



*Zulu Kingdom. **Exceptional***

**Report on the Status Quo of
Community Tourism Information Offices
in KwaZulu-Natal**

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Executive Summary

The provision of information on a destination to tourists is a critical function and responsibility of any destination. In South Africa, this responsibility falls to a number of bodies, in differing degrees, and according to a range of legislation. The responsibility for the provision of national information largely falls to the national marketing and promotions body, South African Tourism (SAT), while the provision of province-specific information falls to the nine provincial Destination Management Organizations. In the case of KwaZulu-Natal, this would be Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN). However, there also exist a number of other information provision bodies.

An initiative of the National Department of Tourism (NDT) resulted in a small number of strategically placed Visitor Information Centers (VICs) which were opened in time for the South African hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2010. These offices were funded by the NDT and represent a very high standard in terms of construction, fitting, collateral and extra services such as internet cafes. At a provincial level, most district municipalities appear also to have opened local tourism information offices, supplying both staff and budgets.

At an even more local level, what used to be termed publicity associations developed into tourism information offices run by the communities they represent, referred to as Community Information Offices, or CTOs. However, it is between these two latter levels that some disjunctures and confusion appear to have arisen. A lack of comprehension surrounding the structure and function of community information offices has led, in many cases, to information offices falling under the control of a municipality. Where a municipality sees little value in tourism, a very small, or even no, budget is apportioned to run the offices. In some cases, municipal employees staff the offices, rather than trained, qualified and experienced information officers, leading to low standards of service. Furthermore, the distribution of CTOs, spatially, is such that most are found along the coast or along the main transportation artery between Durban and Johannesburg, the N3. Should a tourist find himself in the central Zululand or northernmost elephant Coast areas, for example, he would be hard put to locate a source of tourist information in the surrounds.

The purpose of this report was thus to investigate the status quo, in terms of a number of factors, of CTOs in the province of KwaZulu-Natal, and to provide recommendations for the improvement of the structure and function of CTOs in the province.

Distribution of CTOs or tourist information offices by district municipality throughout KZN:

District Municipality	Number of Info Offices
Ethekwini (Durban)	12
Ugu (S Coast)	10
Ilembe (N Coast)	2
Mgungundlovu (P mb)	8
Sisonke (S Berg), uThukela (N Berg)	8
Umzimyathi, Amajuba (Battlefields)	6
Zululand, uThungulu	11
Umkhanyakhude (Elephant Coast)	1

The number of CTOs and other information offices varies according to different databases and to criteria used to define these. However, in receiving a total of 26 responses, the level of error is extremely small and the representivity of the responses highly reliable. Furthermore, the report was written according to what was provided by the respondents. The results are thus not a generalization, but are based upon specific data.

A few associated issues need also to be raised. The responsibility for the accreditation of information offices, CTOs included, initially that of TKZN, now falls to the provincial department, as does the responsibility for ensuring that each is registered. The information offices of CTOs need thus to be accredited by the provincial department in order for them to operate legally, according the existing provincial legislation.

1. Introduction

Tourism or tourism-related information is in great demand by tourists and visitors to any area. Such people require all manner of information – maps, directions, suggestions, accommodation, entertainment, restaurants, beaches, transport, distances and so on, or basically anything which would help them to have an improved experience during their stay in the area. These types of tourist information are historically provided by tourist information offices, which largely provide information on the local and surrounding area. Such offices used to be called publicity associations and have gone through a number of transformations. Many of these are now known as Community Tourism Organizations (CTOs), but there also exist municipal tourist information offices, private information offices and gateway tourism information offices.

Community Tourism Organizations (CTOs) are **accredited** associations (see appendix 3 for the accreditation criteria) to which tourism businesses in the surrounding area belong, usually paying a membership fee, which provides the funding to run the association. The aims of the association are, in the main, to promote the area as a tourism destination, attracting larger numbers of tourists, and providing them not only with information on the area and the attractions and facilities it provides, but also with suggestions of experiences and activities to entice them to stay longer. They may well also produce their own marketing collateral in the form of brochures, maps, fliers or even CDs or flash drives. Some CTOs may also have websites as a means of promoting their areas more widely.

All CTOs are also required to be registered with the provincial tourism authority, Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN), through the DEDT, as per the existing provincial regulations. This registration is a mandatory requirement without which a CTO would be operating illegally.

CTOs usually fall under an umbrella body, or Community Tourism Association (CTA), which acts to promote the interests of all of the CTOs, as well as to provide them with information relating to policy, legislation, regulations or items of interest. The KwaZulu-Natal CTA has recently been reconstituted, having been fully functional for a significant amount of time, but recently become non-functional.

The information offices are found in all the major towns and in most of the minor town throughout the province in an effort to provide tourism information to tourists and other stakeholders, as and when required. The information provided is not only in hard copy format such as maps or brochures, but is also in the form of verbal advice and recommendations from information officers who man the offices, email and fax responses to queries, verbal responses to telephone queries and postal responses. It is this information which helps visitors and tourists to enjoy a better quality visit in the destination, as well as to select a particular destination or sub-destination to visit in the first place.

An initial 52 current, operational local community tourism information offices, CTOs or information offices (see Appendix 2) were identified at the outset of this study, scattered around the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Three of these belong to and are run directly by the provincial tourism marketing and promotions entity, TKZN, and are found in the main TKZN office building in Durban, at the uShaka Marine World theme park and at the King

Shaka International Airport. TKZN has two other tourism information offices, at the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town and in Sandton in Johannesburg, but, being outside the province, these are not part of this report.

The wide variety and number of other information offices throughout KZN, as well as the vast differences in skills, structure, funding and functioning have occasioned the need for a report on their nature and extent. This report provides an overview of these based on the responses to a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) sent to every CTO, as well as on both telephonic and face-to-face interviews conducted with as many CTO managers as possible in the time available.

2. Methodology

It was important to ascertain what the full situation was with regards to all of the tourist information offices throughout the province. In this regard, and at the outset, it was not even clear which information offices qualified as CTOs, which were simply municipal information offices, which provided tourism information, which were actually legal entities, which fell under national initiatives and so on.

A questionnaire was drafted with the aim of sending it out to all listed 'CTOs' in the province. Once it had gone through the usual checks required at TKZN, it was emailed out to every CTO on the database of CTOs at TKZN. It was immediately apparent that the list was incomplete as several of the email addresses did not work. In those cases, the entities were telephoned, the correct email address ascertained, and the questionnaire re-sent.

In several instances, however, the information officer at the office refused to fill in the questionnaire, and more than one responded that they were privately run and wanted nothing to do with the survey. Overall, it proved extremely difficult to obtain a full complement of information, with returns from every office.

After several weeks, the survey was again re-sent, in the hopes of receiving a great number of returns. In total, there were 26 returns received.

The responses were captured in an MSAccess database, and the results are reported upon in section 4.

3. Community Tourism Organizations in KwaZulu-Natal

According to the KZN regulations, all CTOs are required to be registered with the provincial tourism marketing body, TKZN, in order to operate legally. As of the time of this report, there were a total of 52 operational CTOs in KZN, including those run by TKZN. These were:

Table 1: CTOs / Information Offices in KZN

1. Amanzimtoti Tourism Association
2. Boston Bulwer Beat
3. Cato Manor Tourism
4. Dolphin Coast Tourism
5. Drakensberg Tourism Association
6. Durban West Community Tourism Organisation
7. Esikhawini Tourism Office
8. Explore EG – Kokstad
9. Ezingoleni Tourism Association
10. Greytown Tourism
11. Hibiscus Coast – Port Shepstone
12. Hibiscus Coast Tourism – Head office
13. Hibiscus Coast Tourism – Hibberdene
14. Hibiscus Coast Tourism – Margate
15. Hibiscus Coast Tourism – Port Edward
16. Hluhluwe Tourism Association
17. Jozini Tourism & Development Association
18. Kamberg Valley Tourism
19. Ladysmith Tourism (Emnambithi)
20. Major Adventures Information Centre
21. Melmoth Publicity
22. Midlands Meander Association
23. Montrose Travel Centre
24. Msinga Tourism Information (Tugela Ferry)
25. Nongoma Tourism tourism@nongoma.org.za
26. Nottingham Road Tourism
27. Okhahlamba / Drakensberg Tourism
28. Paulpietersburg Tourism
29. Pietermaritzburg Tourism
30. Pongola Information Office
31. Richmond KZN Tourism
32. Sangweni Tourism Centre
33. South Coast Tourism (Shelly Beach)
34. Southern Berg Escape
35. Southern Explorer
36. Southern Midlands Tourism Association
37. The Amble
38. Thousand Hills Tourism
39. Tourism Dundee
40. Tourism Durban

41. Tourism KwaZulu–Natal (head office in Durban Central)
42. Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (Airport)
43. Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (Ushaka Marine World)
44. Tourism Newcastle
45. Tourism Umdoni – Scottburgh
46. Umhlanga Tourism
47. Umhlathuze Tourism
48. Umlalazi Tourism – Eshowe & Mtunzini
49. Umtshezi Tourist Information (Estcourt)
50. Vryheid Information
51. Zululand Birding Route
52. Zululand Regional Tourism Office

It is sometimes easier to grasp the extent of these offices graphically. Their locations are thus plotted on the map below:

Figure 1: Map of KwaZulu-Natal tourism Information Offices / CTOs



● - CTO or Tourism Information Office

The orange 'dots' represent information offices. As is clear, there are many information offices along the coast, and on the N2 and N3, but far fewer towards the north eastern, north central and south central areas of the province. There are also often more than one office in some towns. Durban, for example, has 9 official CTOs.

As stated previously, it is also a provincial regulation that all CTOs are accredited by the provincial tourism, TKZN, in this case. This accreditation is an effort to assure that the basic minimum standards of information provision are met. The requirements of accreditation are found in Appendix 3.

What became very clear from the outset of this study, is that there has arisen substantial confusion as to what constitutes a CTO and how these should be funded and run. In some areas, the tourist information offices have actually been taken over and are run by the local municipality, in direct contravention to the actual purpose of a CTO. In other areas, funding for a CTO is obtained only in part from its members, and some funding comes from the local municipality. Some CTOs have closed their doors due to poor membership, and at least one CTO does not even have an office!

What follows here is an outline of the findings provided by a survey emailed out on several occasions over a period of time in an attempt to obtain the information required for this report.

4. Survey Results

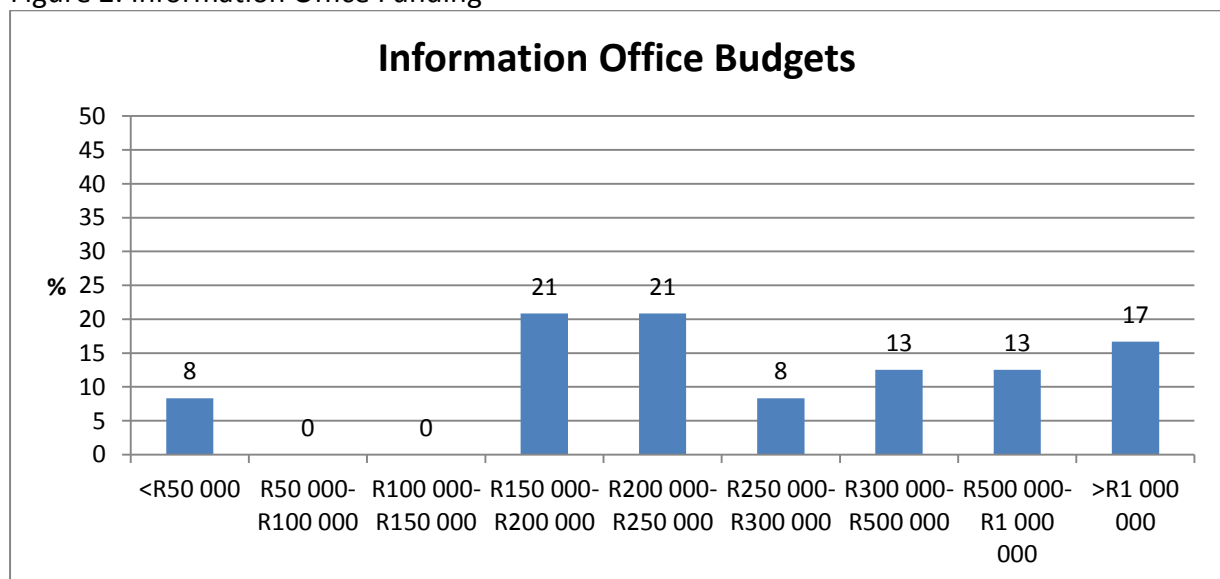
The questionnaire survey resulted in 26 responses out of a total of some 53 tourism information offices. The combined results of those responses are reported upon below.

4.1 Funding

There are a variety of different types of information offices, and not all of them are CTOs. In some instances, too, what are referred to as CTOs are in fact municipally-owned and run information offices, contrary to what the regulations state the case should be. The point of a CTO is that it has as its members tourism businesses in that particular area. The membership fees support the running of the office and the provision of information to tourists and visitors. Because the CTO promotes the area in which its members run their businesses, the membership is highly likely to support their CTO as it is to their specific advantage. Each CTO is thus also supposed to operate a tourist information office in order to help promote tourism and support the tourism businesses in that area.

Tourism information offices, then, usually depend upon membership fees from local tourism stakeholders for their survival. However, this is not the case with all of the information offices. Those under the auspices of TKZN are obviously funded out of the total TKZN grant from the provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism, the budget for the information offices forming part of the Tourism Information Services departmental budget. Other tourism information offices are funded similarly, such as those under the auspices of the municipal tourism structure, Durban Tourism. Some may also be 'gateway' tourism information offices, funded by the national Department of Tourism. The graph below depicts the breakdown with regards to how all of the information offices in KZN are funded (noting that the table is dependent upon the information received from the survey):

Figure 2: Information Office Funding

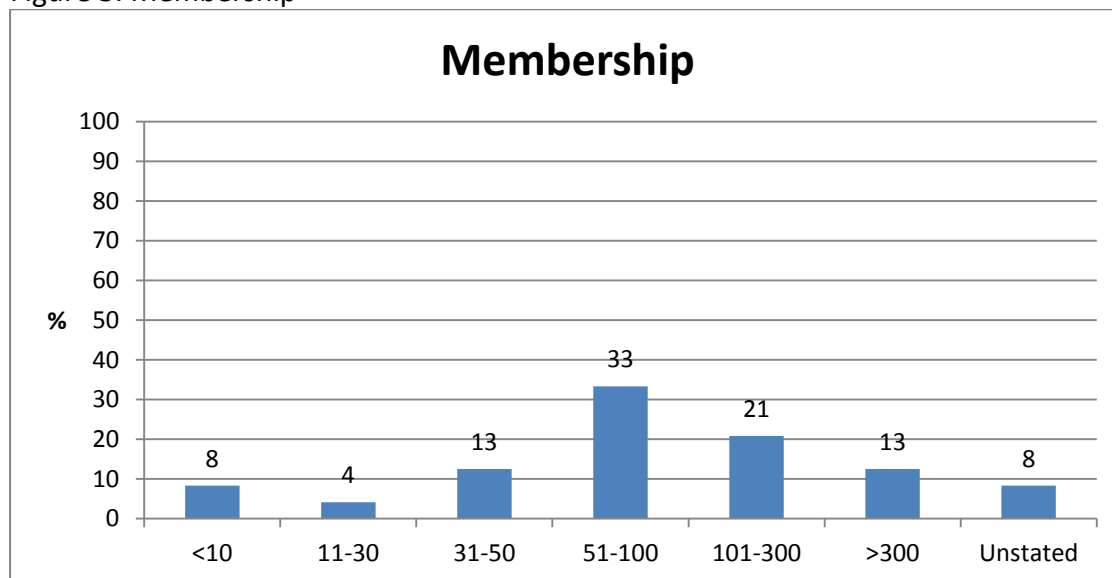


The average amount of the budget of the responses received Was R520 122 per year, but such an average hides a great deal of the picture. Over 50% of the total are expected to

function on less than R250 000 per year. This would have to include salaries and wages, stock, rental, operational costs and so on. While some offices worked with a budget of over R2 million, others had budgets which were decidedly too small to allow them to function at any sort of efficient level. That they were even functioning at all is a credit to their employees and managers who have obviously found alternative methods of allowing them to fulfil their aims. It is clear from this finding that funding of CTOs, and of all information offices, for that matter, is a major limiting factor in terms of them achieving their aims and objectives. This factor is directly linked to the skills levels of the staff they employ which again has an impact on their service levels and on the achievement of their aims.

The funding to run a CTO is ideally meant to come from membership fees from all of the tourism businesses in the surrounding areas. To this end, the information offices were asked how many members they had. In some instances it was clear that this question had been misinterpreted, but on the whole it was answered correctly. The results were as follows:

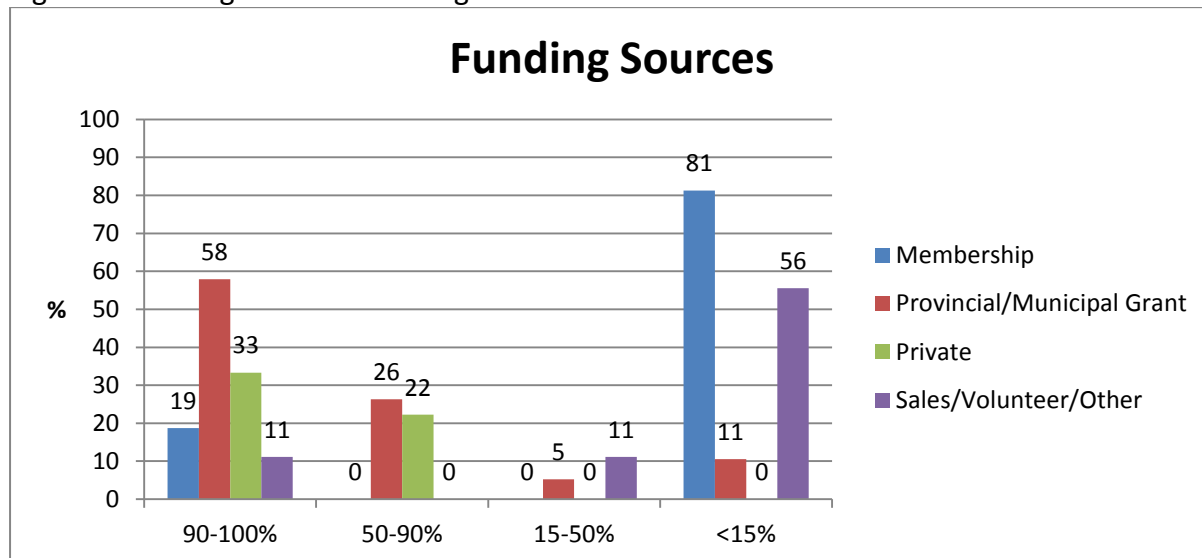
Figure 3: Membership



Almost 58% of the responding information offices had less than 100 members. As the funding for CTOs is ideally drawn, in the main, from membership fees, those CTOs with fewer than 100 members are likely to be facing funding difficulties.

It was also very clear that, as opposed to where CTO funding should originate from, many 'CTO' funds were actually municipal or local municipality grants, and did not arise out of membership fees at all. The extent of this situation is depicted in the graph below:

Figure 4: Funding Source Percentages



Although the ideal funding model for CTOs would be one in which 100% of the funds are supplied through membership fees, this is certainly far from the case in KZN. Here, less than 20% of the responding information offices received most of their funds from their membership. Conversely, over 80% received less than 15% of their funding from their membership. A great deal of the information office funding was obtained from provincial or municipal (ie governmental) grants, with some two thirds of the offices being funded in this manner. Again, this is far from ideal as it cannot be expected that an office funded from some or other governmental source would function as efficiently as one which, due to the source of funding, would work in such a way as to put the interest of its members first, and would seek to promote them and their products at every possible opportunity.

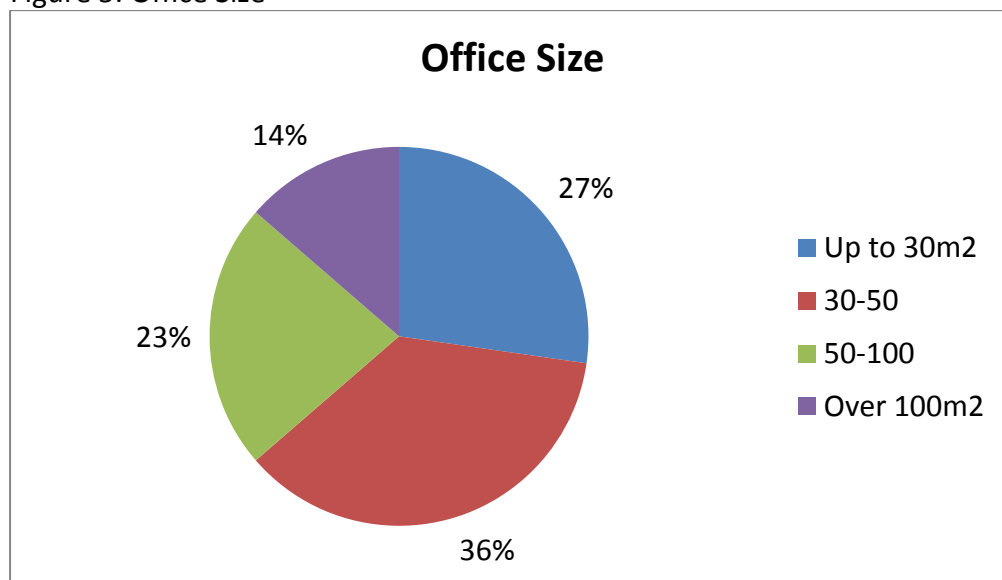
What was most interesting was to discover the amount of private funding provided as well as the innovative ways in which supplementary funding was raised, with anything from the renting out of part of the available space, to selling local goods including arts and crafts and undertaking fund-raising events. Funding though, or rather the lack of it, was most frequently at the heart of the information office woes. Lack of funds prevented the renting of adequate office space, the attraction and retention of suitably qualified and experienced staff, sufficient amounts of information, locational signage as well as a range of other necessities.

4.2 Structure and Function

The size of information offices varied greatly. It was enlightening to discover the variations in the sizes and amenities of tourism information offices. As regards the size available, the following information was obtained:

The average size of the information offices which responded to the survey was 92m². However, the offices ranged in size from 8m² to 500m². There was also one CTO which had no office, and another which noted that it only had or worked from a 'cyber office'. Some information offices also were small, stand-alone structures which served really solely to provide brochures and maps rather than any sort of in-depth tourist information or query response.

Figure 5: Office Size



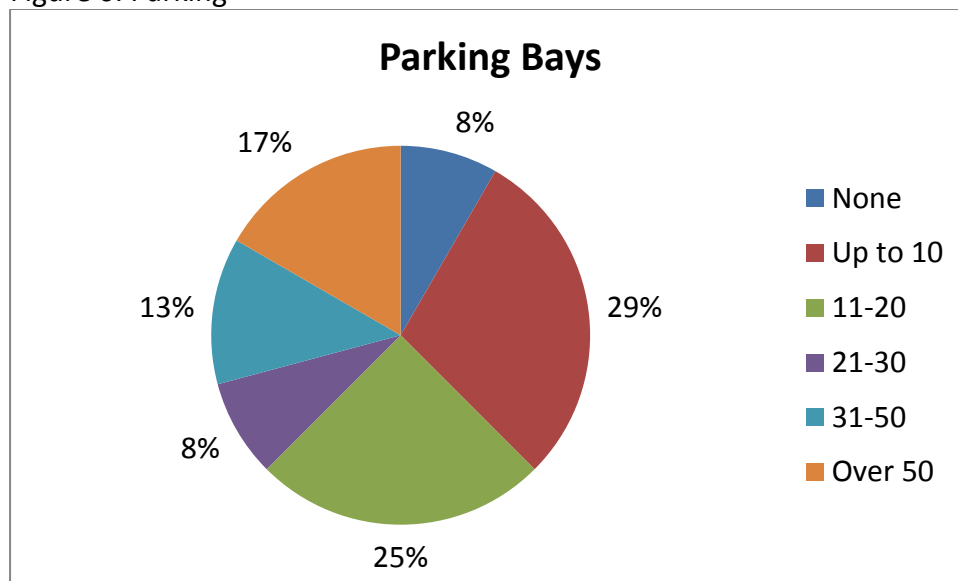
As is clear from the pie graph above, almost two-thirds of the responding offices functioned out of less than 50m² of space. Such space was required to house offices for managers, information desks for information officers dealing with tourists, brochure racks, ablution facilities in some cases, and even internet facilities for tourists in others, as well as stock rooms.

In terms of spatial requirements, information offices need, at the very least, well stocked brochure racks with a wide variety of up to date information on the area, on the surrounding or neighboring areas, and on other attractions further afield which could use the original area as a springboard from with to launch trips. Such information must include maps – of the local town/s, the tourism region, the province, and the country. The office needs also to be able to supply an up-to-date list of all accommodation in the area together with the prices structures, as well as of the restaurants and other food outlets, on top of a recommended list of tourism attractions in the immediate area, within a short walk, a short drive, an hour's drive and so on.

There needs to be space in the office for, at the least, limited seating for tourists, and wherever possible, access to the internet to enable tourists to make bookings on line, if not a full-on internet 'café'. There should also be washroom facilities adjacent to or near the information office, accessible by tourists.

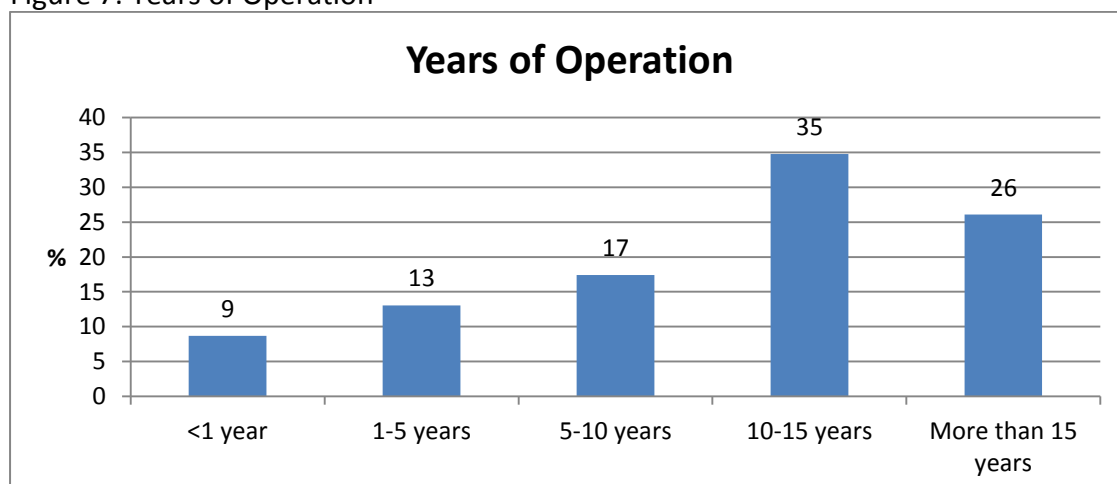
As information offices serve to provide information to tourists or visitors, they are required to provide access to those visitors. This means that there needs to be some sort of parking available, at the very least, despite many tourists who go about on foot in such towns, or make use of public transport. The ideal would be sufficient parking space including that for tour busses. The survey obtained the following information in this regard:

Figure 6: Parking



Two CTOs had no parking bays, as they had no offices. Several had an enormous number of bays but these were not for their exclusive use. Instead, they had the use of bays which were part of a shopping center in which or near which the information office was located. Such a situation is not ideal as, in all likelihood, the parking bays could be used by shoppers leaving none for the exclusive use of tourists.

Figure 7: Years of Operation



As concerns the years of operation, while some of the information offices have been open for decades, others are still in the early stages of their formation. The graph above indicates the length of operation of the information offices which responded to the questionnaire:

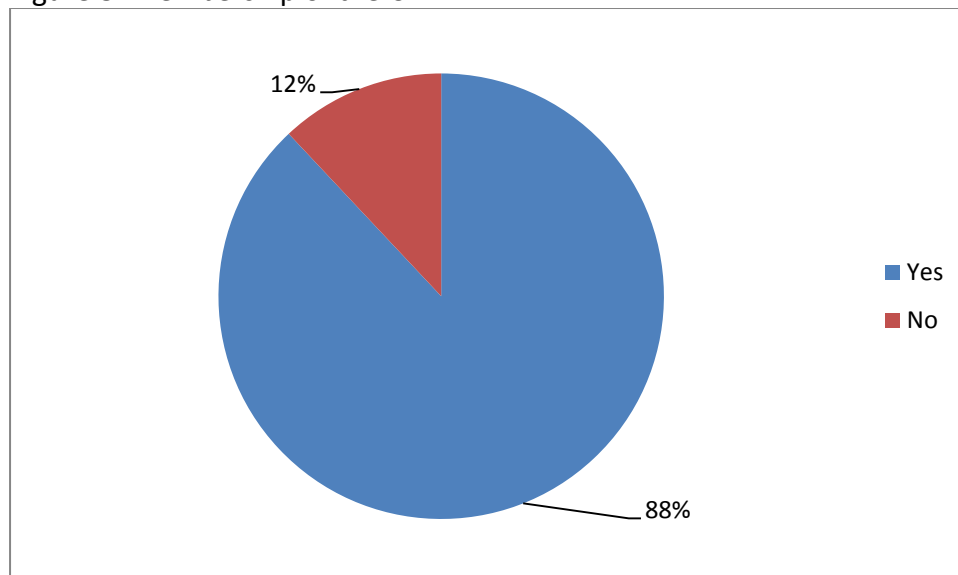
With the exception of one CTO which is still in the process of becoming registered and is thus not fully operational as yet, most of the responding information offices had been in operation for a substantial amount of time. In some instances, the employees did not even know when the office in which they worked had opened its doors as it had been operational for an extended period of time and there had been several total staff turnovers.

Historically, however, some of the information offices had previously been run by the national body, SATOUR, and when tourism and tourism information provision, was devolved down to a provincial level, many of those offices continued to operate, but then fell under the management of the provincial body.

One of the major findings of this study was that a substantial number of so-called CTOs were in fact run by local municipalities, somewhat defeating the objectives of a CTO. In some areas, all of the information offices were run by the local municipality and there were thus no CTOs in the area at all.

One of the questions dealt with whether or not the information office was a member of the Community Tourism Association, the umbrella body under which all CTOs fall.

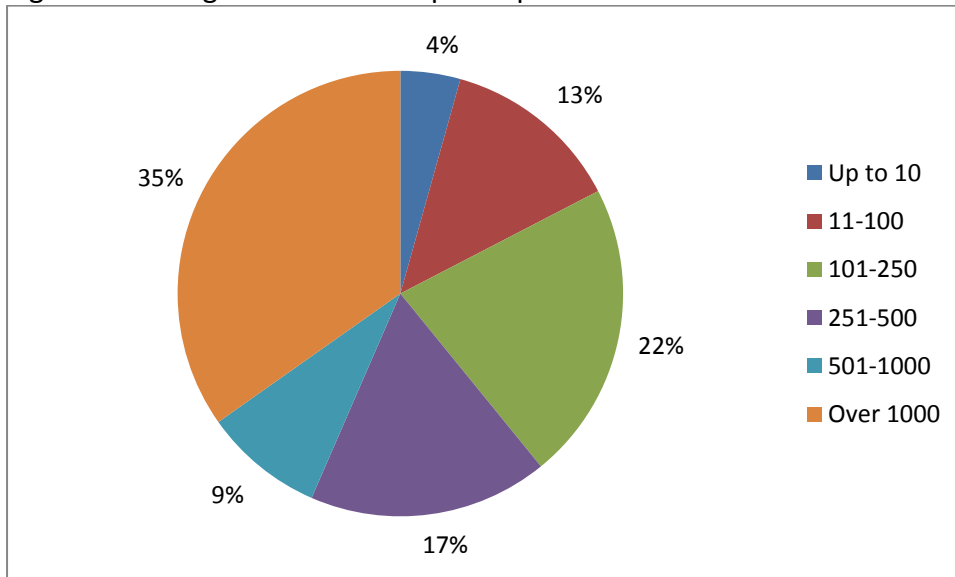
Figure 8: Membership of the CTA



It was quite clear that there was an understanding of the importance of belonging to the CTA as almost four fifths (88%) of the respondents belonged to the CTA. Membership of this body is very important as it is a conduit for up-to-date information, an important networking platform, a source of expertise and legal advice and the like. It was obvious from the responses that this was understood.

In order to understand the justification of the existence of an information office, it is important to assess the level of their operations. One of the ways to do this is to ascertain the total number of enquiries the office deals with per month. These enquiries could be by telephone, fax or email, or by people walking into the office. The figure below provides an indication of the number of enquiries dealt with by information offices in KZN:

Figure 9: Average Number of Enquiries per Month

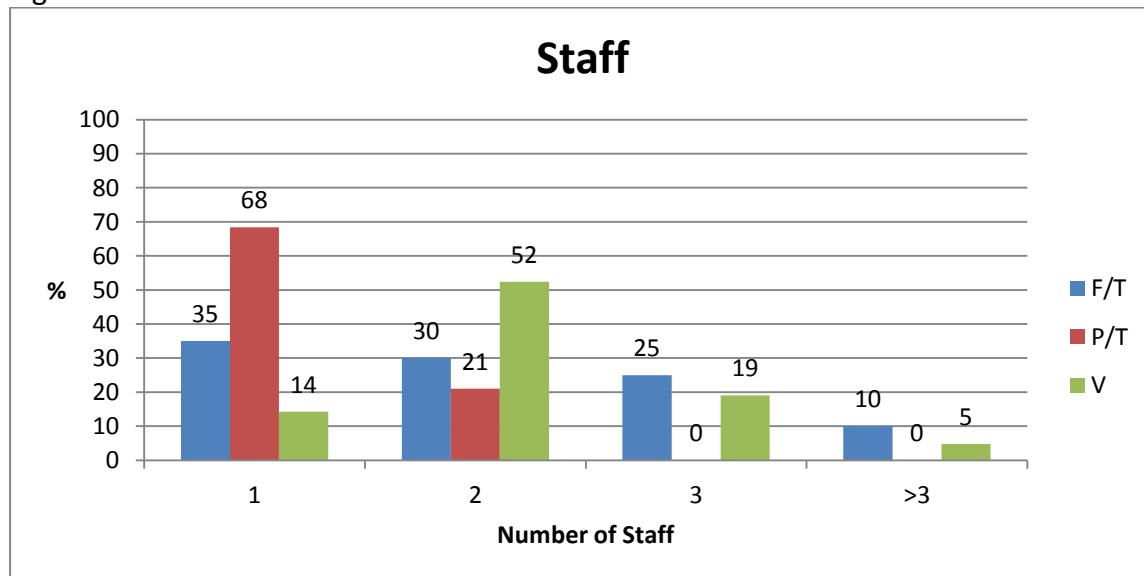


Over one third (35%) of the responses indicated that the office dealt with over 1 000 enquiries per month – or about 30 a day. For offices with essentially one full time staff member, this would put the resources under severe strain. Furthermore, a great deal in terms of service excellence would depend upon the level of response given, which would depend, in turn, upon the level of skills and the level of experience of the information officers responsible for the replies to the queries. This graph, then, needs to be considered in the light of the information on the qualification and experience of employees in the section which follows.

4.3. Employment Status

Information offices were staffed from anywhere from 1 to 7 people. The number of staff was dependent upon a range of factors, from funding availability, to space.

Figure 10: Number of Staff

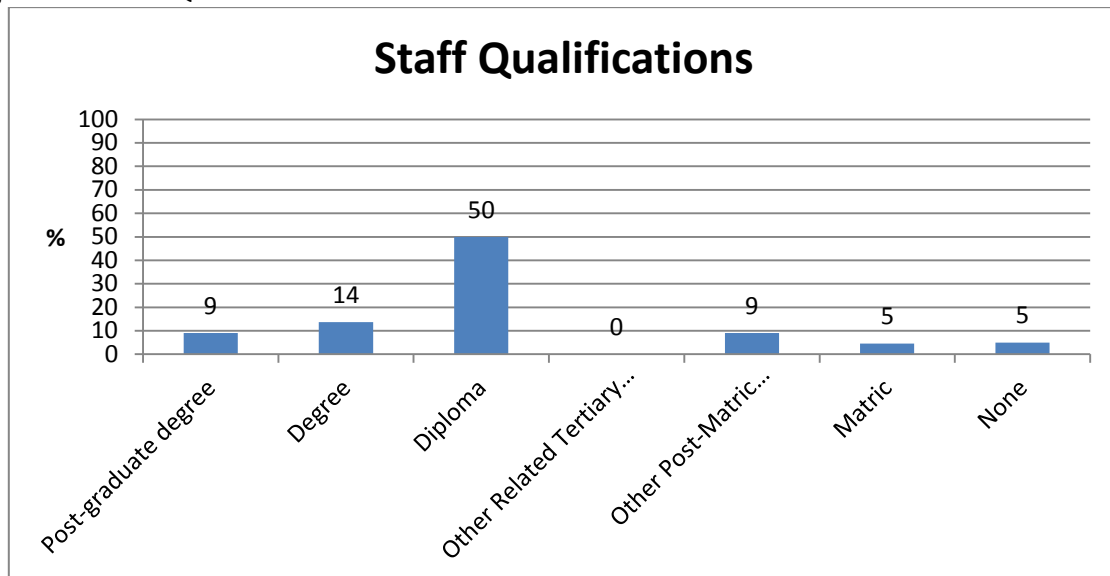


For the most part, information offices were staffed by only one or two people, with another one or two who worked on a volunteer or part time basis.

While having staff was obviously a critical aspect of the functioning of an information office, even more critical was the level of skills on offer. Once again, there was no standard result, and employees' skills ranged from tertiary degrees to barely a Matric, from considerable levels of tourism education, to none at all. Not all of the CTOs or even information offices were found to be staffed by qualified or even experienced personnel. Again, the lack of trained, skilled, tourism personnel, combined with the dearth of service-oriented attitudes, has led to very poor service levels overall.

The survey tested for both qualifications and years of experience and there were vast differences in both areas amongst the information offices.

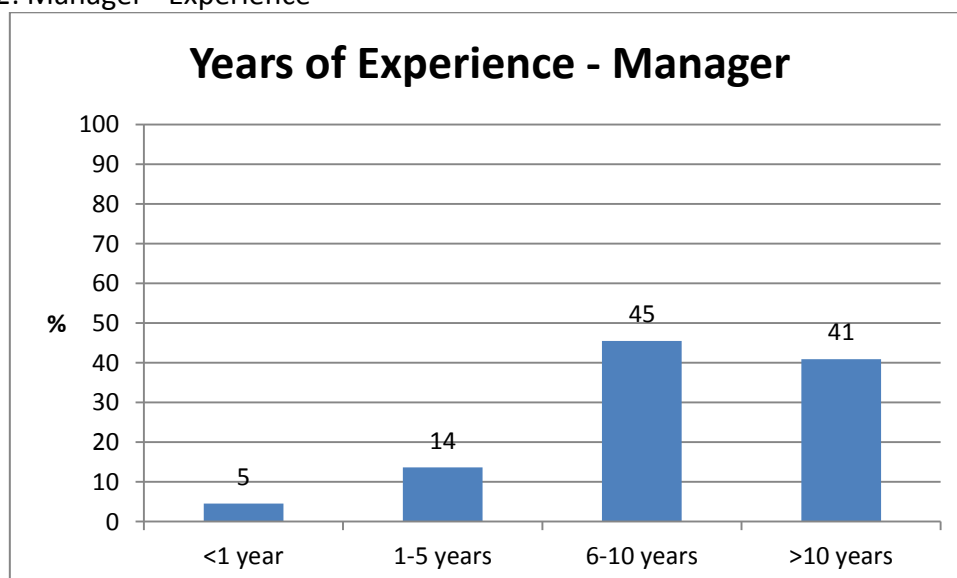
Figure 11: Staff Qualifications



As is clear from the graph above, almost three quarters of the managers of information offices had a tertiary education qualification. These ranged from BSc Honors degrees, to MBAs and National Diplomas in Tourism or Tourism Management. What was somewhat disturbing was that the almost 20% who had an unrelated post-matric qualification, only a matric, or no qualifications whatsoever, and were yet running an information office.

What was also important, and possibly at least as important as the qualifications held by an information office manager, was the amount of experience an information office manager had.

Figure 12: Manager - Experience

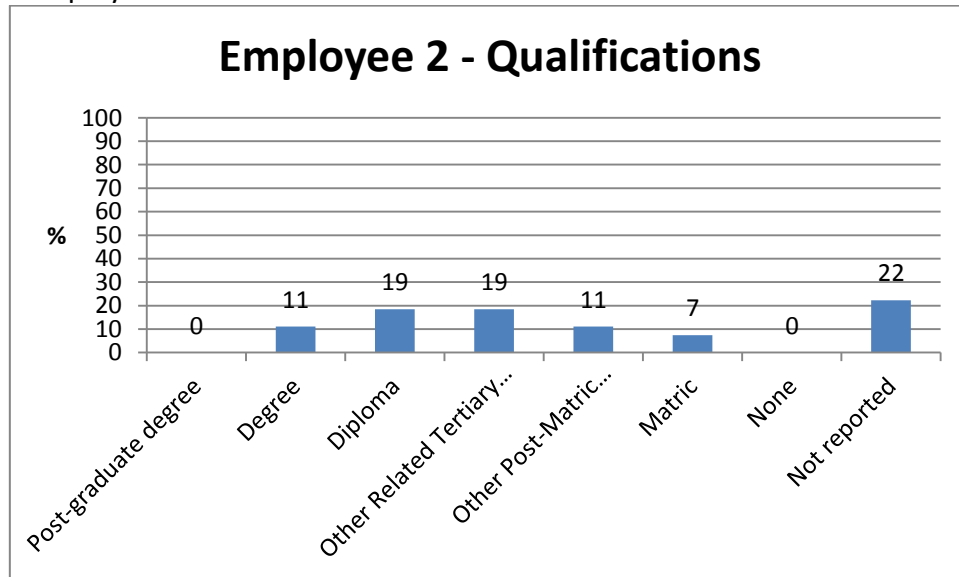


It was found that some 86% of the managers of the information offices in this survey had more than 6 years of experience. At least 5 years of experience is required in order to equip

a manager in such an office with the required experience to enable them to deal with the range of queries and information responses needed by tourists.

It was not only the information office managers who had qualifications and experience in the tourism sector.

Figure 13: Employee 2 - Qualifications



It was very clear that the level of education decreased as soon as information office employees other than the manager of the office were considered. It was a similar situation as regards the years of experience amongst non-managerial staff, as is indicated in the graph below.

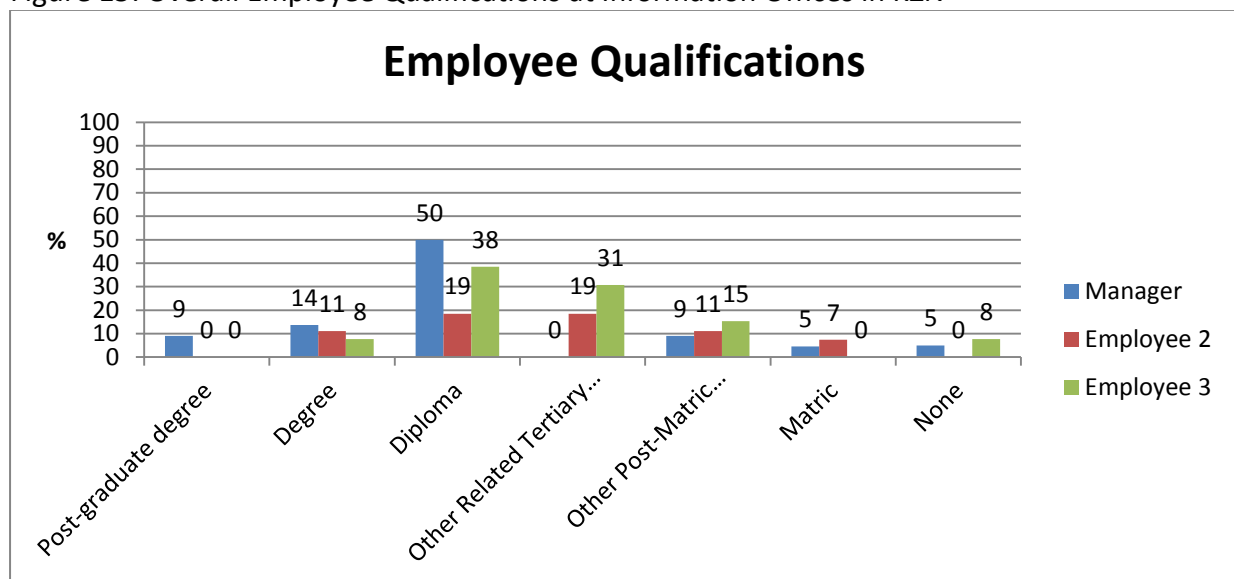
Figure 14: Employee 2 - Experience



It was clear from the graph above that the levels of experience dropped, somewhat dramatically, as other information office staff members were considered. If Employees 3 onwards are considered, the trend of lower or no qualifications continues, as does the decrease in the levels of experience. It is noted that many of these responded they were 'tourism ambassadors', which indicates that they actually have barely rudimentary training in tourism, if any at all, and extremely low levels of experience.

Overall, in looking at the first three listed employees, in terms of qualifications, the picture was thus:

Figure 15: Overall Employee Qualifications at Information Offices in KZN



Some 73% of the managers of the information offices, in terms of this survey, had some measure of tertiary tourism qualification, although most of these were diplomas of one sort or another, rather than degrees. In considering the qualifications of other staff, the level of qualification dropped rapidly. Again, the consequences of unqualified staff manning information offices and being expected to give tourists what they require, are severely negative. The picture is largely the same when it comes to the experience of those staff the information offices where, in some cases, staff did not even have 6 months of experience, nor did they have any tourism qualifications. The impact on the quality of information such staff members provide can only be imagined.

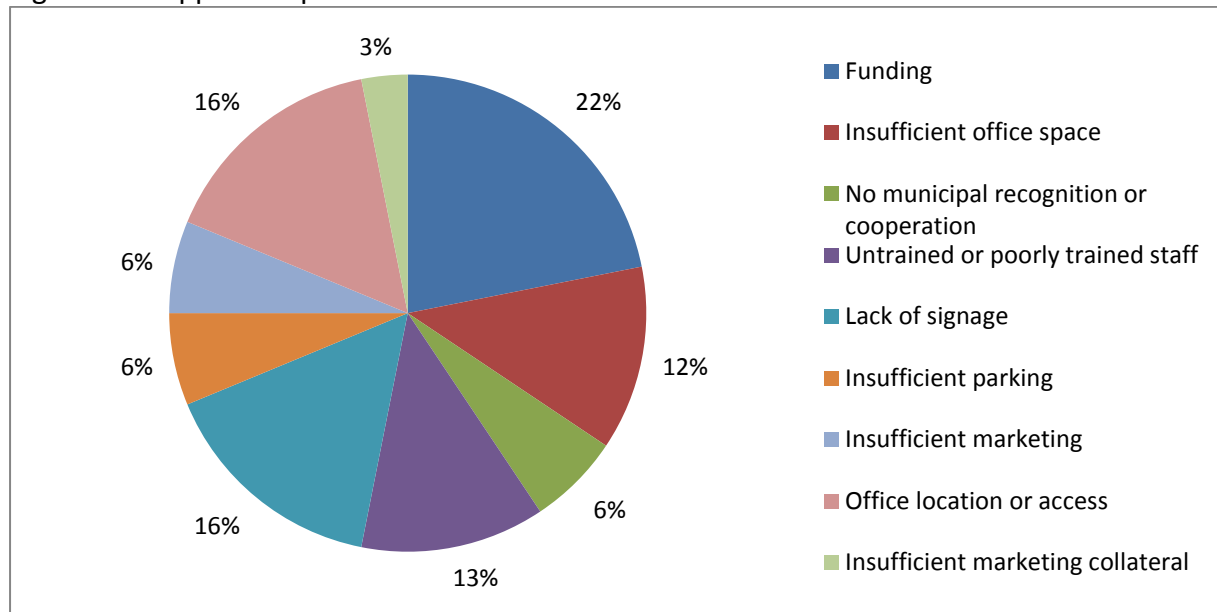
Each information office is unique in terms of its overall level of activity, and this is in terms of both the number of enquiries and the depth of their complexity. For example, it is likely that an information office on a national road such as the one at Montrose, is likely to receive a very high level of enquiries, but these are also likely to be fairly superficial in nature, requiring perhaps only a brochure, or a set of directions. Information offices in a town, however, are more likely to receive queries which require specialist knowledge such as that of the history of the area, of the geography of the surrounds and first-hand experience of the attractions for the purposes of explanation.

This issue is referred to again later in this report in connection both with funding and with capacity constraints.

4.4. Support Requirements

Many of the respondents noted a range of support requirements. All of the support requirements mentioned were collected and collated, and the results are shown in the graph below:

Figure 16: Support Requirements



Most of the respondents mentioned more than one area for which they required support. Furthermore, each of the mentions had a number of aspects. The most mentions were made regarding funding – or rather, the lack of it. It was pointed out that there was a serious need for funding for a number reasons. These included the expansion of premises, staff training, stocking of the information offices, parking area tarring, access upgrading and directional and information signage erection.

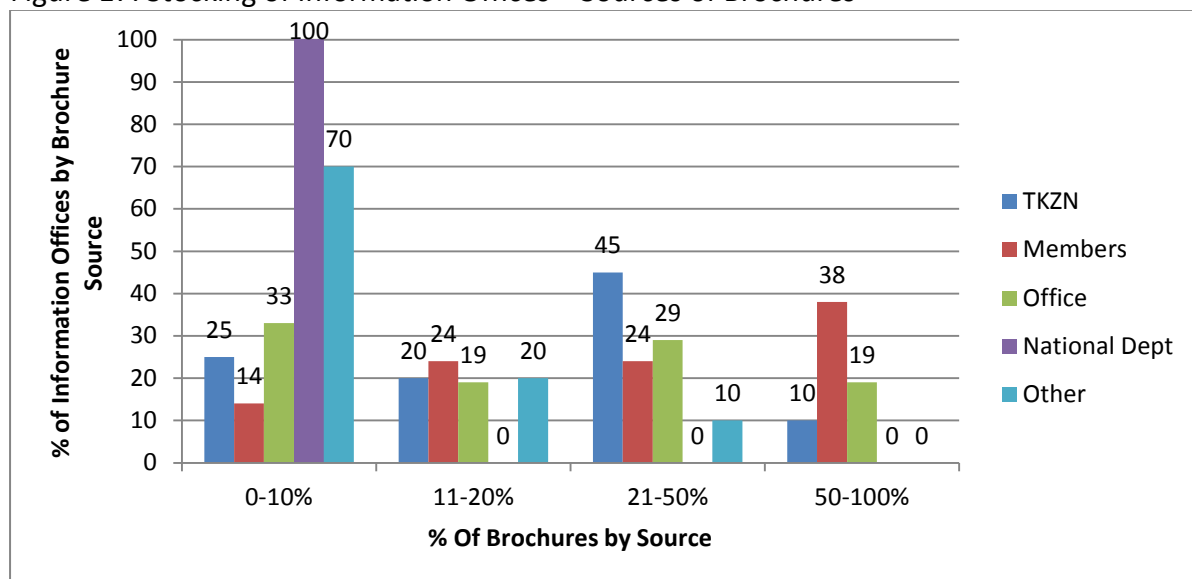
The next two areas for which support was needed were noted as being the lack of signage, and the office’s location or access to it. These two are fundamental to the success of any information office. Tourists need to know where an office is located, and they also need to be able to gain access to it very easily. If a tourism information office is located elsewhere other than in a tourism precinct, or is located in a less savory part of town, it is obviously not going to fulfil the function for which it was established.

The issue of having a sufficient number of staff is a poor second to having adequately trained and appropriately skilled staff with the right attitude to welcome tourists into their information office and provide them with the information they require. This issue relates also to that of insufficient funding as well as to inadequately trained personnel, which was discussed earlier in the section (4.3) which dealt with the qualifications of staff.

4.5 Stock Issues

The stocking of information offices can easily be almost as important as the human resources available. An information office without the requisite information available is worth very little. Marketing collateral, information brochures, maps and the like originate from a variety of sources. So, how much is supplied, and by whom? Respondents were asked how their information offices were stocked, or where their stock came from, and the results of that question are indicated below:

Figure 17: Stocking of Information Offices – Sources of Brochures



The chart above indicates that by far the majority of the brochures and other marketing collateral originates from the members themselves, the information office, and from TKZN. For example, 38% of the information offices received over 50% of their information from their members, directly. In only one instance did the national department contribute all of the material. Included in 'Other' were both the company, 'Brochure Management', and KZN Wildlife, which contributed brochures and magazines to several of the information offices.

It is extremely important that the members of a CTO develop their own marketing collateral and supply it for distribution to a central point such as their own information office.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

It is quite clear from the responses that the situation regarding offices providing tourist information needs serious attention and improvement. If KZN is to provide the visitor with the best possible information service, the standards overall of tourism information offices throughout the province need urgent attention. It must also be clearly understood that the responsibility for the status and state of information offices around the province is overall that of the DEDT, and of the municipalities in which each information office or CTO falls.

There are a number of suggestions and recommendations emanating out of the survey which was done, and out of the summaries of these which have been integrated into this report.

- An overall assessment needs to be done in each municipality, by the tourism manager in that municipality, to ascertain the **overall tourism requirements** and thus the number of information offices which are required in the area, usually with at least one per local municipality. However, municipalities should not attempt to dictate in this regard, but rather enquire as to the needs of the tourists and seek a way to help meet these needs. CTOs which already exist require support from their local municipalities.
- Once that has been done, an assessment needs to be done in each area where an information office exists to **ascertain the amount of adequate office and/or parking space required** for that office to function optimally, ie of the appropriate and adequate physical space required.
- There needs to be a **set of basic minimum requirements in terms of the qualifications and experience necessary for employees in information offices** throughout KZN. The finding that several of the information officer managers had no qualifications whatsoever, in tourism or otherwise, and a few had only a matric, provides an inkling as to the reasons for service levels in these information offices being very low. While it may well be acceptable for a volunteer or an intern in such offices to have minimal qualifications, the same is not true for the managers of such offices, or for that matter, any front line staff member who deals directly with the public. In-service training is also vital, particularly in terms of improving service levels, and courses such as the S A Host one, are most useful in this regard. Constant monitoring and management of staff, particularly new staff, so as to ensure the development of a culture of service, is vital in the achievement of the aims of an information office.
- For a CTO to fulfil its aims, **it needs to function according to its structure**. A CTO is ideally an entity which has as its members all of the tourism or tourism-related businesses in its surrounding area or immediate vicinity, and its aims are to market and promote the businesses of those members as well as the immediate area for the purposes of increased tourism. Again, for those same reasons, there cannot be more than one CTO in any particular location.

- The formal structure requires a constitution, a management committee with a president, treasurer and so on, and it needs to be registered with the provincial department in order to function legally. By virtue of its nature it cannot be run by a municipality, as it would then not constitute a **community** tourism organization. The survey found there to be several different varieties of tourism information offices, very few of which were actually CTOs. In some areas, such as the South Coast, almost all, if not every single information office is actually funded, staffed and run by the municipality. In other areas, such as the Elephant Coast, there are very few CTOs at all.
- While it is commendable that certain municipalities provide funding for information offices, and partial municipal funding for information offices should be encouraged, this is not ideal in terms of the structure, nature and functioning of such offices. Rather, the majority of the **funding should emanate from the members of the CTO** whose interests it should serve. Again, such a structure is suitable because its members ensure that it serves their interests and supports their businesses, as their membership fees enable the information office to function.
- All information offices need to be **accredited** by the provincial tourism authority, as per the regulations (in appendix 3).
- The results of the study showed that over one third of the information offices dealt with some 1 000 enquiries per month. Around 60% dealt with over 250 enquiries every month. While the need for tourist information is abundantly clear, the supply of adequate, informed information is far less so. **Service excellence** is dependent upon the supply of correct, adequate, informed and up-to-date tourist information from information offices. This is critically dependent, then, upon the level of **qualified, skilled and experienced tourism information office staff**.
- Brochure and other **marketing collateral supplies should be provided largely by members** as they are the ones any CTO should be supporting and promoting. However, it appears that there are vast differences in how information offices are stocked with material. In some instances the entire stock is supplied by the national or provincial departments of tourism. While such supplies should be available as generic materials such as regional maps, the vast majority of the supplies need to be supplied by the office itself, on behalf of its members (such as the Midlands Meander brochure or the Southern Explorer), or by the members, of their own businesses, themselves.

Appendix 1 – CTO Questionnaire



Zulu Kingdom. *Exceptional*

KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Information Office Survey

Date: September 2012	Office Name:
Form:	

Dear Tourism Colleague – Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is undertaking a survey of all tourism information offices in the province in order to understand their nature and extent, their function and their need for support. In this regard, we would be very grateful if you could take some time to fill in this short questionnaire, and send it back to the TKZN Research manager, Karen Kohler, on Karen@zulu.org.za, or fax it through to her on 031 305 1438. Please note that this information will remain completely **confidential** and will only be used in a **combined** format in a report. Thank you very much!

-oOo-

1. What is the full name of your information office? _____

2. In what city or town is it located? _____

3. What year was it opened for operations? _____

4. How many staff are employed? _____ Full time; _____ Part time; _____ Volunteers

5. Please give a breakdown of the qualifications and years of experience/employment in this office of each employee including the manager/MD:

Employee 1: Qualifications _____ Years of experience _____
(MD/manager/CEO)

Employee 2: Qualifications _____ Years of experience _____

Employee 3: Qualifications _____ Years of experience _____

Employee 4: Qualifications _____ Years of experience _____

Employee 4: Qualifications _____ Years of experience _____

Employee 5: Qualifications _____ Years of experience _____
(for more employees, please use a new sheet, or fill in at the end of this questionnaire)

6. How big is the total office space at your disposal? _____ square meters; _____ number of parking bays

7. What is the total information office budget for the most recent year? R _____

8. How is this money obtained? _____% Membership fees; _____% Municipal grant; _____% Provincial grant; _____% Privately funded; _____% Other (Explain _____)

9. How many members does this CTO have (where relevant)? _____

10. How many enquiries does the office deal with in total in a month / year (please provide an estimate if exact number not recorded)? _____ monthly; _____ in a year.

11. What percentage of your enquiries come from: _____% local people in the area; _____% South Africans; _____% people from surrounding countries; _____% people from overseas countries.

12. What are the most critical challenges facing this information office? _____

13. How is this office stocked with information – please provide a percentage of your total collateral – brochures, fliers etc?

a. _____% supplied by TKZN

b. _____% supplied by members

c. _____% supplied by the office itself

d. _____% supplied by the national department

e. _____% other (explain _____)

14. What **three** things would enable you to provide a better service to visitors and tourists (please rate by putting 1 – Most important, 2 – Second most important, 3 – Third most important):

a. _____ More staff training

b. _____ More members

c. _____ More funding made available from national, provincial or municipal departments

d. _____ Increased office space

e. _____ Increased signage

f. _____ Better quality marketing collateral

g. _____ Increased variety of marketing collateral

h. _____ Too many information offices in this immediate area

i. _____ Other (explain _____)

15. Is this office a member of the KZN CTA? _____ Yes; _____ No.

-oOo-

Thank you very much for your time and your input. We hope that the final report will result in a way forward to improve the KwaZulu-Natal tourism information service.

If you have any queries regarding this survey, kindly contact the TZKN Research Manager, Karen Kohler, on telephone 031 366 7550, fax 031 305 1438, or email Karen@zulu.org.za.

Appendix 2 – List of CTOs and Contact Details, August 2012

Tourist Information Offices			
Name	Contact Person1	Postal Address	Tourism Region
1. Cato Manor Tourism	Buhle Gumede	P.O. Box 680, Durban, 4000	Durban Metro
2. Central Drakensberg Information	Magda	P.O. Box 203, Winterton, 3340	Drakensberg
3. Danhauser Tourism Office	Philani Ndlovu	P / Bag X 1011, Dannhauser, 3080	Battlefields
4. Dolphin Coast Publicity Association	Chantal Pillay	P.O. Box 534, Ballito, 4420	North Coast
5. Durban Tourism	Patrick Masinga	P. O. Box 1044, Durban, 4000	Durban Metro
6. Durban West Community Tourism Organisation	Barry Livsey	P. O. Box 1261, Wandsbeck, 3630	Durban Metro
7. East Griqualand Outdoors Info Centre	Lesley Emmerson - Scheel	P. O. Box 78, Swartberg, 4710	Drakensberg
8. Elephant Coast Tourism Office	Phillip Liebenberg	P.O. Box 399, Hluhluwe, 3960	Elephant Coast (Maputaland)
9. Endumeni Tourism (Dundee)	Decima Jones	Private Bag X2024, Dundee, 3000	Battlefields
10. Esikhaleni Senkosi Tourism Association	Sihle Mkhwanazi	P.O. Box 266, Esikhaweni, 3887	Zululand
11. Esikhawini Tourism Office	Johnson Nxumalo	P.O. Box 1427, Esikhawini, 3887	Zululand
12. Explore EG	Tracey Greyling	P.O. Box 27, Kokstad, 4700,	Drakensberg
13. Eziqoloni Tourism Association	Skhmbuzo Madlala	P.O. Box 575, Port Shepstone, 4240	South Coast
14. Greytown Community Tourism Organisation	Savy Rutunanan	P.O. Box 71, Greytown, 3250	Pietermaritzburg & Midlands
15. Hlanganani Tourism Association	MSipho Msweli	Khula Info Office, Khula Village , St Lucia, 3936	Elephant Coast (Maputaland)
16. Kamberg Valley Tourism	Brian Bode	P.O. Box 154, Rosetta, 3300	Pietermaritzburg & Midlands
17. Ladysmith (Emnambithi) Tourism	Zanele Ntshingela	P.O Box 29, Ladysmith, 3370	Battlefields
18. Midlands Meander Association	Catherine van Rooyen	P.O. Box 874, Howick, 3290	Pietermaritzburg & Midlands
19. Mkuze Information Centre	Bobby Mavimbela	P. O. Box 401, Mkuze, 3965	Elephant Coast (Maputaland)
20. Montrose Travel Centre	David Eric Short	P.O.Box 880, Harrismith, 9880	Drakensberg
21. Nongoma Community Tourism Association	Princess Bongwiwe Zulu	P O Box 117, Nongoma, 3950	Zululand
22. Nottingham Road Tourism & Information Centre	Collin Clay-Smith	P. O. Box 303, Nottingham Road, 3280	Pietermaritzburg & Midlands
23. Okhahlamba / Drakensberg Tourism	Pretty Ngcobo	P. O. Box 325, Bergville, 3350	Drakensberg
24. Paulpietersburg Tourism	Nomsa Shabangu	P.O. Box 308, Paulpietersburg, 3180	Zululand
25. Pietermaritzburg Tourism	Nhlaka Mdunge	P.O.Box 25, Pietermaritzburg, 3200	Pietermaritzburg & Midlands

26. Pongola Information Bureau	Senzo Kunene	P.O. Box 191, Pongola, 3170	Zululand
27. Richmond KZN Tourism	Colin Woodhead	P.O. Box 15, Richmond , 3780	Pietermaritzburg & Midlands
28. Rosetta Tourism	Patricia Taylor (Trish)	P O Box 27, Rosetta, 3301	Pietermaritzburg & Midlands
29. Sangweni Tourism Centre	Cheryl/Chantel	P.O. Box 534, Ballito, 4420	North Coast
30. Sapphire Coast Tourism - Amanzimtoti	Sbu Mngoma	P.O. Box 471, Amanzimtoti, 4125	Durban Metro
31. South Coast Tourism - Margate	Sheree Korb	P.O. Box 1253, Margate, 4275	South Coast
32. South Coast Tourism - Port Edward	Mthoko Zondi	P.O. Box 50212, Port Edward, 4295	South Coast
33. South Coast Tourism - Shelly Centre	Mrs J M Sparg	P.O. Box 570, Port Shepstone, 4240	South Coast
34. South Coast Tourism - Umdoni	Siyabonga Nxumalo	P.O. Box 570, Port Shepstone, 4240	South Coast
35. South Coast Tourism - Head Office	Vanessa Gounden	P.O. Box 570, Port Shepstone, 4240	South Coast
36. South Coast Tourism - Hibberdene	Sicelo Richard Doyisa	P. O. Box 570, Port Shepstone, 4240	South Coast
37. South Coast Tourism - Port Shepstone	Nwabisa Jali	P.O. Box 570, Port Shepstone, 4240	South Coast
38. South Coast Tourism- Southbroom	Nandipa Conjwa	P O Box 1253, Margate, 4275	South Coast
39. Southern Drakensberg CTO	Michael Dlamini	P.O. Box 300, Underberg, 3257	Drakensberg
40. Southern Midlands Tourism Association	Glynnis Shewan	P.O. Box 27, Highflats, 3306,	Pietermaritzburg & Midlands
41. Thousand Hills Tourism	Thulani Zungu	P.O. Box 72, Bothas Hill, 3660	Durban Metro
42. TKZN - Airport Office	Hilda Potgieter	P.O. Box 2516, Durban, 4000	Durban Metro
43. TKZN - Tourist Junction	Hilda Potgieter	P.O. Box 2516, Durban, 4000	Durban Metro
44. TKZN - Ushaka Marine World	Hilda Potgieter	P.O. Box 2516, Durban, 4000	Durban Metro
45. Tourism Newcastle	Sbonelo Ndimande	P.O. Box 2220, Newcastle, 2940	Battlefields
46. Tourism Umdoni Coast & Country Publicity	Syabonga Nxumalo	P O Box 81, Scottburgh, 4180	South Coast
47. Ulundi Tourism	Thulani Ntenga	P / Bag X 17, Ulundi, 3838	Zululand
48. Umhlanga Tourism Information Centre	Nonhlahla Shazi	P.O. Box 1240, Umhlanga Rocks, 4320	Durban Metro
49. Umhlathuze Tourism Association	Sipho Mchunu	P. O. Box 102500, Meerensee , 3901	Zululand
50. Umlalazi Tourism Eshowe & Mtunzini	Ronel Hulley	P.O. Box 37, Eshowe, 3815	Zululand
51. Umtshezi Tourist Information Bureau (Estcourt)	Mrs. R Bedesi	P.O. Box 15, Estcourt, 3310	Battlefields
52. Vryheid Tourism (Abaqulusi Local Council)	Alet Swanepoel	P.O. Box 57, Vryheid, 3100	Zululand
53. Zululand Regional Tourism Office	Anushka Makka	Private Bag X1025, Richards Bay, 3900	Zululand
54. Zululand Tourism Office	Gustarv Rohrs	P/ Bag X 76, Ulundi, 3838	Zululand

POLICY FOR THE ACCREDITATION OF KWAZULU-NATAL'S TOURISM INFORMATION OFFICES

1. Introduction

The South African Tourism has devolved its responsibility of accrediting tourism information offices to the provinces. As a result the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority, through its Information Advisory Committee, embarked on a process of developing an accreditation policy for tourism information offices in this province.

2. Accreditation Criteria

After an extensive process of consultation with the Regional Councils and Community Tourism Offices in the province, it has been agreed that Community Tourism Organisations will need to meet a basic set of standards in order to be accredited by the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority. These criteria have been endorsed by the Association of Community Tourism Offices in South Africa.

i. Visibility

The Tourism Information Officer must:

- ensure that there are official road signs in place to direct tourists to their office;
- have an official 'i' sign;
- be in a location which is highly visible and accessible to the public.

ii. Accessibility

The Tourism Information Office must:

- be open at least five mornings a week;
- have an illuminated information board in order to provide 24 hour tourism information;
- have a telephone and fax machine;

It is recommended that the Tourism Information Office:

- should have an e-mail address and a website;
- be open 5 and-a-half days a week.

iii. Information

The Tourism Information Officer must be able to timeously and accurately provide:

- Extensive local tourism information;
- Generic regional tourism information;
- Generic provincial tourism information.

It is recommended that the Tourism Information Office should be able to provide national tourism information, and assist in maintaining the provincial tourism asset database.

iv. Staff

The staff of a tourism information office must:

- have extensive and specialised local knowledge.

It is recommended that staff are:

- multilingual;
- wear uniforms.

v. Physical Facilities

The Tourism information office must:

- provide adequate display material;
- Ablution facilities.

It is recommended that there:

- Is adequate parking for buses and cars;
- Are Video and audio facilities provided;
- Are public telephones in close proximity to the Tourism Information Office.

vi. Approval

Only offices which have the endorsement of the relevant local authority to operate as official local tourism information offices, will be endorsed by the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority.

3. Accreditation Procedure

The KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority will be the agency responsible for the accreditation of tourism information offices in this province. Regional Councils should assist this body with this process.

Tourism Information Offices that comply with the standards specified in the criteria above shall be provided with a plaque with the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority logo and a slogan

which indicates that the Tourism Information Office is accredited by the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Authority.

It is recommended that annual inspections be undertaken to ensure that a particular office still complies with the basic standards for a provincial tourism information office.

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