



# Business Support for Emerging Entrepreneurs in Eco-tourism: North West, South Africa

Alpheaus Litheko<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>North-West University, School of Management Sciences Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho, 2790, SOUTH AFRICA

\*Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/jstard.2021.03.01.003>

Received 3 March 2021; Accepted 16 May 2021; Available online 15 June 2021

## Abstract:

This paper is based on the business support needed by emerging entrepreneurs to enter and participate in eco-tourism sector. Entrepreneurs play an important role in an economy as they can be key drivers of economic growth, innovation and job creation. Eco-tourism has been positively linked to job creation, entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation. The aspect of ecotourism is closely linked with the idea of community empowerment. Against this background government is aiming to put policies, strategies and programs in place which aim to create an enabling environment for emerging entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, many emerging entrepreneurs' business fail before reaching maturity, mainly due to inadequate business skills to establish and grow their enterprises, perpetuated by insignificant business support from government. South Africa has high levels of unemployment and severe problem of youth unemployment. This implies that the country needs to develop a policy framework that will comprehensively address issues of unemployment through a creation of economic opportunities. Entrepreneurship is one of the options that can reduce the unemployment rate and the social problems that are associated with unemployment. The objectives of this paper is to examine the business support needed by emerging entrepreneurs to facilitate their entry and participation in eco-tourism sector. Furthermore, to determine emerging entrepreneurs' desire to participate in the sector in the North West province, South Africa. A combination of non-probability quota and convenience sampling were used, by surveying 160 respondents in the North West province, South Africa. The data extracted was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Results suggest that most respondents never received business support from government intervention programs, and had somewhat low levels of information concerning the economic opportunities associated with the eco-tourism sector.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship, eco-tourism, business management, unemployment

## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurs play an important role in an economy as they can be key drivers of economic growth, innovation and job creation. In South Africa, government recognized the importance of entrepreneurship activities, so much that a new Ministry of Small Business Development was established in early 2014. South Africa struggles with an alarmingly high national unemployment rate of 27.6% in the first quarter of 2019, and youth unemployment rate is currently at 55%, moreover the NW province unemployment rate is 26.4% [1], which is partly exacerbated by chronic shortage of skilled labor market. Against this background government is aiming to put policies, strategies and programs in place with the aim of creating an enabling environment for emerging entrepreneurs. Unfortunately, many emerging entrepreneurs' business fail before reaching maturity, mainly due to inadequate business skills to establish and grow their enterprises, perpetuated by insufficient business support from government albeit policy in support of small business start-ups sustenance [2].

Self-employment through entrepreneurship [3], offer the unemployed and the youth the opportunity to create jobs for themselves and others. According to Beeka and Rimmington (2011) [4] and Buang (2011) [5], entrepreneurship is one of the career options for youths and unemployed graduates. Entrepreneurship is one of the options to reduce the

unemployment rate amongst communities, and moreover increase their involvement and participation in the mainstream of economic development. Entrepreneurs need to have business management skills to operate and manage resources effectively to allow business survival and sustainability. Policy makers are charged with the economic development responsibilities and have a belief that enterprise culture is a key to more new ventures and job creation. Eco-tourism is seen as a tool to empower indigenous communities in a particular area [6]. Many eco-tourism sites, such as national parks, mountains and dams, are located in remote areas which have rich ecological and biological diversity and indigenous cultures [7, 8]. Eco-tourism as sector provides numerous entrepreneurship opportunities that could benefit the community, in particular the unemployed youth, whom can become economically self-reliant and create employment opportunities for community members. In turn, the sector to grow and be sustainable requires the contribution of entrepreneurs as they will bring innovation, creativity, indigenous knowledge and products that will satisfy the desires and needs of the travel market. The South African government should take initiatives in providing business management support for entrepreneurs to participate in the eco-tourism sites, the initiative will assist in the sustainable development of eco-tourism as well as business operations.

The aim of this paper is to examine the business support needed by emerging entrepreneurs to enter and participate in the eco-tourism sector, and secondary objectives are:

- To obtain the demographic description of the research population.
- To assess the emerging entrepreneurs' level of knowledge concerning eco-tourism.
- To ascertain emerging entrepreneurs' desire to participate in the eco-tourism sector.

Presented here are the objectives of the paper is based on the business management support required by start-up ventures to facilitate their entry and sustained performance in eco-tourism sector. The significance of the study is to encourage an entrepreneurship disposition amongst the youth to combat the socio-economic ills that have a negative effect on economy of South Africa, and the ensuing section will discuss the paper's theoretical background.

## 2. Literature Review

The need for entrepreneurship education started emerging in the mid-1980s in Nigeria. This is because before this period, unemployment and poverty were not a national concern as it is currently [9]. The political instability and inconsistencies in the social-economic policies of successive government led to the emergence of high level unemployment in Nigeria. In the mid-80s, the Nigeria economic collapsed while youth and graduate unemployment hit the roof [9]. In the face of this situation, entrepreneurship, which would have salvaged the situation, was not encouraged.

A career in entrepreneurship offers significant opportunities for individuals to achieve financial independence and benefit the economy by contributing to job creation, innovation, and economic growth [10]. Goetz, Fleming and Rupasingha (2012) [11] point out that self-employment has significant positive economic impacts not only on wage and salary employment but also on per capita income growth and poverty reduction. Government has replaced the trade sector, as the single biggest employer in South Africa [12]. This is clearly unsustainable as the public sector wage bill is ultimately paid for by the taxes generated by the private sector [3]. Entrepreneurs, [13] can variously contribute not only to job creation but overall to the economic growth through the development of innovative products, technology advancement and skills transfer to members of the community.

Government policy should create an enabling environment for entrepreneurship development and business support, in particular start-up businesses. According to Gangi and Timan (2013) [14] one of the support programmes that could assist to spur entrepreneurship development is the business incubator programmes. This programmes serves as places where entrepreneurs receive value-added support and access to critical tools, information, education, contacts, capital and other resources that may otherwise be unaffordable or inaccessible for the business entrepreneurs. Minister of small business development, Ms Lindiwe Zulu reported the business incubation programme seeks to provide unemployed youth with the theoretical knowledge and entrepreneurial skills that will enable them to operate and manage a successful enterprise. Furthermore, the minister announced that the high mortality rate of SMMEs was a matter of concern for government [15].

### 2.1 Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship development contributes to poverty reduction when it creates employment through the start-up of new entrepreneurship or the expansion of existing ones in a specific industry [16]. The entrepreneurs' increase social wealth by creating new markets, new industries, new technology, new institutional forms, new jobs and net increases in real productivity, increases income which culminates in higher standards of living for the population. As the number of entrepreneurs of any given country increase the poverty indicators will decrease, [16].

An entrepreneur is someone who starts a business with the intention of making a profit and assumes the risk of losing all of the resources if the venture fails [17, 18]. Nieuwenhuizen and Rossouw (2012) [19] describe entrepreneur as a person using his or her talents and abilities, taking initiative in acquiring capital and natural resources, and combining them and providing the necessary management, thereby converting an original idea into a business. In addition, entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur, [19] can be summarized into the following components:

- Identifying an opportunity: the entrepreneur finds an opportunity in the market for a new product (or service) or a business concept.
- Creativity and innovation: the entrepreneur employs his or her creative and innovative abilities to develop a new product or service concept. Something unique or different.
- Gathering resources and starting a business: the entrepreneur needs to secure capital, human resources, raw materials and equipment to start the business. The entrepreneur also needs to prepare a business plan to determine the goals and operations of the business and to raise finances.
- Managing the business: the entrepreneur has to plan, organize, lead and control the business.
- Growing the business: the entrepreneur needs to grow the business in terms of profits, the number of customers, product ranges and services offered.
- Creating wealth: entrepreneurs are, in most cases, in business to make profit and create wealth for themselves.
- Adding value to society: the new business and its innovative products and services add value for customers and society in general, as they provide needed products and services.

The importance of entrepreneurship has been widely recognized in South Africa [19]. The government authorities in South Africa such as the National Department of Small Business Enterprise have made enormous efforts to identify entrepreneurs, provide them with capital, stimulate their businesses, assist their development and generally make it easier for them to enter business, however what is of concern to government is the notable increase in the number of start-up business failures. Mail and Guardian (2017) [20] report that South Africa's business start-ups failure is approximately at 80 percent within the first three years.

## 2.2 Business Management Support

Business management is an applied science that is concerned with the study of those institutions in a particular economic system that satisfies the needs of a community [18]. The management of a business by an entrepreneur is essential for the continuous growth and development thereof, as it will improve the products and services it provides to customers and by doing that it will attract and retain a substantial market share.

In addition to the entrepreneur's trait and characteristics such as, innovation and creativity, risk-taking, profit driven, perseverance, and others that are needed to start and succeed in the operation of a business. Business management skills are just as important to ensure business can surpass the conceptualization and developmental phase to enter the growth phase of the business-life cycle. Entrepreneurs need to develop several management competencies to enable them to operate and manage a successful business through profit maximization and creating jobs for members of the community. The following are key managerial competencies to manage a business effectively [21, 22, 23, 18]:

- Planning and administration competency
  - Information gathering, analysis, and problem solving
  - Planning and organizing projects
  - Time management
  - Budgeting and financial management
- Strategic action competency
  - Understanding the industry
  - Understanding the organization
  - Market analyst
  - Competitor analysis
  - Taking strategic action
- Global awareness competency
  - Cultural knowledge and understanding
  - Cultural openness and sensitivity
  - Business intelligence and awareness
  - Technological trends
- Communication competency
  - Informal communication
  - Formal communication
  - Negotiation
- Teamwork competency
  - Designing teams
  - Creating a supportive environment
  - Managing team dynamics
- Emotional intelligence and self-management competency
  - Integrity and ethical conduct
  - Personal drive and resilience

- Balancing work and life issues
- Self-awareness and development
- Spiritual intelligence

These are few management competencies needed by an entrepreneur that will enable for an effective management of a business as this will contribute to growth and sustainable performance. Public agencies such as: (1) National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) supported by the Department of small business enterprise provides entrepreneurial development programs that is aimed at creating a conducive environment for young entrepreneurs to access relevant entrepreneurship skills, knowledge, values and attitudes for their business. Furthermore, the program offers entrepreneurial trainings that responds appropriately and adequately to the market and business needs of youth [24, 25]. The business management training courses offered by NYDA are designed to support young entrepreneurs in the following stages of their business:

- Pre-start/idea generation
- Survivalist
- Start-up
- Early development
- Growth & expansion

This courses are geared towards assisting emerging entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses and create employment. (2) Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) offer five-day entrepreneurial training courses that supports and empowers emerging entrepreneurs with the skills to enable them to develop and be sustainable in their performance, Entrepreneurs learn to:

- Market their business
- Understand the importance of building a reputable business profile as a marketing tool
- Maintain financial records and develop their business plans

Furthermore, the training courses also cover financial management, customer care, report writing and business writing skills, whilst helping entrepreneurs to identify area of improvement for their business [26]. To ensure business success, entrepreneurs should be able to scan economic trends continuously and respond to changes in the economy. The most important broad economic trend that entrepreneurs need to keep track of, analyze, and forecast is business life cycle [27]. A thorough knowledge, understanding, and incorporation of business life-cycle in business planning will have a strong positive impact on the chance of an entrepreneur's business surviving and growing. The rate of growth varies as business passes through the five phases of the business life-cycle:

Stage 1: Nascent stage – Research and development takes place in this emergent stage during which the business idea is developed into a business opportunity.

Stage 2: Start-up stage – The business establishes its existence. During this stage the entrepreneur make every effort to ensure the business is a success and that business is on a growth trajectory.

Stage 3: Rapid growth stage – During this stage the business should show consistently improved financial performance and rising sales. This stage the role of the entrepreneur changes from taking full responsibility for all activities to delegating responsibility to employees.

Stage 4: Maturity stage – This stage is characterized by a steady growth in sales and profits through the retention of existing customers.

Stage 5: Stability stage – During this stage the growth can start declining, unless new products or services are developed to retain existing customers and attracting new customers, additionally the new products or services are developed to extend the business life-cycle.

### 2.3 Eco-tourism

The trends observed in tourism indicate an increased demand for small-scale, nature related and eco-tourism. Eco-tourism is a subtype of tourism that places much emphasizes on the preservation of the natural resources and provides a great degree of involvement by entrepreneurial sector due to large volumes of demand from both the domestic and international tourist market. An entrepreneurial orientation in eco-tourism [28], can contribute to rural development through the stimulation of local entrepreneurs thus, creating jobs and adding economic value to a region, community and sustainable usage of scarce resources within the community. The Ecotourism Society (1992) [29] has described ecotourism as responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people. Ecotourism consists of the following components: conservation benefits, the nature-based experience, the setting and socio-economic benefits [30]. Eco-tourism should benefit conservation through improved management of visited natural areas [31]. The core precepts of ecotourism are conservation of natural and cultural heritage; empowerment and provision of financial benefits for local communities; minimal environmental impact, cultural education and respect for tourists [32].

Furthermore, Robinson (1993) [33] describes eco-tourism as a form of responsible tourism which is sustainable and thus requires the promotion of appropriate and environmentally sympathetic development in order to protect living and non-living natural resources. It contributes to the objectives of achieving social fairness and enhancing quality

communities in the immediate surrounding area of the protected area. Ecotourism which falls under alternative tourism, concentrates on fewer numbers of tourists, but a better quality of experience, where tourists can learn more about the nature, for example guided tours where they can learn about and experience nature better [34]. Eco-tourism is one of the boosting and promising tourism segmentation in the world today. Many countries of the world build their economic advancement by utilizing this subtype of tourism [35]. The United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) have predicted that eco-tourism will become the world's biggest industry in future [36, 37]. Since the 1990s, the Malaysian government has given much attention to the development of eco-tourism in the country [37]. Vasanth (2005) [38] claims that eco-tourism currently contributes 10% of the country's tourism revenue.

Several researchers established that over 50% South Africans live below the international established poverty line [39, 40]. The researchers view eco-tourism as useful component to stimulate tourism of the country without affecting a nation's natural economy by merely promoting and supporting its biodiversity. Furthermore, the researchers appreciate it as a niche to attract eco-friendly clients. Eco-tourism can generate opportunities for local communities to provide goods and services to tourists by starting-up small businesses, and in turn stimulates job creation. Entrepreneurial opportunities exist for people to exploit eco-tourism to ensure that the people living in the visited areas such as botanical gardens, game reserves and national parks, and many others benefit through an inclusive economic growth [41, 42]. By reinvesting some ecotourism earnings directly in the communities living nearby this tourist destination could assist in alleviating poverty. There are jobs in building the park structure, establishing home-stays and in giving toured guides of tourism attractions in and around villages plus many other opportunities. South Africa and other African countries, have opted for ecotourism as an approach to stimulate economic growth and therefore support ecotourism development.

During the 2019/20 financial year budget's speech by Honourable Ms Kenetswe Mosenogi a Member of Executive Council (MEC) for the newly established Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT) in the North West Provincial Government, South Africa, reported that a significant portion of the budget would be directed to youth empowerment by encouraging a character of entrepreneurship amongst unemployed youth, in particular in the township and rural regions, to be involved in the mainstream of eco-tourism as a principal economic sector in the province [43]. Furthermore, the MEC reported that thirty-five (35) entrepreneurs that are currently at a start-up phase will benefit from R3 million set aside for incubation program with the purpose of supporting entrepreneurs' participation in the eco-tourism sector.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The main purpose of the paper is to determine the business support needed by emerging entrepreneurs to be involved and participate in the eco-tourism sector. A survey was undertaken to obtain the quantitative data needed and the data extracted was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for the purpose of this paper. There are different methods in which a survey could be performed, as it is important in choosing the appropriate method specifically suited for the study. A non-probability quota sampling and non-probability conventional sampling was undertaken for the study. The researcher needs to identify categories of people that need to be in the sample and sampling is done by means of convenience sampling, until the quotas have been reached [44, 45, 46]. There were approximately 280 start-up businesses in the North West province, South Africa [26]. The sample was made up of 160 respondents from four districts in the North West province of South Africa, namely the Ngaka Modiri Molema District Municipality, Bojanala Platinum District Municipality, Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Municipality, and Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati District Municipality. A hyperlink with a questionnaire was emailed to respondents, who had to read instructions and answer the questions. From the 160 questionnaires that were emailed to respondents for data collection, 140 were completed and then data cleaning process was undertaken to remove incomplete and incorrect data for analytical purposes and as a result only 124 questionnaires were analyzable. Simple and intermediate statistical methods were used with the sole aim of addressing the research objectives. A survey instrument was made up of four components, namely, (1) demographic profile, (2) business profile, (3) business management support obtained, and (4) knowledge concerning eco-tourism & wildlife sector. The first component, demographic profile, comprises of 6 items while the second component, business profile comprised of 6 items, third component, business management support obtained comprised of nine items. The fourth component, level of knowledge, comprised of 14 items with each item measured on a three-point Likert scale with 1 = large extent, 2 = average, and 3 = not at all. Additionally, the final 2 items in the fifth component were open-ended questions seeking to determine the training and development needs of businesses. Quantitative data was captured by using the SPSS, version 25.0. A descriptive analysis was being utilized to analyze and interpret the data [47], the method assists in describing and summarizing data in a meaningful manner.

## **4. Result and Discussion**

### **4.1 Demographic Profile**

The findings comprise of the demographic description and the entrepreneurs' perception with reference to the eco-tourism sector. As observed from Table 1 of the 124 entrepreneurs that participated in the study, 48 percent of the businesses were operating in the tourism sector and this was followed by 17.9 percent in the agriculture sector. From the sample 50.8 percent of the businesses were below three years of existence with 34.7 percent at their conceptualization

phase. Most businesses from the sample 60.2 percent were initiated by unemployed persons as the North West province has 26.4 percent unemployment rate [48], and the prospects of such initiatives could end unemployment for the new entrepreneur, and furthermore create direct jobs for the community. Many of these individuals have reverted to survival entrepreneurship in order to survive [49]. The education levels are relatively high amongst respondents with 44.4 percent having obtained a tertiary qualification.

**Table 1 - Demographics of emerging entrepreneurs**

Business sector (%)		Existence of business (%)		Education level (%)		Reason for starting business (%)	
Agriculture	17.9	Business idea	34.7	Never attended	4.0	Unemployment	60.2
Catering	13.8	> One year	26.6	> Grade 12	12.1	Own business	17.1
Manufacturing	7.3	1 – 3 years	24.2	Grade 12	36.3	Entrepreneur	16.3
Tourism	48.0	4 – 5 years	7.3	Diploma/Degree	44.4	Communal support	6.5
Others	13.0	< Five years	7.3	Postgraduate	3.2		
Total	100		100		100		100

## 4.2 Business Management Support

The South African rate of unemployment is fast approaching 40 percent [48], and the creation of a supporting environment for entrepreneurial activities by government programs are imperative to addressing the rapid rise in levels of unemployment and the development of the local economy that creates jobs. Table 2 indicates that most business owners have never received business management support from government with a mean score of 2.31 on generic business start-up advice and support. Other business management support activities include advice on business plans that has a mean score of 2.24 as this indicates that first-time business owners have received no extensive advice on how to prepare a profitable business plan. In relation to business counselling services received a mean score of 2.51 and the score reveals that a significant number of respondents never received business counselling services from government. New start-up ventures require aftercare and counselling to enable business to operate, grow and be sustainable in their respective sectors. Mentorship programs can allow entrepreneurs to gain valuable insights, knowledge, and business acumen to operate efficiently and be sustainable in their business profession.

**Table 2 - Business management support received**

Statement	N	Minimum statistics	Maximum statistics	Mean statistics	Std. Dev statistics
Generic business start-up advice and support	124	1	3	2.31	.859
Business planning advice	123	1	3	2.34	.838
Business registration	124	1	3	2.04	.958
Advice on business plans	124	1	3	2.24	.887
Business counselling	124	1	3	<b>2.51</b>	.716
Generic skills training	124	1	3	2.35	.837
Business planning courses	124	1	3	2.39	.814
Business management (Finance, marketing etc.)	124	1	3	2.39	.814

## 4.3 Knowledge of the Eco-tourism Sector

Eco-tourism brings along entrepreneurial opportunities for communities, in particular communities that reside nearby nature reserves, game reserves, mountains, dams, amongst others, as it provides opportunities to provide goods and services to tourists. For the new ventures to be supported by government programs to participate in the eco-tourism sector, it will be imperative to understand the emerging entrepreneurs' knowledge concerning eco-tourism sector and their level of participation in the sector. As observed from Table 3, the emerging entrepreneurs' knowledge concerning eco-tourism had a mean score of 2.46 which indicates that an overwhelmingly majority of emerging entrepreneurs from the study had a relatively low levels of understanding concerning the sector. Furthermore, the findings revealed that a significant high percentage of respondents were unaware of the economic opportunities associated with eco-tourism, as the statement had a mean score of 2.50.

**Table 3 - Knowledge of the eco-tourism sector**

Statement	N	Minimum statistics	Maximum statistics	Mean statistics	Std. Dev statistics
Knowledge concerning eco-tourism is good	124	1	3	2.46	.630
Aware of the economic opportunities associated with eco-tourism sector	123	1	3	2.50	.669
Need to be educated on the economic opportunities associated with eco-tourism sector	124	1	3	1.23	.474
Business interested to participate in eco-tourism sector	124	1	3	1.21	.465

Nevertheless, the statement on whether they needed to be educated on economic opportunities associated with the sector and if their businesses were interested to participate in the sector, the statements had a mean score of 1.23 and 1.21 respectively, as reflected in Table 3. Clearly indicating that most respondents were interested to obtain knowledge on the economic opportunities associated with the sector and for their businesses to participated therein.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

The purpose of this research was to examine the business support needed by emerging entrepreneurs to participate in the eco-tourism sector. Eco-tourism is a fast growing sector which seeks to promote responsible tourism through the sustainable use of natural resources, preservation of heritage culture and empowerment of local communities, and in particular as eco-tourism is closely linked with local community. As discussed in the literature review there are entrepreneurial opportunities that exist in eco-tourism and this opportunity exist for the local community to exploit, in particular those communities that stay in remote rural areas of the North West province. There are many entrepreneurial opportunities that include wildlife viewing, nature walks, camping, canoeing, cultural tours, hunting, etc. These entrepreneurial opportunities in turn create business opportunities for local people that are involved in artwork, handicrafts, traditional dances, homemade cuisines and overall the sale of local products. However, for the new ventures to be successful and be sustainable in the eco-tourism sector it requires government programs to provide business management support to start-up ventures. The development and growth of entrepreneurial activities is necessary for the development of a rural economy of the NW province, the growth of entrepreneurial activities brings along potential benefits that not only include the end of unemployment for emerging entrepreneurs but also creation of direct jobs for local communities and the creation of product or services for tourists and the general public.

Despite the existence of policy framework for the creation and growth of start-up ventures, there are still high failure rate amongst emerging entrepreneur's business ventures [49, 50, 51]. The findings revealed the mean score of 2.51 for business counselling received by respondents from government programs, the findings clearly reveal that the start-ups never received any business counselling offered by government. In addition, an overall mean score of 2.32 for business management support received by respondent from government, clearly signifies the undesirable perception that emerging entrepreneurs have towards government business support programs. Providing an enabling environment for entrepreneurs will enhance their potential in contributing to the local economy, through the introduction of innovative products, job creation and improve the standard of living of local communities. There are numerous eco-entrepreneurship opportunities for local communities in the protected areas managed by the NW provincial government, protected areas such as the Bloemhof dam nature reserve in the Dr Ruth S. Mompati District (South-Western region), Borakalalo National park in the Bojanala District (Eastern region), Molemane Eye Nature Reserve in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District (Central region) and many more. There are several policy directions the NW government can implement to offer business support to emerging entrepreneurs to enter and participate in the eco-tourism sector and this could be achieved by implementing the following:

- Awareness campaigns – creating awareness of the economic opportunities associated with eco-tourism sector.
- Business management skills – skills training such as basic management and financial skills.
- Business advice and information – Involvement of local government and the facilitation of business-to-business partnership (well-established business in the eco-tourism industry to provide mentorship).
- Financial assistance – provide funding for emerging entrepreneurs.
- Business counselling – provide assistance and support for emerging entrepreneurs.

Thorough knowledge and understanding of the nature of eco-tourism and the economic opportunities thereof would assist the emerging entrepreneurs to become opportunity-driven and exploit the eco-entrepreneurial opportunities associated with the sector. Government support for entrepreneurs is important to convert their start-up ideas into well performing business in the sector, that contribute to their local economic development [52]. The government business support to entrepreneurs, is supporting innovative products and service in the eco-tourism sector, furthermore addressing the high levels of unemployment in the community.

The present article has been written mainly to encourage the NW provincial government and inform policy on the development of entrepreneurship in ecotourism sector as a potential solution to curb the rapid upsurge of the

unemployment rate, in particular amongst the youth, in the North West province and South Africa in overall. This rapid rise in the unemployment rate was exacerbated by external factors such as coronavirus pandemic, that has severely impacted the socio-economic well-being of so many countries globally, whereby lots of communities have lost their jobs and has impacted their livelihoods in an adverse way. A need exists for further research into the exploitation of entrepreneurial opportunities and the development of start-up businesses in the ecotourism sector.

## Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank School of Management Sciences, North-West University for supporting this research work.

## References

- [32] Ah-Choy, E. (2010). The nascent development of ecotourism in lagong hill. *Journal Applied Science*, 7:1528-1531
- [50] Amankwah-Amoah, J., Antwi-Agyei, I & Zhang, H. (2017). Integrating the dark side of competition into explanations of business failures: Evidence from a developing economy. *The Journal of The European Academy of Management*, 15(1):97-109
- [9] Arogundade, B.B. (2011). Entrepreneurship education: An imperative for sustainable development in Nigeria. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 2(1):26-29
- [10] Basu, A. & Virick, M. (2008). Assessing entrepreneurial/intentions amongst students: A comparative study. Accessed from: [http://works.bepress.com/anuradha\\_basu/12/](http://works.bepress.com/anuradha_basu/12/)
- [4] Beeka, B.H. & Rimmington, M. (2011). Entrepreneurship as a career option for African youths. *Journal of Development Entrepreneurship*, 16(1):145-164
- [31] Bhuiyan, M.A.H., Siwar, C., Ismail, S.M. & Islam, R. (2011a). The role of home stay for eco-tourism development in east coast economic region. *Journal Applied Science*, 8:540-546
- [35] Bhuiyan, M.A.H., Siwar, C., Ismail, S.M. & Islam, R. (2011b). The role of government for ecotourism development: Focusing on east coast economic region. *Journal of Social Science*, 7(4):557-564
- [5] Buang, N.A. (2011). Entrepreneurship career paths of graduate entrepreneurs in Malaysia. *Research Journal of Applied Business*, 6(4):282-289
- [44] Creswell, J.W., Ebersohn, L., Eloff, I., Ferreira, R., Ivankova, N.V., Jansen, J.D., Nieuwenhuis, J., Pietersen & Plano Clark, V.L. (2016). *First steps in research*. 2nd ed. Published by van Schaik Publishers
- [17] Cronje, J, Du Toit, G.S., Motlatla, M.D.C. & Marais, K. (2004). *Introduction to business management*. 6th ed. Oxford University Press, Cape Town
- [15] Department of Small Business Development, (2018). Small business development no rapid incubation programme. Newsgroup: <https://www.gov.za/speeches/small-business-development-rapid-incubation-programme-14-June-2018-0000>. Date of access: 17 Sep. 2019
- [24] Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). (2019). *The national youth economic empowerment strategy and implementation framework: Mainstreaming youth in the South African Economy 2009 – 2019*. Pretoria, RSA. Government
- [29] Ecotourism Society, (1992). *Uniting conservation and travel worldwide the ecotourism society*. The Ecotourism Society
- [18] Erasmus, B.J., Strydom, J.W. & Rudansky-Kloppers, S. (2013). *Introduction to business management*. 9th ed. Oxford University Press Southern Africa, Cape Town
- [3] Fatoki, O. (2014). The entrepreneurial intention of undergraduate students in South Africa: The influences of entrepreneurship/education and previous work experience. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Science*, 5(7):294-299
- [34] Fennell, D.A. (2003). *Ecotourism: an introduction* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge
- [14] Gangi, Y.A. & Timan, E. (2013). An empirical investigation of entrepreneurial environment in Sudan. *World Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sustainable Development*, 9(3):168-177
- [11] Goetz, S.J., Fleming, D.A. & Rupasingha, A. (2012). The economic impacts of self-employment. *Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics*, 44(3):315-321
- [7] Hawkins, D.E. & Lamoureux, K. (2001). Global growth and magnitude of ecotourism. In: *The encyclopedia of ecotourism*, Weaver, D.B. (Ed.). CABI Publishing, New York
- [22] Hellriegel, D., Jackson, S.E., Slocum, J., Staude, G., Amos, T., Klopper, H.B., Louw, L. & Oosthuizen, T. (2008). *Management* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press, Cape Town
- [16] Hussain, M.D., Bhuiyan, A.B. & Bakar, R. (2014). Entrepreneurship development and poverty alleviation: An empirical review. *Journal of Asian Scientific Research*, 4(10):558-573
- [37] Jaafar, M. & Maideen, S.A. (2012). Eco-tourism related products and activities and the economic sustainability of small and medium island chalets. *Tourism Management*, 33:683-691
- [36] Kaur, C. (2006). *National ecotourism plan: Assessing implementation of the guidelines for marine parks*. Research Centre for Coastal and Marine Environment, Maritime Institute of Malaysia

- [28] Lordkipanidze, M., Brezet, H. & Backman, H. (2005). The entrepreneurship factor in sustainable tourism development. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 13:787-798
- [23] Lussier, R.N. (2008). *Management fundamentals: Concepts, Applications, Skills Development*. 4th ed. South-Western Cengage learning, Massachusetts
- [20] Mail and Guardian, (2017). Small business 101: Avoid the pitfalls. Available at <https://mg.co.za/article/2017-02-24-00-small-business-101-avoid-the-pitfalls/#:~:text=while%20entrepreneurship%20experts%20would%20agreeneeded%20>. [November, 11 2020]
- [49] Meyer, N., Meyer, D.F. & Molefe, K.N. (2016). Barriers to small informal business development and entrepreneurship: The case of the Emfuleni region. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 13(1):121-133
- [39] Miller, P.S. (2007). Tools and techniques for disease risk assessment in threatened wildlife conservation programmes. *Animal Health and Conservation*, 41:38-51
- [43] Mosenogi, K. (2019). 2019/20 budget vote speech: Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism (DEDECT). Mahikeng Mail: 12, Aug 2019
- [25] National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). (2019). Annual report 2018/2019. Pretoria, RSA. Government
- [19] Nieuwenhuizen, C. & Rossouw, D. (2012). *Business management: a contemporary approach*. Juta and Company Ltd, Cape Town
- [2] Ntema, R.P. (2014). Applying project risk management principles to manage business start-up risk – A proposed training tool. Dissertation (Master in Science), North West University (Vaal Triangle Campus)
- [13] Obaji, N.O. & Olugu, M.U. (2014). The role of government policy in entrepreneurship development. *Science Journal of Business and Management*, 2(4):109-115
- [30] Orams, M.B. (1995). Towards a more desirable form of ecotourism. *Tourism Management*, 16:3-8
- [51] Ptak-Chmielewska, A. (2019). Predicting micro-enterprise failures using data mining techniques. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, 12(30):1-17
- [33] Robinson, G.A. (1993). Ecotourism: local community must benefit. *Custos*, 54(5):6-11
- [40] Saayman, M., Rossouw, R. & Krugell, W. 2012. The impact of tourism on poverty in South Africa. *Development Southern Africa*, 29(3):462-486
- [26] Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), (2018). Annual Report 2017/18. Pretoria, RSA, Government printers
- [52] SEDA, (2019). SMME Quarterly Update: 3rd quarter 2018/2019. Pretoria, RSA, Government printers
- [42] Seeletse, S.M. (2015). Local development through ecotourism in South Africa: opportunities for botanical gardens, game reserves and national parks. *Environment*
- [21] Smit, L. & Van der Bijl, A. (2001). *Business management. A practical outcomes based business management workshop*. CLS Publishers, Cape Town
- [41] Snyman, S. (2014). The impact of ecotourism employment on rural household incomes and social welfare in six Southern African countries. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*. 12(6):1-16
- [6] Sofield, T.H.B. (2003). *Empowerment for sustainable tourism development*. Emerald Group Publishing, Boston.
- [12] South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SACCI). (2013). Business Confidence Index, October 2019. Available at <https://www.polity.org.za/article/sacci-statement-by-the-south-african-chamber-of-commerce-and-industry-trade-conditions-survey-for-november-2013-12122013-2013-12-12>
- [1] Statistics South Africa (STATSA). (2019). Mid-year population estimates: Unemployment. Statistical release (P0302). Pretoria, RSA. Government printers
- [48] STATSA, (2020). Quarterly labour force survey – Q3:2020. Pretoria, RSA. Government
- [45] Thomas, R.M. (2003). *Blending qualitative and quantitative research methods in Thesis and Dissertation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press
- [27] Van Aardt, I. & Bezuidenhout, S. (2014). *Entrepreneurship & new venture management (5th ed.)*. Oxford university press, Cape Town
- [38] Vasanth, G. (2005). Tourism Malaysia may review strategies. Accessed on business times date 09/09/2005
- [47] Watkins, A.E., Scheaffer, R.L. & Cobb, G.W. (2011). *Statistics: from data to decision (2nd ed.)* John Wiley & Sons
- [8] Yogi, H.N. (2010). Eco-tourism and sustainability – opportunities and challenges in the case of Nepal. Centre for sustainable development Uppsala, Sweden. (Master – Full-Dissertation)
- [46] Zijlstra, W.P., van der Ark, L.A. & Sijtsma, K. (2011). Outliers in questionnaire data: Can they be detected and should they be removed? *Journal of Educational and Behavioral Statistics*, 36:186-212