



Exploring the factors that enable green teams` establishment in selected organisations within the South African tourism industry

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DECLARATION

I, **Elzeth Peters**, declare that this study titled “**Exploring the factors that enable green teams` establishment in selected organisations within the South African tourism industry**” submitted to the faculty of Economics and Management Science at the North-West University Business School is my own original work and has never, in its entirety or in part, been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. All sources referred to in this study have been properly indicated with citations and acknowledged by means of references.

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ABSTRACT

The significance of sustainable tourism cannot be overstated, particularly in a country like South Africa, where the natural environment is one of the country's greatest assets, attracting millions of tourists annually. This study underscores the critical role that sustainable tourism plays in not only preserving the country's natural treasures, but also in ensuring the long-term viability of the tourism industry.

The increasing emphasis on sustainability in the global tourism industry was the rationale for exploring the mechanisms and strategies that facilitate the integration of sustainable practices into this sector. South African tourism industry plays a pivotal role in the economy, and is ideally positioned to have a significant positive impact on the environment. The research was an in-depth exploration of the factors that enable the formation and effective operation of green teams in organisations in the tourism industry. Green teams, which consist of employees committed to spearheading sustainability initiatives, are instrumental in promoting eco-friendly practices, reducing environmental footprints, and enhancing the overall sustainability performance of organisations.

The study followed a qualitative research approach, with data gathered through semi-structured interviews with eight purposively selected managers from a variety of organisations in South Africa's private tourism sector that had already established green teams. Data saturation started at participant seven, upon which another interview, with participant eight, was completed to confirm saturation. Thematic analysis of the eight data transcripts allowed for the extraction of valuable insights and firsthand experiences regarding the key factors that play a role in organisations' readiness to establish green teams, the strategic approaches they adopted, and their commitment to sustainability.

The study found that the readiness factors with regard to implementation of green teams are creating a passion for environmental conservation and buy-in for such initiatives, which then have to be embedded in the organisation's culture. Leadership commitment emerged as a cornerstone of the successful establishment of green teams, highlighting the importance of top-down support in driving sustainability initiatives. Organisational leaders play a critical role in ensuring the necessary financial resources are made available, together with the necessary expertise. Green teams' initiatives have to be

underpinned by teamwork in the organisation and collaboration with affected communities. It is critical that initiatives' outcomes are monitored and adjusted where necessary, which processes have to be informed through knowledge sharing and ongoing learning.

The study also uncovered several challenges that impede the smooth operation of green teams, including resistance to change, limited resources, and the long-range commitment that these initiatives require. The benefits of such initiatives include enhanced environmental sustainability, enhanced brand image and staff morale, and sustainability of tourism businesses. Limitations to the study is that it that the findings of this qualitative study cannot be generalised.

This study enriches the understanding of sustainable practices promoted through green teams in the tourism industry, specifically in the South African context. It offers practical insights into the critical role of green teams in organisations that aspire to integrate sustainability into their operations.

Key terms: eco-tourism; green teams; leadership; sustainability practices; readiness

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

GDP	Gross domestic product
GMIC	Green Meeting Industry Council
KPI	Key performance indicator
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study by outlining the background and context of the research and exploring factors that enable the readiness of organisations in the South African tourism industry to establish green teams, also known as 'sustainability teams'. The chapter focuses on the importance of green teams in the South African tourism industry and how their establishment promotes sustainability practices. The chapter also highlights the problem statement and lists the research questions and objectives that supported the enquiry into the research problem. This is followed by a discussion of the significance of the study, a brief overview of the methodology followed in conducting the study, and the research ethics upheld in conducting the research. The chapter concludes with the layout of the dissertation.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This study explored the readiness factors facilitating the establishment of green teams in selected organisations in the South African tourism sector. Green teams focus on sustainability of the tourism industry, promote positive environmental change, and ensure the industry's long-term economic and environmental well-being, thereby enhancing its resilience (World Economic Forum, 2019). According to Giddy (2022:233), exploring the readiness factors that enable the establishment of green teams in organisations in South Africa's tourism industry is a critical step towards promoting sustainable tourism practices in the country.

Recognising the significance of sustainable tourism in South Africa, the government has actively promoted sustainability in the tourism industry, with one popular approach being the implementation of green teams (Shoaib *et al.*, 2022). Comprising individuals from various departments within an organisation, these teams are self-organised and responsible for identifying and implementing sustainability initiatives (Fleischer, 2009:2). The role of green teams is to promote green tourism, which acts as a catalyst to achieve sustainable tourism, which is based on three pillars: planet (the environment), people

(society), and profit (the economy) (Flaherty, 2018:7). Ecotourism, which is travel to natural attractions, flows from sustainable tourism, as illustrated in Figure 1.1.

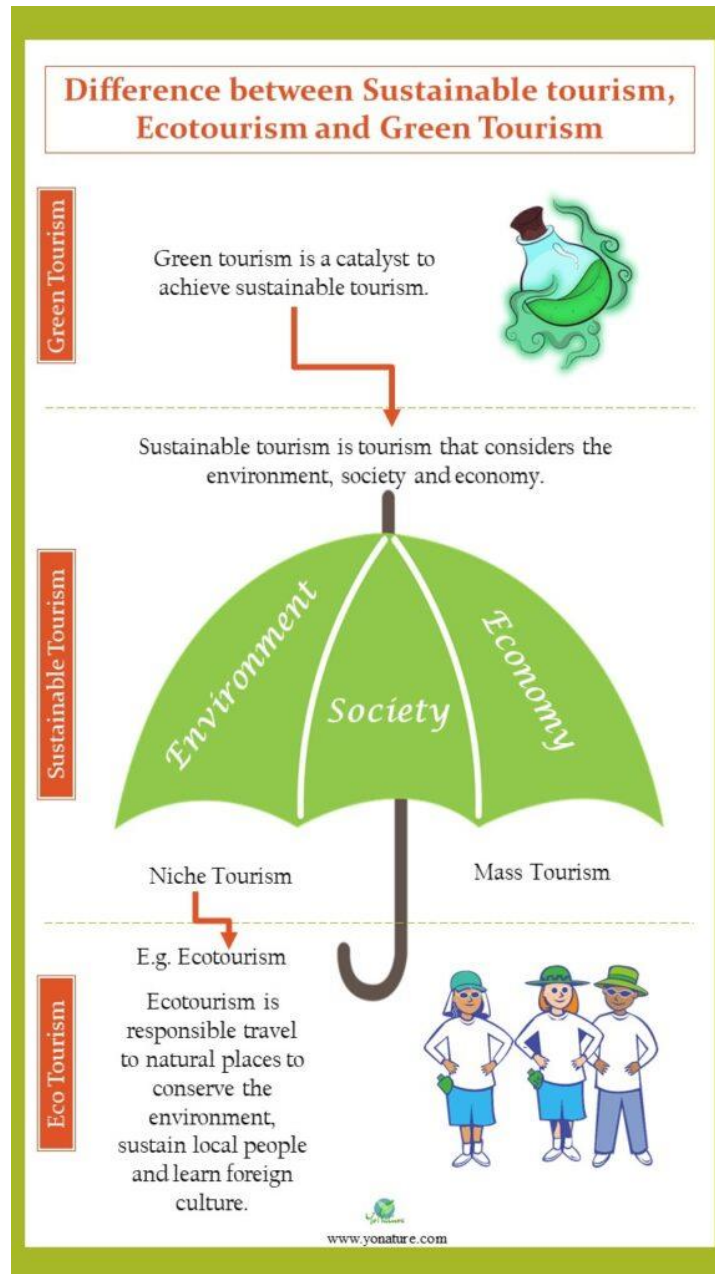


Figure 1.1: Green tourism, sustainable tourism, and eco-tourism

Source: Yonature, 2021

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of sustainability in the tourism industry. With a substantial decline in tourist arrivals, businesses had to reassess the operations and strive to be resilient. This presented an opportunity to integrate sustainable practices into the industry's recovery and future growth plans (Jones & Comfort, 2020:7).

The tourism industry in South Africa is a significant contributor to the country's economy and is therefore crucial for long-term economic and environmental growth (Rasool *et al.*, 2021:3). In 2023, travel and tourism contributed nearly 3.2 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of South Africa (Cowling, 2024). Despite its positive impact, the industry also poses environmental challenges, such as its contribution to resource depletion and greenhouse gas emissions (Department of Tourism, South Africa, 2021). Addressing these challenges is imperative in promoting sustainable tourism practices in the industry.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for Africa 2030 (The SDG Centre for Africa, 2017) hold immense importance and significance for the continent's sustainable development and overall well-being. These goals provide a comprehensive framework to address the complex challenges South Africa faces, with the goals including poverty eradication, gender equality, access to quality education and healthcare, sustainable economic growth, and environmental conservation (Henaó *et al.*, 2017:121). By setting clear targets and indicators, the SDGs (The SDG Centre for Africa, 2017) guide African nations in formulating policies and implementing strategies to foster inclusive and sustainable development (Garfias Royo *et al.*, 2022:3).

The SDGs for Africa (The SDG Centre for Africa, 2017) shape the objectives and activities of effective green teams. These goals, established by the United Nations, address various social, economic, and environmental challenges faced by African nations (Statistics SA, 2019). Green teams can contribute significantly to the achievement of these goals by focusing on sustainability initiatives in organisations, including in the tourism industry (Green Meeting Industry Council [GMIC], 2023). By aligning their efforts with the SDGs (The SDG Centre for Africa, 2017), green teams can drive positive change, not only within their organisations, but also in the broader context of sustainable development in Africa, leading to long-lasting benefits for communities, economies, and the environment (Solís-Radilla *et al.*, 2019:8).

The study focused on green teams in the South African tourism industry in an exploration of the potential of these teams to drive sustainable tourism practices. The study specifically explored factors affecting tourism organisations' readiness to establish green teams. The findings of this research not only contribute to a greater understanding of such efforts in the context of South Africa but may also enhance the management of sustainability practices in the global tourism landscape.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Establishing green teams — groups of dedicated employees tasked with identifying and executing sustainability initiatives — is a powerful strategy for fostering sustainable practices in the tourism industry (Cai *et al.*, 2020:34). The problem being investigated in the current study sought to address a gap in existing literature and in practice, where organisations fail to adequately prepare for the establishment of green teams and effectively implement sustainability practices.

The tourism industry in South Africa plays a pivotal role in the nation's economy, but it also leaves a considerable environmental footprint in terms of carbon emissions, water consumption, waste generation, and adverse effects on natural habitats (Baloch *et al.*, 2022:5918). To address these environmental challenges, there is a pressing need for the adoption of sustainable tourism practices in the industry. To address the research problem, the following research question and sub-questions were formulated.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In line with the problem statement, the main research question of this study was:

What are the key readiness factors with regard to the establishment of green teams in organisations in the South African tourism industry, as perceived and experienced by managers in tourism?

To answer the main research question, the following secondary research questions (SRQs) were formulated:

SRQ1: How does the literature conceptualise green teams, the implementation readiness factors, and the establishment of green teams?

SRQ2: How do managers in tourism perceive and experience the readiness factors with regard to establishing green teams in organisations in South Africa's tourism industry?

SRQ3: What are the challenges faced by managers in implementing green teams in the tourism industry in South Africa?

SRQ4: What are the benefits of the implementation of green teams, as experienced by managers in the South African tourism industry?

1.5 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research questions were aligned with the following research objectives.

1.5.1 Primary objective

In line with the problem statement and the main research question, the primary objective of this study was:

To explore and describe the key readiness factors for establishing green teams in organisations in the South African tourism industry, as perceived and experienced by managers in sustainable tourism.

1.5.2 Secondary objectives

To achieve the primary objective, the following secondary research objectives were formulated:

SRO1: To explore the existing literature on the definition of green teams, factors affecting organisations' readiness to implement such teams, and processes for their establishment;

SRO2: To identify key readiness factors for organisations in the South African tourism establishing green teams, as perceived and experienced by managers in tourism;

SRO3: To explore the benefits of the implementation of green teams, as experienced by managers in the South African tourism industry; and

SRO4: To explore the challenges faced by managers in implementing green teams in South Africa's tourism industry.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this research contribute to the existing body of knowledge on sustainable practices in the tourism industry, particularly in the context of South Africa. The study provides valuable insights into the barriers and opportunities in implementing green teams in this industry to effectively contribute to the attainment of the SDGs for Africa 2030 (The SDG Centre for Africa, 2017). The findings may support the adoption of sustainability practices in the tourism industry, benefiting not only the environment but also the long-term viability of the industry itself.

The study makes contributions to theory, practice, and industry, detailed below:

1.6.1 Theoretical contribution

This study makes a theoretical contribution to the field of sustainable tourism by creating a better understanding of the readiness factors that enable the establishment of green teams to implement sustainable practices in organisations in South Africa's tourism industry. This study further contributes to the challenges and benefits associated with establishing green teams.

1.6.2 Practical contribution

This study on the readiness factors that enable the establishment of green teams in organisations in South Africa's tourism industry yielded several practical contributions. The findings provide valuable insights into strategies to ensure organisations' readiness to implement sustainability practices in the South African tourism industry, which could aid the identification of gaps and areas for improvement in sustainable tourism practices. The study contributes to the development of best practices in sustainable tourism in South Africa by providing insights into determining the readiness of organisations to establish

green teams and implement sustainable practices, which may contribute to the sustainability of environment and tourism businesses. This information may be useful to organisations in the industry that want to adopt sustainable practices.

1.7 SCOPE AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The delimitations of a study refer to the boundaries that are placed on the research to ensure a comprehensive yet focused exploration. It is important that researchers are transparent about the delimitations of their study, to ensure that the readers have a clear understanding of the scope of the research (Bhosale, 2023). Researchers thus detail the scope and delimitations of a study to define the extent and focus of their investigation and to clarify the boundaries and parameters of their research (Jansen, 2023). This includes outlining the subject matter, key aspects or elements that will be considered and analysed as part of the research study, including the geographical focus, the organisations included in the study, and the key constructs explored (Casteel & Bridier, 2021:340). Researchers also have to clearly state what was excluded from the scope of the study, i.e., the aspects, subjects, or elements that were deliberately not included or considered (Adu & Miles, 2023:138).

In the current study, the topic of interest was South African tourism organisations' readiness to establish green teams, as perceived and experienced by managers. The geographical focus of the study was thus limited to South Africa, specifically the tourism industry. The current study, therefore, did not include junior staff in organisations outside of tourism. The research gathered the perspectives and insights of managers and team members of tourism organisations who were directly involved with green teams, and other stakeholders in the tourism industry were, therefore, not included in the study. The organisations included in the study either had established green teams or were in the process of doing so, and included hotels, tour operators, establishments in conservation areas, and other tourism-related businesses committed to sustainability practices.

Although the study acknowledges the importance of national and international environmental policies, it does not delve into a detailed analysis of these policies, but reviews those specifically aimed at sustainability. The study explored the following

constructs: readiness factors for green team establishment, the challenges and barriers associated with implementation, and the benefits of having a green team.

The next section provides a brief overview of the methodology followed in conducting the study, which is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The subsequent sections provide an overview of the study's philosophy, the approach to theory building, the methodological choice, the research design, and the methods employed. The discussion is aligned with the Research Onion proposed by Saunders *et al.* (2019).

1.8.1 Research philosophy

As stated by Bryman *et al.* (2014), a research philosophy represents a set of beliefs regarding the nature of reality and how knowledge could be gained that guides researchers in determining what to investigate, how the research should be conducted, and how findings should be analysed. There are three primary philosophies, namely positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The present study was based in an interpretivist philosophy, which holds that reality is socially constructed, and emphasises the importance of understanding phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Ryan, 2018:16). In line with this philosophical stance, the current study followed a qualitative approach, whereby in-depth data were collected in form of words, which were transcribed to texts (see Ryan, 2018:16).

1.8.2 Approach to theory building

In line with the interpretivist philosophy, qualitative data were gathered, which were analysed inductively, therefore moving from detail to broader constructs. In building theory, the constructs were related to extant literature in a deductive approach (see Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

1.8.3 Methodological choice

Jansen and Warren (2020) note the different research approaches, namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The choice of approach is determined by whether the research focus is based on words (qualitative), numbers (quantitative), or incorporates both (mixed methods). Quantitative research relies on methods of natural science, and gather numerical data and hard facts to calculate results using statistical analysis (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019:2829). The current study followed a qualitative approach, whereby data were gathered in the form of words, as the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences and perceptions (see Jansen & Warren, 2020), in this instance, the factor that impact tourism organisations' readiness to implement green teams.

1.8.4 Research design

The research design was exploratory and descriptive, focusing on practical implementations by managers in selected organisations, to detail the factors influencing tourism organisations' green team readiness. This design facilitates an in-depth understanding of specific phenomena within real-life contexts (Yin, 2018).

1.8.5 Population

The term 'population' refers to the entire group of individuals or instances that share common characteristics and are the subject of the study. The population is the larger, often theoretical, group that researchers aim to make inferences about based on their observations from data collected on a subset or sample of that group (Bhandari, 2023). The population of the current study was managers in the South African tourism industry who had experience of green teams.

1.8.6 Sampling method and sample size

Non-probability purposive sampling was used to select the participants for this study. Participants were selected based on the researcher's judgement of their ability to contribute valuable information with which to answer the research question (see Neuman, 2014). The sample size was determined based on data saturation, which is the point at which no new data emerge from the inclusion of additional participants (Patton, 2015).

1.8.7 Data collection

Data were collected through one-on-one interviews with participants, using an interview guide, a method widely used in qualitative studies (Bhandari, 2020). The interviews were conducted online, via Microsoft Teams, which tool offers the researcher a cost-efficient method and the ability to widen the participant pool (Clements, 2021).

1.8.8 Data analysis

The interview data were analysed using thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative data analysis method that entails identifying recurring patterns, themes, and relationships within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2021:61). Thematic analysis involves five steps: (1) becoming intimately familiar with the data by immersing oneself in the contents; (2) coding, which is the systematic labelling and categorising of data segments with descriptors; (3) identifying themes as patterns emerge that represent significant ideas or experiences; and (4) verification of the themes' relevance and alignment with the research objectives, and (5) labelling the theme with a short, descriptive phrase (Elliot, 2018:2855).

1.9 STRATEGIES TO ENSURE QUALITY RESEARCH

Trustworthiness refers to the rigour of a qualitative study, and is enhanced by meeting the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bryman *et al.*, 2014). Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings reflect the participants' viewpoints, and transferability refers to whether the findings could be applied in other contexts. Dependability is determined by whether the findings are consistent and reliable, and confirmability refers to the findings being free of bias and assumptions. The various strategies employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the current study are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study received ethical clearance NWU-(No. 01867-23-A4; see Annexure A) from the Faculty of Economics and Management Science research Ethics Committee of the North-West University, and the researcher adhered to the ethical guidelines of North-West University and the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), which are aligned to the

stipulations of the Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act 2013). Details of the various ethical considerations that were pertinent to the current study and how these were upheld throughout the research are detailed in Chapter 3.

The next section provides definitions of the key concept under study, followed by an overview of the layout of the dissertation.

1.11 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

Green teams are groups of employees responsible for identifying and implementing sustainability initiatives in an organisation (Yesiltas *et al.*, 2021:343).

Sustainable practices in the tourism industry are strategies and actions that minimise negative impacts on the environment, preserve local communities and cultures, and ensure long-term economic and environmental viability (Moise *et al.*, 2018:93). These practices encompass areas such as energy and water conservation, waste management, biodiversity conservation, community engagement, and responsible tourism.

SDGs are the 17 global goals established by the United Nations in 2015 to address pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. These goals provide a comprehensive framework for countries to promote inclusive and sustainable development, covering areas such as poverty eradication, gender equality, quality education and healthcare, economic growth, and environmental conservation (Clark & Wu, 2016:41).

Sustainable tourism refers to an approach that aims to minimise the negative environmental, socio-cultural, and economic impacts of tourism while maximising the positive benefits (Palacios-Florencio *et al.*, 2021:995).

1.12 LAYOUT OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1: Introduction and background of the study

This chapter introduced the research by providing context and background, the research problem, and the research questions and objectives. This was followed by an overview of the contributions of the study, together with the study's limitations. The chapter also

provided a brief overview of the methodology applied in conducting the study, the criteria applied to ensure quality research, and an introduction to the research ethics upheld.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter contains a review of extant literature on the tourism industry in South Africa, the conceptualisation of green teams, and the readiness of organisations in the tourism industry to implement such teams.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter details the research philosophy underpinning the research, the research approach and design followed, and the methods employed to conduct the study. The chapter discusses the strategies employed to ensure trustworthiness of the study, followed by the ethics that were upheld in conducting the study.

Chapter 4: Analysis, findings, and interpretation

This chapter reports the findings from the data analysis of the interview transcripts, followed by a discussion and interpretation of the findings.

Chapter 5: Conclusion, managerial implications, and limitations

This chapter concludes the study with a summary of the findings, reconciled with the research questions and objectives. This is followed by a discussion of the managerial implications and recommendations for practice. The chapter concludes with a review of the limitations of the study, together with recommendations for future research.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, contains the review of extant literature on the constructs under study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of extant literature on sustainable tourism and the role of green teams, and addresses SRQ1: *How does the literature conceptualise green teams, the implementation readiness factors, and the establishment of green teams?*

Through a blend of theoretical insights and practical examples, this chapter provides clarity on the conceptualisation of green teams, highlighting their significance, the factors contributing to organisations' readiness to implement such teams, and the intricacies involved in their establishment. The chapter offers a thorough understanding of green teams' roles in promoting sustainability practices in the tourism sector.

2.2 IMPACT OF TOURISM ON THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY AND ENVIRONMENT

The impact of tourism on South Africa is a complex and interwoven system of positive and negative effects, with far-reaching implications for South Africa's economy, environment, and socio-cultural fabric. The positive and negative impacts of tourism are discussed below.

2.2.1 Positive impacts

Tourism serves as a formidable driver of economic growth, significantly contributing to the country's gross domestic product (GDP). In 2023, tourism contributed nearly 3.2 percent to the South African GDP (Cowling, 2024). An influx of tourists results in increased spending, benefiting various sectors like hospitality, retail, and transportation (Rogerson & Visser, 2011:219). The industry is a major source of employment, especially in rural areas, thereby aiding in poverty reduction and social upliftment (Boley & Nickerson, 2013:633), as tourism fuels infrastructure development, which holds benefits for both tourists and local residents (Saarinen, 2017:91). Tourism has a positive impact on the preservation of cultures, it acts as a platform for the preservation and global promotion of South African traditions to both local and international audiences (Rogerson, 2012:96).

Responsible tourism initiatives can lead to increased environmental awareness and funding for conservation efforts (Spenceley & Goodwin, 2007:263). However, the industry also has negative impacts, and striking a balance between reaping the benefits and addressing the drawbacks is crucial to ensuring a sustainable and harmonious future for South Africa's tourism industry.

2.2.2 Negative impacts

Tourism can lead to environmental degradation through the loss of natural habitats due to over-tourism, the effects of which include pollution, and a strain on water- and energy resources (Leonard, 2009:467). Popular tourist spots may face over-tourism, leading to crowding, degradation of visitor experience, and local discontent (Rogerson, 2013:96). An over-reliance on tourism can make the local economy vulnerable to global market fluctuations and events affecting travel, such as pandemics or political instability (Saarinen, 2017:91).

Interaction with tourists can lead to the erosion of local cultures and traditions (Van der Duim, 2011:352). Tourism revenue may not be evenly distributed, leading to increased inequality within communities (Boley & Nickerson, 2013:633). In summary, the positive and negative effects of tourism in South Africa lead to a complex relationship between the industry's survival and environmental sustainability, which affects the nation's economic, social, and environmental well-being. As South Africa continues to navigate the complex landscape of tourism, stakeholders must strive for sustainable practices that maximise the benefits while mitigating the potential drawbacks. This calls for collaborative efforts between policymakers, local communities, and the tourism industry to ensure that the positive impacts endure and the negative effects are addressed effectively for the long-term well-being of the nation.

2.3 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African tourism industry has demonstrated notable advancements in the integration of sustainable practices, yet substantial opportunities for improvement still exist (Brune, 2022:136). This industry is confronted with significant challenges, including climate change, water scarcity, waste management, and environmental degradation, all

of which exert profound impacts on the country's natural resources and ecosystems (Gössling *et al.*, 2021). Addressing these challenges is vital to ensure the long-term sustainability of South Africa's tourism sector (Gössling *et al.*, 2021). Among the primary areas of focus, responsible tourism takes into account the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of tourism (World Tourism Organisation, 2023).

The UN Agenda 2030 emphasises sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the context of African nations, with a specific focus on sustainable tourism to achieve economic, social, and environmental objectives.

Economic growth and poverty reduction: Sustainable tourism under the SDG framework aims to stimulate economic growth and reduce poverty by creating jobs and promoting local enterprises (UNWTO, 2021).

Environmental conservation: It stresses the importance of conserving ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural resources, which are crucial for tourism (UNEP, 2020).

Cultural heritage and community empowerment: Sustainable tourism supports the preservation of cultural heritage and empowers local communities by involving them in tourism-related activities (UNESCO, 2019).

Sustainable consumption and production: The agenda advocates for sustainable consumption and production patterns in the tourism industry to reduce environmental impacts (UNEP, 2020).

The implementation of sustainable practices in the tourism industry presents a multifaceted challenge, requiring a delicate balance between economic objectives and environmental and social responsibilities (Sezerel & Karagos, 2023:3). A crucial aspect of this attempt involves integrating sustainability seamlessly into business models.

The formulation and enforcement of effective policies and regulations play a pivotal role in supporting sustainable tourism initiatives (UNWTO, 2021). These regulations serve as a framework to guide industry practices towards environmentally and socially responsible conduct. Additionally, education and awareness emerge as fundamental pillars in the pursuit of sustainable tourism. It is imperative to raise awareness among stakeholders about the inherent benefits of sustainable practices to garner widespread support and

participation in these initiatives (UNESCO, 2019). The tourism sector embracing sustainability requires a concerted effort involving businesses, policymakers, and the public to navigate these challenges and foster a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry.

2.4 THE GREEN TEAM APPROACH

Green teams, also known as 'sustainability teams', are groups of individuals in a business or organisation who are responsible for promoting and implementing sustainable practices with regard to the environment (Fleischer, 2009). If effective, these teams can be instrumental in driving sustainability efforts in the tourism industry. Green teams can be involved in various activities, such as energy- and water conservation, waste reduction, and responsible tourism practices. They can also help to educate staff and guests about sustainable practices and encourage them to adopt these practices in their daily lives. Green teams can thus play an important role in driving sustainability efforts in South Africa's tourism industry. By engaging staff and guests, promoting sustainable practices, and identifying areas for improvement, these teams can help create a more sustainable and responsible tourism industry in South Africa.

2.5 GREEN TEAM INITIATIVES IN SOUTH AFRICAN TOURISM

Sustainable tourism practices have a significant impact on the competitiveness of the South African tourism industry. By incorporating sustainable practices into their operations, tourism businesses can enhance their attractiveness to tourists, improve the competitiveness of destinations, and contribute to long-term industry growth (Streimikiene *et al.*, 2020:260).

Palacios-Florencio *et al.* (2021:995) explain that sustainable tourism practices contribute to the creation of a positive destination image. Tourists are increasingly seeking destinations that prioritise environmental protection, cultural preservation, and community engagement. By implementing sustainable practices, South African tourism businesses showcase their commitment to responsible tourism, which enhances the destination's image and attracts environmentally and socially conscious travellers (Hall & Lew, 2018). Sustainable tourism practices can also provide opportunities for businesses to

differentiate themselves in a competitive market. By offering eco-friendly accommodation, nature-based activities, responsible wildlife encounters, and cultural experiences, tourism businesses in South Africa can create unique selling points that attract environmentally aware travellers. This differentiation strengthens the competitiveness of the industry, and could lead to an increased market share (Pereira *et al.*, 2021:5).

According to Moise *et al.* (2018:93), sustainable tourism practices also contribute to positive tourist experiences, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty. Environmentally aware tourists appreciate destinations and businesses that prioritise sustainability, as this ethos aligns with their values, which enhances their travel experience. Satisfied and loyal customers are more likely to return and recommend the destination or business to others, thereby contributing to the competitiveness of the destination in the highly competitive tourism market (Breiby *et al.*, 2020:348). The promotion and preservation of South Africa's natural and cultural resources by managing tourism activities in an environmentally and culturally responsible manner helps the industry to protect fragile ecosystems, biodiversity, and cultural heritage (Álvarez-García *et al.*, 2018:2). This preservation ensures the long-term availability and attractiveness of these resources, which are key drivers of destinations' competitiveness.

By involving local communities in tourism development, businesses contribute to the economic empowerment of local residents through job creation and poverty alleviation (Manzoor *et al.*, 2019:2). Engaged and empowered communities support sustainable tourism practices and create a positive social environment, further enhancing the competitiveness of the South African tourism industry (Serhane *et al.*, 2021:513). The ever-changing world we live in brings about constant change in market trends, and agile sustainable tourism practices can enable businesses to adapt to these changing market trends and consumer preferences. As sustainability becomes an increasingly important consideration for travellers, businesses that have already incorporated sustainable practices are better positioned to meet evolving market demands. This adaptability and responsiveness enhance the industry's competitiveness and resilience in the face of changing market dynamics (Solís-Radilla *et al.*, 2019:8).

The tourism industry in South Africa, with its awe-inspiring landscapes, vibrant cultures, and diverse wildlife, plays a pivotal role in the country's economy and global reputation as

a top travel destination. However, as the world faces increasing environmental challenges and calls for responsible and sustainable practices, the South African tourism sector has recognised the urgent need to embrace sustainability principles. In response to this call, green team initiatives have emerged as powerful drivers of positive change within the industry, examples of which are discussed below.

2.5.1 Cape Town's water conservation efforts

Green teams in Cape Town's hospitality sector implemented water-saving measures during the recent water crisis (Smith & Leonard, 2019:329). Various hotels saw a reduction in water usage by up to 50%, showcasing a commitment to sustainability while ensuring business continuity (Meyer, 2020).

2.5.2 Kruger National Park's sustainable practices

Introduction of energy-efficient solutions and waste-management practices in Kruger National Park led to a reduction in energy consumption and improved waste recycling, contributing to the conservation of the park's natural resources (Patterson, 2021:188).

2.5.3 Community-based tourism projects

Local communities in rural areas initiated eco-tourism projects, supported by green teams (Khalid *et al.*, 2019:12). These projects empowered local communities economically while preserving cultural heritage and biodiversity.

2.5.4 Durban's Green Corridors

Durban's Green Corridors project focuses on sustainable tourism development along the city's natural waterways (Green Corridors, 2023). This initiative has enhanced eco-tourism and outdoor recreational activities, which boosted local employment and the conservation of natural habitats.

2.5.5 Green certification for tourism businesses

Implementation of a green certification programme for tourism businesses encourages adherence to environmental best practices and enhances these businesses' marketability to eco-conscious tourists (Green, 2022:64).

As South Africa strives to balance economic growth with environmental conservation and social well-being, green team initiatives emerge as essential catalysts for change. These initiatives not only reinforce the importance of sustainable practices in the tourism sector, but also underline the country's commitment to being a responsible global player. By understanding the role and potential of green teams in South African tourism, stakeholders can actively contribute to the preservation of the nation's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and economic prosperity while embracing the values of sustainability in their operations.

2.6 ESTABLISHING GREEN TEAMS — BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

This section highlights the benefits and challenges associated with establishing green teams in an organisation.

2.6.1 Benefits of establishing green teams

Establishing green teams in organisations offers numerous advantages in promoting sustainability and driving positive change. These teams play an essential role in enhancing the sustainability performance of organisations by identifying opportunities for improvement and implementing sustainable practices (Chladek, 2019). By focusing on environmentally responsible initiatives, organisations can reduce their ecological footprint and contribute to a more sustainable future.

One of the key advantages of green teams is increased employee engagement, as these teams provide employees with a platform to actively participate in sustainability efforts. When employees are involved in meaningful sustainability initiatives, they experience a sense of ownership and purpose in their work (Bhattacharya *et al.*, 2022:968). Their heightened engagement leads to increased job satisfaction, improved morale, and a stronger commitment to organisational goals. Engaged employees are more likely to contribute innovative ideas, collaborate effectively, and work towards achieving sustainability targets (Mariani *et al.*, 2022:1082).

Another significant advantage of green teams is the potential for cost savings. Implementing sustainable practices could result in substantial financial benefits for organisations (Smith & Perks, 2010:4). Green teams are instrumental in identifying areas

where resource consumption can be reduced, waste can be minimised, and energy efficiency can be improved. By implementing these measures, organisations could lower their operational costs, optimise their resource utilisation, and achieve long-term financial savings. The cost savings can be redirected towards other important initiatives, thereby fostering a more financially sustainable organisation.

Establishing green teams also enhances an organisation's reputation and stakeholder relations (Ogbeibu et al., 2021). In today's environmentally conscious society, customers, investors, and the wider community increasingly value and support environmentally responsible organisations. By actively promoting sustainable practices through green teams, organisations can strengthen their brand image, attract eco-conscious customers, and build positive relationships with stakeholders. A strong reputation for sustainability can open doors to new partnerships and investment opportunities and enhance customer loyalty (Frempong et al., 2022).

Green teams also foster an organisational culture of innovation and creativity. By bringing together employees from different departments and backgrounds, these teams provide a platform for collaboration and brainstorming ideas related to sustainability (Fields & Atiku, 2019:419). This environment encourages employees to think innovatively, challenge the status quo, and devise creative solutions to sustainability challenges. By embracing new technologies, exploring alternative approaches, and continuously improving sustainability practices, green teams could thus contribute to the organisation's overall innovative capacity.

Green teams could also ensure that organisations are compliant with environmental regulations and sustainability standards. These teams are tasked with staying informed about regulations and ensuring that the organisation adheres to these requirements. By proactively addressing compliance and integrating sustainability into their operations, organisations can avoid penalties, legal actions, and reputational damage. Green teams could thus play a crucial role in maintaining an organisation's alignment with industry best practices, sustainability standards, and legal obligations (Ogbeibu et al., 2020).

In conclusion, establishing green teams in organisations offers a multitude of advantages through the promotion of sustainability and by driving positive change. These teams

contribute to enhanced sustainability performance by identifying opportunities, engaging employees, reducing costs, improving the organisation's reputation, fostering innovation, and ensuring compliance with environmental legislation and regulations. By harnessing the collective efforts and expertise of employees, green teams pave the way for a more sustainable and responsible future for organisations in the tourism industry and beyond.

2.6.2 Challenges in establishing green teams

Establishing green teams in organisations to promote sustainability initiatives is not without its challenges. However, by addressing these challenges, organisations can unlock the numerous benefits that green teams offer.

Malhotra *et al.* (2020:493) explain that resistance to change is a common challenge when introducing sustainability initiatives. Resistance from employees and stakeholders due to fear of the unknown or concerns about increased workloads should be mitigated by effective communication and stakeholder engagement (Creasey, 2022). By clearly articulating the benefits of sustainability practices, involving employees in the decision-making process, and providing training on sustainable practices, organisations can mitigate resistance and foster a positive attitude towards change.

Achieving small successes with limited resources is crucial when first establishing green teams (Van Buskirk, 2019:6). Allocating resources to support green teams can be challenging, particularly when sustainability initiatives compete with other business priorities. Organisations need to prioritise sustainability and allocate the necessary resources to ensure the success of green teams (Miller, 2020:3314). This requires a commitment from top management and an understanding of the long-term benefits of sustainable practices. Green teams may face a lack of expertise in sustainability practices when first established, and may require expert inputs or leadership guidance to gain momentum. Providing training and development opportunities to team members is essential in overcoming this challenge (Esakova, 2020). Organisations can also consider partnering with external experts or consultants to support green team initiatives.

Integrating sustainability practices in existing organisational structures can be complex. Overcoming this challenge requires clear communication channels, cross-departmental

collaboration, and alignment with the organisational goals (Chauhan *et al.*, 2022:295). Organisations should create mechanisms to facilitate the flow of information and foster collaboration between green teams and other departments. It is further important to measure and monitor the impact of green team initiatives in order to track progress and demonstrate the value of sustainability practices. Organisations thus need to establish clear metrics and benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives (Medne & Lapina, 2019:9). Implementing appropriate tools and systems for data collection and analysis is necessary for accurate measurement (Hristov & Chirico, 2019:7).

It is essential to begin such initiatives with the end in mind, to ensure that momentum and the commitment to sustainability practices is sustained over the long term. Organisations should foster a culture that values sustainability and provides ongoing support and recognition for green team initiatives (Fietz & Günther, 2021:34). Recognising and rewarding sustainability achievements may assist in maintaining motivation and sustaining efforts (Kang *et al.*, 2022:4). By addressing these challenges, organisations can fully leverage the potential of green teams in driving sustainable practices. However, before forming a green team, organisations need to assess their readiness for and commitment to sustainability.

2.7 ESTABLISHING GREEN TEAMS — READINESS FACTORS

Establishing effective green teams within organisations requires careful consideration of several readiness factors. These factors determine the organisation's preparedness and capacity to implement sustainable practices through the establishment of green teams. By addressing these key factors, organisations can ensure the successful formation and functioning of green teams and maximise their impact in promoting sustainability. Dangelico (2015:737) states that green teams' overall aim is achieving sustainability and environmental conservation, which requires environmental stewardship. Green teams are often tasked with creating initiatives that conserve the environment yet are economically viable, a balance that is critical for sustainable tourism (Ogweno, 2021:101). Tuan (2019:101) argues that this dual focus helps to embed sustainability in organisational strategies, thereby ensuring long-term commitment and impact. The advocacy role

extends to promoting sustainable tourism practices among tourists, local communities, and industry partners, thus amplifying the impact of their initiatives.

Eco-sustainable tourism represents a synergistic approach to tourism, in which environmental stewardship and sustainability practices are intertwined (Mbaiwa, 2017). Eco-sustainable tourism goes beyond mere environmental conservation; it encompasses a holistic view of sustaining tourism activities in a way that is respectful to nature and beneficial to both current and future generations (Dangelico, 2015:737). The notion of eco-sustainable tourism is deeply rooted in the principles of sustainable development. It seeks a balance between ecological, economic, and socio-cultural dimensions of tourism, challenging conventional practices and advocating for a responsible and future-oriented approach to tourism development (Kay *et al.*, 2018:916).

2.7.1 Management support

Leadership and management must lead the achievement of the vision of promoting sustainable practices, which requires that they recognise the importance of green teams in achieving these goals (Jackson & Adams, 2020). Top-level support is crucial for providing resources, fostering a culture of sustainability, and integrating sustainability into the organisation's mission and strategic objectives (Dryer *et al.*, 2021:7).

Strong leadership and management support are fundamental to the success of green teams (Begum *et al.*, 2021). Organisational leaders should champion sustainable practices and actively participate in green team activities (Johnson & Turner, 2019:1026). By setting a clear sustainability vision, providing direction, and encouraging employee involvement, leaders could inspire enthusiasm and commitment amongst team members and the wider organisation (Davis & Thompson, 2021:115).

2.7.2 Engaging employees and fostering participation

Effective green teams comprise individuals in diverse roles from various departments in the organisation. Organisations have to encourage employee participation and seek volunteers who are passionate about sustainability in order to enhance the team's effectiveness (Temel *et al.*, 2022:94). Involving employees in the decision-making process and providing opportunities for their input and feedback create a sense of

ownership and accountability is critical to the long-term success of such initiatives (Harris & Crane, 2019:722).

2.7.3 Allocating resources for green team endeavours

To ensure the viability of green teams, organisations must allocate sufficient resources, including finances, time, and personnel (Brown & Green, 2020:352). Adequate budget allocation for sustainable initiatives, training programmes, and green team activities allows for the implementation of meaningful projects and initiatives that lead to tangible results (White & Johnson, 2018:124).

2.7.4 Facilitating collaboration and communication

Effective communication and collaboration throughout the organisation are essential for the success of green teams. Organisations need to establish open channels of communication to facilitate the flow of ideas, information, and progress updates (Taylor & Wilson, 2021:315). Cross-departmental collaboration fosters a holistic approach to sustainability, ensuring that all aspects of the organisation contribute to sustainable practices (King & Clarkson, 2022:532).

2.7.5 Measuring and monitoring impact

It is critical that organisations establish clear metrics and benchmarks to measure the impact of green team initiatives (Evans & Davis, 2020:913). Organisations should define key performance indicators (KPIs) to evaluate the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives and track their progress over time (Swallow, 2022). Regular monitoring and reporting of results enable organisations to identify successes, areas for improvement, and the overall contribution of green teams to the achievement of sustainability goals (Patterson & Kim, 2021:188).

2.8 INCORPORATING SUSTAINABILITY INTO ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND PRACTICES

Sustainability should become an integral part of the organisation's culture and practices (Clark & Johnson, 2022:607). Green team initiatives should align with the organisation's

core values and be reflected in its policies, procedures, and day-to-day operations (Villanueva-Álvarez *et al.*, 2017:2). By embedding sustainability in the organisational DNA, green teams become more effective drivers of change and contribute to a long-lasting culture of sustainability (Hill & Jones, 2020:401).

2.8.1 Overcoming resistance to change

Organisations may encounter resistance to sustainability initiatives and the establishment of green teams. Resistance could arise due to concerns about additional workloads, fear of change, and doubts about the benefits of sustainability (Roberts & Jackson, 2019:486). Addressing resistance requires effective communication and stakeholder engagement (Adams & Brown, 2018:129). Educating employees about the importance and positive impacts of sustainable practices can help overcome resistance and garner support (Lee & Miller, 2020:3314).

2.8.2 Sustaining momentum and commitment to sustainability efforts

Having green teams should not be a short-term initiative. To drive lasting change, organisations must sustain momentum and commitment to sustainability efforts over the long term (Green, 2022:64). Continual support, recognition, and celebration of sustainability achievements help maintain enthusiasm and motivate green team members to continue their efforts (Alkhodary, 2023:10).

In conclusion, the readiness factors for green team establishment are vital considerations for organisations seeking to promote sustainable practices in the South African tourism industry. By proactively addressing these factors and fostering a culture of sustainability, organisations can establish effective green teams that contribute to positive environmental, social, and economic impacts and pave the way for a more sustainable and responsible future.

2.9 SUMMARY

This chapter explored the extant literature on green teams, their roles, and organisational readiness for their establishment in the tourism industry, illustrating their pivotal role in implementing sustainable practices. Through a detailed review of literature and practical

examples, the chapter explained the essential elements for establishing green teams and their impact on achieving sustainability goals in the tourism industry of South Africa. In summary, by embracing sustainable tourism practices, South African tourism businesses could enhance their competitiveness, attract environmentally conscious tourists, and contribute to the long-term sustainability and growth of the industry. The integration of sustainability into business strategies not only benefits the environment and local communities, but also strengthens the position of South Africa as a leading tourism destination.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the methodology followed in conducting the study. The current study's methodology was based on the methodological framework proposed by Saunders *et al.*, (2019). A summary of the methodology is provided Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Summary of the research methodology

Research philosophy	Interpretivist
Approach to analysis	Inductive
Approach to theory development	Deductive
Methodological choice	Qualitative
Research design	Exploratory and descriptive
Sampling method	Purposive
Data collection method	Semi-structured interviews
Data analysis method	Thematic analysis
Time horizon	Cross-sectional

The sections below provide details on the methodology and how it was applied in the current study.

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

A research philosophy is determined by the researcher's stance on the nature of reality and how knowledge can be gained. The current study was based in an interpretivist philosophy, which holds that reality is subjective, and the researcher therefore considers participants' perspectives on the intricacies of their social realities. Unlike positivism, which seeks objective truths through empirical data, interpretivism delves into understanding the depth of human experiences and the subjective meanings individuals attach to them (Dawadi *et al.*, 2021:26).

The interpretivist philosophy holds that reality is socially constructed, emphasising the importance of understanding phenomena from the participants' perspectives (Bryman, 2016). The philosophy is aimed at gaining a nuanced comprehension of the complexities inherent in social interaction, and recognises that individuals' beliefs, values, and motivations in addressing the research problem (Dudovskiy, 2009; Harper & Thompson, 2021). The researcher delves deeply into the perceptions and experiences of individuals (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). By adopting this paradigm, the researcher also takes into consideration the significance of context (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Jones & Noble, 2020).

The interpretivist paradigm has gained prominence in academic research, especially in studies exploring complex social phenomena like organisational behaviour and team dynamics.. As the current researcher recognises the importance of individual perspectives and social contexts in relation to the research aims, the interpretivist philosophy was considered appropriate to explore the multifaceted and subjective world of green teams in the South African tourism industry.

3.3 APPROACH TO THEORY DEVELOPMENT

The approach to theory development could be either inductive or deductive. In the inductive approach, the reasoning moves from detailed data to higher-level conclusions, thus, a bottom-up approach. In following a deductive approach, the reasoning moves in the opposite direction, i.e., top-down (Bryman, 2016). Unlike deductive reasoning, which begins with a hypothesis, inductive research starts with observations, which are used to develop broader generalisations and theories (Thomas, 2020).

In the current study, the approach to data analysis was inductive, whereby the researcher analysed detailed data to draw conclusions, which approach is widely used in qualitative data analysis (Bryman, 2016). In relating the findings to literature, the researcher followed a deductive approach, whereby the findings were linked to detailed theoretical postulations in extant literature. This approach is particularly suited to the interpretivist paradigm, as it allows for the exploration of complex social phenomena in a flexible and responsive manner. This flow logic is not only aligned with the interpretivist philosophy

but also ensures that the theories developed are deeply grounded in the real-world experiences of the participants (Williams, 2019:8).

3.4 METHODOLOGICAL CHOICE

An appropriate methodological choice is crucial to achieving the study's objectives (Priya, 2021:100). Jansen and Warren (2020) explain that the researchers have a choice of a qualitative, quantitative, or a mixed-methods approach, which is determined by whether the focus of the research is on words, numbers, or both. In following a quantitative approach, the researcher focuses on gathering data in the form of numbers, usually from large samples, which data are then analysed statistically. The aim is to generalise the results to the study population (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019:2829). A qualitative study involves collecting and analysing words, images, and text, amongst others. The data are usually gathered from small samples, as the aim is to gain an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions with regard to the research topic (Jansen & Warren, 2020).

As the aim of the current study was to gain in-depth information on the participants' experiences and their opinions related to the topic under study, the qualitative approach was considered appropriate. The approach allows the researcher to discover and address nuances and complexities in the subject matter, as well as the reasons behind participants' perceptions (Aspers & Corte, 2019:148)

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The current study's research design was exploratory and descriptive. Exploratory research is aimed at providing a greater understanding of the research problem, and descriptive research provides insight into a population or phenomenon. This design facilitates an in-depth understanding of specific phenomena within real-life contexts (Yin, 2018). The descriptive and interpretative research design entails interpretation of the data by the researcher (Sandelowski, 2010), as was done in the current study. This was considered an appropriate research design for the study.

3.6 TIME HORIZON

The time horizon is the time frame in which a study will be conducted. The choice of time horizon is determined by the research objectives, the type of investigation, and the data required. There are two time horizons in research, cross-sectional and longitudinal (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

In cross-sectional studies, data are collected at a single point in time. In longitudinal studies, data are collected at intervals over a period, to enable the researcher to detect change through comparisons over time (Thomas, 2022). Due to various constraints, including time and resources, the current study was cross-sectional.

3.7 STUDY POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The subsequent sections detail the study's population, the sampling method employed and the sample size, as well as the inclusion- and exclusion criteria applied in selecting participants.

3.7.1 Population

The research population for this study consisted of leaders and owners of businesses in South Africa's tourism sector. The sector is diverse, and establishments include accommodation providers (hotels, lodges, guesthouses, and bed-and-breakfasts establishments), tour operators, travel agents, restaurants, and attractions (IDC Tourism & Services, 2023).

3.7.2 Sampling technique

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion or sample of the study population. It is important that researchers choose an appropriate sample (Showkat & Praveen, 2017:2). Researcher could apply probability- or non-probability sampling. In using probability sampling, each individual of the population has an equal chance of being selected for participation, while this is not the case with non-probability sampling (Bhardwaj, 2019:157-161). Within non-probability sampling, researchers have a choice of purposive, convenience, snowball, and quota sampling, as shown in Figure 3.2.

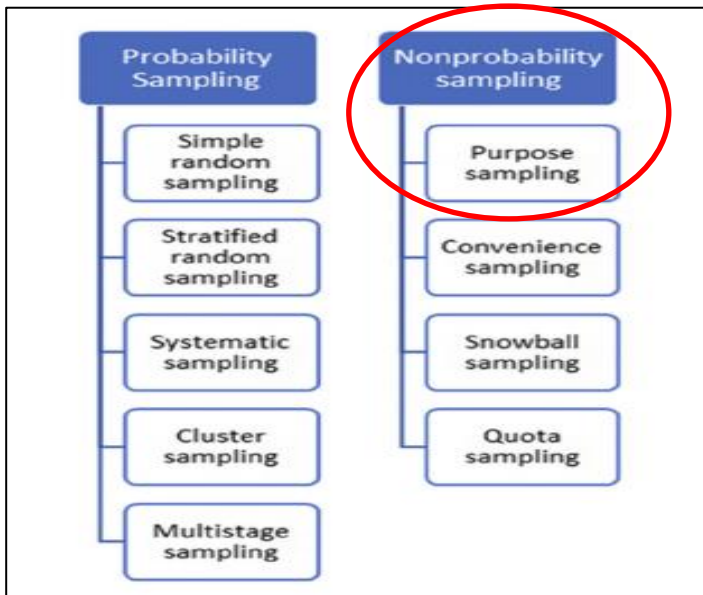


Figure 3.2: Types of sampling

Source: Bhardwaj (2019:158)

In the current study, non-probability sampling was used, specifically purposive and convenience sampling (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). In using purposive sampling, participants are chosen based on the researcher's own judgment regarding their ability to contribute valuable and relevant data (Smith & Doe, 2019). In using convenience sampling, participants are chosen based on their accessibility (Bhardwaj, 2019:161).

3.7.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

To enhance the selection of appropriate participants, the present researcher set inclusion- and exclusion criteria for participation, as recommended by Hornberger and Rangu (2020:2). The aim was to ensure participation by individuals with sufficient experience and exposure to the research problem to contribute rich data (see Brown *et al.*, 2021; Johnson, 2020:1026). The criteria applied in the current study are listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

FOCUS AREA	CRITERIA
Industry	In line with the context of the study, participant selection was limited to the South African tourism industry. Thus, organisations outside of the country and the tourism industry were excluded.
Organisation	To ensure rich data based on experience, participants were selected from organisations that had either already established or were in the process of establishing a green team. Participants from organisations who had not yet or were not planning to do so were thus excluded.
Organisational level	Participants had to occupy a position of influence with regard to the establishment of green teams, to ensure the collection of informed views regarding organisations' readiness to implement green teams. Junior staff, who may not have insights into broader organisational realities, were thus excluded.

Sample size depends on various factors, such as the research question, research population, and available resources (Lakens, 2022:10). In qualitative research, the size of the sample is widely determined using data saturation is reached (Saunders *et al.*, 2017). Data saturation, which was applied in the current study, occurs when enough data have been collected to achieve the research objectives and further data collection provides redundant or repetitive information (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Vasileiou *et al.*, 2018:8). Data collection in the current study was ceased when data saturation had clearly been achieved. The final sample consisted of eight participants.

3.8 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is the process of gathering information in an organised and planned manner to address the aim of the research (Bhandari, 2020). In the current study, data were collected through semi-structured one-on-one interviews conducted by the researcher. In conducting semi-structured interviews, the researcher enjoys flexibility in

terms of the order in which the interview questions are posed. The researcher can also ask probing questions to obtain further insights or clarification. The semi-structured interview thus facilitates the flow of the conversation and allows participants to explain the reasons behind their views. As recommended the present researcher used an interview guide containing semi-structured questions, which were based on the reviewed literature, to ensure all participants were asked the same questions and that the conversation did not drift from the topic under discussion. The interview questions, together with the sub-research questions (SRQs) and sub-research objectives (SROs) to which they related, are shown in Table 3.3 (see also Annexure B).

Table 3.3: Interview question and related SRQs and RSOs

FOCUS AREA	INTERVIEW QUESTION
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greet the interviewee and introduce yourself. • Explain the purpose of the interview and that you are conducting research on the readiness of green teams within the tourism industry. • Mention that their insights and experiences are valuable for understanding the current state of green teams and their impact in the industry. • Assure them that all information provided will be kept confidential and anonymous, if desired.
SECTION A	
Demographic information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job title • Organisation • Years' experience in the tourism industry
SECTION B	
<p>SRQ2: How do managers in tourism perceive and experience the readiness factors with regard to establishing green teams in organisations in South Africa's tourism industry?</p> <p>SRO2: To identify key readiness factors for organisations in the South African tourism establishing green teams, as perceived and experienced by managers in tourism</p>	

FOCUS AREA	INTERVIEW QUESTION
Green team implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can you briefly explain what green teams do and their role in the tourism industry? 2. Has your organisation implemented a green team or similar environmental initiative? If yes, could you provide a brief overview of the team's objectives and activities? 3. What motivated your organisation to establish a green team? 4. How are members of the green team selected or recruited? 5. What types of projects or initiatives has the green team undertaken to promote sustainability within the organisation? 6. How does the green team measure and track its progress towards sustainability goals?
SECTION D	
<p>SRQ3: What are the benefits of the implementation of green teams, as experienced by managers in the South African tourism industry?</p> <p>SRO3: To explore the benefits of the implementation of green teams, as experienced by managers in the South African tourism industry</p>	
Impact of green teams	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. What positive changes or improvements have you observed as a result of the green team's efforts? 8. Can you provide any examples of successful sustainability initiatives led by the green team?
SECTION E	
<p>SRQ4: What are the challenges faced by managers in implementing green teams in the tourism industry in South Africa?</p> <p>SRO4: To explore the challenges faced by managers in implementing green teams in South Africa's tourism industry</p>	
Challenges in establishing green teams	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. What are the challenges or obstacles did you face in implementing the green team?

FOCUS AREA	INTERVIEW QUESTION
Conclusion	Thank the interviewee for his/her time and contribution to the research. Offer to share the research report.

The subsequent sections detail the strategies employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study, followed by the pertinent ethical considerations.

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Following the conclusion of data collection, the stewardship of the data transitions from the participants to the researcher. It is at this juncture that the researcher assumes the role of a storyteller, interpreting the narratives shared by participants through the lens of the research framework (Braun & Clarke, 2021:84). The current researcher employed thematic analysis to analyse the data, which is a method to unearth and delineate constructs and themes embedded within textual data (Braun & Clarke, 2021:84; Williams, 2019:8). Thematic analysis allows for a rich, detailed, and complex account of the data (Nowell et al., 2017).

As the first step of analysis, coding entails the systematic categorisation of key points within participants' descriptions, a foundational step in qualitative analysis. This process can be conducted manually through the annotation of physical interview transcripts (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:259), or facilitated by advanced qualitative data analysis software for efficiency. Following the initial coding, researchers embark on thematising, which involves organising these codes into meaningful themes that resonate with the study's objectives (Elliott, 2018). This thematic analysis is crucial for distilling the essence of the collected data into a coherent theoretical understanding of the subject matter under investigation (Collins & Stockton, 2018:8).

The interviews were transcribed using the transcription tool of Microsoft Teams. The steps proposed by Elliot (2018:2855) were employed in the thematic analysis:

Step 1: Immersion in the data to understand its context and nuances.

Familiarisation with the data entailed reading the transcripts multiple times to grasp the content's depth and breadth.

Step 2: Coding of the data based on initial observations and theoretical considerations.

This step entailed identifying key features and important information contained in the data that related to the research questions and theory in the domain, and coding these systematically across the entire dataset, which process was aided by the transcription tool's organisation capabilities.

Step 3: Organising codes into broader patterns or categories that capture the essence of the data.

Through iterative analysis, the codes were organised into potential themes based on related data. This process involved continuous engagement with the dataset and the emergent insights.

Step 4: Refining the themes to ensure they accurately represent the data.

In this step, the themes were reviewed critically to ensure they aligned with the coded extracts and categories or sub-themes. The aim in refining the themes was to ensure they represented the data.

Step 5: Labelling the themes.

This step entailed establishing clear definitions of the themes, captured in a concise label or 'name'. This step was crucial in ensuring that the themes were coherent and distinct, and that they captured the essence of the data, in alignment with the research objectives.

Step 6: Writing up the findings in a way that integrates the thematic analysis with the research questions and existing literature.

This step entailed compilation of the report of the findings, supported by quotations from the data transcripts. The report also links the findings of the thematic analysis with extant literature and the research questions and objectives.

The next section details the strategies employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

3.10 STRATEGIES TO ENSURE QUALITY RESEARCH

In qualitative research, the researcher must meet the trustworthiness criteria to ensure confidence in the quality of the study (Mohajan, 2020:3). According to Bryman *et al.* (2014), the trustworthiness criteria are: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the extent to which the findings reflect the participants' viewpoints, and transferability refers to whether the findings could be applied in other contexts. Dependability is determined by whether the findings are consistent and reliable, and confirmability refers to the findings being free of bias and assumptions. The strategies recommended by Bryman *et al.* (2014) were employed in the current study.

To ensure credibility, the researcher submitted the findings to the research participants to ensure that their views had been interpreted correctly. To ensure transferability, the researcher provided a detailed description of the context and the research problem, to enable readers to judge whether the findings may be applicable to another context. Dependability was enhanced by using recognised research methods and documenting the research process, including how the findings were derived. Confirmability was enhanced by the researcher guarding against bias in analysing and interpreting the data and triangulating the findings with literature (see Bryman *et al.*, 2014).

3.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers are ethically bound to prioritise the welfare of their participants, thereby adhering to the principle of beneficence (Resnik, 2018). When the distinctions between researcher and participant roles blur, ethical boundaries may be compromised, raising concerns about the integrity of the research engagement (Resnik, 2018). It is crucial that researchers recognise their biases and preconceptions about the study subject and employ effective measures to mitigate their impact on the study (Iphofen, 2019). In conducting interviews, any possible power dynamics have to be borne in mind, to ensure that the discussions evolve into a collaborative relationship in which partnership is emphasised over hierarchy (Iphofen, 2019).

The current study received ethical clearance from North-West University (see Annexure A). The research also adhered to the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) No.

4 of 2013 by anonymising the quotations from the interview transcripts. This study conformed to the ethical guidelines of the Academy of Science of South Africa. Participants were fully informed of the aims of the study, and signed a consent form prior to commencement of the interviews (see Annexure C).

The researcher established rapport with the interviewees and, prior to commencing the interview, again communicated the study's objectives to the participants, emphasising the voluntary nature of their participation and clarifying that there would be no incentives for participating. Furthermore, participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any adverse effects (see Guillemin & Gillam, 2015:382). Participants were guaranteed anonymity, and were assured that any personally identifying information would be removed in the reporting of the findings. The collection of personal data was strictly limited to what was necessary for the research objectives. Participants also provided written consent for their data to be utilised for research purposes. With the participants' consent, the interviews were recorded. Access to the data was restricted to the researcher and the supervising academic. The data are stored securely, and will be destroyed five years after completion of the study (Mertens & Ginsberg, 2019).

3.12 SUMMARY

This chapter delved into the methodology, detailing the interpretivist philosophy, the inductive approach to data analysis and deductive approach to theory development, the qualitative research approach, and the exploratory and descriptive research design. This was followed by a description of the study population and details of the methods used, namely purposive and convenience sampling, semi-structured interviews to collect the data, and thematic analysis to analyse the gathered data. The chapter concluded with the research ethics that were upheld throughout the research. The next chapter reports the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings and interpretations derived from the empirical study, which focused on the readiness factors with regard to the establishment of green teams in organisations within the South African tourism industry. The subsequent section provides a profile of the sample of participants. The rest of the chapter is structured according to the secondary research questions (SRQ2 to RSQ4) and their related research objectives.

For ease of reference, these research questions and objectives are listed again below.

SRQ2: How do managers in tourism perceive and experience the readiness factors with regard to establishing green teams in organisations in South Africa's tourism industry?

SRQ3: What are the challenges faced by managers in implementing green teams in the tourism industry in South Africa?

SRQ4: What are the benefits of the implementation of green teams, as experienced by managers in the South African tourism industry?

SRO2: To identify key readiness factors for organisations in the South African tourism establishing green teams, as perceived and experienced by managers in tourism;

SRO3: To explore the challenges faced by managers in implementing green teams in South Africa's tourism industry;

SRO4: To explore the benefits of the implementation of green teams, as experienced by managers in the South African tourism industry.

In the initial stages of data analysis, the researcher immerses themselves in the collected data to comprehend its context fully. This involves multiple readings of the interview transcripts to grasp the in-depth understanding of the content. After data familiarisation, the researcher proceeds to code the data based on initial observations and theoretical considerations. This step entails systematically identifying key features and significant information within the dataset that relate to the research questions and theoretical

framework. The coding process lays the foundation for subsequent analysis by organising the data in a structured manner.

4.2 PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Participants' demographic information was gathered before the interviews commenced, specifically their job title, type of organisation in the tourism industry, and years' experience, as shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Participant profile

PARTICIPANT	JOB TITLE	TYPE OF ORGANISATION	YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN TOURISM INDUSTRY
P1	Farm manager	Eco-farming and cheese dairy	30
P2	CEO and owner	Various sustainable projects and a tourism magazine	15
P3	Sustainability Manager/HR	Wine tourism	22
P4	CEO and owner	Walking trails and mushroom sanctuary	2
P5	Owner	Eco-lodge	10
P6	Owner	Guest farm and wildlife conservation	28
P7	Owner and operations manager	Sustainable farming and restaurant	30
P8	Sustainability manager	Guest farm and wildlife conservation	26

The participants held various positions, but predominantly that of owner, manager, and/or CEO. Their organisations were diverse, yet centred around sustainability and eco-friendly practices in tourism. The enterprises included eco-farming, a cheese dairy, sustainable projects, tourism media, wine tourism, walking trails, mushroom sanctuaries, eco-lodges,

wildlife conservation, and sustainable farming with a restaurant, indicating a broad spectrum of expertise and perspectives. Their years of experience in the industry ranged widely, from two to 30 years. This diversity in roles and level of experience provided a rich and varied insights into the tourism industry's sustainable practices with regard to green teams at various stages of the process.

The subsequent sections report the findings of the study according to the research questions and the related research objectives. The findings are presented under three main categories, namely the readiness factors with regard to implementation of green teams, the benefits of implementing green teams, and the challenges associated with such initiatives, in alignment with the research questions and objectives. In addition, the findings are linked to extant literature.

4.3 READINESS FACTORS

This section reports the empirical findings related to SRQ2 (*How do managers in sustainable tourism perceive and experience the readiness factors with regard to establishing green teams in organisations in South Africa's tourism industry?*) and SRO2 (*To identify key readiness factors for organisations in the South African tourism establishing green teams, as perceived and experienced by managers in sustainable tourism*).

This section provides participants' views regarding the preparatory steps necessary for organisations in the tourism industry to transition towards more sustainable practices using green teams. It delves into how these factors influence the ability of green teams to initiate, develop, and sustain eco-sustainable tourism initiatives. Five main themes emerged from the data. The themes and their sub-themes are shown in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Emergent themes — green team implementation readiness factors

IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN TEAMS — READINESS FACTORS
Theme 1: <i>Passion and buy-in</i>
Theme 2: <i>Organisational culture</i>

Theme 3: <i>Long-term resources</i>	
Sub-theme: Financial resources	Sub-theme: Expertise
Theme 4: <i>Collaboration in implementation</i>	
Sub-theme: Organisational teamwork	Sub-theme: Community involvement
Theme 5: <i>Continuous improvement</i>	
Sub-theme: Monitoring and evaluation	Sub-theme: Ongoing learning and knowledge sharing

The themes are discussed below, accompanied by supporting quotations from the participant interview transcripts.

4.3.1 Theme 1: Passion and buy-in

Participants indicated the importance of the establishment of green teams being based in a passion for conservation and sustainable eco-tourism. None of the participants mentioned compliance with legislation; all emphasised the voluntary nature of such initiatives. Their experiences indicate that a genuine commitment to these ethical and environmental principles fosters an organisational culture that is conducive to the formation and effectiveness of green teams. This alignment ensures that the teams are not just gestures but are central to the organisation's sustainability objectives, driving meaningful change in practices that resonate with the broader goals of environmental conservation and sustainable tourism. This theme emphasises the importance of members of green teams' personal commitment and alignment with organisational values.

Participants said the following:

P3: "It usually starts off with someone who is passionate about a project..."

P1: *"The staff buy-in is critical, because we don't always get that. We can introduce a wonderful idea, but if you don't have the buy-in, it will never be effective."*

P4: *"... everyone needs to buy in for the business to be a success."*

P8: *"The first thing that we do when we recruit sustainability champions is we look at people that want to make a difference and are in love with the environment and nature."*

P1: *"...someone willing to take ownership."*

P7: *"All of our staff need to participate, but we try to get them involved in projects they are passionate about. We've found that this enhances their willingness to make a difference."*

This theme aligns with the perspective of Farrukh *et al.* (2023:3672), who emphasise the critical role of passion and cultural fit in driving successful team dynamics and initiatives. Moreover, as highlighted by Riisla *et al.* (2021), aligning team members' personal values with organisational culture fosters a more cohesive and effective team, especially in sustainability initiatives. Jia *et al.* (2018) posit that individuals who are passionate about sustainability are more likely to be proactive, creative, and persistent in overcoming challenges, making them invaluable assets to green teams.

Participants also mentioned the importance of buy-in and support of, specifically, top management as an enabler of various other success factors related to the successful establishment of green teams. They noted that top management would have to drive the establishment of green teams and guide their initiatives in synergy with the organisation's strategic objectives. This was seen as essential for embedding sustainability into the organisational principles and ensuring that environmental stewardship is embraced as a core value. Managers should perceive these practical sustainability efforts as integral to the organisation's operational strategy, which should be aligned with the broader goals of environmental responsibility.

Participants further stated:

P5: *"We start by looking at the company's goals, and determine how we can achieve these without damaging the environment."*

P3: *"...we need someone willing to take ownership of the project. It has to add value to the company..."*

P8: *"We first need to get the buy-in from top management ... we need people that are passionate about the project and want to help us drive it..."*

P7: *"All of our staff need to participate, but we try to get them involved in projects they are passionate about. We've found that this enhances their willingness to make a difference."*

Harrison and Ghonim *et al.* (2020:201) stress the significance of strategic alignment in ensuring the effectiveness of sustainability initiatives. Leadership drive is vital to the establishment of a supportive infrastructure for green teams. As highlighted by Helmrich and Chester (2022:4), effective leadership is critical in driving sustainability initiatives and in inspiring and mobilising team members.

Participants indicated that, through eco-advocacy, managers demonstrate their commitment to environmental sustainability, which is crucial for the successful implementation of green teams. However, some participants noted that creating this passion and ensuring buy-in, including from the wider community, could take time, and may hinge on proven successes.

P1: *"After a few successful projects, people have started buying in and participating in the projects."*

P7: *"...due to our strong drive around sustainability, the businesses and community around us have also started buying in."*

In summary, passion and buy-in, starting with management, was indicated as a core readiness factor. While some participants noted that staff suggested initiatives, they noted that management needs to take a leading role in realising innovative ideas. They need to show enthusiasm for sustainability, drive impactful initiatives, and lead by example to create the same passion in employees and ensure their buy-in. They also need to ensure

strategic alignment between the sustainability efforts and the organisational goals and realities.

4.3.2 Theme 2: Organisational culture

Participants indicated the importance of fostering an organisational culture that is supportive of sustainability practices, to ensure ongoing gains and the embedding of the values underpinning sustainability practices. They noted that the whole organisation needs to be dedicated to environmental stewardship for green teams to be effective.

Participants said the following:

P4: *"Everyone that works in the business knows that this is how we do things..."*

P3: *"We don't have a strict selection criteria; we try to motivate as many as possible people to be part of these initiatives, as it forms part of the culture that we try to create."*

P5: *"Well, all our staff is part of the green team because it's a culture we have in the company, and we need all staff to help us to reach our goals."*

P3: *"We need someone willing to take ownership of the project. It has to add value to the company..."*

P3: *"... a willing leader for the project..."*

P6: *"I think, at the start, we as owners will drive the projects, but, in the process, educate our staff about what we are doing. Staff who then show interest to get involved and drive projects can then form part of the team."*

Overall, participants felt strongly that the establishment of green teams should be an organisation-wide effort to foster a culture of sustainability, and viewed eco-advocacy as pivotal in fostering environmental stewardship and implementing sustainable business practices. In this regard, Ogweno (2021: 101) noted that eco-advocacy by means of green teams transcends mere environmental activism; it represents a strategic approach to integrating sustainability into the core values and operations of tourism organisations (Ogweno, 2021:101), thereby ensuring long-term commitment (Tuan, 2019:101). This

commitment is rooted in the understanding that businesses have a responsibility, not only their stakeholders, but also to the environment. As highlighted by Ren *et al.* (2020:968), ethical responsibility in business includes a commitment to sustainable practices that protect and preserve the natural environment. This theme is aligned with the view of Saleem *et al.* (2020), who emphasise that environmental responsibility is becoming increasingly central to corporate ethics.

4.3.3 Theme 3: Long-term resources

Participants noted the importance of resources to enable green teams to function effectively. This theme had two sub-themes, namely financial resources and expertise.

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme: Financial resources

All participants indicated the importance of ensuring sufficient resources to establish green teams and finance their activities.

P3: *"We need to have the finances to drive the project..."*

P3: *"... the main challenge is always the funding of the projects, as it can become quite expensive".*

Participants indicated that establishing green teams requires the long-term commitment of financial and other resources, and that such initiatives require long-range planning to ensure their affordability and sustainability.

P3: *"... need to ensure that it's sustainable over the long term."*

P7: *"The major consideration is whether the project is feasible and whether we will be able to drive the project successfully on a long-term basis."*

P4: *"I think the major challenge is to still make a living while driving these initiatives."*

P1: *"Implementation needs finances, so a budget for the projects is necessary..."*

P5: *"It has to make financial sense..."*

P1 indicated that the use of internal resources requires planning to ensure that other areas of the business run smoothly, to enable ad hoc staff participation and avoid incurring additional costs in running the business.

P1: *"Our business needs to operate smoothly to focus on these initiatives."*

Luo *et al.* (2021:12) and Zhang *et al.* (2020) also note the importance of securing adequate funding for sustainability projects. P8 linked the importance of financial planning with top management's buy-in and support by noting that this would be required for approval of the green team's budget.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme: Expertise

The participants also indicated that expertise is required to plan, cost, and carry out the projects, especially if the projects are not related to the organisation's core business, in which case external consultants may be needed. Furthermore, the viability of projects has to be assessed in terms of their long-term sustainability and potential impact.

P6: *"These projects and the research you have to do before starting takes a lot of time, and you can't really show anything for this time you spend on things that's not actually part of your core business."*

P1: *"I think the only big difference is that we need someone with knowledge about the type of project that we take on. We can't start recycling if no one has a clue about the process."*

P2: *"For us, it's all about the long-term sustainability of the project. We need to ensure that it's feasible and we can continue with the project over the long term."*

P5: *"... discuss how a project could be feasible".*

P7: *"We can't start a project and then not be able to manage it effectively."*

P3: *" you need people to drive the project, but they need to know what they're doing".*

Feasibility involves considering factors such as resource availability, project scope, and the capability to sustain the initiative over time (McLeod, 2021), and a lack of knowledge or expertise can hinder the effective planning and execution of these initiatives, and ultimately scupper such efforts (Agrawal *et al.*, 2023:13). According to Malik *et al.* (2020), effective resource management is crucial for sustainability, which, in tourism, includes the careful utilisation and conservation of natural resources. This knowledge is essential in the tourism industry, where the impact on the environment is direct and significant (Lee *et al.*, 2021). Findler *et al.* (2019:31) and Blak Bernat *et al.* (2023) also note the significance of access to the necessary knowledge and skills for effective management of sustainability initiatives, which could be gained by training staff.

In this regard, P3 warned that organisations should not initially embark on overly complicated and expensive green team initiatives. It is thus important that organisations evaluate the level of expertise of their green teams (Vrchota *et al.*, 2020:281). Chowdhury and Shumon (2020:9) note that such evaluations should not be limited to the implementation of sustainability initiatives, but also the expertise to ensure their long-term effectiveness.

4.3.4 Theme 4: Collaboration in implementation

Participants noted that optimisation of green team initiatives requires establishing and fostering teamwork, both in the organisation and with affected communities. This theme emphasises the collaborative efforts required to translate intentions into actionable strategies and projects.

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme: Organisational teamwork

Participants emphasised cross-functional co-operation and participation to maximise the organisation's internal resources.

Participants noted the following:

P3: "They work together on different projects... It's all about teamwork and practical actions."

P4: *“These teams are the doers in terms of sustainability. They bring together people from various departments to work on eco-friendly projects.”*

P6: *“Green teams are about collective action. They collaborate with each other...”*

Participants noted that a team-based approach is crucial for developing a shared sense of purpose and responsibility towards sustainability, thereby ensuring that the establishment of green teams is not only about individual commitment but also about fostering a supportive and collaborative work environment. This alignment between individual actions and team collaboration is essential for the effective implementation of sustainable practices.

Buijtendijk *et al.* (2020:204) posit that team-based eco-action emphasises the synergistic effect of collaborative efforts in driving sustainable initiatives in the tourism industry. This approach leverages the collective expertise and creativity of team members, fostering a culture of innovation in sustainability. Chin *et al.* (2017:279) suggest that the effectiveness of teamwork lies in its ability to pool diverse skills and perspectives, leading to more holistic and impactful environmental solutions. Green teams working across different departments and sometimes with external stakeholders helps to break down silos and foster a more integrated approach to environmental management (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016:298).

Participants indicated that the passion that team members have for environmental issues energizes the team, fosters innovation, and drives commitment to sustainability goals. When this passion is aligned with the company’s values and culture, it ensures that the green team’s initiatives are not only enthusiastically pursued but also deeply integrated into the organisation's operational ethos. This alignment is seen as essential for creating a cohesive team that can effectively champion and implement sustainability initiatives, thereby enhancing the organisation's overall impact on sustainable tourism. The development of a supportive infrastructure, including networks and systems is essential for the functioning of green teams and the practical execution of sustainability projects (Larsson & Larsson, 2020:585; Willar *et al.*, 2020:115). Participants noted that enabling and encouraging organisational teamwork, in turn, strengthens the desired organisational culture.

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme: Community involvement

Participants emphasised the importance of considering and involving the community in establishing green teams. Such initiatives should consider the needs of the community and involve community members.

P8: *"... aiming to influence not just the company, but also the wider community."*

P6: *"Green teams are about collective action. They collaborate with each other, and sometimes with external parties..."*

P1: *"We also conduct workshops for guests, focusing on sustainable tourism and conservation."*

P8: *"The objective of our green team is to foster a better relationship between tourism and community development."*

Participants indicated that this advocacy has to extend beyond adherence to internal policies, to influencing the broader tourism industry in order to shape a sustainable future for the business and the tourism industry. They highlighted the crucial role of green teams in both educating various stakeholders about sustainability and implementing effective resource management practices. They posited that the community of eco-tourism businesses therefore includes their clients and guests, as well as the affected community.

Participants' views were aligned with that of Tuan (2019:101), who posits that the role of environmental advocacy includes promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst tourists, local communities, and industry. Ryan (2023) states that a focus on community engagement is crucial for ensuring that sustainability initiatives are relevant and beneficial to the local context. Furthermore, a focus on community engagement assists in tailoring initiatives to local needs, thereby enhancing their relevance and ultimate impact (Söderholm, 2020; Waters, 2023).

Community involvement thus encompasses addressing the needs of the affected community and gaining the support and co-operation of clients. Ogweno (2021:101) highlights that eco-advocacy involves not only internal policy changes, but also influencing the broader tourism industry and its stakeholders to implement sustainable

practices. Green teams, in this role, become not only implementers but also educators and influencers, actively shaping the dialogue around environmental stewardship in tourism (Dawo *et al.*, 2022:81). Goedkoop *et al.* (2022) state that community involvement and upliftment are increasingly recognised as vital components of corporate sustainability. Community-driven initiatives focus not just on environmental conservation but also on enhancing the socio-economic conditions of local communities (Anthony, 2023; Esmail *et al.*, 2023:672). Khalid *et al.* (2019:12) state that community empowerment leads to increased awareness and participation in environmental stewardship.

4.3.5 Theme 5: Continuous improvement

Participants noted two important considerations in ensuring continuous improvement, namely constant monitoring and evaluation and ongoing learning and knowledge sharing.

4.3.5.1 Monitoring and evaluation

Participants noted that measuring and tracking progress in sustainability initiatives requires a systematic approach to impact evaluation. This includes using metrics and indicators that reflect the environmental, social, and economic outcomes of these initiatives. Through impact evaluation, managers can determine the extent to which sustainability efforts are meeting their targets, identify areas for improvement, and justify the ongoing investment in green initiatives. It reflects the managerial perspective that for green teams to be perceived as successful and for their efforts to be sustained, their contributions must be quantifiable, demonstrable, and aligned with the organization's strategic sustainability goals.

P3 indicated a formal approach to monitoring and evaluation:

"We do an ethical audit once a year, and then we also have a carbon calculator that we use on a continuous basis."

Other participants noted relying on awareness and observation:

P5: "We measure our success on how well the business is doing in relation with how well we are protecting the environment."

P2: *"We measure ourselves through how much the community gets involved in the projects. If we see increased community involvement, we know we're doing something right."*

P1: *"We have seen that these projects have a positive impact on how the community and our staff view our business."*

P6: *"The success of the projects can be measured quite easily. If we are successful, you will see less waste in the environment, more people working, and the community getting involved in the recycling projects."*

Chomsky (2023) posits that impact evaluation is essential to determine the effectiveness of sustainability efforts and to guide future strategic decisions. Ayarkwa *et al.* (2022) highlight the importance of evaluating the impact of sustainability projects by monitoring the achievement of milestones. Borgert *et al.* (2018:38) note that impact evaluation is crucial for identifying areas of improvement and demonstrating the value of sustainability initiatives to stakeholders.

Thus, while their methods of evaluation varied, participants felt strongly that performance should be measured to ensure the effectiveness of initiatives and enable corrective action, which Flagel (2023) noted is crucial to ensure their long-term success and impact.

4.3.5.2 Ongoing learning and knowledge sharing

All participants indicated that it is vital that organisations continue to learn and share knowledge with the community.

P1: *"Our green team is heavily involved in educational programmes. We have initiatives to educate our staff about sustainability and responsible environmental practices. We also conduct workshops for guests, focusing on sustainable tourism and conservation."*

P5: *"We educate both our employees and guests on the importance of sustainable agriculture practices, which are implemented in our own gardens."*

P8: *"... aiming to influence not just the company, but also the wider community."*

P6: *"We work with local schools and communities, educating them on environmental sustainability..."*

P8: *"We have several educational programmes aimed at local communities, focusing on environmental awareness and sustainability."*

P1: *"Our farming needs to be sustainable. We also need to prove to others that sustainable practices can be successful."*

P3: *"A lack of training and exposure in our teams is probably one of the biggest challenges, as you need people to drive the project, but they need to know what they're doing."*

P4: *"...educating more people."*

In this regard, P5 made an interesting observation: *"In Switzerland, looking after the environment is part of our culture. We've implemented these initiatives from the beginning in South Africa."* Therefore, new knowledge could be gained from unexpected sources, which sources would become accessible in an environment where knowledge sharing is encouraged. Participants' views are aligned to that of Ogweno (2021:101), who posits that green teams have the potential to lead changes in consumer behaviour and industry standards.

The role of green teams in eco-sustainable tourism is not just about conserving the environment, but also about integrating sustainability into business practices in tourism businesses (Baloch *et al.*, 2022:5918). Some participants emphasised that the role of green teams includes aligning business objectives with environmental concerns. In this regard, the World Tourism Organisation (2023) notes that responsible tourism takes into account the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of tourism.

The next section addresses the benefits of implementing green teams in the tourism industry.

4.4 BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING GREEN TEAMS IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Participants were asked their views on the benefits of implementing green teams. The themes shown in Table 4.6 emerged from the interview data.

Table 4.6 Emergent themes — benefits of green team implementation

IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN TEAMS — BENEFITS	
Theme 1: <i>Environmental sustainability</i>	
Sub-theme: Environmental awareness	Sub-theme: Waste reduction
Theme 2: <i>Community upliftment</i>	
Sub-theme: Economic upliftment	Sub-theme: Social upliftment
Theme 3: <i>Enhanced brand image and staff morale</i>	
Theme 4: <i>Business sustainability</i>	

4.4.1 Theme 1: Environmental sustainability

All participants indicated the importance of the overarching goal of environmental sustainability as a result of green teams’ initiatives. Their views were grouped into two categories, namely heightened environmental awareness and waste reduction.

4.4.1.1 *Environmental awareness*

Participants noted that green teams’ activities lead to greater awareness of the importance of environmental conservation, both in the organisation and the affected community, especially with regard to the protection of natural habitats and the preservation of biodiversity.

P2: "... making sure the company not only makes a profit but also cares for the environment."

P4: "They ensure the business practices do not harm the environment, and, where possible, benefit it."

P1: "... focusing on sustainable tourism and conservation."

P5: "The focus of our green team extends to sustainable food production ... which are implemented in our own gardens."

P4: "It always starts with the needs of the farm. Every project is determined by the needs of protecting and uplifting the environment of our farm..."

P6: "The projects will have a definite impact on the environment around us..."

P7: "Our projects have a very positive impact on our environment ..."

P4: "We have built all our houses out of natural resources, and we've expanded this to our hiking facilities as well."

Involving local communities in sustainability projects fosters awareness and a shared sense of responsibility towards environmental stewardship (Kolkowska, 2023). Ogweno (2021:101) states that green teams are crucial in eco-advocacy, given the sector's significant environmental footprint. Tangible environmental conservation efforts lead to measurable ecological benefits, such as reduced waste, improved resource efficiency, and the preservation of natural environments, which are fundamental to the sustainability of the tourism sector. These initiatives further contribute to environmental preservation by fostering a culture with similar values in the broader community (Perkumienė *et al.*, 2023:56).

4.4.1.2 Waste reduction

Most participants highlighted the importance of waste reduction, which includes recycling and promoting a circular economy in the region.

P3: *"One of our main activities is waste reduction. We have implemented extensive recycling programmes, and are constantly looking for ways to reduce our waste output. This includes educating staff and guests about recycling and waste management."*

P7: *"Our green team leads our recycling and energy-saving initiatives. We focus on reducing our environmental footprint through practical actions like installing energy-efficient lighting and promoting recycling."*

P4: *"We are committed to maintaining a small carbon footprint. Our green team's activities include monitoring energy consumption, promoting carbon offsetting initiatives, and implementing energy-saving measures throughout our operations."*

P7: *"I've mentioned a lot of them, but I think our waste reduction project is probably our biggest and ongoing project."*

Most participants noted the importance of reducing and efficiently managing the organisation's resources and waste. This view aligns with the principles of sustainable development (Perkumienė *et al.*, 2023:56). Recycling initiatives play a crucial role in minimising environmental impact and promoting circular economy practices such as recycling. The aim is to minimise and manage the industry's ecological footprint so that tourism destinations can be enjoyed by future generations. The implementation of these initiatives often serves as a showcase of practical sustainability, which then inspires broader community action towards environmental stewardship.

4.4.2 Community upliftment

Green teams are instrumental in advancing eco-education, which involves not only disseminating knowledge about sustainability but also inspiring change in attitudes and behaviours. Participants recognised that the readiness to establish effective green teams is significantly enhanced by their engagement with and contributions to the local communities. This engagement is viewed as a vital aspect of the organisation's sustainability strategy, reflecting a commitment to not only environmental conservation but also socio-economic development. Through this lens, managers perceive green teams as instruments of positive change, fostering community upliftment, and ensuring

that sustainability efforts have tangible benefits for local populations. The experience of integrating community needs and values into sustainability initiatives demonstrates the profound impact that green teams can have on both the organisation and the broader community, reinforcing the essential role of community-centric approaches in the successful implementation of green teams. Goedkoop *et al.* (2022) who state that community involvement and upliftment are increasingly recognised as vital components of corporate sustainability. Community-driven initiatives focus not just on environmental conservation but also on enhancing the socio-economic conditions of local communities (Esmail *et al.*, 2023:672). Participants identified two main areas of upliftment, namely economic and social.

4.4.2.1 Economic upliftment

With regard to economic upliftment, participants said the following:

P6: *"... and will also help with creating jobs..."*

P6: *"... more people working..."*

P7: *"But our community projects where we donate food and other resources is also ongoing, and truly makes a difference."*

P6: *"Our country is at a turning point. Investing in communities is crucial for our continued business success."*

P6: *"The projects will ... also help with creating jobs..."*

Olivero (2023) supports the view that green team initiatives result in communities' economic upliftment. Roscoe *et al.* (2019:742) note that the integration of community needs and values into business sustainability strategies is essential for creating long-lasting positive impacts.

4.4.2.2 Social upliftment

Participants also noted the social upliftment that results from green teams' activities, particularly education and training, with effect evident in both staff and community members.

P6: *"and also ... educating the community..."*

P6: *"We've managed a project where we clean the streets and get the community involved with this, and more and more kids from the community is starting to help us."*

P1: *"We've educated some of our staff members to be able to do school tours on the farms and teach the kids about what we do. So, we've uplifted our staff in this process, and this has also enabled them to teach people in the community."*

P8: *"... aiming to influence not just the company, but also the wider community."*

P6: *"Our team's initiatives are not just about conservation but also community upliftment ..."*

P8: *"We don't necessarily look at sustainability at a level of just conservation, but we're looking at it in a broader scale that includes our community."*

P4: *"...educating more people."*

Iqbal *et al.* (2020:5) highlight the transformative role of sustainability initiatives in empowering communities and enhancing staff skills. Tariq *et al.* (2016:252) emphasise the transformative power of education in achieving environmental goals. According to Ribeiro *et al.* (2022:2897), eco-education initiatives play a pivotal role in transforming organisational and community perspectives towards environmental stewardship. These initiatives often extend beyond the organisation, impacting local communities by promoting sustainable practices (Luke *et al.*, 2022:909). Green teams' efforts often lead to significant developments in community relations. By involving local communities in sustainability projects, green teams contribute to communal upliftment and foster a sense

of shared responsibility towards environmental stewardship (Kolkowska, 2023). This engagement also bolsters the organisation's social licence to operate.

4.4.3 Enhanced brand image and staff morale

Managers indicated that a positive reputation in environmental stewardship can enhance stakeholder trust and customer loyalty. The enhancement of the organisation's reputation is a direct outcome of effective green practices, as these signal to customers, partners, and the broader community the organisation's commitment to sustainability and responsible business practices. This enhanced reputation can translate into increased customer loyalty and attract eco-conscious tourists and partners interested in sustainability collaborations.

Participants noted the following:

P1: "We have seen that these projects have a positive impact on how the community and our staff view our business."

P6: "The success of the projects can be measured quite easily. If we are successful, you will see less waste in the environment, more people working, and the community getting involved in the recycling projects."

P3: "It has to add value to the company, even if it just uplifts the spirit and morale of our staff."

P6: "This project has created a positive experience for our staff and the community around us, and it's a big job, so the more hands that can get involved, the bigger impact we will be able to make."

P3: "We've also received many compliments from our clients about the type of initiatives we focus on, so it's good for our business reputation as well."

P7: "... due to our strong drive around sustainability, the business and community around us have also started buying in."

P4: "This shows people that it's possible, and hopefully motivates them to start their own initiatives."

P7: *"All of our staff need to participate, but we try to get them involved in projects they are passionate about. We've found that this enhances their willingness to make a difference."*

Tangible environmental benefits thus enhance the organisation's reputation as a responsible and sustainable entity (Araújo *et al.*, 2023:118; Moallemi *et al.*, 2020:306). This positive reputation, as noted by Yasar (2023), can lead to increased customer loyalty and business opportunities. Pandey and Kumar (2019) posit that an organisation's reputation for sustainability can significantly impact its relationship with stakeholders, creating additional avenues for collaboration.

4.4.4 Business sustainability

A major benefit of green teams' activities is sustainability of tourism businesses' sustainability. Community-centric approaches not only bolster the socio-economic development of the area, but also enhance the sustainability of the tourism industry itself by creating a supportive environment where tourism can thrive in harmony with local community interests and ecological preservation. Participants said the following:

P6: *"Our country is at a turning point. Investing in communities is crucial for our continued business success."*

P6: *"The projects will have a definite impact on the environment around us, and will also help with creating jobs and educating the community around us."*

P4: *"Our business won't exist if we don't look after the environment. We focus on these projects to grow our business responsibly."*

P7: *"We need to ensure that our tourism industry stays alive by protecting the environment and looking after our community."*

P8: *"Living in the Kalahari, we realised the importance of focusing on sustainability to maintain our business and support the surrounding community."*

P5: *"We start by looking at the company's goals, and determine how we can achieve these without damaging the environment."*

It is clear that green teams, through their roles in eco-advocacy and team-based eco-action, are not just supplementary units but pivotal in driving the shift towards sustainable practices in the South African tourism industry. Their efforts in advocacy and practical action are instrumental in shaping a more sustainable and environmentally conscious tourism sector through efforts such as recycling, waste reduction, carbon footprint management, and conservation of tourist destinations. These initiatives, as Haleem *et al.* (2023) note, are not only environmentally beneficial but also economically sensible, contributing to the long-term viability of the organisation. The role of green teams in resource management demonstrates a commitment to sustainable practices and environmental ethics that are integral to business operations (Hariram *et al.*, 2023).

Participants recognised that their businesses’ long-term success is intertwined with their environmental impact and community wellbeing. Their green teams were born out of a genuine desire to contribute to a more sustainable and equitable tourism industry. Their actions signify a meaningful step towards a future where business success and sustainability are inextricably linked.

The next section discusses the challenges associated with the establishment of green teams.

4.5 CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING GREEN TEAMS

Participants were asked what they considered to be the greatest challenges in implementing green teams in the eco-tourism industry in South Africa. The themes that emerged from the data are shown in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7: Emergent themes — challenges in implementing green teams

IMPLEMENTATION OF GREEN TEAMS — CHALLENGES	
Theme 1: <i>Lack of resources</i>	
Sub-theme: Lack of financial resources	Sub-theme: Lack of expertise
Theme 2: <i>Fostering buy-in and participation</i>	

4.5.1 Lack of resources

4.5.1.1 Lack of financial resources

P4: *"I think the major challenge is to still make a living while driving these initiatives. The main income stream in our part of the country is timber, and, obviously, we're not protecting the environment if we go into that business. So, still making an income and living while protecting the environment is the biggest challenge."*

P4: *"I think the major challenge is to still make a living while driving these initiatives."*

P3: *"We need to have the finances to drive the project..."*

P6: *"These projects and the research you have to do before starting takes a lot of time, and you can't really show anything for this time you spend on things that's not actually part of your core business. I think these projects are long-term investments, and, unfortunately, you have to be willing to spend some money without expecting any quick returns, and that is difficult in business."*

The financial aspect, as noted by Luo *et al.* (2021:12), involves the challenge of securing adequate funding for sustainability projects. This consideration is also linked to time constraints, as green teams must balance the urgency of sustainability initiatives with other operational priorities, and mistakes can be costly (Baba *et al.*, 2021:891). This balancing act is particularly taxing when sustainability projects require long-term investments of time and resources without immediate visible returns, making it a complex task to manage alongside day-to-day business operations.

4.5.1.2 Lack of expertise

Participants said the following regarding lack of expertise and experience:

P1: *"I think the only big difference is that we need someone with knowledge about the type of project that we take on.*

P3: *"A lack of training and exposure in our teams is probably one of the biggest challenges, as you need people to drive the project, but they need to know what they're doing."*

Chowdhury and Shumon (2020:9) state that there is often a lack of the specialised knowledge and expertise required to implement and maintain sustainability practices and initiatives effectively. Agrawal *et al.* (2023:13) note that this knowledge and expertise is required from the start, in the planning of initiatives. Blak Bernat *et al.* (2023) also emphasise the need for expertise in successfully executing sustainability initiatives.

4.5.2 Fostering buy-in and participation

Participants noted that it can be difficult to get buy-in from individuals in the organisation and the community, and that this may take some time to accomplish.

P7: *"All of our staff need to participate, but we try to get them involved in projects they are passionate about. We've found that this enhances their willingness to make a difference."*

P8: *"We first need to get the buy-in from top management ... we need people that are passionate about the project and want to help us drive it..."*

Gaining community support is crucial for the success of green teams' initiatives, as it enhances the relevance, acceptance, and impact of sustainability efforts. However, managers often find this challenging, especially in engaging stakeholders who may have differing interests or a limited understanding of the benefits of sustainable practices. Securing community support is often a complex process that requires effective communication and engagement strategies. Ryba (2022) states that an alignment of individuals' and the organisations' interests is required to create unity.

4.5.3 Initiatives' extensive time horizon

Participants noted that green teams' projects are time-consuming and may take some time to show positive results that encourage community involvement and support.

P6: "These projects and the research you have to do before starting takes a lot of time, and you can't really show anything for this time you spend on things that's not actually part of your core business. I think these projects are long-term investments, and, unfortunately, you have to be willing to spend some money without expecting any quick returns, and that is difficult in business."

P1: "After a few successful projects, people have started buying in and participating in the projects."

The participants' views are aligned with those of Baba *et al.* (2021:891) and Ryba (2022). As highlighted by Flagel (2023), it is therefore essential that organisations assess the viability of projects and their ability to see them through. A feasibility involves considering factors such as resource availability, project scope, and the capability to sustain the initiative over time (McLeod, 2021). Managers and staff must also balance sustainability initiatives with other organisational demands and priorities (Fallah Shayan *et al.*, 2022).

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the study with regard to the conceptualisation of green teams, the readiness factors with regard to their implementation, and the associated benefits and challenges. The readiness factors were found to be passion and buy-in, inculcating an organisational culture that is supportive of their initiatives, and having the required financial resources and expertise. Organisations also need to put strategies in place to ensure teamwork in the organisation and foster collaboration with the local community. There also need to be systems in place to monitor progress and evaluate outcomes, to ensure continuous improvement, supported by ongoing learning and knowledge sharing by all stakeholders. The benefits of green teams' initiatives were identified as enhanced environmental sustainability through heightened environmental awareness and waste reduction, economic and social upliftment of the community, and enhanced brand image and staff morale, which ultimately culminate in enhanced business

sustainability. The main challenges in implementing green teams are a lack of financial resources and expertise, difficulty in fostering buy-in and participation, and the long-term nature of such initiatives.

This concludes the reporting of the findings. The next chapter highlights the main findings with regard to the study's main research objective and research question, namely the readiness factors that need to be taken into account in establishing green teams in eco-tourism organisations in South Africa.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter consolidates the research questions and objectives, followed by a discussion of the managerial implications of the main findings, together with recommendations for practice. Thereafter, the limitations of the study are discussed, together with recommendations for future research.

5.2 RECONCILIATION OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The section provides an overview of the achievement of the study's objectives.

SRQ1 (*How does the literature conceptualise green teams, the implementation readiness factors, and the establishment of green teams?*) was addressed in Chapter 2.

SRQ2 (*How do managers in sustainable tourism perceive and experience the readiness factors with regard to establishing green teams in organisations in South Africa's tourism industry?*; SRO2) was addressed in the reporting of the empirical findings (presented as themes) from the interview data, together with supporting quotations, in Chapter 4, Section 4.4. Relevant literature was also discussed.

SO3 (*To explore the benefits of the implementation of green teams, as experienced by managers in the South African tourism industry*; SRO3) was addressed in Section 4.5.

SRQ4 (*What are the challenges faced by managers in implementing green teams in the tourism industry in South Africa?*; SRO3) was addressed in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.

The main research question of the current study was:

What are the key readiness factors with regard to the establishment of green teams in organisations in the South African tourism industry, as perceived and experienced by managers in tourism?

The study found that the key readiness factors for the implementation of green teams in South Africa's tourism industry are:

- Passion and buy-in;
- An organisational culture that fosters environmental stewardship;
- Long-term resources (financial resources and expertise);
- Collaboration (teamwork in the organisation and involvement of the community);
and
- Continuous improvement (informed by monitoring and evaluation and supported by ongoing learning and knowledge sharing).

The next sections discuss the managerial implications of the findings and offer recommendations for practice based on the main findings.

5.3 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Organisational leaders play a critical role in organisations' readiness to implement green teams. Managers have to engender an organisational culture of sustainable practices by creating a passion for such endeavours, encouraging buy-in, and then embedding these values into the organisation's culture. This involves not only endorsing sustainable practices at the leadership level, but also integrating these practices into the core policies of the organisation. It suggests a top-down approach where leadership's commitment to sustainability sets a precedent for the entire organisation, fostering a culture that values and practices sustainable operations.

Organisational leaders have to ensure that any endeavours are aligned with and integrated into the organisational strategy and consider the organisation's available resources. The next step is to make available the necessary financial resources for the chosen endeavours, and ensure the necessary expertise is available, whether in-house or external. This includes securing dedicated funding for green team activities to ensure they have the necessary resources to implement their initiatives effectively. Literature highlights the importance of employee engagement and training in sustainable practices, which are essential for the effective functioning of green teams. This includes creating an environment where employees feel valued and are motivated to contribute to

sustainability initiatives. Training programmes that educate employees about sustainable practices and their impact could encourage them to participate actively in green teams' initiatives.

Managers also need to ensure that affected communities are consulted and involved in initiatives, and that green teams' efforts are supported by organisational processes. Green teams should not operate in silos; cross-departmental collaboration is vital, and collaboration with affected communities have to be a priority. This involves encouraging the various departments to work together towards common sustainability goals, which will also enable the organisation to leverage diverse employees' expertise and departmental resources.

Organisational leaders should also determine the methods by which these initiatives will be monitored and evaluated, and that the information is used to ensure ongoing improvement. This ensures that green teams assess the effectiveness of their initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions to enhance their efforts. This requires the establishment of communication channels to support knowledge-sharing and the encouragement of ongoing learning.

Leaders may need to overcome resistance to sustainable practices, which resistance could be mitigated through awareness campaigns that educate employees about the benefits of sustainability and incentives to motivate them to adopt sustainability practices.

Together, these strategies provide a comprehensive roadmap for organisations looking to implement or enhance the functioning of green teams in their operations to optimise the effectiveness of these teams in promoting sustainability of both the environment and tourism businesses.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this research study contributes to the theory regarding green teams and sustainability efforts, the study has some limitations. These are reviewed below, together with suggestions of avenues for future research.

The study was limited to a selected few organisations in the South Africa's tourism industry, and future studies could examine organisations' readiness to implement green teams in other countries and industries. The current study was cross-sectional, and future research could be longitudinal, to enable the tracking of progress over time, together with comparisons. Such studies could focus on the long-term effects of green teams' initiatives and explore their dynamics in varied organisational settings, to enhance the understanding of their effectiveness across different contexts. This study was qualitative, and future longitudinal studies could incorporate quantitative metrics to determine the effectiveness of initiatives. Psychological instruments could be employed to measure attitudes towards sustainability and how this may change over time.

5.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a reconciliation of the research objectives and research questions, followed by a discussion of the managerial implications and recommendations based on the key findings. This was followed by a discussion of the limitations of the study, together with recommendations for future research. The findings revealed that to embark on the establishment of effective green teams, initiatives require a concerted effort to create a supportive organisational culture, strategic resource allocation, and collaboration with and involvement of the community. Green teams' initiatives must be monitored closely to ensure ongoing improvement. The study underscores the importance of leadership endorsement in fostering a culture of sustainability, as well as the need for employee training and cross-departmental collaboration to enhance green team functionality. Green team initiatives have to be supported by ongoing learning and knowledge sharing by all stakeholders. It is recommended that these factors be addressed using an integrated approach.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of green teams in the tourism sector, offering practical insights for organisations aiming to enhance their sustainability practices. The study paves the way for further exploration in this field, highlighting the need for continued investigation to fully grasp the complexities and potential of green teams in promoting organisational sustainability. The research sheds light on the various challenges and benefits associated with green team implementation. This exploration enriches the comprehension of the mechanisms through which sustainable practices can

be nurtured and promoted in the tourism industry, contributing valuable insights to the field.

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ANNEXURE A: ETHICAL APPROVAL LETTER



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-484
Fezile.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

30 August 2023

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on, 25/08/2023 the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Exploring factors that enable the readiness of green teams in selected organisations within the South African tourism industry

Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof Y du Plessis

Student: E Peters (24998036)

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Institution Study Number Year Status
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation

Application Type:

Commencement date: 28/08/2023

Risk: Minimal

Expiry date: 28/08/2024

Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

•

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- *The study leader/supervisor (principle investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.*
- *The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.*
- *Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.*
- *The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.*
In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:

- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Rathbone
Digitally signed by Mark Rathbone
DN: cn=Mark Rathbone, o=North-West University, ou=Business management, email=mark.rathbone@nwu.ac.za, c=ZA
Date: 2023.08.30 13:26:32 +02'00'

Prof Mark Rathbone
Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

ANNEXURE B: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Exploring key factors of green team readiness in selected organisations within the South African tourism industry|

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

1. Greet the interviewee and introduce yourself.
2. Ensure you have a voluntary consent form signed with a pseudonym.
3. Notify them that you will record the interview for data transcript and analysis purposes.
4. Explain the purpose of the interview and that you are conducting research on the readiness of green teams within the tourism industry.
5. Mention that their insights and experiences are valuable for understanding the current state of green teams and their impact in the industry.
6. Assure them that all information provided will be kept confidential and data will be anonymous.

A. Demographical Information [this demographic data is only to describe the sample group and not to discriminate or compare]

Please provide some background information about yourself?

- A. Job title
- B. Organisation level
- C. Type of organisation in tourism industry
- D. Years of experience in the tourism industry

B. Specific Questions on Green Team

a) Understanding Green Team

1. How familiar are you with the concept of green teams within the tourism industry?
2. Can you briefly explain what a green team is and their role within the tourism industry?

a) Green Team Implementation [Probe to get full answers]

1. Has your organisation implemented a green team or similar environmental initiative? If yes, could you provide a brief overview of the team's objectives and activities?
2. What motivated your organisation to establish a green team?
3. How are members of the green team selected or recruited?
4. What are the readiness criteria that you take into consideration to establish a green team?
5. How do you differentiate the readiness criteria for the types of projects or initiatives undertaken to promote sustainability within the organisation?
6. How does the green team measure and track its progress towards sustainability goals?

b) Green Team Challenges

1. What are the major challenges or obstacles green teams have faced in implementing sustainable practices within the organisation?

c) Green Team Impact

1. What positive changes or improvements have you observed as a result of the green team's efforts?
2. Can you provide any examples of successful sustainability initiatives led by the green team?

d) Other

Is there anything else you would like to add or any additional insights you would like to share about green teams and sustainability in the tourism industry?

Conclusion

Thank the interviewee for their time and contributions to the research. Remind them about the confidentiality and anonymity of the information shared, if applicable.

Check with them if you can contact them if you want to have more clarity after transcription of the data collected and if they would like to see the transcript. If so ask them for contact details with consent.

ANNEXURE C: INFORMED CONSENT



BUSINESS SCHOOL
BESIGHEIDSKOOL
SEKOLO SA KGWEBO



INFORMED CONSENT FORM

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY: MBA RESEARCH STUDY

RESEARCHER: ELZETH PETERS

CELLPHONE NUMBER: 079 695 3655

E-MAIL: elzethm@gmail.com

DEAR PARTICIPANT,

This Informed Consent Statement serves to confirm the following information as it relates to the academic business science MBA Research Module and subsequent research on the key factors of green team readiness in selected organisations within the South African tourism industry:

1. This study aims to obtain information from individuals who are employed within the private sector of the South African tourism industry.
2. The procedure to be followed is a qualitative research design, using a semi-structured interview guide that will utilise pre-determined, open-ended questions whereby participants are allowed to communicate their views on the noted topic.
3. The estimated completion time for the interview is 30 minutes.
4. If, at any point during the interview, the participant should feel uncomfortable, the participant will have the opportunity to make their discomfort known and immediately end his/her participation.
5. It should also be emphasised that participation in this study is voluntary and with the participant's consent without any form of coercion.
6. The confidentiality, anonymity and privacy of participants are guaranteed.
7. A summarised copy of the final report will be made available to the participants on request.

I, therefore, confirm that I have read and comprehended the Informed Consent Form and give my unqualified consent to Elzeth Peters to utilise the information from the questionnaire in his MBA project and future research.

As a result of this, I grant consent to the processing of certain personal information in terms of section 18 of the POPI Act.

Name and designation	Signature	Date
Supervisor:		
Researcher:		
Participant:		

ANNEXURE D: LANGUAGE EDITOR CERTIFICATE

TERESA KAPP

Phone:
+27 82 789 7878
E-mail:
tekapp@mweb.co.za
info@teresakapp.com

This serves to certify that I duly edited:

Exploring factors that enable the readiness of green teams in selected organisations within the South African tourism industry

E M Peters

I am an accredited editor with the University of Johannesburg, University of Stellenbosch Business School, NWU, UP, UCT, and GIBS, and my clients include the United Nations Global Compact, Absa, FNB, Takealot, and various other universities and organisations in South Africa and Namibia.

Please note that all editing is done in *Track Changes*, and I therefore have no control over what is accepted or rejected by the author. Furthermore, I have no control over text added at a later stage.

Should there be any queries, please contact me on the number provided above.



Teresa Kapp

ANNEXURE E: TURNITIN SUMMARY REPORT

MBA dissertation body only

Student: Elzeth Peters- Date 18 March 2024

ORIGINALITY REPORT

Checked by supervisor: Prof Yvonne du Plessis

15%

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