SUCCESS FACTORS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE-BASED RESORTS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MPHEPHU, SAGOLE AND TSHIPISE THERMAL SPRINGS, LIMPOPO, SOUTH AFRICA.

by

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Declaration

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I declare that *Success factors for the development of natural based resorts: A comparative analysis of Mphephu, Sagole and Tshipise thermal springs,Limpopo,South Africa is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Abstract

South Africa is endowed with hot springs, some operating as resorts. Some hot springs are either totally undeveloped or were developed in the past but now collapsed now in disuse. The main objective of this study was to identity competitive factors that contributed to the success or failure of the resorts as tourism destination. A multifaceted approach was used to gather data from three thermal springs located in Vhembe District Municipality in Limpopo, namely, Tshipise, Mphephu and Sagole, through personal observation, field trips, informal discussion, interviews with specific individuals, group interviews, published and unpublished literature. The data generated was analysed using Likert type scale as well as scoring the presence and absence of competitive elements to compare the success factors of the three resorts. Tourism Destination Competitiveness was used as a proxy indicator of successful development of the resorts. The results indicate that Tshipise was very successful, Mphephu less so and Sagole was declining. Elements that require improvement identified and recommendations were made to rejuvenate Sagole.

Keywords:

Competitiveness factors;

Mphephu Resort;

Sagole Spa;

thermal (hot) springs;

tourism success factors;

Tshipise Resort;

Abbreviations and Acronyms

AD	Anno Domini
AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ATM	Automatic Teller Machine
BC	Before Christ
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DO	Dissolved Oxygen
DVD	Digital Video Disk
EC	Electrical Conductivity
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
GPS	Global Positioning System
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IO	Industrial Organisation
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
LimDev	Limpopo Development Corporation
SOE	State Owned Entity
TDS	Total Dissolved Solid
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Hot water issuing from the Earth's surface has been a subject of awe since the dawn of humankind. Hot springs, also referred to as thermal springs, occur on every continent on Earth. They are usually found in regions with recent volcanic activity where percolating water is heated by hot molten rock (magma) and is released to the surface through channels in the rock (World Book Encyclopaedia, 1982). This water may be heated to above boiling point and a mixture of steam and scalding hot water is emitted from the vent of such geysers. Thermal springs may also originate in non-volcanic but faulted regions, when the faults allow water to penetrate to great depths of the Earth. As a result of the geothermal gradient, the water is heated as it descends. When the circulating underground water encounters an impermeable dyke or a fault, it may be forced to the surface as a thermal spring (Kent, 1969; Hoole, 2001). Such springs are said to be meteoric in origin and the waters are usually cooler than those of volcanic origin.

Hot springs have been used since the ancient times for medicinal, religious and social purposes. The use of water therapy by Greeks dates back to the year 2000 BC. The ancient Greeks were fanatics of cleanliness and a healthy body, and associated neatness with godliness. As a result, temples were built next to the springs. Hot springs were also used for religious purposes in India, and many developed as pilgrimage centres (Virk *et al.,* 1998). Benedict (1992) gives an ethnohistorical account of the North American Indians who used the hot springs for traditional rituals. For instance, Indian hunters from western Kansas believed that the local hot spring was sacred, bottomless and had a monster that swallowed everything thrown into it. They had so much faith in the spring that they made sacrifices to it, offering objects such as jewellery to it and hung gifts on trees around the spring.

According to La Moreaux and Tanner (2001), the Chinese people are known to have used hot springs for medical treatment since AD 25. The diseases treated included dermatosis and rheumatism. One of the most well-known hot springs in England, namely Bath, also owes it origin to the medicinal use of thermal springs (Hoole, 2001). It was used for therapeutic purposes during the era of the Roman Empire but towards the end of the seventeenth century, it became famous as a leisure resort and grew to be one of the largest cities in England. By the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, Bath had developed to a major centre for the high society (Hoole, 2001). The use of the springs by wealthy visitors soon led to the construction of lodgings and hotels to accommodate visitors. Other commercial opportunities arose, resulting in the physical expansion of the city. Thermal springs also developed in other European countries. Examples are Baiae and Puteoli in Italy and Wiesbaden in Germany. In the summer of 1838, the latter received over 8 000 visitors (Hoole, 2001).

Although tourism to hot springs led to economic development in many countries, the industry was affected by the emergence of other tourism destinations. The discovery of minerals in seawater similar to those in hot springs in the early eighteenth century made coastal resorts an alternative to inland spas. Seaside resorts also offered various other attractions not offered in spas. The growing wealth of the European and American middle class in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, together with the introduction of public holidays, institutionalising vocational leave for workers, the reduction of working hours from nine hours to eight hours per day in 1919, and improved and cheaper transport led to an influx of people to ‘holiday’ resorts. These factors led to the decline in popularity, inevitably leading to decay, while the limitless space at coastal resorts resulted in their becoming preferred destinations for recreation and holidays. As a result, some countries were left with very few functional thermal spas. In Britain, there were over one hundred spas in the seventeenth century, but by 1990s only twelve were still operating (Holloway, 1998; Hoole, 2001).

In contrast to this tendency, a continued interest in spas occurred in some countries. The Germans and Hungarians recognised the therapeutic values of hot springs,

especially of the mud and the mineral water baths. Holloway (1998) estimates about 15 million Europeans immerse themselves daily in thermal mineral water.

Earlier use of thermal springs thus centred on their therapeutic and socio-economic value. However, LaMoreaux and Tanner (2001) indicate that thermal springs were used for agricultural purposes in China as early as at least 265 AD for irrigating rice and melon fields.

A more recent development has been the use of hot springs as a source of heat. In 2005, 72 countries reported on the direct utilisation of geothermal energy (Lund *et al.,* 2005). According to Lund (2010), in 2009, global direct-use projects in this field were estimated to have had an installed thermal capacity of 50 583 MWt, with a thermal energy usage of 121 696 GWh per annum. However, the most important commercial use of thermal hot springs is still in the leisure and tourism industry.

1.2 SOUTH AFRICAN HOT SPRINGS

The source of South African hot springs is believed to be rainfall and associated with faulting and shearing (Kent, 1969; Olivier *et al*., 2010). They are usually located in topographically low areas with the surrounding elevated terrain serving as the catchment area for rainfall that permeates downwards through fracture planes in rocks into narrow conduits. The narrow conduits allow water to percolate to a deeper level where it is heated. The impermeable parts of faults, fracture zones or dykes restrict water percolation and cause water to rise to the earth surface (Kent, 1969).

South Africa has about eighty-seven known hot springs (Hoole, 2001; Olivier *et al.*, 2010), of which more than 30 operate as resorts (Boekstein, 1998). The province with most resorts is Limpopo with ten thermal spring resorts, followed by Western Cape with nine, Kwazulu-Natal and Mpumalanga with four each, The Free State and Eastern Cape have 3 each while Gauteng, North West and Northern Cape have one each (Boekstein,

1998; Olivier *et al*., 2008). The mineral content of these springs is influenced by the type of rocks through which the water percolates (Kent, 1969).

The use of thermal springs in South Africa extends into the distant past. The Khoi (Hottentots) used the hot spring at Caledon, calling it ‘a fountain of life’. They believed that it could cure any type of illness and if the water was drunk, it made old men become ‘active like the younger ones’ (Boekstein, 1998). According to Rindl (1936), the hot spring at Montagu was also frequented by the Khoi and the San.

Europeans who had settled in what became known as the Western Cape Province, started visiting the hot springs in this part of the world in the late 1600s and early 1700s, predominantly for health reasons. During this period, Caledon and Malmesbury developed as health resorts. The Caledon spring was particularly well-known amongst the Capetonians and was visited by doctors who recommended it to their patients. It was claimed that bathing in the hot water cured ailments such as rheumatism (Booyens, 1981).

At least two thermal springs in Limpopo, namely Letaba (Die Eiland) and Bela Bela (Warmbaths) were also used before the arrival of the first Europeans. Letaba (Die Eiland) hot spring was used by indigenous people to produce salt by “lixiviating the mud through which the water issued and evaporating the resultant solution over the open fire in clay pots” Kent (1942:35). The earth scattered over the Mamatzapi watercourse is said to be a relic of the salt-making industry. Salt-making is currently done at the Souting (Baleni) hot spring (Figure 1.1). The local community at Bela Bela used the hot spring for the cleansing of evil spirits, invoking charms and during initiation. The spring was also used as a place where people would go and be cleansed as part of purification and spiritual harmonisation after battle (Ntsoane, 2001).

Figure 1.1. The salt making in Baleni.

Source: AE Tshibalo

The development of hot water springs in Limpopo was the direct result of the exploration and occupation of the northern regions of South Africa by the Europeans. Thermal waters were initially used for domestic and irrigation purposes, and later developed as health resorts and tourism destinations. Interestingly, the springs were valued primarily for the therapeutic value of the mud bath. Their use as mineral baths took place considerably later. It is also noticeable that the hottest springs, Tshipise, Bela Bela and Die Eiland developed first while warm and lukewarm springs, such as those at Loubad, Mphephu and Sagole, remained either underdeveloped or undeveloped (Kent, 1942, 1946,1969 and Hoole, 2001). Other than temperature, no explanation has been put forward as to why some springs developed successfully and others not. The research project is set against this background in that it attempts to unravel the reasons for the differences in the level of development of thermal spring resorts in Limpopo Province.

1.3 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Internationally, tourism is identified as one of key industries that create jobs. According to De Olim (2005) one in 12 employees around the world work in the tourism industry. In South Africa, the government considers tourism as one of its basic economic development strategies and markets the country as a place of “coastal beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage”, among other factors (Reimold, 2006). The number of tourists visiting the country has increased significantly over the last decade. In 1994, South Africa received 640 000 foreign visitors. The number exploded to 6, 5 million in 2003 (Reimold, 2006). In 2008, foreign arrivals to South Africa were reported to be 9, 5 million, of which 7, 4 million were from Africa. The number of foreign visitors increased to 9, 9 million in 2009 (Department of Tourism, 2010). The increase in foreign visitors is attributed to the democratisation of the country which started with the release of Nelson Mandela from prison, the first democratic elections of 1994 and the 2010 Soccer World Cup.

Internal tourism also contributes to growth in the tourism industry. About 15 million South Africans undertook 34 million domestic trips in 2002. It is estimated that tourism directly or indirectly created 1, 2 million jobs in 2010 (Department of Tourism, 2010). Since hot spring resorts are a major tourist destination, it seems obvious that they could contribute to economic growth of a region, provided that they are developed in a sustainable manner.

Limpopo has more thermal springs than any other province. While some springs such as Bela Bela, Die Eiland and Tshipise are well-developed as resorts, others are less developed, undeveloped or in a state of decay (Kent, 1969; Mphephu, 1988). Surprisingly a number of underdeveloped and deteriorating resorts are found close to the successful ones. Examples of this are seen at the Tshipise, Mphephu and Sagole hot springs. These resorts are located in the far north of Limpopo Province. Tshipise is well-developed; it attracts thousands of people every year. Mphephu is underdeveloped

and is mostly visited by local people. On the other hand, Sagole is neglected and facilities available are deteriorating (Kent, 1969; Mphephu, 1988; Gray, 2010).

The concept of competitiveness has been used by economists to gauge and increase, the level of success of an enterprise. Initially it was used to produce more and better quality goods and services marketed to consumers. This competitiveness concept is generally applied to firms and companies (Newall, 1992). However, it has lately been applied to the tourism sector to assess a destination's ability to add value to its products that sustain its resources while maintaining a good market position relative to competitors (Hassan, 2000). The concept includes environmental aspects such as natural, human made, social and cultural. According to Ritchie and Crouch (2000), destination competiveness has major ramifications for the tourism industry and is therefore important to tourism operators and policymakers.

Competitiveness theory has been used to determine factors that contribute to success of the thermal springs as tourism destinations (Hassan, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000). According to Lee and King (2006), factors that should be considered when determining for competitiveness of thermal spring resorts, include tourism destination resources and attractors, tourism destination strategies and the tourism destination environment.

While economic principles have been applied to increase the competitiveness of South African tourism destinations, ranging from cities such as Cape Town and Durban, to game parks, this theory has not been applied to thermal spring resorts. The large discrepancy in the development state of the three neighbouring thermal springs in Limpopo, offers an excellent opportunity to identify the factors that have led to the success of some and the failure of others. Only by understanding the underlying causes of these differences in levels of development can informed decisions be made regarding strategies that can be used to ensure the sustainable development of a thermal spring.

1.4 STUDY AREA

The area of study lies in South Africa in Limpopo province. Mphephu, Sagole and Tshipise hot springs are located in the far north of it. Sagole is found on the road leading to Kruger National Park and Tshipise is 50 km from the Beit Bridge border gate between Zimbabwe and South Africa. Mphephu resort is approximately 30 km from Makhado (Louis Trichardt) and 95 km from Tshipise resort. The three springs are within the Vhembe District Municipal area (Mphephu, 1988; Vhembe IDP, 2009/10).

1.5 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of the study is to identify the underlying reasons for the observed differences in level of development of Mphephu, Sagole and Tshipise resorts. This will be done by means of a comparative study of the resorts with regard to the tourism destination competitiveness factors as defined by Lee and King (2006).

Since the development of a thermal spring appears to be related to the physical and chemical properties of the spring, the first objective is determine the physical and chemical properties of the three thermal springs.

In the politically diverse South Africa, the history and ethnographic use of the springs may have influenced the development of the resorts. Therefore, objective 2 aims to describe the history and uses of the Mphephu, Tshipise and Sagole resorts.

The third objective is to assess the three resorts with respect to their competitiveness as tourism destinations. This was accomplished by rating the level of compliance of the resorts in terms of each of the factors defined by Lee and King (2006).

After the investigation, it should be possible to do the following:

- Identify factors contributing to the success or failure of the three thermal springs as tourist resorts

- Suggest possible remedial action for the sustainable development of the thermal springs as a tourist destination.

1.6 LAYOUT OF THE DISSERTATION

Chapter 1 comprised a short introduction to the study and its motivation. Chapter 2 gives an overview of thermal springs and their uses, with special emphasis on their tourism potential. It also introduces the factors that contribute to the success or failure of tourism destinations. Chapter 3 deals with study area and the research methodology, including data collection instruments and the techniques used for data analysis. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 discuss Tshipise, Mphephu and Sagole thermal spring resorts, respectively. Each chapter commences with information on the historical development of the resort and the physical and chemical properties of the hot spring. This is followed with an in-depth discussion and rating of the resort with respect to destination competitiveness factors. In the penultimate chapter, Chapter 7, the ratings of the three resorts are compared and those factors contributing to the success or failure of the resort, identified. Chapter 8 is the conclusion of the dissertation. It provides a summary of the research and findings, and gives recommendations for possible actions that can be taken by the resorts to increase their level of success as tourism destinations.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter commences with a general discussion of thermal springs; their occurrence (section 2.1), physical and chemical characteristics (2.2), and their historical development, including past and current uses (2.3). The section that follows deals with South African thermal springs (2.4) and provides information on the number, location, chemical characteristics and associated geological controls and their historical development (2.5). Since the study focuses on three springs in Limpopo, an account of thermal springs in this province is presented (section 2.6).

The study aims to determine the factors that would lead to the success of these three thermal springs as tourism destinations. Section 2.7 deals with the concept of sustainable development and its relevance to the tourism industry. Section 2.8 describes tourism destination competiveness models that incorporate elements of sustainable development. The chapter concludes with a discussion in section 2.9 of the attributes that would contribute to a successful tourism destination.

2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THERMAL SPRINGS

2.2.1 Definition of hot/thermal springs

Hot springs are defined as springs that discharge groundwater heated by natural geothermal sources (Kent, 1969; Hoole 2001). They are also referred to as hydrothermal or thermal springs. Thermal springs occur on every continent and even beneath the oceans (World Book Encyclopaedia, 1982). There are various types of hot springs, some are erupting and others are non- erupting.

Erupting thermal springs are found in volcanic regions where percolating water is heated by magma reservoirs (Rinehart, 1980; Hoole, 2001). They are found where the water table is relatively near the surface and the sub-surface temperature is at or near boiling point. These erupting thermal springs are also called ‘dying volcanoes’ because they represent the last stage of volcanic activity, when the magma starts to cool and harden (Rinehart, 1980; World Book Encyclopaedia, 1982; Hoole, 2001).

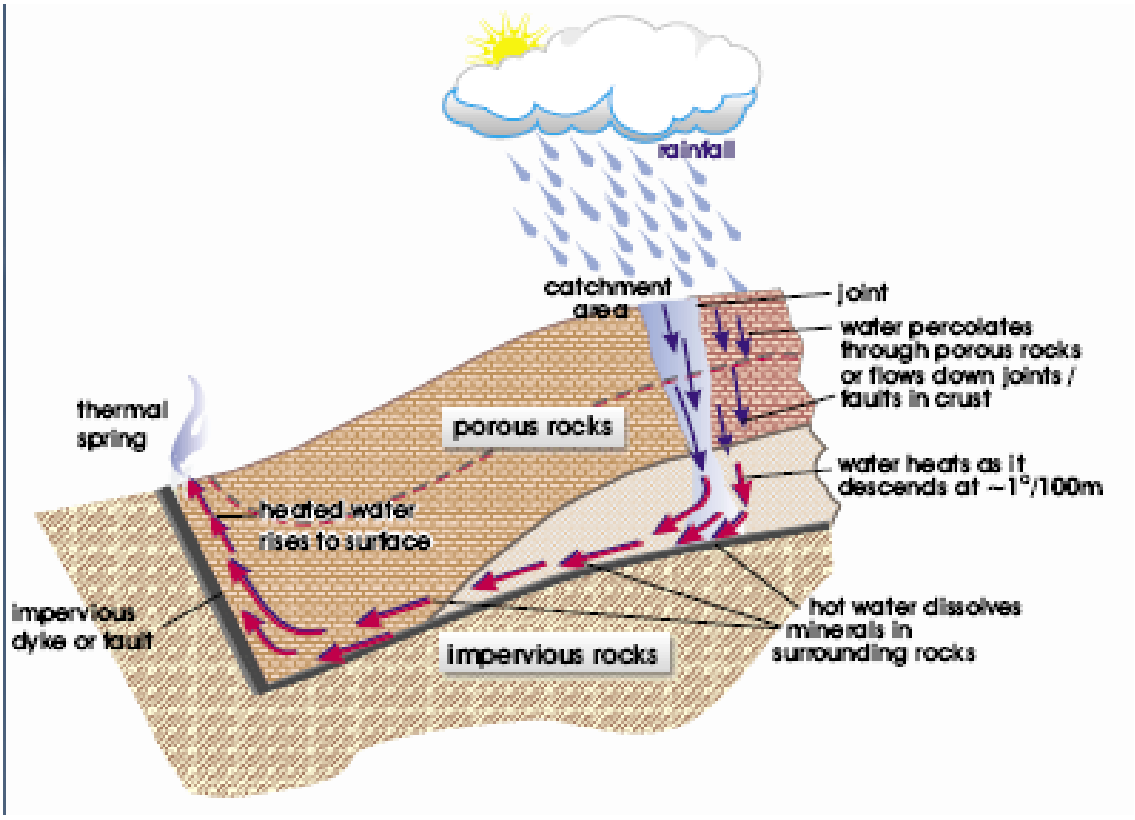

Figure 2.1. Occurrence of thermal springs

Source: Olivier (2006).

The mechanism for the development of a non-erupting thermal spring is illustrated in Fig. 2.1. The flow rates and temperatures of such springs are influenced by the rate at which the water circulates through the system of underground channel ways, the amount of heat supplied at depth, and the extent of dilution of the heated water by cool groundwater near the surface (Kent, 1949; Rinehart, 1980; World Book Encyclopaedia, 1982; Hoole, 2001; Olivier *et al., 2008*).

2.2.2 Physical characteristics of thermal springs

Thermal springs can be classified in terms of their physical characteristics (geology, temperature, flow rates) and chemical characteristics (mineral composition) or a combination of these. Such classifications assist in determining the optimal use of thermal springs.

2.2.2.1 *Flow rates*

Thermal springs can be classified according to the rate at which they discharge water. This is called the flow rate (discharge). The flow rates of hot springs range from tiny seeps to high-rising water that shoots upwards. Some springs alternate between high and low flow rate (La Moreaux & Tanner, 2001).

Flow rates and volumes depend on differences in ground recharge and discharge elevations, and on the size of the fractures and openings discharging the groundwater to the surface (La Moreaux & Tanner, 2001; Helfrich *et al.*, 2005). The discharge of a hot spring can also be influenced by weather patterns, especially in areas characterised by sinkholes and fractured rocks, where floods and rainwater are directed into the ground (Grasby & Lepitzki, 2002; Witcher, 2002a; Helfrich *et al*., 2005).

The flow rate is an important measurement since it is used to estimate water storage and supply, changes in water availability and water use rates (Helfrich *et al*., 2005). The classification of thermal springs according to average discharge is given in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Flow rate classification

Magnitude	Flow (l/s)
1st Magnitude	2800 l/s
2nd Magnitude	280 to 2800 (l/s)
3rd Magnitude	28 to 280 (l/s)
4th Magnitude	6.3 to 28 (l/s) (l/s)
5th Magnitude	0.63 to 6.3 l/s
6th Magnitude	63 to 630 (ml/s)
7th Magnitude	8 to 63 ml/s
8th Magnitude	8 ml/s
l/s-litre per second; ml/s-millilitre per second	

Source: Meinzer (1927)

2.2.2.2 *Temperature*

Thermal springs can be categorised according to their temperature. However, there is considerable debate around what distinguishes a hot spring from a cold spring. The temperature that distinguishes a thermal from a non-thermal spring appears to be largely arbitrary. In view of the fact that the climate of one region differs from that of another, what is ‘warm’ in one region may not be considered to be such elsewhere. For this reason, the definition of a thermal spring is often based on the mean annual air temperature of the specific site. La Moreaux and Tanner (2001) define springs with a temperature ‘significantly higher’ (i.e. by 10°F (6°C) than the mean annual air temperature of the surrounding area, as thermal. However, the lack of a specific ‘base’ temperature may cause difficulties in interregional comparisons. In some countries a defining temperature of around 20°C is used, following the climatological usage of this temperature to separate ‘mild’ from ‘warm’ climates (Kent, 1949). It is generally accepted that the boundary between ‘warm’ and ‘hot’ is that of the normal human body temperature (37°C) (Olivier *et al*., 2008).

The classification of springs may also be influenced by the use of the spring. For instance, Table 2.2 shows the classification used by balneologists.

Table 2.2. Balneological temperature classification

Category (Class)	Temperature
Cold Springs	Below 25 ºC
Tepid Springs	Between 25 ºC and 34 ºC
Warm Springs	Between 34 ºC and 42 ºC
Hot Springs	Above 42 ºC

Source: Taylor & Phillips (2007)

The temperature of thermal springs is influenced by the temperature of the magma (for volcanic springs), the depth of the penetration, as well as the nature of conduits of water to the surface. Although the faster the water comes to the surface, the less chance it has to cool down and thus the hotter it is (Kent, 1949; Hoole, 2001; Witcher, 2002a). This may not always be true, since the large volumes of circulating water may also result in the springs having low temperatures. Hartnady and Jones (2007) found that springs with the highest temperatures in the Western Cape are associated with intermediate flow rates.

2.2.3 Chemical composition

Thermal hot springs have different chemical compositions, depending on, *inter alia*, the geological formations and time taken for the water to infiltrate the Earth (Allen, 1934; Knoblich, 2002). According to Allen (1934) and Knoblich (2002) the depth through which the water circulates contributes to the mineral composition of thermal springs. The mineral content is derived from dissolved minerals from adjacent rocks and magma sources (Allen, 1934; Inguaggiato & Pecoraino, 2000; Knoblich, 2002). Springs rich in calcium bicarbonate are probably associated with limestone and those with abundant alkali chlorides, with magma. Hot springs with little or no soluble components are affected by silicate rocks such as granite, diorite, quartz porphyries, quartzite, slate and gneiss (Allen, 1934; Inguaggiato and Pecoraino, 2000).

Springs with minerals such as sodium (Na) and potassium chlorides (KCl) are sublimates from molten lavas and vapours of these elements that condense long before

they reach the surface. When finding their way to the surface the lavas are dissolved by deeply penetrating waters. Geology also determines the gaseous composition of thermal water. Samsudin *et al*., (1997) indicate that the gases found in hot springs are nitrogen (N_2), carbon dioxide (CO_2), hydrogen sulphide (H_2S), oxygen (O_2), argon (Ar) and methane (CH_4). The sources of these gases are biological waste products from bacterial decomposition of organic material or by-products of the reduction of sulphuric mineral deposits. The presence of these gases, especially H_2S, gives an unpleasant taste and odour to the water in which they are present (Samsudin *et al.,* 1997). Some of these gases are converted into carbonates and sulphates as a result of oxidation by air and reaction with water (Allen, 1934; Knoblich, 2002).

2.2.4 pH

Thermal springs that are characterised by a low pH level (acidic) are unlikely to be utilised as this adversely affects the survival of living organisms around them. As a result of this, acidic springs are unlikely to be used for domestic, recreational and agricultural purposes (New Mexico Environment Department, 2002). Currently most resorts or spas operate at thermal springs that are alkaline. According to the New Mexico Environment Department (2002), water suitable for swimming and bathing normally ranges between 6.5 and 8.3 in terms of its pH level. Water below this level is likely to cause eye irritation.

It is interesting to note that some thermal springs in the same geographic region show different water characteristics. The various springs probably originate from different depths and thus reflect variations in the geological structure within the area.

2.3 USES OF HOT SPRINGS AROUND THE WORLD

2.3.1 Religious and traditional uses

The use of hot springs for religious and traditional purposes has been practiced since ancient times all over the world long before the time of the presence of European settlers. For example, the North American Indians used hot springs for traditional rituals about 10 000 years ago. They regarded thermal springs as neutral ground where different tribes could come to hunt, trade and bath, and where warriors could travel and relax, undisturbed by other tribes (Virk *et al.*, 1998; Hoole, 2001).

Africans have also associated thermal springs with religion. Thermal springs found at the Gumara River in Ethiopia were identified by two Ethiopian saints, Qerqos and Takla Haymanot. Popular belief has it that the benevolent Qerqos, while flying in the sky, was attacked by eagles and his bones fell to the ground causing warm, healing water to gush out where they were dropped (Pankurst, 1990). Ethiopian hot springs were also given Christian and Muslim names. Some of the sites have been declared heritage sites and are currently visited by local and internationals tourists (Pankurst, 1986; Pankurst, 1990; Nguyen, 2007).

The use of hot springs for religious purposes can also be found in Greek mythology. The Greeks associated religion with cleanliness, thus their temples were built next to hot springs so that the water reticulation system could bring water to the holy place (Virk *et al.*, 1998; Hoole, 2001).

2.3.2 Medicinal use

From the above observation it is evident that the uses of springs for religious and health purposes are intertwined. According to La Moreaux and Tanner (2001), the medicinal value of hot springs can be traced back to two and a half thousand years ago. During this period, Chinese people used the Huang hot spring on the Shahe River for treatment for various ailments (La Moreaux & Tanner, 2001; Spicer & Nepgen, 2005).

Africans have also used thermal springs since ancient times. The ancient Egyptians are believed to have used thermal baths for therapeutic purposes since 2000 BC. Many of these springs became known as sacred sites, and later evolved as healing centres (Spicer & Nepgen, 2005). Ethiopians used thermal springs for the treatment of various diseases such as skin diseases, leprosy and other contagious diseases (Pankurst, 1986; Pankurst, 1990).

Ancient Greeks and Romans also used thermal springs for medicinal purposes. In the fourth century BC, the prominent Greek physician and founding father of modern medicine, Hippocrates, prescribed drinking and bathing in spring water for its therapeutic effects, especially for ailments such as jaundice and rheumatism. The early Greek baths were built near hot springs or volcanoes. It is here that the Grecian elite met to exchange philosophical views as well as to treat their physical ailments (Hoole, 2001; Witcher, 2002b; Spicer & Nepgen, 2005).

The Roman Empire continued with the tradition of using thermal water for healing. It is believed that the Romans were the first to build communal baths. Early Roman baths included private chambers, steam rooms and public baths fed by springs. The water for the baths flowed through an elaborate system of aqueducts. The Romans built bathhouses in all their colonies. Thermal springs such as those at Baden Baden in Germany, Bath in England and Vichy in France are examples of Roman architecture and engineering (Hoole, 2001; Witcher, 2002b; Spicer & Nepgen, 2005).

Currently, some hot springs are used for hydrotherapy. Hydrotherapy or water therapy is defined as the treatment of diseases and afflictions by using water at different temperatures and in different ways. The healing methods include drinking mineral water at spas, spraying water onto the body, bathing and underwater massage. Hydrotherapy is said to be the oldest, safest and most affordable method of treating common ailments such as fatigue and body strain (Spicer & Nepgen, 2005:).

2.3.3 Tourism and recreation

The Romans are said to have introduced a sophisticated bath (thermal bath) in Rome after the construction of canals which led to the formation of a public bath (Hoole, 2001). Roman kings such as Keiser Agrippa (21 BC), Nero (65 BC), Titus (81 BC) and Diochetianus (302 BC) built large baths, even outside the Italian borders. The Roman baths were covered areas. The inner parts were utilised for social gatherings, serious conversation, teaching and games (Hoole, 2001).

During the Elizabethan Renaissance, the hot springs at Bath and Buxton in England were frequented by English aristocrats for health and recreational purposes. At the time these springs were not fully developed. However, with the growth of interest in the curative abilities of thermal springs in the 1500s and 1600s, the English populace began to flock to these springs in large numbers (Hoole, 2001). In the late seventeenth century, an improvement in the economy led to improvement in people's standard of living. Health resorts were being transformed into places for the middle class. People visited resorts and spas for various reasons. Some came to the spas to escape urban pressure (Hoole, 2001). As a result, some of the springs, such as those in Bath, developed into major resorts and the surrounding area soon expanded, with luxurious accommodation and shopping areas being established (Hoole, 2001). The impact of tourism on the existing springs saw further development of some surrogate resorts with additional mineral baths, assembly rooms, theatres, libraries, reading rooms and squares.

In the early eighteenth century, after the discovery of the therapeutic benefits of sea water, people became interested in travelling to the coast. Health theorists recognised that minerals found in thermal springs were also available in sea water. As seaside towns developed, thermal spring resorts received fewer visitors and eventually their condition and popularity deteriorated (Towner, 1996; Hoole, 2001; Spicer & Nepgen, 2005). The introduction of cheaper and faster transport, public holidays and vacation leave for workers in later years, further contributed to the decline in spa tourism. Accessibility to coasts became easier. Seaside resorts were many and, as a result, were able to cater for people with different financial backgrounds as well as the increasing number of visitors holidaying at the coast.

According to Spicer and Nepgen (2005), renewed interest in spas emerged during the Victorian era (1837-1901). Spas were managed by medical practitioners, who prescribed and monitored treatments. The spa facilities became popular, and as such they were dominated by the rich and famous. The change in labour laws in Britain in the 1850s provided enough leisure time for workers and in 1919 working hours were reduced to eight hours (Towner, 1996; Hoole, 2001) allowing for even more free time. In the twentieth century, Bath was proclaimed as heritage site. This boosted tourism with the Roman baths and Georgian buildings being important tourist attractions (Towner, 1996; Hoole, 2001).

Other countries that benefited from the rejuvenation of spas include Hungary, Germany and the Czech and Slovak republics (Towner, 1996; Hoole, 2001; Spicer & Nepgen, 2005).

In Africa, thermal springs also contributed to tourism (Pankurst, 1986). The thermal waters of Ethiopia attracted people due to their reputation of having curative powers. This reputation was documented by the British consul, Walter Plowden, who visited Guramba in 1844. He noticed that there were at least 40 people in the water, with about 100 waiting to enter. Other Ethiopian springs that attracted large crowds were Dabamata, Bilen, Barber Waha and Wanzagay. The choice of springs to frequent

depended on the type of ailments that they were thought to cure. Small settlements began to develop to cater for regular visitors' needs (Pankurst, 1990).

Ethiopian springs also developed as a place for royal relaxation. Emperor Menilk is reported to have moved his camp from Entotto to thermal springs in 1885 (Pankurst, 1990). His consort, Queen Taytu, is reported to have built a house near a spring, and the entire court later followed her. The purpose was for relaxation as well as medicinal treatment. The settlement grew and was given the name Addis Ababa, meaning 'New Flower' (Pankurst, 1986; Pankurst, 1990).

Tourism is currently responsible for the development of many thermal springs into spas or resorts, and many spas are changing their focus to recapture the essence of a true spa's contribution to health and well-being. Currently about 15 million Europeans immerse themselves daily in thermal springs waters (Hoole, 2001:40; Spicer & Nepgen, 2005). According to Lund and Freeston (2001), 48 countries were using thermal springs as resorts in the year 2000.This did not include data on countries such as South Africa, Malaysia, Ethiopia, Mozambique and Zambia since these countries did not submit data to the Geothermal World Conference of 2000, although it is a known fact they do have thermal springs and spas for recreational use.

2.3.4 Other uses

2.3.4.1 *Agricultural use*

Thermal springs have been used for irrigation purposes from time immemorial. For instance, it is said that Chinese people have used hot springs since the time of the Jin Dynasty (AD 265-420) (LaMoreaux & Tanner, 2001). During this period, the Cunzhou City hot spring in the Hunan province was used to irrigate rice paddies so that they could grow rice even during the winter season (LaMoreaux & Tanner, 2001).

Over time thermal springs have come to be utilised for a greater variety of agricultural activities. Such activities include but are not limited to aquaculture and crop drying. Countries known to use geothermal energy for fish farming and crop drying are Iceland, USA, Macedonia and New Zealand (Rinehart, 1980; Lund & Freeston, 2001; Witcher, 2002b; Fleischmann, 2006).

2.3.4.2 *The use of mineral deposits*

Ancients also used the deposits of thermal springs to make tools. According to Rector (2005) and Lund (2007), Indians in North America used deposits such as obsidian and basalt to make tools and weapons. Around 500 spears made 2000 years ago were found at an archaeological site about 2 500 kilometres from the Yellowstone National Park at the Hopewell burial site in southern Ohio (Lund, 2007).

Mud coloured by sulphur and mercury deposits was also used as paint for pottery, skins and rock art.

2.4 SOUTH AFRICAN THERMAL SPRINGS

2.4.1 Geographical distribution and physical characteristics

Currently South Africa is not volcanically active. The last volcanic activity occurred about 160 million years ago. The basalt capping of the Drakensberg is an example of this (Hoole, 2001). The most recent igneous rocks in the south-western Cape are late–Cretaceous melilitites. This suggests that volcanic activity cannot be responsible for the discharge or heating of South African thermal springs and that they are rather the result of rainfall (Kent, 1969; Visser, 1989; Hoole, 2001). For this reason only few thermal springs are found in the arid parts of the country. According to Kent (1969) thermal springs in South Africa only occur where the mean annual rainfall exceeds 254 mm.

Like other meteoric hot springs around the world, South African hot springs are associated with deep geological structures such as dykes, faults and folds. They are usually located in the topographically lowest areas. The catchment areas of springs lie in elevated terrain, where water infiltrates along the joint and fracture planes into the narrow conduits (Kent, 1969; Visser, 1989; Hoole, 2001; Olivier *et al.*, 2008).

The thermal springs of South Africa are confined to a broad band (400 km wide) extending across more than half of the country: from Piketberg in the Western Cape through Kwazulu-Natal, the Free State and Gauteng, up to the Soutpansberg in Limpopo (Kent, 1969; Visser, 1989; Hoole, 2001; Olivier *et al*., 2008). The actual number of South African thermal springs is not known. In 1916, Rindl identified 34 hot springs. In 1949, Kent identified 74 thermal springs and nine artesian boreholes in South Africa (Table 2.3). A further four were identified by 1969 (Kent, 1969). Of the 87 known hot springs, more than 30 are currently utilised as holiday resorts (Boekstein, 1998). Based on the information in Table 2.3 below, Limpopo has more hot spring resorts (10), than any other province followed by the Western Cape (9), Kwazulu-Natal and Mpumalanga (4 each), Eastern Cape and Free State (3 each) and Gauteng, Northern Cape and North West provinces (1 each) (Olivier *et al.,* 2008).

Table 2.3. Distribution of hot springs per province

Province	**No. of thermal springs (Kent,1949)**	**Developed springs (Boekstein,1998; Hoole,2001)**
Limpopo	23	10
Western Cape	14	9
Kwazulu-Natal	5	4
Mpumalanga	13	4
Free State	4	3
Eastern Cape	10	3
North West	1	1
Northern Cape	4	1
Gauteng	1	1

Source: Olivier *et al.* (2008)

2.4.2 Physical and chemical characteristics of South African thermal springs

2.4.2.1 *Physical characteristics*

Flow rate

South African thermal springs generally have low flow rates in comparison with volcanic countries where fumaroles and geyser type thermal springs occur (Kent, 1969). Thermal springs with a high flow rate are located in areas with a high annual rainfall. Brandvlei, with the highest flow rate, is found in an area with an annual rainfall exceeding 600 mm (Kent, 1969).

The thermal springs in South Africa usually show a constant flow. According to Kent (1969), the highest flow rates are in the regions of 40 000 m^3/d (~460 l/s i.e. magnitude 2). However, some have experienced a decline in flow rates over time. The reason for this is not known, but may be due to decreased rainfall in catchment regions or increased groundwater extraction for domestic and agricultural purposes.

Temperature

The Kent's 1949 classification of thermal springs is used in South Africa (Table 2.4). Here thermal springs with a temperature of 25ºC are classified as warm and those exceeding 50°C as scalding.

Table 2.4. Temperature classification of hot springs

25– 37ºC : warm
37–50ºC : hot/hyperthermic
≥ 50ºC : scalding

Source: Kent (1949)

Of the 87 thermal springs and boreholes identified by Kent in 1949, 39 can be classified as warm (25-37ºC), 24 as hot (37-50ºC) and six as scalding (≥50ºC). Not enough data was available to classify the remaining five. The hottest thermal springs in South Africa was Siloam (67, 5ºC) in Limpopo as shown by Olivier *et al*., (2010), but its temperature

has decreased over the last six years to only 62°C. Other hot thermal springs are Brandvlei (64ºC) in the Western Cape, Tshipise (57ºC) in Limpopo, Tugela Valley (52-53ºC) in KZN, Warmbaths (Bela Bela) (52ºC) in Limpopo, Olifants Valley (50-51ºC) in the Western Cape and Badplaas (50ºC) in Mpumalanga.

2.4.2.2 *Chemical characteristics*

Chemical composition

The chemical characteristics of water are determined by regional differences in climate, geology, soil and vegetation. Of these, geology plays a dominant role. Examples are springs such as those at Badfontein, Machadodorp and Voortrekkerbad, which are associated with sediments and volcanoes of the Pretoria Series, and are weakly mineralised and alkaline. The Loubad spring arises from the quartzitic sandstones of the late Precambrian Loskop system and is unique as far as other South African thermal springs are concerned, as it is characterised by the presence of $Ca(HCO_3)_2$ (Kent, 1969:156). Welgevonden and Die Oog are alkaline, similar to springs of the Bushveld granite areas such as Klein Tshipise (Sagole) and sulphur springs of the Precambrian Dominion Reef and Pongola systems (Kent, 1969).

Different systems have been used to classify South African thermal springs according to their chemical characteristics. Rindl (1917) focused on the chemicals influencing their medicinal value.

Hot springs with the mineral content of Fe^{2+} ranging between 0,7-7,7 mg/l and Mn^{2+} between 0,9-3,3 mg/l are known as chalybeate. Hot springs in this category are dominant in what was previously known as the southern Cape Province (now Western Cape). In this region, the mineral content of the springs increase from west to east, while the dissolved Fe and Mn shows a corresponding decrease (Kent, 1949). Soutini and Eiland in Limpopo are classified as saline, with NaCl being a principal constituent. Some saline springs such as Tugela and Shushu in Kwazulu-Natal are characterised by

SO_4. Sulphuric hot springs have also been identified. They are characterised by sulphur dioxide ($S0_2$) with dissolved H_2S. Examples of sulphur springs are Stinkfontein and Fort Beaufort (Kent, 1949). South African springs often have high concentrations of fluoride (F^-), and some are rich in bromide (Br^-)(Kent, 1949; Olivier *et al.*, 2010).

A commonly used classification system for thermal springs is that devised by Bond in 1946. He divided thermal spring waters into five categories, as shown in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Classification of thermal water in South Africa

Class	Water	Chemical Composition
A	Highly mineralised chloride-sulphate waters	*TDS > 1 000mg/l; Cl- > 270g/kg; SO4= > 50g/kg
B	Slightly saline chloride waters	TDS 300 – 500 mg/l; Cl- > 270g/kg; SO4= < 3g/kg
C	Temporary hard carbonate waters	TDS < 800 mg/l; pH > 7.6
D	Alkaline sodium carbonate waters	TDS < 1 000 mg/l; Na2CO3 or NaHCO3 > 150 mg/l No permanent hardness
E	“Pure” waters	TDS < 150 mg/l; pH < 7.1
* TDS-Total Dissolved Solids		

Source: Kent (1949)

Most of the South African thermal springs have TDS concentrations in the region of 250-4000 milligrams per litre and thus belong to classes A and B slightly and highly mineralised waters (Kent, 1969).

Gases

According to Kent (1969), gases discharged by springs fall into two categories. Springs from pre-Karoo (pre-Carboniferous) faults are dominated by N_2, with some He and Ar, whereas springs originating from the Karoo system are dominated by CH_4.

pH

The pH levels of thermal springs are influenced by geological formations and chemical composition. According to Kent (1969), of the thermal springs in Archean granite gneiss, eight are alkaline. Such springs include Lilani and Natalspa. Some springs issuing from the Bushveld Complex are alkaline, with a similar chemical composition. Hot springs

occurring in the Welgevonden reverse faults are also alkaline and are similar in chemical composition to springs in the igneous complex as shown in Table 2.6 below.

Other alkaline springs are in the Precambrian Dominion Reef and Pongola systems, and some are associated with the volcanoes of the Pretoria series. Alkaline springs of the Karoo system are said to receive their water from the upper part of the Beaufort series and higher strata (Kent, 1969).

Table 2.6. Influence of rock type on pH

Rock type	**pH**
Archean Granite Gneiss	Alkaline
Bushveld Igneous	Alkaline
Welgevonden Reverse Faults	Alkaline
Pre-Cambrian Dorminion Reef	Alkaline
Cape System	Acidic

Source: Kent (1969)

Thermal springs issuing from the quartzitic sandstone of the Table Mountain series of the Cape system are acidic and show different chemical characteristics.

2.5 HISTORICAL USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH AFRICAN THERMAL SPRINGS

2.5.1 Historical development

South African hot springs were used by indigenous people before the time of the Europeans. According to Henderson (1995), Florisbad was used by human beings about 120 000 years ago. This became apparent in 1912 when stone artefacts and fossilised bones were recovered from the spring mound after an earthquake allowed a new spring to issue near the existing pool (Henderson, 1995). The extraction of salt at Die Eiland (Letaba) and Soutini hot springs is also an ancient practice. It has been estimated that salt production started during the Early Iron Age (Antonites, 2006).

According to Hoole (2001), hot springs in the Western Cape were also frequented long before the European settlers arrived. Early settlers discovered the medicinal properties of mineral water from the local early Khoisan hunter-gatherers. It is claimed that the presence of these healing waters was revealed to the San by wild animals such as baboons and elephants. These animals moved instinctively towards the springs when they needed healing. Other hot springs frequented by indigenous people include those located at Montagu, Caledon, Barrydale, Calitzdorp and Citrusdal. Archival evidence comes from a letter written by Mr JG Grevenbroek to a minister of religion in 1695 (Boekstein, 1998; Hoole, 2001; Spicer & Nepgen, 2005).

The use of South African hot springs was made famous by European settlers during the 1600s and 1700s in the area known as the Cape in those days, the south-western tip of the African continent. The settlers explorations inland led to the establishments of settlements such as Caledon and Malmesbury (and later, Montagu), which later became known as health resorts (Hoole, 2001; Spicer & Nepgen, 2005). The development of the Caledon hot springs gained momentum during the 1700s. According to Hoole (2001), the first house, specifically to rent by patients, was built in 1710. In the nineteenth century, many visitors to the Cape knew of the healing powers of the Caledon thermal spring. The fame of the hot springs at Caledon encouraged officials from the Dutch East Indian Company, resident at the Table Bay settlement, to visit in order to restore their strength and health. These visits were documented in a book by Francois Valentin, which was published in Amsterdam in 1724. Even medical doctors held the Caledon hot springs in high esteem. One of these was Dr Marten Douw Teenstra who visited the springs in 1825 after he had contracted rheumatism while at sea. Although he was cured after staying there for only three weeks, he elected to live there permanently (Hoole, 2001).

The first treatment procedures were documented in 1829 by Dr Johannes Knockers from the Cape. His article entitled ‘Over het gebruik der natuurlyk warme baden’, was published in the Cape magazine ‘Het Nederduitch Zuid-Africaans Tydschrift’. The author was famous for his special interest in hot water spring treatment. He acknowledged the

value of a hot spring's therapeutic power, although he noted that people usually visited springs as a last resort when other medical treatment for the ailment had failed. Dr. Knockers recommended both the external and internal use of spring water. He also believed that the spring loses its healing powers with increasing distance from the source. The healing potential of a spring is thus better at its source. His recommendation was followed at Aliwal North, where weak patients were placed directly above the source. Scaldingly hot springs such as Brandvlei were not popular, as patients could not be immersed into the water at source (Booyens, 1981).

In the late nineteenth century, water treatments were regarded as highly therapeutic, and this was confirmed by medical experts. Rindl in 1916 wrote a report on 'Medicinal Springs of South Africa' documenting their chemical characteristics and purported medicinal value of thermal springs. Prof. LE Kent from the University of Cape Town, also referred to their medicinal value stating that, as most of them were alkaline, they could be used for digestive ailments (Kent, 1952). Kent further acknowledged that drinking water containing certain chemical components cleansed the body by eliminating harmful substances (Booyens, 1981; Hoole, 2001).

Another method used for healing was the mud bath. According to Booyens (1981), 'the first baths which were established were mere holes, hollows or pits which were dug in the course of the river. This led to the fact that the bath users saw mud as being an inherent part of the "warm water experience" and that it had distinct healing qualities.' As a result, people visited the springs for mud healing, rather than swimming. However, the mud bath was suitable only for springs with a suitable soil type. If water rose against a steep rock face, mud was scarce, but it was abundant where the water source was in a low-lying area, in which soil and plant materials had been deposited throughout the centuries. Warmbaths in Limpopo was especially well known for its mud since the entire area around the spring is made up of deep layers of marshy soil (Booyens, 1981; Hoole, 2001). Its use as mineral baths only occurred much later.

Although many South African hot springs were visited for health reasons, people spent time around the spring relaxing. An example is the spring at Caledon. The entire family would accompany a single patient to the baths. As a result, the baths were used for both health and entertainment purposes. They developed into health and entertainment centres. The increase in the number of visitors saw the development of activities such as card games, target practice, mountain climbing, flower-picking, fishing, gatherings, dances, sport activities, concerts and debates (Booyens, 1981).

2.5.2 Current state of South African hot springs

It is evident that some South African towns owe their origin to hot springs, for example, Caledon, Aliwal North and Bela Bela, while at others, such as Christiana, hot springs were merely added attractions (Orton, 1986; Hoole, 2001).

Currently, hot spring developments offer a wider range of different attractions that include game parks, with accommodation ranging from camping sites and self-catering chalets to luxurious hotels (Orton, 1986; Hoole, 2001; Gray; 2010). Conversely, the growth in the health and wellness tourism sector has led to some conventional holiday resorts to heat their swimming pools and to advertise themselves as thermal spring resorts. The Bath and Caledon in the Western Cape, Shu Shu and Lilani in Kwazulu-Natal, and Tshipise, Bela Bela and Die Eiland in Limpopo are some of the resorts with thermal springs while the well-known Klein Kariba near Bela Bela does not (Gray; 2010). In order to cater for the growing number of tourists, previously neglected resorts and spas are being redeveloped. According to South African Government Information Services, (2002), the Department of Tourism in Kwazulu-Natal allocated R3 million for refurbishing the Lilani hot spring.

It is thus evident that in recent years, South Africa has made enormous strides forward in terms of health industries (Spicer & Negpen, 2005). This is proven by the increasing number of spas being built, and treatments being made available. These treatments include standard massages, saunas, and traditional treatments with indigenous herbs

and plant extracts (Spicer & Negpen, 2005). However, few offer medical therapy most concentrating on wellness and beauty treatments.

2.6 HOT SPRINGS IN LIMPOPO

2.6.1 Thermal characteristics

There are over 20 known thermal springs and boreholes in Limpopo. Table 2.7 lists these together with their temperatures and thermal classification. Figure 2.2 shows the distribution of the springs.

Table 2.7. Thermal characteristics of the hot springs of Limpopo

Name	Temperature (ºC)	Temperature (ºC) from literature sources	Class
Siloam	67.5		Scalding
Tshipise	58	57.2(K)	Scalding
Warmbaths/Bela Bela	52	52(K); 60(H)	Scalding
Libertas	52	52(K) ;38(H)	Scalding
Lekkerrus		46(H)	Hot
Sagole	45	45.9(K); 43.6(W) 49(B)	Hot
Welgevonden/Rhemardo	44	44(K)	Hot
Mphephu	43	42.8;43.7(K)	Hot
Souting		43.9(K)	Hot
Tugela		42.8(K)	Hot
Moreson	43	37.7(K)	Hot
Die Eiland	42	40.4;43.7(K)	Hot
Die Oog	40	40(K)	Hot
Vischgat	40	40(K)	Hot
Evangelina	34	32.5(K);45C)	Warm
Makutsi		35(B)	Warm
Munwamadi		31.6(W)	Warm
Sulphur Springs		31(K)	Warm
Buffelshoek		31(K)	Warm
Loubad	30	30(K)	Warm
Vetfontein		26(R)	Warm
Paddysland		26(R)	Warm
B:Boekstein(1998); C:Chidley(1985); H:Hoffman(1979) K: Kent(1949); R:Rindl(1916); W:Winfield(1980); blank spaces – no data			

Source:Olivier *et al*., (2010)

2.6.2 The geological setting

The thermal springs of Limpopo occur in two regions, the Waterberg region in the south and Soutpansberg in the north (Olivier *et al*., 2008). Isolated springs are found in the extreme north-western part of the province and to the east of the escarpment (Olivier *et al.*, 2008).

According to Kent (1949), thermal springs in the southern parts of Limpopo are characterised by three geological formations: the Rooiberg felsites, the Bushveld granites and the Waterberg sandstones. Most of the rocks are impermeable but the geological strata are folded and fractured, and intersected by diabase dykes.

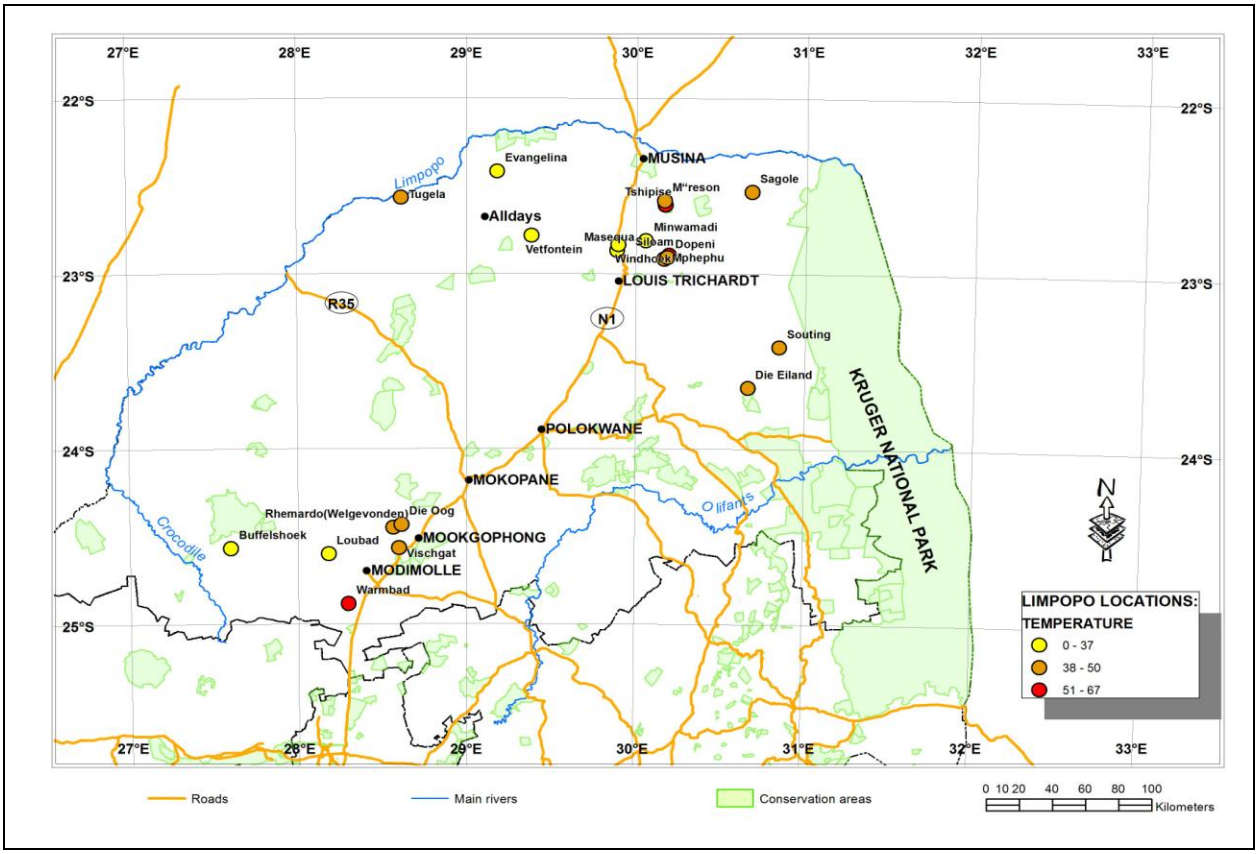

Figure 2.2. Thermal Springs in Limpopo (Olivier *et al*., 2011) adapted from Kent (1949)

The Soutpansberg depositional basin was formed about 1 800 million years ago as an east-west trending asymmetrical rift or half graben along the Palala Shear Belt. Deposition started with basaltic lavas, and was followed by sedimentary rocks. At this stage, there was a featureless landscape. After the sedimentation has ceased about 150 million years, the area was strongly block–faulted, and then uniformly tilted to the north. Approximately 60 million years of erosion formed the current morphology of the Soutpansberg mountain range. The rocks which developed in half graben subsided along a main border fault situated at about 20 km south of the Soutpansberg mountainous area. The area is dominated by igneous and metamorphic rocks. The

rocks are mainly basalt, schist and granite. The geology is characterised by dykes and shear zones (Kent, 1949; 1969).

2.6.3 Chemical characteristics

Most of the thermal springs have sodium as dominant cation, calcium is subdominant followed by potassium and magnesium. A number of the Waterberg thermal springs are classified as 'pure' water based on 1947 Bond's classification, with Warmbaths and Buffelshoek categorised as alkaline sodium carbonate water. Soutpansberg hot springs are mostly classified as temporary hard carbonates and the pH value is above 7.6 with the exception of Evangelina and Die Eiland being highly mineralised chloride-sulphate waters (Kent, 1949; 1969; Olivier *et al.,* 2008; 2011).

2.6.4 Development of Limpopo hot springs and their impact on socio-economic issues

Indigenous people of Limpopo used thermal springs long before the arrival of the Europeans. Letaba was used to produce salt and Warmbaths (Bela Bela) was used for traditional rituals (Kent, 1942; Ntsoane, 2001).

The development of hot water springs in Limpopo was the direct result of the exploration and occupation of the northern regions by Europeans. Thermal springs were initially used for agricultural and domestic purposes. An example is Buffelshoek near Thabazimbi. The Loubad hot springs in the vicinity of Nylstroom, consist of seven springs. Four of these were used for agricultural purposes by farmers and landowners. And the remaining thermal springs, for bathing and domestic purposes (Kent, 1946 & 1949).

As time went by, thermal springs in Limpopo were developed as health resorts and tourism destinations. One of the first springs to be developed was Warmbaths. Carl van Heerden, the original owner of the farm on which the spring is located, named it 'Het

Bad'. In 1873, the Honourable President Burger of the then South African Republic (ZAR), decided to purchase the farm after he saw the tourism and recreational opportunities of the spring (www.accommodation-warmbaths.co.za; Spicer & Negpen, 2005; Gray, 2010). Like in the rest of South Africa, this spring was valued primarily for the therapeutic value of the mud bath. Its use as mineral baths only occurred much later.

The town of Warmbaths developed rapidly after the 1900s. New residential areas sprang up, business complexes were erected, and schools and hotels made their appearance. In 2002, the town was officially renamed Bela Bela (which means 'the pot that boils') (www.accomodation-warmbaths.co.za).

It is noticeable (Table 2.7) that the hottest springs, Tshipise, Warmbaths and Eiland, were the first to be developed, while warm and lukewarm springs such as Loubad and Sagole remained underdeveloped or undeveloped (Hoole, 2001; Kent, 1969).

However, it is not only the temperature of the spring which affects the development status of a thermal spring resort. Other factors such as political instability, poor management style and overutilization of the resource could lead to its deterioration. In view of the importance of developing resources optimally, the resorts need to be developed in a sustainable manner.

2.7 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The definition of sustainable development is important in this study as it will provide a framework for determining factors that could contribute to the observed disparate development of hot springs development in tourism context.

The concept of sustainable development started to evolve in the 1980s after it became apparent that major global environmental changes were occurring suddenly and silently (McKercher, 2003). The world also became aware that there was an element of

uncertainty and risk in relation to the effect of a range of human activities on the natural global environment. As a way to remedy the situation, it was realised that fundamental changes were required in our style of living (McKercher, 2003; Lanza *et al*., 2005).

The term 'Sustainable Development' was first mentioned in 1987 in a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987). The report defined sustainable development as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987; McKercher, 2003; Lanza *et al.,* 2005).

The WCED report identified a number of key principles that guide sustainable development (McKercher, 2003). Some of the principles are:

- Intra-generation equity, social justice and poverty alleviation - this implies improving the well being of all residents in a community, and not just benefiting the powerful or the rich.
- Public participation - which means that we all have a role to play and that communities need to make a collective decision on their own future, rather than having them imposed by external forces.
- Environmental protection as an integral part component of economic development - development without environmental conservation is no longer acceptable.
- Dealing cautiously with risk and uncertainty situations - where environmental impacts of an activity are unknown, the preferred option is to proceed cautiously or not at all, until the likely impacts are determined.

Therefore the concept of sustainable development is a guiding principle to economic development planning in both developed and developing countries (WECD, 1987). True sustainable development addresses the economic, social and environmental consideration (McKercher, 2003; Lanza *et al.,* 2005). In tourism, sustainable development is achievable when resources, both natural and man-made, are used while

maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity and life support systems (McKercher, 2003, Muhanna, 2007).

As a way to guarantee sustainable development the World Trade Organisation (WTO) (2004) indicated that any tourism development should:

- Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development.
- Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values.
- Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contribute to poverty alleviation.

Sustainable tourism development therefore requires the informed participation of all relevant stakeholders to arrive at consensus decision-making. The benefits of development can be realised through consistent monitoring of impacts and where necessary, introduce preventive or corrective measures. Sustainable tourism benefits can only be realised if tourists are provided a high level of satisfaction (WTO, 2004).

2.8 DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

The concept of sustainable development is often at odds with economic development which focuses on business principles alone. One such economic principle is that of competitiveness. The concept of destination competitiveness was adapted from economic theory and is generally applied to the external and internal environment of a firm or company (Newall, 1992; Lee & King, 2006). The external environment considers aspects such as economic growth and transport whereas internal environment factors include service quality, marketing management and human resource development.

Economic theories to quantify destination competitiveness are those that relate to Industrial Organisation (IO) and a Resource-Based View (RBV). Industrial Organisation theory was dominant in the 1960s and into the early 1980s and stressed the influence of external factors on the performance of a company. Resource Based View was used in the late 1980s and considered the internal environment of a firm as impacting on its competitiveness (Hitt *et al.,* 2003).

Destination competitiveness theories combined the IO and RBV to develop tourism models aimed at determining the success or failure of destinations. However, environmental and social factors are often absent from many of these economic models. For this reason, in view of the growing emphasis on sustainable development and pressure by the general public, more and more companies are incorporating elements of environmental and social responsibility. One such tourism destination competitiveness model is that by Ritchie and Crouch (2000).

Competitiveness of a tourism destination is considered as a destination's ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining its market position relative to its competitors (Hassan, 2000). According to Crouch & Ritchie (1999) and Ritchie & Crouch (2000), the concept of destination competitiveness is crucial for the tourism industry and is of considerable interest to practitioners and policy makers.

A number of models that were developed after 2000, were based on this 1999 model by Crouch and Ritchie (Kim, 2000). Lee and King (2006) developed a hot springs destination competitive model that focused on the competitiveness of resorts and spas.

2.9 THE LEE AND KING (2006) MODEL OF HOT SPRINGS DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

Lee and King (2006) identified 57 elements of destination success from literature that were deemed to be relevant to thermal spring sector. Of these elements, they applied 18 elements to thermal springs in Taiwan. This study uses the same factors to gauge the destination success of the three thermal spring resorts under investigation.

Destination competitiveness is assessed in terms of *tourism destination resources and attractors*, *tourism destination strategies* and *tourism destination environments* (Lee & King, 2006). This three factor model is illustrated in Figure 2.3.

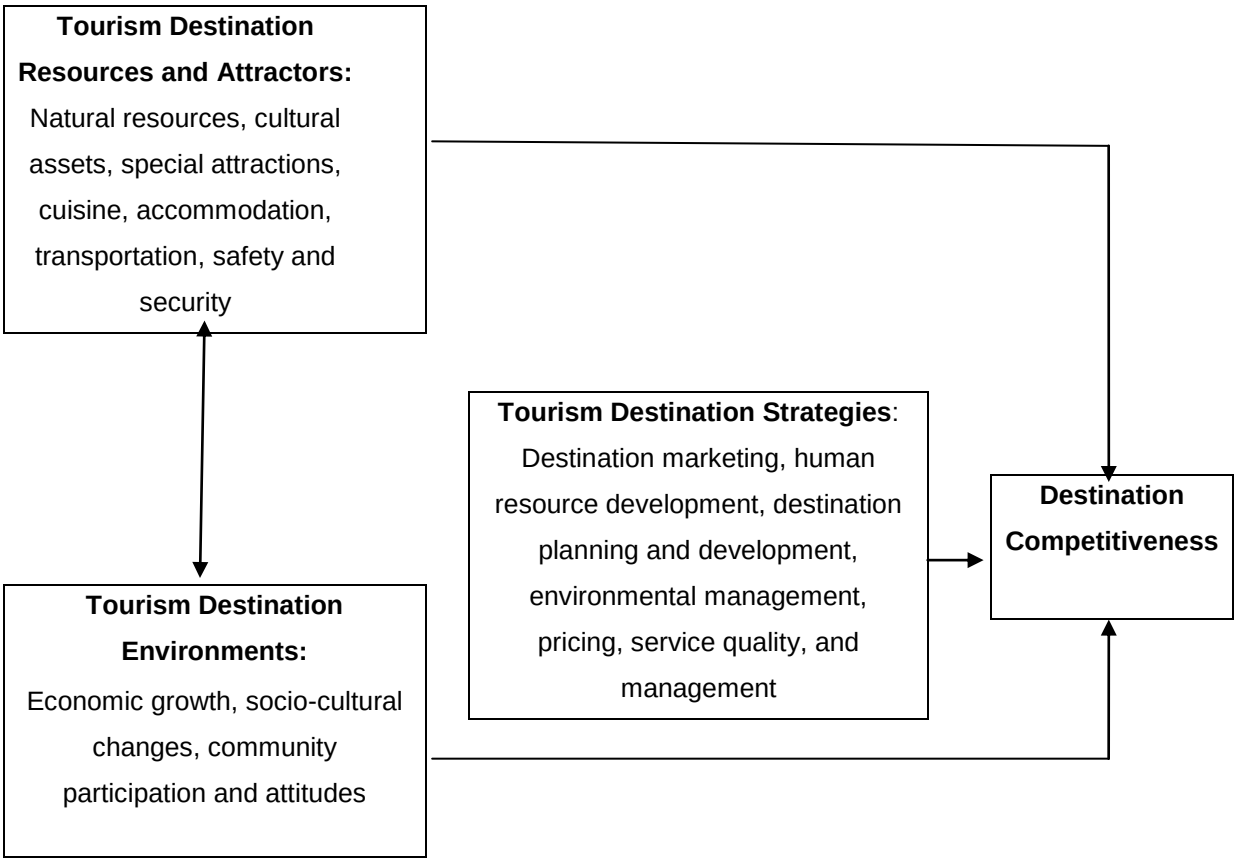

Figure 2.3. A model of hot springs destination competitiveness

Source: Lee & King (2006)

As demonstrated in Figure 2.3, tourism destination resources and attractors are external factors such as natural resources. In this research they include environmental factors such as the hot springs as well as the services offered at the resort that contribute to the development of a tourism destination. Social elements such as cultural assets are included in this category.

Tourism destination strategy (Figure 2.3) refers to the management of a destination. The destinations that are properly planned and managed are most likely to be successful. It is the duty of management to develop a marketing strategy, to ensure pride in quality service and to have professional personnel. A destination that is poorly managed does not usually have a competitive edge over other destinations even with its abundant attractors. Management of the environment, which includes aspects of the business environment as well as the physical environment, forms part of the company's tourism destination strategy.

Tourism destination environments (Figure 2.3) often refer to those elements that the destination developer does not have control over since they are influenced by the international, national or provincial levels. In South Africa, the Department of Tourism (2010) has published a National Tourism Sector Strategy to attract tourists. The exception is the extent to which the developer involves the community in the project and hence influencing the attitude toward the development. This is a vital contributor to sustainable development.

The following discussions will elaborate on the categories and elements of the Lee and King (2006) Hot Spring Model.

2.9.1 Tourism destination resources and attractors

In this section aspects that are major factors that serve as attractors for a tourism destination resort are discussed below.

2.9.1.1 *The natural resource base*

Tourists are attracted to a destination because of its natural environment's uniqueness. The destination may be unique in terms of climate, landscape, fauna or flora (WTO, 2004). Such natural resources need to be conserved to avoid deterioration, in line with the principles of sustainable development.

In the resorts or spas industry, it is said that baths that are built in a natural setting give the tourists a 'get back to nature experience'. Thermal springs are often located in spectacular natural settings and against the backdrop of mountains and rivers. Successful developments would ensure that the resort facilities take full advantage of this natural setting and the scenery of the surrounding area (Snoj & Mumel, 2002; Mclein, 2005; Lee & King, 2006). According to Samsudin *et al.,* (1997) and Lund & Freeston (2001) successfully operating thermal spring resorts owe their success to their temperature, chemical composition, pH level and flow rate of the spring. It is therefore crucial to maintain the natural status of hot springs. This is done by determining all possible sources of contamination such as sewage, industrial waste and agricultural effluent.

The climate experienced at the tourism destination is also a pull factor (Lee & King, 2006). Resorts located in areas where the climate is comfortable are most likely to develop and be more successful than others that are less favourable for human comfort.

2.9.1.2 *Cultural assets*

Cultural assets refer, *inter alia*, to legends, beliefs, customs, monuments and historical sites that include anything of historical importance to the local community or society as a whole. Lee & King (2006) indicate that resorts that have cultural assets in the form of local cultural traditions and specialties are likely to be more competitive tourist destinations. Cultural wealth is a pull factor for a tourist destination as visitors want to learn more about the heritage of the area. It gives the background to the evolution of the particular society (Mckercher, 2003; WTO, 2004). Tourism developments associated with cultural sites and events are important as they can be an uplifting experience in local people's lives. McKercher (2003) identified factors that can contribute to this, namely:

- Conserve areas of cultural diversity and respect land and property rights of traditional inhabitants.
- Strengthen, nurture and encourage the community's ability to maintain and use traditional skills.

2.9.1.3 *Special attractions*

Special attractions refer to attractive resources found in and around a destination. Destinations that offer a variety of attractions have a competitive edge over other destinations and, according to WTO (2004), encourage tourists to stay longer. Such attractions may include horse riding, wild life viewing and many other indoor and outdoor activities (WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006). This is even more advantageous if these activities can be pursued throughout the year. Areas with few attractions could find the tourists disappointed, especially if the weather conditions were unfavourable during their stay (WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006).

2.9.1.4 *Cuisine*

Food plays a major role in tourism satisfaction. A tourism destination that provides hygienic, good and fresh food will attract more visitors. The WTO (2004) identified various indicators that could assist in assessing hygiene and the quality of food at a destination. These range from monitoring the protection of water for the irrigation of food crops and their processing; having a number of tourism businesses supporting local agriculture to maintain a fresh supply of accessible local food, especially nutritious food; and using a number of employees in hospitality and food services with qualifications in nutrition. The WTO (2004) added that the employees and owners of businesses serving indigenous food need to be trained in food hygiene and nutrition.

Bennet *et al.,* (2004) found that one of the most important components in spa tourism in Australia was the types of cuisine provided. The variety of food available is also important. Lee and King (2006) gave an example of Taiwanese spas that offer authentic recipes using ethnic ingredients and cooking styles, and health gourmet menus using seasonal produce. Traditional food and delicacies offered to tourists add value to the site visit especially if they are foreigners (Lee & King, 2006). In addition, provision of Western food attracts visitors as it may remind them of their home experiences.

2.9.1.5 *Accommodation*

Accommodation availability plays a crucial role in the success of a tourism destinations as it determines the number of visitors that can be accommodated (WTO, 2004). Tourism destination competitiveness is also measured against the type of accommodation it offers (Lee & King, 2006). In South Africa most of the resorts have cottages, chalets, camping sites and other facilities to meet a variety of needs. The type and style of the accommodation offered may reflect the environment of an area. For example, resorts found in rural areas may have thatched roofs to represent the culture. In addition, accommodation must be of a good quality as resorts and other tourism destinations market their accommodation on the strength of the facilities available.

The actual location of the accommodation too is important. According to Lee and King (2006), most visitors to hot spring spas and resorts prefer to stay near the natural features and the streams.

2.9.1.6 *Transport*

Tourism destination competitiveness is critically linked to the issue of accessibility and mobility. Therefore the development of a tourism destination will require sound transport planning at local, provincial and national levels.

The WTO (2004) proposed that public transport should be improved and be available, accessible, punctual, comfortable and secure.

There is close inter-relationship between private enterprise and public infrastructure provision. Poor road quality could impact on the accommodation, catering, shopping, and services sectors in that it would discourage visitors from patronising a destination even if the place were well-developed with the necessary facilities (Rousot, 2005:24; Baker, 2007).

Communities with the right mix of infrastructural elements are able to satisfy visitors and simultaneously offer the local residents facilities and experiences that they would not otherwise have had were it not for the tourism development that had taken place (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Mclein, 2005; Baker, 2007).

2.9.1.7 *Health, safety and security.*

Health and safety issues are major concerns for tourists, especially those travelling to international destinations. Health issues refer to illness as well as accidents (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006).

Significant health and safety issues relate to physical and climate changes as travellers are confronted with situations that are different and unfamiliar. The physical and environmental changes referred to are often seasonal since climatic changes could affect air and water quality, changing altitudes, humidity and temperatures, and also micro-flora. Any of the changing conditions could lead to fatigue and even illnesses of a minor and temporary nature, or a major more serious condition such as heart problems, stomach disorders (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006).

Other factors that pose a risk to the safety of visitors could involve the nature of the kind of activities undertaken, the standard of accommodation and food quality, the behaviour of some tourists regarding alcohol and drug abuse, crime and also the actual mode of transport used (WTO, 2004). These factors must be taken into account in conjunction with the age, gender, health status and level of experience of the tourists themselves.

According to the WTO (2004), these health and safety aspects have to be managed with special consideration being given to the needs of the traveller, local service industries and the local community. Most of the successful tourism destinations manage the health and safety of the area and the tourists at the destination, ensuring quality control of the accommodation, hygiene standards, equipment and the bathing environment (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006). Rules and responsibilities are also clearly defined together with the availability of emergency medical care and ambulance services (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Lee & King, 2006). Some destinations have guests covered by health insurance (Snoj & Mumel, 2002).

In addition to health and safety issues, another important factor at a destination is security. According to WTO (2004), destination competitiveness is threatened by both people-induced incidents and natural disasters. Crime, public security, harassment and hostile attitudes between the local community and strangers discourage tourism. The impact of a single negative event may last for years and become difficult to overcome unless finding new ways to once again attract visitors.

Aspects ensuring a high level of safety and security include active crime prevention strategies and giving adequate warnings to visitors of risks unique to a particular destination or site.

In addition, clear health and safety warning signs should be displayed in strategic positions to advise about action needed to prevent unwelcome incidents. Safety and security aspects are the responsibility of the management within the premises of the facility, and relevant government departments, such as policing, in the public areas.

2.9.2 Tourism destination strategies

Tourism destination competitiveness can be improved by implementing various appropriate management strategies for aspects such as marketing, environmental management, human resource development and destination management and sustainable development, pricing, service quality, and management (Buhalis, 2000; Lee & King, 2006). It is therefore essential to have such strategies in place for thermal springs as a competitive destination. According to Lee and King (2006:187), '…hot springs tourism needs to be planned and managed in order to achieve a more holistic form of longer term development'.

2.9.2.1 *Destination marketing management*

The marketing of a tourism destination involves the selling of attractions and accommodation that will take advantage of the uniqueness or assets of the destination (WTO, 2004). Crouch and Ritchie, (1999), the WTO (2004) and Lee and King (2006) advise that managers of tourism destinations should try to find a niche market that is environmentally and socially sound.

A dominant new marketing strategy used in many destinations is 'Green Marketing' as identified by WTO (2004). The strategy focuses on showcasing the destination's environmental or cultural achievements. Marketing the resort in this way could attract more visitors who prefer to go to a place that demonstrates sustainability principles (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006).

Most of the resort marketing teams produce promotional material such as booklets, brochures, various other forms of advertisement. Technology plays a crucial role in the success of a destination. Availability of various forms of media such as the internet becomes a powerful tool for public awareness of a destination (Lee & King, 2006). Most of the successful resorts are marketed via websites, magazines and so on. Some marketers attend fairs, exhibitions, specialist journalists' trips with an idea of marketing their destinations (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006; Smith& Puczko, 2009).

Lee and King (2006) emphasised the establishment of a brand name for hot springs tourist destinations. A destination brand is '…a name, symbol, logo, trademark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination… it conveys promise of a memorable experience that is uniquely associated with the destination' (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The success of branding depends on the quality of a tourism product and its supporting structures (WTO, 2004). The development of cross-marketing programmes for destination tourism products and forming a public-private marketing alliance to publicise the industry can also be used to promote a destination.

Even though a destination may have a good brand, infrastructure, accommodation, natural resources and attractions, it is likely to fail without the implementation of a good marketing strategy, correct segmentation of visitors and the use of appropriate marketing media and tools (Snoj & Mumel, 2002).

2.9.2.2 *Human resource development*

Human resource management within the tourism industry falls within the public and private sectors. Within the hot spring tourism sector, Lee and King (2006) advocate that educational institutions need to offer tourism courses customised specifically for the sector. This will involve co-operation between the tourism industry and tertiary academic institutions.

Tourism enterprises could assist the tourism sector by providing in-house training programmes for their staff and sharing their experiences and material with others. At a national level an endorsed course should be on offer through a variety of service providers, offering an academic and theoretical as well as a practical component. Lee and King (2006) recommend that the educational institutions should assist in designing professional qualification systems for managerial and non-managerial personnel.

Labour seems to be a challenge at many tourism destinations. According to Monteson & Singer (2002), destination developers need to consider the number of employees needed and make provision for training and staff retention through compensation by granting bursaries or loans and offering other incentives on the successful completion of a study programme.

2.9.2.3 *Destination planning and development*

When planning a tourism destination, it is important to critically analyse the environmental, economic and social issues as they will assist planners to incorporate all aspects that require serious attention (WTO, 2004; Smith & Puczko, 2009).

Examples of destination planning and development of resorts, spas and wellness centres are given by Lee & King (2006) & Smith and Puczko (2009). Attention is drawn to the importance of addressing factors such as the optimal use of the land around the hot spring, and its water as a resource. Destination planning would apply to existing and new hot springs areas in which proper designing or redesigning needs to take place with additional construction or renovation of facilities or building new ones.

National and local tourism organisations should provide co-ordination within the sector, assist site developers in licensing matters and encourage enterprises in the sector to be innovative in offering products and resources (Lee & King, 2006; Smith & Puczko, 2009). The government should assist in the promotion of domestic and international marketing campaigns, conducting regular surveys on tourism behaviour and develop a uniform grading system (Manteson & Singer, 2002; WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006; Smith & Puczko, 2009).

2.9.2.4 *Pricing*

The pricing strategy should ensure a destination's competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; WTO, 2004; Smith & Puczko, 2009). When drawing up a cost strategy, factors such as a destination's quality in terms of uniqueness and service quality, accommodation, attractions and packages that are offered by other destinations with similar products, should be taken into account (Snoj & Mumel 2002; WTO, 2004; Smith & Puckzo, 2009). The price of goods and services offered at a tourism destination must be such that tourists get value for the money they spend.

2.9.2.5 *Environmental management*

Lee and King (2006) suggest that environment management at hot spring destinations should involve the development of environmental certification and grading of tourism destinations. In addition, there must be a formulation of environmental protection measures and regulations and their enforcement (Lee & King, 2006).

2.9.2.6 *Service quality management*

International trends in tourism have seen the emergence of standards to grade the quality of a destination. Grading should be done according to WTO (2004) standards that measure management, environment and workplace health and safety. Certification standards support better management systems to create better outcomes for enterprises and the environment they affect. They also enhance the degree of control managers have over destination operations and impacts (WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006).

The tourism industry is labour-intensive and requires a friendly, efficient and professional service at the interface with visitors (Edgell, 2006; Lee & King, 2006). Tourism destination management depends on a wide range of strategic and management skills. These include training in small business skills to support entrepreneurial initiatives. As a way to strengthen delivery, all sectors needed to work with educational institutions to ensure that programmes are developed for the needs of the existing and future workforce (McKercher, 2003; Baker; 2007).

Certification is offered to destinations with good services that are shown through a company's environmental policies, staff training and application of environmentally friendly technologies such as water recycling and being energy efficient. Such initiatives are rewarded by formal certificates from national or international bodies (WTO, 2004). These certificated standards, especially ISO 9000 and 14 000, are used in South Africa

and the country has a Tourism Grading Institute. This institute grades tourism destinations according to specified criteria for service quality. Certification again assists the tourism companies, both small and large, to measure their achievement regarding, *inter alia*, their social responsibilities to their employees and the local community (WTO, 2004).

2.9.3 Tourism destination environments

The tourism destination environment (Figure 2.3) refers to conditions that are mostly outside the control of destination management or the influence of factors, at the national or global levels, that contributed to the development of the tourism site. For example, at the international level, the economic recession affected the number of travellers and this, in turn, impacted negatively on resorts (Lee & King, 2006).

2.9.3.1 *Economic growth*

Benefits of tourism are viewed in terms of investment and the employment opportunities that they bring. According to WTO (2004), tourism brings investment in public infrastructure and services, direct and indirect jobs are created, revenue is earned from tourists spending power, taxes are earned from tourism businesses and any increase in asset value, like land, and the cost of infrastructure provision.

Employment from tourism can be measured by the number of local people employed in tourism, the average wage earned in a community and the ratio of part-time to full-time employment in tourism enterprises (WTO, 2004). Assessing employment trends in the tourism industry will assist in identifying the benefits of tourism, assist in future planning and evaluation of investment needed, and to reduce the belief among some local communities that tourism generates only low income jobs (Lee & King, 2006; Baker, 2007).

Economic decisions should be based on a careful cost-benefit analysis as well as environmental, economic and social impacts (WTO, 2004; Edgell, 2006; Lee & King, 2006). Previous research on the development of sustainable tourism indicates that a well managed tourism programme that considers local expectations and the environment has a good chance to contribute to local economic growth (Edgell, 2006; Lee & King, 2006).

Success of tourism enterprises and businesses requires proper planning and marketing to contribute to local economic growth and improve the living conditions of the community living in the area surrounding the resource that stimulates tourism development.

2.9.3.2 *Socio-cultural changes*

Socio-cultural change refers to how the development of a place as a tourism destination has affected the community's behavioural patterns and living style. Tourism may also contribute to the development of the residential character of a place in that more people will settle nearby and in the area to seek employment (WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006; Smith & Puczko, 2009). The success or failure of a destination especially resorts or spas are also influenced by social factors such as level of education, health consciousness, public interest in health leisure tourism and the access to available leisure time on public holidays and during vacations and weekends (Lee & King, 2006).

2.9.3.3 *Community participation and attitude*

Local communities are hosts to tourists. Tourists visit communities to see historical sites, natural attractions and local practices, and have an interesting experience. The communities can be affected both positively and negatively. Positive ways are that job opportunities arise, entrepreneurship can yield rewards and the provision of infrastructure can enhance their way of life. Examples of negative impacts include

resentment that tourists are taking over their world and a sense of being objects of exploitation, even if temporarily, and, in a more practical way, damage to or stress being placed on the local natural and cultural resources (WTO, 2004). Some communities view tourism negatively as it brings crime, immoral social behaviour and other aspects that are against local culture (Wilson *et al.*, 2001). Traditional or indigenous communities may not want to share their culture with tourists, while rural farming communities may not see any impact of tourism in their daily lives.

Involving the community in a tourism development initiative can contribute to a positive attitude. Attitudes and behaviour of both the community and employees affect the way tourists are treated and their impression of the community (Wilson *et al.*, 2001; Lee & King, 2006). A community which is made to feel part of tourism initiatives is likely to welcome the visitors and protect them. Through community hospitality, tourists will most probably sell the destination to prospective tourists hence there will be an increase in the number of visitors.

Good communication strategies between the tourism operators, businesses, communities and all relevant stakeholders will tend to result in a good attitude to tourists. The strategy may be implemented through public education, including information on the importance of tourism in addressing poverty and other social challenges facing the communities (Wilson *et al.*, 2001; WTO, 2004; Muhanna, 2007).

As mentioned earlier, community involvement is one of the most important aspects of creating a successful tourism destination. Therefore it needs to be part of the process from the start, from planning until the implementation process is complete and even during the operational phase of the resort.

2.10. Chapter summary

Thermal springs around the world are used for various purposes but tourism is the major aspect contributing to the development of thermal springs. Other uses include agriculture as well as hydrotherapy. The developed South African thermal springs are used for tourism purposes. Some are less developed and others not developed. The chapter identified various factors contributing to success factors associated with development of thermal springs as tourism destination. Such factors include the availability of natural resources, community attitude and management of the destination. These factors are to be used compare Sagole, Mphephu and Tshipise hot springs competitiveness.

CHAPTER THREE
STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the location of the study area with reference to its geographical location, terrain features, climate and vegetation as well as the socio-economic characteristics of the region in which it lies. An explanation of the research methodology follows in section 3.4.

3.2 PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STUDY AREA

3.2.1 Geographical location

The study area is located within the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province in South Africa. The province is in the far-north of the country and occupies an area of 123 910 km². It shares borders with Botswana to the west, Zimbabwe to the north and Mozambique to the east. The province is the link between South Africa and the sub-Saharan Africa countries to the north and is often described as the 'Gateway to the North' since it offers easy access to foreign markets (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). Limpopo shares provincial borders with Mpumalanga, Gauteng and North West towards the south.

Topographically, the province consists of central highlands, sloping northwards to the Limpopo valley and descending abruptly to the east. The Waterberg mountain range forms the southern boundary of the province. The Soutpansberg in the north separates the highland plateau from the Limpopo Valley lying further north, while the eastern escarpment that extends in a north-south direction is the boundary between the highlands and the lowveld to the east.

Limpopo Province is divided into five districts and each one is subdivided into municipalities, of which there are 26 in all. The districts are Vhembe (4 local

municipalities), Capricorn (5 local municipalities), Sekhukhune (5 local municipalities), Mopani (5 local municipalities) and Waterberg (7 local municipalities). All three thermal springs, the focus of this study, are located within the Vhembe district.

The Vhembe district covers an area of 21 407 km² and is located in the far-northern part of Limpopo, sharing borders with Mopani and Capricorn districts on the eastern and western sides respectively. The Vhembe district comprises four local municipalities namely, Thulamela, Musina, Mutale and Makhado (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10) (Fig. 3.1).

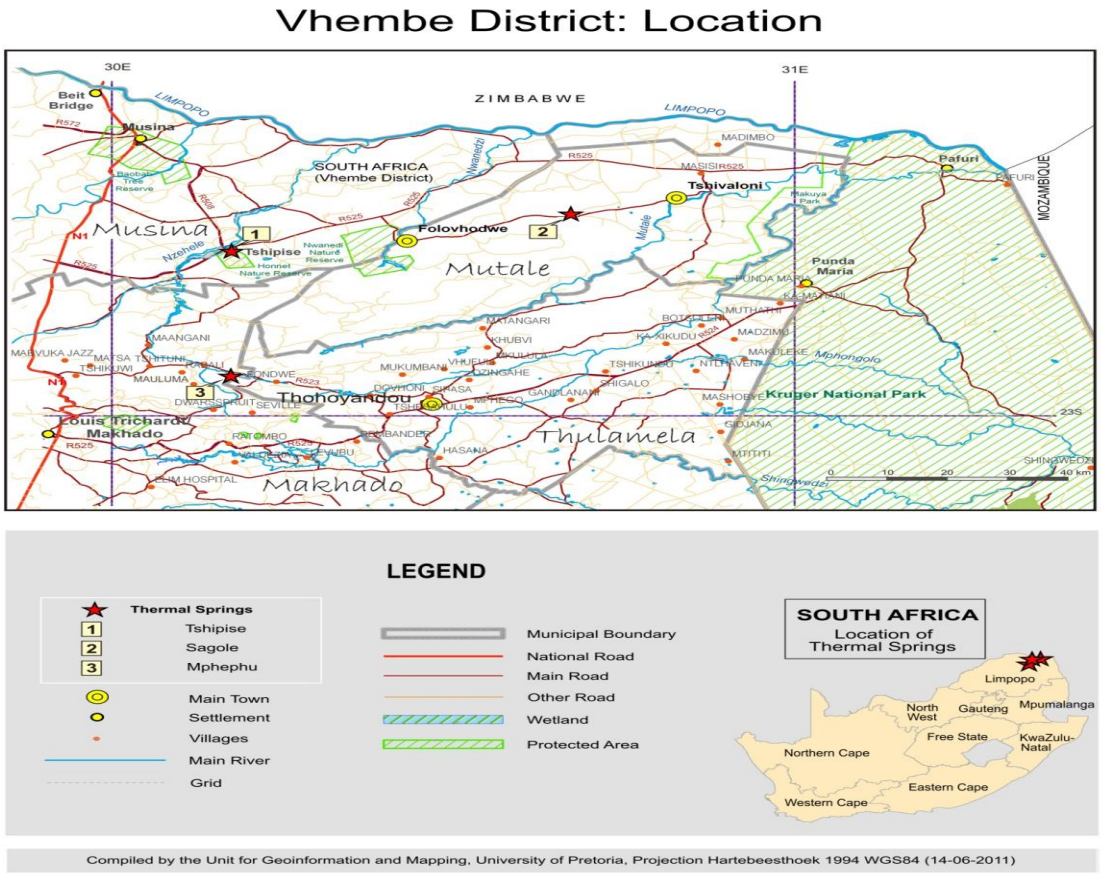

Figure 3.1.The location of Vhembe district.

Source: Unit for Geoinformation and Mapping. University of Pretoria, 2011

Thermal springs in the Vhembe District include Moreson, Mphephu, Minwamadi, Sagole, Siloam and Tshipise. Mphephu, Minwamadi and Siloam are in the Makhado local municipality, Moreson and Tshipise are in the Musina local municipality and

Sagole is in the Mutale local municipal area. The location of the hot springs at Mphephu, Sagole and Tshipise are indicated in Figure 3.1.

Mphephu Resort is in the village of Tshavhalovhedzi at 22º 54’19’’ South and 30º10’37” East. It is situated on the R523 road between Makhado and Thohoyandou in the Nzhelele Valley (www.golimpopo.com). It is approximately 30 km from Louis Trichardt (Makhado). Sagole Spa is in Tshipise village, approximately 40 km from the P?afuri gate of the Kruger National Park at 22º37’44” South and 30º40’46” East. The Tshipise hot spring (22º36’22” S, 30º10’24”E), currently known as Tshipise Resort, is surrounded by farms and the village was previously called Dondwe. It lies about 50 km from the Beit Bridge border post into Zimbabwe and 105 km from the Phafuri gate. Geographically, Mphephu Resort is only about 30 km to the south of Tshipise and Sagole and Tshipise are approximately 50 km apart (Mphephu, 1988; Hoole, 2001).

3.2.2 Morphology / terrain

The Soutpansberg range of mountains is the most prominent geological feature of the district. The name is derived from the salt pans that lie at its western base. These pans have supplied communities with salt ever since prehistoric times.

The Soutpansberg topographical zone lies between 23°05' S & 29° 17' E and 22° 25' S & 31° 20' E and is approximately 210 km wide from east to west and 60 km from north to south at its widest. Its altitude ranges from 250 m above sea level to Hanglip 1 719 m (second-highest peak) and Letjuma 1,747 (the highest peak) on the western half of the mountain (www.soutpansberg.com; www.golimpopo.com). The Soutpansberg mountain system evolved from tectonic processes leading to faulting and folding some billions years ago (DBSA, 1989). Large parts of the area are characterised by dongas and furrows. This is attributed to a high level of erosion caused by short-lived torrential rain (DBSA, 1989). Figure 3.2 shows the morphology of the Vhembe District. Tshipise and Sagole are located on the lowland with hills. Mphephu is located in different morphology compared to the two thermal springs as is found in low mountainous area.

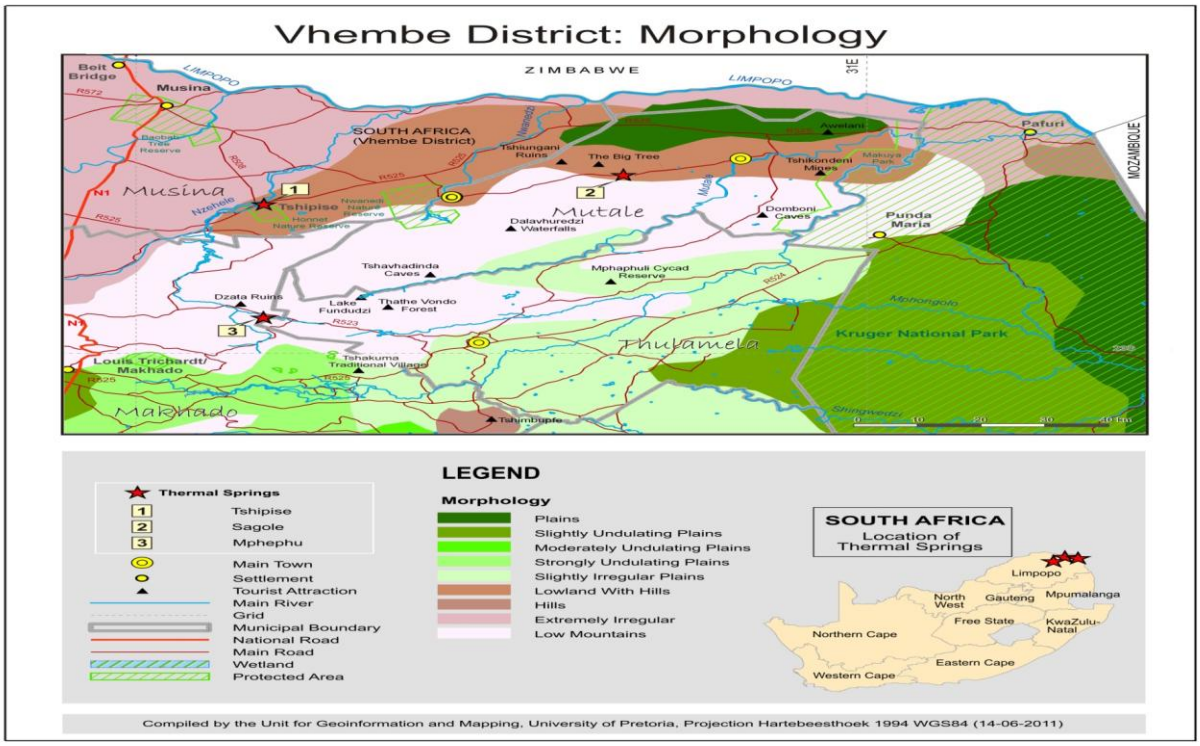

Figure 3.2. Morphology of Vhembe district.

Source: Unit for Geoinformation and Mapping. University of Pretoria, 2011

The mountains receive a high summer rainfall and support a wide range of crops and cultivated lands. The Soutpansberg is a unique wilderness area that accommodates over 500 tree species, of which 50 are endemic to the Soutpansberg or the Limpopo River Valley. The mountain range is home to approximately 467 species of birds and numerous mammal, reptile and amphibian species. Currently, the mountains are a haven for tourists and the area features many nature reserves, game farms and accommodation facilities (www.golimpopo.com).

3.2.3 Climate

The climate of Vhembe is subtropical with mild winters and warm to hot summers. The area experiences an annual rainfall of approximately 500 mm of which about 87.1% falls between October and March (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). Rainfall decreases from east to west and the whole area is prone to frequent droughts, most particularly in the Mutale and Musina localities (DBSA, 1989; Mutale IDP, 2009/10; Musina IDP, 2009/10; Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). According to the Vhembe Integrated Development Programme (IDP) (2009/10) report, the rainfall pattern is largely influenced by the orographic effect of the Drakensberg mountain range. Figure 3.3 illustrates the climatic conditions of the Vhembe District.

The annual temperatures range from a minimum of 10ºC during winter to a maximum of up to 40 ºC in summer, with the highest temperatures occurring in the Limpopo Valley, especially around Musina (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). Sagole and Tshipise area have a mean temperatures of 21ºC-23 ºC.

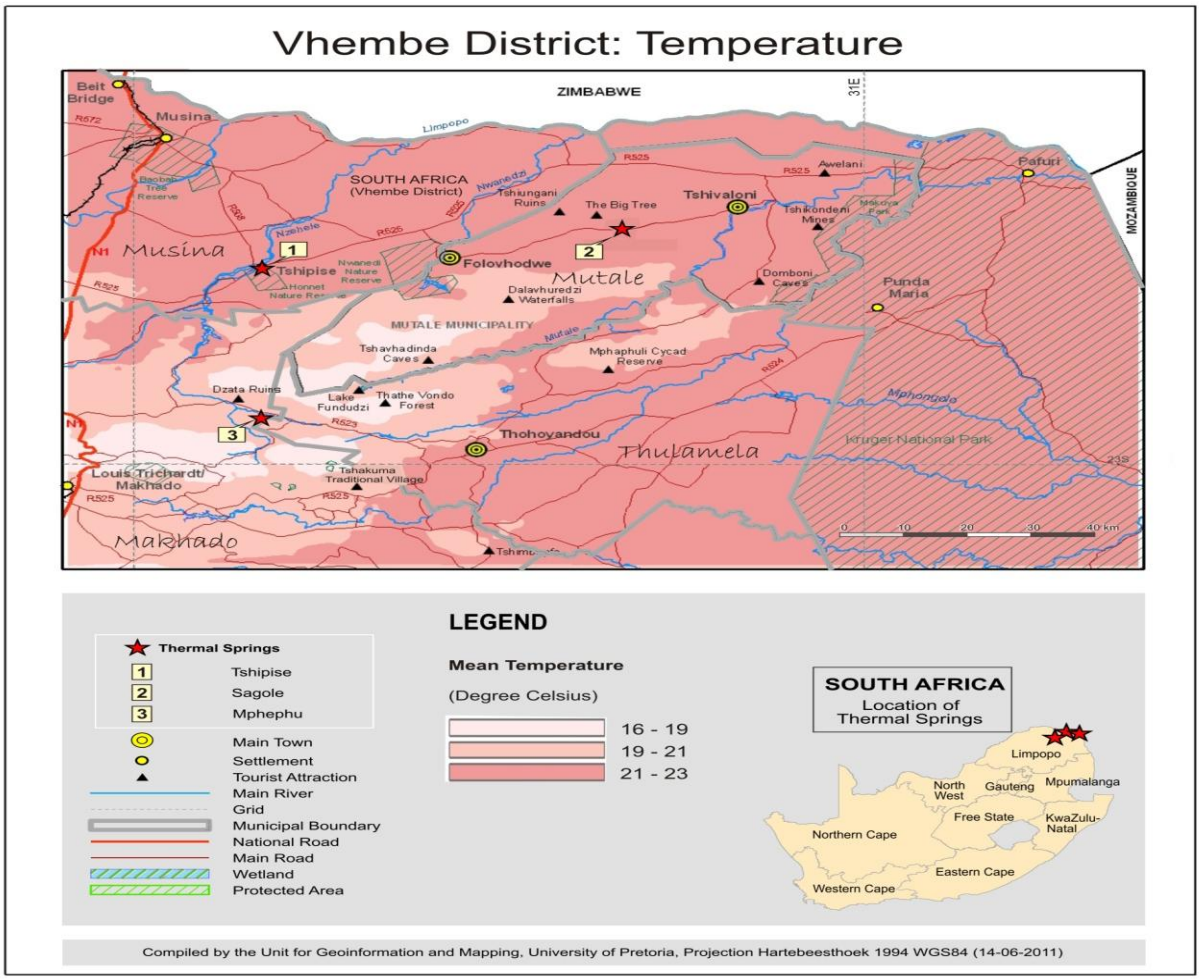

Figure 3.3. Climate of Vhembe district

Source Unit for Geoinformation and Mapping. University of Pretoria,2011

3.2.4 Vegetation

The Vhembe area has amazing biological diversity of flora and fauna, due largely to its geographical location and diverse topography (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10).

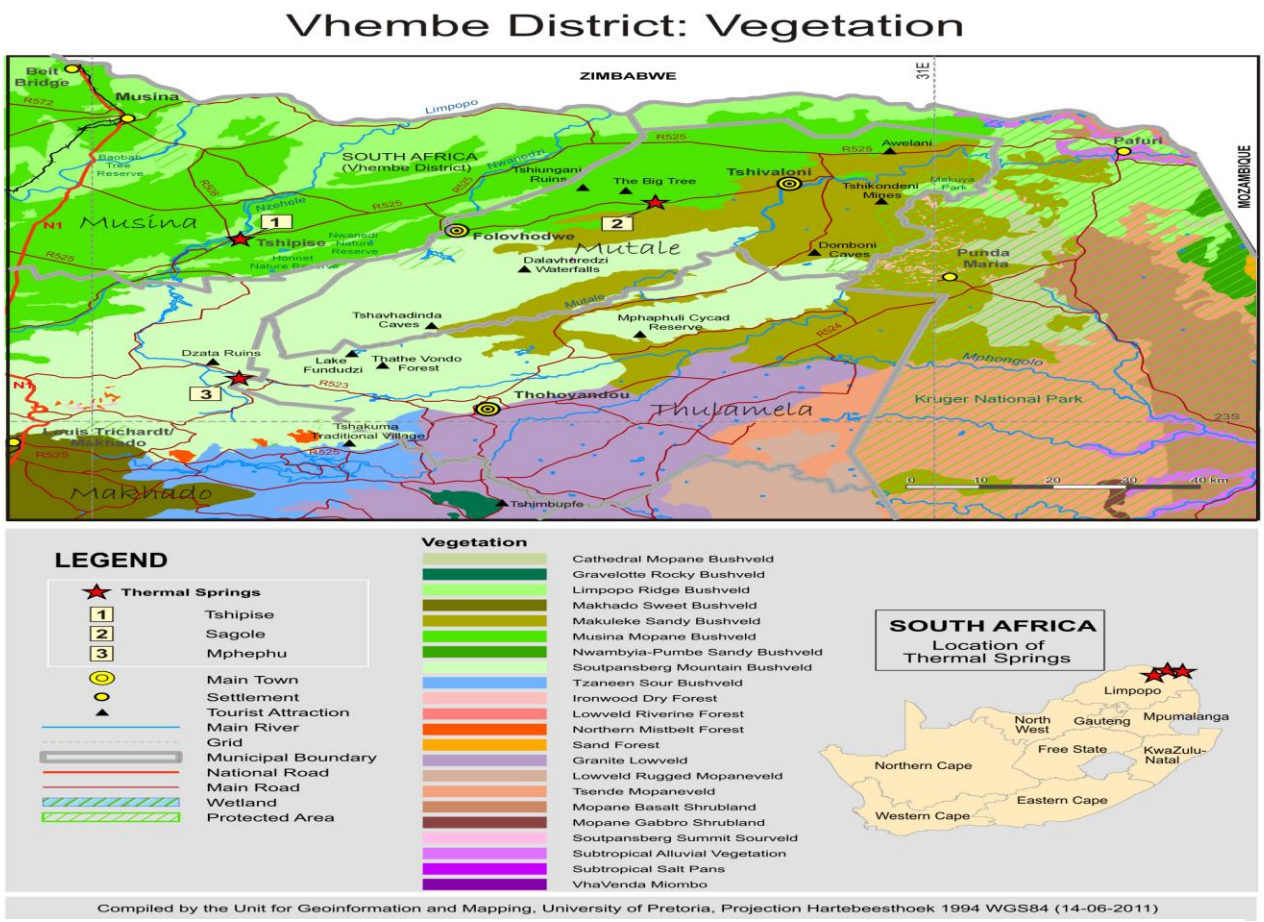

Figure 3.4. Vegetation cover of Vhembe district.

Source: Unit for Geoinformation and Mapping. University of Pretoria, 2011

The district falls within the greater savanna biome, commonly known as the Bushveld, with some small pockets of grassland, woodland and forest biomes. These factors contribute to an assortment of ecological niches in the area, and abundant forests and Baobab trees are a common sight (DBSA, 1989; Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). Figure 3.4 shows the vegetation cover of the area.

There are large conservation areas such as the Kruger National Park. The Phafuri and Punda Maria Gates, Makuya Park are in Thulamela, and the Mapungubwe National Park is a World Heritage Site in the Musina local municipal area. The Makhado Municipality has initiated the 'Conservation Initiative of the Vhembe Biosphere Reserve' along the western Soutpansberg mountain range. The biosphere reserve provides a habitat for a diverse number of species and has a range of different and strong

altitudinal and climatic gradients, giving rise to a mosaic of ecosystems from mesic savanna and wetlands on the slopes, to sourveld grassland and mist belt forest on the summits (DBSA, 1989; Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). The biodiversity also provides the local communities with many kinds of materials for shelter, food, fuel wood and medicinal plants, and contributes to the growth of the eco-tourism industry within the area.

According to the Vhembe IDP (2009/10), the land cover is under threat due to the impact of human activities. Such activities include deforestation, mining and uncontrolled land use developments. The effects may even lead to the extinction of some species (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10).

3.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF STUDY AREA

3.3.1 Demographic characteristics

Data from the 2007 Community Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa will be used to illustrate the demographic profile of the population of Vhembe.

Vhembe District had approximately 1 240 035 million people in 2007 (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). According to Stats SA (2007), Thulamela local municipality had the largest number of people (602 819) in the region, followed by Makhado (471 805), Mutale had 108 215 and Musina 57 195 people. According to Vhembe IDP (2009/10), these population statistics indicate an increase in the number of people in most local municipalities compared to those of Census 2001. Stats SA (2007) noted that, whereas these three municipalities experienced a population increase, Makhado was an exception in that it recorded a population decrease of about 23 456 people. The decline in population may be ascribed to few job opportunities in the area and people migrating to other provinces especially Gauteng, the youth migrating for study purposes and the impact of various illnesses and diseases such as AIDS and other bacterial and virus infections often eventually leading to death.

Table 3.1. Population composition of Vhembe according to group and gender.

	Male				Female				
Local Municipality	**Black**	**Coloured**	**Indian or Asian**	**White**	**Black**	**Coloured**	**Indian or Asian**	**White**	**Total**
Musina	25943	166	-	1651	27554	138	4	1739	57196
Mutale	48792	-	-	230	58827	-	-	366	108215
Thulamela	271804	54	59	187	330457	126	4	130	602819
Makhado	211326	92	9	4429	251503	122	5	4319	471805
	557865	312	68	6497	668341	386	13	6554	1240035

Data Source: Stats SA, 2007.

In terms of population composition, Vhembe District is dominated by the black population group with a total of 1 226 206 people (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). Table 3.1 shows that the area has more black females (668 341) than black males (557 865). Population composition follows a similar pattern in all the local municipalities. The white community is the second highest population. The white community is dominant in Makhado (Louis Trichardt) especially, and also in Musina, local municipalities that were not part of the former Independent State of Venda but were under the white government of the apartheid era. The areas surrounding these towns are the major source of commercial agricultural products in the region, which accounts for the large white population. Coloured and Indian (Asian) communities were reported to be fewer than 1 000 and this may be attributed to the fact that the coloured community are concentrated in other provinces especially Western Cape and Indians live mostly in other provinces especially KwaZulu-Natal but often migrate to other parts of the country in search of business opportunities.

Vhembe district has a predominantly youthful population (Table 3.2) with 187 614 people between the ages of 5 to10 years old. In this age group, 92 899 are males and 94715 are females making them the dominant gender, a trend that is evident in the entire 0-34 year old category. The 15-19 year olds total slightly over 165 000. In the adult population, the over 35 year olds, women outnumber men particularly in the older categories even though population numbers are markedly lower in this youthful population.

Table3.2. Age and gender population composition in Vhembe District.

	Male				Female				
Age	**Musina**	**Mutale**	**Thulamela**	**Makhado**	**Musina**	**Mutale**	**Thulamela**	**Makhado**	**Total**
0 - 4	3674	6470	32763	25719	3594	7655	34166	26503	140544
5 - 10	3667	10080	43556	35596	3443	9436	48818	33018	187614
11 - 14	1947	6894	33491	23677	2047	5945	33999	25457	133457
15 - 19	2230	6330	44616	33291	2592	7125	39075	29786	165045
20 - 24	2403	4309	29135	21283	3467	5804	29474	23981	119856
25 - 29	3413	2919	19150	14042	3276	3531	20818	15959	83108
30 - 34	3373	2671	13678	12449	3148	3434	21237	15309	75299
35 - 39	2194	2081	11943	10331	2630	2975	17835	12894	62883
40 - 44	1603	1920	11372	8036	1479	2804	17452	15517	60183
45 - 49	878	1091	7931	7354	1338	2720	14600	12092	48004
50 - 54	686	1291	6152	5543	777	1691	10533	9070	35743
55 - 59	653	732	4418	5152	409	1058	8931	6636	27989
60 - 65	216	752	4419	4008	443	949	7171	7298	25256
66 - 120	821	1480	9479	9376	794	4066	26606	22429	75051

Source: Stats SA, 2007.

The population distribution within the district shows the history of South Africa as affected by government policy in the apartheid era. The population still remains concentrated in Thulamela local municipality in which the capital city of the former Independent State of Venda, Thohoyandou, is located, and the white population is still mainly in Makhado and Musina, which were part of the former Republic of South Africa.

3.3.1.1 *Education*

The educational characteristics of the general Vhembe population are categorised in terms of people with formal education, including those from tertiary educational institutions. As Figure 3.5 indicates, slightly over 60 000 people in the area have Grade 8 education and 60 000 to 80 000 Grade 10. People who attended Grade 12 but did not

complete their schooling are about 40 000 to 60 000 in number. Those who attained the school-leaving level with university exemption are less than 20 000 people. People with post-Grade 12 qualifications are few in number, below 20 000 and have either diplomas or have graduate and post-graduate degrees.

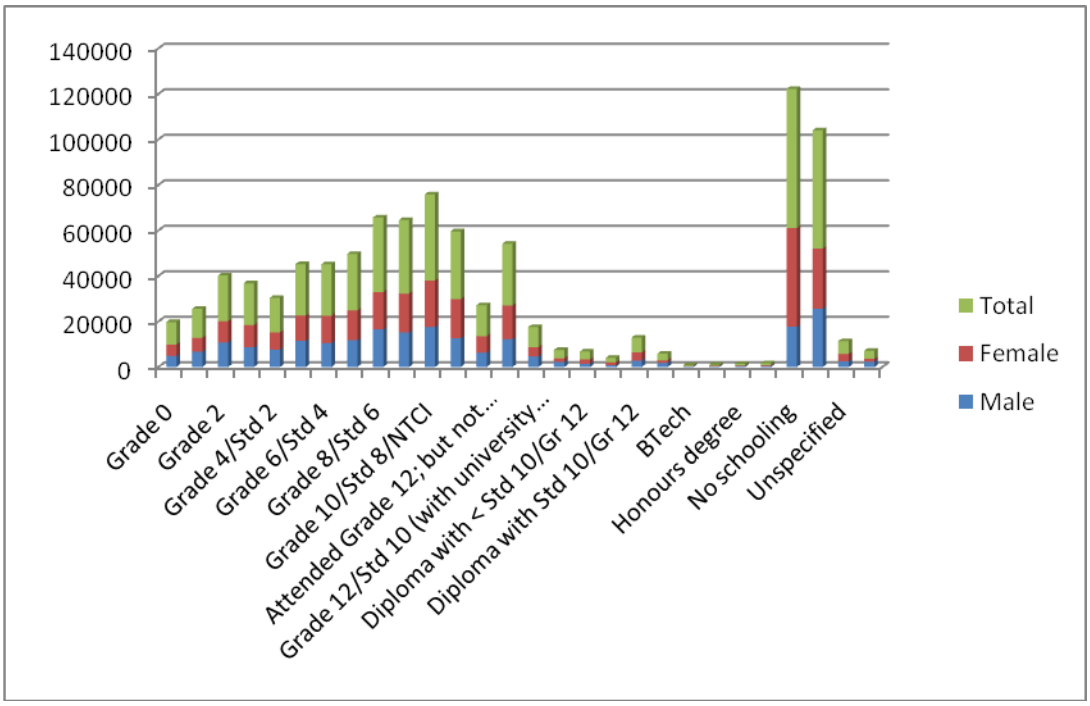

Figure 3.5. Level of Education in Vhembe District.

Source: Stats, SA 2007

The graph went up to 120 000 for people without schooling. It is probable that the level of current illiteracy could be due to the impact of the previous apartheid government's education system that disadvantaged a section of the black population, particularly in the rural areas of which Vhembe is a typical example.

3.3.1.2 *Employment status*

The region is reported to have had approximately 194 000 people employed in 2007. Of these, 97 000 are female and 97 300 male. There are 130 549 unemployed people of whom 76 838 are female and 53 711 male (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10).

Table 3.3. Employment Status of Vhembe District.

Municipality	Employed	Unemployed
Musina	21 880	5 344
Mutale	14 881	9 005
Thulamela	81 641	62 813
Makhado	75 521	53 387
Total	193 923	130 549

Source: Stats SA, 2007

Table 3.3 refers to employment status per local municipality in the study area. Municipalities with the highest number of people employed and unemployed are Thulamela and Makhado. The former had approximately 80 000 people employed and 60 000 unemployed respectively, and the latter had about 70 000 employed with 50 000 unemployed people. Musina had about 20 000 employed with approximately 5 000 unemployed. Mutale is the municipality with fewest job opportunities as 14 000 people were said to be employed and less than 10 000 unemployed in 2007. It is assumed that these trends still represent the current situation. The main source of employment in the district seems to be the public sector especially in the fields of education, health, safety and security. The district has created employment opportunities through various programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). Very few opportunities exist in private sector (manufacturing, etc.) although Musina and Makhado local municipalities are creating employment opportunities in this sector. Dominant employment opportunities are in the agricultural and tourism sectors especially in Makhado and Musina (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10).

Limited job opportunities in the district are attributed to issues such as lack of business management skills**,** lack of market research, food insecurity, transfer of indigenous skills and lack of information about opportunities (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10).

3.3.2 Economic activities

The Vhembe district has experienced low economic growth in the past. However, some economic potential exists in sectors such as agriculture, tourism and mining. There are

a number of challenges hampering economic development in the region. According to Vhembe IDP (2009/10:28), some of these include poor infrastructural development (communication networks, electricity, roads, etc.), crime, lack of Investment, high illiteracy, unplanned settlement, land degradation and lack of reliable business data at local municipal level.

Since this study is about thermal springs as tourism destinations, tourism will be discussed as a sector with potential in the region. Agriculture is also considered because the literature review showed that hot springs could be used in agricultural activities such as fish farming. It is therefore feasible to note the regional status of these particular two sectors.

3.3.2.1 *Agriculture*

Agriculture in the region is a major source of employment. In view of job opportunities in the sector, the regional IDP has devised various plans to improve the industry (Vhembe IDP (2009/10).

Agricultural activities occur within all the local municipalities. The area around Musina and Makhado are known for stock farming (cattle and sheep) and crop production (tomatoes and cabbage). Mutale's agricultural activities are dominated by stock farming. However, subsistence farming is often practised in many areas.

Ways to increase agricultural job creation would be to include agro-processing of dairy products and fruit. At present a large proportion of raw products are processed in other provinces such as Gauteng (Vhembe IDP, 2009/10). The introduction of agricultural subsidies to small scale farmers and the provision of equipment such as tractors and fertilisers are other possible mechanism to boost the agricultural sector.

.**3.3.2.2 *Tourism***

Vhembe District has abundant tourism attractions and is referred to as 'The Hub of Legends' (Vhembe IDP (2009/10) due to its rich cultural heritage. The region has sacred forests such as Thathe, Baobab trees, hot springs and a World Heritage Site (Maphungubwe). Other areas of significance include the Dzata and Tshiungani ruins and caves.

Although the region has a variety of tourism attractions, their development has not been sustainable. There are various reasons for the poor development of the sites. Major barriers to development are poor infrastructure and administrative problems, since some areas with tourism potential fall into different municipal areas. An example is Lake Fundudzi that falls within the Mutale and the Thulamela local municipalities. To overcome this problem, the Vhembe IDP (2009/10) recommended creating tourism hubs that could be administered jointly by relevant stakeholders. Examples of such tourism hubs are:

- The *Venda Heartland.* This would consist of destinations and attractions such as Dzata, Lake Fundudzi, Thate Vondo Forest and the Phiphidi Waterfall. They are found in Mutale, Makhado and Thulamela local municipalities.

- The *Rock Art, Archaeological and Historical Routes.* This hub falls within all local municipalities in Vhembe and would include the Maphungubwe and Thulamela archaeological sites. The infrastructure to link the sites would be co-ordinated by the Vhembe district authority.

- The *Shangoni Gate in Kruger National Park.* The present gate is in the Thulamela local municipality but the planned main access road is in Giyani. The Greater Giyani local municipality in the Mopani District will have to set up a partnership with Thulamela local municipality.

- The *Middle Letaba Dam* shares borders with Makhado local municipality on the north-western side and with Greater Giyani local municipality on the south-eastern part. The joint implementation plan between the municipalities will include the construction of waterside resorts.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 Data collection

A multifaceted approach was used to gather data in line with the objectives of the study. The data was collected from published and unpublished literature, field trips, observations, informal discussions, and interviews with specific individuals, focus group interviews and a self administered questionnaire survey.

Objective 1, namely the determination of the physical and chemical characteristics of the hot water springs, was achieved by means of measurements during site visits and chemical analyses of samples. Additional data on the chemical properties of springs was obtained from the literature. Information for Objective 2, the history and uses of springs, was gleaned from published and unpublished literature and interviews, while Objective 3, the competitiveness factors, was realised through the literature study, observation, interviews and questionnaires. Table 3.4 provides a summary of the data required and their sources.

Table 3.4. Data required and sources

	OBJECTIVE 1	OBJECTIVE 2	OBJECTIVE 3
DATA REQUIRED	Physical and chemical properties of springs	Past and present use	Competitiveness factors
DATA COLLECTION METHODS	• Literature • On-site measurements • Collection of water samples • Chemical analyses	• Literature • Informal discussions • Structured interviews with knowledgeable individuals (Questionnaire A) • Focus group interviews with community (Questionnaire E)	• Literature • Interviews with visitors (Questionnaire C) • Interviews with personnel (Questionnaire D) • Interviews with management (Questionnaire B)

Each of the data collection methods and instruments is described in greater detail in the sections that follow.

3.4.1.1 *Literature*

Literature by Kent (1949, 1969), Olivier *et al.* (2008, 2010) and Winfield (1980) were used to gather information on the physical and chemical properties of the waters at all three springs. Other data sources included DBSA reports (1989) on the physical and socio-economic characteristics of the area. Information on the latter was also obtained from the Integrated Development Plan of Vhembe District and from the Mutale and Musina local municipalities (2008/9). Specific data on the history and past infrastructure of Sagole spa was sourced from an article by Mphephu (1988). Various official documents such as minutes of stakeholder meetings were also used to obtain information on the planning and development of the resorts.

Brochures were procured from Tshipise and Mphephu resorts. Information brochures on cuisine, fauna and flora were provided by the resort manager at Tshipise. These,

together with information from several internet sites and personal observation provided contact details and information on the facilities and activities available at the resorts, as well as on nearby attractions. Unpublished reports with data on visitor statistics were kindly supplied by the management of Mphephu and Tshipise. A DVD of the Mphephu resort made by the Makhado local municipality of activities during the 2010 Soccer World Cup, was also used to inform on the resort's marketing strategies.

The information from websites, literature sources, published and unpublished data and brochures were used to identify management practices prevailing at the three selected tourist destinations.

3.4.1.2 *Field trips*

Field trips were conducted between April 2007 and March 2011. These were used to measure the physical characteristics of spring waters, to collect samples, make observations, conduct interviews, distribute and collect questionnaires and to obtain data from the management and visitors to the resorts. Detail on these methods follows.

Gathering data on physical and chemical properties

Physical characteristics of the springs, such as location, geology, temperature and flow rate might have an influence on the development of thermal springs to resorts or spas and must, therefore, be known. During the site visits to the springs the exact geographical locations of the springs were determined using the GPS (Garmin 60 CSX). The temperature of the water at source was measured using a laboratory quality glass mercury thermometer and recorded. Other physical parameters, namely, temperature, pH, EC and DO were measured *in situ* using Mettler Toledo meters and appropriate probes. Figure 3.6 shows the researcher conducting on-site measurements.

Figure 3.6. Researcher taking temperature measurements at Mphephu hot spring.
Source: AE Tshibalo.

It is important to note that flow rate information was not recorded during the fieldwork as some of the springs had had pumps installed. Fortunately data on the flow rates of the three thermal springs could be obtained from Kent (1949 & 1969). It is not known whether the flow rates have changed over time, but according to Olivier *et al.* (2008; 2010), neither the temperature nor the chemical composition had changed significantly over the past sixty years. Data on the mineral composition of the water was obtained from Olivier *et al.* (2010).

Interviews

Five sets of interviews were conducted, both formally and informally, sometimes using questionnaires. These were:

A. Individual interviews informal discussions
B. Interviews with management
C. Interviews with visitors
D. Interviews with staff at resorts
E. Focus group interviews

South Africa is a developing country and cannot be expected to possess all the characteristics of a First World country. Therefore, not all the elements and attributes of the Lee and King (2006) Model are applicable to the thermal spring resorts studied. The questionnaires were thus adapted to include only relevant aspects.

3.4.1.3 *Informal discussions*

Ad hoc discussions were conducted in an informal manner with members of the community, especially those who had knowledge of tourism in general and specifically regarding the developments of the resorts. Through conversations held with the leaseholder of the Sagole Spa, the aspects contributing to its decline were identified. Community leaders of each village, Tshavhalovhedzi, Dambale (Dondwe) and Tshipise, were approached and asked to identify community members who knew about the history of the hot springs, as well as people who have studied the area with a background in Anthropology, Indigenous Knowledge System or Sociology. One of these was Mr Mashudu Dima, a local traditional healer and tour guide (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7. The researcher with Mr Mashudu Dima, a local traditional healer and tour guide.
Source: DMM Lugisani

A number of people were interviewed including elders and community leaders, professionals such as teachers and retired or retrenched employees of the respective tourist destinations such as Mr Mashawana, a former Venda Development Corporation (VDC) employee and currently a tour guide. Discussions were also held with employees on the facilities and interviews were also conducted with at least two tour guides in Vhembe district based in Thulamela local municipality who were once employees of the Venda Development Corporation of the previous government regime. These interviews commenced during the early part of 2007 at Sagole and Tshipise hot springs. Information on Mphephu was gathered during 2009 and 2010.

3.4.1.4 *Formal discussions*

Various questionnaires were used during formal discussions. One was used for individual interviews (Appendix A), yet another for management (Appendix B), visitors (Appendix C), staff (Appendix D) and focus groups meetings (Appendix E).

Formal discussion with individuals

In interviews conducted on a formal basis, the interviewee was asked a specific set of questions and the researcher recorded the answers. The questionnaire which was used is attached as Appendix A. It focused on previous uses of the hot spring and its ownership the managerial system used in the past; the current infrastructure and facilities; and the general profile of visitors formed part of the fourth part of the personal communication. Respondents replied only to those sections with which they were familiar. Most of this information was used to address Objective 2.

Interviews with resort management

A structured interview (Appendix B) was conducted with the manager of the resorts. This questionnaire was also sent to the head office of Forever Resorts, to be forwarded to the manager at Tshipise. The aim was to gather information about the facilities for accommodation, business transactions and entertainment and other important issues such as the period in which the resort receives the largest number of visitors, the number of employees and the nature of their work. Comments were also elicited on the socio-economic impact of the resort and the potential it has to develop entrepreneurship and address poverty alleviation.

The questionnaire was structured into to five sections. Section A dealt with accommodation facilities, visitors' peak period, available activities, and other alternative specialised offerings such as conferences or special events. Section B requested employment information of the resort such as number of employees (full-time or part-

time), type of work and training opportunities provided by the destination. Section C referred to the place or country of origin of the visitors, and information was from the management to provide tourism trends in the destination. Data in this section was not considered. Section D's questions basically related to the social dimension that included infrastructure availability, such as health facilities for tourists and the community, safety and security. The last section focused on environmental management at the thermal springs.

At Tshipise, the general manager and sectional heads of finance, administration and maintenance responded on behalf of their specific departments. The respondent for the Mphephu resort was its general manager. Electronic mails and telephonic communication were also used to as a follow-up endeavour to obtain answers to questions and to request the return of outstanding documents.

It should be noted that the interviews conducted excluded Sagole Spa since it did not have a proper management system. Instead, individuals working in the Spa provided the required information.

Group interviews

Interviews were held with groups at Tshavhalovhedzi where the Mphephu Resort is located, at Tshipise (Sagole Spa) and Hayoma/ Hamaswiri, the Tshipise Resort. Each group comprised youth, adults and professionals. Participants were selected with the help of community leaders. Interviews were conducted during the visits to the villages. The aim was to determine their attitude towards the development of the hot springs and an influx of tourists into the local area, employment opportunities, as well as suggestions for the improvement of the destination.

Questionnaires were distributed to 20 members of each group (Appendix E). Pencils were provided and the members were asked to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first section (questions 1-8) probed their

attitude to the development of thermal springs as a tourism destination. The second component (questions 9-36) considered impacts of the resort in terms of job creation and social development. The last part (questions 37- 43) dealt with the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Respondents were also requested to comment on other issues related to the resorts.

Areas for meetings included the public pools near the hot springs and soccer fields at Mphephu and Sagole. The Tshipise resort community was met near the gate of the resort as settlement is sparsely distributed and poor roads made it difficult to reach some parts of the area.

Visitor's interviews

This questionnaire (C) aimed to determine the visitor's views on the resort. The questionnaire consisted of three sections. Section 1 elicited information on why the resort was being visited, how often, when and other information about the experience of visiting the venue. The main part of the questionnaire (section 2) comprised impressions or views of the visitors on attributes such as infrastructure, facilities available, accommodation, cuisine, transport, health and safety, community attitude, facilities and natural resources. Each element was subdivided into sub-elements for further explanation as shown in Appendix C.

The visitors were asked to rate their impressions according to a Likert scale of 1-5. A Likert Scale is a psychometric scale commonly used in questionnaires for survey research (Brey *et al*., 2008). In this study, a five-point scale was used where:

- ✓ 1-Very poor
- ✓ 2-Poor
- ✓ 3-Good
- ✓ 4-Very good
- ✓ 5-Excellent

A zero rating was used when the element was not available or did not exist at the resort. This information was used to rate the visitors' views on infrastructure and marketing strategies as needed to achieve objective 3.

The last section (section 3) of the questionnaire provided information on the visitors themselves.

At Mphephu, 20 day visitors were requested to complete the questionnaires. These were collected the same day. Overnight visitors completed ten questionnaires and the researcher collected them the following day. At Tshipise Resort the questionnaires were sent to Forever Resorts Head Office in Pretoria for comments, and they forwarded them to their general manager. The questionnaires (20) were distributed to the visitors by management and collected on the departure day. At Sagole Spa, only four visitors were willing to complete the questionnaire due to limited number of visitors, some were not willing to participate and others were from local villages and do not regard themselves as visitors. The questionnaires were completed on the spot.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Analysis of the visitor's questionnaire (Appendix C) for tourism destination resources and attractors.

The questionnaire was divided into demographic and trip characteristics for analysis purposes. According to Brey *et al. (2008),* the demographic characteristics are useful in understanding the differences in the importance of resort attributes based on the visitor's preference. The trip characteristics are useful in influencing the ratings of resort

elements by tourists as they are dependent on the reasons given for the vacation. The demographic and trip characteristics become a determinant of the decision to visit or not to visit in the future.

Rated attributes were accommodation, cuisine, transport, health and safety, community attitude, facilities and natural resources. Each attribute was subdivided into sub-elements for further explanation as indicated in Appendix C.

After the questionnaires were completed, data analysis commenced, using the visitors' responses on a Likert scale rating system. The percentage frequency of responses for each of the scale ratings were calculated for each of the sub-elements or attributes (elements/factors). This enabled the researcher to obtain a general impression of visitors' views on each of the sub-elements. In order to facilitate a comparison of visitors' views between different sub-elements or elements (attributes), the mean score was calculated. This was determined by multiplying the number of responses (n_i) for a particular Likert scale rating (r_i) and obtaining the sum thereof for a specific sub-element/element. Thereafter the mean score was obtained by dividing this value by N (the total number of respondents).

This method is illustrated using the example below:

	Likert scale ratings (r_i)					
	r = 0	r = 1	r = 2	r = 3	r = 4	r = 5
Frequency of selection (ni) of rating for specific element (Fictitious values) N = 16	4	3	1	5	2	1
Weighted score $=(n_i \times r_i)$	4 x 0 = 0	3 x 1 = 3	1 x 2 = 2	5 x3 = 15	2 x 4 = 8	1 x 5 = 5
Mean score = $\frac{\sum(ni \times ri)}{N}$	Sum = 0 + 3 + 2 + 15 + 8 +5 = 33 Mean = 33/16 = 2.06					

Not only do the mean scores give an index of visitors' views on a particular sub-element or element but can also be used to compare visitor views of the same element but at different sites. These values also give an indication of which sub-elements/elements are considered to be satisfactory or lacking at a resort as well as the extent of visitor satisfaction or dissatisfaction. An indication of the factors contributing to the success or failure of the resort can be obtained by ranking the sub-element/element from high to low.

3.5.2 Analysis of tourism destination strategies and environments

The questionnaires used to gauge tourism destination strategies and environments did not use a Likert scale. Instead, each of the attributes was assessed to determine whether the resort complied to the requirements as given by Lee and King (2006) or not. A 'score' of +1 was given for the presence/availability of the attribute and -1, for its absence. Totals were obtained for each of the elements. Attributes (elements) with low totals could be considered as detractors of successful and sustainable development. These totals could be used to identify those factors contributing to the success/failure of the strategies or management environments of the resort. These calculations are included in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

In order to compare the tourism destination strategies and environments at the three resorts (Chapter 7), the number of elements which conformed to Lee and Kings (2006) requirements were summed. The mean of this total was determined and multiplied by a factor of 5 so as to make these factors (tourism destination strategies and environments) comparable to the mean weighted scores used to evaluate tourism destination resources and attractors. These values could also be used to compare the relative strengths of the three competitiveness factors at each resort.

3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE METHODOLOGY

A few constraints were encountered during data collection. The primary challenge was that current data on financial aspects and visitor numbers at Tshipise could not be obtained. Another shortcoming of the methodology was the low number of questionnaires distributed – particularly at Sagole. Due to the limited numbers of questionnaires, differences in the views and perceptions of males vs females; the young vs the aged; and locals vs foreigners could not be determined. In addition, the visitor survey was a once-off and thus temporal variation in visitor profiles and opinions could not be determined. This may affect the results since weekend visitors might have a different perception of the resort, as day visitors or long-term visitors. Lastly the impacts of political environment could not be quantified.

3.7 Chapter summary

Mphephu, Sagole and Tshipise hot springs are found in the Soutpansberg mountain range and in Vhembe District Municipality. However each spring is found in separate local municipalities. The study used multifaceted approach to collect data. Information was obtained through literature study, interviews and questionnaires. Constraints encountered include lack of finance and inability to access data in some destinations especially Sagole and Tshipise resorts.

CHAPTER FOUR
CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPETITIVENESS OF TSHIPISE RESORT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter commences with a brief overview of the historical development of Tshipise Resort followed by an in-depth discussion of the resort in terms of each of the competitiveness factors as described by Lee and King (2006). The aspects described are referred to as attributes and elements, in literature (WTO, 2004; Lee & King 2006; Brey *et al.*, 2008) and are used interchangeably in this study.

4.2 HISTORY OF TSHIPISE HOT SPRING

The word 'Tshipise' derives from the Tshivenda language, meaning 'hot spring'. The story goes that the spring was discovered by "Ngovhodzi-Nedondwe" while he was hunting. It is said that Ngovhodzi reported this to the chief, Chief Manezhe of Manezhe. The Chief was overwhelmed by the news and, as a token of appreciation, he offered his sister as a wife to the hunter. The family then settled in the area around the spring and from then on, the place was called Dondwe while the spring was known as 'Tshipise tsha Dondwe' (Khavhambe Communications, 2010).

Realising the availability of water in the area, people from other villages (Ramphabana, Niani and others) came to settle in Dondwe under Nedondwe's leadership. They used the spring for stock farming and domestic purposes. The Dondwe community regarded the spring as a sacred place where they performed their rituals to please their ancestors. In order to appease their ancestors, Chief Nedondwe would call his people to gather at the mountain near the spring source. The traditional dance (Tshikona) would be performed and elders of the Royal Family would descend the mountain to the spring. The elders performed specific rituals called 'U phasa' and 'Thevhula'. The success of the rituals was confirmed by a loud sound and steam issuing from the hot spring.

The Nedondwe Royal Family always led the ritual ceremony. There were set rules to be followed when performing traditional rituals. For example, only new pots could be used for the collection of spring water. It was believed that if the rules were broken the spring would dry up, and if rituals were not performed correctly, some calamity would take place in the village. An incident where baboons invaded the fields and destroyed crops and fruit trees was blamed on an act of disobedience since the baboons did not eat the fruit but only destroyed the crops.

4.2.1 Development of the Tshipise Resort

In the early 1900s the railway lines only extended as far as Polokwane, formerly called Pietersburg. During this era, wagons were the dominant mode of transport. Teams of oxen and donkeys had to pull the wagons from Polokwane (Pietersburg) to Musina. The carts were used to transport food, medicine and mining equipment to the copper mines in Musina. The spring became the place where travellers would rest and camp. The hot spring waters were used to rejuvenate tired bodies as the journey was long and arduous.

The overnight facilities were started by a gentleman known as Mr. Fogwell in the 1920s. Initially two rows of chalets were built next to the spring. Another two rows were constructed at a later date. These chalets had virtually no facilities, only a basin and a pot under the bed.

The development of camping facilities and chalets saw many visitors frequenting the resort. Guests that stayed longer would plant little vegetable gardens around their tents and some used the pips from the Baobab tree's seeds to make cream for cooking spinach leaves.

The steady increase in the number of visitors led to the destruction of the old chalets in 1967, and the construction of new accommodation facilities by the owner, Mr. Geldenhuis. During the 1960s, a hotel was built which used generators as a source of

electricity. Eskom installed electricity at a later stage. The construction of the hotel at the resort opened up many business opportunities. The first shop in the area was built by Mr. Hannes Wolfaart and at a later stage was sold to the Council of Public Services.

The development of the resort as a tourism destination gained recognition nationally and internationally. A number of events were held there and important dignitaries visited the resort. It is said that BJ Vorster and PW Botha, two former South African head of states, visited the resort. International guests include the Prince and Princess von Bayorin of Germany who stayed for four days. An internationally renowned movie 'The Wild Geese' was shot in the area with the cast residing at the resort in 1977. Top actors such as Richard Burton, Richard Harris and Roger Moore stayed at the resort. The film company rented the entire resort from September to November. An estimated R1 000 000 was generated during this visit.

Since its development, the resort has changed ownership several times. The Aventura company owned the resort for a considerable period but sold it to Forever Resorts in 2003. The resort currently offers abundant facilities and activities.

4.2.2 Visitor profile

Visitors have various reasons for visiting the resort. The demographic and trip characteristics of current visitors are given in Table 4.1. The table is derived from information obtained from 13 visitor questionnaire (Appendix C).

Table 4.1 shows that 54% of visitors frequent the resort for leisure, probably to enjoy the hot water, and 46% visit for business purposes such as attending a conference, workshops or meetings. Generally, visitors spend more than a few days at the resort (69%).

Table 4.1. Demographic and trip characteristics of visitors

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Trip Characteristics		
Primary Purpose		
Leisure	7	54
Business	6	46
Both		
Period of Visit		
Day(s)	9	69
Week	2	15
Month	2	15
How they know a destination		
Word of Mouth		
Website	7	54
Travel Agent		
Other(Radio, newspaper, pass by, etc)	6	46
Demographic Characteristics		
Gender		
Male	10	77
Female	3	23
Age(Years)		
-20		
20-29	3	23
30-39	4	31
40-49	2	15
50-59	2	15
60+	2	15
Nationality		
African	2	15
Coloureds		
Asians		
Whites	11	85

It seems as though males frequent the resort more often as 77% of the respondents were men. In terms of age, 31% were 30-39 years and the remaining percentages were shared by various age groups (Table 4.1). Resort visitors were mostly whites (85%). The management mentioned that the resort also received visitors from overseas. The resort is popular with families with children.

4.3 Competitiveness at the Tshipise Resort

The study aim involved assessing the factors that contributed to a destination's success. Competitiveness was used as a proxy indicator of success. Factors used to determine competitiveness included indicators of tourism destination resources and attractors, tourism destination strategies and tourism destination environments as defined by Lee and King (2006). This section will describe the attributes/elements of each of these factors.

4.3.1 Tourism destination resources and attractors

4.3.1.1 *Natural resources*

Figure 4.1 shows the eye of the thermal spring at Tshipise.

Figure 4.1. The Tshipise hot spring eye
Source:NP Tuwani

Physical and chemical characteristics of Tshipise hot spring

The analysis of physical and chemical properties and mineral content is important in evaluating water quality. The properties of the hot spring are shown in Table 4.2.

Table.4.2. Physical and chemical properties of Tshipise Hot Spring

Physical properties of the water	
Temperature ºC	58
SAR	15.93
TDS (mg/l)	422.10
Conduct (mS/m)	80.0
pH	8.30
pHs	8.70
Chemical properties of the water	**mg/l**
Sodium (Na)	140.19
Calcium (Ca)	5.58
Potassium (K)	3.51
Magnesium (Mg)	0.17
Bicarbonate (HCO_3)	109.80
Sulphate (SO_4)	47.58
Carbonate (CO_3)	6.00
Fluoride (F)	5.08
Chloride (Cl)	158.60
Phosphate (PO_4)	0.0
Bond Classification	C

Source: Olivier *et al*. (2010)

The temperature of the water of the Tshipise hot spring at the source is 58 ºC and is classified as scalding. The TDS is 422.1 mg/l and the pH, 8.3. The chemical analysis of the Tshipise thermal spring based on the classification devised by Bond in1946 indicates that the water is temporary hard carbonate water. The principal mineral constituents of the thermal spring are sodium and chloride. These are not harmful and some may even be medically beneficial. However, the fluoride concentration far exceeds the threshold value of 1.5 mg/l. This implies that the water should not be consumed. It is not clear whether dermal contact through swimming might be

hazardous. Informal discussion with tourists, staff and members of the community showed that the heat of the thermal spring is one of the most important reasons why the resort is famous.

The natural resource setting

It is generally accepted that the surroundings of a tourism destination played a major role in attracting visitors. Tshipise resort is located in the bushveld region of Limpopo, at the foot of the Tshipise 'Koppie', far from urban areas.

Table 4.3 reflects the visitor's satisfaction with hospitality elements at the resort.

Table 4.3. Natural resource attractors

Element	**Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)**							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent 5	Total	Mean
Natural resources								
Geographic location				3(23.1)	9 (69.2)	1 (7.7)	100	3.9
Ambiance (destination environment				3(23.1)	8 (61.5)	2 (15.4)	100	3.9
Total				6	17	3	26	
Weighted score				18	68	15	101	3.9

n=13

The mean scores of their responses shows clearly that they viewed the natural resources as being very good (mean score = 3.9). Both the geographic location and the ambiance of the resort achieved the same high rating of 3.9. None of visitors gave a score of less than 3, while some rated the natural resource as 'excellent'.

Personal observation supported the visitors' views in that the resort is well-located and the environment allows a person to relax, something especially important for visitors from urban areas. It also gives a feeling of being close to nature and it is therefore not

surprising that 61.5% and more of the visitors rated the natural resources as being very good to excellent.

4.3.1.2 *Cultural assets and special attractions*

Special attractions refer to the presence of cultural heritage sites such as traditional ruins, historical sites, caves and national parks. The resort is in an isolated area, and areas of tourism interest such as the Kruger National Park, are just over 100 km from the resort. Cultural attractions such as Dambale Bushmen print and Dombani Caves are closer to Sagole but form part of the cultural heritage near Tshipise.

The visitors' responses to questions pertaining to the cultural attributes and special attractions at the resort are summarised in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Cultural attributes and special attractions hospitality element

Element	**Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)**							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent. 5	Total	Mean
Cultural & env. attributes								
Special environmental attractions	1(7.7)	1(7.7)	3(23.1)	4(30.8)	3(23.1)	1(7.7)	100	2.8
Cultural souvenirs and crafts	0	2(15.4)	6(46.2)	3(23.1)	2(15.4)	0	100	2.4
Cultural sites accessibility	1(7.7)	2(15.4)	38.5(5)	3(23.1)	2(15.4)		100	2.0
Cultural sites maintenance	2(15.4)	3(23.1)	30.8(4)	3(23.1)	1(7.7)		100	1.9
total	4	8	18	13	8	1	52	
Weighted score	0	8	36	39	32	5	120	2.3

n=13

The existence of special environmental attractions such as wild animals and indigenous plants fared the best and was given an overall rating of 2.8, falling into the category 'good'. Just more than 30% of the visitors rated this aspect as good, 23.1% as very

good and 7.7% as excellent. It appeared that most visitors spent their time in the resort using the available facilities. Some were involved in bird (Figure 4.2) and game watching within the resort, 23.1% of the visitors expressed their satisfaction with special attractions (Table 4.4).

Cultural attributes attained lower mean scores ranging from 1.9 to 2.4 reflecting a rating of ‘poor’. The low rating by visitors may be attributed to lack of cultural attractions in the resort and tourists prefer to spend time in the premises. In addition, visitors may not have seen any attractions nearby or those who saw cultural attractions viewed them with less enthusiasm.

Figure 4.2. Some of the birds species found in the resort:

Source: NP Tuwani

4.3.1.3 Resort facilities and activities.

The resort is rated as a three star due to the facilities and activities that are on offer (www.tourismgrading.co.za). Facilities on site are restaurants, butchery, amphitheatre, a liquor store and supermarket as well as internet facilities.Support services were offered in the resort. An ATM (Figure 4.3) in the shop, a car wash and a laundromat were some of the services available.

Figure 4.3. An ATM machine in the supermarket in Tshipise
Source: NP Tuwani.

The communication network was good in the resort as personally observed. Cell phone signals for CellC, MTN and Vodacom services were present and of good quality. There were public telephones at the restaurant, bar and swimming pools. Internet connections were available for visitors with laptops, computer-access was also available on request at the reception desk. Visitors with disabilities were accommodated or provided for by the resort. Examples of this at the caravan park are visible at Ablution Blocks 2, 3 & 7 which are wheelchair-friendly. Chalet 77 is also specially reserved for the disabled. This information is documented on the walls of the premises and in brochures.

Recreational activities include:

- Game viewing on horseback
- Bush drives
- Traditional spa and mineral baths

The health facility in the resort consists of a Rheumatic Bath. Other recreational facilities are:

- Warm water mineral pool
- Tennis courts
- Cold water pool
- Baby pool
- Volley ball
- Putt–putt
- Pool tables
- Bowls
- Horse riding
- Trampolines
- Jukskei
- Walking trails (in and around the resort)
- Pony rides
- Kiddies play park
- Organised entertainment

The resort has three conference facilities. All the facilities are equipped with standard conference equipment. The equipment includes an overhead projector with screen, monitors, VCRs, and network points. There is also a chapelon the premises for weddings (www.forevertshipise.co.za). According to the management facilities such as bush drives are often fully booked and tourists who utilised them indicated that they are

good (overall weighted mean score = 3.1) (Table 4.5). The majority rated the facilities as good to very good with three visitors indicating that they were excellent. A few visitors were not satisfied with the business services at the conference centre. However, the technology available at the resort was mostly viewed as being good to very good. With the exception of 1 person, all visitors felt that the facilities that were advertised, were actually available at the resort.

Table 4.5. Facilities hospitality element

Element	**Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)**							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent 5	Total	Mean
Facilities								
Facilities available			1(7.7)	3(23.1)	6(46.2)	3(23.1)	100.	3.9
Technology available (internet, cell phone signal, etc)			5(38.5)	5 (38.5)	3(23.1)		100	2.9
Business services (conference centre)		3(23.1)	1(7.7)	6(46.2)	3(23.1)		100	2.7
Total		3	7	14	12	3	39	
Weighted score	0	3	14	42	48	15	122	3.1

n=13

The facilities that owe their existence to the thermal spring are the rheumatic pool and warm water mineral swimming pools. Personal observation confirmed that all the facilities as advertised were available and that they were well-maintained and clean. It is thus clear that the resort has more than adequate facilities and is well-presented in their website (www.forevertshipise.co.za).

4.3.1.4 *Accommodation*

The resort has a variety of types of accommodation. It offers a six-sleeper guesthouse, 95 air conditioned rondavels (Figure 4.4), a camping area and a caravan park that accommodates 370 caravans with seven ablution blocks. The camping site has electricity, a barbecue area and rubbish bins.

Figure 4.4.A chalet in Tshipise Resort:
Source: NP Tuwani

Each rondavel has at least a large room with beds, seating and a TV. Some rondavels have a separate bedroom with a double bed. All have a bathroom (bath and toilet), and a fully equipped kitchen, open parking and a barbeque area outside. The resort's guesthouse accommodation consists of a main bedroom with a double bed and four (4) single beds in the remaining rooms, a television set in lounge, a fully equipped kitchen with a fridge and a microwave. Open parking is provided and the outdoor barbeque area can accommodate a maximum of six persons.

Table 4.6. Accommodation hospitality element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent 5	Total	Mean
Accommodation								
Accommodation quality	0	0	3(23.1)	7(53.9)	2 (15.4)	1 (7.7)	100.1	3.1
Accommodation quantity	0	0	2(15.4)	5 (38.5)	6 (46.2)		100.1	3.3
Caravan park		1 (7.7)		5 (38.5)	4 (30.8)	3 (23.1)	100.1	3.6
Total	0	1	5	17	12	4	39	
Weighted score	0	1	10	51	48	20	130	3.3

N=13

The chalets are in a beautiful setting with evergreen and well-maintained gardens. Horses are free to roam and graze all around the resort. Wild animals such as mongoose move freely around to create a ‘back to nature’ atmosphere in the grounds.

The majority of the visitors rated the accommodation as good (53.9%) and very good (15.4%), giving a mean score of 3.1 (Table 4.6). According to the values in Table 4.6, the number of rondavels available was judged to be satisfactory (mean scores = 3.3 = good) while the visitors were highly satisfied with the caravan park (mean score = 3.6). Despite the very good rating achieved by the latter, one visitor rated it as being very poor. The reason for this low rating was not indicated.

4.3.1.5 *Transport-related infrastructure*

The transport-related infrastructure included aspects such as the accessibility of the resort to visitors involving the quality of roads, signage, directions and various mode of transport.

The resort is easily accessed via tarred roads. The main route to Tshipise is via the R525. The major municipal roads are also tarred and the driveways to the caravan park, guesthouses and chalets were tarred with adequate signage (Figure 4.5). The only dirt roads were those in the camping site itself. The resort provided a map showing all facilities and other activities and destinations around the resort. Even when you enter the resort the signage at the resort gate was clear, as noted and observed. The resort also has a landing strip for small aircraft. The landing strip is unregistered and arrangements need to be made with the resort prior to landing, according to information obtained from personal communication with the manager. The strip is gravel and about 1.5 km long. Around 38.5% of the visitors viewed the road quality as good and 23.1% of them rated the road as very good.

The signposts are abundant, clear and assist the visitor to the resort, with 38.5% of the tourists rating the signage as good and another 38.5% as very good, while 7.7% rated it as excellent (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Transport hospitality element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage) N=13							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent 5	Total	Mean
Transport								
Road quality		1(7.7)	3(23.1)	5(38.5)	3(23.1)	1(7.7)	100	3.0
Signage		2(15.4)		5(38.5)	5(38.5)	1(7.7)	100	3.2
Accessibility of Public Transport	3 (23.1)	3(23.1)	5(38.5)			2(15.4)	100	1.8
Total	3	6	8	10	8	4	39	
Weighted score	0	6	16	30	32	20	104	2.7

N=13

Figure 4.5. Clear signage to various sites in the resort

Source: NP Tuwani

Unfortunately the area does not have public transport facilities for tourists or the local community. This was reflected by a mean score of only 1.8 (poor) attained for

accessibility by public transport, in comparison to the road quality and signage that were rated 3.0 and 3.2 (good), respectively (Table 4.7).

4.3.1.6 *Cuisine*

Cuisine refers to food availability at a destination. The aspect of cuisine included availability of a variety of food items on the resort restaurant menu with the inclusion of traditional delicacies. Table 4.8 gives a summary of the visitor's satisfaction with the resort.

Table 4.8.Cuisine hospitality element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent. 5	Total	Mean
Cuisine								
Variety of food	1 (7.7)		2 (15.4)	1 (7.7)	7 (53.9)	2 (15.4)	100.1	3.5
Traditional delicacy	3 (23.1)	2 (15.4)	2 (15.4)	3 (23.1)		3 (23.1)	100.1	2.3
Total	4	2	4	4	7	5	26	
Weighted score	0	2	8	12	28	25	75	2.9

n=13

Table 4.8 shows that the visitors thought that the cuisine was good (Mean weighted score = 2.9). The variety of food was given a mean score of 3.5, indicating that most of the visitors were very satisfied. It was observed that a number of visitors preferred to prepare their own food. The in-house supermarket appeared to be well stocked. The butchery stocked a variety of meat. This is very useful as many people who visit the resort like to 'braai' meat at the facilities available at the rondavels and in the caravan park. Some products such as confectionary and bread are baked in the resort's bakery as observed and confirmed by employees during the informal discussions. The bakery also supplies the local community living nearby. Around 54% of the visitors gave the variety of food a score of very good and 15.4% rated it as excellent.

Figure 4.6.Variety of food found in the supermarket
Source: NP Tuwani

Visitors were less satisfied with the availability of traditional foods (mean score = 2.3) with almost 40% rating it as very poor or not available. In this part of South Africa, mopani worms and porridge (pap) are very popular. The unavailability of these on the menu may account for the low rating.

Personal observation indicated that the kitchen was hygienic and the food was fresh, tasty and nutritious.

4.2.1.7 *Health, safety and security*

Safety measures at the resort are good and access to the premises is controlled. The resort is fenced and has security guards who are constantly on patrol. They use modern technology to communicate and guard the premises. Although there are wild animals on site, especially monkeys and baboons that might intimidate tourists, they are well controlled. Their impact is generally minimal and they can be a source of delight and pleasure for the tourists, provided the resort rules are respected. The management of the resort added that the security is supported by the South African Police Service who

maintains a visible presence in the farming area. The police station is approximately 30 km from the resort.

Safety rules are prominently displayed at all facilities in the resort. There are personnel on duty at the facilities who offer assistance to the visitors. The lighting around the accommodation adds to the security supplied by the resort. Medical emergency numbers were in brochures posted on the backdoor of every chalet. There are also emergency rules and fire extinguishers (Figure 4.7) at accommodation facilities.

Figure 4.7. A fire extinguisher at the camping site:
Source: NP Tuwani

The health of the environment is also taken into consideration and the gardens and surrounding areas of the resort are neat and clean, as cleaners and gardeners are constantly busy. The hot spring chemical properties as found at the eye of the hot spring were specified and this allowed visitors to know the mineral composition of the water in which they would probably be swimming.

The pools and other facilities mentioned earlier are well-maintained and waste is collected throughout the day. Figure 4.8 shows a dustbin in which garbage is collected. In informal conversation with the resort employees of the resort it was learnt that the staff attend information sessions and receive vaccination against malaria. The restaurant and shops are clean and the supermarket also has general medications on sale. The chalets are supplied with hotlines for emergency medical assistance.

Figure 4.8. A well placed dustbin in the garden
Source: NP Tuwani

The thermal spring water is well-maintained using relevant chemicals and equipment, according to the resort management. There are trained personnel who are responsible for water recycling. The resort also uses water from the Nzhelele dam for domestic purposes. The water management is done in conjunction with the national and provincial Departments of Water Affairs.

Table 4.9. Health, Safety and Security hospitality element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent 5	Total	Mean
Health and Safety								
Cleanliness of the resort			1(7.7)	1(7.7)	8(61.5)	3(23.1)	100	4.0
Cleanliness of the resort facilities				2(15.4)	10(76.9)	1(7.7)	100	3.9
Display of hygiene and safety regulations in the resort			2(15.4)	2(15.4)	7(53.9)	2(15.4)	100	3.7
Display of hygiene and safety regulations at facilities			2(15.4)	1(7.7)	8(61.5)	2(15.4)	100	3.8
General safety in the resort				1(7.7)	11(84.6)	1(7.7)	100	4.0
Total			5	7	44	9	65	
Weighted score			10	21	176	45	252	3.9

n=13

Table 4.9 provides a summary of the visitor's satisfaction with the resort. This survey indicated that all aspects of health, safety and security received a rating of very good (mean score = 3.9) with about 80% giving scores of 4 or 5 to these aspects.

4.3.2 Tourism destination strategies

4.3.2.1 *Management of the resort*

This subsection focuses on the general management of the resort. This includes service quality, the environment, marketing and human resources (Lee & King, 2006).

The aim of this part of the chapter is to identify the management system of the facility and its influence on competitiveness. The resort organogram assists in illustrating the division of labour and identify the areas of responsibilities (Figure 4.9).

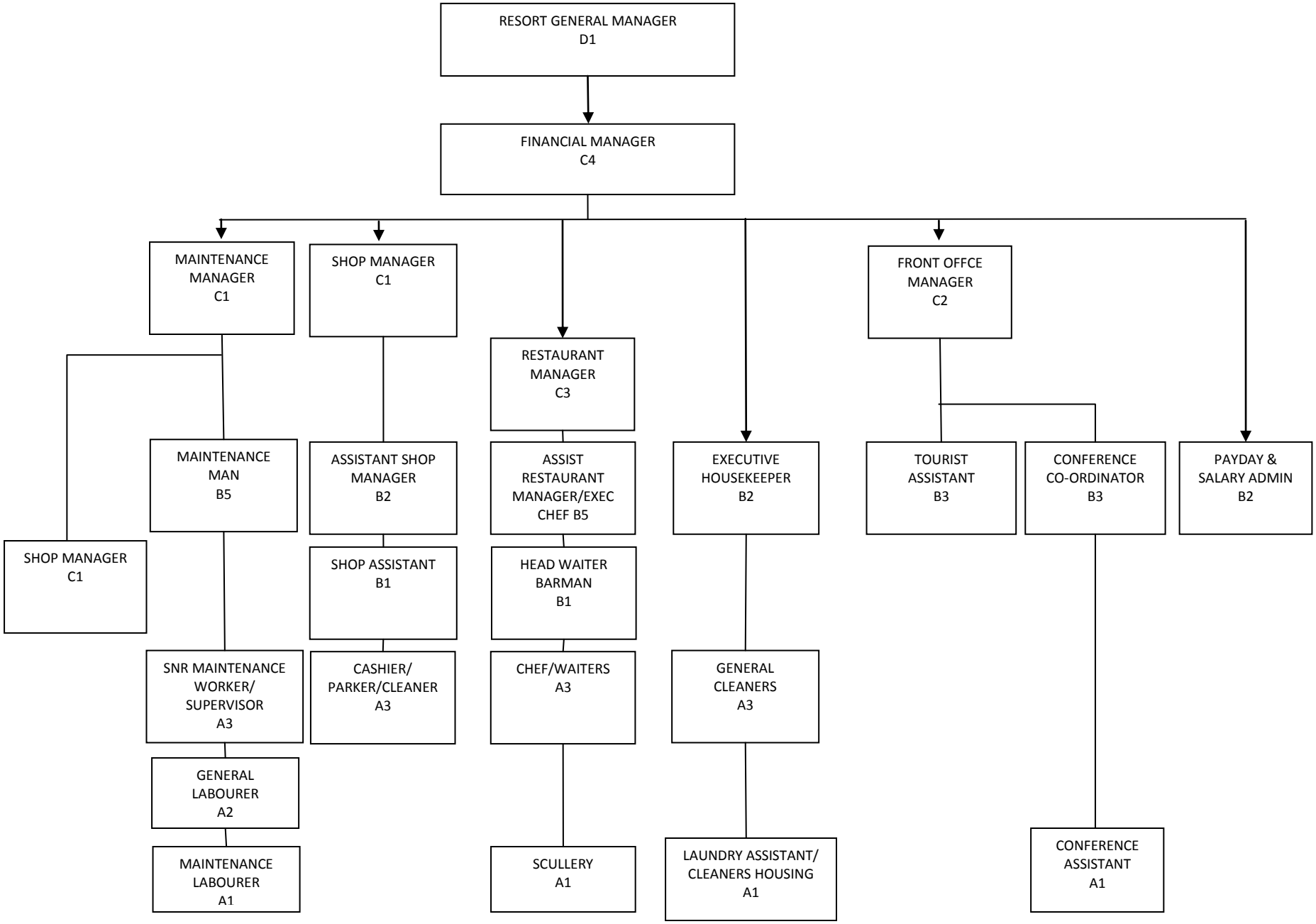

Figure 4.9. Organogram of Tshipise resort.

Source: Resort Manager

The organogram starts with the general manger of the resort followed by a financial manager. The two senior management levels have managers in a specific section. Those sections are maintenance, shop, restaurant and front office management. Each line function consists of supervisors, personnel with technical knowledge and general labour. According to the general manager, the division of labour assists in the evaluation of performance to identify areas with challenges and to improve the quality of the resort as a competitive destination. The management conducts a monthly survey to identify areas that need improvement.

4.3.2.2 *Destination marketing management*

The resort is owned by the Forever Resort Company an international company based in the United States of America. The company has hotels, lodges, self-catering resorts, camping areas, adventure tourism and other tourism accommodation facilities throughout South Africa. Tshipise is marketed as a self-catering resort (www.forevertshipise.co.za) on the company's website, in hospitality magazines, newspapers and other forms of media.

When potential visitors require information about the Tshipise resort, there is ample information about all its facilities and activities on the website. The resort is marketed in international, national and provincial tourism organisations' websites and brochures. The resort features prominently in the Limpopo Tourism and Parks publications. It was observed that all facilities marketed in the media were available as advertised.

A summary of the ratings given to destination marketing is given in Table 4.10 and indicates that four attributes received positive ratings (strategy, promotional material, niche market and brand name) while two were considered to be deficient (green marketing and segmentation). Little information was available on the latter.

Table 4.10. Summary of Tourism destination strategies: Marketing management

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Marketing**		
	Do they have strategy	**x**	
	Promotional material	**x**	
	Niche market	**x**	
	Green market		**X**
	Protection of image (brand name)	**x**	
	Segmentation of guests		**X**
		+4	**-2**

4.3.2.3 *Human resource development*

According to personal communication with the manager, the resort has 110 employees, 103 are permanently employed and seven are students in tourism and hospitality industry. The resort also employs a number of young people; 50 per cent of the staff are between the ages of 20-29 years (Table 4.11).

The resort has professional staff, skilled labour and general employees and provides opportunities for career growth. According to the administrative manager, the personal staff development is a priority. Forever Resorts has a training institution based in Mpumalanga that offers certificate and diploma courses in tourism and hospitality. The students are offered bursaries and monthly stipends to attend these courses. After completing their studies, some are absorbed into the company. The management of Tshipise Resort gave examples of students who are currently managers and supervisors in other companies such as the Protea Hotel Group of Companies.

In-service training is thus available for employees in their field of work. Examples were given of personnel employed as general labour but who were now machine operators in charge of generators and tractors.

Table 4.11 shows a profile of 12 members of staff and their views on Human Resource development opportunities. The questionnaire given in Appendix D was used for this

analysis. The survey was conducted during the 23-25 August 2010 field trip to the resort.

Table 4.11. Respondent Profiles: Staff Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	6	50.0
Female	6	50.0
Age(Years)		
-20	1	8.3
20-29	6	50.0
30-39	3	25.0
40-49	1	8.3
50-59	1	8.3
60+		
Type of Work		
General Labour	6	50.0
Technician		
Administrator	6	50.0
Any		
Are you trained for your work		
Yes	10	83.3
No	2	16.7
Do you have formal qualification		
Yes	6	50.0
No	6	50.0
Are you a local resident?		
Yes	4	50
No	8	50

Of the twelve employees interviewed, six had been trained for their work and six had formal qualifications. The formal qualifications included university degrees and diplomas from universities for science and technology. It was noticeable that only four of the twelve workers interviewed were local.

Table 4.12 indicates the ratings given to these attributes.

Table 4.12 Summary of Tourism destination strategies: Human resource development

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Human Resource Development**		
	In-house training programme	**x**	
	Other training	**x**	
	Compensation/Incentives	**x**	
		+3	**0**

4.3.2.4 *Environmental management*

The resort management is aware of and actively participate in the South African Energy Efficiency and Water Management government initiatives. The initiative encourages the efficient use of water and electricity. The resort has changed showerheads in the accommodation and recreational facilities. The technology minimises the use of water and reduces the amount of energy required for hot water.

The resort is endowed with a variety of indigenous plant species and they are left in their natural state. A record of these and their traditional uses has been compiled. The names of plants are prominently displayed (Figure 4.10). About 30 types of flora are found in the resort. The game reserve has over 33 species and there are almost 33 types of birds.

Figure 4.10. A Bead Bean is one of the marked species in Tshipise:

Source: NP Tuwani

There are rules on waste control meant for tourists and personnel (Figure 4.11).

Figure 4.11. Instruction on the usage of the drainage at the Caravan Park:

Source:NP Tuwani

Table 4.13. Summary of Tourism destination strategies: Environmental management

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Environmental Management**		
	Conservation initiatives	**x**	
	Cleanliness of the ground/facilities	**x**	
	Environmental protection regulations in place	**x**	
	Environmental enforcement	**x**	
	Environmental friendly technologies	**x**	
		+5	**0**

Table 4.13 confirmed that the overall environmental management of the resort was excellent concerning environmental issues.

4.3.2.5 *Pricing*

The resort does not accept day visitors unless there are circumstances such as educational trips for students and learners. On the whole, the visitors come for a holiday of more than one day.

The pricing package was available on the website and applied to two different categories: accommodation in rondavels and in the caravan park (Table 4.14 and 4.15).

Table 4.14. Pricing of Tshipise Resort accommodation

Prices subject to change without prior notice			
Unit Description	**Unit Type**	**LOW SEASON**	**HIGH SEASON**
1Bedroom Rondavel (2 Double beds)	SRD2	R550-00 *Senior: R 350.00*	R650-00 *Senior: R 550.00*
1 Bedroom Rondavel (2 Single beds)	SRS2	R550-00 *Senior: R 350.00*	R650-00 *Senior: R 550.00*
2 Bedroom Rondavel (1 Double & 2 Single beds)	SRD4	R825-00 *Senior: R 495.00*	R920-00 *Senior: R 825.00*
2 Bedroom Rondavel (4 Single beds)	SRS4 SPS4	R825-00 *Senior: R 495.00*	R920-00 *Senior: R 825.00*
2 Bedroom Rondavel (1 Double & 2 Single beds & Sleeper couch)	PRD4	R1020-00 *Senior: R 1020.00*	R1020-00 *Senior: R 1020.00*
3 Bedroom Rondavel (1 Double & 4 Single beds)	DGD6	R1850-00	R1850-00
1 Bedroom - pppn B&B (1 Double bed)	THL2	R200-00	R200-00
1Bedroom Rondavel (2 Double beds)	SRD2	R550-00 *Senior: R 350.00*	R650-00 *Senior: R 550.00*
1 Bedroom Rondavel (2 Single beds)	SRS2	R550-00 *Senior: R 350.00*	R650-00 *Senior: R 550.00*

Source: www.forevertshipise.co.za

Table 4.15. Pricing of Tshipise Resort Caravan and Camping site

Unit Description	**Unit Type**	**LOW SEASON**	**HIGH SEASON**
Power Camping Site	PS / CS	*Site: R 130.00 per site + R 35.00 p/person per night*	*Rate: R140.00 per site + R50.00 p/person p/night*
Power Camping sites (Pensioners Discounted Rate)	PS	*R 100.00 per site per night & R 35.00 per person per night*	*R 130.00 per site per night & R 50.00 per person per night*

- **Maximum 8 people per site allowed**
- **Normal Sites Long Stay Pensioners Rates @ R 1710.00 per month (must stay a minimum of 3 months)**

Source: www.forevertshipise.co.za

The payments methods include the use of credit cards, direct deposits to their bank account, postal orders and cash. Rules and conditions of bookings and payments are explained during enquiries.

The price package to the resort allows access to almost all the facilities in the resort. Further payments are required for horse riding and game viewing. On the whole it is easy to make bookings as the information is published on the resort website as well as other tourism websites and other forms of media such as the resort newsletter.

The tourists (53.9%) contacted in the resort expressed their satisfaction with the prices and rated the price structure as very good and 23.1% rated it as good (Table 4.16).

Table 4. 16. Summary of Tourism destination strategies: Pricing

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Pricing**		
	Cost	**x**	
	Strategy for packages	**x**	
		+2	**0**

Both elements were rated as being positive (see Table 4.16).

4.3.2.6 *Service quality management*

Qualities considered include personnel friendliness and service at the resort. Table 4.17 is the summary of the visitor's satisfaction with the resort (questionnaire Appendix C).

All aspects of service quality were rated highly by the visitors with mean score values of 3.6 and 3.8 for level of service and staff competence and helpfulness. This reflects the high standards set by the staff and management in that: all the employees at Tshipise wear uniforms and are thus easily identified; the reception is open 24 hours a day; and the staff go out of their way to assist visitors in a friendly manner. It was observed that the restaurant personnel were friendly and provided information about the resort as required. Moreover, in cases where a visitor needed something that was not available at the resort, the management referred the person to a specific place and would even

order the items for them. Over two thirds (69.2%) of the visitors were impressed by the service offered by the resort and recorded it as very good (score= 4).

In addition, to the efficiency of the personnel, all the facilities had instructions on display and rules that were applied when using them (explained under Facilities).

Table 4.17. Service Quality Management

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent. 5	Total	Mean
Service Quality								
High level service			1(7.7)	3(23.1)	9(69.2)		100	3.6
Staff competent and helpful			1(7.7)	1(7.7)	11(84.6)		100	3.8
Price			3(23.1)	3(23.1)	7(53.9)		100	3.3
Total			5	7	27		39	
Weighted score			10	21	108		139	3.6

n=13

It is clear from the above that the management endeavours to maintain the resort's 3-star rating (Table 4.18). The overall management of the resort is done most professionally in keeping with its three star rating.

Table 4. 18. Summary of Tourism destination strategies: Service quality management

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Service Quality Management**		
	Work place health and safety	**x**	
	Social responsibility	**x**	
	Efficient and professional service	**x**	
		+3	**0**

4.3.3 Tourism destination environments

4.3.3.1 Community participation and attitude

During the visit to Tshipise during August 2010, eight people were interviewed to obtain information on the views of the community on the resort. These are shown in Table 4.19, which also includes information on the respondents. The questionnaire included as Appendix E was used for this purpose.

It should be noted that the resort is privately owned and the community was not involved in its development. However, the vast majority (almost 90%) of the respondents saw the resort in a positive light. Community members are able to buy from the supermarket and the butchery at the resort and could access the ATM. Some spaza owners even bought food such as bread to sell to their own customers. During renovations and if construction work was being done in the resort, community members were able to get temporary jobs. Tourists and visitors often purchased arts and crafts (Figure 4.12) from locals. The owner of the curio stall at the gate of the resort indicated that his family was able to survive from the sale of the artworks he sells and even the resort management would refer the visitors to the shop.

Figure 4.12. Arts and craft on sale near Tshipise resort:

Source: NP Tuwani

Table 4.19. Community Characteristics of Respondent

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	5	62.5
Female	3	37.5
Age(Years)		
-20		
20-29	2	25.0
30-39	2	25. 0
40-49	2	25.0
50-59	1	12.5
60+	1	12.5
Spa/Resort good for Community?		
Yes	8	100
No	0	00
Are you benefiting from the resort/spa?		
Yes	7	87.5
No	1	12.5
Are there job opportunities?		
Yes	7	87.5
No	1	12.5
Impacts on crime		
Increase	1	12.5
Decrease	7	87.5
Community owned Resort /Spa		
Yes	0	
No	8	100
Community use Spa/Resort facility		
Yes	7	87.5
No	1	12.5
Resort/Spa contributing to community skill development?		
Yes	6	75.0
No	2	25.0

According to Table 4.19, all but one person felt that the resort was good for the community as it created employment and was contributing to the decrease in crime in the area. The resort was also promoting basic education as it had built a school in the area according to information from some community members consulted. The respondents also felt that the resort added to job opportunities (Table 20).

Table 4. 20. Summary of Tourism destination environment: community participation and attitudes

		Yes	No
Tourist destination environments	**Community participation and attitude**		
	Job opportunities	**x**	
	Community involvement	**x**	
		+2	**0**

4.3.3.2 *Market and economic growth*

The economic aspect of the resort on the region is discussed in terms of employment opportunities, entrepreneurship and the social development within the local community.

Although the Tshipise Resort employs a number of people from different parts of the country, it also employs people from nearby villages and other parts of Vhembe District Municipality. According to Table 4.11, half of the locals are employed as general labourers. Some the employees had over 15 years of working experience at the resort.

The resort has contributed to the emergence of small businesses in the area. There is a shop about 1 km from the resort owned by a local person (Figure 4.13). The shop sells goods such as firewood that visitors purchase. The shop has employed two local youth. Most of the products that are used in the resort such as fruit and vegetables are bought from the local farms and nearby towns of Musina and Makhado (Louis Trichardt). As discussed (under Community Participation and Attitude section) there is a curio shop for arts and craft and fruits and vegetable vendors opposite the resort entrance.

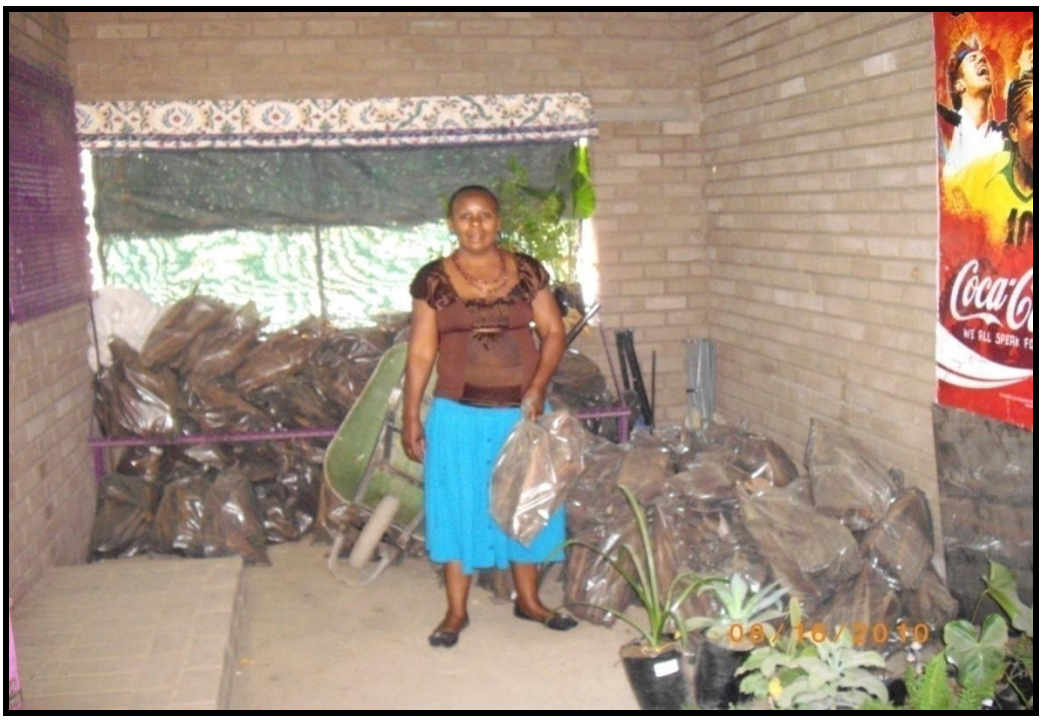

Figure 4.13. Firewood sold at the shop near the gate of the resort:
Source: NP Tuwani

Another source of employment is the Musina-based security company that is contracted to provide safety at the resort. Informal discussions with security personnel indicated that this company has employed many local personnel (Table 4.21).

Table 4. 21. Summary of Tourism destination environment: economic growth

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Environment	**Economic Growth**		
	No of locals employed	**x**	
	Ratio Part/Full time	**x**	
		+2	**0**

4.4. Chapter summary

Since its inception, the Tshipise Resort has been under private ownership. During earlier times, the local community used the thermal spring for cultural and religious purposes. Traditional leaders and the community did not participate in the development of the hot spring as a business venture.

The resort has a three star rating. The visitors are both international and national and they stay for more than a day.

Table 4.22 shows a summary of the main elements defining competitiveness of the tourism destination resources and attractors as defined by Lee & King (2006) and given separately as Tables 4.3 ,4.4,4.5,4.6,4.7,4.8,4.9,4.11,4.14,4.15,4.17 to 4.19 in section 4.3. The hospitality elements were ranked, in descending order, according to the mean scores given by the visitors.

Table 4.22. Rating of destination resources and attractors

Rank	Element	Satisfaction Level (Percentage)							
		None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
1	**Natural resources**				23.1	65.4	11.5	100	3.9
2	**Health and Safety**			7.7	11.5	66.7	14.1	100	3.9
3	**Service Quality**			10.5	18.4	71.1		100	3.6
4	**Accommodation**		2.6	13.2	44.7	31.6	7.9	100	3.3
5	**Facilities**		8.1	18.9	37.8	27.0	8.1	99.9	3.1
6	**Cuisine**	15.4	7.7	15.4	15.4	26.9	19.2	100	2.9
7	**Transport**	8.1	16.2	21.6	27.0	21.6	5.4	99.9	2.7
8	**Cultural Attributes**	7.8	15.7	35.3	25.5	15.7		100	2.3

According to Table 4.22, the natural resources and the health and safety at the resort were the most important of the destination attractors. Tourists were also very satisfied

with the service quality of the employees. Aspects considered were the high standards of employees' professionalism and competency and the cost of the service offered. They found the experience rewarding and felt they got value for the money spent. Accommodation, facilities available at the resort, cuisine and transport obtained mean ratings of 3, i.e. reflecting general satisfaction by the visitors. Despite the fact that the majority of visitors were satisfied with the accommodation, some complained about old furniture, some malfunctioning of toilet and bathroom equipment and worn-out paintings among others.

Facilities considered were those advertised and the availability of specialised services such as communication networks and conference facilities. Ratings on this issue varied with 37.8% rating it as good, 27% very good and 8.1% excellent. Some visitors ranked them poorly with 8.1% rating them as very poor and 18.9% as poor. Visitors found all the facilities and activities as advertised and did not encounter cell phone signal problems. They recommended improvement in conference facilities and in internet connections that were only at the reception desk and there were only a few in conference centre.

In terms of cuisine, 15.4% visitors drew attention to the lack of availability of traditional foods while 7.7% and 15.4% rated the available food poorly. They cited limited choice of food in the menu as the reason. Other tourists found the taste of food delicious and beverages abundant, this was corroborated by 26.9% of the visitors who rated it as very good and 19.2% rated the cuisine as excellent.

The Tshipise Resort is located far from villages and there is no public transport except for those passing by. A small percentage (8.1%) of the visitors declared that public transport as non-existent, 16.2% rated it as very poor and 21.6% as poor. Visitors expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the roads that were tarred and were pleased to see proper signage. On these aspects, the tourists rated them as good (27%), very good (21.6%) and excellent (5.4%) (Table 4.22).

Cultural attributes obtained the lowest of the mean scores, with the vast majority of the visitors rating these as none to very poor. Since Venda is known as ‘The Land of the Legends’, it is unlikely that there are no cultural or heritage sites in the area. The resort and the local tourism organisations should investigate and advertise these to visitors to the area.

Table 4.23 provides a summary of the findings on tourism destination strategies and the environment as given in tables 4.10, 4.12, 4.13, 4.18, 4.20 to 4.21 in sections 4.3 and 4.4. Most of the information was obtained from sources other than visitor surveys. The methods used to evaluate the presence or absence of the Competitiveness elements were discussed in chapter 3.

The Tshipise Resort is marketed through websites, brochures and other media forms. The resort is referred to as the ‘Jewel of the North’ in the media and this proves that it has a brand name. The resort does not cater for day visitors except the educational trips and specific events such as conferences (Table 4.23 under Destination Marketing Management).

The resort offers opportunities for skills development and career growth as shown in Table 4.16. Bursaries are available for students interested in the tourism and hospitality industry. Employees are offered in-service training. In addition the resort has over one hundred employees showing that it is also a source of employment in the area.

Table 4. 23. Summary of Tourism destination strategies and environment

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Marketing**	**+4**	**-2**
	Human Resource Development	**+3**	**0**
	Destination Planning and Development	**+3**	**0**
	Environmental Management	**+5**	**0**
	Pricing	**+2**	**0**
	Service Quality Management	**+3**	**0**
Tourism Destination Environment	**Economic Growth**	**+2**	**0**
	Socio-cultural changes	**+2**	**0**
	Community participation and attitude	**+2**	**0**

Resort planning involves accessing the needs of tourists. There is a fuel filling station nearby. Facilities in the resort include shops, a laundry service, an ATM and a car wash. As such tourists are able to access their needs timeously. Even the pricing packages cover the use of important facilities such as the rheumatic bath.

The resort contributes to the socio-economic development in the area. It supports local businesses by purchasing products from local farms and firms in the nearby towns, Makhado and Musina. The community buys goods for domestic and business purposes from the resort's supermarket.

Elements that require improvement include the availability of public transport and an addition of traditional food to the cuisine. Importantly the tourists felt that the resort did not have other tourism attractions that focused especially cultural sites and traditional heritage. Another possible addition in the tourism destination strategy used by the management is to emphasise and promote green marketing of the resort.

CHAPTER FIVE
CHARACTERSITICS AND COMPETITIVENESS OF MPHEPHU RESORT

5.1 Introduction

As in chapter 4, this chapter commences with a brief overview of the historical development of Mphephu Resort followed by an in-depth discussion on its competitiveness factors as a tourism destination.

5.2 History of Mphephu Resort

The Mphephu hot spring was known as 'Tshipise tsha Tshavhalovhedzi' before being developed as a resort (www.luonde.co.za). This hot spring has been used by the indigenous people for rituals and domestic purposes for generations.

5.2.1 Development of Mphephu Resort

The Mphephu Resort is in the Tshavhalovhedzi village near Siloam hospital at the foot of Tswime Mountain in the former homeland of Venda. It was developed by the Venda Development Corporation (VDC) in 1988 and was officially opened by the then President of the homeland Independent State of Venda, Honourable FN Ravele in 1989. Through the years, the resort hosted a number of events such as the *Venda Land of Legend Marathon* which was widely promoted by a local radio station (Radio Thohoyandou, currently Phalaphala FM). This event is still hosted at the resort annually.

During the 1990s, South Africa experienced the beginnings of political change that eventually saw the dissolution of the politically devised homelands and their incorporation into the revised provincial administration of the Republic of South Africa. As a result of this, the former Venda homeland became part of the Northern Province after the first post-apartheid demarcation of provincial boundaries. The province was later renamed 'Limpopo' in 2003.

Informal interviews with the community revealed that the new political dispensation had an impact on the social and economic aspects of the region such as the amalgamation or dissolution of State Owned Entities (SOEs), of which the Venda Development Corporation (VDC) was one. Consequently, the VDC was forced to close some of the business ventures and, in some organisations, to retrench employees. Mphephu Resort continued to operate but was hit by large-scale retrenchment. The resort was no longer well-maintained and the place became unsafe for tourists as the number of security personnel was decreased. Other reasons too accounted for its deterioration. As a result, the number of visitors to the resort declined.

After South Africa's first democratic general elections in 1994, the VDC was incorporated into the Limpopo Development Corporation (Limdev). According to Mandiwana (2003), Limdev identified all the VDC resources that required upgrading and/or a change in management, as well as identifying those that should be completely closed. The aim was to focus on resources and facilities that would contribute to social upliftment. Mphephu Resort was one of the tourism ventures that were seen to require a new management strategy. In 2003, the resort was leased to the Protea Hotel Group of Companies in partnership with the Mphephu community (Mandiwana, 2003) and it became known as the Mphephu Protea Resort.

According to the terms of this Public/Private Partnership (PPP), the Mphephu community had ownership of 25% of the shares. The Board of Trustees consisted of the Mphephu Territorial Council, the Mphephu Royal Council, Makhado Municipality and the Vhembe District Municipality (Mandiwana, 2003). The joint venture was officially launched by Mr. Thaba Mufamadi, the then MEC of Finance in Limpopo in 2003.

In 2009, the management of the resort was transferred to the 'Wildlife Resort Company' a Limpopo provincial government parastatal. The name of the resort was then changed from Mphephu Protea Resort to Mphephu Wildlife Resort and the PPP agreement is still in place.

5.2.2 Visitor profile

The profile of 16 of the visitors to the Mphephu Resort who participated in this survey (Appendix C) is presented (Table 5.1). Most of the visitors were males (56.3%). The resort is dominated by middle age visitors (40-49 years) of which 81.5% of them are Africans and 18.5% are Whites. Large portion of the visitors (50%) knew of the existence of the resort from word of mouth, 21.5% said they became aware of it through a travel agency and 18.5% discovered the resort from websites.

Although the resort caters for both the day and overnight visitors, it is dominated by day visitors (93.8%).

Table 5.1. Respondent profiles: demographic/trip characteristics

Demographic Characteristics		
Variable	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Gender		
Male	9	56.3
Female	7	43.8
Age(Years)		
-20		
20-29	1	6.5
30-39	2	12.5
40-49	7	43.8
50-59	5	31.5
60+	1	6.5
Nationality		
African	13	81.5
Coloureds	0	
Asians	0	
Whites	3	18.5
Trip Characteristics		
Primary Purpose		
Leisure	5	31.5
Business	11	68.8
Period of Visit		
Day	15	93.8
Week	1	6.5
How they knew about the resort		
Website	3	18.5
Travel Agent	5	31.5
Word of Mouth	8	50

The tourists had various motives for their visits (Table 5.1). For instance, 68.8% of the tourists visited the resort when on business and 31.5% came for leisure; 93.8% of the visitors spent one day or night and relatively few (6.5%) of the visitors spent a week at the resort.

Informal discussion with community members revealed that the resort was often visited by learners from local schools as well as a few adults and children, mainly from other

parts of Limpopo and other provinces and that the resort now received fewer visitors than during the 1990s.

5.3 Competitiveness of Mphephu Resort

As indicated previously, the Lee and King (2006) model is used to identify the elements and their attributes that have led to the success or failure of the resort. These include tourism destination resources and attractors, tourism destination strategies and tourism destination environments.

5.3.1 Tourism destination resources and attractors

The focus will be on the advantages and challenges within and around the resort, and also identifying the resort's potential for growth. This will include resort attractions, facilities and activities, accommodation, transport infrastructure within and around the resort, cuisine, health, safety and security and management of the resort.

5.3.1.1 *Natural resources*

Figure 5.1 shows the thermal spring of Mphephu as one example of its natural resource base.

Figure 5.1. Hot Spring eye of Mphephu resort
Source: NP Tuwani

Physical and chemical characteristics of the Mphephu hot spring

According to Olivier *et al.* (2010), the temperature of Mphephu hot spring water is 43 ºC at the source, the TDS is 175.9 and the pH is 8.10 (Table 5.2.). The hot spring water is therefore alkaline and is classified as hot (using Kent's 1949 classification). In terms of the chemical composition, the Mphephu hot spring is dominated by sodium and bicarbonate ions, and, using Bond's classification can be classified as temporary hard carbonate waters (Olivier *et al.*, 2010). These chemicals are not harmful and may even have beneficial health characteristics. However, the fluoride content of water exceeds the Department of Water Affairs guidelines for drinking water (DWAF, 1996) and it should not be used for drinking purposes. The extent to which it may be harmful for swimming or bathing has not been established.

Table 5.2. Physical and chemical properties of Mphephu hot spring

Physical properties of water	
Temperature ºC	43
SAR	1.99
TDS (mg/l)	175.90
Conduct.(mS/m)	34.0
pH	8.10
pHs	8.24
Chemical properties of the water	**mg/l**
Sodium	40.14
Potassium	1.14
Calcium	13.35
Magnesium	10.60
Fluoride	2.54
Nitrate	0.07
Chloride	32.93
Sulphate	8.28
Phosphate	0.00
Carbonate	0.00
Bicarbonate	134.20
Bond Classification	C

Source: Olivier et al, 2010

The natural resource setting

It was pointed out (Chapter 2) that the surroundings of a tourism destination play an important part in attracting visitors. Table 5.3 gives an analysis of the 16 visitors' rating of Mphephu resort's location within the natural environment (Appendix C). The resort is located at the foot of the Tswime Mountain near the Nzhelele River and is about 1 km from the main road and far from residential areas. The overall score of 3.9 for geographical location indicates that the visitors were highly satisfied with the resort's location.

Table 5.3. Natural resource hospitality element.

	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)

Element	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Natural Resource								
Ambiance (destination environment)	1(6.3)	6(37.5)	2(12.5)	7(43.8)			100.1	2.2
Geographic location			4(25)		5(31.3)	7(43.8)	100.1	3.9
Total	1	6	6	7	5	7	32	
Weighted score	0	6	12	21	20	35	94	3.1

N=16

The ambiance refers to the quietness, spaciousness and general atmosphere of the resort. Baboons and monkeys are abundant in number and, although living in the wild, they are becoming used to and aware of people's presence, taking a chance to grab an extra something to eat, action that could be problematic for the visitors. It is not surprising that more than half of the visitors rated the environment as poor or less as some people would find their presence a nuisance factor – others enjoy their antics and accept them as part of the natural environment. Other than these wild animals, the resort has beautiful vegetation and sufficient recreational space. The 43.8% of visitors who rated this aspect as good (Table 5.3), may have been influenced by this setup.

5.3.1.2 *Cultural assets and special attractions*

The area around the Mphephu hot spring has abundant attractions, such as cultural heritage sites and other built structures. According to Mandiwana (2003), the VDC developed the resort taking advantage of the cultural and natural attractions around the spring. Some of the identified special attractions (www.golimpopo.com) and those observed by the researcher in the field, are:

- The Dzata ruins: cultural site of an ancient Venda king
- Lake Fundudzi: South Africa's only natural lake which is considered sacred by the Vhavenda people
- The Sacred Forest: holy ground for the Nethathe community
- Tswime Breathing Rock: hot air current coming through a vent from underground

- Siloam hot springs: nearby but not developed
- Kokwane footprint: footprint of ancient inhabitants embedded in rocks
- Nzhelele dam: source of water; recreation
- Phiphidi waterfall: traditional beliefs are associated with the waterfall.

The resort is located very close to these attractions as they are within a 50 km radius of the hot spring site. This area is a treasure-house of tourist attractions of cultural, archaeological and natural interest (www.golimpopo.com).

According to responses to a questionnaire (Appendix C), as listed in Table 5.4, 31.3% of the tourists rated the special attractions in the area as excellent. Although the area itself is rich in attractions, some (31.3%) complained about the inaccessibility of the cultural sites.

Table 5.4. Cultural attributes and hospitality element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent 5	Total	Mean
Cultural Attributes								
Special environmental attractions	2(12.5)	3(18.8)	4 (25)	2(12.5)		5(31.3)	100	2.6
Cultural souvenirs and crafts	5(31.3)	2(12.5)	2(12.5)	0	2(12.5)	5(31.3)	100.1	2.4
Cultural sites accessibility	5(31.3)	0	3(18.8)	0	3(18.8)	5(31.3)	100	2.7
Cultural sites maintenance	2(12.5)	3(18.8)	4(25)	0	4(25)	3(18.8)	100	2.6
Total	14	8	13	2	9	18	64	
Weighted score	0	8	26	6	36	90	166	2.6

N=16

Some of the sites are undeveloped and may discourage tourists. The responses indicated that tourism sites such as Lake Fundudzi are not accessible due to poor roads. Although the Vhembe Integrated Development Plan (IDP) of 2009/10 had identified some of these sites as tourism attractors and sources of employment, it seems that no effort has been made to market and develop these attractions. Moreover, very little is being done to market and develop these resources or to make visitors at Mphephu aware of them.

5.3.1.3 *Resort facilities and activities*

The availability and variety of facilities at a destination contribute to visitor satisfaction and would motivate them to stay longer or return (WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006). According to the local tourism authorities (www.wildliferesorts.org), the facilities available at Mphephu resort include:

- Bar
- Barbeque area
- Childcare facilities
- Function rooms
- Guest lounge

- Laundry service
- Conference facilities
- Restaurant
- Swimming pool
- Amphitheatre (Fig 5.2)
- Large veranda

Figure 5.2. An amphitheatre in the resort

Source: NP Tuwani

The reception area is small and located at the back of the main building. The guest lounge, conference centre and restaurant are also very small. The conference room can only accommodate 12 people. A portion (18.8.3%) of the visitors rated it poorly, while 25% rated the facility as very poor or non-existent (Table 5.5).

There are children's playground facilities (Figure 5.3) as well as swimming pools and a soccer field. However, these were not well maintained. For instance, the swimming pools are not entirely clean and the amphitheatre lights are broken and the floor is dusty.

It is interesting to note that activities such as cultural villages and pubs as advertised (www.wildliferesorts.org) are not, in fact, available. This was also noticed by visitors who indicated 43.8% of whom indicated that the marketing of these activities was poor or totally misrepresented (Table 5.5).

Figure 5.3 A swing and other entertainment activities

Source: NP Tuwani

Table 5.5. Facilities hospitality element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Facilities								
Facilities available as advertised	2(12.5)	3(18.8)	7(43.8)	4(25)			100.1	1.8
Technology available(internet, cell phone signal, etc)	2(12.5)	3(18.8)	7(43.8)	4(25)			100.1	1.8
Business services (conference centre)	4(25)	3(18.8)	5(31.3)	1(6.3)		3(18.8)	100.1	1.9
Total	8	9	19	9		3	48	
Weighted score	0	9	38	27	0	15		1.9

N=16

It is thus clear that none of the attributes have a rating (score) of more than 2. In general, the facilities at Mphephu are poor – probably due to neglect.

5.3.1.4 *Accommodation*

The resort has twenty units accommodating a maximum of 40 people. Accommodation consists of 10 blocks of semi-detached units. The interior of the units have running hot and cold water, a bathroom and a kitchen. There is a television set in each unit with a DSTV connection. Table 5.6 shows that 31.3 % of visitors rated the accommodation quality as excellent.

The camping site accommodates 20 caravans. There is a small ablution block with showers and toilets in the camping site. Around 19% of the visitors rated it as excellent while 18.8% rated it as poor or less than poor (Table 5.6). Day visitors who did not use or see the accommodation and caravan park facilities tended to rate them as non-existent (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6. Accommodation element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Accommodation								
Accommodation quality	4(25)	0	1(6.3)	3(18.8)	3(18.8)	5(31.3)	100.1	3.0
Accommodation quantity	4(25)	0	1(6.3)	3(18.8)	3(18.8)	5(31.3)	100.1	3.0
Caravan park	4(25)	2(12.5)	1(6.3)	2(12.5)	4(25)	3(18.8)	100.1	2.6
Total	12	2	3	8	10	13	48	
Weighted score	0	2	6	24	40	65	137	2.9

N=16

However, personal observation shows that the open space around the units is poorly maintained with overgrown grass and pathways that are not paved. The unattractive surroundings may discourage tourists from wanting to stay here as they affect the accommodation quality adversely. The route to the units, is rocky and not in a good condition for vehicles. Nevertheless, the visitors were satisfied with the accommodation at Mphephu as shown by a mean score of almost 3 (2.9).

5.3.1.5 *Transport*

Accessibility to the resort is good as the roads are tarred and in good condition, visitors however need to be cautious about the presence of livestock grazing freely as the resort is in a rural area. The directions to the resort are available from the resort's website and from the signposts on the road. Around 37% of the visitors rated the signage as very good or excellent (Table 5.7).

There is public transport using the services provided by taxis and buses to and from the major towns of Vhembe and 31.3% of the visitors rated the public transport services as excellent.

Table 5.7. Transport related infrastructure hospitality element

Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Transport								
Road quality	3(18.8)	3(18.8)	3(18.8)	1(6.3)	2(12.5)	4(25)	100.1	2.5
Signage	2(12.5)	2(12.5)	2(12.5)	4(25)	2(12.5)	4(25)	100	2.9
Accessibility of Public Transport	2(12.5)	3(18.8)	3(18.8)	3(18.8)	0	5(31.3)	100.1	2.7
Total	7	8	8	8	4	13	48	
Weighted score	0	8	16	24	16	65	129	2.7

n=16

In terms of transport-related infrastructure, the resort is accessible by road but not by train or plane. Opinions differed regarding visitor's perceptions of infrastructure. The overall rating for transport was 2.7 – indicating a tendency towards good or average.

5.3.1.6 *Cuisine*

The restaurant does not offer a variety of food, and 50% of the visitors who frequented the restaurant rated it as very poor. A menu is not provided and the availability of food depends on what is being offered at the time of the visit mostly it consists of stewed beef or chicken with maize meal porridge (pap). However, the kitchen and the utensils were clean. During a site visit the resort provided one type of traditional delicacy (Figure 5.4) which is tripe and porridge (pap). About 18% of the visitors who bought food from the restaurant rated it as very poor and 25% indicated it as poor (Table 5.8). Personal communication with a member of the restaurant staff revealed that other traditional delicacies are available on request, if ordered beforehand. This can be seen as an advantage since some tourists find the idea of eating local cuisine appealing. However, the taste and nature of traditional delicacies may serve as a detractor for tourists not familiar with Vhavenda traditional food, as it different and generally unfamiliar to visitors.

Figure 5.4. Some of the visitors having dinner at the restaurant

Source: NP Tuwani

Table 5.8. Cuisine

Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Cuisine								
Variety of food	4 (25)	8 (50)	2 (12.5)	1 (6.3)	1 (6.3)		100.1	1.2
Traditional delicacy	4 (25)	3 (18.8)	(25)	5 (31.3)			100.1	1.6
Total	8	11	6	6	1		32	
Weighted score	0	11	12	18	4		45	1.4

n=16

Cuisine thus fared badly, since the mean scores given to this element was only 1.4, signifying ‘very poor’.

5.3.1.7 *Health, safety and security*

There were security personnel at the main gate. The purpose of the security service was described as guarding against trespassers and 'hooligans' who might, or did, disturb the visitors. The guards were in uniform and were very polite. There was no evidence of security guards patrolling the resort during the day or at night, and 12.5% of the tourists felt there was no effective security.

There is no telephone line to communicate with the resort in case of need or emergency or a hotline number for visitors. The area of residence and the rooms are not fenced-off hence monkeys and baboons roam freely. Scarecrows have been erected to scare monkeys and baboons away. This intimidated the guests since the baboons made off with the visitors' food. In the evening it is not safe to venture outside as the researcher experienced personally. The exterior is dark at night time with pathways that do not have lights. At the caravan park, there are no health and safety rules.

Data showed that 37.5% of the visitors rated safety as very poor, with 18.8% of them saying the resort safety is poor (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9. Health, Safety and Security hospitality element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Health and Safety								
Cleanliness of the resort		6(37.5)	7(43.8)	3(18.8)			100.1	1.8
Cleanliness of the resort facilities		5(31.3)	4(25)	7(43.8)			100.1	2.1
Display of Hygiene and safety regulations in the resort	2(12.5)	4(25)	8(50)	2(12.5)			100	1.6
Display of hygiene and safety regulations at facilities	2(12.5)	4(25)	7(43.8)	3(18.8)			100.1	1.7
General safety in the resort	2(12.5)	6(37.5)	3(18.8)	5(31.3)			100.1	1.7
Total	6	25	29	20			80	
Weighted Score	0	25	58	60			143	1.8

N=16

There are health and safety rules in force at all the facilities although 43.8% of the visitors rated them as poor, and 25% found the rules to be very poor and sparse. In addition to poor safety rules, the facilities did not have an assistant on duty especially for watching the children if they swim, in the absence of the parents. This was seen as a matter of concern as a case of emergency could arise such as drowning in the pools. Figure 5.5 presents an example of a safety rule notice.

Figure 5.5. Rules displayed at the resort's lawn

Source: NP Tuwani

Another detractor was the fact that there were not enough dustbins at the resort. This situation was exacerbated during peak holiday seasons, especially at Easter and Christmas.

Of the attributes discussed, cleanliness of the facilities obtained the highest mean score of 2.1. Most of the other attributes obtained scores of nearly 2 (1.6 – 1.8). The overall health, safety and security were rated as 'poor'.

5.3.2 Tourism destination strategies

5.3.2.1 *Management of Mphephu Resort*

The aim of discussing the resort management is to understand the operation of the resort as a competitive destination. The discussion will be guided by the research findings on environmental issues, marketing and human resource management. These

components are key factors for consideration in creating a successful tourism destination (WTO, 2004; Lee & King, 2006).

Figure 5.6 illustrates the resort management organogram comprising 18 personnel. However, in reality the situation is totally different. There is a resort general manager who does not have a deputy. The second tier management consists of an artisan. He has three general assistants. The hospitality manager is responsible for the following subsections: guest office manager with two guest assistants, a chef who supervises an assistant chef and two waiters, tour guide (not functional) and a housekeeper with four room attendants.

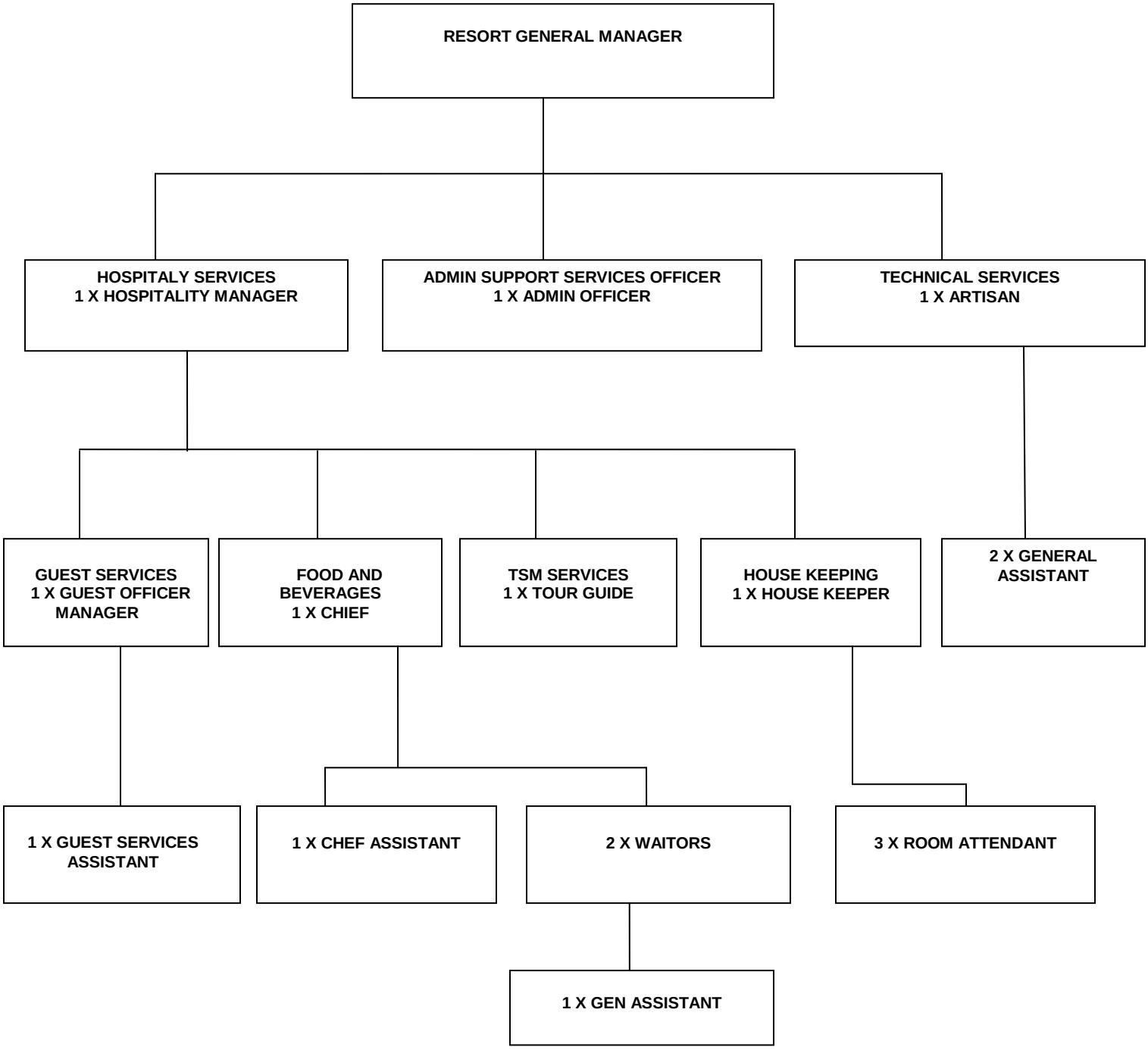

Figure 5.6.Organogram of Mphephu Resort (Supplied by the General Manager)

Although there is an organisational structure, in practice there appeared to be no division of labour. For example, the administrative officer doubled as a receptionist and financial officer.

5.3.2.2 *Destination marketing management*

According to the resort management, the resort takes advantage of the national events for marketing purposes. The 2010 Soccer World Cup held in South Africa was a good example. The resort management embarked on road shows about the event in the Makhado local municipal area. The road shows were used to encourage the public to watch the soccer games at the resort. The management sold beverages and food and provided big screen television viewing for live coverage of the matches. The resort also marketed the event over the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) radio station (Phalaphala FM). It is reported that the resort received many visitors during the tournament.

The branding at the main gate, as personally observed, is neither visible nor attractive due to inferior paintwork.

The resort is marketed using various forms of media such as a website and brochures. Moreover, it is marketed as a ‘wildlife’ resort. This is confusing as there is no fauna on the premises except for the monkeys and baboons and there is no particular conservation promotion on site. A further discrepancy is that facilities advertised, such as hiking, are not available on the resort premises which make this sort of advertisement.

Table 5.10. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Destination marketing

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Marketing**		
	Do they have strategy	**X**	
	Promotional material	**X**	
	Niche market	**X**	
	Green market		**X**
	Protection of image (brand name)	**X**	
	Segmentation of guests		**X**
		4	**2**

5.3.2.3 *Human resource management and development*

Table 5.11 provides an analysis of staff questionnaire (Appendix D) from 10 respondents. Interviews were conducted during the site visit of 23 to 24 August 2010. Questionnaires were distributed to the personnel by the resort manager.

The educational level of the staff members varied from tertiary education to those who had only had some informal training. The employees with better education qualifications were in administrative and managerial positions.

Table 5.11. Respondent Profiles: Staff Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	5	50
Female	5	50
Age(Years)		
-20		
20-29	4	40
30-39	2	20
40-49	1	10
50-59	3	30
60+		
Type of Work		
General Labour	7	70
Technician		
Administrator	3	30
Any other		
Are you trained for your work		
Yes	5	50
No	5	50
Do you have formal qualification		
Yes	5	50
No	5	50

Table 5.11 shows that 50% of the personnel have had a formal education relevant to their field of work. Generally, there is lack of training opportunities for the employees and no skills development plan. This is evident as 70% of the employees are general labourers. The resort does not offer any in-service training for employees. A third (30%) of the personnel (administrators) indicated that they had received training from institutions of higher learning such as universities.

Almost half of the employees at the resort are young (under 30 years of age) (Table 5.11) while 30% are over 50. Gender equity stands at a 50-50 level.

Table 5.12. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Human Resource Development

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Human Resource Development**		
	In-house training programme		**X**
	Other training		**X**
	Compensation/Incentives		**X**
			-3

5.3.2.4 Destination planning and development

Large parts of the resort are well designed in that the initial layout of the buildings was well planned. The buildings are built out of local stone and the pools are partly shaded by trees. Terraces lead from the main veranda to the pools. There are many trees and wide lawns. However, the management has not included the use of any innovative ideas to make the resort unique. Mphephu resort does not have a tourism rating. The situation at Mphephu is reflected in Table 5.13.

Table 5.13. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Destination Planning and Development

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Planning and Development**		
	Design of resort	**x**	
	Innovative products		**X**
	Grading/Rating		**X**
		1	**-2**

5.3.2.5 *Environmental management*

There is a water pipe system from the Nzhelele dam to supply water for drinking purposes in the chalets, and for the day visitors. Cold borehole water is used to water the resort lawns near the swimming pools, and is used in ablution blocks and at other entertainment facilities. The borehole water is not purified and not suitable for consumption. The researcher actually observed muddy water coming from the ablution tap. Water to the swimming pools are from the spring.

The lawns are seen to be well-maintained, with enough personnel taking care of the grounds.

The resort has abundant indigenous plant species that are very beautiful, enhancing the scenery of the setting. However, the species types, their uses and other quality information are not documented for visitors' information. There were no indicators of specific environmental regulation nor environmental care enforcement during the on-site visit.

Table 5. 14. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Environmental Management

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Environmental Management**		
	Conservation initiatives		**X**
	Cleanliness of ground and facility		**X**
	Environmental protection regulations in place		**X**
	Environmental enforcement		**X**
	Environmental friendly technologies		**X**
			-5

5.3.2.6 *Pricing*

According to the resort manger, the entrance fee for day visitors was R10. The price includes the use of all entertainment facilities. Vehicles, including buses, were charged a R10 parking fee, and accommodation was R350 per night. It was not always clear what the prices at the main gate referred to. The R20 entrance fee was very general, and the R10 adult fee did not stipulate the age. The confusing prices provided on the website could inconvenience visitors and needed to be revised. It should be noted that none of these prices were given on the resort's website, especially the tariffs for day visitors. The website provided a pricing list that included activities and facilities not even available at the resort. There were no special prices for packages to the resort.

Table 5.15. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Pricing

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Pricing**		
	Cost	**X**	
	Strategy for packages		**X**
		1	**-1**

5.3.2.7 *Service quality management*

There is no reception area. Visitors have to stand outside while they check in. There are no bell-boys to assist visitors with their luggage. The reception closes at eight o'clock in the evening, which could inconvenience visitors arriving late.

The personnel in the restaurant were friendly but were obviously not professionally trained. This was evident as they did not wear uniforms. It was thus difficult to differentiate between employees and visitors. The restaurant closed at 18:00 on weekday evenings and 20:00 on weekends. There were no proper chairs and tables for visitors and breakfast for overnight visitors was only available on request.

According to Table 5.16, the level of staff competency and helpfulness is lacking and 18.8% indicated that it does not exist, 12.5% rated the level of being competent and helpful as very poor and 43,8% saw it as poor. It can thus be concluded that approximately 75% of the visitors were not impressed with the resort personnel's sense of hospitality (Table 5.16).

Table 5.16. Service Quality Hospitality Element

Element	Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Staff competent and helpful	3(18.8)	2(12.5)	7(43.8)	4(25)	0		100.1	1.8
Price	3(18.8)	2(12.5)	7(43.8)	4(25)	0		100.1	1.8
High level service	1(6.3)	1(6.3)	3(18.8)	3(18.8)	2(12.5)	6(37.5)	100.1	3.4
Total	7	5	17	11	2	6	48	
Weighted score	0	5	34	33	8	30	110	2.3

n = 16

Table 5. 17. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Service Quality Management

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Service Quality Management**		
	Work place health and safety		**X**
	Social responsibility to community		**X**
	Efficient and professional service		**X**
			-4

5.3.3 Tourism destination environments

5.3.3.1 *Community participation and attitude*

The aim of consulting the local community was to find out whether the resort had any effect on social issues such as poverty alleviation. This was achieved through conducting focus group interviews with the local community (Appendix E). The findings derived from the analysed results are presented in Table 5.18. There were 16 respondents who participated in the survey. Detail on how the interviews were conducted and results analysis are explained in Chapter Three. Personal communication with the manager and telephonic follow-ups were done on matters that required clarity.

According to community members, benefits from the hot spring resort development were more obvious in the late 1980s and early 1990s than at present. During earlier years, a number of local residents, especially from villages in Nzhelele area, were employed as general workers and security personnel. This changed during the 1990s due to the political uncertainties of the time and the resort had to retrench personnel. This situation changed the attitude of the community towards the resort, as evidenced by the fact that 76.5% (Table 5.18) of the local people currently did not see any benefit at all coming from the presence of the resort.

Table 5.18. Respondent profiles: community characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	10	58.9
Female	7	41.2
Age(Years)		
-20	1	5.9
20-29	4	23.5
30-39	6	35.2
40-49	5	29.4
50-59	1	5.9
60+		
Spa/Resort good for Community?		
Yes	4	23.5
No	13	76.5
Are you benefiting from the resort/spa?		
Yes	4	23.5
No	13	76.5
Are there job opportunities?		
Yes	1	5.9
No	16	94.1
Impacts on crime		
Increase	10	58.9
Decrease	7	41.2
Community owned Resort /Spa		
Yes	17	100
No	0	0
Community use Spa/Resort facility		
Yes	0	0
No	17	100
Resort/Spa contributing to community development?		
Yes	0	0
No	17	100

Over 90% of the local community felt that the resort does not provide job opportunities. Currently the resort has 18 employees in total. Of these employees, 11 were from the local community, three of them being part-time employees.

None of the community members felt that the resort contributes to skills development or vocational training. Training is that part of a skills development programme that is usually associated with practical activities such as art and craft.

Local residents blamed the resort for the behavioural change of people especially the youth. Comments from two local community members referred specifically to alcohol abuse among the youth visiting the resort. Some 58.9% local people (Table 5.18) attributed crime in the area to the presence of the resort. They also blamed the tourists for harming the environment by littering the area and polluting the nearby stream through careless and thoughtless waste disposal.

Table 5.19 summarises the presence or absence of the attributes of the competitiveness element relating to socio-economic changes and community participation and attitude.

Table 5. 19. Summary of tourism destination environments: Community aspects

		Yes	**No**
Tourism destination environment	**Socio-cultural changes**		
	Impact of tourism on community		**X**
	Level of education of workers		**X**
			-2
	Community participation and attitude		
	Job opportunities		**X**
	Community involvement		**X**
			-2

5.3.3.2 *Market and economic growth*

The size of the market served by the resort is reflected in the number of visitors who use its services. Figure 5.7 shows the total number of both day and guest visitors going the resort for each year from 2007 to 2010 and till March in 2011. Over this five year period, the resort received fewer than 5 000 guest visitors but was well-patronised by day visitors - between 2007 and 2009 there were between 49 000 and 53 000 day visitors, with the number increasing to 79 342 in 2010. The latter marked increase could be credited to the road shows conducted by the management during the 2010 Soccer World Cup . It appears from the number already recorded for the first quarter of 2011 that the market will continue to grow.

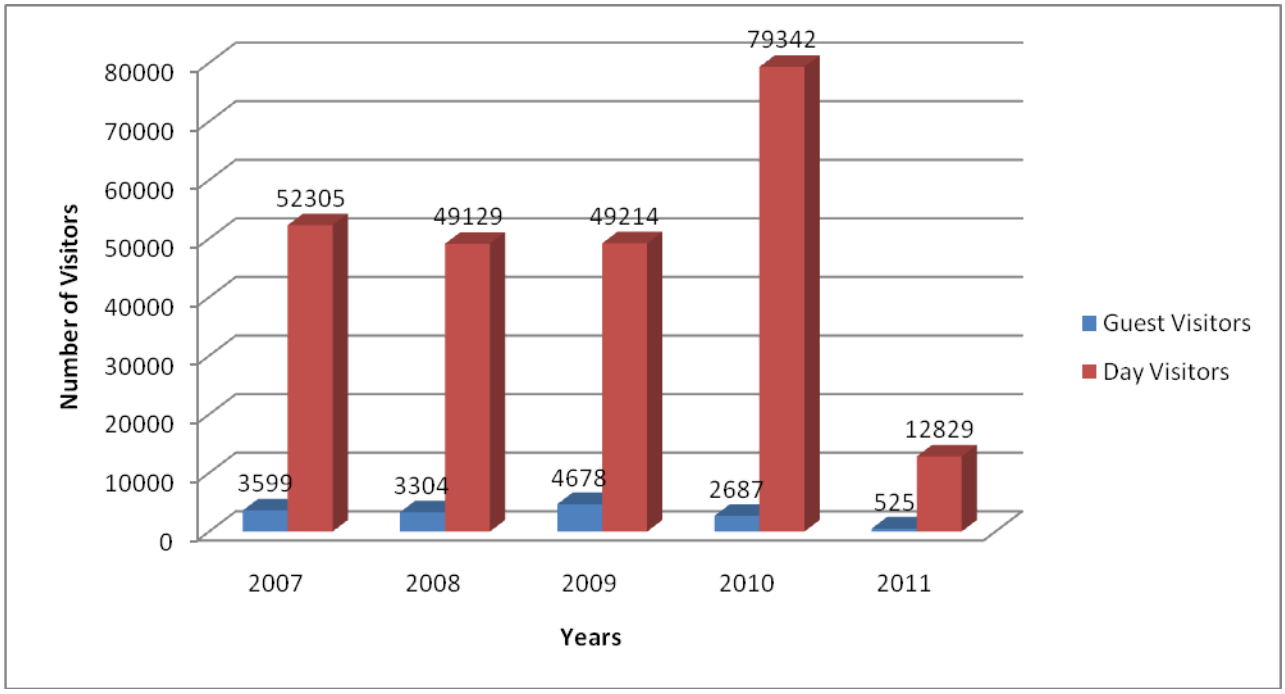

Figure 5.7. Number of Visitors per year
Source: Mphephu Resort, 2011

The development of Mphephu resort is seen to have contributed to socio-economic development within its vicinity in the past. A shopping complex was constructed near the Siloam Hospital and housed nationally recognised retailers such as PEP Stores

(Figure 5.8). The shopping centre employed the local people and reduced the distance and cost of going to purchase goods from towns such as Thohoyandou and even Makhado. Informal discussion brought to light the fact that tourists used to purchase products such food and swimming wear from shops in the complex.

Figure 5.8. A shopping complex in Siloam
Source:NP Tuwani

The decline in the number of visitors to the resort due to socio-political and economic developments of 1990s saw reduced buying power in the complex. This resulted in the closure of the retail shops and retrenchment of employees. The complex is still operational and is now dominated by small business entrepreneurs who mostly trade in jewellery, shoe repairs and similar services needed by the local people. Tourists now have to do their shopping (buying food and beverages) in the nearby towns.

Near the shopping complex there is a newly constructed butchery and a restaurant, currently operational. These developments prove that there is a possibility for small businesses to exist and survive with opportunities success in the area. According to the resort management, the resort buys confectionary products from the local bakery.

Informal businesses selling food and market stalls selling fruit and vegetables are also found in the area. Through personal observation and in informal conversation with the vegetable vendors, the buying power supporting these initiatives came from the visitors to the resort and visitors and patients of the Siloam Hospital.

Table 5.20. Summary of tourism destination environments: Economic growth

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Environment	**Economic Growth**		
	No of locals employed	**X**	
	Ratio Part/Full time	**X**	
		2	

5.4 Chapter summary

The Mphephu hot spring was developed by the Venda Development Corporation in consultation with the local community through the Mphephu Tribal Authority and is currently managed by Wildlife Resorts, a state-owned company.

The resort is located near the tarred road between Thohoyandou and Makhado making it accessible to visitors. There are other tourism attractions near the resort, thus it has the potential of becoming a tourism hub. However, this potential might only be realised if the resort infrastructure, and other tourism destination attractions near the resort, are improved. Elements for improvement were identified through interaction with the resort management and its employees, with tourists and members of the local community. Previous socio-economic developments that resulted from the earlier establishment of the resort, and its effective operation at the time, provide evidence that shows that, if the resort is revitalized, it could help to reduce poverty in the area.

The activities and facilities listed in Table 5.13 (column 1) are suggested by Lee & King (2006) as representative of tourism destination resources and attractors that would attract visitors. The hospitality elements are ranked according to the mean average, and an element with highest mean score was ranked first, descending to the lowest mean

for the activities and facilities attracting tourists to the destination. The calculation method is explained in Chapter Three. This is the summary of the visitors' satisfaction with the resort.

The prime attraction for the tourists (Table 5.21) was the availability of natural resources at the resort. The natural resources included the hot spring and other attractions near the destination such as the Tswime Breathing Stone on the Tswime Mountain. Other elements attracting the tourists to the resort were cultural attributes associated with the Vhavenda traditions, and good transport.

Table.5.21. Rating of Mphephu Resort hospitality elements

Rank	Element	**Satisfaction Level Frequency (Percentage)**							
		None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
1	**Natural resources**	3.1	18.8	18.8	21.9	15.6	21.9	100	3.1
2	**Accommodation**	25	4.2	6.3	16.7	20.8	27.1	99.9	2.9
3	**Transport**	14.6	16.7	16.7	16.7	8.3	27.1	100	2.7
4	**Cultural Attributes**	21.9	12.5	20.3	3.1	14.1	28.1	100	2.6
5	**Service Quality**	14.6	10.4	35.4	22.9	4.2	12.5	100	2.3
6	**Health and Safety**	7.3	31.3	35.4	25	1.0		100	1.8
7	**Facilities**	16.7	18.8	39.6	18.8		6.3	100	1.9
8	**Cuisine**	25	34.3	18.8	18.8	3.1		100	1.4

N = 16

Proper accommodation, transport and cultural attractors were also positive attributes according to the tourists (Table 5.21). The visitors felt that the areas for improvement were service quality, health and safety and the condition of the facilities. These rated close to 2, which translates as being poor. The cuisine fares the worst (1.4). There is much room for improvement here.

Other segments of Lee & King (2006) hot spring model are tourism destination strategies and tourism destination environments and their summary is provided in Table 5.22 below.

Table 5.22. Summary of tourism destination strategies and environments

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Marketing**	**4**	**2**
	Human Resource Development		**-3**
	Destination Planning and Development	1	**-2**
	Environmental Management		**-5**
	Pricing	**1**	**-1**
	Service Quality Management		**-4**
Tourism Destination Environment	**Economic Growth**	**2**	**0**
	Socio-cultural changes	**0**	**-2**
	Community participation and attitude	**0**	**-2**

Based on information in Table 5.22, Mphephu resort's main marketing strategy was to target national sporting events such as Soccer World Cup for which they could offer a worthwhile experience. The resort embarked on road shows to encourage people to watch soccer matches screened at the resort. It had promotional material such as brochures to market the destination. It could cater best for mainly day visitors. The resort's 'Wildlife' branding is confusing as there is no wild-life to be seen anywhere nearby nor are tours to such facilities on offer at the site.

The resort does not have staff development initiatives or plans. Employees do not receive in-service training or any training for that matter. Study opportunities are not provided by the company.

The development of the resort did not consider most of the visitors' needs, particularly the basic essentials. There is a restaurant with an inadequate menu and a supermarket that sold only beverages. Visitors had to rely on nearby towns for services such as banking and telephonic communication and even perishable food commodities. It is not surprising that the resort is not graded by the South African Tourism Grading Board.

In addition to poor infrastructural planning, the resort lacks in terms of environmental planning. There are no environmental awareness initiatives, the resort facilities are not entirely clean and ablution water is muddied. The resort does not have environmental

regulations in place nor is there environmental compliance and enforcement. Lastly, there are no environmental approaches, such as water recycling, at the resort.

The prices appearing on websites are confusing and the cover activities and facilities are not available in the resort. The entrance fee was only known after direct enquiries. There are no priced packages to attract visitors. In addition, the service quality offered is below standard with health and safety risks at a high level.

Economic growth in the area as a result of the establishment the resort was witnessed in the late 1980s and early 1990s as shops were built and people were employed at the resort and in the shops. Currently there are but a limited number of people employed with local people being hired mostly on a part-time basis. The resort's clientele are mostly day visitors who come mainly from the Vhembe District Municipality.

Impacts on socio-cultural changes within the community are dominantly negative. There has been no improvement in people's lives in terms of poverty alleviation programmes or the establishment of learning opportunities such as for art and craft making and other specialised skills. The community attitude tends to be pessimistic as no job opportunities from the resort have been forthcoming.

CHAPTER SIX
CHARACTERSITICS AND COMPETITIVENESS OF SAGOLE SPA

6.1 Introduction

This chapter commences with a brief overview of the historical development of Sagole Spa followed by an in-depth discussion on its competitiveness factors as a tourism destination. Note that the photos included in figures 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8 and 6.9 reflect conditions as they were during 2005. However, interviews and questionnaires reflect the current situation.

6.2 History of Sagole Spa

It is said that the Sagole thermal spring was discovered by Ramashia Netshipale of the Tshipale clan while looking after his stock. He was from a village called Tshilamusi. Having informed his community about the discovery, the clan wanted to relocate and settle in Tshipise (Sagole) to be closer to the spring. Before this could be done, they had to ask permission from Chief Gonono Tshikundamalema of Niani who ruled Tshipise. Chief Tshikundamalema informed the Netshipale community that the area had a headman called Netshipise who ran to Matahe village out of fear of the lions roaming the village. Netshipise returned to the village after being informed of the arrival of the Netshipales in the village.

Community relocated to Tshipise village used the hot springs for domestic purposes and farming and as a sacred place where traditional rituals were performed by the communities from villages such as the Tshipise, Dambale and Domboni. These villages are collectively referred to as Niani and stretches until Musina. Traditional rituals included u ‘Phasa’ and ‘Thevhula’ that involved communicating with the ancestors by performing a traditional dance called ‘Tshikona’, followed by drinking traditional sorghum beer. The community still regard the spring as a sacred place, Zwifhoni.

The spring was made famous by a legendary hunter ‘Sagole’ from Lukahu village. Some regard him as the founder of the spring as they say that he discovered it while chasing an eland buck that got stuck in the mud. Sagole was a foreman to a European farmer known by the Niani community as “Mandevhele”. The European farmer would send Sagole on errands to the town of Sibasa where he would introduce himself as ‘Sagole wa Tshipise’. Even Chief Netshipise appointed Sagole as his right-hand man because of his bravery and fame. It is through his fame and bravery that the hot spring became known as ‘Tshipise tsha Sagole’.

There are myths associated with the Sagole thermal spring. Legend has it that, beneath the surface of the spring, there is mysterious python that releases hot water from its mouth squirting it right to the surface. It is also said that, in the reeds around the spring, there is a harmless woollen-headed snake that pacifies the natural spirits of the spring (Harrison, 2004).

6.2.1 Development of Sagole Spa

Local residents indicated that the development of the hot spring into a spa started in the 1960s. This was called ‘Klein Tshipise’ and was a frequented by dignitaries such as Chief Mphephu, who in 1979 became the president of the then Independent State of Venda. Some elders who worked at the spa said that the former Prime Minister of South Africa, HF Verwoerd, also visited the spa during this period.

During the mid-1980s the Venda Development Corporation (VDC) refurbished the spa. According to the minutes of the meeting held between the representatives from the Tshikundamalema Tribal Council, the VDC and the homeland government of former Venda, held on 14 July 1986, the purpose of the renovations was to increasing tourism in the area and thereby alleviating poverty through job creation. Some of the issues agreed on included: fencing the spa area, shielding the public baths for public and separated for both females and males, allowing the spring eye to remain unfenced, and that the cleaning of the hot spring and stream was to be done by the royal family.

Renovations included the construction of two self-catering cottages with bathrooms and private pools, the refurbishment of six rondavels with communal ablution blocks and cooking facilities, a dormitory equipped with 80 beds and a site for 10 caravans. VDC also constructed a hall with a library that received 140 books from Luxavia International Airline. A duck pond was constructed in the yard for environmental education purposes (Mphephu, 1988).

In 1988 the Sagole Spa was officially opened by the then President of Venda, Mr. PR Mphephu (Mphephu, 1988). The target market of the spa was for visitors from South Africa and the southern African region (SADC) who would use the facility for educational purposes (Mphephu, 1988). The rumblings of political change in the South African scene of the 1990s saw the VDC (a State Owned Entity) closing some tourism destinations under its management. It was incorporated to Limpopo Development Corporation (Limdev) together with other entities of the former homelands of Limpopo. Sagole Spa became one of these. It lost its personnel and was leased to an individual Mr. Litshani. Although the lessee was accountable to Limdev he did not maintain the infrastructure as was agreed with the appointed lessor.

Currently the infrastructure and facilities at the Spa, such as the swimming pools, are not adequately maintained, and are in a state of decay with few tourists, visiting the hot springs. It should be noted that few visitors from other parts of South Africa or elsewhere were found during this study's investigation, as it is now frequented by local people who prefer public to private pools. The information gathered was obtained from four visitors participating in a survey conducted from 23 to 25 August 2010. The profile of visitors and their reason for visiting the Spa in the first place is recorded in Table 6.1.

6.2.2 Visitor profile

The contingent of visitors interviewed at Sagole Spa were three males and a female, two were Africans and two were Whites (Table 6.1). Two of them were between 30-39 years old and the other two were between 20-29 and 40-49. They visited the hot springs

for business purposes and spent only one day there. They found out about the Spa from websites they found when searching the Internet.

Table 6.1.Respondent Profiles: Demographic and Trip Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	3	75
Female	1	25
Age(Years)		
-20	0	0
20-29	1	25
30-39	2	50
40-49	1	25
50-59		
60+		
Nationality		
African	2	50
Coloureds		
Asians		
Whites	2	50
Primary Purpose		
Leisure		
Business	4	100
Both		
Period of Visit		
Day	4	100
Week		
Month		
How they know a destination		
Word of Mouth		
Website	4	100
Travel Agent		
Other		

6.3 Competiveness of Sagole Spa

The format of the discussion follows the pattern as was done for Mphephu and Tshipise resorts. However, most of the information in this chapter comes from the researcher's personal observations and informal discussion with community members, especially on the facilities, as few people visit the Sagole Spa.

6.3.1 Tourism destination resources and attractors

6.3.1.1 *Natural resources*

Figure 6.1 shows the thermal spring at Sagole in its natural setting with the hot springs clearly an example of its natural resource base.

Figure 6.1. Sagole hot spring eye in 2005.

Source: NP Tuwani

Sagole Spa is located in the Tshipise village near the existing irrigation scheme and the Mphephu Youth Centre, now the offices of the provincial Department of Education. The area is surrounded and covered by lush natural vegetation. Table 6.2 provides the visitors' satisfaction with regard to the resort's location.

Table 6.2. Natural resource hospitality element

Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
	None 0	V. Poor 1	Poor 2	Good 3	V. Good 4	Excellent 5	Total	Mean score
Natural resources								
Geographic location	1(25)	2 (50)	1(25)				100	1.3
Ambiance (destination environment)	2 (50)	2 (50)					100	0.5
Total	3	4	1				8	
Score	0	4	2				6	0.8

n = 4

All four visitors rated the location as being non-existent to very poor. Not only was the infrastructure in a state of decays, but livestock belonging to the local community are allowed to graze in the vicinity of the spa. Community members, known to management, enter the Spa grounds and even live there, coming and going as they wish. The researcher observed this phenomenon frequently.

The Spa environment does not offer a sense of quietness or space for visitors to relax and this may be a reason why 50% of the tourists rated it as very poor.

Overall, the geographic location was given a score of 1.3 (very poor) while the ambience is non-existent (score = 0.5).

Physical and chemical characteristics of the hot spring

Table 6.3 lists the physical and chemical properties of Sagole spring waters.

Table 6.3. Physical and chemical properties of Sagole spa

Physical properties in water	
Temperature ºC	46
SAR	8.11
TDS (mg/l)	173.90
Conduct (mS/m)	33.0
pH	8.72
pHs	8.70
Chemical properties in water	**mg/l**
Sodium	58.5
Potassium	1.1
Calcium	3.9
Magnesium	0.0
Fluoride	0.7
Chloride	44.1
Sulphate	17.8
Carbonate	16.5
Bicarbonate	64.1
Phosphate	0.1
Bond Classification	C

Source: Olivier *et al. (*2008)

The water temperature of the hot spring is recorded as 45.9ºC. The total dissolved solids concentration was 173 mg/l and the pH is 8.72. According to the classification devised by Bond in 1946, the water is an alkaline sodium bicarbonate and carbonate. The dominant ions are sodium, bicarbonate and chloride. The water is of good quality and can be used by the community for domestic purposes (Tshibalo & Olivier, 2010).

6.3.1.2 *Cultural assets and special attractions*

The Sagole Spa is surrounded by sites with cultural significance for the Vhavenda people. These sites are in the nearby villages. The areas of special interest around Sagole are shown in Table 6.4 below:

Table 6.4. Tourism attractions in Mutale Local Municipality

Tourist Attraction	Location (Distance from Sagole Spa)	Exclusiveness
Baobab Tree	Zwigodini Village 2km	Biggest Boabab in Africa
Domboni Caves	Domboni Village 3km	Hiding place during tribal wars
Nwanedi Nature Reserve	Folovhodwe 15km	Animal viewing & accommodation
Makuya Park	Adjacent to Kruger National Park 30km	Animal viewing & camping facilities
Tshavhadinda Cave	Ha-Rambuda 40km	Hiding place during Tribal wars
Awelani	Tshikuyu 35km	Caves
Dzhinzhikoni Potholes	Dzamba 30km	Potholes
Dalavhuredzi Water falls	Mufulwi 35km	Ancient finger prints
Khwanda dza Mbidi cultural village	Pile 40km	Traditional houses arts & culture
Tshathanga Caves	Maramanzhi 45km	Hiding place during tribal wars
Mutavhatsindi Nature Reserve	Thengwe 30km	An indigenous plant with curative abilities. Its magic used to weaken the enemies during tribal wars.
Tshiungani Ruins	Tshiungani 4km	Traditional Chief Kraal
Dambale Caves	Dambale 2km	Bushmen (Khoisan) paintings
Kruger National Park	40 km from Sagole	Wildlife viewing and camping
Tshikondeni Mine	Tshikondeni 40 km	Coal mining
Kaolin Clay Mine	Tshipise 500m from Sagole	Kaolin clay mining

Source: Mutale IDP (2008/9)

Some of these attractions, as observed, are not well-developed and access is along gravel roads. Examples are the Dambale caves and Tshiungani ruins. These sites are of cultural significance and have potential to attract tourists to the area. The Baobab Tree (Big Tree) is one of tourism sites that has developed with tarred roads to improve accessibility.

Table 6.5 provides the tourists' rating of the cultural assets and special attractions according to the visitor's questionnaire analysis.

Only one of the visitors knew about these cultural attractions and consequently rated 'Special attractions' as good. Most of the visitors rated the accessibility as poor and the maintenance of these cultural sites as very poor, with one of them indicating that accessibility and maintenance do not even exist in the area. The Big Tree was known to

most and was considered to be first an important pull factors to the area. However, these attractions are close to each other and form part of the African Ivory Route seen from the road signs in Polokwane (N1) and Sagole (D3675). Sustainable development of these sites may contribute to tourism growth in the area.

Table 6.5. Cultural Attributes and Special Attractions Hospitality Element

Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Cultural Attributes and Special attractions								
Special attractions	2(50)		1(25)	1(25)			100	1.3
Souvenirs and crafts	4(100)						100	0
Cultural sites accessibility	1(25)	1(25)	2(50)				100	1.3
Cultural sites maintenance	1(25)	2(50)	1(25)				100	1.0
Total	8	3	4	1			16	
Score	0	3	8	3			14	0.9

n=4

It is unfortunate that near the Spa there are no souvenirs and crafts for sale and all four of the visitors indicated this as an aspect that needed to be corrected (Table 6.5).

6.3.1.3 *Spa facilities and activities*

Renovations done at the Spa saw the construction of facilities such as a caravan park, a hall, swimming pools, goose ponds, dormitory and barbecue (braai) area (Mphephu,1988). These facilities and entertainment activities at the Spa are now in a state of decay. Swimming pools are not clean and the water in the pools is infected with algae. Figure 6.2 shows the state of the swimming pools at the cottages. The maintenance employee mentioned that the unavailability of cleaning chemicals and the lack of electricity to drain water as significant challenges.

Figure 6.2. State of the swimming pools in 2005.
Source: NP Tuwani

In addition to deteriorating swimming pools, other facilities, such as the hall and structures for the provision of shade, are not adequately maintained and damaged equipment has not been replaced. Broken chairs, the gate, the fence and walls surrounding the swimming pools remain unrepaired. Facilities such as the caravan park are actually no longer even visible due to overgrown grass and reeds.

It is not surprising to note that tourists felt that most of the facilities are non-existent and those that are available are in a very poor condition as shown in Table 6.6. For instance, all four of the tourists who responded to the questionnaires said that the Spa did not even have facilities for business services such as an efficient communication system. Technologies such as the internet and telephones are not available. The area itself had poor cell phone reception and so people have to rely on public phones, which is a far less satisfactory method of communication. Although there is an electricity supply in the area, the Spa did not have power and used generators that often malfunctioned.

Table 6.6. Facilities Hospitality Element

Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Facilities								
Facilities available as advertised	3(75)	1(25)					100	0.3
Technology available (internet, cell phone signal, etc)	4(100)						100	0
Business services (conference centre)	4(100)						100	0
Total	11	1					12	
Weighted score	0	1					1	0.1

n=4

Even though the hall had damaged furniture, it was needed in the community as a venue for having meetings, weddings, church services and other social functions.

6.3.1.4 *Accommodation*

The accommodation on offer at the Spa comprised two self-catering cottages, six rondavels, an 80-bed dormitory and a caravan park with 10 sites (Mphephu, 1988; Hoole, 2001).

In addition to the deteriorating facilities, the quality of the accommodation has also declined. An example is provided in Figure 6.3 where the roof of a rondavel is slumping. Inside these rondavels and cottages the furniture was old and the bed linen looks and smells unpleasant. Four rondavels did not have bathroom and toilet facilities. Visitors had to use ablution facilities that were outside and over 100 m away. The route to the facilities was infested with weeds and grass and posed a definite safety risk. The bath and toilet facilities in other two rondavels were malfunctioning and without water.

Besides the poor standard of the accommodation provided, it was observed that the yard was not maintained at all. The routes to the facility were not paved and the dust emanating from the roads could cause respiratory problems. In addition there were no street lights. An informal discussion with community members revealed that there were many snakes in the vicinity, especially pythons that often attack and kill livestock.

Figure 6.3. A rondavel at the Sagole Spa in 2005:
Source NP Tuwani

Table 6.7. Accommodation Hospitality Element

Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Accommodation								
Accommodation quality	2 (50)	2 50)					100	0.5
Accommodation quantity	2 (50)	2 (50)					100	0.5
Caravan park	4(100)						100	0
Total	8	4					12	
Weighted score	0	4					4	0.3

n=4

Tourists' ratings were uniformly either very poor or non-existent as shown in Table 6.7. They were not satisfied with the quality or quantity of the accommodation. The caravan park is considered to be uninhabitable.

6.3.1.5 *Transport- related infrastructure*

During the heydays of the Spa, access to the hot springs was along a gravel road. The researcher once visited the resort during that period. Currently the road from Thohoyandou to Sagole is tarred. However, there are gravel roads that link the Sagole Spa with other destinations such as the Tshipise resort. The area now has abundant public transport services as most of the community members commute to places of work such as Thohoyandou, the major town of Vhembe. The improved transport situation can be credited to the improved roads.

Figure 6.4. The signpost to Sagole Spa

Source: NP Tuwani

There were no signposts indicating the direction to access major roads especially the N1, the Great North Road, or directions to Thohoyandou. Even in Thohoyandou, there are no signposts to the resort. Three of the four visitors commented on the lack of adequate signage.

Table 6.8. Transport Hospitality Element

Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Transport								
Road quality			3(75)	1(25)			100	2.3
Signage			3(75)	1(25)			100	2.3
Accessibility of Public Transport		1(25)	2(50)	1(25)			100	2.0
Total		1	8	3			12	
Weighted score		1	16	9			26	2.2

n=4

Lack of signage in this area is surprising as it has internationally recognised tourism attractions such as Big Tree, Kruger National Park and the Nwanedi Resort.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings, the transport hospitality element scored an average of 2.2 – considerably higher than the other tourism destination resources and attractors elements (Table 6.8).

6.3.1.6 *Cuisine*

The Sagole Spa is located in a rural area that is rich in Venda culture and tradition. The community prides itself on its various traditional delicacies. The delicacies include Mopani worms and various types of vegetables. These food types are not available for sale at Sagole. Table 6.9 indicates that three of the four visitors scored the traditional delicacy as not available while one scored it as poor.

Table 6.9. Cuisine Hospitality Element

Element	**Importance Level (Percentage)**							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Cuisine								
Variety of food	4(100)						100	0
Traditional delicacy	3(75)	1(25					100	0.3
Total	7	1					8	
Weighted score	0	1					1	0.1

n=4

Figure 6.5. A market place near the Spa in 2005
Source: NP Tuwani

The food sold to people is often prepared in an open place and the utensils are not entirely clean, a situation that would repel prospective buyers. Similar dishes are sold at roadside stalls (Figure 6.5) and at restaurants.

In addition to traditional dishes, all the tourists agreed that there was no variety of food items. Food sold in the shops in the area was porridge and beef or chicken, food normally sold to the local residents. Local entrepreneurs blamed the unavailability of food on the fact that the number of visitors frequenting the area was limited and irregular. It was observed that most visitors to the area are patients to an internationally recognised traditional healer Mr. Mudzielwana Mulaudzi better known as Tshikovha.

6.3.1.7 *Health, safety and security*

The spa uses water piped from the spring and does not have a proper sewage system. It uses a septic tank that is currently malfunctioning.

Table 6.10 shows that none of the tourists were satisfied with the cleanliness of the resort. Its facilities were rated as either non-existent or very poor.

Table 6.10. Health and Safety Hospitality Element

Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
	None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
Health and Safety								
Cleanliness of the resort	3(75)	1(25)					100	0.3
Cleanliness of the resort facilities	3(75)	1(25)						0.3
Display of hygiene and safety regulations in the resort	4(100)						100	0
Display of hygiene and safety regulations at facilities	4(100)						100	0
General safety in the resort	3(75)	1(25)					100	0.3
Total	17	3					20	
Weighted score	0	3					3	0.2

n=4

The visitors gave a similar rating on general safety. All the visitors who participated in the survey lamented the absence of safety rules. Figure 6.6 reveals potentially hazardous conditions at the resort.

Figure 6. 6. Health and safety risks at the resort in 2005
Picture by NP Tuwani

Generally the Spa is just not functioning and not to be recommended to visitors.

6.3.2 Tourism destination strategies

6.3.2.1 *Management of Sagole Spa*

The Spa is leased to an individual and four family members manage the site. The senior family member works as the general manager while the family members who live in Tshipise village, are employed as manual labourers for cleaning.

Figure 6.7. Reception area at the Spa in 2005
Source: NP Tuwani

The Spa does not use modern technology such as computers for administrative matters (Figure 6.7). The bookings are done through cell phone communication and this is difficult at times due to poor signals. The lack of managerial skills has left the Spa without the benefit of adequate human resources and efficient management strategies.

6.3.2.2 *Destination marketing management*

The resort had been marketed using various forms of media such as brochures during its heyday. In those brochures, facilities marketed include accommodation, swimming pools and the thermal spring. Current media forms such as the internet, include the Spa as part of other destinations with the Big Tree and Tshipise Resort. Table 6.11 reflects the destination marketing management at Sagole.

Table 6.11. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Destination Marketing

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Marketing**		
	Do they have strategy		**X**
	Promotional material		**X**
	Niche market		**X**
	Green market		**X**
	Protection of image (brand name)		**X**
	Segmentation of guests		**X**
			-6

6.3.2.3 *Human resource development*

The Spa was once a source of employment to many people in Vhembe. These employees ranged from management to general labourers. It is said that some employees had qualifications in the tourism field and the VDC also offered in-service training to employees.

As indicated earlier, the Spa is currently leased to an individual. There are four employees (family members) and their tasks are general labour. These employees do not have knowledge of the tourism and hospitality industry. On the whole, the resort is certainly not contributing to the skills development of the staff.

The state of human resource management is reflected in Table 6. 12

Table 6.12. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Human Resource Development

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Human Resource Development**		
	In-house training programme		**X**
	Other training		**X**
	Compensation/Incentives		**X**
			-3

6.3.2.4 Destination planning and development

The original design of the resort was excellent but due to neglect, the present situation is poor to non-existent, as reflected in Table 6.13.

Table 6.13. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Destination Planning and Development

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Planning and Development**		
	Design of resort		**X**
	Innovative products		**X**
	Grading/Rating		**X**
			-3

6.3.2.5 *Environmental management*

The hot spring is not fenced. People from nearby villages fetch water from it for domestic purposes. The spring is left vulnerable to all forms of waste. It is sometimes cleaned by a headman or delegate from the tribal authority.

Figure 6.8. Garbage near the barbecue area at Sagole Spa in 2005

Source: NP Tuwani

The fence around the spa is broken thus cattle and goats graze in the yard. The Spa's garden is infested with weeds. Figure 6.8 and Table 6.14 show evidence for a need to face the environmental challenges this resort presents. It is surprising that the Spa still operates under these conditions.

Table 6.14. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Environmental Management

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Environmental Management**		
	Conservation initiatives		**X**
	Cleanliness of the ground/facilities		**X**
	Environmental protection regulations in place		**X**
	Environmental enforcement		**X**
	Environmental friendly technologies		**X**
			-5

6.3.2.6 *Pricing*

This is a non-functioning spa that in the past catered for day and overnight visitors. Currently visitors come to swim for R10 per head. Most of these visitors are local people and they complain about the price as facilities are not maintained. Moreover, the price is often increased to R15 during holidays, especially December.

The accommodation fee is R60 per night for rondavels and cottages are R120 each. Table 6.15 indicates the total lack of pricing management at the resort.

Table 6.15. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Pricing

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Pricing**		
	Cost	**X**	
	Strategy for packages		**X**
		1	**-1**

6.3.2.7 *Service quality management*

This is a poorly managed resort by anyone's standards (Table 6.16). As indicated, the Spa currently offers few services.

Table 6.16. Summary of tourism destination strategies: Service Quality Management

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Service Quality Management**		
	Work place health and safety		**X**
	Social responsibility to community		**X**
	Efficient and professional service		**X**
			-3

6.3.3 Tourism destination environments

6.3.3.1 *Community participation and attitude*

The aim of consulting the local community was to find out whether the resort had an impact on social development issues such as poverty alleviation.

The benefits offered by the Spa development were more prevalent in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Informal discussions held with local community members and former employees revealed that, during that period, the Sagole Spa resort employed many (statistics not found) local residents from the Niani area with the majority coming from Dambale, Tshipise and Zwigodini villages. People were employed as general workers and security personnel. This changed due to political change of the 1990s; the resort owners had to lease the Spa. That situation changed the attitude of the community towards the Spa.

The attitude of the community towards the Spa is summarised in Table 6.17. The table provides the results of focus group interviews conducted on 23-25 August 2010 (attached as Appendix E). The table presents the number (17) of responses.

About 88.2% of the local respondents did not see any benefits emanating from the existence of the Spa (Table 6.17) as it does not provide job opportunities. None of the community members felt that the resort is contributing to skills development or to vocational training. It should be noted that the development of any venture normally opens opportunities but in this case craft making, for example, or tourism hospitality training, at this Spa did not happen.

Most (94.1%) of the local residents (Table 6.17) were pleased that they had access to the use of facilities such as hot springs. Some local people (35.3%) mentioned that the Spa also contributed to crime in the area. They also blamed the tourists for contributing to the vandalising of spa facilities such as the hall.

Table 6.17. Respondent Profiles: Community Characteristics

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	9	52.9
Female	8	47.1
Age(Years)		
-20	2	11.8
20-29	6	35.3
30-39	7	41.2
40-49	2	11.8
50-59		
60+		
Spa/Resort good for Community?		
Yes	16	94.1
No	1	5.9
Are you benefiting from the resort/spa?		
Yes	2	11.8
No	15	88.2
Are there job opportunities?		
Yes	2	11.8
No	15	88.2
Impacts on crime		
Increase	6	35.3
Decrease	11	64.7
Community owned Resort /Spa		
Yes	10	58.8
No	7	41.2
Community use Spa/Resort facility		
Yes	16	94.1
No	1	5.9
Resort/Spa contributing to community skill development?		
Yes	0	
No	17	100

The local residents with whom the researcher interacted on an informal basis were of the view that the Spa needed to be redeveloped. According to them, such redevelopment should especially involve the youth who needed to be kept occupied as most of them are unemployed.

Table 6.18 scores Sagole spa in terms of community participation and attitude.

Table 6.18. Summary of tourism destination environment: Community participation and attitude

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Environment	**Community participation and attitude**		
	Job opportunities		**X**
	Community involvement	**x**	
		1	**-1**
	Socio-cultural changes		
	Impact of tourism on community		**X**
	Level of education of workers		**X**
		0	**-2**

The community involvement reflects the manager and four community members who work at the spa.

6.3.3.2 *Market and economic growth*

Sagole Spa, during its heydays, used to receive visitors from overseas and all over South Africa. Some of these visitors would stay for days. Many of the visitors were school children. Accommodation would be occupied to capacity during events such as the solar eclipse, a natural phenomenon, that occurs at specified times under certain astronomic conditions. Some would use camping tents. Statistics could not be found as most of the employees had been retrenched and those still working under Limdev could not trace their documents.

The renovation of Sagole Spa (in the mid-1980s) contributed to socio-economic development in the past. Local shops, especially those around the resort, managed to

flourish according to informal conversations in which the researcher engaged. These shops (Figure 6.9) employed the local people and reduced the distance to purchase goods from towns such as Musina and Thohoyandou. Informal discussion revealed that tourists too used to purchase products such food and beverages.

Figure 6.9. A shop near the Sagole Spa in 2005
Source:NP Tuwani

The decline in the number of visitors to the resort due to socio-economic developments of 1990s saw a reduction in sales as buying power decreased, as did the number of local customers as well as visitors. This resulted in the closure of some shops. Currently others are still functioning well but with fewer customers, unlike in the past.

Figure 6.10. Market place in near Sagole

Source: NP Tuwani

Informal businesses selling food products and markets for fruit and vegetables are also found in the area (Figure 6.10). From personal observation, and through informal discussion with vegetable vendors, it was clear that the buying power rested with the local community. Other customers were visitors to an internationally renowned traditional healer, Tshikovha (Mr. Mudzielwana Mulaudzi).

The current market and economic growth competitiveness element is shown in Fig 6.19

Table 6.19. Summary of tourism destination strategies and environment

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Environment	**Economic Growth**		
	No of locals employed	**X**	
	Ratio Part/Full time		**x**
		1	**-1**

6.4 Chapter summary

Tshipise tsha Sagole was a well-developed Spa during the later 1980s and early 1990s. The Spa started to decline in the mid-1990s. The deterioration continues. The community of Sagole is concerned about the state of the Spa. They indicated that the renovation of the Spa could assist in poverty alleviation through job creation and open up business opportunities in the area.

The visitors rated the Sagole Spa facilities (Appendix C) as was done for Mphephu and Tshipise resorts. The table (Table 6.20) ranks the seven (7) elements according to the mean.

Table 6.20. Rating of Hospitality Elements

Rank	Element	Importance Level (Percentage)							
		None	V. Poor	Poor	Good	V. Good	Excellent	Total	Mean
1	**Transport**		8.3	66.7	25			100	2.2
2	**Cultural Attributes**	50	18.8	25	6.25			100	0.9
3	**Natural resources**	37.5	50	12.25				100	0.8
4	**Accommodation**	66.7	33.3					100	0.3
5	**Health and Safety**	90.9	9.0					99.9	0.2
6	**Facilities**	91.6	8.3					99.9	0.1
7	**Cuisine**	87.5	12.5					100	0.1

n=4

The element ranked first according to Table 6.20 is transport with the road being tarred and abundant public transport. The second indicator was the cultural attribute. The ranking status might be due to the availability of other tourism attractions in the community. However, the huge difference in the mean scores to the first highest score and last shows that these tourism attractions need to be properly developed and managed.

Natural resource element occupies third position in terms of the mean score (Table 6.20). Natural resources refer to the location and its environment and these were seen as being appealing and conducive to a favourable tourism experience. The Spa is located within a residential area and visitors may have felt that the area was not an ideal

environment for a Spa facility as 50% rated it as very poor and 37.5% felt the site as a tourism destination is non-existent, implying that it did not have the right atmosphere for this type of facility.

Accommodation was ranked fourth (Table 6.20) with 66.7% visitors saying that there was no proper lodging and 33.3% saying that the available accommodation was in a poor state. This rating underscores the view that the accommodation is not suitable for human beings, let alone paying visitors. Elements 6-7 had the same mean score of 0.1 (Table 6.20) proving that the resort has poor facilities and food.

It should be noted that, with the exception of transport, none of the other scores surpassed 1, with most having a score of less than 0.5. This translated to 'non-existent'.

The ranking of elements in Table 6.20 related to an assessment of destination resources and attractors as specified in the 2006 Hot Spring Model compiled by Lee & King (2006). A summary of the other two other segments of the model namely, tourism destination strategies and the tourism destination environment are presented in Table 6.21 below.

Table 6.21 paints a gloomy scenario as far as tourism destination management of Sagole Spa is concerned. For instance, in its investigation, this study did not find any evidence of marketing management related to Sagole Spa. The promotional material, a brochure, was found archived by a tour guide and there was no literature on the present state of the resort. Even websites referred to Sagole when reporting on other tourism venues such as the Tshipise Resort. Other aspects missing include the Spa logo or brand.

The Spa was well-planned during its earlier renovation phase as confirmed by the 1986 minutes of the stakeholders meeting. After the refurbishment, the resort flourished, serving plenty of tourists. Currently there are innovative products that could be used to

attract visitors. Moreover, and not surprisingly, the Sagole Spa is not rated by the Tourism Grading Board. This is not an encouraging sign.

Table 6.21. Summary of tourism destination strategies and environment

		Yes	No
Tourism Destination Strategies	**Destination Marketing**	**0**	**-6**
	Human Resource Development		**-3**
	Destination Planning and Development	0	**-3**
	Environmental Management	**0**	**-5**
	Pricing	**1**	**-1**
	Service Quality Management	**0**	**-4**
Tourism Destination Environment	**Economic Growth**	**1**	**-1**
	Socio-cultural changes	**0**	**-2**
	Community participation and attitude	**1-**	**-1**

Other success factors in destination management are service quality, environmental management and resort price package. However, the Spa has an entrance and accommodation fee but this could not be accessed by a potential tourist due to lack of information about the Spa in media forms such as the internet.

Two indicators under tourism destination environment were identified (Table 6.13) as being positive, namely economic growth and community participation and attitude. Economic growth as a result of its initial development was experienced when it was flourishing. Currently, as a business venture in the area, it has not developed well, as the presence of the resort has only attracted a few visitors. The inability of the Spa to generate employment was seen by the community in a pessimistic vein. They are hoping that the renovations currently being planned, would improve their quality of life through offering job and business opportunities.

CHAPTER SEVEN
COMPARISON OF THE DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS OF TSHIPISE, MPHEPHU AND SAGOLE

7.1. Introduction

The three thermal springs selected for this research, namely Tshipise, Mphephu and Sagole are located relatively close to each other within the Vhembe District of Limpopo. The previous three chapters provided detailed discussion on the conditions prevailing at these three South African thermal resorts with regard to their tourism competitiveness attributes as defined by Lee and King in 2006. A summary is presented in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1. Summary of the findings in Tshipise, Mphephu and Sagole resorts

	Tshipise Resort	**Mphephu Resort**	**Sagole Spa**
Visitor profile	77% male; 30 – 39 year old; 85% white; 54% leisure; 54% info from website; all overnight or longer staying.	56% male; 40 – 49 years old; 81% blacks; 68% business; 50% info by word of mouth; mostly day visitors.	75% male; 30 – 39 years old; 50% black; 100% business; 100 from website; all day visitors.
Indicators for destination competitiveness			
Natural Resources: Natural scenery (location). Water quality: temperature pH Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) Spring class	Located below the Tshipise Koppie, far from villages Temp: 58 ºC pH is 8.3 TDS is 422.10. Water highly mineralised	Found below the Tswime mountain near the Nzhelele river away from the villages. Temp: 43ºC pH is 8.10 TDS is 175.9 Water is mineralised	Situated in the Tshipise village. Temp: 45.9ºC pH is 8.72 TDS is 173.9. The water is hardly mineralised
Special Attractions: Year round activities at destination and in other areas around tourism destination.	Activities at the resort are not seasonal: swimming pool, horse riding, Jukskei. There is an amphitheatre. Other attractions are far away from the resort.	Activities at the resort are not seasonal: swimming pools and soccer ground. Other tourist attractions: Dzata ruins, Kokwane foot print, Tswime Breathing Stone etc. They are approximately 10 km from the resort.	Activities at the resort not seasonal: swimming pool. Other tourist's attractions are Kruger National Park (40 km), Tshiungani Ruins (5 km), Big Tree (2 km) etc. Attractions are natural, cultural and built.
Cultural Assets: Arts and Crafts.	Cultural arts and craft stalls at the entrance to the resort.	None in the resort.	None in the resort.

Accommodation: Quality of accommodation (cleanliness, bathing facilities, kitchen), Accommodation available. Surrounding environment beautiful.	Sufficient accommodation but not the best quality. Surrounded by beautiful gardens.	Sufficient accommodation but not the best quality. Surrounded by beautiful gardens.	Decaying accommodation Grounds not well-maintained.
Cuisine: Traditional dishes. Variety of food items	No traditional food. Modern restaurant with enough food.	Limited choice of food and traditional delicacies.	None
Transportation related infrastructure: Road condition. Public transport. Signage	Tarred roads. Not accessible by public transport. Many visible signpost and signage on the road.	Tarred roads. Accessible by public transport. Limited signage to the resort.	Tarred roads. Accessible by public transport. Limited signage to the resort.
Health, Security and Safety: Medical assistance. Hygiene of facilities. Security guards, Safety rules	Medicine such as cough mixture available in the Supermarket. Doctors available on request. Hospital is 30 km away. Police station in Musina and police are visible. Patrol Guards at the gate and 24 hours patrol of premises. Health and Safety rules displayed at facilities. Neat surrounding always.	No medical assistance in the premises. Hospital is 1 km away. Siloam police station is 2 km from the resort. Security Guards at the gate. No patrolling of the whole resort. No health and safety rules for facilities.	No medical assistance in the premises. Community Health Centre next to the Spa. Police Station is 30 km from the Spa. No rules for use the swimming pools.
Destination Marketing Management: Tools for marketing: Websites, radio, TV, magazines, newsletter, brochures and brand name.	Regularly updated website. Facilities shown on the website available. Resort marketed in TV hospitality and wildlife programmes such as National Geographic channel. Marketed in Travel magazines. Online newsletter available on subscription. Brochures available at tourism centres in Limpopo and on site. Resort known as 'A Jewel of the North'	The resort is available in Protea Hotel and Wildlife Resort websites. Some activities such as hiking and canoeing not in the resort as advertised. Newspapers, radio and TV report about events held in the resort. Brochures are available in Tourism centres of Limpopo. The resort is known as 'Wildlife Resort' the name gives a wrong impression as there is no wildlife to be seen.	Most of the websites refer to the Spa in conjunction with other destinations such as 'Big Tree'. Some refer to it as 'Klein Tshipise' a name before renovations. An old brochure was found from the Tourism Agencies in Thohoyandou. Media reports are on social aspects such poverty alleviation and so on. Nothing is said about refurbishing the Spa.
Human Resource Development: Training and Skills development of the destination personnel and within the community	Resort (private) company has training institution for hospitality training. Free bursaries offered to community on tourism related training. Continual in-service training.	No training or skill development for staff or for community members.	No training or skill development for staff or community members.

Environmental Management: Waste collection. Audit of fauna and flora. water recycling	Waste is collected regularly in specific points and dustbins are available. Rules are stipulated for use of facilities such as swimming pools. Resort account and record the available fauna and flora. Water is recycled.	Waste is collected and dustbins are available. No rules or signs on the facilities. Fauna such as baboons are not a threat to visitors. Natural habitat types and uses not recognised. Tap water at the gate is not consumable. No water recycling	Waste strewn everywhere. No rules for use of facilities. No water recycling.
Pricing: Ensure value for money.	Well-maintained facilities. Price includes their use except game viewing. The price is good according to visitors.	Facilities not well maintained. Few activities for overnight. Not all marketed products on the premises. Price reasonable for local visitors but not valuable to travelling tourists.	Pricing not an issue as the spa is not functioning.
Service Quality Management: Professionalism (manners) from employees. Hospitability of the destination. Quality of the products.	All the employees are very friendly and willing to assist. They are identifiable by uniform. Visitors are advised on available products and where to find them. The resort environment is welcoming. Modern technology is used (ATM, Internet, etc).	Difficult to locate the reception. No uniform to employees and not easy to find assistance. Resort feel is dull and a sense of loneliness is felt. No internet facilities. TV connection in accommodation.	No control of entering and exiting visitors. Nothing is happening.
Economic Growth: Employment opportunities. Entrepreneurship.	The resort employed 110 personnel of whom 103 are permanent. Most employees are from nearby villages and others are from many parts of South Africa. Businesses in the resort available. Small businesses emerged in the vicinity.	The resort employed 20 personnel of whom 17 are permanent. Most of the employees are from Nzhelele villages. Small mall shopping complex built due to resort construction. Small businesses developed near the Siloam Hospital and the resort.	Four local people employed. Nearby businesses not benefiting from the spa's existence.
Community participation and attitude: Management. Friendliness towards visitors. Participation in hot spring development. Attitude towards (re)development of the hot spring	A privately owned resort. No community involvement in development. Community is not hostile to visitors. The community has a school constructed by the resort.	A public owned resort. Development done in consultation with Mphephu Royal Council. Mphephu community owns 25% of shares. Community friendly to visitors. Resort constructed a public pool for community. Expectation that resort improvement will alleviate poverty through job creation.	A public owned resort. Development done in consultation Tshikundamalema Royal Council. The community was friendly to visitors during the spa heydays. They were involved during planning. Community concerned about the decline of the spa. Reconstruction is urgently required.

This chapter draws a comparison of the three resorts in terms of their success or failure to meet the requirements of the competitiveness factors.

7.2 Tourism destination resources and attractors

The major elements considered include natural resources, health and safety, service quality, accommodation, facilities available at the resort as well as the transport infrastructure. In order to facilitate comparison, Tables 4.15, 5.13 and 6.12 are synthesised as a single table, Table 7.2. The table was created from the visitors responses to the questionnaires.

Table 7.2. Ratings of elements of tourism destination resources and attractors: Tshipise, Mphephu and Sagole thermal spring resorts

Element	Tshipise	Mphephu	Sagole
Natural resources	3.9	3.1	0.8
Health and Safety	3.9	1.8	0.2
Service Quality	3.6	2.3	0.0
Accommodation	3.3	2.9	0.3
Facilities	3.1	1.9	0.1
Cuisine	2.9	1.4	0.1
Transport	2.7	2.7	2.2
Cultural Attributes	2.3	2.6	0.9
Mean: Tourism destination resources and attractors	3.2	2.3	0.6
Legend: Green = very good; blue = satisfactory to good; yellow = poor; lilac = very poor; orange/red = non-existent			

Table 7.2 shows that Tshipise is the only resort where some (three) of the competiveness elements received a rating of 3.6, 3.9 and 3.9 (very good when rounded to the nearest 4) by the visitors. The other ratings for Tshipise were mostly good, with only cultural attributes being rated as poor (score = 2.3). By contrast, the highest rating at Sagole was for transport infrastructure and even that was low (score = 2; poor), with the other competitiveness elements being either very poor or non-existent. Mphephu' scores were intermediate, with visitor responses mostly ranging from satisfactory to poor.

The natural resource elements rated by the tourists included location and environmental setting. Tshipise had the highest mean score (Table 7.2). It is located below the

Tshipise ‘Koppie’ far from villages and is surrounded by natural vegetation. Mphephu is also located on the slopes of the Tswime Mountain, near the Nzhelele River, and about 1 km away from village. It is surrounded by lush vegetation. However, the roaming baboons and monkeys detracted from the natural beauty, explaining its second position in terms of scores. According to the visitors, the location of Mphephu and Tshipise is ideal as it gives the ‘back to nature’ experience to the resort. This is especially attractive to visitors from urban areas. Sagole’s low score may be attributed to its location within a village with noise from the community disturbing the visitors. Moreover, the terrain is relatively flat and the natural vegetation less dense than at the other two resorts. Little or no attempt had been made to use the indigenous vegetation in the gardens. Remnants of an old mine dump in the vicinity of Sagole added to the ambient dust levels.

As recorded in Table 7.2 Tshipise resort held the first position in terms of health and safety (score = 3.9). Security personnel man the gates and guards patrol the premises throughout the day and night. Health and safety rules were prominently displayed in the chalets and in the grounds. In addition, medicine such as cough mixtures and insect repellents were available at the shop at the resort. Some personnel had had training in first aid and could assist with emergency procedures and with less serious health problems. Medical personnel and an ambulance could be summoned if required. In contrast, Mphephu had security guards at the gate but they did not patrol the resort. Health and safety rules concerning the facilities were limited and applied mostly to the feeding of monkeys and the danger of baboons. It is not surprising that the resort received the low score of 1.8. Neither guards nor medical assistance were available at Sagole resort. Warnings were not even posted regarding the use of the swimming pools. Health and safety were thus sadly lacking at Sagole and the resort only attained a score of 0.2 for this attribute.

Tshipise(score=3.6) resort was identified as providing good service. All the employees were very friendly and willing to assist. They were easily identifiable by their uniforms. Visitors were advised on available products and where to find them. The resort

environment was welcoming. Modern technology was available such as an ATM, Internet, etc. The level of service at Mphephu was poor (mean score = 2.3). It was difficult to locate the reception area and the employees did not wear uniforms, with the result that it is was not easy to find assistance. Although television was available in the chalets and at the main facility, there were no internet facilities. The resort had an ambience of isolation and gave a feeling of alienation. Since there was no marked tourism activity at Sagole, its service quality could not be gauged and was rated as being non-existent.

The Tshipise resort had good accommodation with adequate bedrooms, ablution facilities and a small kitchen. The chalets were clean but the furniture showed signs of wear. Clear rules regarding the use of implements were posted in the chalets. The caravan park was supplied with electricity, water and satellite connections for DSTV. The accommodation units were clean and secure. The Tshipise resort received the highest mean score (3.3) for accommodation (Table 7.2). Although Mphephu had clean and good accommodation with self-catering facilities, the lack of security and paved paths were major concerns as was the inadequate level of lighting to the chalets. Hence this resort received a mean score of 2.9 as compared to 3.3 for Tshipise. Sagole's accommodation was not well-maintained and the caravan park was overgrown by weeds and grass. The bath and toilet facilities were not functional – hence the low mean score of 0.3.

The three resorts showed considerable differences with respect to both the facilities available at the resorts and their level of maintenance. Tshipise achieved a mean score of 3.1 (good); 1.9 at Mphephu and only 0.1 at Sagole. Tshipise had a variety of facilities and activities with a rheumatic pool and Jacuzzis as the main facilities for health therapy. Other leisure facilities included swimming pools and tennis courts. The facilities were well-maintained. Facilities at Mphephu comprised mainly recreational swimming pools and playgrounds. These facilities are not well- maintained. During one of the field visits, the large pool had dry leaves on the bottom of the pool, while one of the smaller pools showed signs of algal scum. The pools appeared to be cleaner on subsequent

visits. Sagole was a shadow of its former self with swimming pools infested with algae and some showing cracks.

Sagole spa is located in a rural area that is rich in Venda culture which offers a variety of traditional food items as part of its cuisine. However, food was not available for the tourists at the resort. Even food sold by street vendors was of questionable quality. It is therefore not surprising that Sagole attained a mean score of only 0.1. Mphephu resort offered one type of food that consisted of traditional 'pap' and tripe. Cuisine was rated as being poor to very poor by the visitors. Tshipise did not offer any traditional fare but had a variety of Western food to choose from and had a good modern restaurant. The resort received the highest mean score of 2.9 (Table 7.2). The inclusion of some traditional dishes and improving the breakfast menu could raise the level of satisfaction with this competitiveness element at Tshipise.

There was relatively little difference in the visitors' rating of the transport infrastructure at the three resorts. All had tarred roads leading to the resort or in the immediate vicinity. There was also abundant public transport in the form of taxis and buses at both Mphephu and Sagole. Although public transport was less available in the vicinity of Tshipise, most of the visitors there were from other regions and thus had used their own transport to travel to the resort. The score of 2.7 at Mphephu and Tshipise may thus be justified by the good quality of the tarred roads and proper signage to the resort, while the score of 2.2 at Sagole may be attributed to poor signage.

Mphephu achieved the highest rating with respect to cultural attributes. Both Mphephu and Sagole are located close to various other tourism attractions. However, most of the special attractions were not developed as a tourist destination. Examples were Dzata and Tshiungani ruins, cultural heritage sites. Developed attractions were mostly built structures like the Nzhelele and Nwanedi dams. Despite the array of cultural attractions near to Sagole, it was only rated 0.9 at Sagole. Clearly visitors were either not aware of these, except for the Big tree, which is passed on the way. The management at Sagole makes no effort to advertise the wealth of cultural assets in the area. Although Tshipise

was surrounded by farms, it used the same attractions as the other thermal springs for marketing purposes. This was the only competitiveness attribute where Tshipise received a lower visitor rating than Mphephu.

7.3 Tourism destination strategies

In this section the management success factors at the three resorts are compared with regard to human resource development and environmental management. Information was derived from the relevant tables in chapters 4, 5 and 6. This information is summarised in Tables 7.3 and 7.4.

Destination marketing management includes developing a marketing strategy and use of promotional material. The only evidence of the implementation of a pro-active marketing strategy, was the initiative that Mphephu resort displayed by conducting road shows in preparation for the Soccer World Cup special event in 2010 (Table 7.3). The road shows encouraged local people to watch soccer on big screens at the resort. The resort received many visitors during this event. Sagole did not have any form of promotional strategies that would enable it to take advantage of a special local or national event. Tshipise did have a strategy for the promotion of local events since their clientele did not include day visitors. They provided their guests with information about local activities that they might be interested in attending during their stay. Tshipise and Mphephu had promotional material such as brochures that were available at tourism centres in Limpopo and on site (Table 7.3). In these, Tshipise is referred to as the ‘Jewel of the North’ and Mphephu as a ’Wildlife Resort’. However, marketing Mphephu as a Wildlife resort was misleading as there were no wild animals except baboons and monkeys at the resort or even nearby. Most of the websites refer to the Sagole Spa in conjunction with other destinations in Limpopo such as the ‘Big Tree’. Some refer to it as ‘Klein Tshipise’ - its name before its change in ownership. An old brochure of the now defunct resort was obtained from tourism agency in Thohoyandou.

Table 7.3. Summary of Tourism Destination Strategies showing overall scores*

Tourism Destination Strategies			
	Tshipise	**Mphephu**	**Sagole**
Destination Marketing Strategies			
Do they have strategy	✓	✓	×
Promotional material	✓	✓	×
Niche market elaborate on this in the text	✓	✓	×
Green market	×	×	×
Protection of image (brand name)	✓	✓	
Segmentation of guests who are the guests?	×	×	×
	4	**4**	**0**
Human Resource Development			
In-house training programme	✓	×	×
Other training	✓	×	×
Compensation/Incentives	✓	×	×
	3	**0**	**0**
Destination Planning and Development			
Design of resort	✓	✓	×
Innovative products	✓	×	×
Grading/Rating	✓	×	×
	3	**1**	**0**
Environmental Management			
Conservation initiatives	✓	×	×
Cleanliness of the ground/facilities	✓	×	×
Environmental protection regulations in place	✓	×	×
Environmental enforcement	✓	×	×
Environmental friendly technologies	✓	×	×
	5	**0**	**0**
Pricing			
Cost	✓	✓	✓
Strategy for packages	✓	×	×
	2	**1**	**1**
Service Quality Management			
Work place health and safety	✓	×	×
Social responsibility to community	✓	×	×
Efficient and professional service	✓	×	×
	3	**0**	**0**
TOTAL	**20**	**6**	**1**
Mean Score	**20/22 x5★ =4.5**	**6/22 x5★=1.4**	**1/22 5★=0.2**

✓ = +1 and x = 0
★ Calculation to convert total to mean score (Likert Scale up to 5) for comparison purposes

In terms of brand name, Tshipise is owned by Forever Resorts, an international company based in the United States. It is a strong brand name. Before being a Forever Resort, Tshipise was previously part of the Aventura group, also a well-known brand in the tourism industry at the time. Mphephu was known only as a resort under the Venda Development Corporation, a parastatal and was not a strong brand. Later it was managed by the Protea-hotel Group of Companies (private) a known brand in the tourism industry. Currently, Mphephu is a Wildlife Resort a parastatal which is also not a strong brand name.

The niche market of Tshipise comprised families and conferences as it had conference facilities. Mphephu concentrated on schools and day visitors and hosted some local government conferences. In terms of having a green market, none of the resorts advertised themselves as green resorts.

In terms human resource development, Tshipise resort was seen to be making an effort to improve the skills of its employees. In-service training was provided to workers. Learnerships and bursary opportunities were offered to students in tourism and hospitality fields. This resulted in Tshipise scoring a good rating for this attribute. Although Mphephu did employ local people, as did Sagole Spa, however, no training opportunities were available for the staff.

Since its early development, Tshipise resort was always managed professionally as a business and this was reflected in its state at the time of the survey for this research. The resort had contingency plans in case of need. The resort had a laundry, car wash, Automatic Teller Machines (ATM), good cell phone signals, a supermarket, a butchery and medical services. The resort was graded as a three star facility. In Mphephu most of these services were found in nearby towns but not at the resort. Sagole Spa did not offer any such service. Neither Mphephu nor Sagole had acquired Tourism Board certification or rating.

In addition to proper resort planning, Tshipise manages its environment with concern. The grounds around the resort were clean with abundant dustbins. It had changed shower heads in the chalets to reduce water and energy consumption, an action that is appropriate for contributing to climate change mitigation initiatives. It was also seen as striving to protect the environment and all natural species, the trees and the birds, within the premises. The species name had been recorded in places. Water management was done in accordance with the Department of Water Affairs regulations and modern technology was used to recycle the water from the pool. A large poster had been erected at the source of the spring showing the physical and chemical properties of the spring waters. The source of the spring had been enclosed in a glass chamber and a special viewing area had been constructed around it. It is unfortunate that Mphephu and Sagole did not pay attention to environmental conservation, though Mphephu was reasonably litter-free during the field visits and had indigenous trees in its grounds. It also allowed monkeys and baboons to roam freely.

At Tshipise, the price charged included use of all facilities except game viewing. The visitors found the price structure acceptable. In contrast to Tshipise, the Mphephu facilities were not well-maintained with only a few activities available for overnight visitors. There was considerable misrepresentation regarding the facilities available at Mphephu. The facilities mentioned in the brochures did not actually exist at the resort. Sagole Spa entrance fee was R10 and facilities used were swimming pools and a hall. Accommodation cost R60 per night. There were no personnel on duty at the time of the site visit.

7.4. Tourism destination environments

Table 7.4. Summary of Tourism Destination Environment at the resorts*

Tourism Destination Environment			
	Tshipise	**Mphephu**	**Sagole**
Economic Growth			
no of locals employed	✓	✓	✓
ratio part/full time	✓	✓	×
	2	**2**	**1**
socio-cultural changes			
impact of tourism on community	✓	×	×
level of education of workers	✓	×	×
	2	**0**	**0**
community attitude and participation			
job opportunities	✓	×	×
community involvement	✓	×	×
	2	**0**	**0**
TOTAL	**60**	**2**	**1**
Mean Score	**6/6 x5★ =5**	**2/6 x5★=1.7**	**1/6x 5★=0.8**
* where ✓ = 1 and x = 0 ★ calculation to convert total to mean score (Likert Scale up to 5) for comparison purposes			

The Impact of the tourist destinations on the communities are seen in relation to evidence of economic growth or development. Over the past years the Tshipise resort had employed an average of approximately hundred personnel and most of the workers were from local villages and towns. The employees resided at the resort and were transported to their homes by the company. Some of the employees with hospitality skills were from other tourism destinations in South Africa. A number of businesses had opened in response to the establishment of the resort. These included a petrol filling station, a curio stall and a supermarket. Mphephu had employed over fifteen personnel. They were from the Mphephu villages such as Tshavhalovhedzi and Tshituni. Some of the employees stayed at the resort while some used private and public transport to get to work. Businesses that targeted tourists had emerged as a result of resort such as a bakery and butchery. Informal businesses sold mostly food. A shopping complex had been built near the resort. The Sagole Spa was managed by four employees. The target markets for both the formal and informal businesses in the vicinity were the local people as few tourists visited the resort.

Community participation at the three tourism destination varied. Tshipise was a privately owned resort. The community did not participate in its resort development but benefitted as a school was built in the area. The Mphephu resort is publicly owned and the Limpopo provincial government and Mphephu Royal Council are shareholders. The resort development was done in consultation with the community. The community also saw the need to further develop the resort to create job opportunities. Sagole Spa was developed in consultation with the government authorities and the Tshikundamalema Tribal Council. During the Spa's heydays, the communities were shareholders. In its current state the Spa requires renovation and since it is located within a disadvantaged community local participation in the initiative could bring benefit for improving living standards.

7.5. CHAPTER SUMMARY

Of the three competitiveness elements discussed, Tshipise scores a perfect 5/5 for Tourism Destination Environmental Factors, a 4.5 for Tourism Destination Strategies and 3.2 for Tourism Destination Resources and Attractors. The former two factors thus score 'excellent' ratings, while the latter is 'good'. The overall mean weighted score Tshipise is thus 4.5.

Mphephu scores highest (2.3) for Tourism Destination Resources and Attractors; 1.7 for Tourism Destination Environment and only 1.1 for Tourism Destination Strategies. The overall mean score is 1.7. It is noticeable that the best mean score at Mphephu is lower than the worst for Tshipise.

Sagole fares badly in all respects, achieving mean scores of 0.8, 0.6 and 0.2 for Tourism Destination Environment, Tourism Destination Resources and Attractors and Tourism Destination Strategies, respectively. Its overall mean score for all three factors is only 0.5. Its only saving grace is the low cost of accommodation, the good transport infrastructure and the cultural attraction that abound in the area.

Using Lee and King's competitiveness factors to score the attributes quantitatively has successfully indicated, not only the difference in level of success of the three resorts, but has highlighted those attributes that need attention if the resorts are to grow and prosper.

CHAPTER EIGHT
SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 INTRODUCTION

South Africa has over 90 thermal springs of which only about one third are developed as tourism destinations. Not all of these are equally successful and even those in close proximity to each other may show considerable differences in the level of development. The principal aim of this study was to identify the underlying reasons for the differences in level of success of three neighbouring thermal spring resorts in Limpopo, namely, Mphephu, Sagole and Tshipise. Currently Tshipise is a thriving holiday resort, Mphephu has some, largely sporadic, activity while Sagole is not functioning at all as a tourism resort.

The study's aim was achieved by using competitiveness as a measure of success of a resort. Three objectives were used to achieve this.

The first objective of the study was to determination of the physical and chemical characteristics of the hot water springs. Site visits were used to measure water temperature and collect water samples for chemical analysis. Tshipise has the highest temperature (58ºC) followed by Sagole (46ºC) and Mphephu (43ºC). The fluoride concentrations of the waters at Tshipise and Mphephu are unacceptably high and therefore should not be used for domestic purposes. The water quality at Sagole is of excellent quality.

The second objective, to explore and document the history and uses of springs, was obtained by means of published and unpublished literature and interviews. All three resorts owe their origin to the existence of a thermal spring. In the past, these were used by local communities for religious and domestic purposes but were developed into tourism and recreation resort during the previous century.

Lee and King's (2006) tourism destination competitiveness model was used for the last objective and to satisfy the overall aim of the project. Various attributes of tourism destination resources and attractors, tourism destination strategies and tourism destination environment were evaluated at each of the resorts. A Likert scale was used to gauge visitors' views on the first of these factors, namely tourism destination resources and attractors, while the presence or absence of a specific attribute was used to score the latter two factors. Personal observations as well as a number of formal interviews and questionnaire surveys were used to obtain this information. Mean scores were calculated for each of the elements so as to quality the competitiveness of the resorts.

8.2 RESULTS

It was found that Tshipise is currently a thriving tourism resort, frequented by families and overseas tourists often on a return-basis. The resort has always been privately owned and is currently managed by Forever Resorts. Neither traditional leaders nor the community participated in its development as a hot spring tourism destination. Today the resort has a three star rating and is patronised by local and international tourists. The visitors, mostly-middle aged white people, come to relax in a rheumatic pool and large heated swimming pools, enjoy a game on the tennis courts and make use of the many other recreational facilities while their children are occupied at the many playground facilities.

The resort actively contributes to the general development of the area. It supports local businesses and in the towns of Makhado and Musina and purchases products from local farms. The community, in turn, purchases goods for domestic and business purposes from the resort's supermarket.

The resort management and employees endeavour to meet the needs of the visitors by providing good accommodation, cuisine, ensuring a healthy and safe environment and

actively implementing a sound environmental policy. Training both at the resort and elsewhere is available to the employees.

The Mphephu hot spring was initially developed by the Venda Development Corporation (VDC) in consultation with the local community through the Mphephu Tribal Authority and is currently managed by Wildlife Resort, a state-owned company. The resort is often visited by schools. Another segment of visitors comprises local community members during sporting events, an initiative started during the 2010 Soccer World Cup and marathon events. Few visitors indulge in swimming as an activity.

The socio-economic impact of the resort was marked during the late 1989 and early 1990s when shops were constructed and local people were employed at the resort and in the shops. Currently the number of full-time staff is limited and local people are hired on a part-time basis.

The resort has a number of facilities including a small conference centre, swimming pools and playground equipment for children. There are a few chalets, but the resort clearly caters for day rather than overnight visitors. The resort offers food in the form of traditional dishes, but is lacking in adequate healthy and safety measures. No training is available to the employees.

Sagole Spa was well-developed during in the late 1980s and early 1990s and received many visitors at the time. It was then called Klein-Tshipise due to its proximity to the Tshipise resort. The Spa started to decline in the mid-1990s which coincided with the change in ownership from VDC to Limdev. The deterioration continues to the present. The accommodation and swimming pool facilities are collapsing, dirty and in a general state of disrepair. The resort has undergone numerous changes in ownership since the 1990s and is currently leased to an individual by Limdev.

Tshipise, and to a lesser extent, Mphephu, are successful as tourism destinations, having contributed to the economic growth of the region. The community around

Tshipise activity benefits from the presence of the resort in the area through entrepreneurial opportunities such as selling firewood and artwork. The Mphephu and Sagole communities do not see any benefits accruing them from the resort development in their areas.

The quantitative assessment of competitiveness factors, elements and attributes indicated that of a possible maximum of 5, Tshipise attained a mean value of 3.2, for tourism destination resources and attractors, indicating that visitors were satisfied with elements such as natural resources, health and safety issues, accommodation, cuisine, transport infrastructure and the quality of the service. Mphephu did not fare as well. Most visitors rated the resort as being satisfactory to poor (mean value = 2.3). The mean rating was 0.6 for Sagole which clearly reflects the lack of even the most rudimentary level of destination attractors and resources.

The analysis of tourism destination strategies showed an even greater discrepancy between the three resorts. Tshipise earned an 'excellent' rating of 4.5 out of 5. Mphephu and Sagole scored only 1.4 and 0.2, respectively. This highlights the lack of human resource development, destination planning and development, environmental management, service quality management and a poor pricing structure at these resorts.

The difference in the levels of the tourism destination environment revealed that Tshipise contributed to economic growth. There were businesses such as a petrol stations and entrepreneurial opportunities for selling art and firewood. These were employment opportunities and sources of income. This was corroborated by a rating of 5 out of 5. Mphephu also contributed to economic growth, but did not significantly improve the advancement of the community. This resort scored a mean of only 1.7 for the tourism destination environment. Sagole scored a dismal 0.8 for this competitiveness factor.

8.3 CONCLUSION

Tshipise was the most successful resort but it does not mean Mphephu had entirely failed. While Tshipise is a conventional tourist resort, using its natural resource as major attractor, Mphephu does not. This does not mean that Mphephu is not successful, but merely that its focus differs from that of traditional thermal spring resorts. Indeed the name of the resort does not even reflect the thermal springs as a natural resource. Sagole, although advertised as a spa, does not use either its resource or the diversity of the cultural attributes at all.

It should be noted from the history of these resorts, that the political landscape may have played a significant role in the success or failure of these resorts. For example, Tshipise was reserved for whites only in the pre-democratic era, Sagole was for the black elite and Mphephu was developed by the former homeland state of Venda. The impact of political changes in South Africa has not received attention in this dissertation since the emphasis of the study was confined to economic factors affecting destination competitiveness.

Other shortcomings include:

- The limited the number of site visits. This might distort the visitor profiles for the various resorts.
- The small size of the visitor survey – especially at Sagole.

Problems encountered included the unwillingness of some community members and resort managers to participate in the interviews and survey and their reluctance to provide information.

8.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

8.4.1 Recommendations for action

- Tshipise resort had excellent service quality management that needs to be maintained. Slight improvement is required regarding accommodation, cuisine and cultural attributes. Old furniture should be replaced and electrical appliances should be kept in good condition. Some chalets require repainting. The restaurant offers Western food and traditional food is not sold. As a quality resort in this locality it is suggested that some African dishes are included in the menu. The breakfast menu should also offer a greater variety of food. The one aspect that Tshipise should consider is giving more attention to 'green' technology. This can be used as an important marketing tool since the environmental movement is gaining momentum world-wide.

  None of the resources and attractors at Mphephu resort was given a rating of more than good. Most were in the region of 2, signifying 'poor'. The natural resource element obtained the highest score and thus more attention should be given to the use and marketing of the natural resources and cultural attributes of the area. Considerable improvements are required in the maintenance of the resort as well as management issues, human resource development and social-community aspects. Cuisine and health and safety should be given immediate attention. It is recommended that chalets be installed with telephones linked to reception or for external dialling with an appropriate system. Internet facilities should be made available to visitors. It is critical that management pay attention to cuisine aspects such as improved food quality, variety of food, preparation and serving. It is strongly advised that the swimming pools and grounds be well maintained.

  The training of personnel in customer care and service, as well as quality management, should be treated seriously. In addition staff must be identifiable by

wearing uniforms. A number of these problems could be solved with training and by exposing workers to conditions and services provided at other resorts.

- Sagole Spa is in the fortunate position and it cannot get worse. Most of the competitiveness attributes are non-existent. The owners of Sagole have the choice whether they want to re-establish the resort as a natural resource-based spa or not. If the former, they will have to give attention to all tourism destination competitiveness elements and implement these with immediate effect. Alternatively, the owners could decide to develop the resource for other uses such as aquaculture, agriculture, the establishment of a resource-based educational centre, or any that is appropriate. Detailed studies should be conducted to identify alternative uses of Sagole thermal spring.

The WTO (2004:226) suggests that smaller enterprises should work with others in the area to create tourism circuits and routes, each offering different attractions. This could only benefit all three resorts in this area.

8.4.2 Recommendations for further research

The following recommendations can be made for further research:

- Identify and evaluate alternative uses for Sagole
- Use the Competitiveness model to identify problems at other thermal spring resorts in South Africa so as to raise their level of success.

One of the most important findings of this study was that the application of the Lee and King (2006) model and the quantification of elements and attributes as developed in this research can be applied, not only to thermal spring resorts, but to any natural resource-based tourism venture. In this respect the study makes a significant contribution to environmental and tourism studies.

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Appendix A: Interview on thermal springs

Interviewer…….

Interviewee…….

Contact details……

Place of stay and for how long…….

Age……

Gender…….

Who are you in the community…….

1. Who discovered the hot spring?

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2. When and how was the spring discovered?

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3. What was the hot spring used for?

3.1.Social(e.g.domestic,agricultural)

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3.2. Myth and legends associated with the spring

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3.3. Religion and traditional believes associated with the spring

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4. Who and how was the spring developed into a spa?

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5. Why is the spa declining?

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6. What needs to be done to improve the hot spring?

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7. How do you feel about the decline of the Spa?

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8. To what do you attribute the decline?

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9. How did the other tourism destination (e.g. Spa) impacted the community?

Advantages

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Disadvantages

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10. How do you feel about the development of the Spa?

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11. What do you think the Spa can be used for?

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12. General Comments

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Appendix B: Manager Interview

Good day. My name is Ndiafhi Patrick Tuwani. I am conducting research on the success factors associated competitiveness of thermal springs: A case study of Limpopo thermal Springs. Your tourist venture forms part of this research project. I would appreciate your participation in this research. It will take approximately 20 minutes of your time.

VENTURE NAME:	

A: Accommodation and activities

1. How many beds in various categories, e.g. beds, camping, tents etc.?				
Beds in chalets:				
Tents:				
Camping sites:				
Caravan parks:				
Any other:				
2.When are the peak times?(Tick)				
	Easter Holidays:		*Any other days:*	
	December Holidays			
	Winter			

3. What activities are offered?				
4. What alternative offerings (e.g. festivals, conferences) do you have at the resort?				

B: Employment

1.Number of jobs (total)	
Full-time:	
Part-time:	
Full-time(Local):	

Part-time(Local):	
2. How do employees get to work?(Company Owned, Public transport, etc)	
3.Are employees receiving any tourism related training	
4. Other employment opportunities as a result of resort development?	

C: Visitors:

Are most of the visitors?

1.Local	
2.National	
3.International	

D: Local impact

1.What local services are available (health care, education, emergency services, fire, police, ambulance)	

2. Are products bought locally? What? Where?	
3. What other small businesses are supported by the resort?	
4.Are any complaints received from:	
Visitors(Specify)e.g. crime ,safety, hospitality:	
Local Residents(Specify)e.g. misbehaviour of tourists:	

Other	

E: Water

1. Does the resort have any water saving strategies (include behaviour change)	

Appendix C: Visitor questionnaire

Good day. My name is Ndiafhi Patrick Tuwani. I am conducting research on the success factors associated with competitiveness of thermal springs: A case study of Limpopo Province hot springs. The tourist venture you are presently visiting forms part of this research project. I would appreciate your participation in this research. It will take approximately 5 minutes of your time. The information you provide is anonymous and confidential.

A. Why did you visit resort?	
B. Where did you hear of resort?	
C. Is this your first visit? *If **Yes**, please proceed to question 6.*	*Yes* ☐ *No* ☐
*D. If **No**, when was you last here?*	
E. How many times have you previously visited resort (excluding this visit)?	
F. What activities did you attend or take part in?	
G. What is the length of your stay at resort?	

Please indicate with a tick (✓) in the appropriate block *0-None; 1-Very Poor ;5-Excellent*	***0***	***1***	***2***	***3***	***4***	***5***
Cultural attributes:						

1. (souvenirs and crafts) availability in the destination						
2.Special attractions or events near the resorts						
3. Cultural sites were accessible						
4. Cultural sites were well maintained						
Accommodation:						
5.Accomodation quality						
6.Accomodation quantity						
7.Caravan park						
8.Camping sites						
Cuisine:						
9.Variety of food						
10.Traditional delicacy(local cuisine)						
Transport:						
11. State of the roads made travel easy						
12. The state of the signage made travel easy						
13. Accessibility of public transport						
Health & Safety:						
14.Cleanliness of the resort						
15.Cleanliness of the resort facilities						
16.Clear display of hygiene and safety regulations in the resort						
17. Clear display of hygiene and safety regulations at facilities						
18.General safety in the resort(security at gates and around)						
19.The resort provided a good variety of experiences						
Community Attitude:						
20.Friendliness towards visitors						
Service Quality:						

21. The level of service provided was high						
22. Service staff was competent and helpful						
23. Cost of stay in the resort						
Facilities:						
24.Resort information accuracy as advertised						
25.Technology availability (internet, signal reception)						
26. Business services (conference centre, etc.)						
Natural Resources:						
27. Geographical location (in mountainous area, river, etc.)						
28.Ambiance or resort feel (wild life, green, quite)						

29. Do you have any other comments or complaints you would like to bring to the researcher's attention?

Please provide me with a few details on yourself

30. Nationality	
31. Gender	*32. Age*

Male	
Female	

<20		*40-49*	
20-29		*50-59*	
30-39		*60+*	

Thank you for your kind co-operation.

Appendix D: Staff interview

Good day. My name is Ndiafhi Patrick Tuwani. I am conducting research on the success factors associated competitiveness of thermal springs. The tourist venture you are employed by forms part of this research project. I would appreciate your participation in this research. It will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

The information you provide is anonymous and confidential.

1. What work do you do at the resort?	*2. When did you start working here?*
3. Did you receive any training/skills development to do this work? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*3.1 If yes, what training and by whom?*
4. Do you have a formal qualification? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*5. If **Yes** to question 4 please specify.*

What is your:

6. Gender?	*Male* ☐ *Female* ☐	*7. Age?*	*<20* ☐ *40-49* ☐ *20-29* ☐ *50-59* ☐ *30-39* ☐ *60+* ☐	*8. How many members in your household?*
9. How far is your home from the resort?		*10. How long have you been living there?*		*11. Where did you live before?*
12. Where do you live when you are working (on duty) at the resort			*13. How do you get from your home to the resort and back home?(transport medium)*	
14. Do you know of any complaints received			*15. If **Yes**, what do they complain*	

from local residents regarding the resort? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*about?*
16. Do you know of any complaints received from visitors? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*17. If **Yes**, what do they complain about?*
18. Do you have any other comments regarding the resort?	

Thank you for your participation.

Appendix E: Community interview

Good day. My name is Ndiafhi Patrick Tuwani. I am conducting research on the success factors associated with competitiveness of thermal springs in Sagole Spa, Tshipise and Mphephu Resort. I would appreciate your participation in this research. It will take approximately 10 minutes of your time. The information you provide is anonymous and confidential.

1. Is the establishment of the resort around the thermal spring good for the community? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*2. Provide reasons for your answer.*
3. *Do you personally benefit from resort?* ☐ Yes ☐ No	*4. Provide reasons for your answer.*
5. Does anyone else in your household benefit from resort? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*6. If **Yes**, how?*
7. Does the broader community benefit from resort? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*8. Provide reasons for your answer.*

Does the resort:

9. Create jobs for local people? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
10. Employ local youth and women? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
11. Increase or decrease the prices of local goods? ☐ Increase ☐ Decrease	
12. Help the community obtain infrastructure and services? (e.g. roads, schools, clinics)?	*13. Provide reasons for your answer.*

☐ Yes ☐ No	
14. Increase or decrease crime in the area?? ☐ Increase ☐ Decrease	*15. Why?*
16. Change the behaviour of the community (e.g. eat, drink, dress, buy, language, want?) ☐ Yes ☐ No	*17. Provide reasons for your answer.*
18. Activities damage or destroy the environment? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
19. Are there areas that people cannot access because of the resort? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
20. Are there more crafts and more cultural activities because of tourism? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*21. Please specify.*
22. Does the resort use the resources people need, such as firewood and water? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*23.If yes specify*
24. Does the community have control over the resort? ☐ Yes ☐ No	

25. Does the money spent by tourists remain in the community? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*26. If **No**, where does it go to?*
27. Can the local community visit/use the resort facility? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*28. Explain?*
29. Do community members receive any skills	*30.Specify:*

training through the resort? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
31. Is the community involved in conservation projects in the community? ☐ Yes ☐ No	
32. Do you want more or less tourism in your area? ☐ More ☐ Less	*33. Why?*
34. Is there anything that bothers you about the resort? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*35. Please specify.*
36. What can be done to make the resort better in your community?	

What is your:

37. Gender?	*Male* ☐ *Female* ☐	*38. Age?*	*<20* ☐	*40-49* ☐	
			20-29 ☐	*50-59* ☐	
			30-39 ☐	*60+* ☐	

39. How far is your home from the tourism venture?	*40. How long have you been living there?*	*41. Where did you live before?*

42. Do you know of any complaints received from local residents regarding resort? ☐ Yes ☐ No	*43. If **Yes**, what do they complain about?*
44. Do you have any other comments regarding the resort?	

Thank you for your participation