A Case Study Investigation of Adventure Tourism Operators
in National Parks

by

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BScosc, MArts
A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Leisure and Tourism Studies, Newcastle Business School
University of Newcastle, Australia
January, 2013
Statement of Originality

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Po-Yu Wang
Writing this Ph. D thesis has been a long and hard climb. I fell numerous times, but the Lord Jesus always sent angels to help me keep going. I would like to thank those who have encouraged me, for without their help it would have been impossible for me to finish this course. I owe a special expression of gratitude to my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Kevin Lyons. Kevin, your guidance and encouragement has been invaluable. Your unflagging enthusiasm for my work has been inspirational. I also give my utmost thanks to my co-supervisor Dr. Tamara Young who has been my teacher and mentor for much of my PhD studies. Both Kevin and Tamara have tirelessly read through my numerous drafts. I am extremely grateful for their enthusiasm and patience, their positive feedback, and their intellectual and practical insight through their constructive criticism of my chapter drafts.

I also give my heartfelt thanks to my colleagues and friends at the University of Newcastle. A special note of appreciation is extended to Dr. Annona Pearse and Dr. Patricia Johnson who have helped me as an international student studying at the University of Newcastle. Because of your great help and care, I was able to keep my study on track and finish it. Thanks also to Dr. Paul Stolk, Dr. Po-Hsin Lai, Dr. Anne Buchmann, and Dr. Joanne Hanley who have extended their friendship and support. My thanks also go to Dr. Guan-Jang Wu, Dr. Chung-Chi Wu, Professor Ching-Yun Huang, Professor Meng-Ching Hu, and Professor Hui-Chuan Wei, who have encouraged me so much in my final stage of PhD study. All these friends have supported me emotionally and intellectually over the years. I thank them wholeheartedly for encouraging me in the ups and downs of being a postgraduate researcher.

Special thanks also go to my Aussie families, in particular Mike and Leigh Ann Healy. You are my parents in Australia. I have received so much love from you. To Peter and Lisa Yates, Jim and Anne Healy, David and Melody Healy, Ben and Nicole Healy, Daniel Healy, Emily Healy, and Scott and Amy Matsen - thank you all for going the distance with me in my Newcastle study years. Your support and prayers have been the best gifts from God. You have all enriched my life in many ways. My thanks also go to the Saints in Taiwan who have prayed for me throughout these years. Now we can say “Glory to God, Hallelujah!”

I owe special thanks to my family for their unconditional love and unwavering support. Thank you to my parents Long-Sheng and Chuan-Yin, and my brother Ming-Jun. You have always been there for me and I would not have got this far without you! And, lastly, an enormous thank you to my beautiful wife, Sui-Hui (Sophia) Shih. Thank you for always being there for me in this PhD journey. We have gone through so many difficulties and I will hold your hand to the end of my life.
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Abstract

As the demand for adventure tourism in national parks increases, the number of adventure tour operators also increases, and the debate regarding their presence in national parks ensues. Conservation then competes with adventure tourism supply and as such is of growing concern to national parks management, particularly in New South Wales (NSW), Australia. This thesis focuses on the operators’ subjective interpretation of adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks, and explores why the operators have particular foci in and perspectives on the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. This thesis draws on role theory and selected motivational theories as a foundation for exploring values and behaviours. A qualitative case study design was employed and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 24 adventure tour operators based in four NSW national parks. Research results indicated that the interviewed operators were motivated by multiple factors, with lifestyle being the overarching and most important motivator driving them to engage in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. This thesis found the operators played a variety of roles in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. These roles were played out in relation to their concerns for clients, the natural environment and their businesses. The role of being an adventure tourism professional was the most salient identity for most operators in this thesis. This thesis also found participants ultimately placed their businesses at the centre of their value systems. Therefore, operators’ endeavours with regard to conservation were not initiated from a concern for the natural environment, but, rather a concern for their businesses. Despite this central focus the operators expressed strong biocentric values and a strong desire to contribute to conservation of national parks. The findings of this thesis were examined in light of this juxtaposition between business values and conservation values and how these impacted operators’ decisions and behaviours. This thesis concludes by examining how the findings challenge current approaches to the management of tourism in national parks and makes recommendations for further research.
Chapter One
Introduction to the Topic

Since the end of the Second World War, with changes in values, demographics, income, technology and leisure time, tourism has become increasingly part of modern society (Urry, 1990; Weaver & Lawton, 2010). The growth of tourism in the latter half of the twentieth century has led to different forms of tourism, such as adventure tourism, emerging to cater for the increasing diversity of tourist needs. Cohen (1972) asserts that when tourism became gradually institutionalised as mass tourism, non-institutionalised tourists, such as explorers and drifters, increased. More and more individuals sought to differentiate or distinguish themselves from mass tourists. These individuals pursue tourism not only for relaxing or escaping, but also to fulfil their unique personal needs and to create meaningful life experiences (Urry, 1990; Wearing, Stevenson & Young, 2010). Such individuals are increasingly interested in discovering different places and/or experiencing different activities, rather than being passive recipients of the predetermined and predictable. Consequently, as an alternative to mass tourism, different forms of special interest and/or niche tourism, such as adventure tourism, ecotourism, wildlife tourism, and nature-based tourism, are now popular and widely offered in the market to meet different tourist needs (Derrett, 2001; Robinson & Novelli, 2005).

As a form of special interest tourism, adventure tourism has experienced significant growth in the last two decades. Millington, Locke and Locke (2001) assert that in 2000, the international adventure tourism market included four to five million trips globally. Heyniger (2006) draws upon statistics of adventure tourism from 2000 to 2005 to reveal that the global expansion of adventure tourism is evident. These statistics include, for example, an increasing number of adventure travellers, tour operators specialising in adventure tourism and forecasts of fast growing demand for adventure tour activities in the future. Buckley (2010) claims that adventure tourism has become a global industry with a total annual turnover of around US$1 trillion. In Australia, in 2008 adventure tourism attracted more than 17 million international and domestic visitors, contributing in excess of $23 billion to the national economy (Tourism NSW, 2009a). To cater for the increasing demand of adventure tourism, the
number of adventure tour operators has significantly increased. Adventure tour operators work directly with these tourists providing access to adventure activities, relevant specialised equipment, skilled instruction and guidance, transport and a range of related services that enable the adventure tourists to satisfy their adventure needs (Buckley, 2006; 2007). Adventure activities range from high risk, such as rock climbing, white-water rafting and skydiving, to non-hazardous, such as bushwalking and whale watching (Promfet, 2006; Sung, Morrison & O’Leary, 2000). Some adventure tour operators work independently while others work with other parts of the supply chain to offer packages for tourists in a specific destination (Buckley, 2010; Williams & Soutar, 2005). Regardless of the size and scope of adventure tour operation, operators are increasingly reliant upon specific natural environments, resources and landscapes often located within protected areas, especially national parks, for conducting their businesses (Herremans, Reid & Wilson, 2005; Williams & Soutar, 2005; Wilson, Nielsen & Buutjens, 2009). This increasing supply of adventure tourism in national parks is not surprising as the context in which tourists seek to satisfy their desire for adventure is relatively homogenous insofar as it is typically in outdoor, natural and often remote landscapes (Buckley, 2010; Sung, 2004; Swarbrooke, Beard, Leckie & Pomfret, 2003).

Varying definitions of adventure tourism have emerged in the literature over the past two decades. However, most tend to highlight the important role which the natural context plays in the experience. For example, Buckley (2006: 1) defines adventure tourism as:

Guided commercial tours where the principle attraction is an outdoor activity that relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requires specialised sporting or similar equipment, and is exciting for the tour clients.

Buckley’s definition highlights natural features and outdoor activities as two important elements constituting the nature of adventure tourism. However, it is the growing emphasis upon national parks and protected areas as central to the experiences of adventure that are of particular interest to this thesis. National parks are natural areas legally set aside to primarily protect unique or endangered natural resources or cultural heritage, while also providing opportunities for the public to
gain recreational and educational experience (Butler & Boyd, 2000; Dudley, 2008). National parks have become important in tourism promotion and they are frequently seen in marketing. These areas are promoted by many countries as ‘must-see’ attractions, so they are well-known labels and/or images to the public, compared to other types of protected areas (Hall & Frost, 2009a; Reinius & Fredman, 2007). National parks often contain natural features, such as cliffs, rivers, canyons, and diverse fauna and flora that create ideal contexts for adventure tourism (Darst & Armstrong, 1980; Ewert, 1989; Williams & Soutar, 2005). Moreover, these areas usually provide public infrastructure such as trails, roads, toilets, first-aid systems, signage and interpretation for visitors’ convenience to enjoy the parks (Buckley, 2004; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). These factors combine to facilitate the development of adventure tourism in national parks (Buckley, 2004; Williams & Soutar, 2005).

For example, in 2009, among international and domestic tourists planning nature-based experiences in Australia, including rock climbing and white water rafting, national parks were the most popular destinations (66%). Moreover, the most popular activity among tourists seeking a nature-based experience was bushwalking (71%) (Tourism Research Australia, 2010).

However, the increasing demand of adventure tourism, as well as other forms of tourism, is creating a variety of pressures on national parks. Tourism consumes considerable natural resources and places pressure on the natural environment for the purpose of gaining enjoyable experiences (Eagles & McCool, 2002; Newsome, Moore & Dowling, 2002). Accordingly, when the demand for tourism in national parks increases, so too does the pressure on the parks’ environments and resources. Hall and Frost (2009a) contend that conservation and recreation, including tourism, have been regarded as a major problem for national parks management. However, an alternative perspective suggests that some forms of nature-based tourism are exemplars of sustainable development in national parks and may help with broader conservation efforts (e.g. Herremans et al., 2005; McCutcheon, Eagles, Havitz & Glover, 2009; New South Wales Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks [TTNP], 2008). Sustainable tourism in national parks is a balancing act that involves meeting tourist needs while protecting the environment for future generations (Fennell, 2008; Hall & Frost, 2009a). Increasingly, national parks agencies have begun collaborating
more closely with tour operators, including adventure tour operators, to achieve that balance (Moore & Weiler, 2009; Wilson, Nielsen & Buutjens, 2009) as they seek to engage with sustainable development principles that inform contemporary national parks policies globally.

Since the World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED] launched the concept of sustainable development in 1987, sustainability has become the focus of the global political agenda. Over the course of the past two decades this agenda has shaped debates about sustainability of tourism (Bramwell & Lane, 1993; Moore & Weiler, 2009). The concept of sustainable development is generally regarded as “development that meets the goals of the present without comprising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987:43). Based on this concept, sustainable development emerged as:

A means of reconciling economic growth with the need to preserve the earth’s physical environment and life support processes- air, water, soil and biodiversity. (Harris & Leiper, 1995: xvii)

Sustainable development is at the centre of debates about the management and development of tourism in national parks.

**Tourism and Sustainable Development of National Parks**

Nature-based tour operators are considered ideal partners for national park agencies in achieving sustainable development of tourism in national parks (Herremans et al., 2005; McCutcheon et al., 2009; Wilson et al., 2009). It has been argued that forms of nature-based tourism, such as adventure tourism, ecotourism and wildlife tourism, play an important role in countering the environmental degradation that emanates from mass tourism (Robinson & Novelli, 2005; Fennell, 2008).

Collectively, operators providing nature-based tourism in national parks are integral in the movement from an anthropocentric view to an ecological view of the management of tourism in national parks (Herremans et al., 2005). It has been acknowledged that these operators are well positioned to provide education and
deliver messages about minimal impact to help tourists understand the importance of the protection of the natural resources and ecosystems in national parks (Armstrong & Weiler, 2002; Williams & Soutar, 2005). Moreover, nature-based tourism providers are in a position to change the habits or modify behaviours of tourists, because they engage tourists on a more personal level (Weiler & Davis, 1993; Randall & Rollins, 2009).

Nevertheless, fears of tourism in national parks leading to over-commercialisation are not uncommon among national parks’ managers, the public users of parks and conservation advocates. Brown (2009) claims the business and profit-making focus and values held by commercial tour operators in national parks will over-ride tour operators’ interest in protecting the natural environment. Similarly, when seeking collaboration with nature-based tour operators, local communities and environmental groups are concerned that business profit will take precedence over protection (Darcy & Wearing, 2005; Eagles & McCool, 2002). Furthermore, Eagles (2009) warns that increasing the collaboration with nature-based tour operators needs to be considered carefully otherwise, Eagles (2009) argues, national parks will be dominated by operators with a focus on profitable outcomes and the initial ecological intention to establish national parks will be lost.

Compared to other types of nature-based tour operators, there is some evidence to suggest that adventure tour operators may play a significant role in the sustainable development of tourism and conservation in national parks. Adventure tourism has more active interaction with natural resources, compared to other forms of nature-based tourism such as ecotourism and wildlife tourism. Climbing rocks, paddling kayaks in pristine streams, setting up anchors on trees or rocks, for example, all create direct and/or perpetual influences on the natural environment (Williams & Soutar, 2005). Furthermore, this form of tourism requires participants to actively interact with the natural environment, not just passively observing it (Buckley, 2006, 2010; Ewert, 1989, 1994). Some scholars have argued that adventure tourism could be the last sustainable form of nature-based tourism (Newsome et al., 2002). Therefore, as suppliers of adventure tourism, adventure tour operators should be
encouraged to pay more attention to minimising impacts on the natural environment and educating their customers about the importance of environmental sustainability.

While adventure tour operators may play a significant role in the sustainable development of national parks, research in this field is relatively new. Buckley (2010) argues that compared to other leisure/recreation/tourism studies, research in adventure tourism is in its infancy. Further, within this under-researched arena, while much has been written about adventure tourists, adventure tour operators have received less attention (Buckley, 2006; 2010; Schott, 2007; Williams & Soutar, 2005). There have been calls for more empirical research examining adventure tour operators, particularly focused on how they interpret themselves and their operation (e.g. Herremans et al., 2005; Torland, 2011; Xie & Schneider, 2004).

When discussing nature-based tour operators’ influences on the sustainable development of national parks, studies largely focused on operators of ecotourism services (e.g. Armstrong & Weiler, 2002; Powell & Ham, 2008), which some scholars suggest ecotourism can involve only limited interaction between tourists and the natural environment (Fennell, 2001; 2008). Adventure tour operators, who may be more directly involved in guiding tourist behaviour and interacting with the natural environment, received only minimal attention. A lamentable gap in the literature exists with respect to the experiences of the people who supply adventure tourism, especially in national parks.

Russell, Lafferty and Loudon (2008) suggest tour operators’ perspectives on tourism in protected areas is important for natural area managers to understand if they hope to improve the management and conservation of natural resources. In this thesis, such perspectives are seen as a product of much deeper value systems that are not well understood and yet are likely to be a central factor in building and sustaining successful partnerships between national park agencies and adventure tour operators.

It has been argued that value-incongruence is often the primary barrier stopping the collaboration between stakeholders in the management of national parks (Stevenson, Airey & Miller, 2008). Adventure tour operators’ values that underpin commercial
adventure tourism supply in national parks, is likely to affect how they conduct their businesses. These values shape, and manifest in adventure tour operators’ motives, roles, identities, and behaviours.

**Motivation, Roles, Identities and Values: The Sources of Sustainable Behaviour**

Motivation, roles, identities and values have been highly used in different types of tourism research, particularly to understand behaviours in different contexts (Scarles & Liburd, 2010; Ross, 1998). These concepts have been employed by many studies as central to providing explanations and predictions in behaviours associated with leisure, recreation and tourism (e.g. Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Patterson & Pan, 2007; Torland, 2011; Weiler & Davis, 1993). The theories and related studies of the above concepts will be critically reviewed in Chapter Four; however a brief introduction to these concepts is warranted here.

Motivation is the driving force by which people achieve goals; it strongly influences people’s decisions to conduct in particular behaviours (Gnoth, 1997; Crompton, 1979), such as deciding to establish an adventure tourism business in a national park. Dann (1981) claims that motivation can be categorised into push and pull categories. Push motives refer to an individual’s intangible, intrinsic desires to undertake particular behaviours, such as the desires for escape and relaxation. Pull motives, on the other hand, refer to the factors attracting an individual to engage in particular actions, such as scenic attractions and historical sights. In leisure and tourism studies, push motives are often more important than pull motives in people’s leisure behaviour (Benson & Seibert, 2009; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). Although human actions are motivated by different push and pull factors, limited studies regarding the motivation of adventure tour operators largely focus on a passion for adventure activities (Schott, 2007; Swarbrooke et al., 2003). It would be unusual, however, if engaging in an adventure tourism business only relied on a single motive. In addition to a passion for adventure activities, there is likely to be other motivational factors driving operators to be involved in commercial adventure tourism supply, such as the increasing demand of adventure tourism in national parks.
While motivational factors are important, understanding the roles operators undertake as they manage or direct their businesses will provide additional insights that move beyond motivational frameworks. A role is “the set of expectations tied to a social position that guide people’s attitudes and behaviour” (Burke & Stets, 2009: 114). It is evident that a person’s role guides his/her behaviours towards particular objects, and vice versa his/her behaviours may reflect the meanings of the role he/she plays. In addition, a role identity is the salience a particular role plays in shaping oneself (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Adventure tour operators’ own perspectives about their involvement in adventure tourism and their operation in national parks will provide important insights into the roles these operators undertake that may contribute to or detract from the sustainable development of national parks. Central to this is a need to understand the roles operators play in their day to day operation and the factors that shape and influence those roles. As Moore and Weiler (2009: 131) suggest there is a need to “gain breadth and depth of understanding of the factors and contexts contributing to partnership successes and failures”.

At the more fundamental level, understanding operators’ values is integral to explaining why adventure tour operators have particular motives, and adopt particular roles. Values function as standards guiding ongoing activities, and also as general plans employed to resolve conflicts and make decisions (Rokeach, 1973). Based on this nature, values are the fundamental factors guiding people’s motivation, attitudes and self-identity (Ajzen, 2001; Fulton, Manfredo & Lipscomb, 1996; Hitlin, 2003). In essence, values are at the core of human behaviour. Values held by tour operators as stakeholders in national parks have been suggested as a central consideration when increasing any partnership with them (e.g. Stevenson et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2009).

Indeed, national parks have become contested spaces due to the involvement of different stakeholders with different values (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Young, 2009). Debate regarding how national parks should be managed often occurs because different interest groups hold different values (Stevenson et al, 2008; Vaske &
Donnelly, 1999). In order to engage in the debate, it is important for government agencies and national park managers to understand what values are held by different stakeholders (Steel, List & Shindler, 1994; Higham & Maher, 2007). Similarly, Sirikaya and Uysal (1997) suggest that more research into the values of tour operators can help governments facilitate partnership with tour operators that are mutually beneficial.

New South Wales as a Research Case

The State of New South Wales (NSW) provides a valuable context for examining adventure tour operators in national parks. NSW lies on the east coast of Australia (see Figure 1.1) and it is the most populated State of Australia. Its abundant cultural, natural, business and educational resources attract numerous visitors, and these visitors bring a considerable amount of revenue to the state (Tourism NSW, 2011a). For example, in the year of 2010, NSW received 23.4 million domestic and 2.8 million international overnight visitors. Visitors’ expenditure in NSW was $18.4 billion (Tourism NSW, 2011b). Tourism is now one of the biggest industries in NSW (Tourism NSW, 2011b).

Figure 1.1 Location of New South Wales
Source: Bluemountainsaustralia (2004)
However, in 2008 it had been argued that NSW was progressively losing market share of Australian tourism (declined 8% from 2004 to 2007), because the State Government had ignored the importance of tourism to the state. Therefore, the State Government was urged to change the situation of declining tourism numbers in NSW. Amending national park policy for increasing tourism in national parks and developing special interest tourism were the two major strategies employed by the State Government to stimulate the tourism market of NSW (Brown, 2009; O’Neill, 2008; Wearing & Lyons, 2008).

Like most national parks in the world, national parks in NSW have been designated as high priority for both the domestic and international tourism industry, particularly nature-based tourism (Tourism NSW, 2011c). The market of nature-based tourism in NSW national parks has been steady (over 22 million visits each year), even when the general tourism market in NSW was declining during 2004-2007 (O’Neill, 2008; TTNP, 2008). Further, at the end of 2008 approximately 400 commercial outdoor recreation licenses for activities including rock climbing, canyoning and bushwalking as well as marine park permits for charter fishing, scuba diving and whale and dolphin watching had been granted by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). These licenses and permits comprised one-third of the total number of commercial licenses granted by the NPWS (Department of Environment and Climate Change [DECC] NSW, 2008a). The NSW State Government noticed these trends and aimed to encourage and promote nature-based tourism in national parks as part of a strategy to recover the declining tourism market for NSW (Brown, 2009).

The report of 2008 NSW Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks [TTNP] plays a significant role in such promotion. Two State Government bodies, Tourism NSW and DECC [now Office of Environment and Heritage], organised the Taskforce on Tourism and National Parks to provide advice for the NSW State Government so as to enhance the level of tourism in NSW national parks while also being compatible with the conservation of the natural and cultural heritages in these areas. As the report states:
The Taskforce was asked to identify ways to promote and protect the State’s biodiversity and cultural heritage values through appropriate use of its national parks and reserves. (pp. 2)

In the report, the Taskforce clearly states that protecting the natural and cultural resources and ecosystems is still the primary task of NSW national parks; tourism must be developed in a sustainable way so as not to damage these resources and systems. Therefore, sustainable nature-based tourism was the preferred form of tourism suggested by the Taskforce to launch in NSW national parks. This preference of nature-based tourism is evident in the report’s first key finding:

Sustainable nature tourism opportunities in key regions offering outstanding experiences can be a significant point of differentiation between destinations, encouraging people to visit Sydney or regional New South Wales and to stay for longer periods. Positive sustainable nature tourism experiences will increase the likelihood of repeat visitation and encourage visitors to recommend their experiences to friends. (pp. iv)

One vital method that TTNP suggests to improve the development of sustainable nature-based tourism in NSW national parks is through increasing partnerships and collaborations with nature-based tour operators. For example, the report states:

Tourism NSW and DECC can assist these operators [nature-based tour operators] in a number of areas including environmental awareness and sustainability, business planning, marketing, website development, product development, packaging and clustering product, product pricing, tourism distribution systems, and utilising market research. Engagement with industry organisations should support where ever possible industry standards, training and accreditation processes. (pp. 74)

This report shows that the partnership largely focuses on business development while environmental sustainability occupies a smaller part of the relationship. Furthermore, tour operators may demand additional services and access in NSW national parks. Therefore, some environmentalists argue that increasing the collaboration with tour operators may shift the major task of NSW national parks from conservation to commercialisation (Brown, 2009). “Conservation first, recreation second” has been the primary objective of the management of NSW national parks for a long period of time (Brown, 2009:10; DECC, 2007: 19). The encouragement of nature-based
tourism may create more impacts on both the management of and the natural environment in NSW national parks (Brown, 2009).

Within this debate, nature-based tour operators’ behaviours and values become central in determining whether nature-based tourism in NSW national parks will become more conservation or commercial-based. Nature-based tour operators’ motivation, roles, identities and values, which significantly influence their behaviours of supplying tourism in national parks, are now the key factors determining success or failure of sustainable development of tourism in NSW national parks.

Among different forms of nature-based tourism, adventure tourism seems to be favoured by the NSW State Government to promote tourism in national parks. After the release of TTPN report, in 2009 the State Government produced two campaigns to promote adventure tourism in NSW. The first one was “Over 55s Travel Market-Industry Must Respond to ‘Shades of Gray’” (Tourism NSW, 2009b). In this announcement Tourism NSW encourages tour operators to actively engage with adventure travellers in the 55 years and over market. Such a strategy identifies Baby Boomers who are looking for a unique and different tourism experience. Activities unique to the place they are travelling to or adventure activities such as kayaking, hiking and cycling are considered to be what Baby Boomers look for. Tourism NSW (2009b) suggests that tour operators should provide more adventure tours to cater for the needs of the Baby Boomer generation.

The second announcement was “Boy’s Own Adventure” released in July 2009. The NSW State Government discovered that in 2008 adventure tourism brought Australia a considerable number of international and domestic visitors, as well as contributing a large amount of revenue to the national economy (Tourism NSW, 2009a). Due to the diverse natural settings in NSW, many of them ideal for adventure activities, the State Government aimed at attracting thrill seeking visitors to the State. As then NSW Minister for Tourism, Jodi Mckay, said (Tourism NSW, 2009a):
We know NSW is a great place to work and relax but it’s also Australia’s premier adventure tourism destination. The *Boy’s Own Adventure* campaign specifically targets male travellers and highlights the diversity and variety of adventurous, outdoor and extreme activities available in NSW.

Indeed, NSW is a traditional destination for adventure tourists. Hall and McArthur (1994) assert that the Blue Mountains area, around 1.5 hours’ drive from Sydney, is one of the earliest regions in which adventure tourism emerged in Australia. Tourism NSW (2011a) also states that surfing, skydiving, mountain biking, horse riding and other diverse outdoor adventure activities have been offered in NSW for a long time. In summary, NSW State Government’s active promotion of adventure tourism and the traditional destination of adventure tourism position it as an ideal case study context for examining adventure tour operators in national parks.

**Research Aim, Objectives and Approach**

Tourism in national parks has engendered debates over management since national parks were firstly established (Hall & Frost, 2009a). Tourism supply in national parks is no exception. An extensive body of literature exists on the concerns of increasing supply of tourism in national parks. Tourism supply in national parks has become an important issue involving the economy, communities, policy and the natural environment; however tourism suppliers, especially those of adventure tourism operators, are not well understood or documented. With the need for tourism and conservation to co-exist, the realities of how adventure tour operators interpret their own position needs to be examined. NSW provides an important case study context for such an examination as the NSW State Government seeks to encourage more adventure tourism in national parks. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to critically examine adventure tour operators in the case of NSW national parks. Given this aim, the objectives of this thesis are:

1. To investigate the factors motivating adventure tour operators to engage in adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks.
2. To examine the roles of adventure tour operators in NSW national parks and the factors influencing the performance of those roles.
3. To explore the role identities of adventure tour operators in NSW national parks.
4. To identify the values held by adventure tour operators in NSW national parks that shape their behaviours as operators.

In order to meet these objectives, this thesis employed a qualitative case study as the research approach to examine adventure tour operators in NSW national parks. Qualitative research is suggested as an ideal approach to gain insights and holistic understanding of social phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Patton, 2002), such as tourism. This approach allows for an examination of people’s own interpretation, concepts and behaviour and also other descriptive data to understand different social phenomena (Sarantakos, 2005). This thesis focuses on ensuring adventure tour operators explain their own experiences and perceptions of adventure tourism operation in NSW national parks. Moreover, although there is an increasing body of literature exploring motivation, roles and values of tour operators, these studies have involved quantitative surveys (e.g. Getz & Carlsen, 2005; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007; Torland, 2011) rather than qualitative research that enable the voice of operators to be heard. Qualitative research, therefore, is regarded as the most appropriate approach to conduct the research in this thesis.

In addition, a case study approach was central to this thesis. The purpose of a case study is to “understand a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2009: 13); and a case study is suitable for pursuing in-depth analysis and perceives respondents as experts (Sarantakos, 2005). Increasing the collaboration with adventure tour operators is a debate currently taking place in NSW. The co-existence of conservation and commercialisation in NSW national parks is at the centre of the debate. Therefore, the study described in thesis is timely. This thesis seeks a deeper understanding of adventure tour operators through interviews that gain insights into their motivation, roles, identities and values.

Twenty four adventure tour operators in four national parks in the Blue Mountains region and Hunter region were selected to take part in the research project of this thesis. In order to popularise nature-based tourism in NSW national parks, TTNP
(2008) suggests that Sydney and surrounds (2-3 hours from Sydney) should be the first central areas to promote this form of tourism. Within this area, TTNP identifies both the Blue Mountains region and the Hunter region as two of the four ‘focal points’ in ‘Sydney and Surrounds Key Product Enhancement Focal Points’ (see Figure 1.2). These two regions are also two of the top five tourist destinations in NSW (Tourism NSW 2011a). The Blue Mountains region and the Hunter region have similar distance to Sydney and provide diverse types of national parks as well as adventure tourism. In these two regions, Blue Mountains, Barrington Tops, Worimi and Port Stephens-Great Lakes national parks have a variety of adventure tour operators supplying diverse adventure tourism activities, such as rock climbing, bushwalking, kayaking, diving and dolphin watching. These national parks have been selected because of the diversity of activities, allowing for more critical analysis of the role of adventure tour operators across a broader range of activities. More details of the sample, methodological frameworks and techniques, and the theoretical positioning of the study described in this thesis will be elaborated upon in Chapter Five.

**Structure of the Thesis**

This chapter provided background and justification on the importance of this thesis. The aims and objectives of the thesis described in this chapter provide a framework and systematic pathway for the chapters to follow.

Chapter Two contextualises this thesis by reviewing the literature that pertains to the link between tourism, nature and commodification. This chapter discusses tourism’s relationship with and its impacts upon the natural environment. Moreover, this chapter discusses sustainable tourism and how sustainable tourism has been applied to national parks contexts. Also central to this chapter is an examination of the emergence of adventure tour operators in national parks, strongly relating to the debates about the commodification of adventure experiences.
Figure 1.2  Sydney and Surrounds Key Product Enhancement Focal Points
Source: NSW Task Force on Tourism and National Parks (2008: xv)
Chapter Three examines the literature regarding national parks management and policy. Adventure tour operators are directly affected by the policies and related management of national parks. Therefore, it is important for the present study to consider how tourism supply has been regulated in national parks contexts. Furthermore, this chapter specifically examines the current planning and management of tourism in national parks in Australia and New South Wales with particular focus upon the management of adventure tourism supply.

Chapter Four focuses on the concepts, theories and studies of motivation, roles, identities and values. These concepts are integral elements to gaining a holistic picture of adventure tour operators’ behaviours and perceptions of adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks. Leisure and tourism studies relevant to these concepts are also reviewed as a foundation for understanding why operators establish their adventure tourism businesses in national parks, how adventure tour operators view themselves and their role in supplying tourism services in national parks.

Chapter Five critically examines the methodological approach taken in this thesis. This chapter commences with the epistemological positioning of this thesis, followed by the justification of the employment of qualitative research. The research strategy, method of data collection, sampling and samples, and data analysis are discussed in the methodology chapter. Research limitations are also discussed in the last section of the chapter.

The results and discussion of the case study are presented in Chapters Six, Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight. Chapter Six examines the factors motivating adventure tour operators to engage in adventure tourism businesses in national parks. Chapter Six begins by describing the selected adventure tour operators’ demographic profiles. The chapter then presents the push and pull motives driving the operators to establish their businesses in NSW national parks, which attempts to go beyond the traditional focus of passion for adventure activities as the single factor motivating operators to be involved in the adventure tourism industry. Moreover, the Motivation-Hygiene Theory (Herzberg, Mausner & Snyderman, 1959) was employed to explain the
motives identified by this thesis more hierarchically. Scholarly literature of tour operators’ profiles and motivation are also linked to the findings of this chapter.

Adventure tour operators’ roles in national parks and factors affecting their performance of the roles are discussed in Chapter Seven. This chapter initially explains the roles recognised by adventure tour operators themselves to present what an adventure tour operator should be in national parks. Following this, the chapter examines the factors influencing the performance of the operators’ roles in NSW national parks. Meanings underpinning the roles and operators’ perspectives on issues regarding commercial adventure tourism supply in national parks are the key points in this chapter. Moreover, this chapter employs Burke’s (1980) Identity Theory to explain what role would be more salient for the operators to play out in the context of tourism in national parks. Scholarly literature of roles and identities are also linked to this chapter to explain how adventure tour operators influence adventure tourism in national parks and describe the practical issues of commercial adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks.

Chapter Eight discusses values held by the operators and evaluates the findings presented in Chapter Six and Chapter Seven to give conclusions to this thesis. Scholarly literature identifies values as the core underpinning motivation, role identities and perspectives. In other words, values are source of human behaviour. Hence, this chapter examines what values were central to the operators in this thesis that underpinned their behaviours in commercial adventure tourism in NSW national parks. This chapter then discusses how adventure tour operators’ motivations, roles, identities and values contribute to management and sustainable development of tourism and conservation in national parks. Concerns regarding the negative impacts to both the natural environment and management of national parks are also identified and discussed. Based on the findings, some future research and practice directions are identified for resolving problematic gaps between national park agencies and adventure tour operators. While the findings have some features that make it unique to NSW, this chapter discusses implications of this research to other contexts where national parks and tourism intersect.
Chapter Two
Tourism, Nature and Commodification

This thesis investigates adventure tour operators who conduct their operation in NSW national parks. Chapter One justified the value of and need for this avenue of inquiry, noting that adventure tour operators are centrally positioned in contemporary debates about the balance of conservation and commercialisation in national parks. Chapter Two considers the foundations to these debates and contextualises the present study in this prior scholarship. Chapter Two begins with a broad discussion of the relationships between tourism and the natural environment. The chapter then examines tourism’s impacts on the natural environment, specifically focussing on the issues and debates surrounding commercial adventure tourism supply in national parks. The chapter then discusses sustainable tourism, special interest tourism and nature-based tourism as these are often touted as appropriate forms of tourism for national parks. Lastly, this chapter examines the emergence of adventure tour operators in national parks, strongly relating to the commodification of adventure experiences.

The Relationship between Tourism and the Natural Environment

In many countries, whether least or more developed, tourism is one of the fastest growing and largest industries and a major source of local and regional employment (Fennell, 2008; Weaver & Lawton, 2010). The significant growth of tourism not only is influenced by, but also asserts influence upon society, the economy, culture, politics and the natural environment (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006; Urry, 1990; Weaver & Lawton, 2010). Consequently, tourism has become a focus of research, and much has now been written about the possible positive and negative economic, social, cultural, political and environmental impacts of tourism. In particularly, research has focused on the impacts on destinations’ natural environment (Holden, 2008; Sharpley, 2009; Buckley, 2010). Before discussing tourism’s influences on the natural environment, it is necessary to firstly understand the relationship between tourism and the natural environment.
The natural environment, and the need to explore it, has been at the core of tourism since tourism emerged (Cohen, 1978; Holden, 2008). While changes in society, economy and technology are important factors generating tourism demand, the attraction of nature plays a significant role in deciding where people visit (Hall, 2006; Reinius & Fredman, 2007). Geographical features (Grand Canyon), diverse ecosystems (the Great Barrier Reef), open natural areas (beaches) and even climate (reliable warm weather in the Mediterranean) may all attract visitors in search of physical, spiritual and/or sensory satisfaction (Holden, 2008). Consequently, the natural environment, including its resources, is regarded as a central dimension of many tourism attractions (Fennell, 2008; Reinius & Fredman, 2007).

According to Goeldner and Ritchie (2003), attractions can be generally categorised as natural (national parks, fauna and flora), recreation (golf, kayaking), cultural (historical sites, museums), events (festivals, religious events), and entertainment (theme parks). Natural attractions are often a primary reason for tourists to visit specific destinations and places such as national parks (Pigram & Jenkins, 2006; Reinius & Fredman, 2007). Tourists are likely to choose a destination because they feel it will be appropriate for the type of experience they are seeking. That is, the natural environment can act as a central element or ‘nucleus’ for such an experience. This nucleus might be any feature or characteristic of a place that a tourist considers visiting or visits (Gunn, 1972; Leiper, 1990; MacCannell, 1989). The tourism industry aims to facilitate a connection between tourists’ needs and the nucleus that satisfies those needs (Hall, 1998; 2006). Increasingly, such central elements are naturally occurring and located in protected areas, such as national parks (Hall & Frost, 2009a; Reinius & Fredman, 2007).

Although research has shown the important role the natural environment plays in serving the needs of tourists, the tourism industry’s use of the natural environment and the associated trade off for economic development has long-been debated and contentious. One of the earliest investigations into the debate about tourism and the natural environment was by Budowski (1976), who identified three possible relationships between tourism and environmental conservation. The first relationship
identified is where tourism and environmental conservation are in conflict, whereby tourism is viewed as a detrimental factor influencing nature and its resources. Such a relationship was proposed to be the most common. The second relationship identified where tourism and environmental conservation coexist with little contact. However, Budowski (1976) suggested this coexistent relationship was not likely to endure, because when tourism grows, changes in the natural environment will occur. The third relationship identified was symbiosis, where tourism and environmental conservation benefit from each other. While Budowski (1976) acknowledged that this symbiosis was difficult to achieve, it still should be set as a target to pursue.

Nonetheless, in the last two decades, studies of the relationship between tourism and conservation have acknowledged that while some forms of tourism, such as ecotourism, require the conservation of nature, symbiosis is still the least evident relationship. For example, Dowling (1993) examined the relationship between tourists, local residents and the natural environment in the context of tourism planning, and suggested that there was a need to plan how to achieve the symbiosis between tourist satisfaction, community well-being and environmental protection when developing tourism in natural areas. Fennell and Weaver (2005) critically examined and reviewed different definitions of ecotourism to assert that even though contemporary ecotourism aims to be an agent for harmony between visitors and the natural environment, it has yet to create full symbiosis. It is because many ‘so-called’ ecotourism products that do not fulfil the criteria of ecotourism are deliberately or inadvertently marketed as such (Fennell, 2008). With regard to increasing tourism in protected areas, Hall and Frost (2009c) also suggest that a greater effort is needed to reduce the conflict between tourism and conservation.

There are two major values occupying the debate on the use of nature for tourism – anthropocentricity and biocentricity. Anthropocentricity positions the natural environment separate from humans, with nature holding a subordinate role relevant to human needs and desires, including recreation and tourism-related needs (Wearing & Huyskens, 2001). Consequently, efforts to protect the natural environment are premised on the recognition that such efforts ultimately benefit human society (Sharples, 2009; Wearing & Huyskens, 2001).
Conversely, a biocentric view views nature and humanity as inseparable, stressing the interconnectivity between them, and that all beings are of equal value. Biocentricity recognises the value and right of nature to exist for its own sake (Sharpley, 2009; Wearing & Huyskens, 2001). Collectively, anthropocentric notions assert that people should utilise natural resources for their own benefit, while biocentric perspectives would question the purpose of the use of those resources and whether the use was really necessary (Cohen, 1978; Fennell, 2008; Holden, 2008; Sharpley, 2009).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that biocentric and anthropocentric values are not mutually exclusive. Steel, Shindler and List (1994) conducted a study, comparing national and Oregon publics’ values towards federal forest lands and examining the conflicts between these values. Steel et al. assert that biocentric and anthropocentric values can be arranged along a continuum, with biocentric viewpoints on one end and anthropocentric viewpoints on the other. Similarly, Manfredo and Fulton (1997) compared wildlife values in Colorado and Belize and found the single protection (biocentric view)/use (anthropocentric view) continuum that was evident in the Colorado data did not emerge for the Belize sample. For the latter group of respondents, both wildlife protection and use values were held simultaneously. Indeed, the debate on tourism and the natural environment is a value-based debate. Recognising that those values shape human behaviour provides a key platform for analysing adventure tour operators. In Chapter Four research on values in tourism supply is explored in some detail.

**Tourism’s Impacts on the Natural Environment**

While a wide variety of studies have sought to explain tourism’s impacts (e.g. Cohen, 1978; Leslie, 2009; Shaw & Williams, 2002), it is tourism’s impacts on the natural environment that is an increasing focus of scholarly investigation (Hall & Page, 2006; Sharpley, 2009) and is most pertinent to this thesis.
The awareness of tourism’s impacts on the natural environment arose in the 1970s (Holden, 2008; Sharpley, 2009). Compared to other industries, tourism was thought as a ‘smokeless industry’ offering economic development not seen since the Industrial Revolution. Some scholars further claim that tourism can offer considerable contributions towards environmental protection. Positive environmental impacts identified as an outcome of tourism tend to highlight the preservation of natural areas. For example, direct conservation occurs as a result of the increased value placed on natural resources due to their values as tourist attractions. This is particularly evident in the work by Harris and Leiper (1995) and Anderson and Leal (2001). Harris and Leiper (1995) argue an anthropocentric view of sustainability to contend that sustainable development can be shaped in the context of managed economic growth that occurs within the framework of environmental stewardship. Similarly, Anderson and Leal (2001) identified the natural environment as capital to develop ‘free market environmentalism’, arguing that the market value of a natural environment is a key mechanism for its protection. Without a robust and healthy natural environment, the tourism industry will lose its core competence to attract tourists. Consequently, the tourism industry would protect the natural environment as important capital to maintain its economic revenue.

However, since the 1970s academics have started to argue that the tourism industry is not as ‘smokeless’ as it was thought to be (Cohen, 1978; Holden, 2008). The negative impacts created by mass tourism outweigh the positive impacts it creates on the natural environment. Hall and Page (2006) assert that even though tourism brings construction of facilities to renew some areas, without proper planning long-term damages result in some areas, such as underwater pollution and overloading of existing urban infrastructure. Leslie (2009) further argues tourism’s negative impacts on the natural environment from a global view. Leslie contends that due to the spread of western lifestyle, with emphasises on consumption for the needs with a variety of products and services, tourism is consumed as a mass-marketed lifestyle activity. However, it also results in more flights and traffic flows that create more fossil fuel consumption and carbon pollution.
Overall, tourism may generate both positive and negative impacts on the natural environment. Within this context, a key concern is whether tourism development is well planned (Hall & Page, 2006; Holden, 2008; Sharpley, 2009). Without proper planning, tourism can be disastrous for settings such as a national park.

One response to the concern of tourism planning has been the promotion of sustainable tourism. Sustainable tourism has become a goal encouraged by international tourism and environmental organisations (e.g. UNWTO, 2011a; IUCN, 2008), different levels of governments and a number of tourism scholars in order to develop tourism while maintaining the attraction of the natural environment (Fennell, 2008; Moore & Weiler, 2009; Sharpley, 2009). Sustainable tourism is now considered an important tool in the conservation of the natural environment, particularly national parks.

**Sustainable Tourism, Special Interest Tourism and Nature-Based Tourism**

The emergence of the term ‘sustainable tourism’ was initially triggered by publications and public presentations regarding the increasing concern of economic development and protection of the natural environment (Harris & Leiper, 1995; McCool & Moisey, 2001; Sharpley, 2009). The Brundtland Commission’s ‘Our Common Future’ released in World Commission on Environment and Development [WCED] in 1987 is an example. This report argues that the survival of human beings depends on sustainable development whereby resources are provided for the needs of present generations while ensuring that resources for future generations are also preserved (McCool & Moisey, 2001). This concept is now largely employed by international organisations (UNWTO), governments and academics as the way to develop tourism whereby the needs of tourists, economic needs of the tourism industry and the need for a healthy natural environment are all considered.

The term ‘sustainable tourism’ became popular in the late 1980s and has become an important term for both tourism researchers and practitioners (Novelli & Benson, 2005; Sharpley, 2009). The United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP] and
World Tourism Organisation (2005, now UNWTO) jointly offer a definition of sustainable tourism to guide its development as:

A tourism that will carry on, that will endure but that will also contribute, nourish and tolerate. This interest in sustainability suggests paying attention to economic, social, cultural and ecological sustainability.

It can be argued therefore that sustainable tourism focuses on a holistic consideration of multiple facets involved with tourism. It is also important to note that sustainable tourism is not a specific market; rather, it is a process for any form of tourism which is based on the use of the natural environment, to be managed and planned in a sustainable way, and considers the long-term economic benefits, environmental protection, and contribution of local community development. It can be a kinder, gentler form of tourism embracing not only growing societal concerns over social and environmental impacts but also a moral commitment to future generations (Clarke, 2002; Fennell, 2008). Nevertheless, at least at this stage, even though sustainable tourism is encouraged by governments, organisations and academics as a goal for all types of tourism to pursue, mass tourism largely focuses on economic profits and therefore is viewed as a contrast to sustainable tourism (Sharpley, 2009). Compared to mass tourism, some forms of special interest tourism, particularly those that are nature-based, have been commonly recognised forms of sustainable tourism (Fennell, 2008; Holden, 2008).

Special interest tourism has emerged over three decades as a counter-point to mass tourism (Derrett, 2001; Robinson & Novelli, 2005). It implies a more sophisticated niche market that distinguishes and differentiates tourists. Tourists who engage in special interest tourism often have particular motives for participating in particular types of tourism activities (rock climbing), identifying themselves as a member belonging to a particular group of people (skydivers), and hold particular values (equity among all creatures on the earth) to differentiate them from mass tourists (Derrett, 2001; Fluker & Turner, 2001; Kane & Zink, 2004). Due to these differences with mass tourism, ‘niche market tourism’ is often represented as an interchangeable term with special interest tourism (Fennell, 2008; Robinson & Novelli, 2005).
Nature-based tourism is a major form of special interest tourism (Newsome et al.,...
Many scholars and tourism organisations use nature-based tourism as a general term that encompasses the types of tourism which significantly rely on natural resources and differentiate it from mass tourism (e.g. McKercher, 1998; Fennell, 2008; Tourism Victoria, 2010; Tourism Western Australia, 2006).

The primary purpose of nature-based tourism is to provide tourists with opportunities to view and enjoy the natural environment, particularly its resources and features (Naidoo & Adamowicz, 2005; Swarbrooke et al., 2003). Moreover, Newsome et al. (2002) suggested that nature-based tourism focuses visitors’ attention on the understanding and conservation of natural resources, and nature-based tourism emphasises both non-living and living components of the natural environment, such as rocks and fauna and flora.

Most importantly, nature-based tourism is also primarily associated with values designed to reduce negative impacts and enhance sustainability (Derrett, 2001; Tourism Research Australia, 2010). This form of tourism is typically characterised as small scale, environmental protection, social harmony, fair partnerships between local people, entrepreneurs and external agencies, and using tourism generated rewards to give back facilities and resources (Hall & Weiler, 1992; Robinson & Novelli, 2005). This suggests that at least some forms of nature-based tourism may be close to achieving Budowski’s (1976) symbiotic relationship. Three forms of tourism emerge in the reviewed literature as key components constructing the sphere of nature-based tourism: ecotourism, wildlife tourism and adventure tourism.

**Ecotourism**

Since the 1980s, and especially in the 21st century, ecotourism has become one of the fastest growing tourism industries globally (Fennel, 2008; Weaver, 2008). Due to such significant growth, over the last three decades many scholars and associations have defined ecotourism from different perspectives, but all share two factors which are education and the natural environment. For example, Weaver (2008:17) reviewed different definitions of ecotourism and nature-based tourism in the last two decades and critically examined ecotourism to define it as:
A form of tourism that fosters learning experiences and appreciation of the nature environment, or some component thereof, within its associated cultural context. It is managed in accordance with industry best practice to attain environmentally and socio-culturally sustainable outcomes as well as financial viability.

Weaver’s definition highlights education of tourists and appreciation of the natural environment as the focus of ecotourism, while contributing to the sustainable outcomes of cultures and economies. Importantly, Weaver included the ‘tourism industry’ in this definition as a key factor in the success of sustainable development. Industry best practice was not included in his definition of ecotourism in a previous version of his work. This reflects a growing awareness of the significance of the industry, particularly the supply-side of tourism in the development of nature-based tourism and sustainable tourism.

Fennell (2008) contends that learning experiences and ecological conservation are vital to ecotourism. He also suggests that modifying tourists’ behaviour to cope with the need of sustainable development through operators’ education is what ecotourism should aim to achieve. It is evident that, again, tour operators play an important role in ecotourism and sustainable tourism.

Interpretation is a term largely involved with education in ecotourism. Interpretation is an educational and illustrative activity and its purpose is to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects (Orams, 1996; Tilden, 1977). Moreover, it not only conveys the information of the objects to people, but also inspires people to learn something about the objects and further to change their attitudes towards the objects (Armstrong & Weiler, 2002). Therefore, interpretation of the importance of the natural environment is one of ecotourism operators’ jobs in their operation (Armstrong & Weiler, 2002; Fennell, 2009; Weaver, 2008).

Ecotourism is identified as an ideal form of tourism to achieve the goal of environmental, economic and cultural sustainability in national parks (Armstrong & Weiler, 2002; Fennell, 2008). Operators of ecotourism may view conservation as a profitable enterprise to ensure the quality of natural resources and cultural assets in national parks (Fennell & Weaver, 2005). However, due to the growth of the market
and its profits, more tourism suppliers engage in this market with limited knowledge of ecotourism and only focus on short-term profits (Armstrong & Weiler, 2002; Fennell & Weaver, 2005).

**Wildlife Tourism**

In contrast to other forms of nature-based tourism, wildlife tourists pay more attention to experiencing and enjoying contact with wildlife in the natural environment. Newsome *et al.* (2002) examined the relationship between the natural environment and forms of nature-based tourism to assert that wildlife tourism concentrates more upon living or biotic elements of nature. For example, safari tourism in some areas of East Africa is well known as wildlife tourism. Spectacular or special fauna and flora are the key elements of wildlife tourism that helps to attract tourists. Moreover, Higginbottom (2004) provides more details for understanding possible elements of wildlife tourism, largely concerned with the viewing of live animals. In Higginbottom’s (2004) view, wildlife tourism focuses on encounters with non-domesticated animals in the natural environment or in captivity, and these encounters can take place through watching, photographing, feeding, hunting or fishing. Enjoyment of contact with living creatures in different ways is central to wildlife tourism.

Roe, Leader-Williams and Dalal-Clayton (1997) offer a broad definition of wildlife tourism to include all its possible parameters, based on the attention of the increasing need of wildlife tourism in developing countries. Wildlife tourism, according to the authors, is a form of tourism that includes the consumptive and non-consumptive use of wild animals in natural areas. Consumptive wildlife tourism involves animals being killed or removed, or having any of their body parts utilised, such as hunting, fishing and bull fighting (Roe, Leader-Williams & Dalal-Clayton, 1997). Moreover, wildlife tourism can include mass tourism or low-impact tourism, generate high or low economic revenues, be sustainable or non-sustainable, domestic or international, and be day visits or longer stays. Such research contends that wildlife tourism, even though recognised as a form of sustainable tourism, can be non-sustainable and can damage natural areas as a result of mass tourism. The increasing number of visits and
vehicles in protected areas, for example, brings disturbance to animals’ habitats and breeding. Moreover, hunting may cause extinction of endangered species. Meanwhile, the growth of wildlife tourism may also change the lifestyle of local communities (Orams, 1996). For example, residents may change their life from agriculture-dependent to tourism-dependent. Without well-designed management, wildlife tourism can be non-sustainable at all. Seeking a balance between conservation, tourism, economy and local communities is also a difficult task for the management of wild-life tourism.

**Adventure Tourism**

Most definitions of adventure tourism include reference to excitement, challenge, novelty, risk, exploration and contrasting emotions (Buckley, 2010; Swarbrooke et al., 2003). Moreover, adventure tourism is typically discussed as a form of tourism that takes place predominantly in the outdoors. Hall (1992: 134) provides one of the most highly cited definition that captures this:

> A broad spectrum of outdoor touristic activities, often commercialized and involving an interaction with the natural environment away from the participant’s home range and containing elements of risk; in which the outcome is influenced by the participant, setting, and management of the touristic experience.

Hall’s definition indicates that outdoor activities, the natural environment and risk are vital elements of adventure tourism. These elements correspond to Ewert’s (1989) definition of adventure recreation, which focuses on the risk of adventure activities to argue that adventure recreation is a combination of activities, with strong interaction with the natural environment and involvement with risk and danger. A focus on the natural environment, outdoor activities and risk of adventure tourism is also evident in the study by Callander and Page (2003) regarding risk management in adventure tourism operation. Callander and Page (2003: 14) defined adventure tourism as “commercially operated activities involving a combination of adventure and excitement pursued in an outdoor environment”.
Common to the definitions above is that commercialisation is a key factor distinguishing adventure tourism from adventure recreation. Ewert (1989) argues that the difference between adventure recreation and adventure tourism is that the former is primarily organised by the participant(s) with limited commercial involvement. Similarly, Hall (1992) suggests that the key differences between adventure recreation and adventure tourism are the distance participant travels away from his/her home and how much the participant engages in commercialised adventure activities. Cloke and Perkins (2002) examined the rise of adventure tourism in Queenstown, New Zealand, to suggest that adventure tourism is significantly connected to the commodification of adventure experiences. That is, commodification and the ways to sell adventure commodities for profits (commercialisation) are characteristics of adventure tourism. Commodification of adventure experiences, which plays a significant role in the emergence of adventure tourism, is discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Some researchers further categorise adventure tourism into ‘soft’ and ‘hard’, determined according to the level of risk involved with the adventure activity. Hill (1995) designed a continuum to explain adventure tourists’ behaviour, beginning with soft adventure at one end of the scale and hard adventure at the other. In this continuum, soft adventure tourism refers to outdoor activities with low levels of risk, and often only requiring minimum commitment and a low level of skills. Examples of soft adventure tourism are wilderness jeep safaris, bushwalking and camping. Conversely, hard adventure tourism refers to activities with high levels of risk, requiring intense commitment and advanced activity skills. Examples of hard adventure tourism are rock climbing, paragliding and kayaking (Hill, 1995; Shephard & Evans, 2005). Moreover, Millington, Locke and Locke (2001) provide a simpler way to explain the difference between soft and hard adventure tourism. They suggest that soft adventure tourism does not necessarily require previous experience, whereas hard adventure tourism may need some experience and proficiency in the activity prior to the tour. Table 2.1 gives more examples of soft and hard adventure tour activities. These two categories have been frequently used by academics to identify adventure tourism products in the market (Beedie & Hudson, 2003; Shephard & Evans, 2005).
Table 2.1 Examples of Adventure Tourism Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soft adventure tourism activities</th>
<th>Hard adventure tourism activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wilderness jeep safaris</td>
<td>Climbing and mountaineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervised and escorted trekking</td>
<td>Long distance back country trekking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling holidays</td>
<td>Downhill mountain biking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailing holidays</td>
<td>Paragliding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to surf and to windsurf</td>
<td>Heli-skiing holidays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping</td>
<td>Canoeing and kayaking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sung et al. (2000)

Bentley and Page (2001) and Pomfret (2006) provide another categorisation of adventure tourism. These authors observed contemporary adventure tourism activities and found that using natural settings as categories to classify adventure tourism activities would be more practical to discuss and examine the relationships between adventure tourism and a single natural setting. They categorised adventure tourism activities into land-based, air-based, water-based adventure tourism, and Pomfret (2006) further proposed mixed (land/water/air) adventure tourism. Examples of mixed adventure tourism are adventure racing, charity challenges and conservation expeditions.

Although most definitions of adventure tourism focus on outdoor activities, the natural environment, risk and commercialisation, some researchers believe this is a narrow view to examine adventure tourism, particularly the focus of risk. Walle (1997) emphasises that risk and danger are the side effects of adventure tourism, not the core. Walle (1997) developed an ‘Insight Theory’ to explain adventure tourism. He believes that this theory is ideal to supplement or even to replace the risk-centred notion of adventure tourism. Insight theory claims that adventure tourists obtain fulfilment not through overcoming risk but through gaining insight or enlightenment in the process of adventure tourism. Danger and risk are not the reasons for taking adventure and are only the side effects of striving for insight. Walle (1997) uses fly-fishing, which is often categorised as outdoor recreation, to demonstrate that it is adventure tourism. He argues that people go fly-fishing because they want to know what it is and how to do it well, and then get fulfilment and exciting experiences in the fly-fishing. People engage in the activity not because of the danger or risk of the activity. In other words, obtaining self-actualisation and excitement through the
insight searching of an activity is the core of adventure tourism. Through the application of insight theory, adventure tourism can include more activities into its realm without being restricted to outdoor or risk associated activities only.

Weber (2001) reinforces Walle’s (1997) contention further. Weber (2001) argues that the traditional definitions of adventure tourism are too narrow to explain the development of adventure tourism, and agrees with Walle’s (1997) contention that insight theory essentially enlarges the spectrum of adventure tourism. However, Weber (2001) argues that while gaining insight is important, risk still plays an integral part in adventure tourism. Furthermore, Weber (2001) suggests that gaining insight into the cultural environment should be included into insight theory. Weber (2001) uses overland tourists, either in ancient time or nowadays, to support that insight theory can be expanded to explain adventure tourism more effectively. Overland tourists travel not for risk seeking but for culture, knowledge or gaining more understanding of self. These people do not undertake particular activities which are traditionally involved in adventure tourism, but what they undertake can be defined as adventure tourism, due to their facing of uncertainty, challenge and novelty.

Kane and Tucker (2004) also agree with the assertions of Walle (1997) and Weber (2001). Kane and Tucker (2004) employed the foundation of tourism and experiences pursued by adventure tourists to question the risk-centred concept of adventure tourism. They argue that one of the characteristics of tourism is to provide participants with a safe and enjoyable experience, but risk relates to a potential for injury and loss. It can be argued that there is a conflict between tourism and risk, as is evident in the question posed below:

Would tourists pay for an adventure experience of risk if the potential to lose was the only or dominant feature? (Kane & Tucker, 2004: 218)

This inquiry demonstrates that using risk to present adventure tourism has an intrinsic contradiction. Kane and Tucker’s research also suggest that adventure tourists focus on reality, identity and freedom during the trip, rather than risk and danger. Adventure tourism, therefore, may broadly include the activities which focus
on the receiving of adventure experiences. The notion of this broad view of adventure tourism is shown as Figure 2.1, illustrating adventure tour activities and their processes are for the purpose of perceiving the experience of adventure. Table 2.2 compares the differences between the two perspectives of adventure tourism.

![Figure 2.1 The Notion of Perception-Centred Adventure](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definitions Differences</th>
<th>Centre on Risk</th>
<th>Centre on Perception of Adventure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Commercialised outdoor activities with risk in natural environment</td>
<td>Any journey which makes participants experience adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key elements</td>
<td>Risk, outdoor, activity</td>
<td>Perception of adventure, psychological experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Focus on outdoor activities e.g. kayaking, sailing, rock climbing, sky diving, etc.</td>
<td>Diversity e.g. cultural, outdoor, spiritual, hedonic, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spectrum</td>
<td>Narrow</td>
<td>Broad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representatives</td>
<td>e.g. Hall (1992); Sung, Morrison &amp; O’ Leary (1997); Bentley &amp; Page (2001).</td>
<td>e.g. Walle (1997); Weber (2001); Swarbrooke et al (2003).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At present adventure tourism is a highly commercialised product provided in the market. The product’s activities largely focus on outdoor adventure activities including both risky and non-risky ones (Buckley, 2007; 2010). Furthermore, the research subjects of this thesis are adventure tour operators who provide adventure products in the market and the natural environment of national parks. Therefore, this thesis chose the definition of adventure tourism focusing on commercialisation, adventure activities and the natural environment as the tenet to recruit adventure tour operators. Buckley’s (2007) definition of adventure tourism is the most suitable to the study described in this thesis. Buckley (2007) defined adventure tourism as:

Guided commercial tours, where the principal attraction is an outdoor activity that relies on features of the natural terrain, generally requires specialised equipment, and is exciting for the tour clients. (Buckley, 2007: 1428)

Collectively, nature-based tourism, ecotourism, wildlife tourism and adventure tourism are all terms used in the tourism industry where nature is one of the primary product ingredients. Although they all share the element of the natural environment, each of them has its own focus. For example, Swarbrooke et al. (2003) critically reviewed definitions of adventure tourism, wildlife tourism and ecotourism to provide an explanation based on ‘values’ for the similarities and differences between these three forms of nature-based tourism. They assert that whale watching, for example, could be described as adventure tourism, ecotourism or wildlife tourism, depending on the emphasis and value the tourist or tourism supplier wishes to convey. Fennell (2008) examined ecotourism products to describe the overlaps between ecotourism and adventure tourism. He argues an emphasis on ‘experience’ to explain that ecotourism focuses on educational experience, but that adventure tourism highlights the experience brought by outdoor activities, even though they use the same resources and possibly the same activities (e.g. bushwalking and dolphin watching).

Newsome et al. (2002) offer an environment-concerned view to differentiate adventure tourism, ecotourism and wildlife tourism. Newsome et al. (2002) (Figure 2.2) divide the three forms of tourism into ‘in the environment’ (adventure tourism),
‘about the environment’ (wildlife tourism) and ‘for the environment’ (ecotourism). Within this division, ecotourism is the form most capable of contributing to environmental sustainability, and adventure tourism is the least. It is therefore reasonable to believe that suppliers of adventure tourism services may be less concerned with the natural environment in which they operate than those supplying other forms of nature-based tourism. However, such assumptions overlook the complexities of values, identities and motives that drive such operators to conduct adventure tourism businesses in protected areas. Such complexities are addressed in Chapter Four.

In addition to the reliance of nature and the different focus of the three forms of nature-based tourism, another characteristic that links them is that they are largely engaged with and provided in national parks. Eagles and McCool (2002) discussed histories and a variety of relationships between tourism and national parks to provide a description of the relationship between national parks and nature-based tourism. They assert that national parks are closely associated with nature-based tourism, because national parks are a symbol of high-quality natural environment with well-designed infrastructure.

Figure 2.2 Nature-based Tourism and Environmental Sustainability
Source: Modified from Newsome, Moore, & Dowling (2002)
Similarly, Buckley (2004) examined partnerships between national parks and ecotourism based on a political context to suggest that national parks often attract operators of nature-based, eco and adventure tourism (NEAT) to launch their tours in national parks. National parks, Buckley (2004) argues, possess convenient park facilities, such as trails and toilets, and ideal natural environments for nature-based tour activities. More importantly, national park managers hope that nature-based tourism can be a tool to contribute to conservation, and this also promotes the development of adventure tourism supply in national parks (Buckley, 2004). The management of tourism in national parks is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The Emergence of Adventure Tour Operators in National Parks

With growing interest in visiting national parks and recognition that environmental quality was an important issue, the idea of marketing unique tourism experiences to protected natural environments in national parks became a viable practice for the tourism industry (Fennell, 2008; Holden, 2008; Newsome et al., 2002). As a result, the use of the term nature-based tourism has recently become a popular tourism industry development strategy (Leslie, 2009; Sharpley, 2009). National parks are particularly attractive destinations for adventure tourism as they provide a range of adventure activity options in one setting, such as rock climbing, four-wheel driving and bushwalking (Reinius & Fredman, 2007; William & Soutar, 2005). Adventure tour operators have become an important intermediary between tourists and unique tourism experiences in national parks (Buckley, 2010; Herremans et al., 2005; William & Soutar, 2005).

The rise of adventure tour operators is related to the commodification of the adventure experience. Commodification in the tourism context is:

The process by which objects and activities come to be evaluated primarily in terms of their exchange value in the context of trade, in addition to use-value that such commodities might have. (Beedie & Hudson, 2003: 633-634)
Cloke and Perkins (2002) provide a comprehensive explanation of the commodification of the adventure experience. They examined the rise of adventure tourism in New Zealand to reveal how the adventure experience is incorporated into a commodity form for tourists. They argue that there are six factors shaping the commodity of adventure experiences: (1) changing taste of tourists’ expectations; (2) images of adventure activities and/or particular tourism destinations; (3) intermediary transferring these images; (4) technology for adventure activities; (5) tourist memory; and (6) protection of the natural environment. These factors are discussed below.

Cloke and Perkins (2002) contend that Urry’s (1990) notion of ‘post-mass tourist’ is at the core of commodification of adventure experience. Such tourists, defined as ‘special interest tourists’, are associated with novelty, experience of other cultures, and intense thrill and spectacle, in contrast to mass tourists. Thus, particular places and/or experiences, such as Queenstown in New Zealand and Bungy Jumping, become meaningful to post-mass tourists. Consumer culture is such that post-mass tourists consume products made by others rather than producing the products by themselves (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). Therefore, a well-designed and packaged adventure tour within a particular destination is more likely to attract attention.

Cloke and Perkins (2002) also assert that tourism objects (places and/or adventure experiences) can be absorbed into images allowing value exchange to take place in a semiotic form. For example, brochures and media highlight the attractions of adventure tours or some particular destinations. Video presents the tours and the destinations as spectacle or a form of performance to catch tourists’ interest while at the same time informing the potential tourist (consumer) that the attractions are purchasable. It can be argued that the messages delivered in the video become simulacrum—what is delivered in the message is more than the reality of the place or activity, for tourists to pursue. This is consistent with the argument of Celsi, Rose and Leigh (1993) that media stimulates people’s desire to pursue the activities they are dreaming about. Beedie and Hudson (2003) also assert that without the promotion of media, adventure experience could not be substantially transferred into the form of commodity.
Another factor contributing to the commodification of the adventure experience is technology. Cloke and Perkins (2002) state, for example, transportation for special terrains has been applied or developed for adventure tours, such as four-wheel-drives. Bungy jumping is another example of how the adventure experience is transferred into commodity by technology. A world-famous bungy jumping company, originating in New Zealand (AJ Hackett) has invested in the development of bungy jumping facilities to make this activity safer and more exciting (longer distance, from original 125 feet to now 340 feet). Johnston and Edwards (1994) also assert that the development of lighter and safer gear for mountaineering, such as ropes and the down-curved ice axe, has enabled mountaineering to become mountain adventure tourism. Technology helps beginners or novices take part in adventure activities with relative ease.

In Cloke and Perkins’s (2002) study, a factor shaping the commodification of adventure experience is the tourists’ memory. When adventure tourists share their memory of the tours with others, whether through speaking or photos or even souvenirs, they also raise their friends or colleagues’ interest in engaging in such tours. Cloke and Perkins (2002) use the example of a photo of adventure tourism in New Zealand printed on a shirt to show that some young people may come to New Zealand due to the shirt or photo. The shirt conveys the meaning of ‘I have been there’ or ‘I have done it’ to stimulate other people’s desire to do the same thing. Similarly, Celsi et al. (1993) argue that some people engage in adventure tours because of colleagues’ encouragement or sharing of adventure tourism experience.

The last factor in Cloke and Perkins’s (2002) study contributing to the commodification of the adventure experience is the establishment of national parks. As Cloke and Perkins (2002: 533) state:

In this way [establishing national parks] some of the most spectacular and scenic locations in New Zealand have at the same time been protected from sprawling tourist-related development, yet made available for specific adventurous activities. Adventurers thus benefit from unspoilt natural settings in which to pit themselves against the forces of nature.
Similarly, Buckley (2004) argues that the natural resources protected by national parks provide an ideal environment for the engagement of adventure tourism. Furthermore, Cloke and Perkins (2002) claim that due to the preservation of the spectacular sceneries, the natural environment of New Zealand itself, for example, becomes a sign for adventure tourists to collect. This is similar to the contention of Reinius and Fredman (2007) who argue that national parks are important attractions for specialised experiences seekers. It is evident that several socio-cultural, technological and environmental contexts shape the commodification of adventure experiences.

The commodification of adventure experiences plays a crucial role in the emergence of adventure tour operators. When adventure experiences became a commodity in the form of adventure tourism, it stimulated people to engage in supplying this commodity for making profits (Cloke & Perkins, 2002; Walle, 1997; Weber, 2001). Adventure experiences, sold as a commodity in the tourism market, have been tested to gain the maximum profit from the commodity – a process of commercialisation (Beedie & Hudson, 2003; Watson & Kopachevsky, 1994). Thus, commodification and commercialisation are two important characteristics of adventure tourism.

When the production and consumption of commodities related to adventure experiences meet, the ‘Experience Economy’ (Pine & Gilmore, 2011) of adventure tourism emerges. Pine and Gilmore (2011) examined the economic offerings throughout history and they contend that experiences are plentiful in their own right as a product offering, and in conjunction with products and services, can be considered as means to provide added value to customers. An experience occurs when a business intentionally uses goods as ‘props’ on the ‘stage’ of services to engage customers in a way that creates a memorable event. For example, Pizza Hut now offers not only meals, but also hosts children’s birthday parties complete with candle-lit cakes and amusements. These events are all for the experiences associated with the meal offered by Pizza Hut (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). When customers gain positive feelings towards a memorable event, this memory itself, which is experience, becomes a sellable product for businesses.
In order to ensure that customers gain memorable experiences, businesses must enable customers to actively participate (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). Active participation makes customers feel a sensation, and this sensation creates long-term memories, becoming an experience (Pine & Gilmore, 2011). In other words, the experience economy focuses on how to convert customers from passive recipients to active participants. This active participation makes customers become players on the stage, lets them create positive feelings towards the business, and then finally generates loyalty among them towards the business.

In the case of adventure tourism, adventure tour operators combine images of adventure activities, the beauty of tourism destinations, technology for adventure activities and the skills of adventure activities into commodities of adventure tourism, creating consumer value (Cloke & Perkins, 2002). Most importantly, these commodities require customers to actively participate, enabling customers to engage in adventure activities as experts and further gain experiences from the commodities. When the products offered by adventure tour operators meet the expectations of adventure tourists, the tourists’ positive feeling towards adventure tourism emerges and thus the experience economy of adventure tourism is shaped.

However, the experience economy of adventure tourism has also brought a great change to the culture and the natural environment of adventure tourism destinations. As previously noted (Beedie & Hudson, 2003; Cloke & Perkins, 2002; Johnson & Edwards, 1994) significant concern exists with regard to the rise of the commercial supply of adventure tourism. For example, Johnson and Edwards (1994) examined the growth of mountain-based adventure tourism in the Himalayas to argue that such growth of adventure tourism results in significant impacts on the local environment, such as the removal of trees for the construction of hotels for ‘outsiders’. Similarly, when Cloke and Perkins (2002: 533) praise the national park benefits of the commodification of adventure experience, they also admit that “of course, in some ways, these activities will themselves be regarded as spoilers of unspoilt landscapes and environments”. Thus, the use of the natural environment for maximising commercial profits of adventure tourism is a crucial and central argument when discussing adventure tour operators in national parks. While adventure tour operators
may argue that they seek a sustainable operation, Beedie and Hudson (2003: 638) warn that:

The result [of the continuing growth of adventure tourism in mountains] will be an exploitation of precious resources for short-term economic gain, and the future of natural resources, like the mountains, will be in jeopardy.

Indeed, the issue of how much effort tour operators spend on environmental protection has been an on-going argument. Cohen (1978) argues that even though the natural environment is a foundation for the tourism industry, it is never guaranteed that tourism suppliers will protect the environment, because tourism suppliers are often oblivious to the environmental effects of their activities when they obtain economic benefit from the environment. Similarly, Hall and Gössling (2009) examined the nature of private companies and criteria of sustainability to argue that tourism firms are intrinsically unable to develop sustainable practices. This is because firms pursue cash flows and return on investment within short time spans, so the long-term sustainability, including environmental sustainability, becomes a secondary task for them. However, Harris and Leiper (1995), as noted earlier, assert that tourism suppliers will maintain the healthy condition of the natural environment for the sustainability of their economic profit, particularly nature-based tour operators who strongly rely on natural settings. Similarly, Herremans et al. (2005) focus on knowledge sharing and long-term economic consideration to suggest that tour operators can assist national park managers to protect the environment, because the operators often develop an ethical code between themselves to protect what their businesses depend on.

Nevertheless, when discussing sustainable development of adventure tourism supply in national parks, studies often focus on the destination locale, best adventure tourism practice at the destination, and specialised adventure tourism products. For example, when Swarbrooke et al. (2003) and Williams and Soutar (2005) discussed adventure tourism with regard to the supply-side and sustainable development, they indicated that adventure tour operators are mostly small-scale operators, lacking in management skills and struggling for cash flow. Callander and Page (2003) and Page, Bentley and Walker (2005) discussed the issues of risk management for adventure
tour operators and argued that operators’ experience enables them to have confidence in managing the risk accompanied with adventure activities, but they may only have limited knowledge of overall risk management. Herremans et al. (2005) examined adventure tour operators’ environmental management practices and suggested that the requirements between operators themselves can help the conservation of national parks. These studies demonstrate that there is limited research investigating the related responses, actions and thinking of adventure tour operators in national parks. Thus, it is a central tenet of this thesis that adventure tour operators must constantly work to meet a balance between conservation of their unique working environment on the one hand, while providing a satisfying and unique adventure experience to their clients on the other. As McCool and Moisey (2001:3) assert that:

Sustainable tourism does not just happen; it occurs only with explicit decision-making process that considers what futures are plausible and desirable and the pathways to them.

This thesis seeks to explore and explain the factors underpinning adventure tour operators’ decision making, practices and behaviours. Literature on motivation, role identities and values, which are the factors influencing decision making and behaviours, will be reviewed in Chapter Four.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has critically reviewed literature associated with the link between nature, tourism and commodification to contextualise the study described in this thesis. This literature review chapter reveals that adventure tourism supply is a complicated issue. It involves diverse environmental, socio-cultural, technological, and political contexts. Within these contexts, the issue of the environment is an important one. The relationship between tourism and the natural environment is always arguable, particularly in national parks where sensitive areas compete for both tourism and environmental protection. Whether tourism is positive or negative for national parks often depends on the application of biocentric or anthropocentric values. In order to balance the development of tourism and maintenance of social, cultural, economic
and environmental values, sustainable tourism is identified as an important strategy to achieve the balance.

Nature-based tourism, including adventure tourism, is recognised as the major form of sustainable tourism. Nature-based tourism is now largely promoted as an ideal form, or ‘best practice’ of tourism for national parks. However, the development of nature-based tourism, especially adventure tourism, is largely associated with the commodification of the special experiences obtained from the forms of nature-based tourism. Consequently, the concern of commodification is now an important issue in the success of nature-based tourism, particularly the ones who supply the commodities. Therefore, when adventure tourism supply in national parks is associated with different contexts, this thesis aims to examine the key actors in this issue, who are adventure tour operators. Adventure tour operators are a major intermediary between national park resources and tourists. These operators can influence tourists’ behaviour and attitudes towards the importance of conservation of national parks. That is also why national park managers are increasingly seeking cooperation with the operators. The next chapter will critically review literature regarding the management of commercial tourism in national parks.
Chapter Three
Tourism in National Parks Management and Policy

The previous chapter examined the link between tourism, nature and commodification, and considered how national parks provide ideal environments for the commercial supply of nature-based tourism, including adventure tourism. Recognising that adventure tour operators are directly affected by the policies and related management of national parks, this chapter firstly contextualises the study described in this thesis by providing a review of the literature as it relates to those policies and management approaches. The chapter then examines the current planning and management of tourism in national parks in Australia and New South Wales with particular focus upon the management of adventure tourism supply.

Tourism Management in National Parks

According to the *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories* edited by Dudley (2008: 16) for the International Union for Conservation of Nature [IUCN], national parks are:

> Large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.

Similarly, Fennell (2008: 112) addresses the important relationship between tourism and environmental conservation and suggests that:

> National parks are broadly mandated with the dual purposes of protecting representative natural areas of significance, and encouraging public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment.

These definitions indicate that national parks are established primarily for the protection of biodiversity while also providing opportunities for different uses of the park environment, such as tourism.
There is a long and significant relationship between tourism and national parks. It has been argued that national parks were initially created with a heavy emphasis on the provision of recreation (Hall & Frost, 2009a; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). The first national park in the world, Yellowstone National Park in the western United States of America, was established in 1872. Hall and Frost (2009b) argue the area was recognised as ‘worthless’ for other commercial purposes such as farming, mining and logging, so therefore suited to recreation. Recreation and tourism seemed to be the only way to create economic value from these lands (Hall & Frost, 2009b).

Similarly, the first national park in Australia, the Royal National Park in NSW (some scholars argue that it is the first national park in the world due to the term ‘national park’ first used in an official document) was identified as barren land not suitable for agriculture. Due to this perceived worthlessness, it was set aside in 1879 to provide an area for Sydney citizens to enjoy open-air enjoyment through recreation. The establishment of this national park was primarily based on the consideration of public health, especially for the enjoyment of Sydney’s working population (Hall & Frost, 2009a; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). In the next few decades, the establishment of national parks in the world inherited the models of these two national parks, which was primarily based on anthropocentric values (Hall & Frost, 2009b), that believe the natural environment is separate from humans and its resources are to be used for meeting human needs and desires (Wearing & Huyskens, 2001).

However, since the 1970s the establishment of national parks has gradually moved towards the needs of environmental protection and ecological conservation. Advocates of national parks have noticed that the previous establishment of national parks heavily emphasised the social dimension but ignored the ecological dimension (Butler & Boyd, 2000; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006; Hall & Frost, 2009a). This emphasis upon the social dimension, particularly for the enjoyment of the public, brought many environmental problems to national parks, such as littering, soil erosion, noise and air pollution. These problems significantly damaged ecosystems and natural resources in national parks, while also, diminishing the quality of tourism experience in these areas (Eagles & McCool, 2002).
One of the major problems facing national park managers is the need to protect ecosystems while providing for a variety of recreational uses, particularly tourism (Hall & Frost, 2009a; Moore & Weiler, 2009). Natural areas and outdoor activities can be major elements to engage in tourism, and national parks often possess both natural and recreation attractions (Hall & Page, 2006; Reinius & Fredman, 2007). Providing recreational opportunities compatible with environmental protection is fundamental to national parks management and is especially significant when conservation of a natural area is the primary objective of a national park (Hall & Frost, 2009a; Newsome et al., 2002). With the significant growth of tourism in national parks, some strategies have been developed to cope with the need for compatibility between tourism and conservation.

Carrying Capacity, the Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS), the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) and the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection Framework (VERP) are strategies for managing tourism and recreation in national parks that are most commonly described in the reviewed literature (Hall & Page, 2006). These strategies are examined in the following section.

*Carrying capacity* is a concept arising out of the recognition that natural attractions may have potential limits for visitor use. This concept is used to understand a natural area’s maximal load for tourism. That is, carrying capacity is a tool to ensure that tourism development would not deteriorate the quality of an area’s attractions (Hall & Page, 2006; Holden, 2008). Manning (2001: 93) offers an explanation of carrying capacity for national parks management being “the amount and type of use that can be accommodated in parks and related areas without unacceptable impacts to park resources and/or the quality of the visitor experience”. Within this concept, there are four types of carrying capacity: physical, economic, ecological and social carrying capacity.

*Physical carrying capacity* is concerned with quantitative measures of the number of visitors and/or usage a tourism site can support. This type of carrying capacity is primarily used to design the management of visitor use of the site (Hall & Page, 2006). Sometimes physical carrying capacity is also used as a concept to limit tourist
access to the site (Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). Physical carrying capacity is also used in
the early stages of the development of a new park, because many facilities and the
management may not be sufficiently developed to carry the increasing number of
tourists (Martin & Uysal, 1990).

Economic carrying capacity is concerned with a level of unacceptable change within
the local economy of a tourism site. That is, resources in the tourism site have to be
used for both tourism and local demand; the use of resources on tourism cannot be
over their use on the local community (Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). This capacity seeks
compatibility among the resource users, the tourism site and wider management
objectives for the site (Hall & Page, 2006).

Ecological carrying capacity is concerned with “the maximum level of recreational
use, in terms of numbers and activities, that can be accommodated by an area or
ecosystem before an unacceptable or irreversible decline in ecological values occur”
(Pigram & Jenkins, 2006: 126). This capacity plays an important role in maintaining
an attraction in its mature phase and in preventing its decline (Martin & Uysal, 1990).
Nevertheless, ecological carrying capacity is more complicated than the previous
ones. This capacity needs to deal with ecology. Furthermore, seasons may be another
consideration when identifying this type of capacity (Hall & Page, 2006).

Social carrying capacity, also known as perceptual or psychological carrying
capacity (Hall & Page, 2006), is concerned with “the maximum level of recreational
use, in terms of numbers and activities, above which there is a decline in the quality
of recreation experience, from the point of view of the recreation participant”
(Pigram & Jenkins, 2006: 130). This capability relates to the ability of individuals
and groups in the tourism site to tolerate others, their activities and the level of
acceptability. When a tourism site becomes mature at its attraction, which means the
site has nearly reached its full carrying potential, social carrying capacity is also
crucial to maintain the attraction and prevent its decline (Martin & Uysal, 1990).

It should be noted that when estimating a carrying capacity of a tourism site, seeking
an average of the four types of carrying capacity is not necessarily the goal. Hall and
Page (2006:149) contend that “the typical scenario is one where the overall figure is influenced by the most sensitive or threatened factor”; therefore, the most sensitive or threatened factor decides which type of carrying capacity should be addressed. For example, when considering environmental conservation as the primary mission of national parks, ecological carrying capacity should be a central consideration for the management of tourism in national parks.

In early applications carrying capacity was often viewed as a management tool to protect sites and resources from excessive use, while also seeking to balance usage with recreational enjoyment for participants (Stankey, 1973; Stankey & McCool, 1984). At present, carrying capacity is now “a precursor of the much wider concept of ‘sustainability’ which has now embraced both recreation and tourism” (Hall & Page, 2006: 148). Carrying capacity is itself a ‘tool’ for sustainable tourism. In addition to its function for sustainable tourism, carrying capacity is a fundamental and necessary consideration for other strategies to manage tourism in national parks (Manning, 2001; Hall & Page, 2006; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006).

The Recreational Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is one of the earliest models for managing the carrying capacity of national parks. Clark and Stankey (1979) developed this model for the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management due to the growing recreational demands in national forests and the increasing conflict over the use of scarce resources. These authorities needed an integrated and comprehensive approach for natural resources planning. Based on this context, the ROS model focuses on comprising six land classes (from primitive to urban) to aid in understanding physical, biological, social and managerial relationships, and then to set parameters and guidelines for the management of recreation opportunities in the natural environment. More precisely, it is “a conceptual framework to clarify the relationship between recreational settings, activities and experiences” (Hall & Page, 2006: 149). For example, the ranges of a national park can start from remote and undeveloped areas to easily accessible and highly developed areas, so the information of each national park is entered into the ROS model to present the characteristics of the site, the types of activities that can be undertaken and the recreation opportunities available alongside each other.
The key limitation to the use of ROS is “its emphasis on the setting at the expense of the type of visitor” (Hall & Page, 2006: 150). The model was influenced by the earlier cultures of landscape planning and architecture professions, which argued visitor management could be largely addressed through the site and facility design (Hall & Page, 2006; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). Furthermore, Nilsen and Tayler (1998) compared different strategies of carrying capacity in national parks to contend that ROS is largely dependent on park managers’ perceptions of the level of natural settings and suitable types of activities, so the disagreement between managers will affect the rest of the planning program (Eagles & McCool, 2002; Hall & Page, 2006).

_The Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC)_ is also a model referred to in the literature of tourism management of national parks. Stankey _et al._ (1985) developed LAC initially from the concern of carrying capacities in US national forests. From the late 1970s, recreational use in the national forests was constantly growing and caused management problems in the forests such as the allowance for the number of cars and visitors. Stankey _et al._ (1985) aimed to develop a strategy where the objectives of national forests management were specific and achievable, and these objectives described the ends rather than the means. Within this context, LAC focuses on resource protection and visitor experience, but not on access to recreational opportunities. Moreover, recreational use is allowed in the forests, but it has to be consistent with a high degree of resource protection. Eagles and McCool (2002) indicate that the LAC model is the most biocentric strategy to manage tourism in national parks.

Unfortunately, only a few applications of LAC were successfully implemented (Hall & McArthur, 1998; Hall & Page, 2006). While the LAC was created by researchers for natural area managers, it ignored the need of support from other stakeholders such as local residents and tourism suppliers (Hall & McArthur, 1998; Hall & Page, 2006). Moreover, the use of ‘limits’ of acceptable change is interpreted by the tourism industry as a discouragement to the visitor experience in natural areas (Hall & Page, 2006). The LAC therefore was considered impractical to implement in the management of tourism in national parks.
The Visitor Experience and Resource Protection Framework (VERP) is a recent model for managing recreation and tourism in national parks. The U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service (1995) created a new process to deal with carrying capacity in terms of the quality of resources and the quality of visitor experience in national parks. This model aims to develop a prescription for desired future resource and social conditions, and this prescription defines what levels of use are appropriate, where, when and why (McCool & Lime, 2001). For processing VERP, a project team is needed to appraise the social and ecological situations of each location of the park. Compared to previous models, VERP has more consideration on the need of both conservation and visitor experience. Through the application of VERP, a national park may have different zones to cater for the needs of different uses of the park (Manning, 2001; Nilsen & Tayler, 1998).

The criticism of VERP is this model was developed from data collected in Arches National Park, Utah, USA (Nilsen & Tayler, 1998). Therefore, the adaption of VERP to other national parks may be inappropriate or may need additional work to collect the data of the selected national park for constructing an appropriate VERP. Regardless of perceived limitations, VERP is one of the most employed strategies to manage carrying capacity, recreation and tourism in national parks (McCool & Lime, 2001; Higham & Maher, 2007).

When discussing these three models, it is necessary to note that they are not mutually exclusive. When McCool and Lime (2001) and Pigram and Jenkins (2006) examined these models, they suggested that these three models can be integrated to identify, develop, monitor and evaluate strategies for visitor management of national parks. Therefore, when managing recreation and tourism in a national park, the three models may be jointly employed by a national park agency.

Although strategies have been employed by national park agencies to manage tourism and carrying capacity of national parks, and sustainable tourism has been encouraged by governments and academics as a way to change tourism’s impacts on the natural environment, the major responsibility for increasing tourism’s benefit to
the environment relies on tourism suppliers and tourists (Herremans et al., 2005; Hall & Frost, 2009a). Tourism suppliers and the people who they are serving play an important role in the success of sustainable development of national parks. Thus, as noted in Chapter One, increasingly national park agencies are seeking cooperation with nature-based tour operators for improving the quality and conservation of national parks. Adventure tour operators play a crucial role in the achievement of the cooperation and sustainable development.

**National Parks in Australia and New South Wales**

Using adventure tour operators in NSW national parks as a case study, this thesis discusses national parks in an Australian and NSW context. National parks in Australia, as in many other countries in the world, are a type of protected area. The Australian Federal Government employs the *Guidelines for Applying Protected Area Management Categories*, IUCN (Dudley, 2008) to categorise Australian protected areas (Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities [DSEWPC], Australian Government, 2011). According to the Guidelines, a protected area is:

> A clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values. (Dudley, 2008: 8)

Protected areas are divided into six categories: (1) Strict nature reserve/Wilderness area; (2) National park; (3) Natural monument or feature; (4) Habitat/species management area; (5) Protected landscape/seascape; and (6) Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources. Each category has its own primary objective(s). For example, in the category of ‘national park’, the definition describes national parks as:

Protected areas are large natural or near natural areas set aside to protect large-scale ecological processes, along with the complement of species and ecosystems characteristic of the area, which also provide a foundation for environmentally and culturally compatible spiritual, scientific, educational, recreational and visitor opportunities.
It is evident that protecting natural and ecological resources is the primary objective of national parks. The IUCN categories of protected areas aim to provide a global standard for governments to plan, establish and manage protected areas (Dudley, 2008).

Australia has over 9,300 protected areas that conserve nearly 98 million hectares of Australian lands, which are close to thirteen per cent of the country. These protected areas are established and managed under State, Territory and Commonwealth legislation (DSEWPC, 2011). For example, the Blue Mountains National Park is managed under the *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Indeed, most ‘national’ parks in Australia are under the jurisdiction of State and Territory Governments, not the Federal Government. These areas are managed by the official agency of each State and Territory Government or jointly managed with the area’s original owners (Aboriginals) (DSEWPC, 2011; Young, 2009). Correspondingly, each State or Territory has its own legislative foundation to establish and manage national parks in its boundary.

National parks in Australia were originally established for improving public health and recreation, not for conservation (Hall & Frost, 2009a; Wearing & Huyskens, 2001). For example, the first national park in Australia, Royal National Park, was established to provide “holiday accommodation, sporting facilities and picnic areas, with the emphasis clearly on human pleasure and amusement (Pigram & Jenkins, 2006: 265). Young (2009), in her study of conflicts between Aboriginal culture and tourism in the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, Northern Territory, Australia, also states that:

The creation of some Australian national parks was about more than just the protection of the environment and providing a place for recreation- it was about positioning Australia as a world-class tourist destination with an iconic natural environment, and recognition of the role that the tourism industry can play in providing economic benefits. (Young, 2009: 137-138)
Thus, recreation and by extension tourism was the central consideration for the establishment of Australian national parks. However, since the growth in the awareness of environmental protection in the 1970s, the establishment of national parks in Australia has gradually focused on conservation. The recreational function is still clear but does not override conservation in the operation of national parks (Wearing & Huyskens, 2001). Conservation is now the priority in the management of Australian national parks (DSEWPC, 2011).

Similarly, the emergence of national parks in NSW was associated with the concern of recreation. Pigram and Jenkins (2006), from a management perspective, state that national parks in NSW were created for providing public recreation opportunities (as in the United States) to ensure the health of working population. Hall and Frost (2009b) provide a historical view and focus on a ‘worthless lands hypothesis’ to assert that the development of NSW national parks is very similar to North America. The poor quality of the lands and the consideration of recreation were reasons for turning the lands into national parks. Such policy demonstrates that the early development of NSW national parks was similar to, or “borrowed” from the American model (Hall & Frost, 2009a:10). However, what is different is that national parks in NSW were established for mass recreation rather than “the elite commercial recreation that characterised the early days of Yellowstone” (Hall & Frost, 2009b: 53). ‘The health of the people’ was a significant consideration in the early stage of NSW national park development (Hall & Frost, 2009b; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). However, since the early years, national parks in NSW have gradually gone beyond the border of recreation.

An awareness of the natural environment rose in 1970s and 1980s and was a crucial factor pushing the growth of NSW national parks (Eagles & McCool, 2002; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006; Hall & Frost, 2009a). To date, national parks in NSW reinforce the conservation of diverse eco- and cultural resources, while providing nature-based recreation opportunities for public. This is supported in the statement of the Office of Environment & Heritage [OEH], NSW State Government (2011a) that:
Parks and reserves in NSW protect the state’s range of habitats and ecosystems, plant and animal species, significant geological features and landforms. They also provide shelter for the largest and most diverse collection of cultural heritage on public land. Finally, they conserve areas important to people, such as places of scenic beauty, landscapes and natural features of significance, wilderness areas, wild rivers, water catchments, popular places for nature-based recreation, and icons and sites of national significance.

For the ecological and cultural consideration and provision of recreation, this most populous state of Australia now has more than 850 national parks and reserves covering about 6 million hectares, or more than 7 per cent, of the State’s land mass, and the parks currently attract more than 22 million visits per annum (OEH, 2011b). Moreover, similar to IUCN, these parks and reserves are divided into ten categories, such as national parks and marine parks, and they are managed by the official agency NPWS which is part of the OEH.

Although there are different categories and types of protected areas, whether in IUCN or OEH categories, ‘national park’ is the most dominant and popularly- known (Hall & Frost, 2009a; 2009c; Mose & Wixlbaumer, 2007). Mose and Wixlbaumer (2007) reviewed the development of national parks and protected areas in Europe and globally to argue that even though the IUCN categories of protected areas are considered to be of equal relevance, national parks are the “premium category of the protected areas” (Mose & Wixlbaumer, 2007: 5). This is because the term ‘National Park’ existed long before other types of protected areas and the protected area system is developed from the notion of national park (Dudley, 2008; Hall & Frost, 2009a). It is also evident that most people do not recognise the differences between the types of protected areas and only know ‘national parks’ (Hall & Frost, 2009c). Moreover, Dudley (2008) argues that a country’s national park may not fit the IUCN category II (national park), because the government and stakeholders have different aims for the use of the park. For example, Dipperu National Park, Australia, is in the IUCN category Ia (strict nature reserve), and Expedition National Park, Australia, is in the category V (protected landscape/seascape). ‘National Park’ is not only the major component of the protected area system but also a type of protected area that may have an overarching meaning to other types of protected areas. Thus, this thesis
employs ‘national park’ as an overarching term to study adventure tour operators in
NSW protected areas. As Hall and Frost (2009a: 15) argue that:

However, to do this [using the term ‘protected areas’] would jettison
the cultural heritage of the term ‘national parks’. It would also set
ourselves up as arbiters of what places are truly (or not) national
parks. In recognising that countries made deliberate choices to call
specific protected areas national parks, we have chosen to include
areas with such titles.

In fact, when OEH and NPWS promote tourism in NSW protected areas, they also
use the term ‘National Park’ to represent a wider system of protected areas. For
example, marine parks, natural reserves and state conservation areas are included in
the websites or publications regarding visiting NSW national parks. Similarly, the
TTNP report (2008) also uses ‘National Parks’ to discuss tourism in other types of
protected areas in NSW. Furthermore, all NSW protected areas are under the official
authority named ‘National Parks and Wildlife Service’. Thus, it is appropriate for
this thesis to use ‘National Park’ as a general term to discuss adventure tour
operators in NSW protected areas.

The NPWS is the major statutory body managing tourism in NSW national parks. It
was established in 1967 as a key government body to protect and manage the small
system of the State’s national parks. Since that time, the NPWS has greatly expanded
its park system and management spectrum. At present, and as noted earlier, it
manages over 850 national parks and reserves and deals with issues of conservation,
education, recreation, tourism, research and Aboriginals in NSW national parks
(OEH, 2011a).

According to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW Legislation,
2011), the powers and functions of NPWS are:

(a) the conservation and protection of land reserved under this Act or
acquired for reservation under this Act and of land for which the
National Parks and Wildlife Reserve Trust is the trustee,
(b) the conservation and protection of wildlife (including threatened
species, populations and ecological communities, and their
habitats),
(c) the conservation and protection of wilderness areas and wild rivers,
(d) the identification, conservation and protection of, and prevention of damage to, Aboriginal objects and Aboriginal places,
(e) conservation agreements and conservation areas,
(f) the provision of facilities and opportunities for sustainable visitor or tourist use and enjoyment on land reserved under this Act,
(g) the identification and protection of buildings, places and objects of non-Aboriginal cultural values on land reserved under this Act,
(h) the conduct of research into and the monitoring of any of the matters referred to in paragraphs (a)–(e),
(i) the undertaking of public education in relation to any of the matters referred to in paragraphs (a)–(e).

The above powers and functions illustrate that conservation and protection of natural, ecological and cultural resources are the major responsibilities for the NPWS. Most importantly, these powers and functions demonstrate the influence of biocentric values and sustainable development. Together with the major responsibilities outlined, the NPWS also provides facilities and opportunities for the sustainable visitor and tourist use, which reflect the promotion of sustainable development and the consideration of the tourist experience. Managing recreation and tourism has always been a significant task for the NPWS (OEH, 2011b), and that includes managing commercial tour operators.

Plan of Management is the most important official document for the NPWS to manage commercial tour operators, including adventure tour operators, in NSW national parks. According to the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, each national park in NSW needs to establish an individual plan of management for the operation of each park. The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 states:

An Act to consolidate and amend the law relating to the establishment, preservation and management of national parks, historic sites and certain other areas and the protection of certain fauna, native plants and Aboriginal objects. (Long Title, NSW Legislation, 2011)

Based on this Act, a plan of management is a legal document, explaining how a national park will be managed and operated. Issues relating to recreation are often discussed in the section of ‘Use of the Park’ or ‘Visitor Use’ in the plan of management. Commercial recreation including commercial tour operators is often an individual subject discussed in the section.
When critically reviewing the *Plan of Management* for the Blue Mountains National Park (NPWS, 2001), ROS and VERP emerged as the frameworks employed by the NPWS to manage recreation including commercial recreation and tourism in the area. As the most popular national park in NSW and Australia (OEH, 2011b), the Blue Mountains National Park is regarded as an important destination for recreation and tourism seekers for a long time. Providing high quality tourism information and experience is a major aim of the plan of management for the Blue Mountains National Park. However, protecting significant natural and cultural resources is also a primary target of the plan. Thus, in order to balance the use of recreation and the need of protecting precious ecosystems, the plan of management for the Blue Mountains National Park reveals an intention to maximise the compatibility between conservation and visitor experience. The plan also reveals multiple zones to cater for the needs of different uses, and users of the park in keeping with the frameworks of ROS and VERP. For example, when discussing facilities for recreation and tourism, the plan of management states:

A major review of existing facilities is required and clearer priorities for maintenance and upgrading of facilities or removal need to be developed to ensure that conservation and recreation objectives can both be met in a management environment of limited resources. (p. 56)

Furthermore, it indicates the need for different levels of consideration of conservation and recreation within four zones:

To assist in the development of management guidelines which will ensure conservation of the park’s natural and cultural heritage while providing for appropriate recreation, four recreation settings have been defined for the park….Developed areas, natural areas, wilderness areas and restricted areas (p. 56-57)

Developed areas, such as Katoomba, a regional town adjacent to the Blue Mountains National Park, have a large number of facilities to cater for the needs of the increased number of visitors. Natural areas have relatively low-key facilities and less recreational use compared to developed areas. Wilderness areas only provide opportunities for solitude and self-reliant recreation, and public vehicles are
prohibited to enter these areas. Restricted areas are set aside for the protection of water supply; public access is limited to foot access and vehicle access is only allowed at one area. Zoning these areas reinforces the intention to have different levels of carrying capacity in the national park.

The strategy of ROS is also used in this plan of management to manage recreation, particularly in regard to tour operators. The need to avoid conflicts between different recreational users while maintaining the quality of the natural environment is observed in the statements of the plan of management. For example, the need for compatibility between different users and also the need to maintain the carrying capacity is captured in the following excerpt:

> Commercial recreation may conflict with other recreational uses of the park and increase crowding at some sites. Commercial recreation needs to be managed as a component of all recreation in the park to ensure that it is carried out in a sustainable manner and that all impacts are within acceptable limits. (p. 82)

The plan of management recognises commercial recreation and tour operators as important components of the Blue Mountains National Park. It acknowledges the positive benefits of commercial recreation on the park, such as educating tourists about proper behaviour in the park environment. However, the plan of management also admits that commercial recreation has brought negative effects to the park, such as damage to rock faces. Therefore, commercial recreation needs to be managed and monitored by the NPWS.

Licensing is the approach undertaken by the plan of management of the Blue Mountains National Park to manage commercial recreation and tour operators. According to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*, each NSW national park has to have its own licensing system to manage commercial recreation and tourism. The licensing provides a mechanism for ensuring that commercial tour operators’ activities and behaviour are appropriate for the locations where they provide their services and compatible with general recreation use. However, it can be argued that the licensing agreement is ambiguous in its language, suggesting that operators must have ‘appropriate’ skills, knowledge and experience but not defining such skills,
knowledge and experience. Clear indicators are not provided to determine these requirements of a qualified operator. Moreover, the licensing system requires operators to make financial contributions to the national park management due to the use of the park’s public resources, and:

Fees will be set at or above the minimum level of recovering the costs of managing the activities and the licensing system. Fees for individual operators will be commensurate with their level of use of the park. (p. 84)

According to the plan of management, group size, activities and location are the factors deciding the level of operators’ use of the park, and then this level of use determines the fees. An example of use and associated fees is the activity of canyoning. Due to its involvement with water, use of canyons and diverse eco-systems, canyoning is limited to certain areas and attracts a higher-charge.

Compared to the plan of management for the Blue Mountains National Park, the Draft Plan of Management for the Barrington Tops National Park proposed by the NPWS (2007, the final plan is pending) is noticeably different. Due to its location, the Barrington Tops National Park, a three-hour drive from Sydney, has not been facing the same pressure from tourism as the Blue Mountains National Park. The draft plan of management does not seek the maximum compatibility between conservation and recreation. Instead, it focuses on the priority of conservation. As the first paragraph of its management objectives and strategies indicates:

The primary management objective of the planning area is to conserve the natural and cultural values. The provision of sustainable visitor opportunities that are compatible with and promote the understanding and enjoyment of the park values is a secondary objective. (p. 19)

This plan of management reflects an engagement with LAC, with a focus on the biocentric value. Within this concept, the majority of the objectives in this plan of management are concerned with achievable targets, not the process. The objectives describe the ends of recreational use and environmental protection rather than the means. Moreover, limits of recreational use appear throughout the plan of
management for the purposes of environmental protection and sustainability. For example, in the consideration of adventure activities, the plan of management states:

Adventure activities have the potential to conflict with other park visitors and/or with the protection of the natural and cultural environment….Orienteering/rogaining, paragliding/sailing, abseiling and rock climbing will not be permitted in the planning area. Any other form of adventure activity will require written consent from the NPWS. Provision of a risk assessment and appropriate public liability insurance will be a requirement for consent. (p. 78)

Similarly, the limits of commercial recreation including tourism in the national park are also identified in this plan of management. For example:

Investigation into the appropriate limits for commercial activities will be undertaken. This will take into consideration the location and frequency of activities and group sizes as well as the potential for impact on the environmental values, facilities and other visitors. (p. 79)

It can be argued that within the plan of management, commercial tour operators in the Barrington Tops National Park are both beneficial and contentious. The plan of management identifies that operators can provide opportunities to interpret and promote natural and cultural heritage in this area, but they also can create negative impacts on the values of the park. Thus, operators in this park also need to be managed by the NPWS licensing system. Visitor numbers, activities, location and fees for the park management are regulated by the licensing system. The influence of LAC is evident in this draft plan of management to avoid the over-development of tourism in the Barrington Tops National Park.

Even though Worimi Conservation Lands and Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park have not had any draft of plan of management, commercial tour operators in these two areas are also recognised by the NPWS as an important intermediary between tourists and park resources. Meanwhile they need to operate their businesses under the licensing system of the NPWS as do commercial tour operators in the Blue Mountains and Barrington Tops national parks (OEH, 2011b). The NPWS and its licensing systems, evidently, play an important role in the commercial adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks.
In July 2009, the NPWS launched a new licensing system for commercial tour operators in NSW national parks: *Parks Eco Pass* [PEP]. Sustainable development and collaboration between the NPWS and commercial tour operators are two major goals reflected in the statements of PEP. These goals reflect the intentions of the TTNP report as introduced in Chapter One. For example, PEP states:

> Recreation and tour operators play an invaluable role, in partnership with NPWS, in promoting our parks and encouraging visitors to appreciate, understand and enjoy them. (PEP, p. 1)

And the TTNP report suggests that:

> It [NPWS] should also engage operators in a partnership arrangement that results in them serving as advocates for conservation values. (TTNP, p. 74)

A simpler and clearer licensing system is also a character of PEP. For example, PEP clearly indicates who needs this license and who does not; fees paid by operators to national parks are much clearer and consistent (see Table 3.1). Such enhancements encourage the development of sustainable nature-based tourism in NSW national parks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of fee</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Year Licence application fee</td>
<td>$150.00* ($250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Year Licence application fee</td>
<td>$300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Year Premium Licence annual fee</td>
<td>$350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Head Day Use Fee</td>
<td>$4.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Head Short Stay Fee</td>
<td>$2.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Per Head Concession Fee</td>
<td>$2.30***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major amendment fee</td>
<td>$200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Card replacement fee</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licence restoration fee</td>
<td>$50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This fee is valid until 1 July 2011 only.
** Up to a cumulative maximum of 2 hours. No concession is available for short stay.
*** A concession fee is payable for clients under the age of 16 years or for seniors subject to identification.
Although PEP is a new licensing system, it does not deny previous licensing systems and plans of management. This is evident in the PEP statement regarding existing operators:

Where an existing operator has reasonably complied with the conditions of an existing licence, and the proposed activity and the location of the activity remain unchanged and consistent with the relevant plan of management, the application and processing of a new licence will be straightforward. (PEP, p. 17)

A significant difference between PEP and old licensing systems is that PEP provides more freedom and convenience to NSW commercial tour operators. PEP is now a state-wide licensing system allowing licensed tour operators to operate their businesses across multiple parks. Before the launch of this Pass, operators needed to apply different park licenses to get access to different NSW national parks. This also reinforces the suggestion of TTNP that:

Consideration should be given to simplifying all existing licensing systems for nature tourism operators operating across all public lands, including marine protected areas in New South Wales where possible. (TTNP, p. 74)

However, even though it appears that tour operators have more freedom to provide their services in NSW national parks, the plan of management of each national park precedes this new licensing system. When operators undertake their tours in a national park, observing the requirements of the park’s plan of management is still necessary. This new licensing system, does however, open a new era for commercial tourism supply in NSW national parks.

Although the NPWS employs different strategies to manage commercial recreation and tourism in NSW national parks, the major responsibility for increasing tourism’s benefit on national park environments relies on tourism suppliers and tourists (Herremans et al., 2005; Hall & Frost, 2009a). The question of whether commercial tour operators, such as adventure tour operators, would protect the natural environment in their commercial operation is again raised. The question is a debated one when the NSW State Government released the TTNP report and decided to increase collaboration with and give more freedom to commercial tour operators to
promote nature-based tourism in NSW national parks. Such a decision, it has been argued, may create many conflicts with the existing carrying capacities and plans of management for NSW national parks and possibly impact negatively on park environments (Brown, 2009). Additionally, in the research of Wilson et al. (2009) regarding the partnership between the NPWS and commercial tour operators, they argue that the NPWS officers felt that they were forced by the national park policy to facilitate the development of tourism in national parks, which impeded their major job of protecting the natural environment. More specifically, Wearing and Lyons (2008) argue that national park rangers’ educational background in biology can be a significant factor in causing their negative attitudes towards the encouragement of tourism in national parks. Collectively, it can be argued that a conflict between the application of biocentric value or anthropocentric value to underpin NSW national park policy is evident. Furthermore, if commercial tour operators have unethical values, they will find a method to ‘beat’ the system for their private interests (Herremans et al., 2005). Therefore, there is an urgent need to examine adventure tour operators with regard to their business decisions and practices, their identification of their roles in national parks, their perspectives on commercial tourism supply in national parks, and the values they hold to deal with different issues regarding commercial tour operation in national parks. These issues are discussed in depth in Chapters Six, Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has critically reviewed literature associated with tourism management in national parks to contextualise the study described in this thesis. This literature review chapter reveals that there is a long and complicated relationship between tourism and national parks. This relationship involves diverse considerations for the dual purposes of national parks – conservation and recreation. Seeking the compatibility between conservation and recreation is always an uneasy task for national park managers, particularly when commercial tourism has been increasingly developed in national parks. In order to achieve the ideal condition of the compatibility between tourism and conservation, many strategies have been developed for the management of tourism in national parks. The employment of
these strategies depends on the situations and concerns of the individual national park. Moreover, sustainable development plays a crucial role in these strategies seeking to balance the development and maintenance of social, cultural, economic and environmental values in national parks.

The State of NSW, Australia, is no exception. With the increasing demand of tourism in national parks, different policies and strategies were developed to manage issues regarding tourism in national parks. The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and the Plan of Management for each national park are the most important basis for the NPWS to manage tourism in NSW national parks. The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and the plans of management examined in this chapter demonstrate the importance of conservation and the need to restrict the operation of commercial tour operators. Nevertheless, different plans of management may give different levels of freedom to the operators, depending on the pressure and influence from tourism. Moreover, the principle of ‘user pays’ is evident in the management of commercial tourism. Although policies and strategies are necessary for the management of tourism in national parks, nature-based tour operators, particularly adventure tour operators, play a crucial role in the compatibility of tourism and conservation in these areas. More specifically, their motivation, roles, identities and values become a crucial consideration when seeking cooperation with commercial tour operators for the sustainable development of tourism and conservation in national parks. The next chapter will critically review literature regarding motivations, role identities and values, particularly in the context of tourism.
Chapter Four
Motivation, Role Identities and Values

In the previous chapters it is evident that a number of debates have been raised in the literature about the importance and appropriateness of including adventure tour operators as key partners in national parks management. One of the major concerns is that business and market focussed imperatives that may underpin tourism enterprises are potentially incongruous with conservation priorities. However, empirical research supporting such debates is incomplete. Little is known about the perspectives of tourism operators who provide tourism services in national parks. Most notably, there is a lack of empirical research that considers the factors that drive these operators to develop and conduct their businesses. This chapter critically examines selected theories of motivation, role identity and values as a holistic lens for viewing, exploring, explaining and describing why these operators do what they do. This thesis seeks to understand how these factors shape how adventure tour operators see themselves and their businesses in light of the tourism-conservation debates that were raised in the previous chapters.

This chapter is composed of three sections. The first section focuses on selected concepts and theories regarding the motivation of tourism suppliers. This section introduces particular theories used for understanding operators’ motivation to establish their adventure tourism businesses in NSW national parks. Following this, the chapter introduces and examines the concepts and theories of role identity. The employment of Burke’s (1980) identity theory for examining how adventure tour operators view themselves in national parks is justified. Empirical research of roles and identities supporting this thesis are also reviewed and introduced. Lastly, this chapter reviews the notions and related theories of values. The importance of values as the source of motivation, attitudes and role identities is examined for addressing values as the most crucial factor explaining why adventure tour operators have particular motivation, role identities and perspectives on issues of commercial adventure tourism in NSW national parks.
Motivation of Adventure Tourism Operators

Why do people choose to engage in the commercial supply of adventure tourism in national parks? Is there a need that they hope to have fulfilled? In attempting to answer such questions, an understanding of what motivates these people must be examined, because motivation is the starting point that launches the decision process (Crompton & McKay, 1997).

There is no universal definition of motivation; each definition or concept of motivation has its own considerations or parameters. Furthermore, when motives are examined, they are often explained in different categories, such as push/pull and intrinsic/extrinsic motives (Benson & Seibert, 2009; Patterson & Pan, 2007; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). This section examines several crucial studies regarding entrepreneurial start up motivation to argue the importance of motivation in the study of adventure tour operators in national parks.

It can be argued that motivation plays an important role in people’s decision making and behaviours towards tourism (Dann, 1981; Gnoth, 1997). However, while the study of motivation has been employed to understand tourists including adventure tourists, the research on the motives of tourism suppliers and adventure tour operators has remained peripheral in tourism studies. The relatively scant research that has focussed upon the motives of special interest tourism and adventure tourism recognises two key motivators.

The first is the passion many operators have for specific adventure activities. Adventure tour operators are often the people who have a strong interest in and long-term engagement with adventure activities (Cloutier, 2003; Swarbrooke et al., 2003). In order to enjoy the activities they love, operators decided to turn their career into the supply of adventure tourism (Buckley, 2006; Swarbrooke et al., 2003).

The motivation of passion for adventure activities is significantly associated with two leisure theories – ‘Recreation Specialisation’ and ‘Serious Leisure’. The theory of Recreation Specialisation was introduced by Bryan in 1977, based on a study of trout
fishermen. He provided a framework that outlined a continuum of outdoor recreation participation, with low involvement and general interest at one end, and high involvement and specialised interest at the other. This theory suggests that when people progress to higher stages of involvement, the longer they participate in a leisure activity. Moreover, they undergo a change in skills, commitment and equipment associated with the activity, and often display a preference for certain environments.

Similarly, involvement and progression in the form of a career is the focus of ‘Serious Leisure’ theory, initially proposed by Robert Stebbins in 1982. Serious leisure was subsequently refined by Stebbins into the following abbreviated definition:

The systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that, in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centred on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge, and experience. (Stebbins, 1992: 3)

Amateurs participate in areas such as art, sciences, sport and entertainment. Hobbyists were classified into five categories: collectors; makers and tinkerers; activity participants; players; or liberal arts enthusiasts. Volunteers were classified into three categories: management and board work; service work; and political and civil work (Stebbins, 1982; 1999). These three forms of participation in serious leisure are distinguished by six qualities that define participants’ systematic pursuit of a serious leisure career. The six qualities are (Stebbins, 1999):

- perseverance – conquering some adversity and gaining positive feelings in their pursuit
- effort to acquire knowledge, training, or skills of their pursuit
- finding a career marked by turning points and stages of achievement in their pursuit
- obtaining durable benefits and rewards as a result of their pursuit
- identifying strongly with their pursuit
- a unique ethos related to their pursuit
What needs to be noted is that the distinction between amateurs, hobbyists and volunteers is based on the participants’ relationship with professionals. Amateurs have the strongest link to professionals in their activity. Amateurs often view themselves as having a vocation in the activity, aligning themselves with professionals and distinct from the non-activity involved public. Hobbyists have no such strong relationship with professionals as amateurs, but may still have a few professionals in their activity. The volunteers are focused on involvement in a helping activity with varying relationships with professionals (Stebbins, 1982; 1999).

While both ‘recreation specialisation’ and ‘serious leisure’ have their own perspectives on people’s leisure involvement, they are not distinct constructs. Scott (2012) examined the strengths and differences of recreation specialisation and serious leisure and asserted that these two theories have many commonalities and, most importantly, they can complement each other in understanding people’s serious leisure activities and intense forms of leisure. For example, serious leisure offers three types of participation (see above) to explain people’s systematic pursuit of a serious leisure career. However, this theory neglects the diversity of commitment and seriousness within all leisure activities. Therefore, recreation specialisation, which contends leisure participants, can be arranged along a continuum of involvement from casual to committed, and can be a supplement to serious leisure when explaining people’s involvement in leisure activities (Scott, 2012).

Although both recreation specialisation and serious leisure focus on recreationists or tourists, these two theories can be employed to understand why people chose adventure tour operators as their career. Buckley (2006) investigated different types of adventure tour operators to assert that they are the people who turned their passion for adventure activities into business (Buckley, 2006). Swarbrooke et al. (2003), in their discussion of the supply-side of adventure tourism, also contend that one of the characteristics of adventure tour operators is they were originally amateurs of adventure activities. Similarly, Williams and Soutar (2005) critically examined issues regarding adventure tour operators to argue that most adventure tour operators were amateurs who have strong commitments to adventure activities. In other words,
being a recreational specialist and devoting him/herself to a particular leisure activity are what adventure tour operators may have experienced and then pushed them to engage in the supply of adventure tourism. Therefore, it is appropriate to employ recreation specialisation and serious leisure to understand the motivation of adventure tour operators in NSW national parks.

The second key motivator is lifestyle. Veal (1993: 247) defines lifestyle as “the distinctive pattern of personal and social behaviour characteristic of an individual or a group”. The behaviour here includes activities involved with different interpersonal relationships, consumption behaviours, leisure, work, civic and religious activities (Veal, 1993). In other words, lifestyle is a way of living that is characteristics of an individual or a group in a society. In regard to tourism operators, generally, the motivation of small enterprises is significantly associated with his/her desire to start a business venture and is centred on the potential new business owner’s need to take control and change his/her work status as an employee. In addition, job frustration, perceived lack of advancement opportunities, and escape from supervision and constraint of subservient roles, for example, may also stimulate an individual to establish his/her own business (Morrison, Rimmington & Williams, 1999). A desire to change his/her lifestyle is therefore likely to play a role in motivating an individual to start a new business venture.

In a similar vein, lifestyle is recognised as the most important motivation driving people to engage in small tourism enterprises. The work of Shaw and Williams (2004) who surveyed the lifestyle of surfing tour operators in Cornwall, United Kingdom is an exemplar of such a focus. Shaw and Williams (2004) argue that seeking a lifestyle is the most important factor motivating operators to engage in the surfing tourism industry. This lifestyle enables operators to enjoy surfing while also having sufficient income for daily life. Similarly, Dewhurst and Horobin (1998) examined small-scale tourism businesses and argue that most tour operators seek a chosen lifestyle in which a balance can be achieved between family, income and a way-of-life. The Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources, Australia (2006) investigated tourism operators in Australia, and also suggests that most tourism operators in Australia are driven by lifestyle factors that provide personal choice and freedom.
Lifestyle motivation is a noted characteristic of tourism entrepreneurship. Traditionally, entrepreneurship focuses on economic performance regarding the entrepreneurs’ will to change, creativity, risk-taking, innovation and ownership of the business (Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991; Dewhurst & Horobin, 1998). Entrepreneurship is the practice of starting a new business or reviving an existing business, in order to capitalize on new found opportunities and seek profit as a reward. However, Morrison et al. (1999), in their examination of small tourism businesses, contend that the lifestyle entrepreneurship in small tourism businesses is unique, and it may not be able to be fully explained by the traditional concept of entrepreneurship. Most tour operators run small- to medium-sized businesses and their entrepreneurship activities seem not to focus heavily on economic performance. Instead, they emphasise the pursuit of a lifestyle business that strikes a balance between family, income and quality of life. That is, tour operators place their notions of an ‘ideal lifestyle’ at the centre of their businesses; maximum profit is not the goal they are pursuing (Morrison et al., 1999).

Similarly, Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) argue that having a lifestyle business is central to the entrepreneurship held by tour operators. Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) explored motives of hotel and adventure tour operators in New Zealand to explain tourism entrepreneurship. They claim that while entrepreneurship of private businesses largely focuses on maximising economic values, small-scale tourism businessmen often reject economic and business growth, and seek a balance between social, economic and environmental values. Moreover, Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) assert the operators’ rejection of economic growth does not result in financial suicide but rather provides opportunities for themselves to position their businesses in a niche market. The operators prefer to have clients who have similar values to them; therefore they can maintain the quality of their life meanwhile have sufficient income. Ateljevic and Doorne (2000: 389) contend these operators choose to “stay within the fence” because this is the life they aim to possess. Evidently, lifestyle entrepreneurship focuses on earning a respectable living, finding satisfaction in career attainment and achievements and spending quality time with enjoyable things (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000).
This thesis argues that, whether passion for adventure activities or lifestyle motivation, it would be unusual if a person is only motivated by a single reason to operate an adventure tourism business. What is more likely is that operators are motivated by multiple factors. This is evident in work by Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) who employed both qualitative and quantitative methods to explore the factors motivating Australian farmers to establish their farm tourism businesses. Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) argue for most farm tour operators in their study, both social and economic motives were important. Social motives include meeting people and educating them about farming, provision for retirement, and farm lifestyle. Economic motives include the need for a second income (particularly in times of drought) and the use of the spare rooms or facilities of the farm. Ollenburg and Buckley (2007) also indicated autonomy was a motivator simultaneously expressed when the operators showed their economic motives.

In their study of safety of adventure tourism products in Scotland, Page et al. (2005) indicated multiple motives operate at once but noted the passion for adventure activities was the major factor motivating their research participants to start an adventure business (71%). Other motivators did exist but only occupied small percentages, such as being a business owner (14%) and semi-retired (3.1%), and lifestyle was the least motivating factor (1.6%). When Page et al. (2005) discussed lifestyle as the least important motive of adventure tour operators, they described their finding as surprising, noting that many previous studies regarding tour operators demonstrate lifestyle as a significant motivation for people to engage in a tourism business. What is overlooked by this body of research is that while there may indeed be a central motivator for wanting to be a tourism operator, other motives do not disappear. Moreover, these other motives may emerge as being more central as a person learns more of their business as it grows and develops. However, the role these diverse motives play in shaping the decisions and behaviours of operators as they run their businesses in protected areas have yet to be fully and critically investigated.
This thesis employed ‘push’ and ‘pull’ motives as the framework to examine the motivation of adventure tour operators in national parks. Push motives are related to people’s desire (e.g. escape, relaxation and prestige), while pull motives are associated with attributes of destination choices (e.g. parks and natural scenery) for fulfilling the desire (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The previous sections have demonstrated that passion for adventure activities and desire for a lifestyle business can be important factors motivating people to engage in the commercial supply of adventure tourism, but financial considerations may also be a concern for operators. Most importantly, it is necessary to know why operators chose these particularly restricted areas to establish their tourism businesses. This push/pull framework provides a fuller view to examine the factors motivating adventure tour operators to engage in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks.

In addition, this thesis employed the motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) as a supplementary construct that helps explain the hierarchy of motives identified by this thesis. The motivation-hygiene theory contends that there are two types of factors guiding the satisfaction of a person’s job, which are ‘motivators’ and ‘hygiene factors’. Motivators are elements of an individual’s job that lead to good feelings about their work and themselves; thus, he/she is motivated to perform job tasks and will likely experience job satisfaction. People who are satisfied at their work put forth that extra effort and productivity increases as a result. Hygiene factors are elements that lead to negative feelings about one’s job and oneself; thus one will likely experience job dissatisfaction. When people become dissatisfied with any hygiene factors, they tend to restrict output. Table 4.1 lists motivators and hygiene factors in the motivation-hygiene theory.

However, it should be noted that in this theory lack of satisfaction does not equate to dissatisfaction. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction are on two continua. When motivators are not present on the job, individuals do not tend to be ‘dissatisfied’ – they are simply ‘not satisfied’. The individuals who are ‘not satisfied’ do not tend to restrict productivity; they just do not get involved in their jobs or put forth the extra effort to do a good job. Similarly, when hygiene factors are considered as good or acceptable,
individuals do not tend to become satisfied; they simply become ‘not dissatisfied’. Productivity is not restricted – it is just held at an acceptable level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivators</th>
<th>Hygiene Factors</th>
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<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Company Policies &amp; Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Interpersonal Relations</td>
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<td>Work Itself</td>
<td>Working Conditions</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Supervision</td>
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<td>Promotion</td>
<td>Status</td>
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<td>Growth</td>
<td>Job Security</td>
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Source: Herzberg et al. (1959)

Collectively, motivators play a more important role than hygiene factors in guiding people’s effort to willingly conduct particular matters, such as devoting themselves to the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. This thesis argues that it is appropriate to employ push/pull and motivation/hygiene as the conceptual frameworks to examine the motivation of adventure tour operators in NSW national parks, contributing to a holistic understanding of adventure tour operators in protected areas. Moreover, this helps understand what factors and/or items are valued more by each operator in his/her operation of adventure tourism supply in national parks.

**Role Identities**

The fundamental question of who we are is revealed through our roles/identities in a society (Burke & Stets, 2009; Burke & Tully, 1977; Stryker, 1968). An individual may identify him/herself as a spouse, an educator, a business owner, an Australian, a kayaker or a professional tourism supplier in different situations. Identity is determined by how an individual views the ‘self’ in a particular situation. Thus, according to Callero (1985), the ‘self’ is viewed as a structure of roles (Turner, 1978), identities (Stryker, 1980) or role identities (McCall & Simmons, 1978). Role is external, and it is linked to social positions within the social structure, such as a
tourism supplier or an adventure tour operator. *Identity* is internal, consisting of internalised meanings and expectations associated with a role (Stryker & Burke, 2000), such as how an adventure tour operator defines him/herself as an adventure tour operator. The joint term ‘*role identity*’ is defined in part by the social structure and by the individual (Callero, 1985; Turner, 1978). Thus, role identities are often used by scholars to study a person’s self-concept which reflects his/her positions in a society and the positions’ meanings (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Burke & Stets, 2009).

A set of meanings which an individual perceived or learned from other people and/or a society is at the core of role identities. Stryker (1980) asserts that a role identity is a set of characteristics, expectations or meanings that is defined by a social position and becomes a dimension of an individual’s self. Within this concept, the role identity of ‘teacher’, for example, may have the meanings of ‘mentor’ and ‘friend’ that a person applies to himself or herself when he/she plays out the role of teacher. Consequently, his/her behaviours manifest the meanings of mentor and friend as a teacher. Burke and Stets (2009) also focus on a set of meanings but provide a broader view to explain role identities. They suggest that:

> An identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person. (Burke & Stets, 2009: 3)

This definition of role identity indicates an individual may reveal different types of meanings to reflect his/her identities in different surroundings. For example, an adventure tour operator may reveal particular types of meanings to identify him/herself as an adventure tourism supplier in a national park.

The explanation of role identity has been developed by scholars into identity theory (Burke & Stets, 2009). Identity theory asserts a person’s self-concept is organised into a hierarchy of role identities, and in different situations a person will demonstrate different identities (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Furthermore, identity theory seeks to explain:
The specific meanings that individuals have for the multiple identities they claim; how these identities relate to one another for any one person; how their identities influence their behaviour, thoughts, and feeling or emotions; and how their identities tie them in to society at large. (Burke & Stets, 2009: 3)

It is evident, then, an individual’s role identity has a significant relationship with his/her behaviour and other factors may influence his/her behaviour. How adventure tour operators feel and deal with commercial adventure tourism supply in a conservation-focused area, therefore, is associated with the roles identified by adventure tour operators.

While Burke and Stets (2009) attempted to provide a universal definition of identity theory, they also claimed that although identity theory has been well developed, different perspectives on identity theory still exist. Identity theory has been developed by three different focuses argued by McCall and Simmons (1978), Stryker (1980), and Burke (1980; Burke & Reitzes, 1981). For McCall and Simmons (1978), people play out identities in attempting to interrelate their identities with other people in a situation. McCall and Simmons (1978) focus on the interaction between people to explain identity theory. For Stryker (1980), identity theory concentrates on examining how social structures influence the structure of self and how structure of the self affects social behaviour. People depend on their taste and preference to navigate in and around the groupings in a society and these groupings influence who people become. The social structure is the centre of Stryker’s (1980) view of identity theory. For Burke (1980; Burke & Reitzes, 1981), identity theory concentrates on the internal dynamics of self-processes as these affect social behaviour corresponding to the roles/identities expected by a society. That is, role identities and behaviour are “a function of the relationship between perceived meanings of the self in a situation and identity-standard meanings” (Burke & Stets, 2009: 54). Perceived meanings of the self are the focus of Burke’s (1980) perspective on identity theory.

Whether emphasising the social structure or perceived meanings of the self, the perspectives of identity theory examined above all demonstrate the importance of identity salience. As noted earlier, role identities are hierarchically structured as a system to manifest a person’s self. Some role identities are more a part of the self
than others, and therefore a person’s role identities have a variable influence on the self-concept (Callero, 1988). That is, some role identities are more salient than others in a person’s self-concept. For example, for an individual the occupational role identity may be the dominant aspect of the self, taking precedence over other roles/identities and affecting the individual’s self-perceptions and behaviours. For another individual, however, the family role identity may be more important and concerns of family will come prior to other types of work. Different people have different commitments to their role identities. Adventure tour operators should be no exception.

Moreover, Stryker and Burke (2000: 290), in their reviewing and comparable work of identity theory, argue that:

If the competing or conflicting identities reflect greatly different commitments and consequently differ greatly in salience, the identity based on greater commitment and higher salience will be reflected (in situations where alternative identities can be invoked) in the operative identity standard and perceived self-meanings.

That is, performances or behaviours reflecting identities depend significantly on how salient an identity is in an individual’s overall hierarchy of identities. A more salient identity is more often applied in a situation. Therefore, situations are another factor driving the manifestation or confirmation of salient identities. People are more likely to define situations they enter, or in which they find themselves, in ways that make a highly salient identity relevant. This process enables them to enact that identity (Burke & Franzoi, 1988). Identity salience and situations provide a critical application for this thesis. For example, such application is useful when examining the strong interaction adventure tour operators have with the natural environment, how they identify themselves in a situation in which roles/identities may have conflict, or what salient identities they reflect in their operation of tourism business in national parks.

While the explanation of role identities is well presented, in the recent decade another form of identity – ‘personal identity’ has been independently discussed by scholars examining role identities. Scholars have started to notice that personal
identities are also important in the formation of people’s roles/identities (Burke & Stets, 2009; Stets & Carter, 2006). Collinson and Hockey (2007: 383) contended that whereas social identities are “those we attribute or impute to others, situating them as social objects….personal identities refer to the meanings we attribute to the self”. That is, personal identities focus on ‘unique individuals’. These meanings serve as identity standards to make people feel they are unique (Burke, 2004). Furthermore, Hitlin (2003) examined diverse studies of identity and suggested that personal identity is experienced by individuals as core or unique to themselves; often this identity differentiates the person from others. Thus, personal identity can be understood as a sum of reflections on the subjective experience of embodied self (Cote & Levine, 2002) and focuses on individual autonomy rather than communal involvement (Hitlin, 2003). In other words, meanings of personal identity are used by a person to subjectively define him/herself as a unique individual, and in relation to this thesis, as a conservationist or a professional rock climber.

Although there are different perspectives by which role identities explain how an individual identifies his/herself, this thesis employed the identity theory in Burke’s (1980) perspective to examine how adventure tour operators identify themselves in national parks. As noted previously, Burke’s (1980) identity theory focuses on the match between the internal meanings of the self and the meaning of an identity expected by a society. Moreover, Burke’s (1980) identity theory views self-verification, which is a person’s internal self-standards, as a key motivator carrying out his/her performance of a role. That is, when a person’s internal self-meanings of an identity is consistent with the identity’s standard meaning from a social structure, this person will carry out particular patterns of behaviours to manifest the identity (Burke, 1980; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Burke & Stets, 2009). Correspondingly, when we want to understand a person’s behaviour, the meaning which the behaviour evokes should correspond to the meaning held in his/her identity. It is clear that Burke puts more attention on ‘self’ in identity theory.

Due to the lack of studies examining adventure tour operators’ positions in a social structure, this thesis aimed to let adventure tour operators ‘themselves’ reflect the meanings which constitute the salient identities underlying the roles of an adventure
tour operator in the national park. That is, through adventure tour operators’ descriptions of their behaviours, attitudes and experiences about adventure tourism supply in national parks, they reflect what an adventure tour operator in the national park is in their mind and which meaning of an adventure tour operator is the most salient one to identify who he/she is. Employing Burke’s (1980) identity theory can also address personal identities’ influence on how an adventure tour operator subjectively identifies his/herself as an adventure tour operator in a national park.

At present, role identities have been largely applied as a subject in many social science studies, but have not been much conceptually and empirically applied in the research of tourism operators. For example, Down and Warren (2008) examined narratives of small enterprises in order to understand the creation and maintenance of entrepreneurial identity. Based on a two and a half year ethnographic study of small enterprises in UK, Down and Warren (2008) argued that small enterprises often use clichés and metaphors to shape and reflect who they are. Risk taker, brave warrior, careerist, business grower and dominator were the roles frequently indicated in their clichés and metaphors, and a particular role could be more salient to a particular interview participant. While the work of Down and Warren (2008) provides useful information to examine tour operators as small enterprises, tourism enterprises have their own characteristics to differentiate from general small enterprises (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Thomas, 2004).

More specifically, as discussed above, role identities significantly influence how an individual acts, thinks and feels to respond to matters in different situations. In a similar vein, role identities of adventure tour operators, for instance, should affect how they act and feel about adventure tourism supply in national parks. Examining how adventure tour operators identify their roles can benefit the understanding of adventure tour operators’ activities in national parks. However, most identity studies in tourism largely focus on tourists. For example, Simpson and Siguaw (2008) examined identity salience’s influence on word-of-mouth communications in a tourism context. They assert that winter tourists, referred to as special interest tourists, have embraced the tourist region as an important part of their self-concept. That is, when they reveal their identity salience as winter tourists, they often include
the destination in their identity salience. Therefore, they argue that through
word-of-mouth tourists can serve as goodwill ambassadors in advocating tourist
destinations to their friends or families, and special interest tourists may promote a
destination much more due to the involvement of destination in their identity salience.
Simpson and Siguaw’s (2008) study reveals that a destination and its environment
can be a significant part of a person’s identity.

Cohen (2010) qualitatively explored lifestyle travellers’ identity formation in India
and Thailand. Lifestyle travellers are “individuals for whom extended leisure travel
is a preferred way of life that the individual returns to repeatedly” (Cohen, 2010: 289). However, according to his interview data, travelling as a lifestyle can be a
double-edged sword for lifestyle travellers. On the one hand, lifestyle travelling
enabled some of the interviewees to develop their personal identity through exposing
themselves in different cultures, people, areas and situations. On the other hand,
others lost the feeling of who they were resulting in confusion of their personal
identity, due to “the turning upside down of one’s world” (Cohen, 2010: 296), which
describes the repeated identities change from a traveller to a worker and from a
worker to a traveller again. Cohen’s (2010) study demonstrates that viewing the
repeated behaviour of travelling as a lifestyle may develop or damage a person’s
identity.

Even though the studies of Simpson and Siguaw (2008) and Cohen (2010) focus on
role identities of tourists, they provide some possible ways for this thesis to examine
role identities of adventure tour operators. This is because before taking on the
profession of adventure tour operators, most of them used to be adventure travellers
and/or adventure activity lovers (Page et al., 2005; Swarbrooke et al., 2003), or
amateurs. Therefore, tourism destinations’ environments and lifestyle may also be
involved with adventure tour operators’ role identities.

Within the limited studies of role identities in the context of tourism suppliers,
Sharpe’s (2005) and Torland’s (2011) studies provide relevant research for this thesis.
Sharpe (2005) employed ethnography to study the relationship between adventure
tour guides’ emotions and role identities in an adventure tourism service. The
participants in Sharpe’s (2005) study, who were part-time adventure tour guides, indicated that they needed to perform the ‘persona’ of adventure tour guide, such as ensuring safety and generating fun. This persona is often required by a tourism company. However, significantly, most research participants did not feel that this performance really denied their ‘real self’. They felt that being an adventure tour guide was more likely the true self, because they loved nature and could get rid of other identities in their normal life, such as a spouse, a full-time employee or a father. Even though sometimes they still found an incongruity existing between their role of an adventure tour guide and his/her emotion (e.g. kept acting as an fun creator when he/she wanted to enjoy nature independently for relaxation), they would find their own ways to adjust this incongruity, such as telling tourists that they went to check the weather forecast but actually they went to enjoy the quiet with no disturbance from tourists. Sharpe’s (2005) study reflects that in an identity shaped by an organisational culture or by extension a society’s norm, an individual may get satisfaction when the self-meaning meets the identity meaning of a society. Nevertheless, an individual may still get confused about their identities when a situation does not correspond to an individual’s feeling or emotion.

Torland (2011) conducted similar research to Sharpe (2005), but she went further to examine adventure tour guides’ selves, identities, emotions and job satisfaction. She used email interviews to explore how Australian adventure tour guides comprehend their identities and examined the importance of ‘self’ in their identities. Torland (2011) also surveyed the impact of emotion on the tour guides’ job satisfaction. According to the analysis of her 25 email interviews, over two-thirds of the interview participants indicated that they felt they had one core self and meanwhile they had other identities in different situations. Furthermore, the tour guides in Torland’s (2011) study all expressed that they were extroverted people both on-work and off-work. The study reflects that extrovert can be an identity of the adventure tour guides. In addition, Torland (2011: 1) suggests that adventure tour guides’ identities could be arranged “in a hierarchy where higher-order identities representing individuals’ core values, morals and traits oversee the activation of lower-order identities”. Higher-order identities also significantly influence the tour guides’ job
satisfaction. When the meanings of identities meet the job requirements, adventure tour guides get satisfaction. This finding, then, is similar to that of Sharpe (2005).

Although Sharpe’s (2005) study indicates that personal emotion and organisational culture can significantly shape the persona of adventure tour guides, due to her research focus, Sharpe (2005) was not able to reflect what the guides’ roles/identities were and also neglected other factors which might influence the manifestation of the guides’ roles and identities. In addition, Torland’s (2011) study seems to simplify the complexity of role identities. It appears that the ‘yes/no’ answers were used to claim that adventure tour guides have multiple role identities. An individual’s role identities are strongly associated with different situations which he/she immerses (Burke & Stets, 2009), so only using the question if you feel you have “one core self and many different versions of self” (Torland, 2011: 7) to argue the possessing of multiple role identities may be too simple. Moreover, what the meanings of the core self and different versions of self were not explained. It can be argued, then, that more detailed and insightful information describing adventure tourism operators’ roles/identities are needed. Hence, this thesis aimed to let adventure tour operators verbalise the meanings of their multiple roles and identities, and meanwhile to see if there is any factor influencing the performance of their roles/identities in the context of adventure tourism in national parks.

As Down and Warren (2008) suggested above, in order to understand adventure tour operators’ role identities, it is necessary to first examine the roles frequently expressed by them. This thesis engages with other studies researching the roles of tour guides to examine adventure tour operators’ roles and their identities in national parks. For example, Cohen (1985) examined tour guides’ roles in mainstream tourism from a tourist perspective. Cohen (1985) claims that tour guides have to play roles in both the leadership sphere and the mediatory sphere. The leadership sphere focuses on guiding tourists to somewhere they have never been and giving entertainment to tourists, so tour guides play the roles of organiser and entertainer. The mediatory sphere focuses on linking tourists to local people, sites, institutions and touristic facilities, so tour guides play the roles of cultural broker and teacher. Cohen’s study provides a useful structure to further understand the roles played by
adventure tour operators. Similarly, Weiler and Davis (1993) employed Cohen’s (1985) theory to examine nature-based tour guides’ roles. They analysed official documents, codes and tourism brochures of the Australian Tourism Industry Association and concluded that nature-based tour guides need to play further roles of motivator and environmental interpreter. These two roles are undertaken for the protection of natural resources, and motivating and teaching tourists about the importance of environmental protection. The two roles also demonstrate the difference between nature-based tour guides and mass tourism tour guides.

However, Randall and Rollins (2009) tested Weiler and Davis’s (1993) six roles of nature-based tour guides and argued that only five of the six roles were important for tourists. Randall and Rollins (2009) surveyed tourists’ views on the roles of kayaking tour guides in the Pacific Rim National Park, Canada. They found that the roles of motivator and environmental interpreter were the most important two roles for tourists. The role of ‘teacher’ which communicates to tourists, the local culture and people was the least important role of a tour guide from tourists’ views. Randall and Rollins (2009) indicated that the reasons for the low rating of the role ‘teacher’ are unclear, and they assumed that it was because the ways used by tour guides to interpret local culture and people were vague. This finding reflects that a nature-based tour guide may not be able to play the role ‘teacher’ well enough for tourists. Training nature-based tour guides to be an educator may be needed.

The roles discussed above demonstrate that tour guides may create different effects on tourists through the roles they play. However, these studies largely focused on guides but overlooked the tour operators who hire and regulate the guides. Moreover, the majority of these studies employed tourists’ views to argue the roles played by tour guides. Therefore, as roles/identities of tour guides have been examined from a tourist perspective, this thesis aimed to explore, explain and describe the roles and further identities of tour operators from the subjective interpretation of the tour operators themselves.
Values

Values have been extensively studied from a variety of perspectives. For example, Rokeach (1973:5) examined the nature of human values to define a value as:

An enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence.

Furthermore, Rokeach (1973) argues that a person’s values function as standards which guide ongoing activities, and also as general plans employed to resolve conflicts and make decisions. Similarly, Smith (1977) defined values based on the relationship between behaviour and values. Smith claims that a value “influences a person’s behaviour in some way; what a person does reflects his values” (Smith, 1977:4). In addition, Fulton, Manfredo and Lipscomb (1996) provide a holistic vision to view the function of values. They reviewed different scholars’ perspectives on values to conclude that values are:

Fundamental, enduring beliefs or mental constructs that are used to evaluate the desirability of specific modes of conduct or the ends achieved through such conduct. (Fulton et al., 1996: 25)

Collectively, values are an individual’s fundamental belief to direct behaviour, resolve mental conflicts and make decisions.

Values exist in an organised system where each value is ordered in priority with respect to other values (Rokeach, 1973; Fulton et al., 1996; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999). When an individual learns a value, this value is integrated into the individual’s value system. The value system is organised and ordered according to how the individual assesses the importance of different values (Rokeach, 1973; Kamakura & Novak, 1992). Consequently, when the individual meets values’ conflict, he/she relies on this value system to maintain self-esteem and consistency in the conflict situation (Rokeach, 1979; cited from Madrigal, 1995). For example, when a conflict arises between an operator’s values of profit and conservation in a decision about taking more clients for extra money or exceeding the carrying capacity of a canyon, it will be resolved based on the priority given to each of these
values in the operator’s value system. Therefore, an individual’s values are organised as a hierarchically ordered system, and this system enables the individual to deal with value conflict linked with different issues.

From the discussions above, it is clear that values are important in determining human behaviours and making decisions. The way which values influence behaviour and decision making is through attitudes (Ajzen, 2001; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999). A number of researchers have defined attitude in different ways. For example, Schroder, Driver and Streufert (1967) view an attitude from a social psychology perspective as a result of a combination of a person’s beliefs and assessment of the particular situation. They argue that the possessing of information and the degree of the involvement in a belief decide how an individual assesses an object. For example, an operator’s attitude towards a tourism policy of national parks may depend on his/her belief of the coexistence between tourism and conservation, information received from the national park agency and the condition of his/her business. Similarly, Weiss (2002) reviewed different definitions of attitudes in social science and indicated that attitudes are composed of affective and belief components; and the core of an attitude is the notion of evaluation. Weiss’ definition clearly reveals that attitudes are strongly associated with evaluation. Indeed, most definitions of attitude agree that:

An attitude represents a summary evaluation of a psychological object captured in such attribute dimensions as good-bad, harmful-beneficial, pleasant-unpleasant, and likable-dislikeable. (Ajzen, 2001: 28)

Furthermore, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) state that attitudes represent individuals’ consistent tendency to respond to an object in question, and attitudes significantly influence people’s behaviour towards the object. It can be concluded, then, that attitude is a person’s mental state to evaluate an object in question. Attitudes can be viewed as a product of values. As Rokeach (1973) asserts, individuals employ values as standards to evaluate attitudes and behaviours. Similarly, Ajzen (2001) gives a holistic review of studies of attitudes to contend that an individual’s overall attitude towards an object is determined by his/her subjective values of that object. Clearly,
attitudes are based on values, and that is why attitudes are viewed as an important function for expressing values.

The importance of values as the foundation of attitudes can also be observed in two theories which are frequently employed by leisure and tourism studies to explain recreationist and/or tourist behaviours. These two theories are: Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) and Cognitive Hierarchy Model of Human Behaviour (Fulton et al., 1996). The theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) focuses on an individual’s intention to perform a given behaviour. Ajzen (1985) indicates that intention is the immediate antecedent of behaviour. When an opportunity arises and the behavioural intention is strong enough, an individual will perform the behaviour to carry out the intention.

Moreover, intention is influenced by behavioural beliefs, normative beliefs and control beliefs (Ajzen, 1985, 1991; Hrubes, Ajzen & Daigle, 2001). These three beliefs are independent determinants of intention. First, behavioural beliefs concern the likely consequences of behaviour and create an attitude towards behaviour in regard to the person as favourable or unfavourable to the behaviour in question. Second, normative beliefs concern the normative expectations of others and the subjective social norm’s influence on a person to perform or not to perform the behaviour. Third, control beliefs concern the presence of factors which may make it easier or harder for a person to perform the behaviour; in other words, this belief is about a person’s perceived behaviour control to perform the behaviour. Consequently, the combination of attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control are the factors shaping behavioural intentions, and then the intention guides the performance of behaviour. A schematic representation of the theory of planned behaviour is shown in Figure 4.1.

In general, if a person possesses a more favourable attitude and subjective norm plus a greater perceived control towards a type of behaviour in question, he/she shall have a stronger intention to perform that behaviour. When the opportunity matures, the person is expected to carry out the intention, which is the behaviour. However, the success of the behaviour will depend not only on one’s intention, but also on factors
which may restrict the performance of the behaviour, such as time, money, skills and cooperation of others (Ajzen, 1985). These factors represent the person’s actual control over the behaviour (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Thus, it is useful to consider perceived behavioural control aside from intention, and that is why the theory of planned behaviour is different from the original Fishbein and Ajzen’s (1975) theory of reasoned action (Ajzen, 1985). Collectively, if a person has an intention to perform the behaviour with the required opportunities and resources, he/she shall succeed in doing so. For example, if adventure tour operators have positive attitudes towards the natural environment and possess the norms that they should protect the natural environment, they shall have the intention to ensure their operation complies with conservation in national parks. However, this intention will also be influenced by regulations of national parks and the business condition. Therefore, the attitudes, norms and outside conditions may all influence their behaviours towards conservation of national parks.

![Figure 4.1 The Theory of Planned Behaviour](source: Hrubes, Ajzen & Daigle (2001)).

While most studies that employed the two theories largely focus on the understanding and prediction of tourist behaviours, some of the studies provide useful information for this thesis to examine the values held by adventure tour operators in NSW national parks. For example, Ajzen and Driver (1991) employed the theory of planned behaviour to understand leisure choice. They used
questionnaires to survey university students’ attitudes, subjective norms, perceived
behaviour control, and intentions concerning outdoor adventure recreation activities
such as mountain climbing, boating and biking. In this research they focused on the
understanding of beliefs which are the core ingredients of values (Fulton et al., 1996;
Rokeach, 1973). Ajzen and Driver (1991) suggest that behavioural beliefs regarding
the cost and benefits of participating in the leisure activity play a significant role in
leisure participation. Their study reveals that an individual’s values regarding
economy and leisure significantly influence how he/she would engage in a leisure
activity. Similarly, operators’ values regarding economy and leisure may
significantly influence their decisions to engage in the tourism industry and conduct
their businesses.

The cognitive hierarchy model of human behaviour (Fulton et al., 1996) provides
another angle to view the relationship between behaviours, attitudes and values. This
model focuses on the behaviours, attitudes and values existing as an inverted
pyramid hierarchy system. Fulton et al. (1996) indicate that behaviour, attitudes and
values build on one another. That is, behaviours are influenced by behavioural
intentions, and then these intentions are derived from attitudes and norms. Moreover,
attitudes and norms are created by clusters of values (value orientations). Finally,
values are the foundation of these elements in the system. This model is shown as
Figure 4.2.

Fulton et al. (1996) also indicate that this hierarchy model is shaped by
characteristics of values, attitudes and behaviours. Firstly, they argue that values are
stable, central and limited in number (very few). That is because values are the
cognitive representation of basic life needs, and only focus on fundamental social
and biological needs of humans. They are the centre of the human cognitive system
and hard to change (Rokeach, 1973). Secondly, they argue that attitudes are
manufactured by values and people use attitudes as mental states to reflect how they
view or feel an object in question, so attitudes are located between values and
behaviour. Moreover, attitudes could be multiple towards the same object or towards
different objects, and new attitudes override but may not replace old attitudes (Ajzen,
2001). That is why the number of attitudes is greater than the number of values.
Thirdly, within different contexts and under different types of volitional control, people perform more types of different behaviour but these are based on similar attitudes and values. Thus, the number of behaviours is much greater than the number of attitudes.

![Diagram of the Cognitive Hierarchy Model of Human Behaviour](image)

**Figure 4.2 The Cognitive Hierarchy Model of Human Behaviour**

Source: Vaske & Donnelly (1999)

The cognitive hierarchy model of human behaviour is similar to the planned behaviour model, but portrays the comparison of the numbers and levels of behaviours, attitudes and values. These three elements exist in a causal sequence of which values are the foundation (very few), attitudes are the intermediate (many), and behaviours are the manifestation (a great many). Therefore, these three elements which build on one another and the relationships between them present an inverted pyramid figure.

Vaske and Donnelly (1999) employed the cognitive hierarchy model of human behaviour to predict wildland preservation voting intentions. Their findings gave this thesis key ideas regarding how adventure tour operators might respond to the national park’s policy about increasing the cooperation with commercial tour operators.
operators to grow both conservation and tourism in NSW national parks, and why they had such responses. Vaske and Donnelly (1999: 523) claim that “debate regarding how national forests should be managed often occurs because different interest groups hold differing values”. Indeed, according to their findings, their research participants centred on either biocentric values or anthropocentric values, and the voting intentions on establishing national forests are different between biocentric values holders and anthropocentric values holders. Biocentric values or anthropocentric values are significantly related to the attitudes towards wildland preservation, and these attitudes have a significant impact on the voting intentions of wildland preservation. It is clear, then, that values are the most fundamental factor influencing people’s attitudes and decisions on environmental issues.

Both the planned behaviour model and the cognitive hierarchy model provided a solid conceptual framework for this thesis to inductively draw out the values that underpinned the behaviours and attitudes of adventure tour operators. From examining adventure tour operators’ description of their operation and attitudes towards issues regarding commercial adventure tourism supply in national parks, this thesis can determine what values they hold to deal with commercial adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks.

Values are not only the foundation of attitudes, but also the source of motivation and role identities. Gnoth (1997) developed a model to explain the relationships between values, motivations, expectations and behaviours. In this model, Gnoth (1997) argues that values are the core for a person to evaluate the potential objects, situations and events for satisfying these values. Therefore, in order to satisfy the person’s values, he/she may generate motives and evaluate the situation to conduct a particular behaviour for satisfying his/her values. For example, a person who has decided to conduct an adventure tour can be involved with an evaluation of an adventure activity in a particular destination and motivation to satisfy his/her values of self-fulfilment and excitement. Gnoth’s (1997) contention is confirmed by Kim, Borges and Chon (2006) in their study of environmental values’ impacts on tourism motivation. They applied Gnoth’s contention to a survey of tourists at the International Festival of Environmental Film and Video. Their research results
indicate that there are significant motivational differences among the groups who have different values of environmental protection. Therefore, it can be argued that values play a central role in people’s motivation. Similarly, operators’ values strongly influence their motivation to conduct their businesses, and further affect their behaviours of supplying tourism in the natural environment.

Values are also the core of role identities and this observation results from the relationships between values, attitudes and role identities. Burke and Stets (2009) argue that a person’s role identity guides his/her attitudes and behaviours. When a person identifies a role, the attitudes he/she has often correspond to the role he/she identifies. As previously noted, an individual’s attitude towards an object influences how the individual acts towards the object. However, Burke (1991) argues that when a person engages in a particular behaviour towards an object, he/she depends on not only his/her attitude towards the object but also his/her attitude towards him/herself. For example, if an individual identifies him/herself as a bad person, he/she may behave negatively towards a good object, or he/she may behave positively towards a bad object. In addition, Burke (1991) contends that persons constantly search for contexts where there is congruence between self-meanings and the meanings ascribed to identities and accompanying specific roles. That is, a person’s identity motivates him/her to conduct particular behaviours in order to match the meanings of an identity. Therefore, a person’s role identity affects his/her attitudes, motives and by extension behaviours towards different objects or issues in the society.

Based on the relationship between self-identity and attitudes, Hitlin (2003) surveyed first year university students’ self-conceptions, values and volunteer identity to examine the relationship between personal identities and values. He adopted the notions of identity theory, the theory of planned behaviour and Rokeach’s (1973) statement of values to undertake his research. According to his findings, Hitlin (2003) argues that values are the core of personal identity as a volunteer, and through the personal identity, the university students demonstrated particular attitudes towards how other people view their volunteering work. Hitlin’s (2003) research demonstrates values as the base to forming a person’s role identity. Collectively, values are an important factor driving identity and motivation.
In the study described in this thesis, values are recognised as the fundamental factor influencing adventure tour operators’ motivations, role identities and attitudes towards issues regarding commercial adventure tourism in national parks. Values are considered by this thesis as the most important factor to explain why adventure tour operators have particular motives, why they hold specific role identities, and why they have particular perspectives on commercial adventure tourism in national parks. Moreover, understanding adventure tour operators’ values can benefit the management of these operators. If adventure tour operators have unethical values, they will find a method to ‘beat the system’ for self-interest rather than the interest of conservation of national parks. Conversely, if they have ethical values for the sustainability of national park environments, they will view conservation as complementary to their values (Eagles, 2009; Herremans et al., 2005). The values held by adventure tour operators are necessary to understand when national park managers seek the cooperation with the operators on the issues of tourism and conservation in national parks.

When examining how adventure tour operators in national parks deal with conflict between conservation and tourism’s impacts on the natural environment, this thesis will consider another characteristic of values, which is that values exist as a hierarchy system as introduced previously. Kaul, Khokle and Koshy’s (2006) Value-Congruity Relationship Model assists this thesis to explain the value systems engaged in by adventure tour operators. The value-congruity relationship model (Kaul et al., 2006) focuses on using values as the base to explain an individual’s relationships with other objects. This model suggests that the relationships between objects and an individual are based on the level of value congruity between the objects and the individual. That is, the stronger the value congruity, the stronger the relationship quality. Kaul et al. (2006: 8-9) indicate that the value-congruity model is comprised of three central ideas: (1) values are the primary drivers of all human actions including building relationships; (2) all human beings desire complete congruity in all their relationships; and (3) progression is not a natural outcome in the process of relationship formation; it is a conscious decision an individual makes to
change a relationship form into another higher order form. The value-congruity relationship model is shown as Figure 4.3.

Based on the ideas introduced above, this model argues that a person’s values are spread in a concentric ordered way. ‘I’ is the centre and gradually the values are expressed in the circles of inner, primary, secondary and outermost. Based on these circles, a person views other people or different items as objects (can be tangible or intangible) falling in different concentric circles around the ‘I’. The closer to the ‘I’ means the person(s) or object(s) has a stronger level of value congruity with the individual’s central values, so they have a stronger relationship. On the contrary, a
person(s) or object(s) falling in the farthest circle to the centre ‘I’ means those ones are ‘strangers’ to the individual due to a lack of congruity with primary and even secondary values. According to these circles, it can be argued that the individual has different levels of relationships with people or objects, so the individual treats them differently. In addition, when secondary values are incongruous with primary values, they have less influence upon the individual’s behaviours. This model essentially addresses the idea that objects are identified by a person’s values in an ordered way.

The value-congruity relationship model (Kaul et al., 2006) assists this thesis in understanding why some objects in national parks may be more important to adventure tour operators. For instance, commercial profits may be considered a central value that helps reinforce the self-concept of adventure tour operators. Furthermore, a commercial tour operator whose self-concept is associated with commercial profits may have secondary values associated with protecting the natural environment. When these secondary values are incongruous with primary values, they have less influence upon their behaviours. This model is beneficial to this thesis in exploring, explaining and describing the significance of the objects relating to the operation of adventure tour business in national parks, particularly when studies focus on lifestyle and the natural environment as crucial items for small-scale tour operators (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Herremans et al., 2005) but without the understanding of the objects’ hierarchy and conflict in the operation of tourism business.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter has critically reviewed literature associated with motivation, role identities and values as the conceptual framework for the study described in this thesis. The reviewed literature reveals that motivation, role identities and values are significant factors influencing how adventure tour operators deal with issues regarding adventure tourism supply and conservation in national parks. Unfortunately, only a limited number of studies address the theories of motivation, roles, identities and values as dimensions of tour operators’ behaviours within the concept of adventure tourism, both conceptually and empirically. This thesis argues
that an examination of adventure tour operators’ motivation, roles, identities and values can facilitate an understanding of why adventure tour operators perceive and react to some issues of environmental protection in particular ways. More importantly, values are the core for both motivation and role identities. Adventure tour operators’ values can provide an overarching explanation of why they have particular motivations and role identities. Moreover, comparing the values held by adventure tour operators can also offer useful information to understand when and under what conditions one value is more dominant than the others. Chapters Six, Chapter Seven and Chapter Eight examine further adventure tour operators’ motivations, roles, identities and values regarding adventure tourism supply in national parks.
Chapter Five
Research Methodology

The preceding chapters have outlined the need to research adventure tour operators in NSW national parks and have critically reviewed literature relevant to the study described in this thesis. This chapter explains how the empirical study was designed and conducted in a manner that enabled the research objectives outlined in Chapter One to be appropriately addressed. This chapter explains and justifies the theoretical underpinnings of the chosen methodology, the contingent nature of the data chosen, the non-random character of cases studied, and the reasons why the study described in this thesis took the path it did (Silverman, 2010).

This chapter is composed of several sections. It begins with an introduction of the epistemology underpinning this thesis, in order to state the researcher’s position in the present study. Following, this chapter justifies the employment of a qualitative approach to examine adventure tour operators in NSW national parks. A qualitative approach was employed to examine operators’ perspectives on commercial adventure tourism supply in national parks, using motivations, role identities and values as the framework. The chapter then justifies and gives details of the qualitative case study strategy utilised in this thesis. Sample recruitment for this thesis is also explained and justified. After introducing the method of data collection, the chapter examines the methods of data analysis employed by this thesis to examine emerging themes. This chapter then discusses potential biases in and limitations of the study.

Epistemology

Research is a systematic process of investigation, which provides a means for generating, testing and validating knowledge (Brew, 2001; Sarantakos, 2005). Moreover, research allows others see why particular evidence was gathered, how the evidence was gathered, and what the findings were (Bouma & Ling, 2004). Some scholars state that research can be further divided into categories derived from different foundations, functions and applications. These categories are, for example,
pure and applied, primary and secondary, theoretical and empirical, and descriptive and exploratory (Clark, Riley, Wilkie & Wood, 1998; Rugg & Petre, 2007; Taylor, 2000; Veal, 2006). One of the most utilised distinctions for categorising research is positivism and interpretivism, which is based on the concept of epistemology (Clark et al., 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Epistemology refers to the pre-existing assumptions and beliefs held by a researcher in determining how knowledge can and should be obtained (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Bryman (2004:11) states that a central issue in epistemological considerations is “the question of whether the social world can and should be studied according to the same principles, procedures, and ethos as the natural sciences”. It refers to a social science researcher’s decision to either be ‘value free’ to objectively examine the research subject or to be one of the actors in what is essentially a social setting. Such decisions guide the researcher to the opposite positions in epistemology – positivism and interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

The position taken by this thesis was interpretivism. Interpretivism states the social world and people’s behaviour are meaningful, and a study that includes interpretivism as its epistemology aims to understand the behaviour of others according to their reality and understanding of the world (Bryman, 2004). More importantly, it aims to understand meanings of behaviour, and interpretive researchers acknowledge the subjectivity of interpretation and the interactions between the researcher and the research participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sarantakos, 2005). Correspondingly, this thesis chose interpretivism as the epistemological position because adventure tour operators in national parks assign particular meanings to their lived experiences and unpacking those meanings is an act of interpretation. To help guide and direct this process, this thesis utilised the reviewed literature as a palette from which an interpretive picture of the meanings operators assigned to their experiences and behaviours could be painted. Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 24) suggest, interpretivism “assumes that the knower and respondent co-create understandings”. Thus, the outcomes of this research were affected not only by the researcher’s interactions with operators, but also by the researcher’s informed perspectives and decisions made regarding the methods chosen for data
collection and data analysis. Additionally, Veal (2006) claims that interpretivism seeks to understand people’s situation or behaviour through their own interpretation. The researcher needs to see the world from their point of view and attempts to gain more insightful information from research subjects through deep engagement with them. Thus, this thesis employed face-to-face, in depth interviews with selected adventure tour operators and then analysed their words to interpret adventure tour operators in national parks. This process also corresponds with the assertion of Denzin and Lincoln (2005) that a good interpretivist text is based on purposive (theoretical) sampling, inductive data analysis, and idiographic (contextual) interpretation.

**Employing Qualitative Research**

Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 3) provide the following holistic definition of qualitative research:

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Sarantakos (2005), focusing on the complexity of the human society, suggests that qualitative research seeks to understand the world or phenomenon through collecting and analysing descriptive data and people’s interpretation, concepts and behaviour, such as adventure tour operators’ narratives and practices regarding their businesses in national parks. Rich description of phenomenon and individuals’ subjective interpretation and creation are the key characteristics of qualitative research (Morse & Richards, 2007; Veal, 2006).

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state that qualitative research is appropriate when research purposes are to identify new theoretical propositions or social actions, but
the researcher does not have the full understanding about the details of the phenomena under immediate study. Furthermore, Silverman (2010) argues that qualitative research is appropriate when the research aims to explore a little known area, to comprehend how research participants interpret their experiences in a setting or process, to construct a theory through research participants’ perspectives, and to gain in-depth insight into the specific phenomena. More importantly, by employing qualitative research the researcher intends to:

Capture data on the perceptions of local actors ‘from the inside’, through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding (Verstehen), and of suspending or ‘bracketing’ preconceptions about the topic under discussion. (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 6)

Understanding adventure tour operators in national parks is topical and relevant as national park agencies seek more cooperation with these operators to increase both conservation and tourism in national parks. However, adventure tourism supply in national parks is an under-researched area and the views of adventure tour operators, who understand the related issues, are seldom articulated. It is important that the voices of adventure tour operators need to be included in the discussion of nature-based tourism in national parks, in order to gain a fuller representation of all the key players in the environment of tourism and national parks.

A further issue requiring discussion is the employment of qualitative research to examine motivations, roles, identities and values, which are traditionally studied by a quantitative approach (e.g. Ajzen & Driver, 1991; Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Jurowski & Gursoy, 2004; Torland, 2011; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999). Motivations, role identities and values are mental states which sometimes cannot be adequately understood by focusing on a few variables of quantitative research (Fischer, 2006; Hari Das, 1983). Most quantitative studies of these three subjects are restrictive in that the truthfulness of participants’ responses may be influenced by, and reflective of the researchers’ ideas through the predetermined research design and questionnaires (Sarantakos, 2005; Veal, 2006). However, in qualitative research, the research participants can freely and subjectively express what they mean and think about their motivation, identities and attitudes which all reflect their values. As
Jennings (2001:166) recommends qualitative methods as an ideal means for
exploring people’s opinions, values and attitudes:

 Detailed information regarding attitudes, opinions and values may
be elicited as opposed to using scales that tend to reduce the
interviewee’s experiences to numeric positions along a continuum.

Similarly, Neuman (2000) suggests that a qualitative methodology, strongly
relying on in-depth interviews, allows for a richer and more nuanced account
of people’s opinions, attitudes and experiences; the sample size is small
because depth and richness are the key, not generalizability or replication.
Qualitative research can provide a rich and deep understanding for describing
behavioural issues. This thesis sought a rich and deep understanding of
adventure tourism operators in national parks from the operators their own
voices and perspectives. Qualitative research enabled the adventure tour
operators in this thesis to effectively and freely describe what being an operator
working in a national park means to them.

This thesis does however acknowledge the usefulness of a quantitative approach for
researching motivation, role identities and values. This thesis employed regularly
cited models studying these three socio-psychological terms as ‘sensitising concepts’
(Charmaz, 2003) to examine adventure tour operators in national parks. Charmaz
(2003: 259) provides a definition of sensitising concepts as:

 Sensitising concepts offer ways of seeing, organising, and
understanding experience; they are embedded in our disciplinary
emphases and perspectival proclivities. Although sensitising
concepts may deepen perception, they provide starting points for
building analysis, not ending points for evading it.

Hence, the employed quantitative models of motivation, role identities and values
were the starting points of this thesis used to build understandings of the
under-researched area of adventure tour operators in national parks. These
understandings can provide useful and empirical information for future research into
adventure tourism supply and tourism in protected areas.
Case Studies as a Research Strategy

Stake (1995: xi) defines a case study as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances”. Similarly, Flyvbjerg (2011) examined definitions of case study to assert that a case study is an intensive analysis of an individual unit, which can be a person, a group, an event, a single situation, or any specific case, stressing on such a time in such a place in relation to context. NSW, as introduced in Chapter One, is such a specific case. Yin (2009: 13) further contends that a case study needs to be “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context”. Due to the features of a case study mentioned above, Jennings (2001) argues that in tourism research, case studies are an important component of research to explore, explain and describe specific issues.

Yin (2009) contends that a case study design should be considered when: (a) the focus of the research is to answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions; (b) the researcher cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the research; (c) the researcher wants to cover contextual conditions because he/she believes they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context. Moreover, Sarantakos (2005) suggested that case study research is suitable for pursuing in-depth analysis and perceives respondents as experts, not as sources of data. Case studies are also ideal for tourism research in order to develop description and improve understanding in a specific context rather than endeavour to create universal models (Jafari, 1987; Kerr, Barron & Wood, 2001). These contentions indicate that a case study approach is well suited to the research objectives of this thesis.

Increasing nature-based adventure tourism in NSW national parks through commercial tour operators is at once a new phenomenon taking place within a specific context where key policy debates about tourism in protected areas is playing out. How and why commercial tour operators would protect the natural environment in a national park in the context of tourism development has become a central debate in the phenomenon. However, operators’ influences on the environment have not
been fully understood by the government and, further, have not been critically analysed by tourism studies. Moreover, this research is not able to manipulate the operators’ behaviours in the phenomenon, but this research considers and describes the perspectives of those who work as adventure tour operators in NSW national parks are those taking part in the research. A case study strategy, therefore, was considered the most appropriate approach to undertake this research as it provides an appropriate means to conducting an in-depth investigation of the complexities of adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks.

Once a case study has been determined as the research strategy, the researcher needs to consider what types of case study will be conducted (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case studies are often categorised as explanatory, exploratory, or descriptive (Simons, 2009; Yin, 2009). An explanatory case study plays a major role in case study research, because this type of case study focuses on how and why questions and seeks to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions (Yin, 2009). An exploratory case study explores single or multiple cases of phenomenon for the purpose of discovering uniqueness or characteristics, since there is a dearth of pre-existing data in the public arena (Yin, 2009). In regard to descriptive case studies, Simons (2009) states that a descriptive case study collects evidence to enable the researcher to describe either a single case or multiple cases, and the who, what, where questions are often included in a descriptive case study. The selection of a specific type of case study design strongly depends on the overall study purpose, but these types of case studies are not mutually excluded.

The explanatory function was the central justification for this thesis to employ case studies as the research strategy. This thesis sought to understand the ways (how) and sources (why) of operators’ practices in dealing with commercial adventure tourism in national parks. Meanwhile, this thesis presumed there was a causal link between operators’ values, roles, identities, motivations and behaviours for their operation in national parks. Nevertheless, this thesis also engages with the other two functions associated with a case study. Such examples of the exploratory function can be the forces motivating adventure tour operators to engage in adventure tourism business and the factors influencing adventure tour operators’ role identities in NSW national
parks. In addition, the present study employed the descriptive function of case studies to understand who the operators were and what their operational characteristics existed in the context of commercial tourism supply in national parks. Such an approach enabled an understanding of the demographic and entrepreneurial characteristics of the selected adventure tour operators in this thesis.

**Sampling and Samples**

Purposive sampling is an ideal sampling strategy for case studies as it yields the most information about the phenomenon and context under study (Patton, 2002; Yin, 2009). The characteristic of purposive sampling is that the researcher uses his/her own knowledge to decide “who or what study units are the most appropriate for inclusion in the study based on the potential study units knowledge base or closeness of fit to criteria associated with the study’s focus” (Jennings, 2001:139). This thesis employed a purposive sampling strategy to recruit 24 adventure tour operators in four national parks within two NSW administrative regions as the sample. The four national parks were the Blue Mountains National Park in the Greater Blue Mountains region, Barrington Tops National Park, Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park, and Worimi Conservation Lands in the Hunter region. The reasons for selecting the regions, national parks and operators are outlined below.

The Greater Blue Mountains region and Hunter region were selected because of their proximity to Sydney and the popularity of adventure tourism within these regions. As noted in Chapter One, the TTNP report (2008) identified the most populated city of NSW, Sydney, as the centre from where tourism spreads into NSW regions. National parks in regions close to Sydney, particularly the Greater Blue Mountains region and Hunter region, are identified by the report as key destinations to stimulate the tourism market in NSW national parks (TTNP, 2008). These two regions are a similar distance from Sydney (around two hours) and they are two of the top five tourism destinations in NSW. Furthermore, these two regions are well regarded for the diverse types of adventure tourism offered by adventure tour operators (Tourism NSW, 2011a). Therefore, the selection of the Greater Blue Mountains region and the
Hunter region as sample areas for recruiting research participants was regarded as appropriate to understand adventure tour operators in NSW national parks.

The Blue Mountains National Park, Barrington Tops National Park, Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park, and Worimi Conservation Lands were selected because of the diversity of adventure tour operators found within these different types of national parks. These four national parks have diverse natural and geographical features, so they attract different forms of adventure tourism within their boundaries, such as rock climbing in the Blue Mountains National Park and whale watching in the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park. By including voices of several types of adventure tour operators in different national parks this thesis gained a multiplicity of perspectives and was able to theoretically interrogate the themes emerging in the study. More importantly, due to the close proximity to Sydney, the adventure tour operators in these four national parks in particular were facing an increasing demand for adventure tourism and a heated debate concerning conservation and tourism in national parks (DECC, 2007). Their motives, roles, identities and values reflected how they would conduct the demand and debate. Therefore, it was appropriate for this thesis to select adventure tour operators in these four national parks as the sample. More information of the four national parks is outlined below.

*The Blue Mountains National Park* is one of the most popular national parks in Australia (OEH, 2011b). It is around 1.5 hours driving distance from Sydney, and covers over 240,000 hectares. The park offers diverse natural and cultural features, such as the dominating sandstone cliff lines of the Jamison valley, the distinct vegetation communities in Mount Werong, and Indigenous rock art in the Red Hands Cave. The Blue Mountains National Park attracts over 2.8 million domestic and international visitors each year, and the significant features of the park resulted in a listing of World Heritage Areas in 2000 (OEH, 2011b). Furthermore, there is a variety of forms of tourism being practiced in this national park, such as cultural, eco and adventure tourism. More specifically, the spectacular cliffs, canyons and forests in this park provide ideal environments for both soft and hard adventure tourism. The
Blue Mountains National Park is considered to be one of the areas where adventure tourism emerged in Australia (Hall & McArthur, 1994).

The Barrington Tops National Park has gradually become a popular destination for tourists from Sydney (OEH, 2011b). This park is approximately 2.5 hours driving distance from Sydney. It covers 74,567 hectares and is noted for the contrast between the lower valley’s tropical forest and ancient volcano’s subalpine coniferous trees (DECC, 2007). Due to its valuable natural resources, the Barrington Tops National Park was inscribed on the list of World Heritage Areas in 1986 (DECC, 2007). Furthermore, clear rushing rivers in this park provide ideal environments for white water rafting and kayaking. Trails within the tropical forest and coniferous trees also make the Barrington Tops National Park ideal for bushwalking and such attractions encourage ecotourism and adventure tourism in the national park (DECC, 2007; OEH, 2011b). However, the increasing needs of recreation and tourism have been identified by the park’s draft plan of management as a possible threat to the conservation of the national park. Therefore, the management of commercial tour operators, tourism development and conservation is an important issue for the Barrington Tops National Park (DECC, 2007).

The Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park is also a popular tourism destination for tourists from Sydney and surrounding areas (Port Stephens Council, 2011). The south side of the park is around two hours north of Sydney. This marine park covers 98,000 hectares including offshore waters to the three nautical mile limit of state waters. The protection of the state’s most spectacular marine life, such as whales, dolphins and grey nurse sharks, was the key consideration in the establishment of the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park. In addition, commercial fishing and outdoor recreation have a long history in this area and significantly contribute to the development of this park (OEH, 2011b). The unique natural features and the ideal water environment provide a variety of opportunities for wildlife tourism, ecotourism and adventure tourism. Protecting eco-systems in this area while also allowing the sustainable use of tourism and recreation is the most important task of this national park (OEH, 2011b).
Worimi Conservation Lands are a new national park in NSW. This national park was established in 2007 and it is co-managed by the Worimi Aboriginal Community and the NPWS (OEH, 2011b). It is adjacent to the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park and encompasses 4200 hectares. The majority of this national park encompasses Stockton Beach. The sand dunes of Stockton Beach provide an ideal environment for four-wheel-driving (4WD) tours. Several adventure tour operators provide 4WD tourism services in this national park. The plan of management for this national park is still in progressing but some changes to the management of increased recreation and tourism in this area is evident, such as the erection of fences in order to limit entry to the sand dunes.

Within the four NSW national parks introduced above, the samples of adventure tour operators were obtained from two websites. The first website was the Blue Mountains Tourism Limited website: www.visitbluemountains.com.au, which is a non-profit tourism website supported by the Blue Mountains City Council. The second was the Hunter Regional Tourism Organisation website: www.huntertourism.com, which is an official tourist information website for the Hunter region. The criteria for selecting operators from these two websites were based on the definitions of adventure tourism introduced in Chapter Two, which include the elements of commercially guided, outdoor activities and the natural environment. Importantly, the selected operators had to offer tourism services in national parks. Consequently, some of the operators on these two websites were not considered for this thesis. For instance, operators who provided transportation and tours of Aboriginal art sites were not included as samples by this thesis.

Recruitment for this thesis involved recruiting 24 operators in five waves. The first wave of recruiting targeted the Blue Mountains National Park, because of its significance as the area where adventure tourism emerged in Australia (Hall & McArthur, 1994). It is also the area where adventure tourism is most popularly provided in NSW (Tourism NSW, 2011a). From this national park, fourteen operators qualified for inclusion in this research. The researcher of this thesis commenced recruiting the fourteen operators by email however initial contact elicited no responses. Therefore, direct contact was instigated and six of the fourteen
initial contacts agreed to participate in the research, and these operators included both hard and soft land-based adventure tour operators. Operators who did not want to take part in the project cited a lack of time or were not interested in the research project.

The second wave of recruiting concentrated on the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park, particularly the Nelson Bay area. Nelson Bay is where most commercial tour operators in the Port Stephens area are located (Port Stephens Council, 2011). In addition, adventure tourism activities provided in this area are markedly different to the activities offered in the Blue Mountains National Park. This recruitment was initiated to provide this thesis with the perspectives of tourism operators working in a different national park environment. Telephone contact and direct visits were made initially with twelve operators who qualified for this thesis and eight agreed to participate. These operators expressed interest in sharing their narratives of establishing and running their adventure tourism businesses in the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park. Most of these operators provided soft water-based adventure tours, with only a few offering hard water-based adventure tourism activities.

The third wave of recruiting targeted operators in the Worimi Conservation Lands. Six operators qualified for this thesis. The adventure tours offered here are within the unique environment of sand dunes, in contrast to other natural environments in NSW national parks. Telephone contact was initially made with the six operators and three of them agreed to participate. Two of the three operators provided soft land-based adventure tours and one provided a hard air-based adventure tourism activity.

The fourth wave of recruiting targeted the Barrington Tops National Park. This national park is further from Sydney however adventure tourism was increasing in this area (DECC, 2007). Four adventure tour operators in this area qualified for this thesis. Approached by phone, all four operators agreed to participate in the research project of this thesis. The four operators all provided soft land-based adventure tours but one of them also offered a hard water-based adventure tour.
The fifth wave of recruiting focused on the Blue Mountains National Park again in order to include an increased number of operators representing one of the most important areas of adventure tourism in Australia (Blue Mountains City Council, 2006). Direct contact was instigated and three further operators agreed to take part and these operators provided both soft and hard land-based adventure tours for tourists. The inclusion of more tourism operators from the Blue Mountains National Park has enriched the data of this thesis.

The Method of Data Collection

Under the interpretive paradigm, interviews are recommended as an ideal method to collect data for case studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2009). Interviewing is a data collection technique which utilises the verbal questioning of respondents (Sarantakos, 2005). Yin (2009) states that a key reason to employ interviews for a case study is because, as most case studies are related to human affairs, interviews can guide participants as informants to provide important insights and detailed information for understanding the little-explored cases. Similarly, Clark et al. (1998:132) highlight the benefits of employing interviews in qualitative case studies:

The interview as a form of collecting qualitative data is at its most useful when it gives us insight into how individuals or groups think about their world, how they construct the ‘reality’ of that world.

The assertion of Clark et al. (1998) also corresponds to the contention of Patton (2002) that interviews allow data to be obtained that cannot be observed, such as adventure tour operators’ experiences, opinions, feelings, thoughts and perspectives.

Reflection through interviews elicited data that could not be gained through simply witnessing behaviour. Moreover, the ways in which the operators responded in interviews contributed to this thesis’s interpretations of issues regarding adventure tour operators in NSW national parks, such as their positive or negative attitudes towards the NPWS. Additionally, interviews allowed this thesis to effectively document the issues relating to the operators’ operation in the past, present and future in order to obtain a deeper and fuller understanding of adventure tour
operators in national parks. The style of interview used for this research was the in-depth, semi-structured interview. Fielding and Thomas (2008: 246) described such interviews as “the interviewer asks certain, major questions the same way each time, but is free to alter the sequence and to probe for more information”. Furthermore, this type of interview focuses on the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee(s) thereby generating more data relevant to the research subject (Bryman, 2004). Through the conversation and interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee(s), other significant issues relating to the research subject may emerge. More importantly, semi-structured interviews allowed for interview participants to voluntarily share their stories with the interviewer in an open manner and to offer the information which they perceived as important or significant to the topics under discussion (Patton, 2002). In-depth, semi-structured interviews enabled this thesis to obtain in-depth data where adventure tour operators could use their own words and, where relevant, determine the subject matter to be discussed.

The questions of the semi-structured interviews for this thesis were composed of four sections. The interview topics were developed so as to gain a nuanced understanding of the operators in national parks, meanwhile to facilitate the flow of conservation. The first series of questions were designed as ‘ice-breakers’, in order to make the interview participants feel at ease and to generate interests in answering further questions. These questions commenced from asking the operational characters of the business, followed by investigating the development of their businesses, which led the operators to speak about their narratives for engaging in adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks. Amongst other things, their business details and the factors involved in the development of their businesses were discussed. The second series of interview questions were designed to gain insights into the operators’ point of view, particularly in relation to their thoughts, perspectives, and the meanings they attach to their experiences on dealing with tourists and the natural environment. The reviewed literature has demonstrated that adventure tour operators have been identified as an important bridge between tourists and the natural environment through the engagement of adventure activities. Within this section the operators were asked to discuss the influences they made on tourists, the relationship between
the natural environment and their businesses, the effects of their operation on the environment, and their strategies to cope their services with conservation.

The third series of questions related to the operators’ experiences and perspectives regarding commercial adventure tourism in national parks management. Commercial tourism in NSW national parks is strictly managed by the NPWS and related regulations. Thus, operators were asked to discuss how the management had influenced their operation. Operators’ perceptions, expectations and experiences regarding the national park agency and its management were reflected in this section of interview questions. The fourth series of interview questions were designed to allow the operators to reflect in detail about their images and expectations of adventure tourism, adventure tour operator and adventure tourism industry. Expected commercial adventure tourism in national parks from a supplier’s perspective was revealed. The interview concluded by asking the interview participants if there was anything they would like to add that they thought might be relevant to the research. The interview questions had been modified several times based on the ideas emerged in the first few interviews. The series of questions enabled this thesis to obtain a holistic picture of and insights into adventure tour operators in NSW national parks. A copy of the final version of the interview questions appears in Appendix A.

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with twenty-three participants and one was conducted by telephone. A total of 16 fieldtrips were taken from May 2008 to March 2009 for the face-to-face interviews. Prior to the fieldtrips, participants were asked to decide on the location for the interview where they would feel comfortable, allowing the interviewees to speak on particular subjects more willingly (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2010). Of the twenty-three interview participants, nineteen chose their offices as the place for the interview, and other four participants chose cafes to conduct the interview. The telephone interview was conducted in the office of the researcher.

The research was subject to ethical clearance by the Human Research Ethics Committee [HREC], the University of Newcastle, Australia. Informing the interview participants about their rights in the research project of this thesis was a necessary
procedure of this project. Before the interviews commenced, interviewees were shown the research information sheet that was granted by HREC in December of 2007 (Appendix B). The information sheet introduced the purpose of this thesis and also informed participants that their details, such as business names and contact numbers, would not be identified in the transcriptions. All interviewees and organisations were given pseudonyms to assure confidentiality and protect privacy. Furthermore, the information sheet notified interviewees the interview data would only be used for this thesis. In addition, the research participants understood only project supervisors, the interviewer and interview participants could review their own transcripts and that data would be securely stored for five years; and after five years the data would be destroyed. Such controls enabled the interview participants to freely reflect their perspectives on commercial adventure tourism in NSW national parks. After introducing and understanding all the information and rights regarding this research, the interview participants were asked to sign the consent form (Appendix C) for the participation of the research.

A digital voice recorder was used for recording all the interviews. The use of a recording device was preferred as it captured the manner of the interview. In addition to the recordings, hand-written notes were also used during the interviews. The notes were used to capture key words or ideas during the interviews. These key words or ideas, such as conservation and limited access to national parks, were used to link related interview questions and resulted in generating useful data about adventure tour operators in NSW national parks. Interview questions flowed smoothly and more insightful information on specific issues regarding adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks resulted. The interviews varied in length, with most taking approximately 40-50 minutes to complete.

Upon completion, all data were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist into Microsoft Word documents for analysis. As Bryman (2004:325) notes that the procedure of recording and transcribing interviews “is important for detailed analysis required in qualitative research and to ensure the interviewees’ answers are captured in their own terms”. After each interview was transcribed it was reviewed by the researcher to check for accuracy. Re-listening to the interviews and re-reading the
transcripts were the ways used by the researcher to check the accuracy. Moreover, checking and re-listening to the interviews enabled this thesis to more effectively catch the themes of the operators’ meanings and perceptions of adventure tour operators in NSW national parks. Marginal notes about significant remarks or observations were made in these two processes to generate codes and identify themes. As Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest that re-reading and re-listening the interview data are necessary steps for a qualitative researcher to interpret and theorise in relation to the data he/she collected.

**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is utilised in order to understand the important meanings of answers according to the concepts or theories of the chosen discipline (Sarantakos, 2005; Silverman, 2010). Hence, based on the models and theories discussed in Chapter Four, the interview data of this research was analysed for insights into the meanings of the operators’ motivations, roles, identities and values. Following the analysis, these meanings were categorised into themes.

Qualitative data analysis is conducted in parallel with data collection; they are not two discrete entities of the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data collected without analysis can result in “a redundancy in information being identified in the data and no new information being found” (Jennings, 2001:195). Therefore, when the first few interviews were completed, repeated words and ideas in the content of these interviews were summarised. This allowed the study to be more sensitive to particular issues and to explore such issues in future interviews. Coding and memoing of the interview data commenced at this stage.

Coding is recognised as the first step for analysing and narrowing qualitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Sarantakos, 2005). Codes are “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 56). Codes can be words, phrases, sentences or even paragraphs connected to a specific setting, such as the word ‘teaching’ is
connected to ‘conservation’ in this thesis. Correspondingly, coding reviews and meaningfully dissects collected data, while not damaging the relations between the parts (Patton, 2002; Sarantakos, 2005). Research data is differentiated and combined at this stage (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Descriptive, interpretive and pattern codes suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) were employed by this thesis to code the interview data of this thesis. Descriptive codes often use a single summarising notion to name the “chunk” of data being analysed (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 56). For example, when the interviewed operators described the development of their business, this thesis used ‘motivators’ as a single notion to summarise this description. Based on descriptive codes, interpretive codes provide a deeper level of analysis, such as dividing the “chunk” into segments. For example, one of the interviewees (James) said:

Because that’s [rock climbing] more of my passion, my interest in it. It’s very hard to make your passion your profession, but you know, you can try.

This quotation was further coded into the segment of ‘MPI (motivator: personal interest)’. Finally, pattern codes are more inferential and explanatory than interpretive codes. Pattern codes identify themes, processes and relationships. For example, the interviewee Rick explained why he looked after the natural environment in this way:

I look at that [the national park environment] heavily because I’m going to similar places all the time, the same places. If I go in there and make a mess of it, the next customer I take in there is not going to see a genuine Australian environment.

This quotation reveals that Rick protected the natural environment for the benefit of his business. It reflects that the operation of his business was the reason influencing him to protect the environment, therefore this quotation received an added code ‘EPAV’ (Environmental Protection for the Anthropocentric Value) to illustrate the pattern of the operators’ concerns for the natural environment. Such codes are often “used later in the course of data collection, as the patterns come clearer” (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 57).
Memoing was used to connect codes, categories and concepts emerging from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Glaser (1978: 83-84) gives a definition of a memo and also describes the memo’s relationship with codes:

[A memo is] the theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding….it exhausts the analyst’s momentary ideation based on data with perhaps a little conceptual elaboration.

For example, when the operators stated the importance of environmental protection, a memo was used to remind the researcher that a particular role or identity might underpin the statement, and a specific value should connect to the particular role or identity. Indeed, memos serve a cluster function to draw incidents together which appear to have commonalities (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Memoing can also provide assistance for researchers during the process of data collection and data analysis through recording an observation, a comment or a reflection (Jennings, 2001). Memos enabled this thesis to record some particular statements of the operators and to connect the codes and categories reflected from the data, such as the links between operation, role identities and values.

After conducting codes and memos, the method of thematic analysis was employed in emerging themes of the interview data. Thematic analysis is the process of reading and re-reading the transcripts or field notes, to produce themes and subthemes that construct the data (Bryman, 2004). Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggest that when searching for themes, the researcher should look for repetitions, typologies or categories, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-related material. For example, the term ‘lifestyle’ and its related meanings were repeatedly mentioned by the operators in this thesis, so lifestyle was identified as a theme to describe adventure tour operators in NSW national parks. In addition, the researcher constructs ‘units’ to identify the themes. Units are referred to as “a set of tendencies one can see in fieldwork” (Lofland & Lofland 1995:103). Units therefore link codes in a way that interconnections can be seen and can enable the mapping of broader phenomena. The
units used for the thematic analysis included, for example, pull motives, push motives, political influences, anthropocentric values and biocentric values. These units enabled the thematic analysis to gain critical findings from the data. The themes found in this thesis construct the data of the operators’ perspectives on adventure tour operators in NSW national parks.

All the interview data were input into NVivo qualitative analysis software for thematic analysis. Qualitative analysis software is recognised as a good and practical tool for analysing case studies (Yin, 2009). The NVivo software enabled this thesis to categorise the data and then to analyse the possible relationships between motivations, roles, identities, values and other issues reflected by the selected adventure tour operators in NSW national parks. In the process of NVivo analysis, the data were closely investigated to identify common phrases, patterns and themes. Through this process, several themes emerged that inform and constitute the findings of this thesis.

**Limitations of the Study**

The study described in this thesis contains several limiting conditions. Limitations are associated with the general critiques of qualitative research methodology and some of them are inherent in this thesis’s research design. Consideration of the limitations has been given to minimise their impact.

The first limitation concerns the size of the sample. This thesis purposively recruited twenty-four operators in four NSW national parks, so it may not be able to extrapolate data to all types of adventure tour operators in national parks and adventure tour operators in other national parks. Moreover, indeed, the restricted scope of the findings of qualitative research is often criticised by quantitative researchers (Bryman, 2004). Therefore, the findings in this thesis only reflect the views of the interview participants and cannot be applied to or generalised with regard to all types of adventure tour operators in national parks and adventure tour operators in other states’ or countries’ national parks. That is, the research context is limited and it is the most obvious weakness of this research. However, it needs to be
recognised that a global generalisation was not the consideration of this thesis. As Yin (2009) suggests, purposively selected samples for a case study mean that only analytical generation can be achieved rather than statistical generalisation. This thesis focuses on the current unique situation of commercial adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks, and seeks to contribute to the debate that increasing the cooperation with commercial tour operators in NSW national parks can benefit people, economy and conservation in the State of NSW (Brown, 2009; TTNP, 2008). What can be argued is that while this debate has some features that make it unique to NSW, it reflects a broader debate that is relatively commonplace wherever protected areas and tourism intersect, especially with regard to the influence of tourism on local economies and environmental protection.

The second limitation concerns the selection of the four national parks. The national parks in this thesis were purposively selected because of their proximity to Sydney as the centre from where tourism spreads into NSW regions, and also their reputation for diverse adventure tourism activities. In addition, adventure tours provided in these four national parks take part in the summer seasons (DECC, 2008b). Therefore, the findings and suggestions of this thesis may not reflect national parks in remote areas, or in national parks where winter activities dominate. However, this thesis provides a fruitful avenue of research and the base from which to study adventure tourism in other types of national parks, to see if similar issues and viewpoints are expressed by tourism operators in those areas.

The third limitation concerns the researcher’s subjectivity. Because qualitative analysis strongly rests with the thinking and choices of the researcher, qualitative studies are often limited by researcher subjectivity (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The study described in this thesis is no exception. The roles of the researcher in this thesis in previous years as an elite rock climber and as a professional mountaineering guide may have influenced the way in which the researcher interpreted the data. This previous experience might, however, also be helpful in allowing the researcher to be more sensitive in identifying the roles identified by the operators and also in obtaining a deeper insight into the issues and values which influenced the operators’ identities in national parks. It could be argued that such information and themes
identified may be overlooked by other researchers. However, the previous roles may also have created a bias in the way the information and themes developed, because what was interpreted in this thesis was the synthesised product of the researcher’s knowledge, history and experience in guiding adventure activities. Thus, the personal experiences, values and beliefs may be reflected in the interpretation of the findings of this thesis.

Recognising possible biases, this thesis employed several ways to minimise them. For example, this thesis examined studies of the relationships and/or conflicts between tourism and conservation (e.g. Budowski, 1976; Wilson et al., 2009) to examine if such bias was obvious or extraordinary. Furthermore, re-examination of the interpretation of the data was undertaken to highlight areas where the interpretation might need adjustment. Moreover, the personal check of bias was written into memos for data analysis. It is argued, therefore, that the influence of the researcher’s bias was reduced.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter justified the selected methodology including its methods and provided a detailed account of the research process undertaken for the study described in this thesis. A qualitative case study was regarded as the most appropriate method of addressing the research aims and questions detailed in Chapter One. The data collection technique employed was chosen after careful consideration of its strengths and appropriateness. Drawing on in-depth semi-structured interviews and focusing on a broader selection of national parks and park operators enhanced the depth of the data collected. In addition, the employed methods of data analysis have been introduced. The limitations of this thesis’s methodology also have been examined. The presentation and discussion of the data in this thesis is undertaken in Chapters Six, Seven and Eight.
Chapter Six
Motivations of Adventure Tour Operators in National Parks

This chapter focuses on the interview participants’ motivations for engaging in the provision of adventure tourism in NSW national parks. Motivation plays an important role in tour operators’ decision-making (Dewhurst & Horobin, 1998; Ollenburg & Buckley, 2007). However, the literature reviewed in Chapter Four indicates that adventure tour operators’ motivations are largely focused on their passion for adventure activities. Other motives remain relatively obscure partly because adventure tourism supply in national parks receives little attention in tourism research. In order to gain a fuller understanding of the factors motivating adventure tour operators to engage in an adventure tourism business in a national park, data from the interviews with adventure tour operators were analysed using a framework of push and pull motives. Moreover, the motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) was employed as a supplementary construct that helps explain the motives in a more hierarchical manner.

This chapter comprises four sections. This chapter begins by profiling the adventure tour operators interviewed, using socio-demographic and entrepreneurial characteristics. Such profiling provides a basic understanding of the operators and their businesses. Following this, factors that motivated the operators to engage in their adventure tourism businesses in NSW national parks are explored, using their narratives detailing their initial business involvement. Both push and pull motives are discussed. In addition to these two motivational categories, this thesis also argues that there was an overarching motivation driving the operators to engage in their adventure tourism businesses in national parks. The hierarchy of these motives is, therefore, also addressed. Quotations taken from the interview transcripts are used to illustrate multiple participants’ perspectives throughout this chapter. In the results chapters direct quotations from respondents are followed by their pseudonym, type of business and location.
Profiles of Adventure Tour Operators and Their Firms

Of the interview data collected, the gender breakdown of the interview participants was 21 males (87.5%) and 3 females (12.5%). The average age of the interviewed operators was 44. The age range of the operators was 28 to 63. This is consistent with the national data produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008) that found most small business operators in Australia are male and middle-aged. This result is also similar to the assertion by Thomas (2004) that commercial tour operators are often males in their middle age.

The mean of their operational years was 9. The range of their operational years was from 6 months to 28 years. The mean and range of operational years indicate that the operators’ businesses were, in the main, well established. The average years of their operation is similar to the finding by Bentley et al. (2001) that the majority of adventure tour operators have operated their businesses for 5 to 10 years, but the range of operation years is larger than the range discussed in the study by Herremans et al. (2005) where the maximum operating years of the sampled adventure tour operators was 13 and the minimum was 6.

According to the data, 20 operators worked as individual operators (83.3%), 3 owned the business jointly (12.5%) and 1 operated a family-owned business (4.2%). It is evident that the dominant pattern of ownership was individual operations. Such statistics are consistent with surveys conducted by Bentley et al. (2001) and Page et al. (2005) indicating that 80–90% of adventure tour operators own their businesses individually or jointly (in New Zealand and Scotland). However, the patterns of ownership found by this thesis are inconsistent with Herremans et al. (2005) who assert that over 85% of adventure tourism businesses in their study (in Canada) were predominately owned by families. It is evident that the ownership of adventure tourism business in each area may have its unique characteristics.

Over 95% of the staff members hired by the operators in this thesis were casual employees. The average number of casual employees was 14 primarily during the peak summer seasons. Furthermore, operators who provided hard adventure tours
required more casual employees than those operators offering soft adventure tour options. Often, in summer seasons, soft adventure tour operators needed 1 to 5 casual employees, but hard adventure tour operators needed 15 to 30. In addition, more than half of the operators did not have any full-time employees. The average number of fulltime employees was one. In addition to full-time and casual employees, Jordan (parasailing, Port Stephens) and Terrance (bushwalking and 4WDing, Blue Mountains) indicated they sub-contracted out work rather than employing staff. Jordan indicated he contracted out marketing and bookkeeping functions of his business. Terrance said: “What we do predominantly is contract our guides in because they’re all ecologists or biologists in their own right”. Nevertheless, most of the staffing profiles of the operators are consistent with previous studies where the majority of tourism operators run small businesses (e.g. Buckley, 2010; Swarbrooke et al., 2003) that predominantly employ casual staff (see Bentley et al., 2000; Page et al., 2005; Herremans et al., 2005). Table 6.1 below shows the demographic and entrepreneurial details of each operator.

Of the 24 operators, 9 provided soft adventure tours (e.g. bushwalking, whale watching), 7 offered hard adventure tours (e.g. rock climbing, diving), and 8 supplied both hard and soft adventure tours. These soft and hard adventure tours consisted of 15 activities. When categorised according to the type of environment in which the activities were undertaken, 9 activities were land-based (e.g. horse riding, four-wheel driving [4WDing]), 4 activities were water-based (e.g. kayaking, dolphin watching), and two activities were air-based (parasailing, hang gliding). This is consistent with the assertions of Bentley et al. (2000) and Pomfret (2006) that land-based adventure activities are the major products supplied in the adventure tourism market. Table 6.2 below presents these activities.

The 20 operators (83.3%) indicated that Sydney residents and international tourists provided an important and stable customer base for their businesses. The international tourists were mainly from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, western European countries, South Korea and China, but Korean and Chinese tourists were noted as visitors in the interviews of whale and dolphin watching operators at the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park, such as Hudson and Jim.
Table 6.1 Demographic Characteristics of Adventure Tour Operator

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Operation years</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Fulltime employees</th>
<th>Casual employees</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aaron</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Barrington Tops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Barrington Tops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Barrington Tops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Barrington Tops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Joint</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rick</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrance</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>4 people under contracts</td>
<td>4 people under contracts</td>
<td>Blue Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Family owned</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Port Stephens-Great Lakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Port Stephens-Great Lakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Individual</td>
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## Table 6.2 Activities Provided by Adventure Tour Operators

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<th>Activity</th>
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<th>Soft adventure</th>
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<th>Air-based</th>
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<td>Rock climbing</td>
<td>Mountain biking</td>
<td>Bush walking</td>
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<td>Matt</td>
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<td>Bob</td>
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<td>Michelle</td>
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<td>Adam</td>
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<td>James</td>
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<td>Rick</td>
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<td>Shirley</td>
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<td>Terrance</td>
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<td>David</td>
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<td>Hudson</td>
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<td>Jim</td>
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David (dolphin/whale watching, Port Stephens) and Richard (diving, Port Stephens) mentioned that Newcastle residents were also important clients. Jonathan (4WDing, Worimi) and Jordan (parasailing, Port Stephens) were unable to report a particular pattern to their customer base. The research data shows that both the Sydney and international tourism markets are important to the adventure tour operators. This result is reflective of broader trends reported by Tourism NSW (2011b) that the majority of tourists visiting the Blue Mountains and Hunter regions were Sydney residents, and international tourists were the third largest group of visitors visiting these two areas. This also corresponds to the findings of the TTNP report (2008) which noted that Sydney played a crucial role in the expansion of nature-based tourism in NSW national parks.

Operators who provided hard adventure tours in the Blue Mountains National Park and the Barrington Tops National Park indicated in this thesis that their clients were mainly young independent travellers and/or backpackers in their 20s to early 30s. However, Luke and Richard, who provided diving (hard adventure tourism) at the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park, chose different characteristics to describe their clients. They described their clients as mostly well-educated, middle-aged, who had good incomes, cared for the environment and enjoyed diving as a part of their lifestyles:

Socio-economically I’d say they [diving tourists] are higher than the norm. We get a lot of educated people participating in scuba diving. They’re pretty conservative people. So, yeah, normally pretty well educated and quite conservative. (Luke, diving, Port Stephens)

Somebody [diving tourist] who has an income exceeding $70,000—we find that is our magic point—somebody who is lifestyle orientated, usually males, although we do get a large proportion of females, but males in that 35-year age bracket who have disposable income and they are looking for a refocus or a redirection in life. (Richard, diving, Port Stephens)

Other operators in this thesis said that there was no particular age or type of person in their tours. As Jonathan (4WDing, Worimi) commented “we attract pretty well all walks of life and all ages”. This result is consistent with the assertions of Buckley
In order to explore adventure tour operators’ motives in operating adventure tourism businesses, this thesis employed the research of Dann (1981) and Crompton (1979) on leisure motivation and the motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959).

Push and pull motives, as sensitising concepts, are employed to examine the operators’ motives which emerged from the interview data. Operators’ push motives are examined as their intrinsic tendency to undertake the supply of adventure tourism in national parks, and pull motives are the extrinsic factors pulling the operators to develop their adventure tourism businesses in national parks. According to the data analysis, this thesis found that each operator was motivated by a number and range of incentives to develop his/her business. In addition, some motives were more powerful than others for a particular operator. In total, there were 7 push and 4 pull factors motivating the operators to develop their adventure tourism businesses in NSW national parks. Furthermore, this thesis found that there was an overarching motivation predominant among operators to supply adventure tourism in NSW national parks, and this motivation was lifestyle.

**Push Motives**

*Passion for adventure activities* was the first theme which emerged from the interview data as a push motivation. More than two-thirds of the operators expressed passion for the adventure activities they offered, such as rock climbing, diving, bushwalking and four-wheel driving. The passion motivated them to consider and pursue a career as an adventure tour operator. They often used the terms ‘enjoyment’ or ‘passion’ to describe their personal involvement in the activities that they saw as a central life interest (Stebbins, 2005). As the following remarks suggest, these operators chose to pursue and develop a business that would enable them to remain actively involved in activities in which they themselves were passionate participants:
It [establishing an adventure tourism business] wasn’t really made on business—it wasn’t a business decision. It was more of a personal interest decision….Yeah, perhaps a little bit selfish. I wanted to make a career where I can put my hobbies and my interests into my career. Nature, water sports and the outdoors are strong interests of mine. (Mike, kayaking, Port Stephens)

I’ve been climbing for 15 years so that definitely encapsulated the focus of this business. It’s a climbing-focused company, because that’s more of my passion, my interest in it. It’s very hard to make your passion your profession, but you know, you can try. (James, rock climbing etc., Blue Mountains)

When discussing the passion for adventure activities, several operators further demonstrated that because of their passion for adventure activities, they decided to change their jobs to that of an adventure tour operator. The comments from Aaron and Anthony reflect this:

I was lucky to be able to do something that I was able to enjoy doing. I could have gone out and drove a truck, drove a tractor—well I hated doing that—so why not do something that I enjoy? I enjoy getting on a horse and riding around. So I made that decision. (Aaron, horse riding, Barrington Tops)

The business just kind of came as a passion. I had a passion to fly and in order to fly. I mean I had other jobs as I was growing up—I worked in the building industry and worked in construction but it was always just to make enough money to take time off and go flying. The better at flying I got, the more time I needed to put into it, so it just kind of happened that I just started finding ways to make money doing flights. So it just kind of led into this. (Anthony, hang gliding, Worimi)

The passion for adventure activities has been identified by other studies of adventure tour operators as a central motivation driving people to become professional adventure tourism suppliers. For example, Page et al. (2005) suggest that adventure tour operators started their businesses in order to keep doing the activities they enjoyed. Swarbrooke et al. (2003) also state that adventure tour operators are often people who are passionate about adventure activities.

However, not all operators viewed the passion for adventure activities as the most powerful factor motivating them to operate an adventure tourism business in a national park. Several interview participants noted that while they enjoyed the
activities, that was not the main motive. For example, Luke’s comments clearly reflect that financial gain was a stronger motive than his love of adventure activities in driving him to develop his business:

Well, what motivated me was a belief that the scuba diving was expanding and was a good sport and would be more popular in the future. So we’re looking at this from, primarily, an economic sense rather than as a participant. I quite enjoy diving, but my main interest was always economics. (Luke, diving, Port Stephens)

Luke’s comments reflect a strong profit motive, but also demonstrate his entrepreneurship. That is, the willingness to undertake a productive venture while seeking profit as a reward (Dewhurst & Horbins, 1998; Down & Warren, 2008). This entrepreneurship will be discussed in the latter part of this chapter.

For several operators such as David (dolphin and whale watching, Port Stephens) and Matt (bushwalking, Barrington Tops), their responses indicated that they were more motivated by a love of nature than a strong engagement with adventure activities. A few operators (e.g. Jordan, parasailing, Port Stephens), who had also not described a passionate motive, had discussed their intention to develop the potential of the market. It appears, therefore, that passion for adventure activities may not necessarily be a factor and/or the most powerful factor motivating all people to get involved in an adventure tourism business. The following explores in more detail the range of motives beyond passion for adventure that emerged from the data.

Affinity for nature was another key push motivation that emerged from the interview data, and this theme often accompanied the operators’ passion for adventure activities. For example, Mike, following his comments above, indicated that:

But not only that [kayaking], the surroundings are around you, are within you at the same time. You can get up close to everything whether it be the bush land and the rocks nearby, the sandbars out at sea or the dolphins swimming next to you, or the sea turtles and what not, everything can be very, very close in a friendly way that is not going to affect the environment. (Mike, kayaking, Port Stephens)
The overwhelming majority of the operators indicated that a love of nature was one of the driving forces pushing them to develop their adventure tourism businesses in national parks. This corresponds with the findings of McKercher and Robbins (1998) that an affinity for nature is a characteristic of nature-based tourism operators. Being an adventure tour operator was an ideal way for these operators to immerse themselves in the natural environment they love. Several operators further indicated that consistently being in the natural environment was the most important consideration in them joining the industry. Matt’s and Michelle’s comments capture this:

It [the natural environment] is something that I really enjoy and that I can share with other people. (Matt, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

I don’t know. I’ve just always enjoyed being in nature. I find it really peaceful and I find life is in perspective when you are out in the natural environment. All the silly little things that stress you out and worry you in normal life just disappear. (Michelle, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

When the operators revealed their affinity for nature as a motivation, around half of them further mentioned that where they had grown up in childhood was a crucial factor in developing this love of nature. For example, Hudson and Tom indicated:

I’ve always, as most Australians are, we live on the coast, and you spend your life on the coast, and you spend your life when you’re a kid at the beach, surfing, swimming, diving – all those sorts of things. And it’s just a natural extension that I got offered a job when I was in WA [Western Australia] to work on the water and I took it up and enjoyed it and gained some qualifications, and then went back to the building industry and then decided that I wanted to be back on the water. So it’s basically I must have salt water in my veins! (Hudson, dolphin watching, Port Stephens)

I grew up in the lower Blue Mountains. I love the bush; I love the peace; I love the quiet. I’m probably one of those mad, crazy people. I’m not so mad that you know, get away from everything, I like being in the bush, I like the peace and quiet. (Tom, rock climbing, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

The remarks reflect an appreciation for the natural environment that pushed these operators to launch their businesses in the particular types of natural environments which they love, or more specifically, to become specialised adventure tour operators.
Whether their affinity for nature focuses on water or land, the remarks made by these operators concur with Ateljevic and Doorne’s contention (2000) that having constant contact with the natural environment is a key factor in making small-scale tour operators in New Zealand decide to stay in the tourism industry. More importantly, some adventure tour operators may view the natural environment as the most powerful factor pushing them to supply adventure tourism in national parks.

As can be seen in the remarks above by Aaron, Anthony and Hudson, this thesis also found that operators launched their adventure tourism businesses in national parks because they wanted to escape from jobs or environments they did not enjoy. Indeed, escapism was also one of the factors pushing many operators in this thesis to start an adventure tourism business. Around half of the interviewed operators indicated escapism as a push motivation in combination with their love of adventure activities and nature, and also their desire to escape from former environments which they perceived as mundane. Escapism, therefore, is not only a motivation driving tourists to travel (Dann, 1981; Urry, 1990; Yoon & Uysal, 2005), but also a motivation pushing the operators in this thesis to develop their adventure tourism businesses.

There were two meanings underpinning the escapism which motivated the operators to develop their own adventure tourism businesses in national parks. Some of the interviewed operators declared that they had chosen the adventure tourism business to escape from having to work in an office or in jobs they did not like. They remarked that their previous jobs were boring or disappointing. They felt that engaging in the supply of adventure tourism was a much better option. This is illustrated clearly by Luke’s and Michelle’s comments:

I worked in Canberra for 12 years with the Department of Overseas Trade and I really couldn’t see myself staying sane and working within that environment for another 30 years. So we left there in 1977 to come to a small town and to establish a small business. (Luke, diving, Port Stephens)

I found, once I got into engineering, that most people were only interested in money and I found that very disappointing and I got very disillusioned with it and I couldn’t seem to get into the field of engineering that was going to make me happy. I kept trying to change jobs to get closer to where I wanted to be and I wasn’t...
getting closer and I was attracted to this style of work [adventure tour operator]. (Michelle, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

These two comments reflect on work conditions, which are a hygiene factor in the motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959), that pushed these operators to engage in the supply of adventure tourism. Their previous jobs made them feel dissatisfied, so they were seeking alternative work conditions to mitigate dissatisfaction. The operators’ motivation and hygiene factors will be discussed later in this chapter.

While many operators focussed on previous jobs to demonstrate the motivation of escapism, a small number of operators who provided adventure tourism in the Blue Mountains National Park expressed this motivation in another way. Adam, Nicole, Shirley and Tom indicated that they wanted to get away from the busy city (Sydney) and stay in the environment they liked (Blue Mountains National Park) as much as possible. Their statements suggest that Sydney was not an ideal place for them to live and work. This is particularly captured in Shirley’s comments on her feelings about city life:

For me I find the city really hectic and the air is dirty and everything is bustling and going on and I want to be nice and relaxed and go on with my life without having to be affected by a million different people every day. I mean, up here, there is still stuff going on, and I go down to the city to go out or go shopping or that sort of stuff, but I don’t want to wake up to it every day. (Shirley, canyoning etc., Blue Mountains)

The remarks above reflect the motivation that these operators wanted simply to get away from what they perceived as a mundane environment. Nevertheless, escapism in tourism studies often focuses on tourists’ escape from boredom in their lives or the need for a break from their daily routines (e.g. Fluker & Turner, 2000; Patterson & Pan, 2007, Urry, 1990). This thesis argues that although the interviewed operators also need escape from boredom and/or mundane environments, their escapism largely focuses on escaping for long-term enjoyment, not for short-term breaks from daily routine. Therefore, this thesis asserts that the motivation of escapism has some particular meaning for the operators in this thesis and is in contrast to that of tourists.
While the motives regarding adventure activities, nature and escapism were generally identified by the interviewed operators as key push factors, some operators pointed to other factors as being stronger motives to have their own businesses. Around half of adventure tour operators interviewed expressed autonomy as a strong motivation pushing them to establish their own adventure tourism businesses in national parks. These operators used to work for other tour operators or employers, but they felt they were potentially better at running an adventure tourism business. When they revealed the motivation of autonomy, some of them reflected their insistence on, or belief in, particular aspects of the operation of an adventure tourism business, such as using a particular method to guide or entertain their customers. This is best illustrated in Gary’s and Patrick’s comments:

I wanted to have control over the business. I’ve worked for lots of different adventure operators and no one does it as good as yourself, as you believe you can do. So autonomy was something that I gained and I really enjoy. (Gary, abseiling, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

I started doing slideshows for this company and, through no fault of their own, because they were going through a crisis, and in retrospect I can understand that they didn’t want to do it; they just didn’t have the time or the resources. Eventually they weren’t interested in me doing slideshows and I just got frustrated. I did want to do this. So that is why I set up my own company because I thought it would work, and it has. It was just to make it. I just wanted to do it, a personal desire to do it. (Patrick, rock climbing, abseiling, Blue Mountains)

Others did not complain about previous work experiences and simply said they just wanted to work for themselves. The examples of Bob and James illustrate how they got involved in their adventure tourism businesses:

I grew up in a family-owned business and I always have that motivation to work myself. (Bob, mountain biking, kayaking etc, Barrington Tops)

I opened this [business] because I wanted to work for myself. I felt that there was something lacking in what we’ve been currently providing. (James, rock climbing, Blue Mountains)

Jim suggested that being ‘unemployable’ is a part of his nature:
I’m unemployable. I don’t think anyone would employ me [laughs]. I tried working for somebody once, but we didn’t last too long [laughs]. I don’t know. I think it’s that thing of independence of we all like to think that we are running our own show but ultimately like Bob Dylan said, you are either working for the devil or the lord. You’re going to work for somebody sooner or later but it’s just your values you are working for, what you are holding on to what your dream is. And if you are working for somebody else, well, maybe he thinks the same way as you but maybe he doesn’t. So it gives you a chance to determine your own future. (Jim, whale/dolphin watching, Port Stephens)

These responses illustrate that these operators had strong beliefs in the operation of an adventure tourism business and wished to have more control and/or freedom in their career. The beliefs and wish provided a significant motivation for them to establish their own adventure tourism businesses. The motivation of autonomy is consistent with Page et al.’s assertion (2005: 389) that adventure tour operators “felt that being a business owner allowed them to be their own boss”. However, Page et al. (2005) identified autonomy as a less important motivation for their research participants. In contrast, this thesis found at least half of the interviewed operators claimed autonomy as a significant factor motivating them to develop their own adventure tourism businesses.

Several operators indicated that compared to the love of adventure activities and nature, social interaction was a much more powerful motivation pushing them to immerse themselves in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. These operators stated they were motivated by a desire to meet different people and to enable people to enjoy what they enjoyed. Being an adventure tour operator provided many opportunities for them to satisfy this motivation. Comments from Nicole and George demonstrate the push motivation of social interaction:

When I was about 25 I decided I wanted a different career and I looked at what I enjoyed doing in life, and I enjoyed being with people and spending time with people; that’s probably the number one thing that I enjoyed about jobs that I had previously and I enjoyed the outdoors. I like chatting to people and I find jobs where you are indoors just working; I find them really challenging. I don’t really have the attention span to just focus on a task. But socialising and being with people is fun for me and easy. (Nicole, rock climbing, canyoning, bushwalking, Blue Mountains)
To me it’s a love and a passion that I love sharing with other people and if I were independently wealthy I’d do it free of charge. (George, 4WDing, Worimi)

George’s comment also reflects that even though being an adventure tour operator was what he wanted to do, this job needed to be able to offer him a certain level of income. This combination of the need for income and the fulfilment of desire was shared by many operators in this thesis, and it will be discussed further in the section on lifestyle motivation.

A few operators interpreted the motivation of social interaction from another perspective. They were interested in observing people engaging in an enjoyable experience, and that interest was the reason pushing them to engage in the supply of adventure tourism. This push motivation is captured particularly well in Adam’s remarks:

I’ve always noticed that people derive a lot of pleasure from it [adventure tourism]. They really get a lot out of doing a tour and doing these sorts of activities, and it’s something that’s very different to what they might do in their normal day-to-day life. Seeing the sort of reward that people get from doing this—from going out on these sorts of tours—that’s what I get pleasure from. (Adam, rock climbing etc., Blue Mountains)

While the operators above sought relationships with, and enjoyment from, tourists, Lewis indicated that he wanted to be recognised by other people as someone important or special:

It is also very enjoyable to introduce other people to that [kayaking] and I must have had probably hundreds of people come to me and thank me for introducing them to kayaking and tell me that I am the reason why they are launching their kayaks right now. So the enthusiasm isn’t hard to come by, but I didn’t know if it was going to work as a business. (Lewis, kayaking, Port Stephens)

It is evident that each of these operators had his/her own focus to emphasise the importance of social interaction as a motivation. While social interaction is recognised as an important motivation underpinning adventure tourists’ decisions to participate in tours (Fluker & Turner, 2000; Patterson & Pan, 2007), social
interaction for tourists often refers to making new friends or meeting someone special. In this thesis, operators’ social interaction is not only a desire to meet new people and to forge new friendships, but is also strongly associated with their love of nature or passion for adventure activities they want to share with other people. The identification of social interaction as a motivation for adventure tour operators provides a new framework in which to understand why people engage in the supply of adventure tourism. This finding also shows that the operators may view themselves as educators or interpreters. The roles identified by the operators will be discussed further in the next chapter.

In addition to the major themes discussed above, a few operators pointed to a further two push motivations, which were self-challenge and the need of extra income. Richard said the most powerful factor pushing him to establish his diving tourism business was that he wanted a challenge and to put his ability to run a business to test:

A desire to improve and meet my fullest potential and see what I was capable of doing without the bounds of an employer. I wanted to take that entrepreneurial step and see what was possible. (Richard, diving, Port Stephens)

It is evident that Richard sought accomplishment and achievement (Herzberg et al., 1959) in his pursuit of being an adventure tour operator. Moreover, the comment also demonstrates two characteristics of entrepreneurship, which are risk taking and innovation. This result suggests that adventure tour operators may reflect the characteristics associated with general entrepreneurship.

Aaron (horse riding, Barrington Tops) and George (4WDing, Worimi) indicated a minor motivation as being that they needed extra income to cover their living costs. For example, Aaron said the following:

In 1995, we had a financial situation with the government and politics, so we decided that we needed a second income. (Aaron, horse riding, Barrington Tops)
Although only two operators expressed economic concerns as push motivations, many other operators indicated that the growth of the adventure tourism market was an important factor pulling them to engage in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. The pull motivation of economic concerns will be discussed in the following section.

**Pull Motives**

Several themes which emerged from the interview data were identified as pull motives encouraging the operators in this thesis to develop their adventure tourism businesses in NSW national parks. Most of these pull motives correspond to the push motives discussed previously.

The first pull motivation that emerged from the interview data was *the market of adventure tourism*. All operators in this thesis mentioned that one of the reasons they came to the business was an awareness of the opportunity to profit from the adventure tourism market. However, operators had different interpretations of this.

Most interviewed operators recognised the need to generate income from their businesses to sustain their livelihood. These operators said they had come to the adventure tourism industry because they believed the business would be able to provide them with reasonable profits, enabling them to stay in this industry and make a living. Without a basic level of income, they would not have chosen to be an adventure tour operator. Being able to gain profits was a significant concern for these operators engaging in the adventure tourism industry. George’s and Terrance’s comments reflect these concerns:

> It [the adventure tourism business] was able to, with the money you earned from doing those tour products, spend it in the different areas for vehicle maintenance, for fuelling, for your own upkeep and socialising and different things like that. (George, 4WDing, Worimi)

> We were looking for a business that would be profitable, employable. (Terrance, 4WDing, bushwalking, Blue Mountains)
Some operators noticed the potential of the adventure tourism market, and were drawn to it for this reason:

There were a lot of people that may well be interested in doing that, but they wouldn’t do it unless they were guided. So from there, it basically was conceived as small groups that you take out, and, in a word, allow people to experience the feeling that no people had been there before, which in some of these areas you can do. (Matt, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

It started in 2002. I guess it was always in the back of my mind that kayak tours would be a good thing in Tea Gardens. I should mention too that it wasn’t a big gamble, in terms of money, to try it. So while I didn’t do any market research, there really wasn’t a big risk involved. Really I was just buying some kayaks and printing some brochures, so the worst thing that could happen, if it didn’t work, I’d just sell my kayaks and kayaks are very tangible items. (Lewis, kayaking, Port Stephens)

A few of the operators stated that they had observed adventure tourism businesses that were not managed well so decided to take on the operation themselves. For example:

I saw the fellow that was here before and I could see that there was an enormous potential there, and when he went broke and his boat went, that’s when I offered him a few dollars for his business name. That’s all I wanted, the business name. (Jordan, parasailing, Port Stephens)

Initially when I started the business I went out to Coffs Harbour with a tour operator. This fellow should never have been in business. An example of it was: two girls were on the tour with us; it was a tag along tour. Virtually ourselves driving our own vehicle; these girls were travelling in his vehicle. He opened the back of the vehicle up for lunch. The card board box that he had all of the food in fell out. All of the sausages fell on the ground. He went over to a stream in the rain forest and washed the sausages and said, “They’ll be alright” and cooked them from raw. This gentleman didn’t have any water for his passengers in the car. These girls then came to us asked could they use our water. So yes it opened my eyes up that you have to be 110% prepared if you’re going to take passengers out in your car. (Rick, 4WDing, Blue Mountains)

What is interesting about these operators, however, is an unwillingness to prioritise profit above all else. Instead, they were pursuing a profit which enabled them to make a living and, most importantly, maximise their lifestyle. It is evident that economic considerations played an important role in pulling the operators to running
businesses in national parks. However, this is somewhat different to the motivations highlighted by Shaw and Williams (2004) and Page et al. (2005), which found that adventure tour operators often had non-economic motives for establishing businesses. It would, however, be unreasonable to establish an adventure tourism business—or any business—without taking economic factors into consideration. Thus, this thesis argues that when examining adventure tour operators’ motives, their consideration of economic factors, such as the potential of the market and or the business, should not be ignored.

Another pull motivation reflected in the interviews with the operators was a better working environment. Many operators in this thesis indicated they had started an adventure tourism business because they were attracted to working as an adventure tour operator in a national park. They expressed the view that this was a job that offered a much better working environment than other jobs could. Flexibility, relaxation and freedom were the terms they often used in describing this motivation, and this motivation corresponded to their push motives of escapism, autonomy and social interaction. For example, Adam’s following remark about a better working environment corresponds with the push motives of escapism and social interaction he identified:

Just more the relaxed nature of it [being an adventure tour operator], rather than working in an office where you’ve got to wear a suit, a tie and it’s a very formal environment. It’s very relaxed here. You actually can, if you’re with customers, you can actually talk to them….rather than just serving them a coffee, or having to deal with them in a banking sense, or something like that, you know where you’re talking to people, you’re interacting with them, your customers, but you’re not really talking to them, getting to know them. And when you take people out on a rock climbing day, you can actually talk to them and get to know them a bit more than the standard thing of “Hi, how are you today?”. (Adam, rock climbing etc., Blue Mountains)

Similarly, Michelle indicated that the working environment of an adventure tour operator was one of the factors pulling her to start working in an adventure tourism business in a national park, which corresponded with her motivation of escapism:
It [being an adventure tour operator] was an opportunity to get out of the office and not be stuck in an office every day and be out and amongst the beautiful rivers and forests. (Michelle, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

Michelle’s comment was echoed by many other adventure tour operators in this thesis. Moreover, when they talked about the better working environment, they typically mentioned the national park.

*The beauty of the national park* was a further motivation pulling the operators to engage in adventure tourism supply in national parks. Trees, bush and forests were terms frequently mentioned by the land-based adventure tour operators in the Blue Mountains and Barrington Tops national parks when they reflected the pull motivation of the beauty of the national park. They felt that the beauty was not only good for themselves, but also for tourists. Aaron’s and Matt’s comments illustrate this:

We decided that we would do something that would put our life experience together and we live here alongside of the Barrington Tops, which is, as far as I’m concerned, one of the seven wonders of Australia….You go out into the bush; it’s lovely and peaceful. Birds are singing. It’s all natural. (Aaron, horse riding, Barrington Tops)

I think there are a lot of good places in the Hunter region that people don’t appreciate, in terms of natural areas that are quite world class in terms of the experiences they can offer people….You can sit on top of a mountain and there be no development whatsoever. Which, in this day and age, is actually rare, and, to be in that environment in a safe way. That is what really drove us. (Matt, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

Operators who provided water-based adventure tours reflected similarly upon the beauty of sea creatures, especially dolphins and/or whales, when they described the beauty of the national park as a pull motivation. For example, Jim said:

I actually started seeing whales coming past the point and, like many people I suppose, I realised that we used to go to Harvey Bay in Queensland, but we knew that the same whales were going around up the coast of NSW. So I started to get very interested in whales. (Jim, whale/dolphin watching, Port Stephens)
The beauty of the national park as a pull motivation for operators corresponds with the push motivation of an affinity for nature. National parks often contain spectacular natural features (Eagles & McCool, 2002; Hall & Frost, 2009a; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006) that played an important role in pulling the operators to establish their businesses in these areas.

However, it is undeniable that some of the operators in this thesis also identified national parks as popular tourist destinations, which pulled them to establish their adventure tourism businesses. As Hudson indicated:

Nelson Bay, because I live in Newcastle, is one of the only areas around that you can run a business pretty much all year around in the tourist industry—it has the turnover to enable you to survive. (Hudson, dolphin watching, Port Stephens)

Moreover, these operators observed that the natural resources protected by national parks played an important role in attracting tourists to purchase adventure tourism commodities (Buckley, 2004; Cloke & Perkins, 2002). This is captured particularly clearly in Michelle’s comments:

National park attracts people to the area. It attracted me to the area! I saw photos of the waterfalls and rainforest and said I want to go there. So, from that perspective it is really, really important for us. (Michelle, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

Several operators in the Blue Mountains National Park and the Barrington Tops National Park further indicated that because of the popularity of national parks, it was easier for them to market their products. That is, they considered the ‘brands’ of particular national parks as a powerful marketing tool, and this advantage also pulled them to develop their businesses in national parks. Tom’s comment is a good example to illustrate this:

I’m really promoting where we are in the Blue Mountain’s World Heritage-listed region. Blue Mountains tourism is destination marketing. I do use the national park areas, and I have a licence with national parks to do that [marketing]. (Tom, rock climbing, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

While Cloke and Perkins (2002) assert that the beauty of national parks plays an
important role in the commodification of adventure tourism in national parks, this thesis argues that the reputations of national parks also contribute to the development of these adventure commodities. National parks have become icons or images for tourists to collect (Reinius & Fredman; 2007; Urry, 1990; Young, 2009). People may come to national parks because of their ‘names’, not because of adventure activities. Moreover, the marketing advantages are linked to the economic consideration discussed previously. It appears that adventure tour operators in this thesis focus not only on the whole market of adventure tourism, but also specifically on the adventure tourism market in national parks. Whether for financial return or personal satisfaction, national parks played an important role in pulling these operators to establish their businesses within the parks’ boundaries.

The discussions in the previous sections demonstrate that the adventure tour operators in this thesis were motivated by both push and pull factors to engage in the supply of commercial adventure tourism in national parks. Appendix D presents a summary of the motives held by each operator in this thesis.

**Lifestyle as an Overarching Motive**

While the adventure tour operators were motivated by multiple push and pull factors to develop their businesses, this thesis found that there was a motivation that went beyond the boundaries of push and pull. This motivation was *lifestyle*. The motives the operators reflected in their narratives ultimately all contributed to the fulfilment of the lifestyle they wanted. For example, an overwhelming majority of the operators in the Blue Mountains National Park and the Barrington Tops National Park declared they were seeking a lifestyle which combined the activities they loved, a beautiful natural environment and the working conditions they wanted. They found being an adventure tour operator in a national park was an ideal way to satisfy this desire. This is captured clearly in Shirley’s and Tom’s comments:

> My priorities in life would be riding my bike and just being able to relax and doing what I want in the bush. So I race mountain bikes, so I try and get out on my mountain bike every day and so this industry is quite flexible. If I’m guiding I can choose to work five days one week and none the next, it’s up to me as long as I roster
staff on. So, for me, it gives me the ability to train with my bike and get out and go canyoning socially and go to cafes at lunchtime. (Shirley, canyoning etc., Blue Mountains)

Let’s face it, how many jobs do you know where you can actually go walking out in the bush, enjoying the sunshine, wearing no shoes or socks, walking through the bush, talking to people and showing them your countryside. I mean just go out, stand on the cliff top with a bunch of clients and as you survey the view on a beautiful day say, “Guys, what do you think of my office? Because that’s it”. (Tom, canyoning etc., Blue Mountains)

Other operators focused on the natural environment and their contact with diverse people to describe their lifestyle motivation. As Nicole and Jonathan said:

I looked at things that I could do with people, in the outdoors…Just having a different lifestyle, like a simple life. Going home at the end of the day, then it’s over. You come, you work and you leave—that’s one thing that I really like about it. (Nicole, rock climbing, canyoning, bushwalking, Blue Mountains)

I wanted an outdoors activity where I could meet different people. If anyone thinks they are going to make a fortune out of tourism, they are wasting their time. It was mostly just for lifestyle. (Jonathan, 4WDing, Worimi)

While different operators associated different meanings with the word lifestyle, this thesis found that for all interviewed operators lifestyle was the dominant motivation driving them to develop their businesses. Without the lifestyle they wanted, being an adventure tour operator would be meaningless to them. As Michelle (kayaking etc., Barrington Tops) said, “This is a lifestyle business, and if the lifestyle goes there’s no point.” Lewis also indicated how important the lifestyle was in the pursuit of his business:

It’s [the adventure tourism business] not ideal if you want to make lots of money. That’s not the way to go about it. But my priority is more about lifestyle than money so I just keep it to myself. I’ve had businesses in the past that have been the same. I just keep it to myself and it is surprising just how much one person can achieve. (Lewis, kayaking, Port Stephens)

Paradoxically, all respondents were adamant that maximising profit was not what motivated them to develop their adventure tourism businesses in national parks. For example, Gary and Hudson indicated:
It’s [being an adventure tour operator] just the sort of industry where it’s a little more than a normal job. I mean you wouldn't really do it for the money. A lot of these guys have university qualifications and could be earning a hundred thousand to two hundred thousand dollars a year but they chose to work for a lot less in the guiding industry. Just for the lifestyle. (Gary, abseiling, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

Nobody buys a charter boat to make a million dollars. Nobody who owns a boat here is ever going to make a million dollars because boats are too expensive to run. So it’s more about a lifestyle for people and it’s not about squillions of dollars. (Hudson, dolphin watching, Port Stephens)

The interview data reflect that keeping the enjoyment of adventure activities, the natural environment, autonomy, meeting people, or the all-inclusive lifestyle were the central factors motivating the adventure tour operators to engage in an adventure tourism business. Lifestyle in particular plays an overarching role in the operators’ motives. This finding is similar to the argument put forward by Ateljevic and Doorne (2000) and Shaw and Williams (2004) that most small-scale tourism businesses are initiated by the ambition to have a chosen lifestyle. Specifically, lifestyle is the most important factor motivating tourism operators to enter into the tourism industry. Evidently, the operators in this thesis are lifestyle entrepreneurs, who choose this business in support of their personal lifestyle, rather than the financial rewards of owning a business (Morrison et al., 1999). Figure 6.1 shows the push/pull and lifestyle motives discussed in this chapter.

Motivation-hygiene theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) can help explain the hierarchy of operators’ motives. In the theory, as described in Chapter Four, motivators are an individual’s psychological needs to achieve and grow; and hygiene factors are an individual’s physiological needs to avoid dissatisfaction. Motivators lead people to perceive good feelings about their work and themselves, and hygiene factors lead to dissatisfaction. In this thesis, income was evidently a hygiene factor enabling the interview participants to ‘stay’ in this industry, but other motives, especially lifestyle, were far more powerful as motivators pushing them to happily ‘devote’ themselves in the supply of adventure tourism. Although the motivators played a more important role in the operators’ decision-making, the absence of hygiene factors could result in
dissatisfaction at being an adventure tour operator. Thus, both types of motivational factors were important in the establishment of their business. Table 6.3 further presents the motives held by the operators and the equivalent of the motivators and hygiene factors in the motivation-hygiene theory.

Figure 6.1 Motives of Adventure Tour Operators in NSW National Parks

Lifestyle Motivation

Push Motivation
- Passion for adventure activities
- Affinity for nature
- Escapism
- Autonomy
- Social interaction
- Self-challenge
- Need of extra income

Pull Motivation
- The market of adventure tourism
- A better working environment
- The beauty of the national park
- National parks as popular tourist destinations

Being an adventure tour operator in a national park
Table 6.3 also presents the complexity of the operators’ motives. As discussed previously, most operators viewed the passion for adventure activities and the affinity for nature as motivators pushing them to develop their businesses, but for other operators these two motives were only the basic requirement as hygiene factors to work as tour operators in national parks. Autonomy and social interaction, for example, were more powerful motivators for these other operators to turn their careers into the commercial supply of adventure tourism in national parks. Thus, the factors motivating the operators were diverse and dynamic, not static upon the single motivation of passion for adventure activities.

Table 6.3 Operators’ Motives Equivalent to Motivators and Hygiene Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives of Operators</th>
<th>Herzberg’s Equivalent</th>
<th>Motivator / Hygiene</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifestyle</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Motivator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure activities</td>
<td>Work itself / Work conditions</td>
<td>Motivator / Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affinity for nature</td>
<td>Work itself / Work conditions</td>
<td>Motivator / Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escapism</td>
<td>Work conditions</td>
<td>Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Motivator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social interaction</td>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Motivator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-challenge</td>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Motivator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The need for extra income</td>
<td>Work conditions</td>
<td>Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market</td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working environment</td>
<td>Work itself / Work conditions</td>
<td>Motivator / Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beauty of national parks</td>
<td>Work itself / Work conditions</td>
<td>Motivator / Hygiene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist destination</td>
<td>Salary</td>
<td>Hygiene</td>
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**Chapter Summary**

This chapter profiled the socio-demographic and entrepreneurial characteristics of the adventure tour operators in this thesis. Moreover, this chapter examined the motives driving the operators to engage in commercial adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks. This thesis asserts that most adventure tour operators, as with other types of tour operators, are small-scale operators. This thesis found that the dominant characteristics of the adventure tour operators interviewed were that they
are middle-aged and male, and operating independent tourism businesses with a limited number of full-time employees.

Lifestyle plays an overarching role in the motivation among the operators interviewed. This thesis also contends individual push motives play a more significant role than pull motives in influencing the operators to develop their adventure tourism businesses in national parks. These results all reflect that passion for adventure activities is not the major or sole motivation driving adventure tour operators in this thesis to establish their businesses. An adventure tour operator can be motivated by multiple factors simultaneously. More importantly, even though the operators in this thesis demonstrate different motives, some motives are more powerful than others for some particular individuals. This shows the complex role of motives within some operators.

In addition, this thesis asserts that operators enjoy many privileges as adventure tour operators, but also require a sufficient income to support the lifestyle. That is, even though push factors play a crucial role in the operators’ motives, it is arguable that they would not fulfil these push motives without the basic economic profit gained from their business. It is evident that personal enjoyment and needs play an important role in turning an individual’s career into the commercial supply of adventure tourism in national parks. Collectively, national parks are ideal places for adventure tour operators to fulfil their desires and at the same time acquire sufficient income for the sustainment of their lifestyle. This chapter has broadened the understanding of the motivations of adventure tour operators, and provides in-depth information for national park managers to formulate appropriate plans to manage adventure tour operators in national parks.

Since adventure tour operators started conducting their businesses in national parks, they have influenced both tourists and the natural environments in these conservation-centred areas. These influences have direct and indirect impacts on the conservation of the parks. How they identify their roles regarding adventure tourism supply in national parks becomes an important issue when national park agencies seek more cooperation with these operators. In addition, what factors they recognise
as important in performing their roles and how they perceive these factors are also worthy of investigation. The next chapter will explore the adventure tour operators in this thesis with regard to their roles and the factors influencing their role performance through a critical examination of their perspectives and experiences regarding commercial adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks.
Chapter Seven

Adventure Tour Operators in National Parks: Roles and the Influences of National Parks and Wildlife Service

Chapter One posited that adventure tour operators have been increasingly recognised as having important roles to play in ensuring there is compatibility between tourism and conservation in national parks. Understanding the nature of these roles is therefore important. As discussed in the literature review chapters, the roles which operators play in the context of adventure tourism in national parks influence what they do and how they feel in the practice of their services. Moreover, these roles can affect clients’ behaviours and attitudes towards issues regarding tourism and conservation in the parks. This chapter explores operators’ roles in detail, subjectively reflected by operators’ behaviours and perspectives as commercial adventure tour operators in national parks. More importantly, the meanings underpinning the roles to present their position as adventure tour operators in national parks are examined. In addition, this chapter examines the interaction and/or contradiction of the roles, and the important issues raised by operators affecting their performance in such roles.

This chapter comprises two sections. This chapter begins by presenting the three key roles that emerged as salient to the operators in this thesis. Following the examination of these roles, this chapter discusses a factor—NPWS—that emerged from operators’ narratives as significant in the performance of their roles in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks.

The Roles of Adventure Tour Operators in National Parks

Three key themes emerged from the data that reflect the functional roles that were adopted by the operators in this thesis: ‘Experience Providers’, ‘Adventure Tourism Professionals’, and ‘Stewards of the Natural Environment’. On most occasions these three roles associated with one another, but sometimes contradictions emerged
among them. The following provides a detailed account of each of these roles and is supported by comments made by the operators.

**Adventure Tour Operators as Experience Providers**

In this thesis, adventure tour operators expressed the view that they felt they were central in enabling tourists to gain diverse experiences from adventure tourism in national parks. All interviewed operators indicated that the goal of their service was to deliver experiences to tourists through engagement with the adventure tours they provided. For example, Mike and Nicole commented:

An adventure tour operator needs to be someone who can give an unforgettable experience to the customer. (Mike, kayaking, Port Stephens)

It [being an adventure tour operator] is taking people who have had a limited experience in the outdoors or adventure, and providing them with an experience, whether it is abseiling or canyoning or rock climbing. (Nicole, rock climbing, canyoning, bushwalking, Blue Mountains)

As Nicole’s comment suggests, adventure activities are often viewed as a vehicle for tourists to gain specialised experiences, and adventure tour operators are the people who are best able to provide them (Buckley, 2006, 2007; Williams & Soutar, 2005). However, although all operators concurred that they played the role of experience provider, this meant different things for each of them. The meanings attached to being an experience provider are considered here.

**Adventure Providers**

Nearly two-thirds of the operators in this thesis indicated, not surprisingly, that as an adventure tour operator, being able to provide something adventurous for clients was a central role they needed to address in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. For example, Jordan explained an adventure tour operator as:

Someone who provides that experience, that adventure experience. The one you don’t do every day. A lot of people ride horses every day for a living; that’s not an adventure. A lot of people ride motorbikes every day; that’s not an adventure. But to go up in a
parachute, or a hot air balloon, or whatever, it’s all high adventure.
(Jordan, parasailing, Port Stephens)

Jordan’s comments mark the importance of adventure experience for an adventure tour operator. He also defined adventure as something not done every day. This hints at the notion that ‘novelty’ may be a key element in constructing adventure experiences. Indeed, the emergence of the role of adventure provider was built upon several adventurous experiences repeatedly reflected by the operators, such as novelty, challenge and thrill.

A number of operators focused on novelty to represent the role of adventure provider. For example, when David (whale/dolphin watching, Port Stephens) was asked what he aimed to achieve for his clients, he said:

Obviously a very good experience. Depending on where they are from, a lot of countries don’t have what we have here, so we are very lucky to have what we do. So to have them seeing that straight away allows them to appreciate and enjoy what we have—they are just in awe. (David, whale/dolphin watching, Port Stephens)

Similarly, Luke indicated:

[An adventure tour operator is] Someone who is providing opportunities to people to participate in activities that they wouldn’t normally do. (Luke, diving, Port Stephens)

Along with novelty, challenge was another experience commonly discussed by some operators that flowed from the initial novelty of the adventure experience. Jim’s comment gives an example to reveal this:

Adventure always conjures up a challenge. If you are not challenged by something new, or different or exciting or a little bit scary, pushing the boundaries a bit, well I don’t think that’s adventure. It’s the ability to push yourself a little bit beyond your comfort level. Whether it is under the water or above it, it doesn’t really matter as long as you are given an opportunity to do something different, that you might not do, especially when you get older….Going out in the open ocean, not that many people have ever been out there. That’s a challenge; that’s an adventure for some people, then on top of that, to sail, well, not many people have sailed, so that is a bit of an adventure. (Jim, whale/dolphin watching, Port Stephens)
From Jim’s comment, it is apparent that challenge can also be a consequential result of facing excitement and thrill. More importantly, it seems that soft adventure may be able to offer tourists experiences which are primarily viewed as hard adventure outcomes (Sung, 2004; Walle, 1997; Weber, 2001). This assertion is echoed by Jonathan that:

[An adventure tour operator is] A tour operator that wants to go a little bit further than the average tour operator and give people a bit more for their money. Thrill seeker, oh, probably not a thrill seeker, but going that way. (Jonathan, 4WDing, Worimi)

While fears and thrills were identified as hard adventure experiences, surprisingly, only four hard adventure tour operators in this thesis focussed on this:

Technically, I look at it [adventure tourism] as people outsourcing their adrenalin rush to an operator, instead of them specifically learning and training to do those specific techniques to, say, climb or kayak. They will then outsource it to an operator and get a mediocre experience, but to them it’s probably a good experience but technically it’s a mediocre experience and it’s what I call a “taste”. (Bob, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

What I want to provide to them [tourists] is that I want to be able to open their eyes to the feeling of free flight. To experience flying like a bird above the earth and to feel relaxed and show them that they can fly the glider, by themselves, with just weight shift, no controls, so that they have a few minutes of experiencing that freedom. And once I bring them down safely and they land on their feet, they can remember that for the rest of their lives. (Anthony, hang gliding, Worimi)

These comments suggest that, for the majority of hard adventure tour operators in this thesis, they paid more attention to novelty, challenge, escape and enjoyment as the experiences they aimed to offer to their customers. The roles of escape facilitator and enjoyment provider will be discussed in the following sections. What is important in the comments above is that adventure experiences attached to adventure tourism can be dynamic, not fixed to particular types of adventure tourism. In other words, in order to fulfil the needs of and create special experiences for adventure tourists, operators can manipulate adventure experiences to satisfy the needs of these tourists.
Escape Facilitators

Some operators felt they played an important role in facilitating opportunities for their clients to escape. In order to fulfil this role, they actively encouraged their clients to immerse themselves in the activities they provided. That is, adventure tourism was a vehicle enabling tourists to escape from their daily lives and worries. Richard’s comments demonstrate this:

As a dive instructor, the most rewarding thing is getting someone who has never dived and taking them to the point where they are just chaffing a bit to get back in the water….What I want to achieve for them is a complete opposite to what their real world is. So the more stressed they are in their real world, the more responsibilities they have, the more relaxed I want them to become. I want them to achieve something for themselves, their own time, and their own space. I want them to have their own passion. I want them to fall in love with diving. I want them to personally walk out of the water and feel like the whole week that they’ve had, no matter how bad it was, was worth having because it got them to this point where they could go for a dive. (Richard, diving, Port Stephens)

Richard’s comments were echoed by Michelle, but Michelle also addressed the escape from city life:

Such a huge part of what we do is allowing people that opportunity to escape from the city and to see what they could have. (Michelle, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

Indeed, escape is largely recognised by tourism studies as an important experience which tourists seek (Urry, 1990; Wearing et al., 2010). In this thesis, operators demonstrated that they were an intermediary, giving tourists the opportunities to fulfil their desire of escape, escaping from the daily living and escaping to relaxation and even refreshment.

Enjoyment Providers

Despite the diversity of meanings constructing the role of experience provider in this thesis, being a provider of enjoyment was undoubtedly deemed a central role for the majority of the operators. As discussed above, when engaging with customers, operators might provide novelty, challenge, thrill or escape for their customers. However, enjoyment was, for the majority, the final experiential outcome they aimed for.
to provide for their clients through their services. For example, after Richard discussed the provision of escape, he concluded enjoyment as the final outcome he aimed to provide for his clients:

I do it [diving] for the people not the diving. I enjoy seeing people have a good time and enjoy themselves. So, for me, it’s not about the diving at all; it could be any vehicle; it could be skiing or mountain biking (Richard, diving, Port Stephens)

Similarly, Shirley remarked that as an adventure tour operator, offering the experience of enjoyment to her clients was what she required, whether through novelty or challenge in her adventure tours:

You [as an adventure tour operator] just make sure the trip is to their [tourists’] level, so they are challenged but not over-exerted so they can actually take it in and enjoy it….make it fun and do lots of jumps into the water and abseiling and stuff. I guess canyons are a kind of fun in themselves and just being relaxed and letting them have fun is the best way to do it. (Shirley, canyoning etc., Blue Mountains)

Shirley’s comments reflect that both the natural environment and adventure activities are used for creating an enjoyable experience – a strongly anthropocentric perspective. This anthropocentric perspective will be discussed further in the next chapter.

It should be noted that the emergent finding of ‘enjoyment provider’ is similar to the role of tour guides as examined by Cohen (1985), Sharpe (2005) and Weiler and Davis (1993) who suggest tour guides often play the role of entertainer. Weiler and Davis (1993) state the role of entertainer is less important for nature-based tour guides to play. However, consistent with Sharpe (2005), some operators in this thesis adopted the role of providing enjoyment for tourists to play out their position as adventure tour operators.

Not surprisingly, for operators in this thesis, the role of being an adventure provider meant providing customers with access to novelty, challenge and excitement. These three experiences are the core elements of adventure (Buckley, 2006; Swarbrooke et
al., 2003) and adventure tour commodities (Celsi et al., 1993; Cloke & Perkins, 2002). Consequently, the idea of experience economy (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, see Chapter Two) is easy to be noted in this role of experience provider. The operators provided opportunities for their customers to gain special experiences through actively engaging in the adventure activities. Most importantly, the operators made their clients participate as experts on the ‘stage’. That is, their clients could enjoy the experiences brought by adventure activities, which previously could only be experienced by experts. The operators aimed to manipulate different experiences to make their clients feel happy and to justify the associated costs. Nicole’s comments best demonstrate the idea of experience economy:

[As an adventure tour operator] I want them [tourists] to leave feeling like they have had a great time and they’ve done something that they have always dreamed about doing and they feel really good that they have done it. So fun and enjoyment and that they feel like it was money well spent. For some people they have huge fears and anxieties and it is quite rewarding to get them through that, as well. That’s probably it, that they have an enjoyable experience and whatever they are expecting from the day, that I am trying to achieve that expectation for them. You can tell, you might have a group and they want to have an amazing, adrenalin-packed day and you might just change the day to provide that for them, or you might have some people that want a wilderness experience and a quiet, calm, and when they are in the canyon they want to feel the serenity of the canyon around them so we just cater the day for them. Some people might just want to take photos all day, and that’s a completely different type of day so just trying to figure out what they want and give it to them. Sometimes you can’t please everyone, but it’s finding that balance. (Nicole, rock climbing, canyoning, bushwalking, Blue Mountains)

However, what is surprising is the absence of recognition among the operators of the role they play in providing clients with access to risk.

Risk, as noted in Chapter Two, is traditionally viewed as a central tenet of adventure tourism (e.g. Page et al., 2005; Pomfret, 2006; Sung, 2004). Nevertheless, this thesis provides an alternative view that risk may not be the most important experience offered by adventure tour operators. This contention is similar to Kane and Tucker (2004) where risk relates to a potential for injury and loss but tourism indicates fun, excitement and enjoyment, so there is a conflict in using risk as the central element
required for adventure tourism. Risk should only be a side-effect of adventure tourism (Walle, 1997; Weber, 2001). This thesis argues that the diverse experiences brought about by adventure tours should be a process of the creation of maximum enjoyment. It is undeniable that the risk associated with adventure tours still exists, but it is strongly diminished by the professional role played by adventure tour operators, which is the focus of the following section.

**Adventure Tour Operators as Professionals**

While being an ‘experience provider’ was important to the operators in this thesis, it competed with the role of what it meant to be a professional supplier of adventure tourism. This professionalism for many of the operators meant focussing on customer safety; for others it was the application of specialised skills they had developed. Moreover, whether focusing on customer safety or specialised skills, the operators’ experiences in conducting adventure tour activities were the most crucial factor underpinning their professionalism.

**Safety Guarantors**

Even though risk was not explicitly described as a central component of delivering an adventure experience, it did not mean the risk embedded in adventure tour activities was not considered by the operators. In fact, all interviewed operators consistently stated the importance of safety, and this emphasis on safety might have contributed to variation in the importance and performance of the role of adventure tourism professional. Avoiding risk in their work as experience providers resulted from their strong focus on safety issues. Thus, they indicated that being a safety guarantor was a quality in which a professional adventure tourism supplier needed to possess. Safety was recognised by the operators as rule number one in their services. For example, George (4WDing, Worimi) said “maximum safety is the forerunner of maximum fun”. Similarly, Hudson indicated:

> It [safety] is more important for me. That marine park regulations or national parks and wildlife, for example, if they give us a no-go zone, they say “you can’t go in this zone”, but a storm blows up and we need to go into that zone to seek protection and then I would
Due to the emphasis on safety, Luke and Jonathan indicated a ‘proviso’ in their statements of being experience providers:

To enjoy themselves [clients] and enjoy the experience [diving], but they also have to make sure that they do it within the regulations that are required by the industry. Things like their behaviour perhaps when they are diving with sharks, and things like that. (Luke, diving, Port Stephens)

An adventure tour operator is just somebody who provides that service so that people can participate in that activity but he [sic] has to oversee the safe operation of it. You have a bit of duty to care, to provide a good service and make sure your customers go away happy and talk about it. (Jonathan, 4WDing, Worimi)

While operators need to provide opportunities for their clients to gain different experiences, they also have to offer an assurance that these experiences are delivered in a safe way (Page et al., 2005). It is evident that the operators in this thesis saw themselves as safety guarantors. However, some operators recognised that enjoyment could be diminished by the need of safety:

We find that we have an interest in making sure that people are safe. If we don’t find that an activity would be safe, or a person is fit or safe to dive, we will not conduct that activity. We would rather say, “Here’s your money back” rather than do something dangerous. That way we know that we are here for the long-term. (Luke, diving, Port Stephens)

Luke’s comments also reflect the priority of the role of adventure tourism professional over the role of experience provider. This priority will be discussed further in the latter part of this chapter.

Drawing on the discussions above, it is evident that risk management was an implied role underpinning those operators who emphasised client safety. However, other aspects were less central. Only a few operators recognised other forms of risk and their role in managing it. For example Terrance, who was an operator offering 4WDing and bushwalking tours in the Blue Mountains National Park, highlighted...
financial risks associated with changes in the consumer market and the major impact it can have upon his business:

The main problem we face as a business is a down turn in clients, and that’s brought back to a simplistic approach, world economics. If plasma screens decrease in price, we lose tourists because the leisure industry is one of the last industries to be supported by the household budget. So we see a down turn when there are certain economic changes worldwide. If the interest rates go up, tourism goes down. And that’s an impact on my business. (Terrance, 4WDing, bushwalking, Blue Mountains)

George, who provided 4WDing at the Worimi Conservation Lands, indicated the risks from business competition and protection of insurance:

One obstacle we had for a period of time was some of the competitors were doing sand boarding, and sand boarding has a degree of risk involved and it was the matter of then finding the appropriate insurance company that was able to cover the risk of insurance, so after that we were able to do the sand boarding. (George, 4WDing, Worimi)

However, explicit focus upon financial risk management or other risk management issues was not a central focus of the operators interviewed. This is consistent with research by Swarbrooke et al. (2003) and Buckley (2010) who found that small-scale adventure tour operators often lacked the management skills necessary to ensure the long-term viability of their businesses, particularly financial management-related acumen.

**Specialised Experts of Adventure Tourism**

All operators in this thesis indicated that they were experts who specialised in the adventure activities they provided for tourists (Beedie & Hudson, 2003). The narratives of some of the operators focused on training and qualifications to demonstrate they had developed specialised expertise. That is, not only did they undertake adventure activities, they also had requisite knowledge and professional skills of such activities. As Mike said:

[As a kayaking instructor] You do have to go through courses that are quite difficult and not unlike a boot camp and you do have to pass assessments and tests to be able to achieve it [kayaking
instructor] and you need all those qualifications. (Mike, kayaking, Port Stephens)

However, other operators argued that while having the confirmation by way of licences was important, it was only a basic requirement for an adventure tour operator. They suggested that being an adventure tour operator, he/she needed to increase their own experiences to be an expert being able to handle different situations in adventure tours. This importance of experience was highlighted in Shirley’s comments:

[As an adventure tour operator] You’ve got to get qualifications, so you need to be specific to your activities. You also need first aid, bronze medallion, all those sorts of bits and pieces. Experience, though, is one of the biggest things you need. Just because you’ve got the qualifications doesn’t mean you can go and do a canyon you’ve never done before. It’s about knowing the areas you are working in, having a passion for it and being able to confidently take people through in a safe and enjoyable manner. (Shirley, canyoning etc., Blue Mountains)

Due to the experience, they would be able to assure the safety of their tourists. As Aaron indicated:

We use years of experience as our safety. You’ve got to have Plan B and Plan C and things like that. It’s like when you do your first-aid course, when an accident happens, the first thing to do is stop and assess what has happened and that is what I feel how we operate our safety. (Aaron, horse riding, Barrington Tops)

Implicit in the excerpts above is that adventure tour operators and the people who can undertake adventure activities were not indiscriminate. For these operators, licenses and experiences were the two key factors shaping them as professionals of the supply of adventure activities.

The meaning of specialised experts of adventure tourism was also evident in the operators’ statements regarding how they selected their staff. In the interview data, the land-based operators who hired staff all recognised that qualified staff members were an important factor in their performance as adventure tourism professionals. Professionalism of staff was intimately linked to issues of safety raised earlier. These
operators focused on safety to address the importance of qualified staff in assuring tourist safety. For example, Shirley explained:

> You need to have the right guides for the right trips. Some guides are more qualified and more experienced than others and they are more appropriate for harder trips. Keeping that in mind you can generally minimize most risks. (Shirley, canyoning etc., Blue Mountains)

Because of the importance attached to qualified staff, these operators were very ‘selective’ at selecting their staff members. They indicated that many people were interested in the jobs they offered, but only a few were qualified for the role. Aaron’s and James’s comments reflect this:

> With our horses you have got to understand horses to be able to work with them. We get a lot of people who want to come here and work, but I just sort of let them come along and help and I soon find out that they really don’t know much about horses. (Aaron, horse riding, Barrington Tops)

> We are fairly selective with staff in regard to rock climbing. There’s plenty of outdoor instructors in the Blue Mountains and they can canyon, they can bush walk but they don’t have 10 years of rock climbing experience and it used to be that the industry was always just climbers. So for us to get an instructor who can guide a client up a 10 pitch grade 21, like Hotel California [a climbing route]….there’s maybe 5 or 6 people that we can call on. So we have a fairly small range of people, because we’re fairly stringent on who we employ. And that’s because we’ve got a zero incident insurance policy. (James, rock climbing, Blue Mountains)

In the quotations above, it is clear that ‘experience’ is the key consideration for the operators when selecting their staff members. Professionalism is seen to be born of experience in the view of these operators and therefore highly valued. Nevertheless, sometimes this ‘picky’ at selecting staff members also created a problem for the operators. In their peak season (summer), they sometimes faced the challenge of a lack of qualified staff, particularly the operators who provided the hard adventure tours. As Tom (rock climbing, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains) indicated: The biggest issue and problem that we have, realistically right now is that we don’t have enough staff available. This challenge also reflects the operators’ professional identity – for the concern of safety they would not launch a tour without qualified staff.
While most land-based operators focused on safety and experience to address the importance of staff members, Aaron and Patrick raised another issue in regards to staff – their communication skills. For example, Patrick’s statements reflect how vital the staff’s communication skills are in helping him effectively deliver adventure tours to tourists:

> We chose people first who were very good with people and they were people who already had a background in rock climbing and we knew they were safe and professional and wanted to do the right thing. But first of all, good with people. (Patrick, rock climbing, abseiling, Blue Mountains)

What the excerpts above indicate is that staff members were crucial in the operators’ performance in their roles of adventure tourism professionals and experience providers. Indeed, tourism staff members are recognised as playing an important role in the tourism operation (Cohen, 1985; Randall & Rollins, 2009). However, the discussion about staff members in this thesis reflects that the operators largely focused on safety, emphasising the importance of professionals of adventure tourism supply. Other roles or skills that a tourism staff member should possess, such as entertainer and interpreter (Weiler & Davis, 1993; Randall & Rollins, 2009), seem to be less important for the operators. This scenario reveals that, again, being a professional of adventure tourism supply had a significant meaning to the operators in this thesis.

**Market Leaders**

While the findings of this research suggest being a professional adventure tourism supplier meant taking on the role of being concerned for the safety of participants, or being seen as experts, a few operators interpreted this from a commercial perspective. These operators stated that they were *market leaders* in the adventure tourism industry. For example, Patrick (abseiling, rock climbing, Blue Mountains) said: *We were sort of leading. It was a nice position to be in, and it’s a good feeling.* Similarly, Tom indicated that:

> I personally think that we are the market leader here. Essentially, the main thing is I’ve been promoting things. As you look around and
you look at our internet site, we’ve been a finalist in the NSW tourism awards for both 2006, 2007, and each time we were in the top 5 or top 6 in the state. I don’t plan to come second or just to be a runner up; I actually want to win, and this year I believe that with our new marketing strategies, our new staff and business performance, we will win. We want to position ourselves as the number one. There are other companies here in the district that actually turn over a greater amount of money than we do, have more clients, etc. That’s fine. But we actually have the premier prices. We set the pricing structure in this industry, and everybody else follows suit. Only the market leader would do that. (Tom, rock climbing, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

Tom’s comment reflects that being the market leader contributes to his professional role, and also demonstrates his entrepreneurship which aims to create innovation in the operation of his business. Tom’s entrepreneurship is different to those tour operators interviewed who sought a lifestyle balance.

When the interviewed operators reflected upon their roles as experience providers and adventure tourism professionals, the natural environment was never far away from their minds. As two operators in the Barrington National Park stated:

[An adventure tour operator is] Anyone that organises other people to do something adventurous. They really need to have a good understanding of what they are doing. There are a lot of characteristics, like being able to deal with safety issues and relate to people and know some areas reasonably well so they can explain it. There is a whole range of factors. (Matt, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

They [adventure tour operators] have to have an ability to understand and recognise the values of our local environment and to maintain or improve those environments. They have to be good with people and….They have to have an in-depth knowledge of that specific skill in what they’re doing to be successful. (Bob, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

As a form of nature-based tourism, the natural environment undoubtedly plays an important role in the supply of adventure tourism. The interview participants expressed a sense of environmental protection. They felt protecting the natural environment was what they needed to do, as elaborated in the next theme.
Adventure Tour Operators as Stewards of the Natural Environment

All operators in this thesis indicated that protecting the environment was a responsibility they needed to undertake. Furthermore, these operators felt they had an important role to play as stewards of the natural environment. The following comments are emblematic of this:

I believe our role is one of the guardians of the environment and it is our job to protect it for the next generation and the generations beyond to ensure that they can have the same pleasant experience that we enjoy. (Richard, diving, Port Stephens)

To me, all hang glider pilots, they are kind of a unique group of people. I can’t think of any one individual that doesn’t love the outdoors and love the environment. We are all, probably, the biggest bunch of greenies that you would ever know. We look after the environment; we don’t like flying over rubbish heaps, and so these people, when we get out we really take care of the land and we don’t use any polluting engines, no noise pollution. We’re just free as a bird and that’s how we like to keep it….We do take care of the environment. (Anthony, hang gliding, Worimi)

Embedded in these two excerpts are two central themes that explain what being an environmental steward means – practicing and promoting ‘minimum impact’ and acting as ‘environmental interpreters and educators’.

Minimal Impact Practitioners

More than two-thirds of the operators commented that minimising their impacts, from both their tours and businesses, on the natural environment was central to them as adventure tour operators. Minimising litter, caring for the natural environment and limiting soil degradation were the terms frequently referred to by the operators to illustrate how they protected and were responsible for the natural environment. As Tom explained:

Our role is taking people through the environment, through the national park areas in complete safety, with minimal impact. I mean we’re not going to go through and break all the trees and sticks down and push boulders down the hill or anything like that, or drive through the pristine bush, going off the tracks in a four wheel drive or cutting off the hill on foot. We have to stick to the tracks and the trails and essentially, that is minimum impact….What that means is the onus and responsibility is on us to maintain that and ensure there
is no environmental degradation or erosion. So it’s in our interest to look after that land. (Tom, rock climbing, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

A few operators enacted some environmentally sustainable practices within their organisations to minimise their influence on the natural environment. For example, Bob said:

We use bio-diesel on our trucks; we try and recycle, and that means using recycled materials in our business and also recycling materials that are going out of the business, as much as we honestly can. (Bob, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington Tops)

Both Bob’s and Tom’s comments reflect an individual effort to conserve the natural environment, which was echoed by many operators in this thesis. However, whale/dolphin watching operators at the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park developed another way far beyond individual effort. They developed a voluntary code of practice to regulate their impacts on the natural environment and further to contribute to environmental sustainability. This is particularly captured in David’s comments:

It’s [the natural environment] got to be there for the next generation and the next generation after that as well. So you’ve got to be very careful how you do things, distance rules. You’ve got to be careful about how you approach, how much time you spend with them, not too many boats in one group at one time, so all those sorts of things you’ve really got to make sure you are doing the right things for the next day, really….We have an agreement, or code of ethics, that we run between the operators here. Distance rules, time spent with the dolphins, how many trips per day, how many boats in one group, how much information we put forward and supply on cruises. It works very well between all of us together. (David, whale/dolphin watching, Port Stephens)

The excerpts above clearly reflect the operators’ ambition to protect the environment and contribute to sustainability through their operational practices. This corresponds to the assertion of Herremans et al. (2005) that many adventure tour operators in protected areas have developed their own formal and informal environmental management systems to help conservation in those areas. Fennell (2008) also suggests a voluntary code of practice or a code of ethics may effectively enable tourism stakeholders to contribute to environmental sustainability.
Environmental Educators

The overwhelming majority of operators spoke of the crucial role they felt they played in educating tourists about the importance of environmental protection. Rick’s comments capture this:

The only way you’re going to help the environment long term is by education. If I can be a part of teaching the general public….if they go out into the bush and they destroy the bush, it’s not going to be there for the next generation, so we have to do that. (Rick, 4WDing, Blue Mountains)

Within the role of educator, many operators employed the notion of interpretation (Tilden, 1977; Orams, 1996, see Chapter Two, ecotourism) to educate their clients. For example, some operators indicated that actively infusing the concept of conservation to tourists was the strategy they used to promote the importance of the national park environment. These operators often used ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions to guide their clients in understanding why conservation was important. Comments from Adam support this:

I believe that the way you get the most value from having a conservation area is to take people to those places and explaining to them why it’s so important and so they have an understanding more of how precious it is and how fragile it is, and why it is worth conservation, why it’s worth some money. Rather if you, if they’ve got no idea what’s there then how can they value it? (Adam, rock climbing etc., Blue Mountains)

Other operators aimed to modify tourists’ behaviours towards the natural environment through education. These operators not only taught their clients the importance of the environment, but also educated them on how to behave in a manner that was friendly to the environment. This approach is captured in George’s comments:

It [the business] also assisted in educating the general public on how to better look after the dunes. As a lot of people would come on as customers, wanting to do four-wheel driving and then they may purchase a vehicle or if they are intending to purchase a vehicle, some would come on asking questions about touring and travelling over the dunes, what to do what not to do. So progressively educating people….That’s specifically to teach people how to drive
in the dunes and the most environmentally sustainable way, with not travelling over the vegetation, with not going into the water so you’re not likely to have oil dilution into the water and things like that, so….a variety of educational things. (George, 4WDing, Worimi)

George’s comments echo findings reported earlier in this thesis that described what being ‘a professional’ meant to these operators. The considerable experience that operators had developed not only enabled them to be able to provide safe and enjoyable experiences to customers, it also provided an important foundation for educating them.

Of the 24 operators interviewed, only two diving operators did not feel they needed to be environmental educators. Luke and Richard believed conservation as second-nature to divers. For this reason, they felt that they did not need to spend time on educating their clients about conservation or environmental protection as most of their clients already embraced conservation principles. This is best illustrated in Luke’s comments:

One of the good things about divers is that divers, by nature, have got a general underlying greenie feel to them. Most divers by nature tend to be very environmentally sensitive and environmentally aware because they are in that environment. Most divers will tell you they feel honoured to be able to go into that environment because it is completely alien. (Luke, diving, Port Stephens)

Practicing minimum impact and educating customers about the natural environment are important functional roles that the tourism industry has been encouraged to pursue (Armstrong & Weiler, 2002; Sharpley, 2009). However, the growth of ecotourism as the key tourism sector for such functions has meant the contributing role other tourism sectors might play is overlooked. Based on the operators in this thesis, adventure tourism may well be one such sector.

While the operators in this thesis overwhelmingly saw that they had an important role to play in protecting the natural environment. A number of respondents were realistic about the reach and impact of such roles. Some suggested that it was impossible for them to have no negative influences on the natural environment.
Their narratives highlight a difference in attitude towards the influences that adventure tourism has on the natural environment. Minimal impact, for example, was the only thing they could do to benefit the natural environment, as Nicole explained:

I don’t think there is much we can do to improve it [the natural environment]. Taking groups of people is always going to have an impact, and in the context of the work that we do, we can’t stop and pull out weeds and all that sort of stuff. All we can do is to minimise any impact that our group is going to have. Probably the only thing that I think I do to improve the environment when I am working is that I pick up rubbish, whether it is my group’s rubbish or not, that is probably the only thing. (Nicole, rock climbing, canyoning, bushwalking, Blue Mountains)

Lewis indicated that his service was essentially not able to be an environment-friendly business; he just tried his best to have a minimum impact on the natural environment:

In doing that [kayaking] we gonna [sic] disturb something else that I didn’t notice, so we have impacts just being there. Unfortunately, that’s what we do. People say, “Gee your business is environmentally-friendly” and I say, “It’s not. It’s not as environmentally-unfriendly as it could be”, but there is nothing environmentally-friendly about it. The environment doesn’t benefit from me one bit. Although, if I am educating people to be a little bit more sensitive about the environment, it’s still not helping the environment but it can help reduce….well it doesn’t help the environment but it just doesn’t stuff it up as quickly. (Lewis, kayaking, Port Stephens)

Similarly, Patrick argued the off-site impact of adventure tourism from a global perspective that it could not benefit the natural environment at all:

It’s [conservation] difficult because our clients are travelling all the way from another country in a big plane and they arrive here, they have a train up to here, and we drive them out and back, they go back to a train to Sydney and then they fly home. So, conservation, in the scheme of things, travelling is not conservation. It uses a lot of resources. People in third world countries don’t use that many resources, so travellers…. It’s very un-environmental. And what we tried to do if we made a new track is to take the shortest possible route. But none of it….none of it is environmentally friendly. The ropes are made of petrol and…. It’s not being environmentally friendly at all. (Patrick, abseiling, rock climbing, Blue Mountains)
The examples above offer a competing discourse to the dominant themes on the role as stewards of the natural environment. The excerpts raise an important question of whether nature-based tourism can be truly environmentally sustainable. Chapter One and Chapter Three of this thesis have argued that tourism in national parks has long been contentious. One of the key arguments is that inevitably tourism will create negative impacts on national parks’ unique natural environments. Similarly, the remarks from the three operators reveal that sustainable tourism can be regarded as not sustainable at all. More importantly, Patrick’s comment reflects that when a nature-based tourism destination becomes a ‘mecca’ for tourists, by extension the consumption of fossil fuel in transportation diminishes the sustainable tourism aspect of the operation.

‘Conditional’ Stewardship

It is evident that minimum impact and education were central to the operators’ role as stewards of the natural environment. However, several critical issues emerge here. The most evident one is that the natural environment was viewed as capital to build up a tourism business (Harris & Leiper, 1995; Anderson & Leal, 2001). Without the environment, they would not be able to supply adventure tourism for their clients. This is best illustrated by Hudson’s and Gary’s comments:

As beautiful as Port Stephens is, without the whales and dolphins I doubt I would have a business because you use that activity. There are many beautiful places in the world, but there are not that many places in the world where you have the mix of wild animals, temperate weather and conditions that conspire to showing people nature, so, to me, it’s everything. (Hudson, dolphin watching, Port Stephens)

The environment is crucial to us. If the environment becomes degraded, national parks will stop us using the area and then we’ll lose our business. So the nature and the environment mean everything to us. (Gary, abseiling, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

What is evident in the above comments is the perceived responsibility of environmental protection that developed among the operators as a result of the strong interaction between their businesses and the natural environment. While a focus on the protection of the natural environment was evident for all operators, it should be noted, however, that
the overwhelming majority of them protected the environment because their businesses relied on it. Only three operators, Jim (whale/dolphin watching), Lewis (kayaking) and Mike (kayaking), strongly expressed that they were the people who placed a higher priority on the natural environment and its creatures than on tourism. In providing adventure tourism and facing related issues, they were offering the chance to get in touch with nature that made them distinctive (Hitlin, 2003; Burke & Stets, 2009). For example, Lewis expressed his attitudes towards the natural environment in this way:

Definitely sensitive and aware and I definitely put the environment ahead of everything. As I said, I would rather divert my tour than interfere in something I could avoid. Probably I think I am much more sensitive to the environment than most and I am not so money hungry that I am happy to destroy the natural environment so I can profit from its destruction. (Lewis, kayaking, Port Stephens)

Lewis’s comments clearly reveal how he committed himself to protect the natural environment and differentiated from other people through his awareness of the natural environment. Similarly, Mike desired to project he is a person who really cares about the natural environment:

My belief is, I am a very eco-conscious kind of guy. I do believe in living with everything in a respectable manner. So to appreciate and to confront other aspects of wildlife and nature is very important. To understand it is very important but also not to exploit it as well. (Mike, kayaking, Port Stephens)

Another issue concerning the operators’ stewardship is while all interviewed operators reflected a strong intention to be ‘green’ as much as possible; this was tempered by their financial/business considerations. Most operators in this thesis indicated they would protect the environment, but this protection could not impede the profit of their operation. Bob’s and David’s comments reflect this:

We have included as many green policies as we can afford. If we could afford it we would have every single green policy in place, but it is not always financially viable, which we want to be. We’ve introduced carbon neutral school programs….We are a long way short of where I would like to be. (Bob, kayaking, bushwalking, Barrington tops)

Probably it’s good to look after things but we have got to be practical on how it’s approached, because at the end of the day it is still a business that needs to be run. Without this type of business,
the public, the tourism, this area is very dependant on the tourism that we do. (David, dolphin/whale watching, Port Stephens)

The consideration of business as a priority is evident here. These comments reveal that compared to the natural environment, their businesses are located at a higher position in the operators’ value systems. This raises a great concern over how operators would deal with the conflicts between conservation and the adventure tourism business. This is explored more fully in the next chapter.

The third issue relating to the operators’ stewardship is that the majority of them use their personal experiences and knowledge regarding recreation and the natural environment to define conservation and the carrying capacity of a national park. In the interviews, operators frequently argued against the national parks management, revealing an unbalanced and misguided point of view. For example, Aaron commented on the NPWS management in regard to conservation in this way:

You cannot ride through it because they [NPWS] reckon the horses are doing damage. The horses are doing no more damage to that land….They [the horses] don’t do a tenth of the damage what the pigs and everything else do to them. If we were allowed to ride through them more, more people would be going there, therefore those pigs and dingoes wouldn’t be living there because they would be getting disturbed too much. The dingoes and the pigs are going there because it is a sanctuary. Pigs are a terrible animal, and the dingoes are feral and the wild dogs, which they all are, now, there are very few purebred dingoes. They go in there so they don’t get disturbed. They come into the open country; they do damage on our open country and private country and then they go back in there for safety. The national parks are breeding feral animals. (Aaron, horse riding, Barrington Tops)

Patrick focused on profit to argue that the carrying capacity numbers under the NPWS management were too low:

We were just selling the business as that was happening. We thought the numbers [allowed to access canyons] were too low. In some canyons you can have a few more people—maybe four or five—and the difference with that is that businesses would not be struggling. Not making huge amounts of money but you could pay the guides more now; you could get a bit more money. So we thought maybe four more people would have been perfect because those four would
have been profit, and from that profit you can pay the guides more and do other things. (Patrick, rock climbing etc., Blue Mountains)

These two quotes suggest a misunderstanding or disregard of the influences of their services on the natural environment. Priskin (2003) identified a similar pattern in his research where nature-based tourists are aware of environmental impacts from their tourism activities, but they lack the understanding of how their activities can damage the natural environment. These tourists employ their superficial knowledge of environmental protection to identify their behaviours as environment-friendly. It seems that the interviewed operators also perceived their tours as less harmful to the natural environment, but the damage they created might be more than they imagined. This raises an important concern as to whether adventure tour operators can practice conservation in a more correct and/or biocentric way.

**The Influences of NPWS**

When the operators in this thesis reflected their roles in the context of adventure tourism supply in national parks, an issue was raised by them as important in their performance. The common underlying influence was the NPWS. The NPWS, in the operators’ perspectives, further enabled or restricted their behaviours in the pursuit of the fulfilment of their roles.

In the interview data, the influences of the NPWS were commonly voiced by all operators. The national park agency emerged as the most important factor affecting the performance of the roles discussed above. However, whether the operators viewed the NPWS positively or negatively varied greatly.

A number of operators identified the NPWS as an *enabler* helping them fulfil the performance of their roles in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. Some of the operators indicated the standards required of adventure tour operators by the NPWS were necessary and beneficial to the adventure tourism industry in national parks, and therefore praised the NPWS. Comments from Adam and Jonathan, for
example, show the NPWS standards for adventure tour operators protected the reputation of the industry:

Having a license system it does offer some protection for the business because if a new operator wants to start running tours they have to get that license prior to commencing rather than if there was no licensing system at all, there’d be other people just taking friends, you know, sort of the cowboy style, just taking people out to get a quick buck into the national park and in the long run that worse for the customers too, because they get shaggy low quality guides, potentially. So having the licensing system and being a member of that, it’s better for the customers and better for our business. (Adam, rock climbing etc., Blue Mountains)

It [tourism supply in national parks] needs governing, because if you don’t have a certain amount of governing you get rogue operators, probably for want of a better word, operating, and the whole thing falls down around you. You know you may be the best operator out there but if you got another operator that is not so good or does the wrong thing, it all reflects, in general, in tourism, back on a good operator so you have to have a fairly high standard. (Jonathan, 4WDing, Worimi)

Similarly, some operators recognised that the NPWS enabled them to ensure their customers were safe. As Patrick said:

It [a NPWS requirement] sets a good standard that you are going to get a minimum standard of safety, qualifications and things like that….Nowadays, some of the companies have 10 guides out. One company, in a busy period you might have 25-30 guides, so you do need, with that number, to make sure that they all know what they are doing, because someone could die. So I think it protects the public assets, the national parks and it protects the public personally from having minimum standards for the guides. So it’s fantastic. (Patrick, rock climbing, abseiling, Blue Mountains)

A few operators felt that the NPWS played a crucial role in facilitating their ability to protect the natural environment. This is captured in the comments of Lewis and Shirley:

I think it’s [the licensing system] good. I think it’s necessary. I suppose as far as the marine park goes, human activity is already devastating the planet and it is growing so any mechanism that can regulate and monitor, or even limit or prohibit that activity can only be a good thing considering the damage our activities have already done, so that’s as a far as the marine park goes. (Lewis, kayaking, Port Stephens)
I think it’s [NPWS] good. They are just trying to protect something that is special. We are so close to the city and it’s so easy for people to come up here and do whatever they want, basically, so if there wasn’t any regulations [sic] there it could get trashed really easily, so I think it’s a good thing that there are regulations and people actively trying to protect it. (Shirley, canyoning etc., Blue Mountains)

The excerpts above clearly reveal that for these operators, the NPWS was not simply an enforcer but an ally. Moreover, the licenses granted by the NPWS seem to become an official endorsement that operators could use as evidence of their own standing as adventure tourism professionals. Evidently, a potential partnership between national park agencies and adventure tour operators emerged here. Through identifying the goals shared by these two groups of stakeholders, the partnership between them should be expected.

While the benefits provided by the NPWS were evident here, other operators in this thesis regarded the NPWS as the greatest impediment on their ability to effectively play out their roles. Limited access to some areas and to wildlife in national parks was the most problematic issue identified by the operators in their relationship with the NPWS. Operators in the Barrington Tops National Park and several operators in the Blue Mountains National Park and Worimi Conservation Lands indicated that the limited access to some areas was an obstacle to their operation; as well as, stopping them from offering particular experiences to their clients. This negative attitude towards the NPWS is evident in the statements of Anthony and Rick:

I am sick of being treated like a criminal. Some of these park rangers they will come up and just come up in front of….As soon as you land and say “Hey you are not supposed to land on that beach” and they will threaten you with writing you a ticket and we will have to say “we’ve been doing it for 30 years, where is it written?”. They don’t have anything really to charge us with but they act like they do every time and I’m just tired of it. (Anthony, hang gliding, Worimi)

Basically the only thing really is that you’re restricted in where you can go. Do I think the national park’s licensing system is fair? No, I don’t. For the simple reason, I’m licensed to go into national parks because I pay a considerable licence fee in every national park in Australia. Blue Mountains is the highest. I am restricted to go where the public can go. I can’t go anywhere else. (Rick, 4WDing, Blue Mountains)
Several operators who provided hard adventure tours in the Blue Mountains National Park employed another case to illustrate limited access as a barrier to their performance as experience providers. These operators complained that the number of tourists allowed by the NPWS to visit some areas was too low. Hence, their role as experience providers, whose aim is to enable more people to enjoy diverse experiences, was hindered. This complaint is evident in Tom’s comment on the number of tourists he could bring canyoning:

[NPWS staff said] “I’m sorry; we can’t take your booking because there’s not enough space in the canyons”. Are they [clients] going to come back next week? No. Are they going to come back next year? No. Could my company help them? Why would they want to come back? It’s not my company’s problem; it becomes my company’s problem, but it’s created by the national park’s licensing system and their rules and regulations, their plans of management. (Tom, rock climbing, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

Limited access, as a barrier, was also evident in the narratives of most operators in the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park, but this complaint was triggered by another issue. All whale and dolphin watching operators stated the required distance between their ships and the whales or dolphins was too far, thus they were not able to provide a close intimate experience for tourists and not able to educate tourists about the wildlife as effectively. As can be seen in David’s and Hudson’s comments:

More restrictions, distance from dolphin and whales so therefore the clients aren’t as satisfied. Being so restricted, and not allowing us to do the job that we’re here to do is making it very hard. (David, dolphin/whale watching, Port Stephens)

These restrictions can make it difficult for people to see the dolphins and for you to educate people about dolphins and to point out certain characteristics that individual dolphins have. (Hudson, dolphin watching, Port Stephens)

It is clear that access was a common problem for most operators in this thesis. Lack of access created some disharmony and even conflicts between the operators and the national park agency. In short, these operators felt they were being treated unfairly by the NPWS.
Many operators focused on the regulations imposed on them as commercial tour operators to argue the unfairness. That is, they were severely restricted while in contrast recreationists and the public were free to do as they like. As Tom states in the following comments:

National parks are also toothless in their ability to restrict unlicensed operators and big groups and yet we are being caned and punished left, right and centre and yet you could come, you could put 20 people through Serendipity canyon, where we’re only allowed to put 8 with 2 staff. You could take 20 and you can have three harnesses between all of you and one rope and national parks can’t stop you and won’t stop you because you’re not doing it from a commercial basis. Therefore you could go and do that every weekend with your mates. (Tom, rock climbing, bushwalking etc., Blue Mountains)

Similarly, Jordan revealed the same problem in the Port Stephens-Great Lakes Marine Park:

They [NPWS] are trying to impose a 25 knot speed limit on me, on all of us. Whereas if you owned a boat, as the general public, you can run here 100-mile-a-hour and they can’t do anything. (Jordan, parasailing, Port Stephens)

It is evident that the partiality in management of commercial tour operators versus the general public by the NPWS creates a significant strain on the operator–NPWS relationship. Moreover, due to this perceived unfairness, many operators repeatedly stated that they were ‘paying for nothing’. That is, they paid fees to the NPWS [see Chapter Three] but got more restrictions. Thus, Terrance argued that because they did take the responsibility of looking after the natural environment, operators should be free to use the park but the general public should be charged because of their lack of responsibility in looking after the national park environment:

The licensing agreement means I have public liability to cover any incidents in the park, so the park isn’t liable for any accidents or things I create but also we pay a per head fee. So you’re charging the people who actually look after the park and not charging the people who are not looking after the park. So there’s problems [sic] with the licence and agreement as to fees paid. So we should be charging the public, and because the operator has a responsible approach to its business in the park, should be free, or less restrictive. (Terrance, 4WDing, bushwalking, Blue Mountains)
The comments above suggest dissatisfaction with the way adventure tourism operators are treated and managed by the NPWS. However, this thesis found that these operators were likely to ignore their use of, and access to public amenities in the creation of their profits. In addition, even though they viewed themselves as stewards of the natural environment, at the same time they wanted to bring in more tourists to engage in wider or closer contact with the natural resources protected by national parks. It appears that there was a contradiction between the ways in which they recognised their roles and what they wanted to do in national parks; or more specifically, operators used their own view to define what limited access should be. This problem corresponds to Wearing’s (2003: 74) arguments that “the future threats to conservation will centre almost entirely on the issue of access”.

When this thesis further pursued the reasons resulting in the disharmony surrounding access, operators voiced a lack of trust from the NPWS. Meanwhile, this lack of trust was also often accompanied with their performance of the role of steward of the natural environment. These operators felt that they could take visitors to experience the beauty of the national parks and at the same time educate the clients on the importance of conservation; however, national park managers did not appear to value this. Thus, they were unable to increase access to some areas and deliver environmental messages to visitors. They felt passionate but powerless (McCutcheon et al., 2009) in performing their role as stewards of the natural environment. This is evident in Aaron’s and Jim’s comments:

We’ve tried to talk to national parks and because we don’t have a certificate to say that we are educated environmentalists, they don’t want to listen to us, so they just don’t listen. (Aaron, horse riding, Barrington Tops)

They [national park managers] see us as the devil incarnate sometimes. You think that’s the way they treat you because they think, “You’re in private enterprise so just about anything you say we can discount because it’s about money.” But that’s not the case. Private enterprise in our business, the thing that would kill us, would be if something happened to those animals out there. So to work in combination with a government department that is managing the animals for the animals' sake, they have to join up and start to trust that we are not all out there trying to drive over them to provide some experience and don’t care that they might die; it’s our core business, too. (Jim, dolphin/whale watching, Port Stephens)
These two comments reveal that the level of trust from the NPWS has constrained the possibility of cooperation between adventure tour operators and the NPWS. However, this thesis has found that the operators’ lack of understanding of the basics of national parks management (e.g. ROS and VERP, see Chapter Three) could also be the reason creating the barrier between the operators and the NPWS. That is, in many cases the interviewed operators used their own experiences and understanding to define the carrying capacity or conservation of a national park.

From the discussions above, it is evident that the operators expressed a variety of concerns about the NPWS. Indeed, national park policy or agencies have been identified by some studies as a significant factor affecting the supply of tourism in national parks (e.g. Russell et al., 2008; Wilson et al., 2009). Ateljevic and Doorne (2004) further assert that government agency roles are an important factor constraining the development of small tourism firms. The findings in this thesis concur with the studies above, but this thesis also argues that operators had some deficiency and ignorance in their knowledge of how a national park should be managed. The value-incongruity between national park managers and tour operators is the fundamental reason creating the gap between them. Chapter Eight discusses this further.

At this point four things are clear: (1) the operators in this thesis played multiple roles in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks; (2) each role had a different meaning for each of them; (3) some roles were more dominant than others in their effect on the behaviours of operators, particularly when conflict between the roles emerged; (4) each operator viewed the management of commercial adventure tourism in national parks from his/her own perspective. As a result, the descriptions the operators provided of who they were, what they did and how they felt were diverse and complex.

Identity theory (Burke, 1980) can explain the diversity and complexity of the operators’ behaviours, roles, and perspectives. As described in Chapter Four, identity theory (Burke, 1980) asserts that an identity is the set of meanings an individual
employs to define who he/she is as a unique individual. Moreover, the roles identified by the individual are structured hierarchically, in the manifestation of one’s self (Burke, 1980; Burke & Stets, 2009). The behaviours and attitudes of an individual depend a great deal on the salience of an identity in the individual’s overall hierarchy of identities. That is, an identity of greater salience is often applied in situations that result in conflict between roles/identities, in order to facilitate the decision-making process and resolve the situation (Stryker & Burke, 2000). In this thesis, how the operators practiced and addressed commercial adventure tourism in national parks was associated with their self-perceived roles and/or salient identities. When dealing with tourists, the behaviours and perspectives expressed by the operators were associated with the role of experience provider. Similarly, when dealing with businesses and the natural environment, their behaviours and perspectives corresponded to the roles of adventure tourism professional and steward of the natural environment, respectively.

More specifically, for most operators, the salience of the role of adventure tourism professional best explains how they addressed conflict between roles and showed particular attitudes towards the NPWS. For example, when confronted with conflict between ensuring tourists’ safety and providing experience for tourists, the role of adventure tourism professional emerged as the salient identity with associated behaviour to resolve the conflict. Similarly, when most operators showed negative attitudes towards the NPWS, they employed the role of adventure tourism professional as the salient identity to argue the inappropriateness of the NPWS management. Meanwhile, the professional-recreationist dichotomy was also evident in their argument about access to national park areas and contributions towards environmental protection. Adventure tourism professionals were the salient identity that these operators adopted to manifest themselves as unique. For these operators, adventure tourism professionals clearly had a higher position in the hierarchy of their role identities.

Other operators in this thesis appeared to adopt the role of stewards of the natural environment as their salient identity. Due to the salience of the role of steward of the natural environment, these operators performed this role to resolve conflicts between
the roles. For example, when the operators encountered the conflict of proving a novel experience with disturbing an animal’s habitat, they chose to circumvent the habitat to match the meanings of being a steward of the natural environment. This salience of stewards of the natural environment also explains why these operators committed themselves more to protect the natural environment and differentiated themselves from other people through their awareness of the natural environment. In addition, they demonstrated positive attitudes towards the NPWS because they believed protecting the natural environment was a prior issue in the position of an adventure tour operator in national parks. This small number of operators evidently desired to manifest their identity as people who place a higher priority on the natural environment than on tourism.

Irrespective of whether they were adventure tourism professionals or stewards of the nature environment, these identities indicated how operators in this thesis wanted to be seen by others (Stryker & Burke, 2000; Bryan, 1977). These findings extend previous research on the roles and identities of nature-based tourism operators.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter demonstrated the diversity of the roles of adventure tour operators in national parks, and also discussed the key factor—NPWS—affecting their performance. In examining how each recognised their roles in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks, the diversity of responses indicated three major roles – experience providers, adventure tourism professionals and stewards of the natural environment. Each operator had his/her own perspectives on what roles an adventure tour operator should play in a national park. These roles and their meanings enable a deeper understanding of adventure tour operators.

The factor which the operators recognised as the most important in the performance of their roles was also revealed. The NPWS played a dominating role in the scope, limits and complexity of activities the adventure tour operators could undertake in the national parks, influencing the nature of the relationship the operators had with the roles they might fulfil. In addition, operators’ attitudes and concerns towards the
NPWS were evident, and further indicated there could be fundamental differences between the commercial tour operators and national park managers. When seeking more cooperation with adventure tour operators on issues of tourism and conservation in national parks, these attitudes and concerns should be noted.

While the interview participants presented a variety of representative roles and influences of the NPWS, identity theory (Burke, 1980) well explained the roles and perspectives revealed by them. Collectively, the findings in this chapter paint a larger conceptual picture of operators who work in the commercial adventure tourism supply in national parks. Further, practical information can be provided to national park agencies when they seek more cooperation with tour operators on issues of nature-based tourism and conservation in NSW national parks (TTNP, 2008). Moreover, the question of why the operators held such roles/identities and attitudes must be addressed. In the next chapter, values and related theories will be employed to explain and discuss their roles, identities and perceptions of the NPWS in the context of commercial adventure tourism in national parks.
Chapter Eight
Conclusion: A Value-Based Approach to Understanding the Relationship between Operators and National Parks Management

The previous chapters examined the interview data while also demonstrated the complexity of adventure tour operators’ motives, roles and perspectives within selected national parks in NSW. This chapter aims to provide interpretive insight into these findings and offer suggestions for future studies on both nature-based tourism in park areas and national parks management itself in connection with the aforementioned. This chapter therefore firstly employs the concepts and theories of values discussed in Chapter Four as tools to explain the findings revealed in the previous chapters. Following, this chapter discusses the dominance of anthropocentric values and the consequent hampering of biocentric values held by the operators in this thesis. The dominance of anthropocentric values raises some concerns about how adventure tour operators can be a positive force for the conservation of national parks. Continued discussion of operators’ values elucidates how operators position their biocentric values in relation to their anthropocentric values. The influence of operators’ biocentric values upon their anthropocentric values opens a way for national park agencies to include adventure tour operators, or other nature-based tour operators, as partners for the conservation of national parks. This chapter then asserts that it is difficult to bring commercial tour operators and national park agencies together in the management of tourism and conservation in national parks, largely arising from the fundamental difference of the values held by these two groups of stakeholders. Yet, this chapter also reveals the possibility in bringing these two types of stakeholders into harmony. Lastly, this chapter provides conclusions to this thesis and offers some practical suggestions for future studies and potential collaboration between commercial tour operators and national park agencies.

Values Underpinning Operator Behaviours

Table 8.1 summarises the findings revealed in previous chapters.
Table 8.1 Summary of Findings

**Adventure Tour Operators in New South Wales National Parks**

<table>
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<th>Profiles</th>
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<td>Push motives</td>
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<td>Pull motives</td>
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<td>Overarching motive</td>
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<th>Roles</th>
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<td><strong>Categories</strong></td>
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<td>Experience providers</td>
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<td>Adventure tourism professionals</td>
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<td>Stewards of the natural environment</td>
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<tr>
<th>Influences of National Parks and Wildlife Service</th>
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<td><strong>Categories</strong></td>
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<td>Enabler</td>
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<td>Impediment</td>
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Table 8.1 shows the complexity and nuances of the adventure tour operators in this thesis. This complexity and nuances leads to an important question: Why do these operators have such motives, roles and perspectives in their operation of adventure tourism business in national parks? The values held by these operators are the most important answer to this question.

Gnoth (1997) asserts that values play a central role in people’s motivation. Behaviour is directed by motives that in turn are directed by a person’s values. Torland (2011) and Hitlin (2003) contend that role identities are arranged in a hierarchy where higher-order role identities representing individuals’ core values oversee the activation of lower-order role identities. In addition, both the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) and the Cognitive Hierarchy Model of Human Behaviour (Fulton et al., 1996) indicate that values are an individual’s fundamental belief for directing behaviour, expressing attitudes, resolving mental conflicts and making decisions (see Chapter Four). Therefore, values can be used to explain the operators’ motivations, roles, identities and perspectives regarding commercial adventure tourism in national parks. That is, values play a fundamental role in the operators’ behaviours, including how they deal with the conflict between tourism and conservation in national parks.

Values in the context of tourism in national parks are often categorised into anthropocentric and biocentric values (Steel et al., 1994; Manfredo & Fulton, 1997). While these two types of values hold different perspectives on the relationships between humans and the natural environment (see Chapter Two), these values are not mutually exclusive (Steel et al., 1994). It is possible for people to hold anthropocentric and biocentric values simultaneously to deal with issues regarding tourism in the natural environment. The operators in this thesis are good examples. This co-existence of anthropocentric and biocentric values provides a way for this thesis to discuss the values underpinning the operators’ behaviours. The following discusses these values as a way of explaining this co-existence.

*Enjoyment, freedom and pragmatism* are the anthropocentric values that best explain the findings revealed in previous chapters. *Enjoyment* is often viewed as a construct
of an individual’s perceived positive emotions such as fun, joy, and pleasure (Kelly, 1983; Padilchak, 1991). It is a characteristic of leisure, which is widely recognised as an important element in people’s lives (Kaplan, 1975; Lynch & Veal, 1996; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). In the narratives, the operators frequently emphasised the necessity and importance of enjoyment, whether it is associated with the natural environment, adventure activities, working environments, or customers. For example, they loved being outdoors because they found the natural environment enjoyable, and this encouraged them to conduct the supply of outdoor adventure activities. Furthermore, they recognised that both adventure tourism and the natural environment were ideal tools for people to gain enjoyment – a strongly anthropocentric position. In this thesis, operators not only stressed on the importance of enjoyment in their lives but also acknowledged that it influenced their roles, attitudes, and behaviours in relation to their businesses. Enjoyment, therefore, has become a central factor influencing their thoughts, words and behaviours. This finding echoes Ajzen and Driver’s (1991) assertion that an individual’s values regarding leisure significantly influence the individual’s engagement in leisure activities.

*Freedom* is another anthropocentric value underpinning the operators’ behaviours regarding adventure tourism supply in national parks. Freedom often refers to self-control or self-ownership, and it is also a characteristic of leisure (Kaplan, 1975; Lynch & Veal, 1996; Pigram & Jenkins, 2006). Moreover, several studies contend that freedom plays a crucial role in the motivations of small-scale tour operators (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Page et al., 2005). In this thesis, many operators demonstrated negative attitudes towards working for other people. For this reason, they sought more autonomy and freedom in their working life. Operating an adventure tourism business, therefore, became an ideal way for them to fulfil the desire for greater freedom. Through this business, many of them also aimed to make their clients gain the feeling of freedom. In addition, as the previous chapter shows, several operators complained to the NPWS regarding their access to some areas or wildlife, and the desire for more freedom was evidently the foundation underpinning these complaints. Freedom, therefore, was one of the values held by the operators that underpinned their motivations, roles and perspectives regarding adventure tourism supply in national parks.
Pragmatism can also be viewed as one of the anthropocentric values held by the operators to underpin their behaviours in national parks. Pragmatism, in a broad sense, means that the truth or meaning of a proposition lies in its observable practical consequences rather than anything metaphysical (Ulrich, 2007). More specifically, in concerns of entrepreneurship, pragmatism is recognised as a significant value underpinning an alternative view of entrepreneurship—one that regards entrepreneurship as a means-driven, risk-averse and circular process (Kraaijenbrink, 2012; Sarasvathy & Dew, 2005). Thus, it is argued by some scholars that this view runs contrary to the mainstream view of entrepreneurship, which is commonly regarded as a rationally planned, risk-taking and linear process of opportunity recognition and exploitation (Kraaijenbrink, 2012). In the present study, the operators considered being an adventure tour operator in a national park as the most realistic way to fulfil their motivations. Moreover, in their performance as adventure tourism professionals, many operators frequently revealed that there was no short-cut to succeed in adventure tourism business. Through an accumulation of experiences and working in a pragmatic way, success in running adventure tourism business was achieved. In addition, while minimum impact was viewed by the operators as important, the strategies they used for minimum impact needed to be pragmatic within the budget of their operation. Correspondingly, with regard to attitudes towards the NPWS, many operators complained about the inability of the NPWS to realistically consider the situation of an adventure tourism business within the national park structure. Therefore the management of tourism in national parks was not, in the view of tourism operators, practical for them. These examples reveal pragmatism as an important value underpinning the operators’ behaviours and attitudes. This value provides another possible approach towards understanding the entrepreneurship of small-scale tourism business. As Kraaijenbrink (2012: 187) suggests: “It is argued that a pragmatic view of entrepreneurship is most fruitful when it is not applied at the level of the entrepreneurial process, but at the level of underlying human actions”.

Sustainability and equity are the biocentric values used by this thesis to explain the behaviours, motivations, and roles of the operators. Sustainability is often understood
to refer to meeting the needs of the present generation while not compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987, see Chapter Two). In a more ecological sense, sustainability focuses on “maintaining the long-term viability of supporting ecosystems” (Cottrell, 2003: 121). When the operators revealed their motivations, it was clear that their affinity for nature played a significant role in pushing them to engage in the supply of adventure tourism. In the descriptions relating to their affinity for nature, many operators indicated that they hoped the natural environment could be sustainable for as long as possible for future generations. Maintaining a healthy natural environment was important not only for their enjoyment, but also intrinsically for nature itself. Moreover, when the operators expressed their feelings of stewardship towards the natural environment, the importance of environmental sustainability to their businesses was asserted, together with its significance for future generations. Thus, environmental sustainability can be viewed as a core value influencing the operators’ supply of adventure tourism in national parks. This is supported by Herremans et al. (2005) and McCutcheon et al. (2009) who argue that environmental sustainability is a crucial factor influencing the tour operators’ decisions and behaviours in the supply of tourism in protected areas.

Closely related to the value of sustainability, equity is another biocentric value that underpins the operators’ behaviours in national parks. Equity in a biocentric view asserts that nature and humans have the same rights to exist and that all beings are of equal value (Sharpley, 2009). In the operators’ descriptions of themselves as stewards of the natural environment, it was evident that they believed the natural environment had every right to be sustained and to be protected for its own sake. Furthermore, future generations had equal rights to enjoy the natural environment in the same way that the present generation does, underpinning the sustainability argument as outlined above. The value of equity was evident in many operators’ concerns regarding the relationship between humans and the natural environment. Figure 8.1 demonstrates the relationships between motivations, attitudes and values held by the operators.
Figure 8.1
Motives/Attitudes/Values of Adventure Tour Operators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
<th>Motivations/Attitudes towards adventure activities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>- Passion for adventure activities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adventure activities are enjoyable</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Adventure tours need to be enjoyable for clients</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>Motivations/Attitudes towards the natural environment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Affinity for nature</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The natural environment is enjoyable for people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The natural environment needs to be sustainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The natural environment, including its creatures, and human beings are equal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>Motivations/Attitudes towards the business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Escapism: Being free from working for other people or the city living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Being an adventure tour operator is enjoyable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Being an adventure tour operator is realistic to fulfill the motivations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adventure tourism operation needs to be pragmatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Adventure tourism operation needs to be sustainable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Strategies for minimum impact need to be pragmatic</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Working for other is unfavorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Having autonomy is good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>Motivations/Attitudes towards clients</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Social interaction: Meeting different people is enjoyable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Clients in the tours are enjoyable</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Clients in the tours are free from the daily living</td>
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<th>Attitudes towards NPWS and its policy</th>
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<tr>
<td>- The policy of NPWS is fair</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The policy of NPWS is unfair</td>
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<td>- The policy of NPWS is unpractical</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Limited by NPWS is dislikeful</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The policy of NPWS is good for environmental protection</td>
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The discussion above reflects a central theme in which the operators expressed the belief that the sustainability of the natural environment and the operation of their business should exist harmoniously. However, although operators held biocentrically dominant values associated with sustainability and equity, it is evident that the operators had given these two values different priorities in their value systems. That is, the operators simultaneously possessed both anthropocentric and biocentric values, and these two types of values did exert an influence on their operation of adventure tourism supply in national parks. However, this thesis asserts that there were some nuanced relationships between these values. The hierarchy of values and the Value-Congruity Relationship Model (Kaul, Khokle & Koshy, 2006) can help explain this.

**Dominance of Anthropocentric Values and the Tempering of Biocentric Values**

Balancing and weighing values may be facilitated by a values hierarchy. As noted in Chapter Four, values exist in an organised system where each value is ordered in priority with respect to other values, and this system is organised and ordered according to how an individual assesses the importance of different values (Rokeach, 1973; Kamakura & Novak, 1992; Vaske & Donnelly, 1999). In other words, individuals may refer to their own value hierarchy and the order of priority in which they personally rank values to decide what attitudes and identities are worthy of expressing, as well as the behaviours to match such attitudes and identities. This is a key point in understanding what types of values have a higher position in operators’ value systems, significantly affecting how they conduct their businesses and resolve conflicts regarding adventure tourism supply in national parks.

In the previous chapters, several important findings were revealed. These findings reflect a central theme that the overwhelming majority of interviewed operators prioritised anthropocentric values when considering issues associated with adventure tourism supply in national parks. In the examination of operators’ motivations, it appears that adventure activities, the natural environment and adventure tourism business were all intended to support the achievement of the lifestyle business they wanted as their top priority. In the examination of the roles played out by the
operators, when the operators reflected their role as experience providers, it was evident that adventure tourism and the natural environment were largely recognised as channels for providing enjoyment and other experiences for their clients. Furthermore, in the operators’ comments regarding access to national park areas and wildlife, the requirement for more freedom was clearly for the consideration of their clients and businesses. These operators evidently viewed the tourist experience and their businesses as the centre of their operation. It is clear that from most operators’ perspectives, adventure tourism in national parks contexts is intended to meet human needs and desires of enjoyment.

The most important body of evidence showing the dominance of anthropocentric values is the operators’ explanations of why they need to play the role of steward of the natural environment. For example, as noted in the previous chapter, when the researcher of this thesis pursued the reasons that encouraged the operators to look after the natural environment, the relationship of their businesses to the environment emerged as a central theme. Environmental sustainability was recognised by the operators as a key consideration in the performance of their roles/identities. The biocentric values are evident here. However, this consideration was based on their businesses as being the centre of their value systems. Collectively, both adventure tourism businesses and natural environment were important for the operators, but the adventure tourism business played a more important role in the operators’ value systems. The Value-Congruity Relationship Model (Kaul, Khokle & Koshy, 2006) explains this.

The Value-Congruity Relationship Model (Kaul, Khokle & Koshy, 2006), as noted in Chapter Four, suggests that objects reflecting values closely associated with an individual’s self-concept, or having strong value congruity with the individual, are the objects located in the central position of the individual’s value system. The stronger the value congruity with the individual, the more central the position the object would have in the individual’s value system. In the present study, it is evident that both the business of adventure tourism and the natural environment had strong relationships with the interviewed operators. However, for most operators, adventure tourism business was the object that more strongly reflected the values closely
associated with their self-concepts. The business was the object being able to fulfil the operators’ motivations, roles and identities. In other words, the business of adventure tourism had a higher level of value congruity with the operators in this thesis. Therefore, operators’ adventure tourism businesses were placed in a more central position than the natural environment in their value systems, and that is why anthropocentric values played a dominant role in their performance of adventure tourism supply in national parks. This raises an important concern, as Brown (2009) argues, with respect to the commercial tour operators’ business values dominating their interest in the protection of the natural environment.

While anthropocentric values dominated these operators’ value systems, these values were clearly tempered by the operators’ biocentric values when they dealt with issues regarding adventure tourism supply in national parks. As noted above, the consideration of sustainability of the natural environment was an important factor influencing the operators’ performance of their roles and/or identities, but the operators would protect the natural environment because it was crucial to their businesses. Therefore, when they supplied their services, they would consider their influence on the natural environment. These scenarios show that the operators’ biocentric values played a role in ‘tempering’ the dominance of their anthropocentric values. That is, anthropocentric values and biocentric values not only co-existed in the operators’ value systems (Steel et al., 1994; Manfredo & Fulton, 1997), but also created influences on one another. Consequently, this thesis contends that the operators’ values relating to both the natural environment and commercial profit were not static, but dynamic and integrally related. The operators were much aware that their businesses and related activities are natural-resource dependent. The desire to protect the environment was in fact a desire to protect the resource that the businesses and activities they love depend upon (Herremans et al., 2005). These findings provide another perspective on seeing the potential to include adventure tour operators as partners for the conservation of national parks. These findings also demonstrate that both tangible (e.g. the business) and intangible (e.g. environmental sustainability) objects can be included in people’s value systems. While the value-congruity relationship model focuses on the relationships between tangible objects and values, the findings of this thesis provide another implication for the
model; that intangible objects can also have strong relationships with an individual’s values.

The understanding of the values of operators in relation to the business of adventure tourism and environmental protection can be enhanced by the work of Harris and Leiper (1995) and the work of Stern et al. (1999). Harris and Leiper (1995) believe that environmental stewardship can work side by side with the principles of free enterprise as part of a broader sustainable tourism framework. They argue that sustainable development within the context of managed economic growth occurs within the framework of environmental stewardship, which changes the main principles of the anthropocentric logic. The goal of such stewardship is to pass on to future generations a stock of natural resources with no less quality or quantity than that inherited by the current generation. In connection with the previous discussion of anthropocentric values, maintaining the healthy condition of the natural environment is necessary for the survival of human beings and for the growth of the economy. The benefits derived from the healthy natural environment have become a powerful factor in moving the operators down the path of sustainable development.

Stern et al. (1999) examined how people’s values, beliefs and norms affect their behaviours regarding environmental protection, and through the examination developed the value-belief-norm theory. The value-belief-norm theory asserts that people’s professional behaviours towards environmental protection initiate from acceptance of particular values, from beliefs that objects important to those values are under threat and from beliefs that their actions can help alleviate the threat and restore the values (Stern et al., 1999). In this thesis, the operators demonstrated that they held both anthropocentric and biocentric values to underpin their operations. Further, the natural environment played an important role in establishing their values. The operators believed that the natural environment was threatened by people or tourists who did not care about environmental protection. Therefore, they aimed to use their operations and tours to aid in the improvement of environmental protection and, most importantly, to protect the natural environment for personal fulfilment.
Free market environmentalism theories (Anderson & Leal, 2001) and recreation specialisation (Bryan, 1977) provide a further explanation for how the competing anthropocentric and biocentric values might be reconciled. Free market environmentalism asserts that the market value of a natural environment is a key mechanism for its protection. Without the environment in a healthy condition, gaining economic profit from the tourism market would be unachievable. In regard to this thesis, the operators stated the natural environment in the national park was crucial to their businesses and living, so protecting national parks was their responsibility. Consequently, they felt being a steward of the environment was natural and necessary for adventure tour operators in national parks. They also felt they should have more freedom to operate an adventure tourism business in the parks, and should not be restricted by additional costs and licensing fees.

However, while free market environmentalism has much to offer, it also has serious limitations. One of the major limitations is that it is a theory of rationality. The limitations of this are emerging in this thesis, where most operators indicated they were passionate about the adventure activities they provided for clients, not because it allowed them to be environmental stewards but because it provided them a mechanism to spend their lives doing what they love. Such passion for adventure is underpinned by an emotionally laden value that may not easily translate into predictable commercially driven, pro-conservation behaviours. More specifically, the role of personal values that operators developed from their personal recreational experiences (Bryant, 1977) may cloud and unreasonably shape commercial decisions as ‘conditional stewardship’ which is discussed in Chapter Seven. Such examples present the possibility that the operators’ anthropocentric values may create improper behaviours and effects towards the national park environments, and these operators cannot sense the impropriety. Therefore, one of the challenges is to ensure that commercial adventure tour operators are encouraged to see the impact of their activities.

Another issue which should be noted is that, whether explained in terms of free market environmentalism or economy-based environmental sustainability, conservation driven by economic forces appears to be a contradiction in terms of the
context of national parks. Chapter Three highlights the literature which argues that the establishment of national parks is for the purpose of conservation while simultaneously providing recreational opportunities for the public. Economic concerns are not, at least not primarily, the consideration of national parks. For this reason, national park agencies and their managers often frame issues of national parks management within the context of conservation (Eagles, 2009; Hall & Frost, 2009b). Conversely, as this thesis argues, adventure tour operators often focus on addressing the fulfilment of their anthropocentric values in the matter of adventure tourism supply in national parks; conservation is used for fulfilment, not as a priority for the operators. Therefore, because of these basic differences, promoting joint work between these two groups of stakeholders may not be an easy job. Darcy and Wearing (2005) and Eagles (2009) also warn that even though having more cooperation with commercial tourism suppliers may have its potential benefits for national parks—such as more funds for their management—it suffers the risk that national parks management may be controlled by tourism suppliers, creating a reliance on their financial contributions. If conservation is the primary purpose of national parks, using free market environmentalism and/or economy-based environmental sustainability to manage tourism and conservation of national parks may have fundamental difficulties.

**Gap between Stakeholders**

While national park managers are not examined in this thesis, it is evident from the perspectives of the interviewed operators and the reviewed literature that a significant gap does exist between these two groups of stakeholders, strongly relating to the differences in the values they emphasise. In Chapter Three, the reviewed literature demonstrates that biocentric values play a central role in the establishment and management of national parks (Hall & Frost, 2009b; Wearing & Huyskens, 2001). In the previous chapter, this thesis has pointed to the perception of NPWS as an obstacle for most operators playing out their roles in the context of adventure tourism in national parks. These operators felt that NPWS officers did not listen to them and/or value them as possible partners in conservation of national parks. In addition, as discussed earlier, the values encouraging the operators to protect the
natural environment are different from those employed by national park agencies to manage national parks. It is clear that the operators in this thesis and NPWS officers hold fundamentally different views on the issues relating to adventure tourism in national parks. More specifically, they rely on different values to deal with commercial tourism supply in national parks. This gap is best illustrated in Anthony’s comments:

Their [NPWS’s] goal to maintain and protect their parklands or conservation lands is a good one—they take care of it for generations to come. However, I don’t necessarily agree with some of their methods. Some of the rangers, or people in charge of the parks and land, have a very limited knowledge of who hang glider pilots are and why we are there flying. And some of their ideas, to kick everyone out of the park and let all the plants grow naturally, that is not necessarily the way to manage the thing. We need to educate them that we are assets for them to work with. We have a large group of people that are happy to clean and maintain their parks and help them, but until they get that attitude and understand that, they tend to work against us. They are always trying to push us out of the area instead of understanding that we have been managing and caring for these areas for thirty years and there is no damage. (Anthony, hang gliding, Worimi)

This assertion echoes the work of Wearing and Lyons (2008), which suggests that the biological sciences background of many national park managers can be a significant factor creating a bias against the development of tourism in national parks. Similarly, Wilson et al. (2009) found that NPWS officers complained that developing tourism in national parks was not something they felt they should undertake; instead they felt they should pay more attention to protecting endangered species in the parks. Collectively, the discussions above reflect a basic difference in the values held by the operators and NPWS officers.

It is understandable that national park managers and private tour operators may have different goals and needs in responding to issues surrounding conservation and tourism in national parks (Hermanns et al., 2005; Wilson et al., 2009). That is also where the tension and conflict of interest between them emanates from (Dredge & Jenkins, 2007; Stevenson et al., 2008). When a difference in fundamental values exists between two groups of people or stakeholders, it becomes difficult to promote collaboration between them (Kaul, Khokle & Koshy, 2006; Stevenson et al., 2008).
This scenario reveals that the biggest challenge for collaboration is whether operators view conservation as complementary to their values. There is also a need for NPWS officers to find ways of encouraging the operators to cooperate with them in pursuit of shared values and targets. For these reasons, establishing a partnership with commercial tour operators for the purpose of conservation of national parks is a difficult job for national park managers.

Managing Adventure Tour Operators: An Uneasy Task for National Parks Management

This thesis argues that the presence of adventure tour operators in national parks is a double-edged sword, and that the heated debate on this critical area of park management is global and therefore important in the wider debate on nature-based tourism. The review of the literature illustrated how both supporters and opponents of commercial tour operators in national parks management agree on the importance of nature-based tour operators, particularly adventure tour operators. But they have quite different positions when discussing the appropriateness of using these operators for the sustainable development of national parks. Based on the analysis of the interview data, this thesis contends that it is the nature of adventure tour operators to create both positive and negative impacts on national parks; identifying these operators as either enablers of, or barriers to, national parks management is, therefore, difficult. Chapter Six shows, for example, that the interviewed operators were motivated by the enjoyment of adventure activities and the desire to have more social interaction. Moreover, Chapter Seven explains that the operators aimed as one of their goals in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks to provide diverse experiences to tourists in a professional manner. These findings suggest that these operators can offer practical ideas and activities that could be helpful to national park agencies when dealing with tourism development issues in national parks, particularly when national park managers have limited knowledge of tourism management (Wearing & Lyons, 2008; Wilson et al., 2009).

However, while operators were also motivated by their love of nature and had a strong desire to maintain and protect the natural environment, a deeper examination
of these operators demonstrates that they can generate significant negative impacts on both the management and conservation of national parks. Chapter Seven found that the operators felt they were educating tourists, adhering to minimum impact guidelines, and further, they felt they had a deep commitment to conservation in the national parks. They saw their businesses as sustainable and environmentally-friendly within the natural environment. These findings suggest that the operators in this thesis may be ideal partners for national park agencies, co-sharing the responsibility of conservation. Nevertheless, this thesis raises some concerns about the operators relying on their relatively myopic, personal perspectives to identify what is good for the natural environment. Compared to mass tourism operators, adventure tour operators may indeed reflect greater environmental awareness; however, they may have embedded a particular definition of conservation that neglects deeper interpretation and higher biocentric values. For example, the operators in this thesis frequently reflected a misunderstanding that minimal impact equated to sustainable tourism. The operators’ lack of education and knowledge about sustainable tourism and conservation is evident here. Moreover, they tended to ignore their own negative influences on the park environment and were unaware that adventure tourism is one of the least environmentally friendly forms of nature-based tourism (Newsome et al., 2002, see Chapter Three). These issues cloud the operators’ ability to contribute to conservation of national parks.

More fundamentally, even though the operators possessed biocentric values, most of them based their adventure tourism business on their anthropocentric values, in contrast to the biocentric foundations underpinning national parks management. While the operators demonstrated a range of roles in different situations, these roles, from their perspectives, culminated in a successful adventure tourism business in a national park. Most importantly, as discussed previously, it is evident that the business of adventure tourism occupied a very central position in the value systems of the operators. The adventure tourism business, clearly, was at the centre of everything the operators did in national parks. The success or failure of the business determined the identities and values of the operators. All the meanings of the roles and attitudes towards adventure tourism in national parks flowed from the business. Without a successful adventure tourism business, these operators did not have any
reason to engage with issues such as conservation or sustainability of national parks. Therefore, this thesis asserts that adventure tourism as a business ultimately had a stronger level of value congruity and relationship for the operators than the natural environment. This thesis contends that business-related values dominated decision-making among these operators, and the success or failure of the adventure tourism business shaped how these operators played out their roles and identities, including that of stewards of the natural environment. The combination of limited knowledge and a perspective based on their own business can result in a lack of appropriate understanding of adventure tourism’s impacts on the natural environment.

In addition, it needs to be noted that even though the supply of adventure tourism would not require additional infrastructure development than is required for the supply of mass tourism, it requires greater involvement with the natural environment for its success. When seeking a stronger partnership with adventure tour operators, and by extension other nature-based tour operators in national parks, the risk that tour operators will put business before the natural environment is always present, especially when they are encouraged to develop tourism in those areas. Hence, there is a great danger in including these tour operators as partners in national parks management without a fuller understanding of the limitations of their conservation education and skills, and more importantly the values underpinning their services in national parks.

Having recognised this, the NPWS, as well as other national park agencies, does need to be alert to the dominance of operators’ anthropocentric values when increasing the involvement of such tour operators in the management of national parks. This concern is similar to the view put forward by several other scholars that the assumption that tourism operators will protect the natural environment because it is the basis of their business proves in many cases to be unwarranted (e.g. Cohen, 1978; Darcy & Wearing, 2005; Eagles, 2009). These scholars assert that tourism operators are often oblivious to the environmental effects of their services, or possess such a limited view of a total situation that they are unable to grasp the implications of their small-scale and profit-making operation on the overall environment.
However, this thesis is not denying the possibility of involving adventure tour operators as partners in improving conservation efforts of NSW national parks. Instead, this thesis suggests that seeking ways to make adventure and, by extension, nature-based tour operators be ideal partners for the conservation is an important task for the NPWS. Jamal and Stronza (2009: 185) state:

The user-conservation gap frequently present in protected area destinations indicates the need for collaboration and coordination to ensure that the parks system and the tourism (industry) system work closely together for sustainable destination management.

Similarly, as the findings of roles and values indicate, a gap between the operators and NPWS officers does exist and this stops the further cooperation between these two groups of stakeholders on the issues of tourism and conservation in national parks. When national park managers are facing an increasing need for tourism in national parks, but lack the budgetary provision to meet these demands, partnership with commercial tour operators has become a key issue in the development of national parks management (Eagles, 2009). Therefore, NPWS officers do need to develop a plan to reduce the gap and have a better partnership with tour operators for the management of tourism and conservation in NSW national parks.

The need for more cooperation with nature-based tour operators in national parks management is evident, and is, in fact, regarded as an inevitable trend in the management of national parks (Jamal & Stronza, 2009; McCool, 2009). Although adventure tour operators may be a double-edged sword in terms of the management of national parks, this thesis argues that it is still possible for them to be as potential allies rather than enemies of national park managers. This thesis suggests that the key factors that would facilitate this partnership are: (1) regulating the supply of adventure tourism in national parks; (2) recognising the importance of the operators in the conservation of national parks; (3) improving the ways of communication with operators; and (4) changing operators’ attitudes and behaviours regarding adventure tourism in the natural environment through education.
The Roles of Regulation, Recognition, Communication and Education in Successful Partnerships

Fennell (2008) and Pigram and Jenkins (2006) argue that defining the fine line between acceptable and unacceptable human–wildlife interactions has been a difficult task for some time, particularly on issues regarding tourism in protected areas. Similarly, the level of freedom and partnership afforded to commercial tourism supply in national parks is hard to decide. Both the reviewed literature and the findings of this thesis also reveal the possible risks and opportunities of having adventure tour operators as partners in the development of tourism and conservation in national parks. The question of how to involve nature-based tour operators, such as adventure tour operators, in the national parks management is a difficult issue for national park agencies.

Evidence in the interview data is the dominance of operators’ anthropocentric values and their prioritisation of their businesses. This thesis contends that government control of nature-based tour operators in national parks is still necessary in order to temper their anthropocentric values, or in case the biocentric values of operators are not able to moderate their anthropocentric values. The existing Plans of Management for NSW national parks only offer concepts and guidelines to manage commercial tourism in national parks. This thesis suggests that the NPWS, as well as other national park agencies, should be more specific in regulating nature-based tour operators’ operational behaviours, and ensure that their tourism activities do not exceed the carrying capacity of national parks and are consistent with the goals of national parks. For example, the NPWS can provide a checklist for operators to verify if their tourism activities meet the sustainable requirements of national park management, such as, the number of clients and littering and ‘leave no trace’. Moreover, a regular official examination of operators’ tours should be made mandatory to ensure they do not exceed the carrying capacity of a national park. Such regulations are particularly important when nature-based tour operators may have only limited knowledge of conservation, and even less understanding of how tourism and conservation coexist. In addition, the regulations can serve as the minimum requirement for the management of commercial tourism supply in national
parks, enabling nature-based tour operators to more clearly understand what they should and should not do in these highly protected areas.

While working with national park agencies received low agreement from the interviewed operators, the findings of this thesis also reveal some possible ways to implement the partnership successfully. The first is to raise awareness of the importance of adventure tour operators in the management of tourism and conservation in national parks. Both the reviewed literature and the interview data demonstrate the importance of adventure tour operators in national parks. However, a large number of the interviewed operators felt that they were not trusted, and consequently ignored, by the NPWS. The previous chapter also discussed that it is possible for national park managers to have a bias against commercial tour operators. Therefore, this thesis suggests that the NPWS should improve their recognition of the importance of adventure tour operators if they want to involve the operators in the sustainable development of national parks. For example, increasing the number of representatives of nature-based tour operators in the planning meetings of national park management is a good start. As Wilson et al. (2009) suggest, in order to establish a better partnership with stakeholders, governments should be more aware of the importance of these stakeholders. Otherwise, tour operators will keep operating their businesses in their own ways and will create a more significant gap between them and national park agencies.

Second, the NPWS should improve the way they communicate with operators. From the findings of this thesis it is evident that the operators had some misapprehensions about the management of NPWS. These misunderstandings might result from a lack of communication between NPWS and operators. The NPWS should actively invite operators to visit the NPWS and discuss conservation and tourism in national parks. Meanwhile, NPWS officers should participate in the ‘famil-tour’ which is a familiarisation tour provided by operators for booking agents to familiarise themselves with their products. Through the ‘famil-tour’ the NPWS can better understand adventure tourism products more and improving discussions with operators regarding adventure tourism in national parks. Indeed, communication as well as recognition should be given priority in any partnership between tour
operators and national park agencies. As noted by Laing et al. (2008), it is unnecessary for partners to share the same visions all the time, but they at least need to be amenable to valuing each other’s perspectives and keeping communication open. This echoes the argument by Stevenson et al. (2008) that tourism policy is essentially about communication. National park agencies should go further to change operators’ attitudes and behaviours, and also hopefully raise their biocentric values, to create a higher level of value congruency between the operators and the agencies on the issues of conservation in national parks.

Indeed, the development of the biocentric values of tour operators is central to improving the value congruency between operators and national park agencies. Scarles and Liburd (2010:153) claim that “values influence how sustainability is interpreted and implemented in different destinations”. Chapter Four of this thesis indicated that individuals may refer to their own value hierarchy, and the order of priority in which they personally rank values is, therefore, worthy of more attention, as is the manner in which they address such situations. Operators’ values play a significant role in the conservation of national parks, particularly when governments are seeking their help in improving both tourism and conservation in these areas. In the case of this thesis, the operators do possess biocentric values and have strong intentions to protect the natural environment. Some of them even have codes of ethics that contribute to conservation of national parks. Nevertheless, the dominance of their anthropocentric values and the level of their knowledge on conservation are still concerns when considering operators as ideal partners for conservation of national parks. If the biocentric values of operators can be raised to a higher level, they will view conservation as important as their business, resulting in a better relationship with national park agencies and a willingness to protect the environments and ecosystems in the areas.

Education plays a central role in changing behaviours and attitudes of operators, and this change may further raise their biocentric values. The NPWS should take responsibility for educating these operators. Rokeach (1973) and Ajzen (2001) suggest that education is an important way of influencing an individual’s value hierarchy. Moreover, Armstrong and Weiler (2002) and Hermanns et al. (2005)
argue that national park agencies need to educate and provide more information about environmental conservation and sustainable tourism to commercial tour operators in national parks. Through conservation and sustainable tourism education, operators’ behaviours and attitudes towards environmental conservation should be changed, and their biocentric values should be raised within their value systems, priorities and operations, contributing to both tourism and conservation in national parks. Correspondingly, with the concerns discussed above, this thesis contends that the NPWS needs to serve as a source of expertise to educate adventure tour operators about issues relating to tourism and conservation in national parks. National park agencies should develop an appropriate plan to educate and share information on conservation with adventure tour operators, such as holding sustainable tourism workshops, enabling adventure tour operators to have deeper and clearer understandings of conservation, which in turn will provide a basis for enhancing the joint promotion of conservation of national parks.

Additionally, it needs to be noted that the role identities of tour operators relate to how the operator is caring for him/herself in the supply of tourism in national parks. Thus, programmes educating operators have to consider their need to provide services to customers, the environment and the business. National park agencies should develop plans that take into consideration the operators’ role identities and biocentric values, educating them and thereby constructively influencing their behaviours and attitudes regarding tourism and conservation in national parks. This can enhance the way they make decisions and select practice strategies. Otherwise, tour operators will rely solely on their own ethics or knowledge to minimise their impacts on the natural environment of national parks. Pigram and Jenkins (2006: 278) advocate:

> Competing values, interests and priorities highlight the need for planning procedures that take account of environmental concerns, as well as recreational and tourism use of national parks, in an integrated and sensitive way.

This thesis endorses this view and suggests that through appropriate education and good planning, integrated and healthy cooperation is possible between national park agencies and adventure tourism operators.
Collectively, how the NPWS relates to tour operators will influence how the operators act in NSW national parks. As Russell et al. (2008) state, the responses of operators in national parks are strongly affected by their perceptions of environmental regulation, perceptions of the regulatory agency, and the relationship between operators and regulators. The NPWS, as well as other national park agencies, needs to understand they play a significant role in the development of cooperation between commercial tour operators and national park managers, and further in the compatibility between tourism and conservation in national parks.

While the suggestions introduced above may not generate an immediate effect on adventure tour operators, they are a good start. Compared to the tensions created by increasing regulations and fees, these suggestions provide more positive alternatives, whereby different stakeholders develop greater understandings of each other. Including adventure tour operators as partners in national parks management has appeared to cause problems relating to regulation, lack of recognition, and poor communication and education for these operators. While adventure tour operators remain constrained by regulations (as they see it) without appropriate recognition, communication and education, they feel they are marginalised and can act irresponsibly as a result. By including these suggestions, in conjunction with regulation, a change in their behaviours and attitudes regarding adventure tourism in national parks is surely expected. National park agencies could begin such programmes with the operators who already reflect a higher level of value congruency with the agencies. The knowledge gained from these operators can then potentially be transferred to other operators. Gradually, an advanced connection and collaboration between the two types of stakeholders for the sustainable development of national parks may be achieved.

**Future Implications of the Research**

This thesis is limited to a particular case study with a small number of interview participants with specialised backgrounds. This thesis is therefore unable to create a general pattern to describe adventure tour operators in national parks. However, as
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Chapter One and Chapter Two have argued, the commercial supply of adventure tourism is growing globally and most adventure tour operators share similar characteristics. Moreover, the tension between conservation and commercial tourism in national parks has become relatively commonplace wherever national parks and tourism intersect. Thus, the findings in this thesis suggest helpful implications for future research. This thesis is a critical examination of the people who live, work, and know adventure tourism supply in national parks best. This thesis corresponds to what Buckley (2006; 2010) argued is required in the adventure tourism context—namely ‘more case studies of on-the-spot audits’.

This thesis revealed a pattern of results which can be used to help understand adventure tour operators in national parks. Both tourism planning and further studies of adventure tour operators, and by extension, nature-based tour operators may benefit from these findings. Their motivations, roles, identities, perspectives and values become important considerations for future planning of adventure tourism and other forms of nature-based tourism in protected areas. For example, national park agencies could establish a system to ascertain whether applicants have role identities and values that are closely aligned with the goals of national parks. Without a deeper understanding of these operators, the management of commercial adventure tourism supply in national parks will lack a degree of persuasiveness in its practice.

Governments and national park agencies need to recognise that adventure tour operators now play a key role in the management and development of national parks. This thesis agrees with the sentiments of Thomas and Thomas (2006) that if tourism policies are to be effective, key stakeholders, including commercial tour operators, need to be more than the recipients of policy decisions. If national parks continue to attract tourists engaging in adventure activities, there may not only be a shortage of appropriate strategies to manage adventure tourism supply, but the operators available may not have the best qualifications. Consequently, improving tourism and conservation in national parks will be less effective. This thesis asserts that understanding, communicating and further educating these operators will provide considerable benefits to national park development. Sustainable tourism in national parks is significantly dependent on the effective cooperation of all the stakeholders (Jamal & Stronza, 2009).
In addition, this thesis found that whilst regulation and education can be required of commercial tour operators, operators’ perspectives on the NPWS are a much-neglected aspect of commercial tourism in NSW national parks (O’Neill, 2008; TTNP, 2008). The findings regarding the factors influencing operator performance could help the NPWS decrease the gap between commercial tour operators and the NPWS management. As this research has demonstrated, the NPWS is the most significant factor affecting the roles played by the interviewed operators. Moreover, it is clear that an atmosphere of mutual mistrust currently exists between the NPWS and the operators. Correspondingly, McCool (2009) asserts that trust and power are two significant considerations in increasing the collaboration between national park agencies and stakeholders. Through the critical examination of operators’ perspectives on the NPWS, this thesis highlights the gap and points to possible ways forward for the NPWS in terms of increasing trust and building stronger partnerships with commercial tour operators.

In regard to future studies, research that examines adventure tour operators from the perspectives of national park agencies and tourists is clearly needed. The study described in this thesis focuses on the subjective interpretation of operators themselves. Due to the strong relationship with adventure tour operators, the voices of the agencies and tourists are important and should be heard as well. Examining the perspectives of these two stakeholders and comparing them with operators can reveal a broader and fuller understanding of the influence of adventure tour operators on the expanding market of adventure tourism in national parks.

In addition, Dredge and Jenkins (2007) state that planning for tourism is a compound of economic, social, cultural, political and environmental considerations that reflect the diversity of the factors influencing tourism development. Therefore, this thesis suggests that future research should examine the issues surrounding adventure tourism in national parks in other contexts. For example, Hall and Frost (2009b: 61) claim:

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The creation or continued protection of a national park is not a rational process. It is a political battle, a process that involves the values of interests in the struggle for power relative to government decisions.

This thesis suggests that the value congruency between adventure tour operators and national park managers or tourism policy is an area worthy of further investigation.

Similarly, when examining adventure tour operators in the future, researchers should also adopt a broader perspective on this group of tourism entrepreneurs. They are not people motivated just by enthusiasm for adventure activities, performing the singular role of being adventure experience providers and focusing on economic profit alone. They have multiple relationships with diverse facets associated with adventure tourism supply. More importantly, they can simultaneously hold both anthropocentric and biocentric values as the foundations for their relationships. In different situations, operators manifest a particular value and identity to demonstrate who he/she is. These all reflect the complexity of the issues relating to adventure tour operators. The findings presented in this thesis can therefore be a useful reference for the exploration of the broader context of adventure tourism supply.

Further empirical studies regarding the relationships between values and serious leisure are needed. The findings revealed in this thesis indicate that operators share similar desires motivating them to engage in the supply of adventure activities, and also have strong commitments concerning what an adventure tour operator should be. While serious leisure provides solid ideas to explain the operators’ desires and commitment, it is evident that values also play a crucial role. However, the relationships between values and serious leisure only receive little attention. Therefore, this thesis encourages future researchers to undertake more examinations to ascertain how values connect to recreation specialisation and/or serious leisure.

Chapter Summary

This chapter examined the values held by the operators and synthesised the findings of the present empirical study to draw the thesis to a conclusion and also to offer
practical suggestions for future studies and tourism policy. This chapter indicated that the operators held both anthropocentric and biocentric values to underpin their behaviours in the supply of adventure tourism in national parks. Anthropocentric values possessed a higher position in the operators’ value systems, but they were tempered by the biocentric values. How to deal with the operators’ values for the conservation of national parks becomes an uneasy task for national parks management. Correspondingly, this chapter concluded that adventure tour operators are central to the debate on increasing commercial nature-based tourism in national parks. These operators can benefit both tourism and conservation in national parks, but they need more recognition, communication and education on the issues of conservation to complement the regulatory framework. Otherwise, they can create negative impacts on the ecosystems of national parks and even the national parks management.

It is undeniable that the business focus of adventure tourism still dominates what the operators do and feel in national parks. However, although there is a gap in the fundamental beliefs of national park agencies and adventure tour operators, there are opportunities to enhance their partnership positively to promote better tourism and conservation in national parks. The position of the study described in this thesis is that while including adventure tour operators as a key partner in tourism and conservation has its benefits, discipline and education need to be addressed to ensure the appropriateness of operator behaviours in national parks. Education can bring about a change in the practices, attitudes and hopefully values of adventure tour operators. These changes can multiply into a broader spectrum of nature-based tourism supply which is a key mediator in providing people with a natural environment experience. Therefore, raising the biocentric values of operators and making them aware of their influence on the natural environment should be central to education programmes.

A synthesis of the various issues raised in this thesis is now presented along with suggestions and remarks on possible implications for future national parks management of adventure tourism and, by extension, nature-based tourism. The findings of this thesis provide a step further in understanding adventure tour
operators in national parks. Based on the findings and the reviewed literature, this thesis asserts that better cooperation and/or partnership between national park agencies and nature-based tour operators is needed. National park agencies need to recognise the importance of operators’ biocentric values, while ensuring that accurate conservation information and/or knowledge is a basic requirement for all operators. Certainly, operators also need to recognise the influence of their operations on the national park environment. Hence, a communication platform for these two types of stakeholders is required. Through these processes, a better national park environment for both conservation and nature-based tourism may be achievable. In addition, more work in this area of research is necessary. The use of national parks will always be an issue that is debated within a variety of economic, political, social, cultural and environmental discourses. Adventure tour operators, and their relationships with national parks management, overlap many of these debates. Are adventure tour operators ideal partners for national parks management? Competing interests in the conservation and use of national parks will draw their own conclusions. This research, in its quest to further understanding of the perspectives of adventure tour operators, contributes to this ongoing debate.
Appendix A

Interview Questions

Basic Information

Interview Date: ______
Business Name: ____________    Business Location: _________
Operator’s Name: ____________    Gender: ___    Age: ___
Interview Place: ______

Ice Break Questions

1. Could you please describe your business?
2. Could you please describe the customers you attract?
3. Could you please describe the development of your business?

Main Questions

4. Because you offer your service in the natural environment, how do you feel about the natural environment to your business?
5. Why do you have such feelings?
6. How do you view adventure tourism’s influence on the natural environment?
7. When you take your customers to have adventure tourism, what do you want to bring them? How do you make it?
8. Why do you think these things are important for your clients?
9. Does the national park management influence your operation? If yes, how does it influence?
10. What is your perspective on the influence of the national park management?
11. What risks does your service have?
12. What is your perspective on risk and liability in adventure tourism business?
13. What are the main issues or problems that your business faces? How do you go about addressing these issues or problems?
14. What challenges have you met and are you facing now?
15. How do you feel about these challenges?
16. The NSW government is working on new policies to improve the tourism market, especially nature-based tourism in national parks, what is your perspective on this issue?
17. What kinds of help do you want to get from the government? Why?

**Closing Questions**

18. How do you feel about the future of adventure tourism in national parks?

19. What is your perspective on the future adventure tourism industry in national parks?

20. Is there anything else you would like to share about adventure tourism supply in national parks?
Appendix B

Information Sheet

SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, POLITICS AND TOURISM
FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW

Dr. Kevin Lyons
Senior Lecturer
Telephone (02) 4921 8989
Fax (02) 4921 6911
e-mail: Kevin.Lyons@newcastle.edu.au

Information Statement for the Project:

A STUDY OF ADVENTURE TOUR OPERATORS IN NSW NATIONAL PARKS

You are invited to take part in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Dr. Kevin Lyons, Dr. Tamara Young and Mr. Po-Yu Wang from the School of Economics, Politics and Tourism, Faculty of Business and Law, University of Newcastle.

This study forms Mr. Po-Yu Wang’s Ph. D research project, the purpose of which is to explore personal experiences, values and attitudes that contribute toward the supply of adventure tourism in NSW national parks. This project also aims to understand operational details of adventure tour operators in NSW national parks.

We are seeking adventure tour operators in NSW national parks, to participate in this research of related issues of adventure tourism supply in NSW national parks.

Participation in this research is entirely your choice. Only those people who give their informed consent will be included in the project. Whether or not you decide to participate, your decision will not disadvantage you in any way. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason. You will also be able to withdraw the information that you have provided to us if you so wish.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a face to face interview with Mr Po-Yu Wang. This interview will take place at your business and at a time that suits you. The content of interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder. The interview should take around 45 minutes. Interviews will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist during which time we will remove any information that identifies you. You will be invited to check the transcriptions for accuracy and may edit the content if you wish.

The content of your interview will remain confidential and only known to the researchers and yourself. All data collected for this project will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in the office of Dr Kevin Lyons and will be destroyed after 5 years. Only Drs Lyons, Young, and Mr Po-Yu Wang will have access to the data.
the completion of this study a summary report of the findings will be made available to participants upon request.

Please read through this Information Statement and ensure that you understand its contents before you agree to participate. If there is anything you do not understand or wish to clarify please don’t hesitate to contact one of us.

If you would like to participate, please complete the attached Consent Form.

For further information on this project please contact either
Kevin Lyons on 02 49218989 or kevin.lyons@newcastle.edu.au
Tamara Young on 02 49215804 or tamara.young@newcastle.edu.au

We would like to thank you for considering this invitation to participate in this study.

Yours sincerely,

Kevin Lyons (Senior Lecturer, Tourism Studies)
Tamara Young (Lecturer, Tourism Studies)
Po-Yu Wang (Ph. D candidate)
School of Economics, Politics & Tourism

FOOTNOTE
This project has been approved by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee, Approval No. H-657-1207.

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research Office, The Chancellery, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan, NSW 2308, telephone 02 49216333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au.
Appendix C

CONSENT FORM

A STUDY OF ADVENTURE TOUR OPERATORS IN NSW NATIONAL PARKS

I agree to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that the project will be conducted as described in the Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I consent to participating in an interview conducted by Mr Po-Yu Wang. The content of interview will be recorded to understand the operation of my business.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researchers and that my name will not be identified in any publications that are produced as an outcome of this research.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Print Name:

Signature: Date:

Contact Details

Dr. Kevin Lyons
Senior Lecturer
Telephone (02) 4921 8989
Fax (02) 4921 6911

e-mail: kevin.lyons@newcastle.edu.au
## Appendix D

### Motivations of Adventure Tour Operators in National Parks

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<th>Names</th>
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<th>Affinity for nature</th>
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<th>Social interaction</th>
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* Potential Market  ** Failed Business
References


Appendix E: References


Appendix E: References


