ENVIRONMENTAL TOURISM AWARDS

ENCOURAGING BEST PRACTICE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT?

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The true value of environmental and sustainable tourism awards to industry and the environment is not well understood. Little is known about those entering environmental and sustainable tourism awards, or the benefits that can be gained from winning an award. There is also uncertainty surrounding the effectiveness and success of existing award programs. Understanding award applicants and the benefits that can be gained by participating operators can provide award organisers with some valuable insight into the scope and future of environmental and sustainable tourism awards.

The aim of this study was to evaluate a range of environmental and sustainable tourism awards available to the Australian tourism industry from the perspective of 1999 and 2000 award applicants.

Applicants for the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Award and the National Travel Industry Awards – Environmental Achievement Award during the years 1999 and 2000 were selected as the sample. A total of 59 applicants were interviewed via telephone during the months of January and February 2001. Overall, the response rate was high (89%) with only seven applicants unable to participate.

The findings show that during 1999 and 2000, environmental and sustainable tourism award applicants were dominated by tour operators and accommodation providers. Furthermore, most operators came from Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales and Western Australia, and over half of the operators surveyed employed less than twenty full-time equivalent staff. A high proportion of operators also operated their tourism business in the natural environment (i.e. coastal, mountain, rainforest, riverine), thus indicating that the majority of applicants are nature-based or ecotourism operators.

The most common initiatives and projects being entered for the awards were those initiatives associated with waste, water and energy management, and environmental education. Actions that were less likely to result in short term benefits for the company such as staff

development, sensitive building design and research were less common among the initiatives undertaken.

The primary reason for operators entering environmental tourism awards was to gain recognition for the actions they have undertaken to protect the environment. Of secondary importance was the opportunity to evaluate the environmental performance of the business.

Winning an environmental or sustainable tourism award created obvious benefits for operators. For example, over 80% of operators received increased publicity as a result of winning an award. Many winning applicants also believed that winning the award had made staff more committed to improve the environmental performance of the business and increased staff morale. There was little evidence, however, to suggest that winning an award increased sales and improved customer satisfaction.

The process involved in applying for environmental and sustainable tourism awards also created benefits for operators. In particular, the awards proved to be a valuable tool for evaluating the environmental performance of tourism businesses and helped most operators to improve their understanding of the business. Furthermore, forty-eight percent of respondents believed that the criteria set for the awards provided a stimulus for improving the environmental performance of their business. The same group of applicants was also more inclined to believe that the awards helped to reduce their impact on the environment, and to set environmental performance standards.

Weaknesses in the awards examined, especially the State Tourism Awards, included the cost and time involved in applying. To encourage other tourism operators to reduce their impact on the environment, applicants suggested broader ranging environment categories for the State Tourism Awards, greater promotion of environmental tourism awards and a more inclusive judging system.

In the Australian context, the results of this study demonstrate that environmental and sustainable tourism awards are a successful medium for encouraging sustainable tourism practices. The extent to which the sustainable tourism message is being portrayed, however, is limited. For example, it is evident from this study that those entering

environmental and sustainable tourism awards are primarily nature-based and ecotourism operators. The awards are therefore serving as a reward for taking action rather than a stimulus to act in the first place.

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to improve and encourage sustainable tourism practices within the tourism industry, various environmental and sustainable tourism awards have been developed. The aim of this study was to evaluate a range of environmental tourism awards available to the Australian tourism industry from the perspective of 1999 and 2000 award applicants. A total of 59 applicants were surveyed from three environmental tourism award programs. A profile of award applicants over this time revealed that most applicants are either nature-based or ecotourism operators seeking to gain recognition for their environmental achievements. Publicity was the most common benefit gained by those operators winning an award. The award criteria were recognised as a useful tool for improving the environmental performance of some businesses and improving operators understanding of their business. The results clearly suggest, however, that the extent to which the sustainable tourism message is being portrayed by environmental tourism awards is limited, primarily reaching those few who are already taking meaningful action to reduce their impact on the environment. The applicants interviewed in this study suggested improvements to existing award programs in an effort to encourage other tourism operators to adopt sustainable tourism practices and participate in environmental and sustainable tourism awards.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tourism depends on the environment. The quality of the environment, or some particular feature of it, is frequently the primary attraction for tourists (Ceballos-Lascurain 1996). Tourism, however, has the potential to damage the very resources on which it depends. Alongside other industries, tourism is recognised as a major consumer of natural resources and tourism activities have contributed to the degradation of our coastlines, marine ecosystems, historical sites, mountain regions and unique scenic sites (Weaver and Lawton 1999; Gunn 1988).

In the past twenty years, concern over the potential impacts of tourism has given rise to new and evolving perspectives on tourism development (Sharpley 2000a; Weaver & Lawton 1999; Hall 1992). Acknowledging the relationship that exists between tourism and the environment the preferred approach to tourism development exists within the framework of sustainable development (Sharpley 2000a).

In comparison to the traditional forms of tourism development, sustainable tourism seeks to strike a balance between economic return, social and cultural sustainability and environmental sustainability. Ideally, sustainable tourism 'allows the economic needs of industry and the experiential needs of tourists to be met while at the same time maintaining the cultural integrity, preserving or enhancing biological diversity, and maintaining life support systems' (Harris & Leiper 1995). It is this framework that forms the basis for the following discussion.

1.1 Implementing Sustainable Tourism

Achieving a balance between economic, environmental, social and cultural sustainability is not easy. As a result, the concept of sustainable tourism is widely debated throughout tourism literature (Sharpley 2000a; Sharpley 2000b; Yeoman 2000; Wheeller 1994; McKercher 1993; Butler 1991). Not only is there confusion surrounding the meaning of sustainable tourism (Sharpley 2000b; Toplis 1999) there are also issues surrounding the implementation of sustainable tourism principles. Without effective means of translating sustainable tourism principles into action, critics argue that

sustainable tourism fails as a feasible option for long-term tourism development (Sharpley 2000a; Yeoman 2000; Berry & Ladkin 1997). One of the problems associated with implementation is said to lie in the diverse and competitive nature of the tourism industry. The potential benefits that accompany sustainable tourism practices are also not evident, thus making their adoption slow (Huybers & Bennet.1997).

Arising from this concern is the question of how best to encourage sustainable tourism practices. In Australia, the most dominant approach has come from outside the industry in the form of government regulation (Huybers & Bennett 1997). Among the regulatory mechanisms relevant for managing the impacts of tourism are emission standards, land use zoning and licensing. Although there is some evidence to suggest that regulation can work to create increases in profitability for tourism operators (Huybers & Bennett 1997) industry bodies have put more emphasis in promoting voluntary adoption of sustainable practices in their industry. An example is the former Tourism Council Australia *Code of Environmental Practice* (1990) and later the *Code of Sustainable Practice* (1998) both of which were developed by a committee of environmentalists, government officials and tourism industry representatives to demonstrate to the industry that sustainable tourism management equals good general management, and is necessary for the long-term viability of the Australian tourism industry (Tourism Council Australia 1998).

In contrast to government imposed regulatory mechanisms for the environment, self-regulation takes a "bottom-up" approach and looks to industry associations and individual firms to define sustainable goals and implement sustainable practices (Middleton 1997). Codes of conduct were among the first of the self-regulatory initiatives emerging from the industry (e.g. Tourism Council Australia Code of Sustainable Practice). Self-help guides and manuals (e.g. Tourism Council Australia Being Green Series) and certification and benchmarking programs (e.g. Green Globe 21) followed shortly after. Environmental tourism awards and sustainable tourism awards were also introduced as a way to encourage the adoption of sustainable tourism practices and recognise environmental excellence within the industry (e.g. British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards).

Coupled with the plethora of sustainable tourism documents are numerous examples of so called 'best practice' tourism role models. Harris and Leiper (1995) have outlined several of these role models in their book titled *Sustainable Tourism: An Australian Perspective*". Examples of 'best practice' tourism have also been promoted through the Tourism Council Australia *Being Green Series*. These documents provide evidence that tourism firms are capable of taking meaningful steps towards minimising their impact on the environment. The adoption of sustainable practices by tourism firms is closely related to self-interest factors (Harris 1998), suggesting that what is good for business (self-interest) can also be good sustainable practice. The following self-interest factors were identified by Harris (1998):

- cost savings;

- product differentiation, resulting in increased sales;

- a desire to minimise or eliminate friction between business and a given management body and/or community;

- compliance with environmental regulations and/or licensing provisions; and

- a concern to avoid future costs stemming from the need to rectify environmental problems flowing from construction and/or operations.

Despite widespread promotion of 'best practice' role models for sustainable tourism, many operators see themselves as powerless to create and encourage sustainable tourism. This is particularly the case when a resource is shared between a number of operators or with third parties (Healy 1994). The typical response to manage this problem is for government to introduce environmental regulations to make operators act responsibly. This type of response, however, is plagued by the lack of political will to control overuse, as well as a lack of funding (Hall and McArthur 1998; Healy 1994).

Alternatively, operators may voluntarily and collectively take action to limit overuse. It is generally presumed, however, that for this to occur there must be other motivating forces in addition to resource

protection (Hjalager 1996). Such forces might include increased competitiveness and cost savings.

Existing alongside self-regulatory approaches to sustainable tourism, are environmental and sustainable tourism award schemes designed to reward and recognise best practice within the tourism industry. These schemes have the potential to create benefits for participating operators and the industry as a whole. Award programs can be the first step towards committing the organisation to environmental and social responsibility and may contribute significantly to increased environmental awareness (Mihalic 2000).

1.2   Environmental and Sustainable Tourism Awards

In an effort to improve and encourage sustainable tourism practices within the industry, various environmental and sustainable tourism awards have been developed throughout the world. A recent web site established by Oceans Blue lists over one hundred environment awards for the tourism industry worldwide (2000)[1]. Among those available to the Australian tourism industry are the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State and National Awards for Excellence in Tourism, the National Travel Industry Awards – Environmental Achievement Award, the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, the Banksia Awards and the Pacific Asia Travel Association Gold Awards.

The general assumption among those involved in running award programs like the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism Awards is that the awards create benefits for applicants. The benefits that are typically promoted to the industry include:

•   Industry recognition (Tourism Council Australia NSW 2000)

•   Publicity (British Airways 2000)

•   Marketing advantage (Tourism Council Australia NSW 2000)

•   Opportunity to evaluate and review business activity (Tourism Council Australia NSW 2000)

[1] www.oceansblue.org/galleryhonours/index.html

- Set environmental performance standards (Tourism Council Australia 2000)

- Guide to encourage businesses in their strategic planning (Tourism Council Australia 2000)

1.2.1   Encouraging best practice

Very little research examining the effectiveness of environmental and sustainable tourism awards exists to date. As a result, it is difficult to determine whether or not environmental and sustainable tourism awards encourage operators within the industry to adopt sustainable practices. Those studies that do exist do, however, provide some evidence to suggest that environmental tourism awards can increase industry awareness of the environment. For example, Weferling (1999) examined the success of the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards from the perspective of five high-ranking people working in the United Kingdom (UK) tourism industry. The results revealed that all interviewees agreed that the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards were well recognised as a medium for raising environmental awareness. Some described the Awards as the *leading* and *most established environmental awards scheme in the world*. From the perspective of the interviewees this success was largely attributed to British Airway's *tremendous marketing expertise, combined with the energy, time and resources dedicated to the program*.

In Australia, two studies have focused specifically on awards for the tourism industry. The more extensive of the two studies was undertaken by Toplis (1999). His study examined the Victorian Tourism Awards with special reference to operators' attitudes towards the "Environmental Tourism" category of the Awards. The survey consisted of 283 Victorian tourism operators. The findings show that over two-thirds (67.7%) of industry respondents agreed that tourism awards have a role to play in promoting sustainable tourism practices. When asked about the effectiveness of the present award structure in promoting sustainable tourism, few respondents believed it to be effective.

Toplis (1999) also identified a number of benefits that can be gained by winning a State Tourism Award. He found that the most common benefit experienced by winners of the Victorian State Tourism Awards

was increased profile. Some respondents also indicated an increase in clientele as a result of winning an Award. However, very few were able to provide an estimate of the percentage increase. The average increase in clientele experienced by those able to provide the percentage increase was between five and ten percent.

Focusing on the New South Wales State Tourism Awards Coleman (1999) revealed similar findings. Coleman conducted fourteen interviews with previous award participants including both winners and unsuccessful applicants. The results revealed that the New South Wales Award program was a successful tool for encouraging changes in business managerial practices. This was particularly true for organisations in their first year/s of competing. Although Coleman's study did not specifically examine the "Environmental Tourism" category of the awards her results suggest that award programs may influence business management practices related to the environment. Specific benefits identified that were associated with winning a New South Wales Tourism Award included increased staff motivation and competence, assistance in recruiting staff and general marketing related benefits.

Coleman's study also identified the costs involved in entering the Awards. The time and financial cost involved in preparing a submission was perceived to be the greatest impact on the business (Coleman 1999). A report by Synergy for the World Wide Fund for Nature – UK (WWF-UK) on tourism certification programs has also identified weaknesses associated with environmental tourism awards. While acknowledging the role environmental and sustainable tourism awards can play in helping the tourism industry to improve its environmental performance, the report outlines five weaknesses as being the judging process, recognition of the best only, focus on ecotourism, no mechanism for monitoring the performance, and the time and expense involved in applying. These weaknesses are further explained in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Weaknesses in environmental tourism awards identified by Synergy in a report for the WWF-UK (2000).

WEAKNESSES	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
Judging Process	With some notable exceptions, award programs do not have transparent systems for assessing the quality of entries or for auditing those businesses that send in entries. This can create problems concerning the credibility of the award.
Recognise only the best	The achievement of winners are only recognised and often look complex and do not, therefore, encourage confidence among businesses with less commitment to make progress.
Focus on ecotourism	Many award programs focus on small scale and specialist ecotourism projects, making sustainability seem rather remote to mainstream tourism operators.
No monitoring mechanism	Most award programs provide a snap shot of a business performance, but do not examine the way in which businesses progress over time.
Time and expense	The requirements of some award programs are such that operators must spend a great deal of time and money on developing their application for the award. For many small businesses these costs can be a real deterrent.

Toplis (1999) and Weferling (1999) in their studies on environmental and sustainable tourism awards provide some evidence to suggest that the tourism industry has taken an interest in sustainable tourism. There is also a slight inkling to suggest that environmental and sustainable tourism award programs for the tourism industry may increase industry awareness of the environment. No hard evidence, however, is provided to suggest that these programs achieve this, let alone improve businesses environmental performance.

Coupled with the weaknesses identified by WWF-UK (2000) and Coleman (1999) the uncertainty surrounding the effectiveness of environmental and sustainable tourism awards highlights the need for further research in this area. Developing from these concerns, this study attempts to examine in more detail, the effectiveness of environmental and sustainable tourism awards in an Australian context.

1.3   Project Aims and Objectives

Environmental award programs for the tourism industry have the potential to promote sustainable tourism practices (Toplis 1999; Weferling 1999). Along with the benefits that can be gained by winning an award (Toplis 1999; Coleman 1999) the potential also exists for award programs to improve the environmental performance of tourism businesses. Understanding environmental tourism awards from the perspective of award applicants can help to identify the true value of environmental tourism awards for the tourism industry. Furthermore, by examining the range of tourism operators entering environmental and sustainable tourism award programs award organisers can gain some valuable insight into the effectiveness and scope of existing award programs.

The aim of this project was to evaluate a range of environmental and sustainable tourism awards available to the Australian tourism industry from the perspective of 1999 and 2000 award applicants. In contrast to award organisers and consumers, award applicants are well suited to providing details about the costs and benefits associated with existing awards. Specific objectives were created to achieve this aim and are outlined as follows:

i) Identify major environmental and sustainable tourism award programs available to the Australian tourism industry and examine the application and selection processes for each award program.

ii) For the selected award programs prepare a profile of award applicants including information about applicants' motivations for entering environmental tourism awards and applicants' attitudes towards environmental tourism awards.

iii) Identify the type of projects entered for the selected award programs during the years 1999 and 2000;

iv) Identify the specific operator and environmental benefits gained by Award winners for 1999 and 2000; and

v) Provide recommendations for improving the impact of environmental and sustainable tourism awards on the adoption of sustainable tourism practices within the industry.

The following section describes how the aims and objectives of this study were carried out by examining the methodological approach adopted for the study. The process for selecting award programs examined in this study is described, the research participants are identified and the research instrument is explained.

METHODOLOGY

2.1   Award Program Selection

The first objective of this study was to examine a range of environmental and sustainable tourism awards available to the Australian tourism industry. A comprehensive search of the various programs identified five major environmental and sustainable tourism award programs available to the Australian tourism industry.

The five award programs identified included:

• The British Airways (BA) Tourism for Tomorrow Awards

• The National Travel Industry Awards (NTIA) Environmental Achievement Award

• The "Environmental Tourism" category of the State & Territory Awards for Excellence in Tourism

• Banksia Environmental Award

• Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Gold Awards

Table 2.1 explains why only three of the five programs identified were included in the research analyses. The selection process for the final three programs was dictated by a number of criteria that were considered important to the research objectives. The criteria are outlined as follows:

1. The award program needed to promote sustainable tourism practices.

2. The award program needed to be accessible to the Australian tourism industry during 1999 and 2000.

3. For the purpose of gaining a large enough sample of Australian award participants, the award program required a good representation of Australian entries during 1999 and 2000.

4. The contact details of the award applicants during 1999 and 2000 had to be accessible for the purpose of surveying the range of award applicants.

5. The award organisers needed to be supportive of the project.

Table 2.1 Awards considered for inclusion in the project and how they measure against specified selection criteria

Selection Criteria	AWARD PROGRAM				
	BA Tourism for Tomorrow Award	NTIA Environmental Achievement Award	Environmental tourism category of State Tourism Awards	Banksia Environmental Award	PATA Gold Awards
Promotes sustainable tourism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accessible to Australian tourism industry (1999-2000)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Good representation of entries from the Australian tourism industry (1999-2000)	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Applicant database/entries are accessible	✓	✗	✓	✗	✗
Award organiser supportive of this research project	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Award program meets selection criteria for inclusion in this project: ✓ Yes ✗ No

The British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award were the three award programs selected for this study. These three programs promote sustainable tourism through the specified award criteria, are

accessible to the Australian tourism industry and received a good representation of Australian entries during 1999 and 2000.

Equally important, the organisers of the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, the State Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award were supportive of the research project. With the exception of the Environmental Achievement Award, the selected award programs had accessible applicant listings thus allowing for a detailed analysis of 1999 and 2000 award applicants. A full applicant listing for the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award was not available. However, the award organiser was able to provide details of the 1999 and 2000 Award winners.

The additional programs considered for inclusion, the PATA Gold Awards and the Banksia Awards failed to meet the criteria for inclusion on several counts. For this reason it was impractical to include them in the study.

2.2   Research Instrument

The research instrument employed in this study was a telephone survey. The survey questionnaire was developed in cooperation with a Project Steering Committee. The Steering Committee consisted of eight members including a representative from the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award program, the National (State) Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award. Other Committee members included an academic supervisor, two tourism professionals and a representative from both Tourism Council Australia and the Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism. The wording of particular questions in the survey was also influenced by previous surveys and interviews developed to examine tourism award programs (i.e. Coleman 1999; Toplis 1999).

The questions asked in the questionnaire (Appendix A) differed slightly depending on the type of award program that was entered by the applicant and whether or not the applicant was successful in winning an award. For example, questions for Tourism for Tomorrow Award applicants related specifically to their experience in entering that award program. If the applicant had won a Tourism for Tomorrow Award they were asked additional questions relating to the benefits

gained from winning that particular award. The same applied to applicants of the State Tourism Awards. Because records of the applicants for the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award were not available, only the winners for this program were surveyed. The final questionnaire was four pages long and consisted of fifteen questions (Appendix A).

To develop a profile of the proponents and projects entering environmental tourism awards (Objective 2) the following variables were measured:

1. Location of tourism operation

2. Industry sector

3. Scale of tourism operation (i.e. number of full-time equivalent staff)

4. Operating environment (e.g. coastal, rainforest, etc)

5. Type of environmental projects or initiatives entered in the awards

6. Applicants' motivations for entering the awards

7. Applicants' attitudes towards environmental practices and environmental tourism awards

8. Applicants' awareness of environmental tourism award programs

Objective three of this study was to identify the specific benefits gained by operators entering environmental and sustainable tourism awards. A list of possible benefits was read to respondents and a 'yes' or 'no' response obtained. The list was created on the basis of those benefits promoted by the award organisers, as well as information gathered from the interviews undertaken by Coleman (1999) (Q10, Appendix A). An additional question listing the benefits specific to winning an award was asked of the award winners. The ranges of benefits in this list were based on the results of similar questions asked in the studies undertaken by Toplis (1999) and Coleman (1999) (Q6 & Q7, Appendix A). An open-ended question seeking additional

benefits was included at the end of both questions to identify any benefits that may not have been listed in the questionnaire.

In order to achieve objective three it was also considered necessary to identify any costs that may have resulted from entering the award. Therefore, a question listing possible costs associated with the awards was included (Q11, Appendix A). The costs listed were generated as a result of a pre-test of the questionnaire. To ensure all responses were recorded an option existed for respondents to list other costs not mentioned in the questionnaire.

In an effort to measure the effect of environmental tourism awards on operators' environmental performance applicants were asked if they had altered their business as a result of the award criteria. Where respondents answered 'yes', the researcher prompted the respondent for an example. The examples gathered from respondents were then coded into meaningful categories of alterations.

A pre-test of the questionnaire was undertaken on a sample of eight environmental and sustainable tourism award applicants from within Australia, four applicants from the "Environmental Tourism" category of the 1998 State Tourism Awards, and four applicants from the 1998 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. The pre-test proved beneficial in contributing to the final layout and wording of the questions.

2.3   Survey Participants and Procedures

Applicants for the 1999 and 2000 Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the 1999 and 2000 applicants for the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards were selected as the sample. Winners of the 1999 and 2000 NTIA Environmental Achievement Award were also included in the sample (Table 2.2). Due to the small sample size representing the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award program, the Award program was excluded from all comparative analyses presented in this report.

Table 2.2 The number of applicants surveyed from each of the selected award programs.

ENVIRONMENTAL TOURISM AWARD PROGRAM	NO. APPLICANTS SURVEYED	% OF SURVEYS
British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards	19	32%
"Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards	38	64%
NTIA Environmental Achievement Award	2	4%
Total	**59**	**100%**

Applicant details for the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards for 1999 and 2000 were gathered from databases maintained by the award organisers. A contact name, the company name, the company address and contact telephone and fax number were recorded for each applicant and entered into a database. Only winners' details for the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award were available, hence the small sample size (Table 2.2).

One month prior to the telephone survey an introductory letter was sent to all operators included in the applicant database (66 in total). The letter provided details about the project and its purpose and indicated to applicants when they should expect a telephone call. Several applicants responded with a preferred time and date on which they could be contacted. Others were called at random and either participated in the survey on the first call or suggested a better time for the researcher to call back. The person interviewed was typically in a management position within the company or had close involvement in the preparation of the award application.

The telephone survey was conducted during the months of January and early February 2001. The telephone interviews averaged fifteen minutes in length. Overall the response rate was high (89%) with only seven applicants unable to participate. Reasons for non-responses included that the company had changed hands, the company no longer existed or a suitable person was unavailable to respond to the questions. In several situations (10) tourism operators had entered

more than one of the selected award programs. Where this was the case applicants were interviewed on the basis of their application for the appropriate State Tourism Award. The reason for this was to gain a sample of applicants from each of the State/Territory Awards. In hindsight, the dual applicants should have been randomly placed into either of the two programs.

2.4   Limitations

The sample of environmental and sustainable tourism award applicants in this study was limited to applicants applying in the years 1999 and 2000. Problems associated with operators' recollection of the awards and changes in business ownership prevented the inclusion of applicants during previous years, thus only a small sample size was obtained. Ideally, the study would have included applicants entering environmental tourism awards over a longer time period. Similarly, it would be valuable to include applicants from other award programs not examined in this study.

Several problems were encountered when undertaking the telephone survey. The problem of greatest concern related to the accuracy of the research instrument. Out of those applicants surveyed, several had won other awards in addition to the environmental tourism award they were questioned about. As a result, it was often difficult for respondents to relate their answers specifically to the environmental and sustainable tourism award of interest.

2.5   Data Analysis

Due to the small sample size the data analysis was limited to frequencies, cross-tabulations and chi-squared analyses. Frequency counts were undertaken to identify underlying patterns in data. Where more detailed results were required cross-tabulations and chi-square analyses were conducted on the relevant variables. This was particularly the case when comparing results between the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism Awards. Where cell counts of less than five were encountered in the cross-tabulations the results were interpreted with particular caution.

The following section provides a detailed presentation of the research results. The results are presented in a format that is consistent with the project objectives.

3.1   Environment Awards For The Australian Tourism Industry

Three environmental tourism awards were examined in this study. These award programs include:

• the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards;

• the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards; and

• the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award, sponsored by the Australian Federation of Travel Agents and supported by the World Wide Fund for Nature.

3.1.1   Tourism for tomorrow awards

The British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards operates at the international level receiving entries from all over the world. With six different categories available to tourism operators, the program is open to a diversity of tourism projects. The purpose of having these categories was to provide competition among similar projects (Table 3.1). In previous years, the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards operated the awards with regional categories. The regional categories proved difficult to judge, as unlike projects (e.g. visitor centre and wilderness tour operation) were judged against each other. In 2000, a specific Australian Tourism for Tomorrow Award was created alongside the existing UK Tourism for Tomorrow Award and the New Zealand Tourism for Tomorrow Award.

The process of applying for the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards requires applicants to address six criteria (Table 3.1; Appendix B). The criteria cover a range of environmental issues, including those associated with the development of tourism in culturally sensitive areas. Under each of the criteria operators are required to answer questions relating to 1) local community; 2) the protection of natural and cultural heritage; 3) waste, water and energy management; 4) environmental education

and environmental awareness; 5) leadership and innovation; and 6) sustainability. The application addressing these criteria is to be no more than 1500 words. Projects do not need to address all of the criteria but applicants must state clearly those relevant to the project.

At a formal presentation held in London, winners of the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards are presented with a certificate and plaque. British Airways (BA) also promotes the winners through BA publications such as the in-flight magazine and *The Green Travel Guide*. Projects are judged by a panel of experts including academics, industry professionals, journalists and conservationists. Judging entries involves a thorough examination of the applications, referee reports and accompanying slides/photos. Entries are then discussed amongst members of the panel. British Airways does not accept entries from other award schemes and will only receive entries form completed projects. Applicants are not charged an entry fee (Table 3.1).

3.1.2   State Tourism Awards

The "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards is a national program available to Australian tourism operators. The "Environmental Tourism" category is one of twenty-eight different categories available to operators Australia wide. The awards apply in each State and Territory and winners of the State/Territory awards go in the running for a National Award. Details for the "Environmental Tourism" category indicate that this particular award is specific to nature-based and ecotourism operators (Table 3.1, Appendix B). The specificity of this award to nature-based and ecotourism operators is also reflected in the award criteria.

The six criteria specific to the "Environmental Tourism" category require evidence that the tourism operator: 1) has an environmental management plan; 2) has an interpretive plan; 3) supports research on the natural environment; 4) is compatible with the environmental values of the site/s; 5) supports the local community; and 6) provides services for those with specialist needs (Table 3.1). An additional eight criteria must also be addressed by applicants covering general business management topics such as finance, marketing and staff training (Appendix B).

Winners of the awards receive some publicity through the award organisers (e.g. article published in the *Weekend Australian*), but are generally responsible for marketing their own successes. Winners also receive a plaque and certificate for their achievements. Entrants are judged in their individual States/Territories by a panel of judges. No other information about the judges (e.g. credentials) is provided. Winners are selected on the basis of the written application (Table 3.1). In the *New South Wales Awards for Excellence in Tourism Guidelines* (2000) it is also stated that "finalists that operate a business visited by the public will undergo a site inspection of that place of business" (p 9). These site visits, however, are known to be rare.

The rules for applying for the State Awards are quite extensive. The most important, however, is that applicants must operate in the State or Territory of their nomination, and only one category can be entered. Applicants must also pay an application fee to enter the State Tourism Awards (Table 3.1). The actual prices listed in Table 3.1 were taken from those, which applied in 2000. Due to the recent closure of Tourism Council Australia, the prices indicated in this report may have changed. Similarly, it is likely that the structure of the State Tourism Awards is under review.

3.1.3   Environmental Achievement Award

The Australian Federation of Travel Agents and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) sponsored Environmental Achievement Award is part of the larger National Travel Industry Awards for Australia. The Environmental Achievement Award in particular is a relatively new award beginning in 1997. The award is open to all tourism projects and/or programs that are able to demonstrate their environmental achievements (Table 3.1). Examples of programs that could be entered include:

• Recycling programs

• Environmental awareness training for staff and customers

• Waste reduction programs

- Energy saving programs

- Education or interpretation programs

The application process for this award requires a written application addressing the award criteria. However, applicants are not expected to address all eight of the criteria. The criteria are very broad ranging encompassing issues associated with environmental planning, environmental management, conservation, marketing, education and staff training (Table 3.1, Appendix B). One winner is chosen for the award each year and receives a plaque displaying the WWF panda logo. Publicity via tourism trade magazines is also provided for winners on a short-term basis.

The judging panel consists of three or more judges and typically includes a representative from WWF, an academic and an industry representative. Winners are selected on the basis of the written application. No rules are listed for applicants to enter and no entry fee applies (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 A summary table giving details of the three environmental tourism award programs examined in this study.

IMPORTANT FEATURES	BA TOURISM FOR TOMORROW AWARDS	"ENVIRONMENTAL TOURISM" CATEGORY OF STATE TOURISM AWARDS	NTIA ENVIRONMENTAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
Operational Level	International	National	National
Award Categories	1. Protected Areas and National Parks 2. Accommodation 3. Tourism Organisations 4. Built Environment 5. Environmental Experience 6. Large-scale tourism	Environmental Tourism (i.e. nature-based and ecotourism specific)	Open to all tourism projects and programs with an environmental focus.

Award Criteria	1. Social 2. Heritage 3. Management 4. Communication 5. Leadership 6. Sustainable Tourism	1. Environmental Management 2. Interpretation 3. Research 4. Environmental Values 5. Local Community 6. Special Services + General Criteria (Appendix B)	1. Environmental Policy 2. Impact Assessment 3. Wise Resource Use 4. Environmental Management 5. Conservation 6. Appropriate Marketing 7. Education & Interpretation 8. Staff Training
Winner's Prize	– Certificate/Plaque – Widespread publicity	– Certificate/Plaque – Some publicity	– Plaque – Some publicity
Judging	– Based on written submission – Panel of judges for each category	– Based on written submission – Panel of judges for each State/Territory	– Based on written submission – Panel of judges
General Rules	– Entries only received from completed projects – Other award scemes are not eligible for entry	– Applicants must be based or operate in the region, state or territory of their nomination	– N/A
Cost of Entry	– No cost	– $150 for Tourism Council Australia Members[2] – $160 for non-members	– No cost

3.2.1   Location

The majority of environmental and sustainable tourism award applicants included in this study operated their tourism business in Queensland, New South Wales or Western Australia. South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory were least represented by tourism businesses in the awards examined (Figure 3.1).

[2] Tourism Council Australia was closed in December 2000. As a result, these prices may have changed and could vary across the States and Territories.
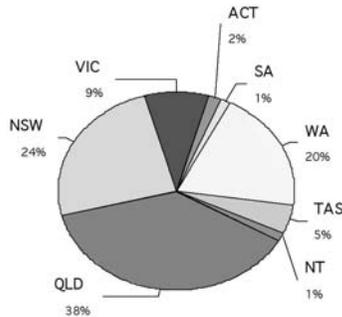
Figure 3.1 The proportion (%) of environmental and sustainable tourism award applicants across Australia during 1999 and 2000 (n=66) *.

3.2.2 Industry sector, scale and environment

The industry sectors represented in the environmental tourism awards were identified as accommodation (e.g. hotels, motels, B&B's, resorts), attractions (e.g. visitor centres, zoos, wildlife parks), tour operators (e.g. nature tours, river cruises, diving centres) and land management agencies (e.g. protected area management agencies, local government). An additional category identified as 'other' was also created to include conservation voluntary organisations.

A large proportion of applicants were tour operators and accommodation providers. The attractions sector and land management agencies represented fewer applicants. Only two voluntary organisations entered the awards (Table 3.2).

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* Includes British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award.

Table 3.2 A break down environmental tourism and sustainable tourism award applicants during 1999 and 2000 by industry sector[*].

INDUSTRY SECTOR (N = 66)	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Tour Operator	41%
Accommodation	29%
Attraction	17%
Land Management Agency	10%
Other	3%

There are obvious differences in the number of entries received from accommodation providers and tour operators when comparing the sectors represented in the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards with those represented in the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards. For example, the Tourism for Tomorrow awards received more entries from accommodation providers, and the State Tourism Awards received more applications from tour operators (Figure 3.2). However, the small sample size means that these differences are not significant.
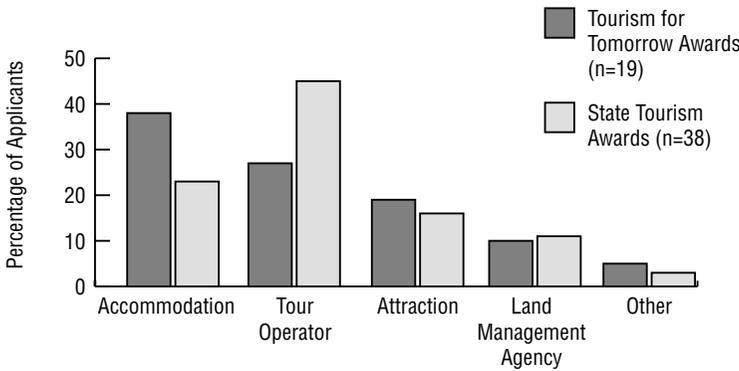
Figure 3.2 The industry sectors represented in the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and State Tourism Awards during 1999 and 2000*, and the proportion (%) of award applicants within each sector.

* Includes British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award.

For this study, the scale of tourism operators refers to the number of full time equivalent staff employed. The results were varied with over half of respondents indicating that their tourism operation employed less than twenty full time equivalent staff. Of this total, 26% of respondents employed three full time equivalent staff (Table 3.3). This finding is hardly surprising given most ecotourism and nature based businesses in Australia are small, owner-operated or family-run businesses (Issaverdis 1999).

Table 3.3 The scale of tourism businesses entering environmental and sustainable tourism awards* during 1999 and 2000.

SCALE OF OPERATION# (N = 59)	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Less than 20	59%
20 – 100	27%
Greater than 101	14%

Measured as the number of full time equivalent staff employed.

In the large-scale category (> 101 full time equivalent staff), the greatest amount of full time equivalent staff employed by an applicant was 350. Had a different measure of scale been used in this study, such as business turn over or visitor numbers, the results may have shown that environmental and sustainable tourism awards receive more entries from larger, more financially stable businesses. It is interesting to note that significantly more than expected large-scale tourism businesses entered the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards than the State Tourism Awards during 1999 and 2000 (χ^2 = 8.084, d.f.= 2, p< 0.05) (Figure 3.3). This is most likely the result of the large-scale tourism category available in the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards or a greater interest from large companies to gain international recognition for their environmental achievements.

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* Includes British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award.
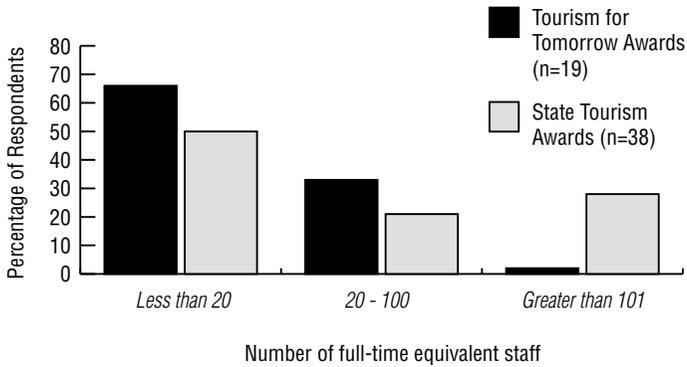
Figure 3.3 The scale of tourism projects entering the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism Awards during 1999 and 2000.

As well as providing information on the scale of the tourism operation respondents were able to describe the type of environment, or environments, in which they operate. Overall, 56% of respondents indicated that their business operated in the marine or coastal environment. A further 17% operated in urban, river, cave, open-forest and rural environments (other) (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 The type of environment/s in which award applicants operate their business during 1999 and 2000.

OPERATING ENVIRONMENTS* (N = 59)	PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Marine or Coastal	56%
Rainforest	39%
Mountain or Alpine	24%
Wetland	19%
Arid or Semi-Arid	17%
Other	17%

* These percentages represent the number of 'yes' responses obtained. The results will not add to 100% as operators often nominated more than one environment as being applicable to their operation.

3.2.3 Project type

The types of environmental projects and/or initiatives undertaken by respondents were coded into eight categories of initiatives as listed in Figure 3.4. The most frequent responses related to activities in environmental education such as interpretation for guests and visitors, and actions related to environmental management such as waste and water management, and energy consumption. Visitor impact management was nominated by 11% of respondents while other initiatives nominated related to research activities, conservation, staff development, sensitive design and social responsibility (e.g. community involvement, cultural awareness) (Figure 3.4)
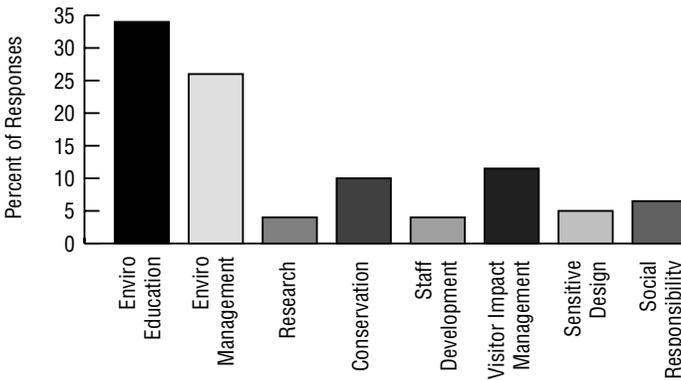
Figure 3.4 Categories of environmental projects nominated by respondents for environmental and sustainable tourism awards* during 1999 and 2000 and the proportion (%) of projects nominated within each category.

3.2.4 Motivations for entering environmental tourism awards

Applicants' motivations for entering environmental tourism awards were determined by how important certain factors were to them when entering the award program. Motivations were measured on a three-point scale, 1 being 'not at all important' and 3 being 'very important'. Table 3.5 shows the results as a mean score.

The opportunity to gain recognition from peers was considered by operators to be the most important motivating force for entering environmental and sustainable tourism awards. Ensuring the long-term conservation of the environment and the opportunity to evaluate the environmental performance of the business were also considered important to operators entering the awards. Of slightly less importance to operators was the opportunity to gain an advantage over competitors and the opportunity to identify new approaches for improving environmental performance. Avoiding criticism was not an important factor influencing operators to enter environmental and sustainable tourism awards (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5 Respondents' motivations for entering environmental tourism awards*.

MOTIVATIONS (LISTED IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE)	MEAN SCORE
The opportunity to gain recognition from peers	2.5
To ensure the long-term conservation of the environment in which your business operates	2.4
The opportunity to evaluate the environmental performance of your business	2.4
The opportunity to gain an advantage over competitors	2.1
The opportunity to identify new approaches for improving environmental performance	2.1
To avoid criticism that could result from not entering the awards	1.1

1 = Not at all important   2 = Of some importance   3 = Very important

Other motivating factors for entering the awards included the opportunity to gain recognition from outside of the industry (e.g. with environment agencies) (26% of respondents). For some (27%) entering environmental tourism awards was also about personal satisfaction, promoting best practice, increasing visitor numbers, documenting achievements, prestige and/or credibility.

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* Includes British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards, "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award.

3.2.5 Attitudes towards environmental tourism awards

Table 3.6 shows that there was a general agreement amongst operators that environmental and sustainable tourism awards play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism. However, the majority did believe that award organisers should play a greater role in promoting successful award applicants. This is most likely explained by the fact that the State Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award offer a minimal amount of publicity to winners.

Despite support for environmental tourism awards there was a tendency for applicants to believe that if environmental tourism awards did not exist there would still be reason to improve the environmental performance of their business. Similarly, respondents were inclined to believe that improving the environmental performance of a business was not just about increasing business profits (Table 3.6).

Table 3.6 Applicants' responses to statements about environmental practices and environmental tourism awards

STATEMENT TOPIC	MEAN SCORE		
Award organisers should have a greater role in promoting the successful award applicants.	Strongly Disagree	_____|____	Strongly Agree
Environmental tourism awards play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism.	Strongly Disagree	_____|_____	Strongly Agree
There is no point in improving the environmental performance of a business unless it results in an increase in business profits.	Strongly Disagree	_|_____	Strongly Agree
If environmental tourism awards did not exist there would be no point in improving the environmental performance of our business.	Strongly Disagree	_|_____	Strongly Agree
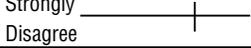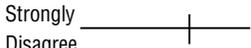
3.2.6 Awareness of environment award programs

Overall, 58% of respondents stated that they found out about the awards through a tourism agency within their state, territory or region. Nineteen percent found out by word of mouth, 10% stated that it was simply industry knowledge, 8% discovered the awards via

an award brochure and the other 5% found out about the award programs in either the newspaper or a magazine.

Respondents were more likely to rely on finding out about the awards through tourism agencies such as Tourism Queensland, Tourism Tasmania, the Ecotourism Association of Australia and regional tourism organisations. The award brochure and word of mouth were also significant sources of information for applicants entering the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. (Figure 3.5).
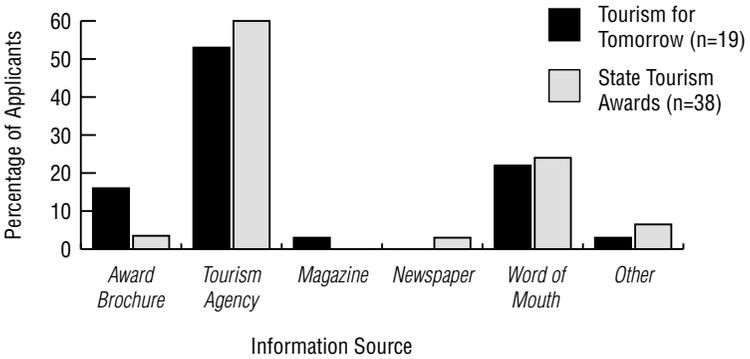
Figure 3.5 The source of information respondents used to find out about the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism Awards.

Respondents' awareness of other environmental tourism award programs (i.e. award programs different to those the respondent was questioned about) was also identified. The findings revealed that 46% of all respondents were aware of the Banksia Awards and 29% of all respondents were aware of the PATA Gold Awards. The Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism awards were generally well known by most respondents. In contrast, most applicants were unfamiliar with the Environmental Achievement Award (Table 3.7).

Table 3.7 Respondents' awareness of other environmental tourism award programs.

ENVIRONMENTAL TOURISM AWARD	SAMPLE SIZE	RESPONDENT AWARENESS (%)
NTIA Environmental Achievement Award	57	21%
Banksia Awards	59	46%
PATA Gold Awards	59	29%
Tourism for Tomorrow Awards	40	60%
State/National Tourism Awards	21	81%

3.3   Benefits and costs

3.3.1   Award winners

Overall, 46% of respondents had either won an environmental tourism award or were highly commended. Of this total, two winners were applicants from the Environmental Achievement Award, five were applicants from the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and twenty were applicants from the State Tourism Awards. Twenty-six of the winning or highly commended respondents promoted their winning status to others. Only one respondent did not promote their environmental achievement, commenting that they had only recently won the award. As a result, no promotional material had been produced by the respondent.

Of the 26 respondents that did promote their winning status to others, only four believed that they had experienced an increase in sales, and only two of these four could provide an estimate of the percentage increase. The estimates provided by both respondents were between a 20% and 30% increase. The remaining respondents explained that they had not experienced an increase in sales as a result of winning the award, or an increase in sales resulting from winning the award was too difficult to measure.

While few respondents experienced an increase in sales, the survey did reveal that over 80% of respondents received increased publicity after winning an environmental or sustainable tourism award. Similarly, many respondents indicated that winning an environmental

or sustainable tourism award had improved staff morale. For 65% of respondents winning an environmental or sustainable tourism award had also led staff to be more committed to improve the environmental performance of the business. However, very few respondents agreed that environment awards improved customer satisfaction levels. A total of three respondents believed that they did not gain any benefits at all from winning the award.

When comparing the benefits gained from winning a Tourism for Tomorrow Award and a State Tourism Award differences are apparent (Figure 3.6). For example, all winners surveyed from the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards believed that they received increased publicity as a result of winning the Award. In addition, staff morale had improved and there was a greater commitment from staff to improve the environmental performance of the business for these Award winners. To a lesser extent, the winners of the State Tourism Awards received the same benefits, with the addition of increased customer satisfaction.
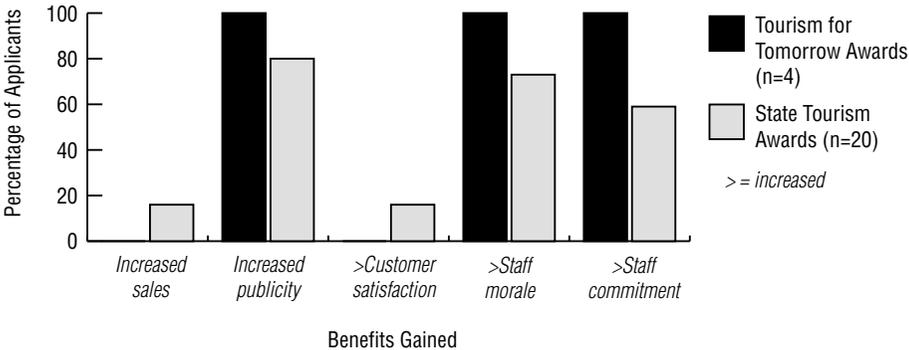
Figure 3.6 The proportion (%) of respondents gaining benefits from winning a Tourism for Tomorrow Award and a State Tourism Award during 1999 and 2000.

When given the opportunity to discuss other benefits that were gained from winning an environmental tourism award, 15 respondents replied. Table 3.8 shows that responses included *"greater recognition by suppliers and the industry"*, "ability to compare against others in the industry" and "recognition by senior management".

Table 3.8 Additional benefits gained by winning award applicants during 1999 and 2000.

TYPE OF BENEFIT	NUMBER OF APPLICANTS
Greater recognition by suppliers and industry	4
Able to compare against others in industry	3
Recognition by senior management	2
Recognition at an international scale	2
Recognition and support from the local community, including other businesses	1
Respect from government agencies	1
Invited to present a paper at conference	1
Raised awareness of what it takes to win an award	1

3.3.2 Award applicants

All respondents, including unsuccessful award applicants, were asked about benefits they received from *entering* an environmental tourism award program. The majority of respondents believed that the awards process had increased their understanding of their business and helped evaluate the environmental performance of their business. When it came to setting environmental performance standards and reducing environmental impacts, environmental tourism awards had less of an impact on tourism operators (Figure 3.7). Important to note, however, is the large number of respondents who stated that they had already set environmental performance standards for their business prior to entering the awards. Overall, one in seven respondents stated that they did not receive any benefits at all from entering the environmental tourism awards.

When comparing the benefits gained by respondents entering the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards significant differences were found (Figure 3.7). Respondents who entered the Tourism for Tomorrow awards during 1999 and 2000 were less likely to state that entering the awards had improved their understanding of the business ($\chi^2 = 8.001$, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.05$). The same applicants were

also less likely to believe that the awards process had helped them to reduce their impact on the environment ($c^2 = 4.660$, d.f. $= 1$, p $<$ 0.05). This is possibly the result of the more detailed application process involved in entering the State Tourism Awards compared to the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. The results also suggest that the majority of operators entering the State Tourism Awards are less experienced in environmental tourism and are thus gaining more from the awards process.
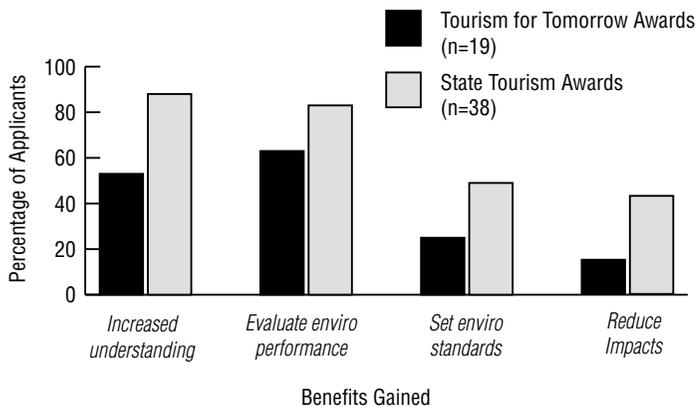
Figure 3.7 The proportion (%) of respondents gaining benefits from entering the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism Awards (n = 57).

Other benefits operators gained from entering the awards were recorded and categorised as follows:

1. Business Improvements (66% of responses) – including increased motivation, provision for an overview of the business, improved skills in evaluation, improved staff morale, increased confidence in the industry, improved understanding of the industry and documentation of business improvements

2. Recognition and awareness (34% of responses) – associated with strengthened partnerships, respect and networking.

To gain a better understanding of the impact of award criteria on the environmental performance of tourism businesses respondents were asked if the award criteria provided a stimulus for improving their environmental performance. Forty-eight percent of respondents revealed that the award criteria had provided a stimulus for improving the organisations' environmental performance.

Twenty-three respondents were able to provide an example of the type of improvements made. These were coded into two categories:

1. Improved practices

2. Staff and resources

Seventy-eight percent of examples provided by respondents were coded as 'improved practices' and included environmental monitoring and benchmarking activities, environmental planning and policy making and improvements to aspects of the business (e.g. energy consumption, recycling, interpretation). One participant, for example, stated that the State Tourism Awards *"encouraged us to conduct proper environmental impact and risk management studies on our river cruises"*. Another example given by a different respondent was recorded as follows: *"The Awards made us realise that feeding the animals was the wrong approach, so we changed our behaviour and incorporated the 'don't feed wildlife' message into our interpretation".*

Staff and resource improvements included employing environmentally qualified staff, designating more money for environmental improvements and improving business management. One respondent stated that *"following the awards it was decided that the resort would spend money on a new sewage treatment system".*

Respondents who believed that the award criteria had provided a stimulus for improving the environmental performance of their operation were significantly more likely to state that entering the award program had helped their business to set environmental performance standards (χ^2=12.308, d.f.=1, p < 0.001) and reduce their impact on the environment (χ^2= 17.102, d.f.=1, p < 0.001).

3.3.3 Costs resulting from environmental tourism awards

In addition to the benefits gained from entering environmental tourism awards, respondents were asked if they had experienced any costs. A large proportion of respondents believed that the time (71%, 42) and financial cost (56%, 33) involved in putting together the application was the most negative aspect associated with entering environmental tourism awards.

Nineteen percent of winning applicants during 1999 and 2000 expressed that they had experienced additional costs in advertising. Thirty-eight percent of unsuccessful award applicants believed that staff were demoralised or disappointed as a result of not winning the award.

Applicants entering the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards were less likely than "Environmental Tourism" category applicants of the State Tourism Awards to consider negatively, the financial cost and time involved in award applications (cost – χ^2 = 8.097, d.f. = 1, p < 0.05; time – χ^2 = 8.515, d.f. = 1, p < 0.05). Table 3.9 demonstrates how a larger proportion of State Tourism Award applicants considered negatively the costs and time associated with entering the award than those entering the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. The differences in the results here most likely reflect the differences between what is expected by the two programs in the application process. For the State Tourism Awards, far more detail is required about the operation of the tourism business. As a result, the application process is more complex and time consuming.

Table 3.9 The proportion (%) of applicants concerned about the financial costs and time involved in entering the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism Awards.

COSTS EXPERIENCED	TOURISM FOR TOMORROW AWARDS (N = 19)	STATE TOURISM AWARDS (N = 38)
Financial costs	31%	71%
Time	47%	84%

3.4   Improvements to environmental tourism awards

Respondent's recommendations for improving environmental and sustainable tourism awards were categorised and coded according to the type of improvements suggested. The five categories created are listed as follows[3]:

1. Award Criteria/Award Category
2. Increase Awareness
3. Judging/Selection Process
4. Feedback
5. General

The larger proportion of respondents commented on how the award categories or criteria could be improved (Figure 3.8). For example, one respondent commenting on the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards suggested that *"there needs to be more specific categories within the [environmental tourism] category because of the range of environmental projects that exist."* (Participant #8). As for the award criteria for the State Tourism Awards, one respondent felt that " [the criteria] *should focus on general environmental practices rather than the facility delivering "environmental experiences". All attractions should be eligible no matter where the facility is based.* (Participant #5). Another respondent, in reference to the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards criteria stated that *"there needs to be more emphasis put on social and cultural responsibility in the awards"* (Participant #52).

Other respondents were more concerned about the need to increase the awareness of environmental tourism awards or the judging and selection process of the awards (Figure 3.8).   For example, one respondent believed that *"everyone needs to be aware that environmental tourism awards are important not just to nature based tourism operators, but their importance should also be promoted to all tourism businesses."* (Participant #9).

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[3] Examples of responses for each category are provided in Appendix C.

Another respondent provided recommendations for improving the judging and selection process for the State Tourism Awards, commenting that :

"The selection process is not fairly based because the projects are judged primarily on the application. Site visits should be mandatory for judging where the project is judged on the business by observation and site assessment. (Participant #21).
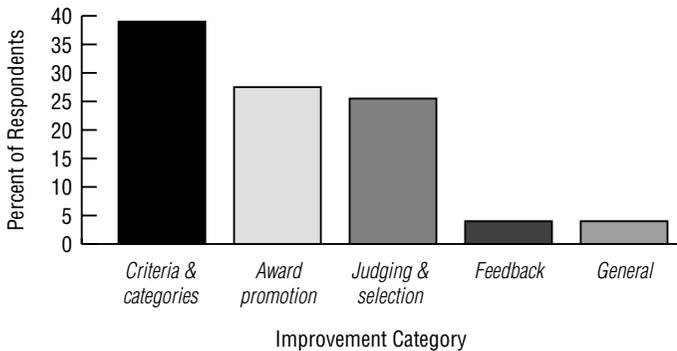
Figure 3.8 Suggested improvements by respondents to environmental tourism awards.

The remaining respondents requested that more feedback be provided about the award submission or were more interested in providing comments about the awards in general (Figure 3.8). For example, one respondent recommended that *"feedback should be provided to all applicants and assistance given in getting the business to a better standard. There need to be greater incentives for entering these environment awards"* (Participant #39).

A more general comment made by one of the Tourism for Tomorrow Award applicants was as follows:

"The BA [Tourism for Tomorrow] award is good in that it has a word limit however, it does not allow for any elaboration on certain elements. Overall, it is the most organised of the environmental tourism awards" (Participant #49).

The section to follow draws on the results to discuss the success of environmental and sustainable tourism awards from the perspective of award applicants. The implications of the results are examined in the broader context of sustainable tourism and the future of environmental and sustainable tourism awards is examined.

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Environmental Tourism Awards: Who Are They Reaching?

Environmental and sustainable tourism awards aim to recognise and reward operators for their environmental achievements. In this study the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards, the British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award were examined. These programs were chosen particularly for their accessibility and suitability to the Australian tourism industry. Covering a range of environmental and social issues, each program has a set number of criteria that operators must address, and an application addressing the criteria forms the basis from which winning projects are selected. In contrast to the other awards examined, the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Awards was characterised by a set of criteria specific to nature-based and ecotourism operators. The same program was also identified as charging applicants an application fee.

An examination of applicants' awareness of award programs shows that the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism Awards are more widely recognised by Australian award applicants than the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award. Given the Environmental Achievement Award is relatively new to the industry (i.e. 1997) this finding was expected. As for respondents' awareness of other environmental tourism awards, the opportunity exists for award organisers to promote more widely, the PATA Gold Awards and the Banksia Awards, as respondents' awareness of these programs was low. A greater awareness of these programs and the potential benefits of entering such programs can only encourage more operators to apply for environmental and sustainable tourism awards.

Tourism agencies like Tourism Queensland and Tourism Tasmania are already playing a successful role in promoting the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards and the State Tourism Awards. The potential exists for the same agencies to provide more details about the range of environmental and sustainable tourism award programs available to the Australian tourism industry. Other agencies involved in tourism such as protected area management agencies should also be involved

in encouraging tourism operators to participate in environmental and sustainable tourism awards by offering incentives through recognition.

An understanding of the applicants has provided further insight into the scope and success of environmental tourism awards at the national level. To a certain degree, the results of this study reflect a pattern in the uptake of sustainable practices within the industry. The pattern presented is one dominated by accommodation providers and tour operators. Berry and Ladkin (1997) have previously noted that environmental management practices are easier and more cost effective for accommodation providers. This is especially true for larger accommodation providers where cost savings can be significantly high (Australian Hotels Association 1994).

The nature-based and ecotourism sector of the Australian tourism industry is typically characterised by small, owner-operator or family-run businesses. The same operators also tend to have a relatively high awareness of the environment (Issaverdis 1999). If sustainable tourism is to be achieved, it has been argued that sustainable practices will need to be adopted by all tourism operators (Middleton 1997). The results of this study suggest that in Australia, the environmental and sustainable tourism awards examined are either failing to get the sustainable tourism message beyond the nature-based and ecotourism sector of the tourism industry, or they are failing to attract other sectors. Ideally, the awards should encourage all sectors of the industry to adopt sustainable tourism practices.

In trying to understand the profile of tourism operators entering environmental tourism awards, it is also important to consider the type of environmental initiatives and projects being entered for the awards. Findings presented by Harris (1998), Huybers & Bennet (1997) and Forsyth (1995) reveal that tourism operators are most likely to undertake environmental initiatives that involve waste, water and energy management. The results of this study show that the same initiatives are also likely to form the basis for entering environmental and sustainable tourism awards. For tourism operators, environmental management activities such as recycling, composting and the installation of energy saving devices are cost effective and relatively easy to implement. As well as yielding company benefits in terms of

cost savings, environmental management activities also have a relatively short pay off period (Stabler and Goodall 1997).

Environmental education was also a common initiative taken up by the award applicants surveyed. For example, 33% of respondents stated that environmental education and interpretation was a major focus in their environmental management program. This finding most likely reflects the large number of tour operators represented in the sample of award applicants. Education and interpretation is a significant feature of the tour experience, and tourists are now coming to expect education as part of their nature experience (Moscardo 1998). Actions to reduce the impact of visitors on the environment such as minimum impact bushwalking were also common among 11% of operators. Again, these actions are relatively cheap for operators to employ.

More demanding in terms of time and cost are actions that contribute to conservation and research. These activities, as well as those associated with sensitive building design, social responsibility and staff development are less likely to result in short-term benefits for the company. As a result, these activities proved less common amongst applicants entering environmental and sustainable tourism awards during 1999 and 2000. There is scope here for environmental tourism awards to take the lead in encouraging and rewarding new and emerging environmental, social and cultural projects within the tourism industry.

4.2   Why Apply For Environment Awards?

Most respondents (81%) believe environmental tourism awards play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism. These findings are consistent with those presented by Toplis (1999) and further support the need for programs like environmental and sustainable tourism awards within the industry. Having said this, it is quite possible that tourism operators will improve the environmental performance of their business regardless of environmental tourism awards. In fact, this study shows that if environmental tourism awards did not exist most operators agree that there is still reason to improve the environmental performance of the business. This finding is

positive, but again it demonstrates that those entering environmental tourism awards already have an awareness and element of concern for the environment.

Tourism operators applying for environmental and sustainable tourism awards are entering these programs primarily to gain recognition for the actions they have taken to conserve the social, cultural and/or physical environment. Of secondary importance is the opportunity to evaluate the environmental performance of the business. Evaluating the performance of a business is a process operators go through to identify the negative impacts of the business operation. Once these impacts are identified it is up to the operator to address them and improve their performance. Part of this process involves setting environmental performance standards (Goodall 1995). For the majority of respondents, the awards did not help to set environmental performance standards nor did they help to reduce impacts.

When it comes to winning an environmental or sustainable tourism award there are obvious benefits for operators, as well as the environment. For the environment it was identified that winning an award can motivate staff to further improve the environmental performance of the business. As for operators themselves, the benefits are more obvious with over 80% of operators receiving increased publicity as a result of winning an award. There was little evidence, however, to suggest that winning an environmental or sustainable tourism award increased sales and improved customer satisfaction. As reported by Crabtree (1995), this finding is not uncommon in the tourism industry. An example of this reported by Crabtree involved Quicksilver, the largest marine tour operator in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Quicksilver have spent a considerable amount of time and money implementing sustainable practices for their business, however Quicksilver stated that *"the actual financial benefits (i.e. cash in hand) of implementing more sustainable practices were, so far, negligible"*. From an operator's point of view it is possible to presume that winning an environmental tourism award will create publicity for the operation, however it is doubtful whether the actual environmental credential gained from winning an award will improve business profits.

When comparing the real benefits gained by operators winning environmental or sustainable tourism awards to those promoted by award organisers inconsistencies are apparent. Of particular concern was the assumption by Tourism Council Australia (New South Wales) that winning an award will create marketing benefits. Although winning an environmental tourism award was shown to increase publicity, winning an award will not necessarily create a marketing advantage.

As for the benefits that can be gained purely from *entering* an environmental or sustainable tourism award, the real benefits closely reflect those that are promoted. For example, both award programs were successful in providing operators with the opportunity to evaluate and review business activity. For those entering the State Tourism Awards, the awards process was also successful in assisting some operators to set environmental performance standards. In addition, it was found that the overall awards process can improve staff morale and encourage greater commitment from staff to improve the environmental performance of the business. Award organisers should make these additional benefits clearer to award applicants.

At present, British Airways only promote benefits that can be gained from winning the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. This study has shown that the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards also creates benefits for those operators who do not win an award. However, given this study was specifically focused on Australian applicants British Airways should be cautious when interpreting these results. While it is important to make clear to operators the benefits of entering environmental and sustainable tourism awards, further research at the international level is required to determine if the benefits gained by Australian tourism operators are consistent with those experienced by operators from other countries.

4.3 The Future for Environmental and Sustainable Tourism Awards

The results of this study suggest there is scope for improving environmental and sustainable tourism awards to encourage not only nature-based and ecotourism operators, but other sectors of the industry to participate in such programs. Of particular concern to

applicants of the State Tourism Awards and the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards was the time taken to prepare the application and the financial cost in producing the final product. While some costs are to be expected when applying for any award there is concern that the costs felt by operators, especially those entering the State Tourism Awards, could threaten the future of such programs. For example, if the cost of entering an award far outweighs the benefits then the appeal of awards to operators is reduced. It may be that tourism award coordinators put a limit on the number of words accepted in an application, and where possible such programs should operate the program without an entry fee. Where this is not possible the fee should reflect no more than the administrative costs involved in processing the applications.

Suggestions for improving environmental tourism awards were particularly directed at encouraging other tourism operators to reduce their impact on the environment. Among the suggestions made were those relating to award criteria and categories. For many there was a strong belief that the "Environmental Tourism" category of the State Tourism Award is too restrictive. A common suggestion put forward regarding this matter was the need for more environment-related categories within the State Tourism Awards. The reasoning given was that a range of environmental tourism projects exists and although some operate in the natural environment, others are rural or urban-based projects. Regardless of the setting, all environmental management initiatives adopted by tourism operators need to be recognised.

With so many categories already available in the State Tourism Awards, a more suitable option might be to set environmental criteria for each of the existing categories.   For example, all tourism businesses entering a tourism award would need to address criteria relating to the environment whether they are competing for an award for a significant regional event or budget accommodation. This option will give those operators already doing the right thing an advantage over others, and it has the potential to encourage other tourism operators to adopt a sustainable tourism approach.

A very important component of sustainable tourism that is not adequately addressed in two of the award programs, namely the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award and the State Tourism Awards, is

the socio-cultural component. This includes addressing the needs and concerns of local communities. Hall (1992) and Hall and McArthur (1998) argue that sustainable tourism can only be achieved if attention is simultaneously paid to the economic, environmental, social and cultural dimensions within which tourism occurs. This issue was raised by a number of applicants when commenting on the award criteria. It is recommended that award organisers respond to this suggestion and the same weighting be given to social and cultural criteria as environmental criteria when judging award applications. The difficulty, however, would be in documenting achievements in this area for socio-cultural issues are less tangible than environmental features.

For award applicants the promotion of environmental and sustainable tourism awards was similarly considered important. With this in mind award organisers and tourism agencies should take every opportunity to promote the existing award programs, as well as the successful award applicants. Holding workshops for operators about existing award programs available to operators is one option that may be of particular interest to operators. If approached correctly, it is also an option that might encourage mainstream tourism operators to participate.

Another opportunity for improvement is the existing judging and selection process. In particular, the fact that the awards examined in this study do not involve site visits leads many applicants to believe that the awards are biased and subjective. If financially feasible, award organisers should consider site visits. In cases where the cost and time involved in site visits prevents such an option award organisers should request the contact details and a letter from referees. It is also recommended that award organisers provide applicants with more information about the selection process.

The awards process also needs to be inclusive and open to all. Toplis (1999) recommends that state and regional awards be linked to national and/or international environmental and sustainable tourism award programs to further enhance and increase the value to operators. Some operators entering environmental and sustainable tourism awards also believe that feedback from the judges about the

performance of the business should be provided to applicants as a further incentive for entering the awards.

However, supplying feedback to each applicant can be costly and infeasible. Furthermore, it should be recognised that environmental and sustainable tourism awards are not the only tools available to operators looking to adopt more responsible practices. In this situation, environmental accreditation programs can be of greater value to operators as such programs are designed to encourage continual improvement over time. They are also considered a more effective means of enhancing standards as such programs typically provide operators with technical advice (WWF-UK 2000).

4.4   Limitations

While the findings of this study do provide valuable insight into environmental and sustainable tourism awards from the perspective of applicants, further research in this area is needed. This study is limited in that the applicants surveyed were specific to the years 1999 and 2000. Furthermore, the results are a reflection of three specific award programs available to the Australian tourism industry. It is recommended that further research in this area include applicants from all environmental and sustainable tourism awards available to the Australian tourism industry. It would also be valuable to include in the survey, non-applicants and applicants of awards over a 5-10 year period. Access to this sort of information could provide insight into the long-term benefits resulting from awards. With a larger sample size it would also be possible to make more reliable comparisons between the various award programs.

5. CONCLUSION

It is clear from the results of this study that environmental and sustainable tourism awards play an important role in recognising and rewarding the efforts of operators willing to adopt sustainable practices. Such programs can also provide operators with a tool for evaluating the environmental performance of their business. A closer look at the results, however, suggests that environmental and sustainable tourism award programs are failing to promote sustainable tourism beyond the nature-based and ecotourism sectors of the industry. That is, the awards are targeting those few who are already taking meaningful action to reduce their impact on the environment. As a result, environmental and sustainable tourism awards are failing to reach mainstream tourism operators within the industry. By failing to reach all sectors of the tourism industry, the role of environmental tourism awards in the broader context of sustainable tourism is diminished.

It appears that environmental and sustainable tourism awards are in a conjectural phase, that if given the support and time have the potential to contribute to a more environmentally, socially and culturally responsible form of tourism. In the case of Australian tourism, the potential exists for coordinators of the State Tourism Awards to incorporate into all categories of the awards, environmental, social and cultural criteria. There is also potential for the environmental and sustainable tourism awards examined in this study to be further publicised and the benefits that can be gained from participating in the awards promoted. Working with state and regional tourism agencies, award organisers could improve industry awareness of environmental and sustainable tourism awards and encourage further adoption of sustainable tourism practices.

5.1 Recommendations

A number of possible steps might be taken to encourage greater participation in sustainable tourism, and to improve the existing award programs:

- There is a need to expand the scope of environmental and sustainable tourism awards to encourage all sectors of the industry to participate. In particular reference to the State Tourism Awards, it is recommended that environmental criteria be included into all categories of the existing award program. This option will give those operators already adopting sustainable tourism practices an advantage over others.

- The social and cultural components of tourism were not adequately addressed in two of the award programs examined. It is recommended that the State Tourism Awards and the NTIA Environmental Achievement Award could more thoroughly address the social and cultural dimensions of tourism in the award criteria.

- Environmental and sustainable tourism award programs could be more widely promoted to the tourism industry. Award organisers might cooperate with state and regional tourism agencies (e.g. Tourism Queensland, Cradle Coast Tourism) to provide operators with more details about the range of environmental tourism award programs available to the Australian tourism industry. Other agencies involved in tourism such as protected area management agencies should also be involved in encouraging tourism operators to participate in environmental tourism awards. Workshops for operators about the awards may be of particular interest to operators in some regions.

- Award organisers could clarify the true benefits that can be gained from entering and winning environmental tourism awards. For example, the potential exists for award organisers to promote more widely the benefits gained through the process of applying for awards such as an improved understanding of the business. By making clear the diversity of benefits that can be gained by entering awards operators will have a greater incentive to apply.

- The financial cost of entering the State Tourism Awards could be reduced and the extent of information required in a single application could be reviewed. If it is not possible to operate the award program without an entry fee, the fee should reflect no

more than the administrative costs involved in processing the applications.

• Tourism awards need to be part of a larger education process demonstrating the benefits of sustainable tourism practices. Where possible, tourism awards should complement environmental accreditation programs that encourage operators to continually improve their environmental performance.

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APPENDIX A – SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

AWARD PARTICIPANT TELEPHONE SURVEY

SECTION 1

1. How did you first become aware of < enter Environmental Tourism Award>**?**

☐   Award brochure

☐   Tourism agency (which one?)

☐   Magazine (which one?)

☐   Newspaper (which one?)

☐   Newsletter (which one?)

☐   Internet (what site?)

☐   Word of Mouth

☐   Other (Specify)

2. Are you aware of :

a) The British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards?
☐ Yes ☐ No

b) The Environmental Achievement Award?   ☐ Yes ☐ No

c)The Australian Awards for Excellence in Tourism? ☐ Yes ☐ No

d) The Banksia Awards?   ☐ Yes ☐ No

e) The Pacific Asia Travel Association Gold Awards? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. On a scale of 1 to 3, where 1 = not at all important, 2 = of some importance, and 3 = very important, we would like to know how important the following motivations were to your organisation when entering the Environmental Tourism Award.

	Not at all Important	Of some Importance	Very Important
a) The opportunity to gain an advantage over competitors	1	2	3
b) The opportunity to gain recognition from peers	1	2	3
c) To ensure the long-term conservation of the environment in which your business operates	1	2	3
d) The opportunity to evaluate the environmental performance of your business	1	2	3
e) The opportunity to identify new approaches for improving environmental performance	1	2	3
f) To avoid criticism that could result from not entering the awards	1	2	3
g) Can you think of any other reasons why you entered the awards?			

4. Has your organisation been successful in winning a Environmental Tourism Award?

☐ Yes   ☐ No (If No, go to question 8)

5. Have you promoted the fact that your business has won this award?

☐ Yes   ☐ No (If No, go to question 7)

6. Since winning the award, have you noticed an increase in trade?

☐ Yes_____ %

☐ No

☐ Too early to say

☐ Too difficult to measure

7. What benefits do you believe you have received from winning the Environmental Tourism Award?
(Please answer either yes or no to the following)

☐ Increased sales

☐ Increased publicity

☐ Increased customer satisfaction

☐ Improved staff morale

☐ A greater commitment from staff to improve the environmental performance of the business

☐ Other (Specify) _____

8. In this question a number of statements about Environmental Tourism Awards are made. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement where 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Agree; 4 = Strongly Agree.

a) Environmental tourism awards play an important role in promoting sustainable tourism	1	2	3	4
b) If environmental tourism awards did not exist there would be no point in improving the environmental performance of our business	1	2	3	4
c) Award organisers should have a greater role in promoting the successful award applicants	1	2	3	4
d) There is no point in improving the environmental performance of a business unless it results in an increase in business profits	1	2	3	4

9. Did the Award criteria provide a stimulus for improving your organisation's environmental performance?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

If Yes, can you please give an example of the type of improvements that were made:

_____
_____
_____
_____

10. Regardless of whether or not you won an Award, what benefits do you believe you have gained from participating in the Environmental Tourism Award?
(Please answer either yes or no to the following)

☐ Increased understanding of your business

☐ Helped evaluate the environmental performance of your business

☐ Helped the business to set environmental benchmarks

☐ Helped the business to minimise the environmental impacts of tourism on the environment

☐ Other (Specify)

11. What negative effects do you believe have resulted from entering the awards?
(Please answer either yes or no to the following)

☐ Increased financial costs associated with preparing the submission

☐ Lost time as a result of preparing the submission

☐ Demoralised staff

☐ Additional costs in advertising (ask winners only)

☐ Unrealistic customer expectations of "Environmental Tourism" (ask winners only)

☐ Other (Specify)

SECTION 2

The following questions will assist in establishing a broad profile of your business.

12. Tourism as an industry operates in a variety of environmental settings. In what type of environment does your tourism business operate?
(Please answer yes or no to the following)

☐ Marine or Coastal

☐ Mountain or Alpine

☐ Rainforest

☐ Wetland

☐ Arid/Semi-Arid

☐ Other (Specify) _____

13. You entered your organisation in the Environmental Tourism Award**. Please tell us the type of environmental initiatives and/or projects that were entered (e.g. waste management, environmental education, visitor impact management)**

14.Can you please tell me the number of full time equivalent staff your organisation employs?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Number of full time equivalent staff = _____

15.How could the Environmental Tourism Award **be improved to encourage other tourism operators to reduce their impact on the environment?**

_____
_____
_____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey

British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Awards
2001 – Entry Procedure

Your entry must consist of the following elements:

1) A completed entry form (see below)

2) No more than 250 words typed in English covering:

    a) The objectives of the project

    b) How the project is financed (public and/or private sources)

    c) Number of visitors per annum, scale/size of facilities

3) No more than 1500 words typed in English describing how the project meets one or more of the following environmental objectives (NOTE: Projects do not need to address all of these but please state clearly those relevant to your project):

    a) Social: how does it benefit the local community?

    b) Heritage: how does it protect the cultural, built and natural heritage?

    c) Management: how do you manage the project, in terms of numbers of people and their impacts on waste, energy and water management?

    d) Communication: how do you inform visitors and others about the environmental and social implications of their tourism? How do you use information technology?

    e) Leadership: what is it that makes your project a role model? What is innovative about it?

f) Sustainable Tourism: how does it contribute to a better quality of life for everyone now and for future generations?

4) **Please include up to six 35mm colour slides (or photographs) with your submission (NOTE: these will not be returned so please do not send originals).**

5) **Ensure that the entry form is signed by an appropriate officer of the organisation.**

<div align="center">

2001 – Award Details

</div>

An award will be presented to the best entry from each of the following categories. An entry may be considered for more than one category, at the discretion of British Airways.

Categories

1) Protected Areas & National Parks

2) Accommodation (including camps, hotels, cruise ships & resorts)

3) Tourism Organisations (including tour operators and voluntary bodies)

4) Built Environment (including old and new buildings, renovations of old, and siting and style of new buildings)

5) Environmental Experience (including attractions, integrated accommodation with wildlife experience, environmental innovation and use of technology)

6) Mass Tourism (over 200,000 visitors per annum)

Judging
The awards will be judged by an expert panel with the overall winner selected from the winners of each of the above categories.

Benefits & Recognition
Award winning entries may be publicised through:

- "Wish You Were Here...?" the UK TV travel programme

- The British Airways in-flight magazine, "High Life"

- The Green Travel Guide

- At least one representative of each category will be flown by British Airways to the awards ceremony in London

- Recognition at the Tourism for Tomorrow Awards ceremony

- Publicity through British Airways worldwide media communications

Rules

- We will only accept entries from completed projects. The project can be a phase of a larger programme but it must be significant and distinct.

- Other award schemes are not eligible for entry.

- The two referees should not be directly related to the project and at least one referee should be associated with either your local tourist office or another government body.

- The entry must be written in English and should be supplied **unbound**.

- Other supporting material can be included but should be kept to a minimum. There is no guarantee that it will be considered by the judges. **Material will not be returned.**

- All material submitted must be available for publication.

- A completed entry form must accompany all entries (photocopies are acceptable).

- An entry may be included in an additional judging category at the discretion of British Airways.

All entries must be received by 1st May 2001

Please send your entry to:
British Airways plc., Tourism for Tomorrow Awards,
Environment Branch, Australasia House (HBBG), Waterside,
PO Box 365, Middlesex UB7 0GB, UK

These awards are run in association with:
ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents); ASTA (American Society of Travel Agents);
BTA (British Tourist Authority); PATA (Pacific Asia Travel Association); IHEI (International
Hotels Environment Initiative); and IUCN – the World Conservation Union

Australian State and Territory Tourism Awards

General Criteria:

1. Provide a general overview of the nature and history of the business and describe the unique and/or outstanding features of your business (this will assist the judges in achieving an overview of your business and is non-scorable).

2. List your goals for the qualifying period and the strategies employed to achieve each goal. Indicate the outcome against each goal and use percentages where appropriate.

3. Detail your business success and explain the effect that this had on the profitability of the business.

    a) Graphs or charts, which indicate the growth of the business, should be included, and must be accompanied by a clear explanation (percentages may be used).

    b) Appropriate documentation supporting your claims e.g. a letter from your accountant, a qualified third party or a statutory declaration must be included in the supporting documentation.

    c) If the growth of your business has slowed, show evidence of what steps have been taken to minimise this decline (only those who have had a decline in the business are required to answer this question).

Please note: all financial information given will be treated as confidential.

1. Describe your target markets. In addition,
    a) Outline your major marketing activities against each target group.

    b) Describe the results of your marketing activities. These may be stated in percentage terms.

2. How have you contributed to the development of tourism in your State/Territory/Australia? Show how you have cooperated with your local and State tourism authorities and your industry.

3. a) What staff development programs have been conducted during the qualifying period?

   b) How did the staff development programs improve your business?

   c) What percentage of your staff participated in staff development programs?

   d) Include self development programs if appropriate.

4. Explain how you ensure a standard of quality in your customer service. Provide evidence of customer satisfaction (for example, letters of appreciation, visitor-book comments, surveys, etc.).

5. a) How do you ensure you continually improve the operation of your business? This may involve recent innovations, such as, refurbishment, regular maintenance activities, additional facilities, extended hours, new menus, additional products or services, staff development programs or education and training programs.

   b) Provide evidence of benefits gained.

Environmental Tourism

This category is for recognition of best practice ecotourism operators that demonstrate the mutually beneficial relationship between tourism and our natural and environmental heritage. Environmental tourism product, natural or introduced, should enter this category.

Specific Category Criteria:

1. a) Demonstrate how your business preserves, enhances and conserves its specific natural environment by summarising your

environmental management plan and resource management strategies.

b) Demonstrate how your business interprets its specific natural environment by summarising you interpretation management plan.

c) Demonstrate how your business supports research on the natural environment. This could include providing logistical support to researchers gathering data for use in research.

2. Describe the environmental value of the site/s you occupy or visit and how your operation is compatible to this site.

3. How do you encourage your local community's support and involvement in your activities?

4. What services do you provide for visitors with specialist needs? E.g. language assistance, people with disabilities etc.

National Travel Industry Awards
Environmental Achievement Award

Information included on the Award brochure:

The NTIA Environmental Achievement Award is not an ecotourism award, although a specialist ecotourism operator could win it.

The Award has been established to recognise positive progress in the incorporation of sound environmental management techniques into overall corporate strategies and practices. Winning Environmental Achievement Award entries over the years will be used to educate the broader industry about achievable, environmentally friendly outcomes in corporate strategy planning and execution.

Examples of the types of effective programs that can be entered include:
• Recycling programs.

• Environmental Awareness training programs conducted for staff, customers or other target groups.

• Waste reduction programs.

• Energy saving programs or projects.

• Environmentally sensitive development programs or activities.

• Ecotourism projects or programs.

The criteria set by WWF are as follows:

• Implementation of corporate environmental policy into business practice.

• Integration of environmental planning and impact assessment consideration into all aspects of business.

• Improvement in the use of resources e.g. minimising waste and litter, transport and sewage, wastewater drainings.

- Undertaking of conservation initiatives e.g. natural area management, monitoring of impacts, on-going investment in relevant research, support of conservation group or need.

- Marketing that provides tourists/travellers with full and responsible information that increases respect for the natural environment and/or the resource and waste management practices of your organisation.

- Education of tourists/travellers and/or customers about conservation of areas visited or sustainable resource used.

- Provision of staff training, which integrates sustainable tourism practices into the workplace.

Participant Feedback on Environmental Tourism Awards

Category One: Award Criteria/Categories

1. Criteria need to be more specific if [the national tourism awards] are going to modify behaviour. There is a need for specific criteria perhaps with the guidance of the NEAP program. (Participant #1, Aust. Awards)

2. Need for a multi-faceted approach to the awards based on the whole operation not just a section of it. (Participant #2, Aust. Awards)

3. There needs to be more specific categories within the [environmental tourism] category because of the range of environmental projects that exist. (Participant #8, Aust. Awards)

4. The selection criteria and the selection process need to be transparent so that people know that the [awards system] is legitimate and vilified. I would like to know how judgements about the projects entered are made. (Participant #10, Aust. Awards)

5. There is a need to lift the standards of [environmental tourism] awards. (Participant #11, Aust. Awards)

6. The award criteria should focus on general environmental practices rather than the facility delivering "environmental experiences". All attractions should be eligible no matter where the facility is based. (Participant #5, Aust Awards)

7. The beginning [general] criteria take up a lot of time even before the environmental criteria. Maybe it should be more specific. (Participant #7, Aust. Awards)

8. There should be a better classification of "Environmental Tourism". It appears to be very tourism based with an emphasis on

accommodation. As they stand, the awards are not encouraging to small businesses. (Participant #37, Aust. Awards).

9. The category [environmental tourism] needs to be refined. Those who are winning the award tend to be nature-based operators or ecotourism operators. The category should reflect this. (Participant #34, Aust. Awards)

10. There needs to be more emphasis put on social and cultural responsibility in the awards [BA Awards]. (Participant #52, BA)

11. Need categories where awards could establish enthusiasm in reducing impact and lead people in the right direction. This might mean that the criteria are more specific. (Participant #23, Aust. Awards)

12. All the environmental businesses are lumped together in the one category. They need to divide it up into different categories. (Participant #18, Aust. Awards)

13. The Environmental Tourism category needs to be as open as possible to reflect diversity in the industry. Or they should diversify the categories e.g. environmental tourism and nature-based tourism. (Participant #6, Aust. Awards)

14. The criteria/questions of the awards [BA Tourism for Tomorrow] were ambiguous and vague. They need to be more specific. (Participant #63, BA)

15. The criteria need to be clear and transparent (Participant #51, BA)

16. Environmental tourism awards need to relate to real ecological processes (Participant # 62, BA)

17. They need to break "Environmental Tourism" into separate categories. (Participant #21, Aust. Awards)

18. The awards [environmental tourism category] need to be broader ranging. At the moment, unless the project is built with environment in mind from the start then it appears that it isn't

even considered. Ideally the awards should also look at older, smaller operations that are achieving in the environmental field. (Participant #16, Aust Awards)

Category Two: Increase Awareness

1. [Environmental tourism] awards are good but there is no consumer awareness. (Participant # 8, Aust. Awards)

2. What are the results of the awards? People don't fully understand [environmental tourism] unless we demonstrate how it can be done. (Participant #13, Aust. Awards)

3. We need to make more [industry] people and consumers aware of [environmental tourism] awards to motivate them to participate. (Participant #22, Aust Awards)

4. There needs to be better defining and detailing of what's involved in entering the awards and the benefits that can be gained. For example make it clear that you don't have to be fully environmental to enter because some operations might think they don't have a chance. Additional categories might need to be created to give others the opportunity to win (i.e. an urban-based hotel adopting sustainable practices). (Participant #12, Aust. Awards)

5. Award organisers need to take on exposure benefits for winners (Participant # 49, BA)

6. There needs to be more promotion of the [Tourism for Tomorrow] awards through the state tourism agencies because not many people are aware they exist. (Participant #56, BA)

7. There needs to be more publicity globally of the awards and the winners. (Participant #52, BA).

8. The publication of a A5 booklet, which details winners, provides an environmental audit of the site and facilities and highlights new and successful innovations. (Participant #61, BA).

9. Somebody needs to send out details of all the existing [environmental tourism] awards each year. (Participant #58, BA)

10. The awards [NTIA] need to be more widely publicised so the travel industry see more importance in doing these things. (Participant #65, NTIA).

11. More publicity of the awards. (Participant #55, BA)

12. There should be heavier promotion of the awards [BA Tourism for Tomorrow] at the international level. More awareness of such awards is needed. (Participant #48, BA)

13. Everyone needs to be aware that environmental tourism awards are important not just to nature based tourism operators but their importance should also be promoted to all tourism businesses. (Participant #9, Aust. Awards)

14. The [award] program needs more promotion. (Participant #66, NTIA)

15. In any awards system it is difficult to be objective and default, this can have a negative impact on projects. (Participant #51, BA)

Category Three: Judging/Selection Process

1. The awards are not being judged on a level playing field – for example, a number of hotels and motels enter other categories even though they are environmental tourism because they know they have a better chance at winning. Therefore, the competition is reduced. (Participant # 3, Aust. Awards)

2. I believe that the selection of projects is politically and financially driven. (Participant #10, Aust. Awards)

3. The judging panel needs to be more culturally aware. They should come and experience Aboriginal culture first hand. (Participant #15, Aust. Awards)

4. In my experience with the [environmental tourism] award the entrants have been judged on their application not the business. There is no examination of the business. (Participant #14, Aust Awards)

5. I object to a system where [a project] is judged purely on words written rather than the business itself. An on-ground assessment is needed, not just a site visit. For many businesses they are selling an experience, which is hard to express on paper. It's like buying a car off the Internet!!! The top four entrants from each category should be assessed on site where judging takes place in the eyes of the consumer. Maybe something like a set assessment format. (Participant #36, Aust. Award)

6. The judging appears to be ad hoc. Where judges visit the site not every business has the same judge. They should get the Parks people involved for [environmental tourism] and maybe the Hall of Fame winners could be involved in following up applications (like a judge/assessor). (Participant # 31, Aust. Award)

7. More points in the selection process should be given to the environment and there should be evidence that what is written on paper is really being done. Perhaps a mystery customer. (Participant #27, Aust Awards).

8. The awards [environmental tourism award] are judged on what is written rather than what is actually done on site. Talking to the public would give the best indication of what the business is really like. (Participant #30, Aust. Awards).

9. The business turnover appears to have a major impact on the way the awards are judged with less focus on the environmental side. (Participant #47, BA).

10. The awards are based on a written submission rather than an operation. (Participant #41, Aust Awards)

11. There should be site visits and the awards need to be made more prestigious as far as the environment is concerned. The winners

are not true representations of environmental tourism. (Participant #59, BA)

12. The awards [BA Tourism for Tomorrow] need to be judged appropriately. There needs to be involvement with the Australian Conservation Foundation or the Wilderness Society. They need to promote the winners and give reasons why they were chosen as winners. What criteria was their selection based on? (Participant #53, BA)

13. The selection process is not fairly based because the projects are judged primarily on the application. Site visits should be mandatory for judging where the project is judged on the business by observation and site assessment. Our application was knocked back about grammar. It appears the applications are judged on academic abilities rather than the running of a business. (Participant #26, Aust. Awards)

14. Judges decision should be based on site inspections. (Participant #21, Aust Awards)

15. The Global winners of the award [Tourism for Tomorrow] have been unknown projects, which reduce the value of the BA award to the public. They spend money and time promoting these small places, which are difficult to get too. (Participant #44, BA)

Category Four: Feedback

1. There is not enough feedback or suggestions on how to improve. [Environmental tourism] awards can make people achieve higher standards. (Participant #60, BA)

2. Feedback should be provided to all applicants and assistance given in getting the business to a better standard. There need to be greater incentives for entering these environment awards. (Participant #39, Aust. Awards)

Category Five: General

1. The awards in general should operate on the basis of the financial year, not the calendar year. (Participant #3, Aust. Awards)

2. There needs to be more lead-time from when the award application is received and the due date for the application. (Participant #4, Aust Awards)

3. I see environmental tourism awards as an image rather than practice. The current category [environmental tourism] doesn't prompt companies to do much. The award application is so large and takes a huge amount of time making it very difficult for small businesses to enter. (Participant #17, Aust Awards).

4. The BA [Tourism for Tomorrow] award is good in that it has a word limit however, it does not allow for any elaboration on certain elements. Overall, it is the most organised of the environmental tourism awards. (Participant #49, BA)

5. At least two months should be allowed for organisations to prepare their award applications – it is a full time job. Applications must be sent out with at least two months lead. (Participant #49, BA)

6. The awards [Tourism for Tomorrow Awards] need to give some guidance of how to reduce impacts. For example, five actions, which could be adopted. (Participant #46, BA).

7. Great program. (Participant #46, BA).

8. They [BA] need to clearly define "sustainable". Where money is being made from the environment but not being put back into the environment then it is not sustainable. (Participant #64, BA).

9. The Australian awards should consider coordination with NEAP (Participant #9, Aust. Awards)

10. The timing of receiving the [BA Tourism for Tomorrow] application was poor allowing only a couple of weeks to complete and send the application (Participant #63, BA)

11. BA set a word limit, which is good however, the feedback we received indicated that we didn't provide enough detail. They need to be flexible if the projects spread across the range of criteria where more detail is needed. (Participant #51, BA)

12. [Environmental tourism] awards can be very helpful in developing an environmental plan. (Participant # 20, Aust Awards)

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The Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism was established under the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Program to underpin the development of a dynamic, internationally competitive, and sustainable tourism industry.

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