSIS REGARDING COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Analyzing the data is done in a similar way for data derived from representatives of community groups. Four codes were already in place (listed in table 3.4.) during the first two interviews. After the first analysis a high differences between 'outside' operators (those not residing in the Daintree Coast) and local operators became apparent. As such, a separate code was made and more attention towards this topic is given in following interviews. After interviewing the remaining three community groups the second and final analysis is made.

Table 3.4: Coding used for analyzing data derived from interviews with community groups.	
Initial codes	
Code	**Content**
Benefits received	Every example of a benefit received by the actions of ecotourism operators either pro-active or reactive
Preferences about benefits	Statements reflecting the opinion about the extent to which that group is satisfied about the benefits received by ecotourism operators
Experiences in community participation	Examples in which a community group influenced an ecotourism operator's decision-making, either pro-active or reactive
Preferences about community participation	Statements reflecting the opinion about the extent to which that group is satisfied about being involved in an ecotourism operator's decision-making
Added codes	
Code	**Content**
Outside operators	Experiences with participation and benefits related to operators that reside outside of their community but do conduct tours there

After all the interviews with community groups and ecotourism operators are conducted, the analyzed data is operationalized. For community participation this means that the responses are categorized according to the typology of Borrini-Feyerabend (1996) depicted in table 3.1 and ways in which community participation is facilitated (e.g. local forums) (§ 3.2.3). Regarding 'involvement in the benefits', the findings are grouped under the different categories depicted in table 3.2 (§ 3.2.3).

Figure 3.1 exemplifies the steps taken in this research regarding the second column (b) of the research framework in figure 1.1 (§ 1.4). In sum, this starts with conducting and transcribing interviews (step 1 to 2), using an interactive approach in data analysis (step 3 to 7-9), and finally to combine and operationalize the findings and draw conclusions (step 10 to 11). When these steps are completed it is possible to move to the third column (c) of the research framework, by reflecting the conclusions with the theory, thus identifying the concurrence and overlap between theory and practice.
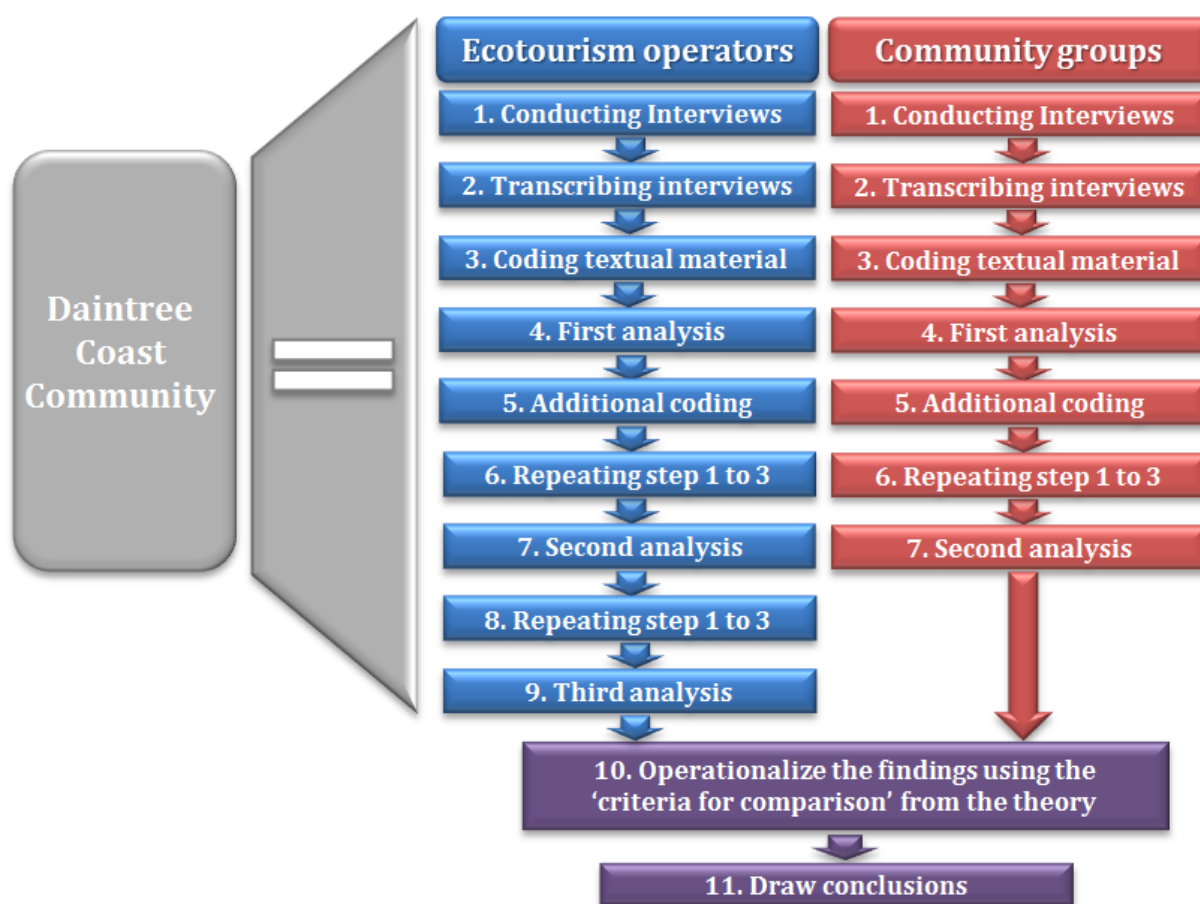
Figure 3.1: Data analysis using an iterative approach

4. BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH AREA

This chapter provides a short introduction to the research area by discussing its history and current practices. Next, the policy guidelines by the State of Queensland are reviewed regarding community participation and provision of benefits in ecotourism, followed by the certification criteria of Ecotourism Australia that apply to the ecotourism operators under study. These findings represent the last part of the literature study in the first column (a) of the research framework.

4.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH AREA

The Daintree Coast Community is a small region about 120 kilometers north of Cairns in Tropical North Queensland, Australia. The settlement of the region started in the early 1880s. During that time the main industry involved agriculture which later changed into timber and cattle. Infrastructure was put in place in 1956, connecting the area to the south by means of a ferry, and a dirt road was put in place in 1963 to connect with regions up north. (DCCI, 2002)

In 1980 the timber industry was the main economic sector but things changed drastically when the World Wilderness Congress was held in Cairns the same year. Due to increased awareness of the environment, protests began to take place in October 1981 at Mount Windsor Tableland in the Daintree involving blockades against logging practices. The issue of logging in rainforests became a major new issue late 1983 when the Dougles Shire Council, supported by the Queensland Government, decided to construct a 32-km road between Cape Tribulation (a suburb in the Daintree Coast) and Bloomsfield (a region up north), through a recently declared national park (Cairns Post, 2002). In December 1983, bulldozers arrived to commence with the construction of the road. Many protesters arrived who constructed a headquarters, climbed trees, chained themselves to trees, or just buried themselves in the ground (Destination Daintree, 2011). It did not take long before the Daintree became an icon of "conservation vs. logging". The protest movement gained continued strength through the 1980s and resulted in some of the angriest confrontations in the Cairns region up until today. The road was finished, but eventually in 1988 the Hawke Labor Government sought a World Heritage Listing of rainforests which was granted the same year (Cairns Post, 2002).

Today about 500 inhabitants reside in the Daintree Coast (Tourism Daintree Coast, 2011) living in a number of suburbs, namely: Forest Creek, Cape Kimberly, Cow Bay, Alexandra Bay, Diwan, Thorthon Beach, Noah, Cape Tribulation. The area is not connected to the main power grid and is only accessible by a ferry from the south, and by 4WD cars from the north. The area is internationally recognized as an area of beauty and diversity, encompassing two World Heritage Areas; the Wet Tropics Rainforest and The Great Barrier Reef. It is the most diverse rainforest of Australia and home to numerous rare or threatened plants and species (Destination Daintree, 2011a). Due to these characteristics the Daintree Coast evolved into a nature tourism and ecotourism community known for its diversity in environmental scenery and wildlife (ibid). Apart from a banana and tea plantation, tourism is the only and main economic sector of the area.

4.2 POLICY PRACTICES FOR QUEENSLAND'S ECOTOURISM INDUSTRY

The government of Queensland was the first of six states of the Commonwealth of Australia to develop and commence an ecotourism plan in 1997 (State of Queensland, 2002, p.6). The current ecotourism plan called 'Queensland Ecotourism Plan 2003-2008: Sustainable Tourism in Queensland's Natural Areas' (hereafter 'Plan') was developed in 2002 and serves as a framework to plan, develop, manage and market ecotourism in Queensland (ibid). The Plan serves as a blueprint regarding the state's current guiding principles on how ecotourism operators should behave in relation to their local communities where they conduct tourism activities (ibid, p.3). There is no legal foundation that requires them to comply with it, thus the Plan is not necessary a tool to accelerate change of behavior. However, the ECO Certification Program which is discussed in the following paragraph serves as an instrument for Queensland government to incorporate the principles in daily practice.

The current definition of ecotourism by the State of Queensland goes as follows: *"Ecotourism encompasses a spectrum of nature-based activities that foster visitor appreciation and understanding of natural and cultural heritage and are managed to be ecologically, economically and socially sustainable" (State of Queensland, 2002, p.5).* In addition it is stated that *"Achieving social and cultural sustainability will require that tourism operators involve the local community in the development and management of their tourism ventures,…" (State of Queensland, 2002, p.31).*

It is mentioned that by involving the community in development and management, tourism operations can ensure that the local community receives genuine benefits from tourism occurring in their living environment. These benefits need to include employment, stimulating the use of local goods and services, providing beneficial infrastructure, put effort into conservation and management of the local environment and realizing a sense of pride for community members (State of Queensland, 2002, p.31). More aimed towards cultural sustainability, it is emphasized that ecotourism operators should present interpretative programs and activities to tourists. Thus, promoting the relation between tourists and local residents with the aim to develop a better understanding of local lifestyle and culture and ensuring respect for the host community, especially concerning indigenous culture (ibid).

One of the five key objectives in the Plan is community development. This objective recognizes that communities need to have both input in tourism development and ownership of tourism in their living area and must benefit directly from any local and regional tourism development. Therefore, the focus is given on establishing and maintaining partnerships between the ecotourism industry and the local communities (ibid, p.26). The 'ecotourism industry' encompasses ecotourism operators and their relevant industry associations (ibid, p.17). Concerning community involvement, the ecotourism industry should incorporate the following actions in order to accomplish this key objective:

- facilitate greater community involvement in planning and development;
- reflect community needs in ecotourism management, planning and development;
- increase contributions to conservation and communities from the ecotourism industry;
- establish partnerships with conservation organizations and Aboriginal Torrent Strait Islander (ATSI) groups to achieve common goals. (ibid)

In addition to the Plan, there is a statutory body called 'Tourism Queensland'. Their role concerns destination management, industry development and marketing (Tourism Queensland, 2010a). The given practices and guidelines encompass similar aspirations as those mentioned in the Plan. Ecotourism operators should engage in direct consultation with the community, especially in the planning stages of a business (Tourism Queensland, 2010). The aim is to

operate in harmony with the aspirations of the host community which represents 'best-practice'. The attitude, resources and strategic thinking of ecotourism operators is considered essential (Tourism Queensland, 2010). Tourism Queensland even produced a manual called '*Working with Communities – A Guide for Tourism Operators'.* This guide clearly states that operators need to engage in community consultation since it is the key to achieve mutually beneficial and sustainable outcomes. It also refers to ways of enabling consultation such as local events or open days (Tourism Queensland, 2003, p.7).

In sum, the Queensland government sees it as the responsibility of ecotourism operators to involve local communities in their development, planning, and management and to provide a flow of benefits to these communities. These guidelines resemble a similar request for community participation as identified in the scientific literature. The ultimate aim of the government is that ecotourism operators create partnerships with their local communities. However, some aspects remain unclear. First, it is unclear to what extent local communities should participate in the decision-making to reflect their needs (form of participation). The word 'partnerships' is mentioned but not elaborated upon what it actually means. Second, it is unclear which type of 'medium' operators should use to enable participation and become aware of local needs and expectations (e.g. local forums, council meetings, or open days). The information provided by Tourism Queensland is more clear on these aspects by advising the extent of participation that should take place (consultation) and mediums to enable consultation (e.g. local events or open days). Although there are clear provisions outlined in the Plan which likely fosters its application, in the end there is no liability insurance in place to force compliance by ecotourism operators.

4.3 CRITERIA FOR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE NATIONAL ECO CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

As stated before, the Queensland Government sees the ECO Certification Program as an instrument for operators to comply with their principles (State of Queensland, 2002). Every operator investigated in this study is accredited in the national ECO Certification Program, a program by Ecotourism Australia (EA). If an operator receives certification it can display the ECO logo showcasing its commitment towards environmental sustainability, economic viability, and social and cultural responsibility (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2009, p.1). However, several requirements need to be met relating to community involvement and participation in order to carry the ECO certification logo. First it is important to illustrate the levels of certification and the definition of ecotourism which goes as follows: *"Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation" (Ecotourism Australia, 2012).*

This definition itself seems to lack a clear aspect of social sustainability compared to the definition of Queensland Government. However on the website of EA it is noted that the 'ultimate' definition of ecotourism complies with executing all the criteria in the ECO Certification Program (Ecotourism Australia, 2012). The ECP is based upon criteria reflecting environmental, economic and social principles of sustainability. It holds three levels of certification and from low to high these levels are; 'Nature Tourism', 'Ecotourism' and 'Advanced Ecotourism'. Of the ecotourism operators involved in this research, seven are 'Advanced Ecotourism', one is 'Ecotourism', and one is 'Nature tourism'.

- 'Nature tourism' encompasses business and environmental assessment criteria only,
- 'Ecotourism' also involves social, cultural and interpretation/education criteria, and
- 'Advanced Ecotourism' involves an additional compliance to 75% of additional 'advanced criteria' (Ecotourism Australia, 2012a, p.1).

There are several criteria that relate to 'community involvement' for operators to comply with. These criteria concern local 'mainstream'[4] communities and are derived from two chapters of the ECP[5], namely: 'Contribution to Conservation' and 'Working with Local Communities' (Ecotourism Australia, 2012, pp.9-10). Table 4.1 displays these criteria for tour operators with 'ecotourism' (B) and 'advanced ecotourism' (A) accreditation. Criteria that surpass involvement in the benefits and imply an exchange of views at a minimum are marked blue.

Table 4.1: Aspects of community involvement in the ECP Program (Source: Ecotourism Australia, 2003).		
Criteria for providing local benefits	**B**	**A**
Local residents are employed in some aspect of the product.	x	x
Products (such as food or drinks) are locally purchased.	x	x
Services (such as maintenance or repairs) are locally purchased.	x	x
Materials and services used for maintenance and construction are obtained by means of local sources (if available and environmentally responsible).	x	x
Local guides are employed to provide training or to present local sites.		x
Regional food and/or wine are part of an ecotourism experience.		x
Customers are given the opportunity to buy local products.		x
Criteria for minimizing impact on local communities	**B**	**A**
If applicable, the following aspects are briefed to customers in accordance with the local lifestyle: acceptable clothing; use of language; restricted areas; interacting with objects; taking photographs; appropriate behavior.	x	x
Community resources which are scarce are used to a minor extent.	x	x
Within the last year local community representatives have been asked (formally) how they experience the effects of the operation on their community and what their impressions were.		x
Within the last year local community representatives were informed of relevant changes to the product before these changes were implemented.		x
Criteria for community involvement	**B**	**A**
Concrete support or participation was recently offered to a non-profit organization or event which contributed to the local community's welfare.	x	x
A discount is recently offered to a local resident group, school or special interest group.	x	x
A minimum of one (B) or two (A) of the following was recently given to local resident(s): free training; work experience for residing student(s); access to equipment for job applications; advice for job applications; mentoring for career development.	x	x
An operation's representative recently participated in at least one (B) or two (A) of the following which related to a local issue or initiative: attending a meeting; attending a seminar or workshop; writing a letter or submission.	x	x
Contribution to conservation: Local conservation initiatives	**B**	**A**
In the past year a minimum of five (B) or eight (A) of the following are realized by the operator: providing a donation or sponsorship for a local conservation group; promoting a conservation group or their initiatives; engage in a partnership with a conservation group; providing concession rates to schools or other bodies that study environmental conservation; financial, physical or in-kind support for conservation work in a natural not used by the operator itself.	x	x
In the past year a local conservation group is invited to participate in the product offered and provided feedback on the contribution to environmental conservation.		x

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[4] Additional criteria apply for indigenous communities. However these criteria are not displayed in this study since the research area concerns a 'mainstream' community

[5] A newer version of the program is released in 2012, however this document could not be obtained and a telephone interview revealed no relevant differences in criteria.

In sum, it can be concluded that ecotourism operators (that are 'ecotourism' or 'advanced ecotourism' accredited) should involve the local community in the benefits derived from ecotourism. It is further expected that support or participation is being offered to contribute to the welfare of the community, and that participation takes place in one or more local issues or initiatives. For 'advanced ecotourism' operators the level of involvement is expected to be higher. These businesses should formally ask community representatives how they are impacted by their operations and how they experience this. Thus, there is the expectation to involve community representatives in their management aspects which may refer to how operations are shaped and how the benefits are distributed, implying an involvement in decision-making. Although examples are given how to exchange views (e.g. attend a meeting) no requirement given for the extent of participation that should take place. Furthermore, in the ECP program no definition is given for a 'local community' or 'social sustainability' even though these words are mentioned and can be interpreted in different ways.

5. RESULTS: COMMUNITY PRACTICES

This chapter displays the results of this study. First, it is discussed how ecotourism operators provide benefits to the Daintree Coast community (involvement in the benefits), followed by the findings on how ecotourism operators allow community stakeholders to participate in their decision-making process. Both concern the second pillar (b) of the research framework in figure 1.1 by investigating ecotourism operators in the Daintree Coast and analyzing this data using the operationalization criteria from the literature study.

5.1 INVOLVING THE DAINTREE COAST COMMUNITY IN THE BENEFITS

Seven out of nine ecotourism operators (hereafter 'operators') believe that in order to operate a successful business you need to have the support of the community where you operate in. These operators do not provide benefits to a community to the extent it would harm their business success (spending too much time or money than economically viable), but contributions to the Daintree Coast community are made in several ways. Table 5.1 illustrates in which ways operators involve the Daintree Coast community in the benefits. The different groups that receive benefits from operators are divided into the community as a whole (general), tourism businesses, the school, the health center and environmental groups. The table also indicates whether an operator initiated a benefit itself (pro-active) or due to a request from that particular group (reactive). Both operators and community stakeholders are asked about these benefits in order to check for discrepancies between statements made. Table 5.1 shows that every operator involves the local community to a certain extent. However there are large differences regarding the variety of groups involved and ways in which benefits are shaped.

Table 5.1: Ways in which ecotourism operators involve the community in the benefits													
Involved with	**Created benefit**	**Operator**									**Total**	**Proactive**
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
General	(Generate) local employment	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	9	9
	Promoting the area	x									1	1
	Sell local products		x	x			x				3	1
	Environmental education		x		x	x	x				4	4
	Re-vegetation project						x				1	1
	Use local products/services								x		1	1
Tourism businesses	Package-deals	x	x		x	x		x	x	x	7	-
	Commissions		x								1	-
	Free tours			x							1	1
School	Sponsoring raffles	x	x	x	x	x	x				6	0
	Fundraiser		x								1	1
	Free tours				x		x				2	2
	Environmental education				x		x				2	2
	Financial support						x				1	1
Health center	Sponsoring raffles	x	x	x	x	x	x				6	0
	Sponsoring public holiday			x							1	0
Environmental group 1	Voluntary work		x				x				2	1
	Free tours				x		x				2	2
	Financial support						x				1	0
	Marketing						x				1	0
Environmental group 2	Voluntary work								x		1	0
	Financial support			x			x				2	0
	Marketing						x				1	0

Taking the local community as a whole, every operator (nine) provides benefits by means of employment opportunities for people in the community. Six operators believe the best way of contributing to the local community is by employment or bringing tourists to the community that use other facilities, thus generating more local revenue and employment. Six operators that reside in the community itself (local operators) (operator 1 to 6 in table 5.1) generate jobs by employing local people in their business. Half of these operators even have a policy to recruit locally only. The remaining three operators are located outside of the Daintree Coast in Cairns (outside operators) (operator 7 to 9 in table 5.1) and visit the area for their product (tours). By using local (tourism) businesses such as tour operators or accommodation providers they generate an extra need for local employment. Also, in four cases operators employ projects with the aim to enhance the environmental awareness of community members. Examples are; setting up a recycling program, organize beach cleanups, or education devoted to conserve indigenous plants and trees. Furthermore, local products and services are utilized or promoted by three operators.

The tourism industry itself benefits due to actions of individual operators. Seven operators provide package-deals with other businesses in the tourism industry that involve tours, food or beverages, or overnight accommodations. These package-deals are communicated to eco-tourists by operators using the World Wide Web, on-site advertisements or by suggesting a tour or accommodation mouth-to-mouth. In two cases operators preferred to either promote every business or none at all to avoid any discomfort in the community (which resulted in promoting none). Every outside operator is involved with the remaining tourism industry by means of package-deals.

The two public organizations within the local community; a primary school and a health center both benefit from every local operator (six) by receiving support for their raffles taking place two or three times a year. Support is given by donating prices (tours or vouches), selling tickets and buying tickets. Regarding the school, three operators surpass a reactive approach in raffles by pro-actively offering free tours, financial support or educating the children regarding environmental awareness and local knowledge of the area. None of the outside operators (three) benefit the school or health center in the Daintree Coast.

The two environmental organizations operating within the local community both receive different benefits from three operators. Environmental group 1 benefits by means of volunteers, free tours financial support and marketing. The same goes for the other environmental group except the free tours. The voluntary work usually involves supporting tree planting days or assisting in the nursery. It should be noted that large differences exist between operators regarding the amount of financial support and voluntary hours offered. For example, one operator assists annually in a tree planting day and another assists weekly in a nursery. Also, financial support varies between displaying collection boxes and paying the expenses of an environmental group to replant a patch of forest.

The tourism associations have lobbied for increased access to the area during the wet season which resulted in raising a bridge which provides access to the area. Currently several operators are lobbying for connection to the main power grid. Also, one community group did not receive any benefits from the ecotourism sector and did not approach operators for benefits.

Analysis of the results

By using the findings above with the operationalization of 'involvement in the benefits' in table 3.2 (§ 3.2.3) an analysis is made. Table 5.2 shows that two indicators are addressed by every operator in this study, namely; employment (increased employment opportunities) and indirect revenue distribution (utilizing local products, services or materials, and providing room for increased tourism spending). Six operators contribute to healthcare (projects to improve (access to) local healthcare) and education (projects to improve (access to) local education). No examples are found that relate to improving the access towards healthcare or education. As stated above, education as a benefit takes place on a community level by means of projects and for the primary school by means of projects and financial contributions. Nature (aiding conservation initiatives) receives support by five operators, although there are large differences regarding the extent of support taking place. Direct revenue distribution (projects or regulations regarding direct distribution of revenues) occurs by three operators. Operator 3 and 6 financially benefit environmental groups and operator 2 does the same for the primary school. The remaining indicators; infrastructure, training, intercultural, and increasing self-sufficiency are benefits that are not addressed by any operator. Based on the information above several statements can be made.

Table 5.2: Analysis of involvement in the benefits by ecotourism operators										
Indicator	**Operator**									
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**total**
Employment	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	9
Direct revenue distribution		+	+			+				3
Indirect revenue distribution	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	9
Infrastructure										0
Healthcare	+	+	+	+	+	+				6
Education	+	+	+	+	+	+				6
Training										0
Intercultural										0
Increasing self-sufficiency										0
Nature		+	+		+	+		+		4

Regarding table 5.2, indirectly every operator could benefit the local community since its operations attract tourists which may spend money elsewhere and thus provide opportunities for employment and revenue. Second, several local operators provide financial support to organizations outside the Daintree Coast community. Examples are financial support to schools or supporting a university in Cairns by means of time or money. Third, operators 7 to 9 are outside operators and do involve the community in their hometown such as financially supporting local sporting clubs or providing training for indigenous groups in the area. Since this does not concern the Daintree Coast community, it is not included in table 5.2.

Apart from these results there are some aspects worth mentioning. First, except for employment and supporting other businesses, the benefits created for the non-tourism community primarily arise by means of a reactive approach by operators. Every interviewed operator sees it predominantly as the responsibility of community groups or individuals to approach them if they need something. The stakeholder groups that serve as the representation of the community have the same understanding and believe it is their own responsibility to address operators if support is needed.

> *"So yeah when someone is basically just looking for a little bit of financial*
> *support they just write to us or call us and say we are doing X, Y, Z, could you*
> *please provide support?" (Operator 2).*

Second, although a reactive approach by operators is deemed appropriate by community stakeholders, it seems that providing some form of benefit is necessary, whether it is employment or donating in raffles. Some community groups see how local operators contribute and are pleased, but it is less apparent how outside operators contribute (in this research mostly by generating employment in the facilities they use). Below illustrates an example by one stakeholder group that some form of benefit (or compensation) seems necessary.

> *"You know there is a lot of traffic on the road and they do make money out of bringing tourists up here so it might well be worth it" (Stakeholder group 1).*

Third, there is a clear difference between local and outside operators and the support given to the Daintree Coast community. It appears that operators primarily benefit the region where they reside. Operator 7, 8 and 9 have less involvement with the community (especially education and healthcare) compared to local operators. However, there is a similar involvement compared to Daintree operators when looking at their community in Cairns. Support is offered to local sporting clubs, free tours are provided for community groups and raffles receive donations (Operator 7 and 9).

> *"Cairns, in some respects, is our center for the region and why we don't have a lot of programs in the Daintree? I don't know, maybe because they never approached us for anything to do with that. People living in this area are a lot closer to the heart" (Operator 7).*

Fourth, every operator is relatively sensitive in supporting the community where they live and want to help community groups. However, when operators provide benefits to a community, several benefits arise for themselves as well. It is generally acknowledged by operators and stakeholder groups that benefits are not randomly created. Operator 2, 3, 6, 7 and 8 mention that by supporting a local community it is less likely that an operator itself gets on the 'wrong side' of the community. This seems to be especially the case for bigger companies. Operator 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 acknowledge that benefitting the community benefits their community as well (since they are local operators). Examples are to support the school where their children participate or stimulating the medical center that everybody uses (including operators). Provided benefits to a community are also used as marketing purposes or to increase customers. Examples are displaying the contributions on the website or in brochures (operator 2 and 6), demonstrating community benefits when applying for awards (operator 2 and 6), or give away free tickets which might persuade other customers to come along as well (operator 4 and 5). Other types of mutual benefits found relate to an increase of business credibility (operator 4 and 5) and creating networks (operator 6). However, mutual benefits are not perceived as something 'wrong' by three community groups who believe that these type of benefits are necessary to keep interaction going.

> *"It is mutually beneficial but it doesn't matter, it's a good outcome. If interaction is always one side it will fall apart. So mutually beneficial is necessary in order to keep interaction going" (Stakeholder group 3).*

Fifth, some of the benefits provided by operators are not limited to the ecotourism industry alone. Raffles by the school and health center also receive support from other (non-ecotourism) businesses and individuals in the area.

5.2 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE DAINTREE COAST

This paragraph is divided into two sections; community participation with the tourism industry and community participation involving the non-tourist community of the Daintree Coast. The reason for this division is because tourism operators collaborate with the tourism industry in a different way than the remaining groups from the community.

5.2.1 COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION WITHIN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

It is generally acknowledged that the Daintree Coast is a tourism community and most of the locals are involved in the tourism sector. A slight majority of the operators (operator 1, 3, 5, 6, 9) state they involve the community or are involved in the community by being a member of tourism associations or by communicating with other tourism businesses. The results in this paragraph show the relations with the tourism industry divided into tourism businesses and tourism associations. Table 5.3 provides an overview of how participation is 'shaped' (in what ways and to what extent) by operators. The column 'facilitation' relates to ways in which community participation is made possible (method) and the 'degree' concerns the extent of participation taking place. The latter concerns the operationalization of community participation from table 3.1 (§ 3.2.3).

Table 5.3: Characteristics of community participation within the tourism industry				
Operator	**Tourism businesses**		**Tourism associations**	
	Facilitation	**Degree of participation**	**Facilitation**	**Degree of participation**
1	Visits	Actively consulting	Meetings, e-mail	Informing
2	None	Ignoring	Meetings	Informing
3	Visits, email	Informing	Meetings	Informing
4	None	Ignoring	Meetings	Informing
5	None	Ignoring	Meetings	Informing
6	None	Ignoring	Meetings, e-mail	Informing
7	None	Ignoring	Meetings	Informing
8	Visits	Actively consulting	Meetings	Informing
9	Visits	Actively consulting	Meetings	Informing

Community participation involving tourism businesses

Every operator (nine) is connected to at least one other tourism business such as accommodation providers or other operators. Although every operator shares ties with other tourism businesses by means of package deals, they mostly tend to themselves and do not interfere too much with how other operators shape their activities. It is stated by operator 2 and 5 that most tourism businesses do not criticize another one's operations. Operator 2, 3 and 6 also mention that the Daintree Coast being a small community; it is easy to create discomfort as everything goes around quickly. Both factors may contribute to the reason why most operators stay within ignoring or informing regarding participation. Table 5.4 illustrates how several operators view community participation with other tourism businesses. Again, the column 'facilitation' relates to ways in which community participation is made possible (method).

Table 5.4: View on community participation by means of tourism businesses		
Operator	**Facilitation**	**View on community participation**
1	Visits	We build package deals. We can benefit them and they benefit us. So we listen to them, if there are any complaints we would certainly want to hear them and address them.
2	None given	If I see someone who has better practices than we do, then I will try to influence it. But I don't think anyone has ever come to us and said "you have to do this, and why aren't you doing this?" The main part is really just our own decision of the company and own ethos
3	Visits, email	The people we meet are employees and other people from the tourism industry. We visit the local booking agents regularly and talk about various aspects of our operation. We absolutely give the possibility to give their comments.
8	Visits	You have to work in association with them. If they have certain rules and regulations than that's what you have to abide be. We discuss our operations with the tourism industry and all the associated businesses along the way.
9	Visits	We look for key partners. We always engage with them and we explain what we try to achieve. It is in our best interest.

Operator 1, 8 and 9 pro-actively seek out other tourism businesses involved in package deals to talk about various aspects of their operations. For example, operator 8 does not live in the Daintree Coast itself and occasionally does a checkup and talks with people in the tourism industry. Operator 9 indicated a natural preference to work with tourism businesses that are also ecotourism certified. It is indicated by all three operators that the possibility is left open for comments or opinions on how an operation might be changed to suit the parties involved in a better way, creating a possibility to incorporate views. As it concerns an exchange of views in a pro-active way with the possibility of incorporating them it is marked as 'actively consulting' *(consulting with (local) stakeholders on the relevant issues and decisions)*. Operator 3 pro-actively informs other tourism businesses on the operations taking place by means of visits or e-mails when dropping brochures which provides an opportunity for an informal chat with these operators. Since the goal of these visits is to inform and not to consult how operations could be changed, it is marked as 'informing' *(informing (local) stakeholders on relevant issues and decisions)*. Operator 2, 4, 5, 6, and 7 mentioned no type of facilitation where participation can occur. Also other tourism businesses are not informed about the relevant issues and decisions these operators take. Sine there is no initiative in pro-actively taking steps to inform others, the degree of participation relates most to 'ignoring' *(ignoring capacities and interests of (local) stakeholders and minimize the relationship with the area of concern)*. It should be mentioned that there is the possibility where these businesses do meet, namely at the tourism associations.

No examples are found where the influence by other tourism players led to operational changes regarding environmental or social aspects.

Community participation involving tourism associations

Every operator is a member of one or more tourism associations with a focus on the Daintree Coast[6.] Operator 5 and 6 both indicate that tourism associations can be used as a platform to discuss one's operations and operator 7 believes it provides an opportunity to get informed and to consult on the operational decisions by operators. Operator 5, 8 and 9 state that these tourism associations might play a role in providing opportunities to consult with the non-tourism community or address local community issues as a consequence of being a tourism destination.

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[6] *These tourism associations are: Daintree Marketing Co-operative, Daintree Port Douglas Tourism Association or Tourism Daintree Coast.*

Although three operators share this vision, most of the respondents are clear that tourism associations are created with the goal to market a destination. Therefore not much attention is given to individual businesses or community issues. All members pay a monetary fee to their tourism association(s) which is used to create awareness or in another way improve the profitability of a tourism destination. It is mentioned by operator 3 and 6 that businesses can provide support to local communities individually if they want to and tourism associations are not enacted to do this. For this reason tourism associations do not get involved in supporting other groups or addressing local issues since it is not in accordance with their main goal.

> *"The minor operational issues that really should just involve a local person ringing up the council and say "There is a pothole outside, can you come and fix it?" It has nothing to do with tourism marketing organizations. It might be if the whole road would be destroyed and people couldn't get here"* (Operator 3).

Facilitating communication primarily takes place in meetings by the associations every three months in which tourism-related issues can be raised and discussed. Every member can attend these meetings and is given the possibility to add something to the agenda. In one case a tourism association mainly communicates through their website by means of emails. Table 5.5 illustrates how several operators view community participation by means of tourism associations. The column 'facilitation' relates to ways in which community participation is made possible.

Table 5.5: View on community participation by means of tourism associations		
Operator	**Facilitation**	**View on community participation**
5	Meetings	The [tourism association] talks about how to improve things and how to cooperate, but mostly about promoting the area. However we are open for talking about projects that we can do collaborative, and I guess the [tourism association] might be willing to discuss this.
6	Meetings, email	We are a fairly small community and everyone that's involved in tourism up here is a very good and broad representation of the community. I imagine that is satisfied by us, by meeting regularly with the tourism people of the area.
7	Meetings	By being a member of the tourism association, any local issues will come up hopefully, which can be passed back to us. So there is consultation and there is communication

Although it is indicated by respondents that these associations (may) influence an operator's decision-making, the results show mainly an exchange of information at best. Members are informed on how tourism is taking place and predominantly the agenda is focused on marketing the Daintree Coast. No actual involvement in decision-making is found or appears to take place that results in truly influencing (changing) the decisions an operator makes regarding environmental or social aspects. Therefore the degree of participation given to operators and the tourism associations is marked 'informing'.

5.2.2   COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION WITH THE NON-TOURISM COMMUNITY

In paragraph 5.1 it is stated that every tour-operator in the Daintree Coast agrees that in terms of operating a successful business you need to have to support of the community you operate in. However this support is not generated by means of community participation, or in other words; involving the community in a company's decision-making process. Table 5.6 on the following page provides an overview of how community participation is shaped by operators and their view regarding this topic. The column 'facilitation' relates to ways in which community participation is made possible and 'degree' concerns the extent of participation taking place. For several operators there is a higher degree of community participation with (tourism) businesses or tourism associations compared to the non-tourism community.

Operator	Facilitation	Approach	Degree	View on community participation
				Table 5.6: Characteristics and view on community participation by ecotourism operators.
1	None given	Reactive	Ignoring	Working supportive with the local community [other businesses in the area] is important to us. So we build ecotourism packages, we are working with the community
2	Telephone	Reactive	Ignoring	Nothing is set in stone how we contact the community. If one of the drivers speeds down the road then the residents know to get on the phone and call me. I will tell those drivers that if they do that they won't get to drive anymore. It's pretty unofficial but that's the way it works.
3	None given	Reactive	Ignoring	You don't go at somebody's house and talk about your operations. Suppose it was a very close neighbor and we had a potential impact on their property you might do that.
4	Open to visits, telephone	Reactive	Ignoring	They [Daintree Coast inhabitants] phone for a free-bee to raise some funds. We've never turned anybody away. We are always open for ideas.
5	None given	Reactive	Ignoring	We are always open to talk to people who want to, or who have some critiques or ideas
6	None given	Reactive	Ignoring	In turns of management decisions, nobody is consulted or would influence the way we operate and manage our business. I can't think of a simple example where community groups came in and suggested that we should be doing something different.
7	Contact with drivers	Reactive	Ignoring	We don't do a lot of consultation with the communities in those areas because we don't see that our operations have much of a negative impact on them. The fact is that people want to visit the area, so if you live there you have to expect traffic to come to those areas. I'm sure if there are issues that they would certainly tell our drivers.
8	None given	Reactive	Ignoring	You like to be involved with everything but it's just physically impossible. You can't be involved in every community group and every town because there could be 20 different community groups searching and going into different directions
9	Tourism associations	Reactive	Ignoring	We don't really get involved too much outside of tourism really to be honest. We would definitely be open to them [Daintree community] approaching us.

The results show that none of the operators have a pro-active approach when it comes to community participation. No formal agreements are in place by operators on communicating with the Daintree Coast community. In other words, no evidence is found that operators inform or consult with the non-tourism community about their operations or how a community might benefit from these operations. This indicates a result that no effort is made by operators to explore and incorporate community views in their decision-making. It is stated by operator 2, 5 and 6 that tourism businesses do not act in response to community participation or the pressure of any groups. One example is found that originated from a management perspective in which case operator 6 approached community groups and individuals to consult with them when their help or advice is needed. However, this is the other way around and is done with the intention to create support, not to create influence in their decision-making.

Every operator (nine) is found to be open to criticism or ideas that are raised in the community. In this sense 'open' is the correct word since every operator has a reactive approach when it comes to incorporating community views in their decisions. Two examples are found where community members approached a tour-operator with a complaint. One occasion involved a bus that transported tourists through the community towards the starting point of a tour resulting in noise and dust complaints. In this case operator 2 received a phone call from a resident and addressed this matter to resolve the complaint. Another example is hindrance by a bus that used the parking area of operator 6 to make a "u-turn" every day. This led to dissatisfaction by surrounding inhabitants. As a response the operator took this complaint into account and resolved the matter in favor of the inhabitants.

Although every operator has a reactive approach, some ways of facilitating community participation are given. Operator 1, 3, 5, 6 and 8 provided no examples of facilitating community participation with the Daintree Coast community. Although they are open to criticism and ideas, nothing is indicated how such comments might reach them. Operator 2 and 4 both indicated that they welcome any telephone calls and would incorporate any complaint in their operations. For operator 4 this also concerned the possibility of people visiting the business with comments or ideas. Operator 7 sees their drivers as the link between the business and the community and state that community stakeholders can discuss any issue with the drivers. Operator 9 views tourism associations as a possible platform where community members can raise any issues about their operations. This shows that an operator's approach is similar as to most of the 'involvement in the benefits', namely a reactive approach. Since no operator actually takes the first step and engages the community in participation, the degree of participation is marked as 'ignoring' *(ignoring capacities and interests of (local) stakeholders and minimize the relationship with the area of concern)* for all operators. Thus, the form of participation is found highest in relation to other tourism businesses in the Daintree Coast, followed by the tourism associations and last the non-tourism community. Based on this analysis some statements are made.

First, engaging in community participation is clearly not viewed as a necessity by operators. Operators view their business as their own including the decisions that affect the business. From their point of view the community is not needed for making decisions and operators do not see it as their responsibility to include the wider community in decision-making. In all the cases it does not happen and there appears to be no direct need for it to happen. Operator 5, 8 and 9 state that actually engaging the local community in participation would be a nice thing to do but this is not seen as something feasible. The main reason given by operators concerns their businesses being relatively small which makes it a time and resource consuming effort (operator 1, 6, 8 and 9). This appears to be especially relevant for operator 8 who does not reside in the Daintree Coast community itself, making it difficult to get involved. It is also mentioned by operator 6 and 8 that it is unwise to engage in community participation. The given reason is that it is impossible to satisfy everyone and therefore it might be smarter not to engage in community participation as some groups might feel neglected which in turn creates discomfort that would not be there if community participation never occurred in the first place.

> *"If you are genuine about consultation than it should be as broad as possible. The only problem with that is that you are going to get every different opinion on the sun and your problem is how do you synthesize that and in the meantime spend a lot of money on how you are going to deal with it" (Operator 6).*

Second, the findings indicate that people tend to operate on a much more simple level. The general idea seems to be that people in the Daintree Coast know each other and would like to see everyone doing well. Therefore if a group would be approached by an operator (or vice versa) it is done to help and support that group and not from the point of view of allowing that group to shape their operations and influence their decision-making.

Third, although no operator pro-actively engages the non-tourism community, it should be kept in mind that it is a small community and people might also pass each other on the street that could provide an opportunity to discuss one's operation (although this is not mentioned by operators).

5.3 A COMMUNITY VIEW ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

In order to provide a fair reflection of reality this section provides the view and opinion of community stakeholders regarding community participation taking place. These represent the five non-tourism stakeholder groups (hereafter 'groups') of the Daintree Coast community. The results confirm that no group is engaged by operators in decision-making which represents the findings in paragraph 5.2.2. Table 5.7 shows that group 1, 2, 3 and 5 believe operators are not responsible to engage the community in their decision-making. Group 4 is less clear on this topic and states that if operators could have the responsibility it would be a good thing. An opinion from group 1 concerning influencing an operator's decision-making goes as follows:

"I don't really feel that's our place and that it is our role to tell them that they have to contribute really. The local businesses employ the local community. In that sense they already do help out the local community with providing jobs" (Stakeholder group 1).

Stakeholder group	Engaged in community participation	Is it the responsibility of an operator	Do you want to be engaged in community participation
Table 5.7: Community views on participation by ecotourism operators			
1	No	No, not at all actually. I think it is fine that we ask them.	Yes, that sure would be a nice thing, but I'm not sure what contribution we could give.
2	No	No I don't think they should do it.	I wouldn't mind to be asked. Don't know what they could do, but interesting to be asked.
3	No	Not necessarily, if you want something you should ask it.	I would like to be more involved (consulted) in the management by tour operators. But it would be rude to say to a tour operator: "you have to give me your things because I would like to have a look at it".
4	No	It would be nice if they could.	No, we are a small organization and don't have the resources to do that, unless we receive some form of donation.
5	No	We don't see it is their responsibility, they don't have to.	We wouldn't mind them engaging us. So we can assist, we just haven't been asked.

Four out of five groups would not object being engaged in community participation. Group 3 is positive about getting involved in the decision-making process and can name examples how to do it and what it would like to achieve. Group 1 and 2 are positive as well but are unsure what contribution can be given. Group 5 would not mind to participate and knows how to contribute. Group 4 states it cannot be involved in decision-making due to limited resources, unless an operator would financially benefit them. Regarding the local operators, Group 1 and 2 are very satisfied the way involvement (both participation and benefits) occurs today. Group 3 and 5 are not dissatisfied with the current degree of involvement but are keen to improve these relations. Group 4 is dissatisfied and would like to see improved partnerships.

Concerning community involvement in the benefits it is found common that when something is needed the groups will refer to it themselves. In most cases the general thought is that

involvement with a group occurs when operators are approached with a request to sponsor or participate in a local event. Group 1, 2 and 3 do not expect operators to contribute time or money in a pro-active way, although it would be perceived as 'nice' by group 4. In sum, although four out of five stakeholder groups would not mind to be engaged, none of them is engaged at the moment and do not see it as the task of an operator to include them in decision-making. It is even mentioned by Group 1 and 3 that it feels as trespassing or rude to influence (or ask to influence) an operator's decision-making.

6. THEORY VS. PRACTICE: CONCURRENCE AND DISCREPANCY

This chapter provides a comparison between the analyzed results from the Daintree Coast and the theoretical claims of why and how community participation and involvement in the benefits should occur. First the concurrence and discrepancy regarding involvement in the benefits are discussed followed by the topic of community participation. This constitutes the third column (c) of the research framework in figure 1.1.

6.1 CONCURRENCE AND DISCREPANCY REGARDING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN THE BENEFITS

In paragraph 2.3.1 of the theoretical section and chapter 4 of the policy practices, several indicators are reviewed regarding how a community can and should benefit by operators. The analysis shows that some of these topics do occur in practice and some do not. Examples of concurrence between theory and practice are named first. *Chances for employment* (Jenkins and Wearing, 2003; State of Queensland, 2002) are increased by every operator in this study. This is performed by either employing people directly or indirectly by using local facilities. *Providing room for increased tourism* spending (Taylor et al., 2006) also occurs by each operator by means of package deals, promoting local products or selling local products. This corresponds with Ecotourism Australia (2003) and the State of Queensland (2002) that *local products, services or materials need to be utilized or stimulated* which occurs by three operators that sell or use local products. *Provision of benefits to the local healthcare and education* (Jenkins and Wearing, 2003) occurs by six operators and *contributions to nature* (ibid; State of Queensland, 2002; Ecotourism Australia, 2003) are given by a slight majority of the operators (five). For the certification criteria, most of the benefits occur in practice.

Several indicators from the literature regarding community benefits are not found in practice showing a discrepancy with the theory. *Improving (beneficial) infrastructure* (Koens et al., 2009; Ecotourism Australia, 2003) is not delivered by individual operators. However, the results do show that tourism associations, who consist of a collection of individual operators, do lobby for improvements to infrastructure, and have achieved results such as improved access to the area by raising a river crossing. No real examples of *providing training opportunities* (Ecotourism Australia, 2003) are found in practice. However 'training' is a broad concept and it is unsure when this topic is considered as addressed. The findings in practice only indicate that locals are trained to become a guide on one of the tours during the high season. *Encouraging the relation between tourists and the local residents* (State of Queensland, 2002) is another benefit that is not found in practice. The Daintree Coast community is a mainstream (white) community which may explain why less emphasis is placed on developing better intercultural relationships between tourists and locals, as these differences are smaller compared to surrounding indigenous communities. No examples are found that relate to *encouraging and increasing self-sufficiency of groups from the community* (Jenkins and Wearing, 2003). At best, financial contributions are given, but no evidence shows the goal of increasing self-sufficiency.

To conclude, comparing theory with practice, the concurrence is larger than the discrepancy. Every operator provides some of the benefits listed in the scientific literature, although varying in type and extent. No operator is found that provides every benefit suggested by the literature. The reviewed scientific literature does not make a clear demarcation between the applications of benefits for mainstream or non-mainstream communities. The policy practices do indicate that increasing intercultural relationships are more applicable to indigenous communities, but should still be addressed in mainstream communities like the Daintree Coast.

6.2 CONCURRENCE AND DISCREPANCY REGARDING COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The findings in the (scientific) literature indicate that the local community should participate in the decision-making of ecotourism operators or destinations for several reasons (Beetin, 1998 in Garrod, 2003; Brandon, 1993 in Garrod (2003); D'Amore, 1983 in Timothy, 1999; Garrod, 2003; Kruger, 2005; Leksakundilok, 2006; State of Queensland, 2002; Xue-Mei and Ji-Gang, 2004). To clarify, involvement in decision-making referred to any involvement in management or planning and thus influencing decisions on an operational level or in selecting and distributing benefits (Garrod, 2003, State of Queensland, 2002). Any true meaningful form of participation needed to include a mutual exchanges views and information with diverse values and views from a broad spectrum of society (Sustainable Tourism CRC, 2005, p.44).

The findings in the Daintree Coast, summarized below in table 6.1, show a large discrepancy between theory and practice. The identified need in the general literature (Borrini-Feyerabend, 1996; Manteaw, 2007; Muthuri, 2007; Pinkerton, 1989; Rajak, 2006 in Muthuri, 2007; Voinov and Bousquet, 2010) that community participation is important and necessary is not visible at all. This is especially interesting given the success of ecotourism in the area as a best practice example. Three cases (operator 1, 8 and 9) are found where there is a level of participation (consulting) with a stakeholder group from the community that reflects a mutual exchange of views and information (Sustainable Tourism CRC, 2005, p.44). However this concerns only one group (tourism businesses) and is therefore not seen as including diverse values and views from a broad spectrum of society (ibid).

Table 6.1: Community participation by ecotourism operators					
	Tourism associations		Tourism businesses		Non-tourism industry	
Operator	Facilitation	Degree of participation	Facilitation	Degree of participation	Facilitation	Degree of participation
1	Meetings, e-mail	Informing	Visits	Actively consulting	None given	Ignoring
2	Meetings	Informing	None	Ignoring	Telephone	Ignoring
3	Meetings	Informing	Visits, email	Informing	None given	Ignoring
4	Meetings	Informing	None	Ignoring	Open to visits, telephone	Ignoring
5	Meetings	Informing	None	Ignoring	None given	Ignoring
6	Meetings, e-mail	Informing	None	Ignoring	None given	Ignoring
7	Meetings	Informing	None	Ignoring	Contact with drivers	Ignoring
8	Meetings	Informing	Vistings	Actively consulting	None given	Ignoring
9	Meetings	Informing	Visits	Actively consulting	Tourism associations	Ignoring

Community participation consisting of a one-way relationship that involves informing others (Sanchez, 2009) is visible between one operator (operator 3) and two stakeholder groups, namely other tourism businesses and tourism associations, or operators and the tourism associations as the only stakeholder group. Again building upon the criteria of Sustainable Tourism CRC (2005) it concerns only one sector of a community, thus lacking a diverse set of views and values. All the remaining groups of the community that would represent a broader spectrum of society are not engaged by an ecotourism operator. Thus viewing a community as a collection of groups in a destination (State of Queensland, 2002) it is deemed appropriate to say

that community participation is not occurring in practice in the research area. Looking at the factors in the literature why community participation should occur, some statements can be made.

First it is said that community participation is part of *behaving responsibly and in a sustainable way* (ORSE, 2008; Manteaw, 2007, Muthuri, 2007). Operators in the Daintree Coast appear to disagree. The findings seem to indicate that 'ecotourism' is actually more 'nature tourism' in the sense that operators behave responsibly by taking care of the environment and less by addressing the social aspects discussed in the literature. Clear examples are community participation which is not occurring and linked to participation; *empowering communities* (Leksakundilok, 2006, Borrini-Feyerabend (1996), ORSE, 2008, Manteaw, 2007) which does not occur as well. It is interesting to see that community groups also do not see it as the responsibility of operators to engage them in participation and apparently do not have the aspiration to be empowered. Examples of social factors by ecotourism that do occur are employment and providing benefits to raffles. However companies which are not marked as ecotourism provide similar benefits to the community and in this sense, ecotourism operators do not perform 'better' than others.

Second, participation is considered necessary to *decrease conflict by creating harmonious relationships, understanding community needs and generate support for the tourism sector* (D'Amore, 1983 in Timothy, 1999; Beetin, 1998 in Garrod (2003); Xue-Mei and Ji-Gang, 2004; Voinov and Bousquet, 2010; ORSE, 2008). No visible effort is found where operators engage in true community participation to address these matters. Every operator mentioned they are open to critique or ideas if addressed by community members. It seems that a reactive approach is deemed appropriate by the community as they feel it is their own responsibility to address operators when something is needed. It is not possible to state that participation would lead to *an increase in (the importance of) benefits* (Brandon, 1993 in Garrod 2003; Rajak, 2006 in Muthuri, 2007). However, when something is needed by community groups it is common to approach operators and based on the responses of operators and community groups, in most cases they receive the benefits they are looking for.

Third, it is mentioned that community participation is necessary to *protect the resource at stake* (Kruger, 2005; Pinkerton, 1989). It is difficult to provide an answer to this statement as the Daintree Coast started as a tourism destination only in the 1980s. In the meantime positive and negative experiences occurred in the area in which the negative experiences might have been reduced when community groups involved in conservation would have participated.

Looking at the policy guidelines regarding community participation (State of Queensland, 2002) the same story can be told. Apart from providing benefits and in some cases putting effort into conservation (that both happen without engaging in community participation), ecotourism operators in the Daintree Coast do not follow these expected strategies. The same applies for the aspirations of Tourism Queensland that operators need to engage in community consultation which is the key to achieve mutually beneficial and sustainable outcomes (Tourism Queensland, 2003, p.7). Regarding the certification criteria, being certified does not necessarily contribute to a better relation between the host community and the operator.

7. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an answer to the research question and draws several conclusion based on the findings in the Daintree Coast and the literature.

The aim of this study was to yield descriptive knowledge on how community participation is shaped in practice by ecotourism operators, how they involve a community in the benefits and how the findings relate to the literature. With this aim it was attempted to answer the following research question:

In what ways and to what extent do ecotourism operators in the Daintree Coast allow the community to (1) participate in their decision-making and (2) get involved in benefit sharing, and what is the concurrence and discrepancy between theory and practice?

'Community participation' occurs in different ways depending on the community stakeholder group. In relation to tourism associations, participation is marked as "informing" as every operator exchanges information in these associations by means of meetings and/or emails. Regarding tourism businesses as a community stakeholder, five ecotourism operators are marked as "ignoring" as they do not facilitate participation nor pro-actively inform others from that sector. One operator is marked as "informing" due to visits and phone calls to inform others about its operations. Three operators are marked as "consulting" by pro-actively visiting other tourism businesses to discuss operations, exchange views and the possibility to incorporate such views. Within the tourism sector, no examples are found that resulted in changing an operator's decisions or operations. None of the ecotourism operators approach groups from the non-tourism community to engage them in participation. Every operator is open to suggestions and has a reactive approach towards these groups. Four operators indicate that telephone calls, visits, drivers, and/or tourism associations could be used by these groups to facilitate community participation. For these reasons, community participation to the non-tourism community is marked as 'ignoring'.

In all nine cases benefits arise by creating employment opportunities and providing indirect revenue distribution. Six operators financially support healthcare and education in the community, and five operators contribute to conservation initiatives using in-kind or financial support. Direct revenue distribution to local organizations and education on a community scale (environmental awareness) is facilitated by three operators. These comprise the main benefits for the local community in this study. In most cases these benefits arise because community stakeholders are pro-active in asking benefits (since ecotourism operators are reactive) which is considered appropriate by all stakeholders involved. A clear difference in benefits is visible between local and outside operators, as outside operators mostly benefit their local community and not so much the host community they visit. Also it is concluded that providing a certain degree of benefit to a community is necessary as the general idea appears to be that those using the natural environment should give something back in return.

The concurrence between theory and practice regarding the benefits is considered larger than the discrepancy. Although varying between type and size, the benefits found include six out of ten identified in the scientific literature. Four benefits are not addressed by operators, although three of these seem more applicable to indigenous communities (training, relationships, and self-sufficiency) and less to the Daintree Coast. One of these benefits (improving infrastructure) is found to be addressed by the tourism associations.

Regarding community participation, the discrepancy between theory and practice far outweighs the concurrence which is pretty much non-existent. No operators are found that engage in 'true

community participation' which encompasses a mutual exchange of views with a diversity of values and views from the community as a whole. By viewing a community as a collection of individuals, groups and businesses in a destination it is deemed appropriate to state that true and meaningful community participation is not occurring in this research area.

Based on the responses from the Daintree Coast community, benefits do seem to play a necessary role to maintain a positive relation between an ecotourism operator and a local community. However, engaging in community participation is not viewed as a necessity or responsibility by both ecotourism operators and the local community to create or maintain a positive relation.

8. DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of several paragraphs. First the methodological issues in this research are addressed followed by what the scientific literature can learn from this study. Next, suggestions for future research are opted followed by recommendations for the stakeholders involved. The latter two aspects concern the fourth and last column (d) of the research framework in figure 1.1.

8.1 METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

This study involved a qualitative research design and is based on interpretive, subjective and contextual data (Thomson, 2011, p.78). Several aspects were taken into account to maximize the (internal) validity. The descriptive validity (the accuracy of the data reflecting respondent's statements) is improved by recording every interview and writing down the exact responses concerning community participation and involvement. The recordings are transcribed within two days to avoid a loss of context and information observed during the interviews. The interpretive validity (interpreting a respondent's behavior or clarifying statements) (ibid, p.79) is improved by using follow-up questions, probing questions and asking for examples during each interview. Also, effort is spend on keeping my own opinion and view separate from seeking certain answers during data collection and analysis. The theoretical validity (providing an accurate explanation of the phenomenon in question) (ibid) is maximized by basing the findings presented in this research on the gathered empirical data. Audio recordings are repeatedly analyzed if doubts occurred. The coherence (the results fit together and are not contradictory) (ibid) is uphold by interviewing each respondent with the same topics and providing similar examples when clarification was needed. A triangulation of methods and sources is applied to further increase validity, encompassing face-to-face interviews, observations, literature reviews and a variety of sources.

Because of the nature and scope of the research, the external validity (e.g. applying the results to other cases) is not large. In other words, when using this research and its results to analyze other regions, one has to take into account the specific conditions that were present during this study (e.g. culture, politics, history). It can be said that within the research area, the results are generalizable since none of the investigated operators engage in community participation, but outside of the region the generalizability may decrease due to contextual differences. Still, since this area is selected as 'the' area to find participation, it is still considered generalizable in other regions to a certain extent.

The stakeholder groups representing the Daintree Coast community in this research include five community groups, ecotourism operators and the tourism associations. In this sense, the opinion of the Daintree Coast community is based only on representatives from these groups, and to a reduced extent, individuals within the community. Also, the Daintree Coast is considered a tourism community, although the amount of people working in tourism varies between the suburbs (high in Cape Tribulation, versus low in Cow Bay and Diwan). Observations made clear that the community changes relatively fast as residents stay for a few years and then move on. This might limit chances for community participation to have occurred in practice.

In qualitative research the term 'reliability' (consistency of the results over time and accurate representation of the total population under stud) is deemed inappropriate (Golafshani, 2003, p.599). However some factors are kept in mind that makes this research more reliable. When possible scientific articles (peer reviewed) are used and preferred above others. The claims stated in non-scientific sources are verified in the scientific literature when possible. Also, it was attempted to remain critical when interviewing respondents and it succeeded to arrange

interviews with only representatives of an organization that are familiar with tourism relations. The given information by respondents is verified by asking examples and checking with other sources or respondents whether given statements are true. Furthermore, the methodology in chapter 3 was constructed in such a way that others would be able to replicate this research in other ecotourism destinations.

To conclude, the literature study in the theory section (chapter 2) was deployed to find approaches that call for community participation. Literature stating otherwise was not investigated in this research context, and it is not attempted to state that participation is always deemed necessary in the literature.

8.2 PLACE IN THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE

This research delivered other results than first expected. The reasons in the literature why participation should occur seem reasonable but the findings indicate that participation in ecotourism destinations is not always necessary. Also, some operators believe it leads to conflict since it is not possible to take every aspiration of each community group into account. It is mentioned that it is more a carry-over from government doctrine and a public liability insurance so people cannot complain. Second, even without participation, the ecotourism sector already receives support since it is by far the main economic sector in the area that provides jobs and revenue. Several statements regarding the different types of literature discussing community participation can also be made.

First, regarding collaborative management (CM), this community is indeed strongly affected by the operations taking place. Even though local interests are affected, a need by local stakeholders to increase their capacities is not found as the decisions made by operators do not lead to a direct conflict with local interests. Since the results do not include examples where participation does happen, it is inappropriate to say that decisions could not be better with participation. However, looking at CM with ecotourism operators as the stakeholder in charge, if operators are willing to listen to community complaints it can be sufficient to safeguard local interests and avoid a formal way of engaging the community in participation which costs time (and money).

Second, regarding the CSR literature, interacting with external stakeholders does not necessarily need to include participation to behave sustainably in the eyes of the community. Indications are found that there are higher expectations for companies which are more successful than others (higher revenue). For companies that have no employees (or only a few), engaging in community participation is deemed a difficult expectation due to a limited amount of time or resources to spare. It is not necessarily the case that good relations with local actors only arise when pro-active dialogues take place. Being aware of community needs and providing contributions to a community is possible by being reactive while still satisfying these local stakeholders.

Third, for the CCI literature: demonstrating goodwill towards local communities is possible without turning to participation as a necessary instrument. Also, creating benefits that actually matter to a community may also arise if companies are responsive to community needs. Chances that a company benefits a host community also relates to the fact that the company resides in that area and is influenced by the personal ethos of company owners to 'help'.

Fourth, for the ecotourism literature it can only be concluded that participation might be necessary for some areas, but not this research area, as neither operators nor community groups believe it should occur. For that reason, not having participation is not considered as something 'bad'. Participation is of course an instrument to reach a certain goal and initiating participation

is not a goal in itself. Two conditions are suggested in which case there would sooner be a reason why participation occurs:

(a) Experiences that involve an exchange of cultures where one culture (e.g. tourists from a Western culture) meets with a highly different culture (e.g. Aboriginal culture), thus high differences in values and behavior are present where it would seem more probably that chances for conflict increase. Also, since less is known about a different culture, participation by learning and incorporating views, can serve as an instrument to find out about the differences and incorporate them in an experience to avoid conflict. Such a situation also seems more applicable regarding the benefits not found in this study, namely improving intercultural relations and increasing self-sufficiency of communities. Some of the interviewed operators also operate in indigenous communities and in these situations more effort is placed on educating tourists to behave accordingly and to consult with the indigenous communities on every aspect of the operations taking place.

(b) Apart from cultural differences, there would sooner be a reason that participation is present if conflicts occur between operators and a local community. In this study no real conflicts are identified. For most employed people in the area, tourism is almost the only sector to work in and therefore the local tourism operators already receive some support and acknowledgement from community members just by being there and bringing tourists (and thus employment) to the area.

In sum, this study contributes to the (ecotourism) literature by revealing that there is not always a necessity and need for community participation to take place. A reason for participation to occur could vary between destinations and is not applicable to ecotourism destinations in general. It seems probable that there are certain circumstances that could influence the occurrence of participation which are hypothesized below:

H1: If tour operators organize tours that involve an exchange of cultures with high differences and chances for conflict, then it is more likely to have a reason for participation* to occur.

H2: If no conflicts occur/occurred between operator and local stakeholders, then chances for participation* are small.

* Participation involving a least the degree of consulting.

Part of this study in Australia was devoted to community participation by indigenous operators with an Aboriginal culture. The findings confirm with what is stated above, namely that the necessity of community participation depends on the area and its characteristics (history, culture, politics). Regarding aboriginal operators three cases were studied. It appeared that Aboriginal societies are complex societies and the differences between mainstream (white) communities such as the Daintree Coast are very large indeed. Although getting involved in ecotourism was performed more out of a necessity, the goals by aboriginal operators were based on empowering the community and increasing self-sufficiency by creating jobs and providing training. Also formal meetings are held annually with boards of directors where every community member can provide ideas and directions and, although with certain preferences in mind, the community members can be elected as a board member. Having community participation was unquestionable and deemed a vital aspect (of ecotourism) as each community member fundamentally had the right to co-decide. All in all it was interesting to see that ecotourism is not a single concept and ecotourism destinations can vary greatly in their context, goals and ways of facilitating ecotourism and community participation, in this case between aboriginal and mainstream communities.

Regarding accreditation programs, several results are found as well worth mentioning. For this research a clear choice was made to select operators accredited by the ECO Certification Program in order to find best-practice examples. During the research it became clear that accredited operators do not necessarily behave in a more responsible or better way compared to non-accredited operators in the region. In each case operators joined the program not to achieve best-practices (environmentally and socially wise), but from a marketing point of view and because it was 'expected from them" by eco-tourists, thus increasing credibility. The responses varied to a great extent whether being certified actually contributed to the annual customer rate. In most cases the main benefits of accreditation identified by operators were to have their administration in order, increasing credibility and getting a 'good feeling' by being accredited. The actual influence of accreditation on a company (environmentally and socially wise) was very small. In most cases no alterations were made as a consequence of accreditation. When comparing the operators in this study with their varying levels of ECO certification, no clear differences are visible regarding the degree of community participation and provided benefits to a community.

8.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was specifically aimed at how ecotourism operators shape community involvement with an emphasis on community participation. The results indicate that community participation is not a given, even in locations where one expects it the most. However, this study only looked at one community being an ecotourism destination in one country. Further research could be devoted to studying other locations where the type of community and/or operator (culture-wise) is varied to see if community participation is occurring and why it is (not) taking place. The hypotheses 1 and 2 might provide guidance when conducting such research. If different degrees of participation are found, it should be attempted to investigate if a causal link exists between a certain degree of participation and the outcomes of ecotourism (e.g. environmental care, provided benefits to a community). Another possibility to establish such a link could be a longitudinal study in ecotourism companies that recently engaged in community participation or stopped doing so.

Although not a specific aim of this research, emphasis was placed on finding explanations why operators benefit a local community and which factors might influence this. Several factors are found that seem to play an influencing role on the extent benefits are provided and could be applied in further research. First, being an operator residing in the host community seems most prominent. Having the support of the local community is considered a necessity by most operators and at the same time operators feel the need to support their community and let them participate in a business's success (to some extent). In addition, the operators in this study liked to create relationships (networks) with their community (outside operators have less involvement in the Daintree Coast, but share similar relations in their home community). Second, mutual benefits appear to play another important role. There are always reasons in the interest of the operator why benefits were created (e.g. creating business support, benefiting the community you are part of, marketing purposes, creating networks, increasing credibility). Third, company size and available resources are considered another important factor. In three cases not having sufficient resources is mentioned as a limiting factor towards community involvement and in one case having sufficient resources was given as a reason to provide more benefits. Fourth, although mutual benefits influence decisions, the personal ethos of company owners also appears to play a role (the extent that an operator believes others should share in their success) as some benefits lacked a clear mutual benefit. Two hypotheses are made concerning community involvement in the benefits that could serve as future research purposes.

H3: If an operator is local (resides in the community where tours are conducted), then the chances for mutual benefits, and thus the chances for benefits going to a host community are greater.

H4: If an operator has a bigger company and more resources (employees and revenue) available, then the delivered benefits to a community a greater.

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED

Based on this research some recommendations are made for the stakeholders involved. Concerning ecotourism operators, it is important that benefits are provided to a host community and that operators are open to community expectations and critiques. This is easier for local operators as they have the local knowledge and daily interaction with community members. For outside operators it is important that a host community is able to contact the company and they are aware that contributions are made to their community (e.g. indirectly employing people). Local stakeholder groups are finding it sometimes difficult to contact outside operators with requests for support. To save time and money, local businesses who are involved in package deals could serve as a medium when local businesses are approached by community groups for support. This is considered an easy and cheap way to create (extra) support for your organization. By a limited amount of effort such a providing a small donation or volunteering in a project (for half a day), the outcomes are improved relations and acceptance for the operations taking place.

For (some of) the local stakeholders involved in this research there are also some things to say. Although less visible, the outside operators in this study also contributed to the community by cooperating with local businesses which promoted local employment. Furthermore, each outside operator indicated they are open to suggestions or requests for support by community groups in the Daintree Coast. Sometimes the relation was not there because they do not approach community groups and community groups are not able to approach them. Local operators might be willing to serve as a medium for outside operators when asked for support. Regarding outside operators approached at the ferry that do not participate; it might help to put up a sign indicating which operators contribute to the host community eco-tourists are about to visit. This might lead to eco-tourists asking their operator why they do not contribute, thus increasing chances that they would..

As an advice for governmental institutions, it is made clear in this study that actively stimulating community participation in ecotourism is not always necessary. If there is no need, then the resources can be invested elsewhere. Examples are to educate tour operators how they can contribute to a community (ways of providing benefits) and to be open for community critiques. Again for outside operators more attention can be placed on the fact that although it is good to support their local community, the host community should not be excluded as they experience most of the (negative) effects. Furthermore, apart from focusing on ecotourism operators, community groups could also be educated on creating projects or events as an instrument to generate (financial) support. It is found in practice that for these groups it is sometimes difficult to come up with a project for operators to participate in. If a project actually has a clear body, name and purpose, operators can reflect their support in marketing purposes, thus creating a mutual benefit which could increase the change they participate in the project.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE ECOTOURISM OPERATORS

The reason for conducting this interview is due to writing my master thesis which focuses on ecotourism. I would like to know more on how ecotourism tour operators operate in practice with an emphasis on the community you operate in. This would relate to
- what your experiences are, and what the outcomes might have been.

It is important to note that I do not stress involving the community is better than not doing so. I merely would like to understand your reasons for acting and operating the way you do. If preferred, anonymity can be guaranteed.

Opening / Ecotourism Australia

Why did you join ecotourism Australia?

Has this made a difference for your operations?

What do you think it means to be a member of ecotourism Australia? (responsibilities)

To what extent do you see it is providing benefits to you individually and the wider community?

Community participation

In what ways are you involved and connected in the wider community?

Who do you meet with (what sort of groups, businesses or individuals)

Do you facilitate community input? If so how? (e.g. annual workshop or meeting allowing you to provide information or allowing consultation and a reactive approach)

Are they relevant to how you run your business?
Do they provide any benefit/contribution or guidance to you?

In terms of the way you interact and deal with businesses, groups or individuals from the Daintree has that influenced you in any of your decisions about how you go about your business?

Would you like to involve the community in another way OR has it ever been different before? Do you think that would change how you go about your business?

Are there other non-local groups that are involved or connected to your business not mentioned so far (such as government(agencies), NGO's or universities)?

Community benefits

To what extent do you think it is important that your customers have an enriching experience, learn about the landscape and that they understand what is happening in this community?

What choices did you have to make since the economic downturn and has that changed the way you review the wider community involvement? Do you want to have less community relationships, or are you turning to the community to help you navigate these hard times?

What wider benefits do you think flow from you running your business here? Think of it in terms of benefits for the economy, benefits for the community and benefits for the environment (What would have been different if you weren't here)?

What other reasons can you think of that played a significant role in how your operations delivered benefits to the economy/community/environment/ or harming you to do so?

Closing: Is there something you would like to add or something which I missed to ask?

APPENDIX 2: FACTSHEET ECOTOURISM OPERATORS

	Question	Answer
1.	What is your position, work experience and age?	
2.	Is it correct that your services for eco-tourists involves:	
3.	What is the company's goal and mission?	
4.	How does your company define ecotourism?	

	Question	Answer					
5	How long has your company been operating?						
6.	Do you own the company yourself or is it a daughter company/ subsidiary?						
7.	How many employees are employed in this company?						
8.	Do you operate on private or public land?						
9.	Do you and/or employees have a background or relevant knowledge concerning environmental conservation issues and delivering benefits to communities? If so what kind?						
10.	Do you train your staff with formal qualifications regarding environmental care and community relations? If so what kind of training?						
11.	How many customers does the company attract in high and low season?						
12.	To what extent are you satisfied with the current number of customers?	Unsatisfied	1	2	3	4	5 Very satisfied
13.	To what extent are you satisfied with the current amount of revenue generation?	Unsatisfied	1	2	3	4	5 Very satisfied

APPENDIX 3: QUESTIONNAIRE COMMUNITY GROUPS

Introduction + opening

Involvement in the benefits

Does your organization benefit by operating/residing in an area which is targeted by ecotourism?

YES:
• How does your organization benefit?
• Do you also benefit directly from ecotourism operators (e.g. providing time/money)?
• How does this come into existence? Who sets the first step?
• Who supports you, how often and to what extent?

NO:
• Is your organization ever benefitted or support of ecotourism operators conducting tours in the Daintree Coast?
• Are you in any way connected to the tourism industry in the Daintree Coast?
• Do you approach ecotourism operators yourself in Daintree Coast if you would like help or funding?

To what extent are you satisfied with the benefits that are provided to your organization by the tourism industry?

Participation

Do you think it is the responsibility of ecotourism operators to approach you, asking if they can help in any way? (or do you belief you should approach them if you want something?) Why (not)

Would you like to be involved by an operator in how he manages its operations (concerning decisions about caring for the environment)? Why (not)

Would you like to be involved by an operator in how he contributes to the local and wider community here (concerning decisions about socio-economic benefits)? Why (not)

Ecotourism Australia

Are you aware of the organization called Ecotourism Australia?

Do you have an opinion on whether certification by Ecotourism Australia is making a difference at the moment for tour operators to support you (certified vs. non-certified)

Closing

What could be done better from a tourism perspective?

Is there something that I missed to ask or that you would like to add?