Exploring Practitioner Conceptualisations of Professionalism and the Impact of Professionalisation on the Work of Australian Ecotour Guides

By

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I, Sandra Sun-Ah Ponting, certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii
LIST OF TABLES viii
LIST OF FIGURES ix
ABSTRACT x

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 1

1.1 Professionalism 1
1.1.1 Introduction 1
1.1.2 The Professions and their Professionalism 2
1.2 Development of the Study 6
1.2.1 Some Background 6
1.2.2 Who Are Ecotour Guides? 6
1.2.3 Justification for Research 8
1.3 Thesis Aim and Objectives 10
1.4 Approach to Study 11
1.4.1 Introduction 11
1.4.2 Theoretical Perspectives 11
1.4.3 Methodological Approach 12
1.5 Contribution of the Study 13
1.6 Summary 13
1.7 Thesis Outline 14

CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR ECOTOUR GUIDING 16

2.1 Introduction 16
2.2 Tour Guiding 18
2.2.1 Introduction 18
2.2.2 Tour Guiding in the Past 18
2.2.3 Learning About Contemporary Tour Guides 21
2.2.4 Beyond Tour Guiding Role Studies 25
2.3 Ecotourism and Tour Guiding 30

2.3.1 The Significance of Ecotourism 30
2.3.2 Summarising Ecotourism Principles 31
2.3.3 Achieving Ecotourism Principles Through Ecotour Guides 33
2.3.4 Conceptualising Ecotour Guides 34
2.3.5 Specialised Skills – Environmental Interpretation 38
2.4 Summary 43
CHAPTER THREE: PROFESSIONALISM IN AUSTRALIAN ECOTOUR GUIDING 44
3.1 Introduction 44
3.2 Conceptualising Work 45
3.2.1 Introduction 45
3.2.2 Meanings of Work – Creating Self-Identity 47
3.2.3 Work as Emotional Labour 50
3.3 Professionalisation and the Professions 53
3.3.1 Introduction 53
3.3.2 Defining Professionalisation 54
3.3.3 Different Ways of Understanding the Professions 57
3.4 Professionalism and Ecotour Guiding 66
3.4.1 Introduction 66
3.4.2 The Concept of Professional Ecotour Guides 68
3.5 Events of Professionalisation for Australian Ecotour Guides 72
3.5.1 Stages of Professionalisation 72
3.5.2 Codes of Guiding Practice 74
3.5.3 Expert Knowledge and Skills - Training and Educational Programs 76
3.5.4 Professional Certification Programs by Professional Associations 78
3.5.5 Caveat - Professionalisation for Ecotour Guides 90
3.6 Summary 92
CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS 94
4.1 Introduction 94
4.2 Interpretivist Approach to Methodology 95
4.3 Developing The Research Questions 97
4.4 A Case Study of the EcoGuide Australia Certification Program 98

4.4.1 Why Study The Case? 98
4.4.2 Validity and Reliability of the Study 101
4.4.3 Interpretivist Case Study Ethics and Politics 106
4.5 Case Study Research Process and Procedures 107
4.5.1 Introduction 107
4.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews 108
4.5.3 Ecotour Observation 114
4.5.4 Questionnaire Surveys of Tourists 119
4.5.5 Data Recording and Transcriptions 120
4.5.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation 121
4.6 Strengths and Limitations of the Case Study Approach 123
4.7 Summary 125
CHAPTER FIVE: CONTEXTUALISING THE SPECIALISED WORK OF AUSTRALIAN ECOTOUR GUIDES 127
5.1 Introduction 127
5.2 Specialised Work of Ecotour Guides 129
5.2.1 Work Responsibility 129
5.2.2 The Title of 'Ecotour Guide' 130
5.3 Knowledge and Skills of an Ecotour Guide 135
5.4 Performing Specialised Work 138
5.4.1 Expert Knowledge and Skills 138
5.4.2 Central Task - Environmental Interpretation 139
5.4.3 Expert Skill – Providing Meaningful Experiences of Nature 144
5.4.4 Expert Knowledge - Accurate Environmental Knowledge 149
5.4.5 Achieving Overall Tourist Satisfaction 154
5.5 Summary 158
CHAPTER SIX: CONCEPTUALISING PROFESSIONAL ECOTOUR GUIDES 159
6.1 Introduction 159
6.2 Professional Guides are Passionate Guides 162
6.3 Passion for Nature 164
6.3.1 Working for Nature 164
6.3.1 Commitment to Nature Conservation 166

6.3.2 Commitment to Self-Improvement 172
6.4 Passion for People 175
6.4.1 Working for People 175
6.4.2 Commitment to Service 176
6.4.3 Commitment to Influence People 182
6.5 Other Professional Elements 185
6.6 Summary 188
CHAPTER SEVEN: THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONALISATION ON ECOTOUR GUIDES 190
7.1 Introduction 190
7.2 Impact of the EcoGuide Certification Program 191
7.2.1 Introducing the EcoGuide Program 191
7.2.2 Motivation/Lack of Motivation 192
7.2.3 The Impact of the EcoGuide Program on EcoGuides 201
7.3 Conceptualising the Impact of the Professionalisation Process 209
7.3.1 Introduction 209
7.3.2 Interpreting and Understanding the Impact of Professionalisation 209
7.4 Summary 218
CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION 220
8.1 Introduction 220
8.2 Interpreting and Applying the Study Results 221
8.2.1 Challenges of being a Professional Ecotour Guide 221
8.2.2 Challenges in Achieving Ecotour Guiding Professionalism 229
8.3 Implications and Future Research 233
8.3.1 Introduction 233
8.3.2 Ecotour Guiding as Professionalised Work 233
8.3.3 Maximising the Benefits of Certification 234
8.3.4 Professionalism in Practice 235
8.4 Concluding Comment 238

Appendix One: Code of conduct 239
Appendix Two: Summary of EcoGuide Certification Program competencies 245
Appendix Three: Value statement 248
Appendix Four: Consent form 249
Appendix Five: Self-completed questionnaire surveys 250
Appendix Six: Example of interview transcript 254
Appendix Seven: Customers' recognition and perceived values of the EcoGuide Program 263
Appendix Eight: Additional interview data 265
Bibliography 268

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1 A typology of Australian tour guides 29
Table 2.2 Key roles of general and ecotour guides in tour guiding literature 37
Table 3.1 Defining characteristics of professions 61
Table 3.2 Stages of professionalisation in the Australian ecotour guiding sector 73
Table 3.3 Summary of professional certification and accreditation programs available for tour guides in Australia 85
Table 4.1 Details of research participants 117
Table 4.1 Details of research participants (continued) 118
Table 5.1 Empirical support for the work (roles) of ecotour guides identified in the literature 136
Table 5.1 Empirical support for the work (roles) of ecotour guides identified in the literature (continued) 137
Table 5.2 Most memorable experience from ecotours 142

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 The dynamics of the tourist guide's role 23
Figure 2.2 Images of ecotour guide brochures 27
Figure 5.1 Expert knowledge and skills for the specialised work of ecotour guides 157
Figure 6.1 Ecotour guides' conceptual model of a professional 161
Figure 8.1 Challenges to being a professional ecotour guide 222
Figure 8.2 Striving for an ideal state of ecotour guiding professionalism 237

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the work of ecotour guides, and the impact professionalisation has on raising ecotour guides' levels of professionalism. A review of literature and research across the topics of tour guiding, ecotourism and ecotour guiding revealed that professionalisation theory has not been engaged in the ongoing debate concerning the professionalisation of ecotourism. Despite frequent use of the term 'professional' in ecotourism discourse, investigation showed that its use is arbitrary, poorly defined, and lacking a sound theoretical and empirical basis. Interpretivist epistemology guided a case study of Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Certification Program which involved in-depth interviews with certified and non-certified ecotour guides as well as key ecotourism industry stakeholders, ecotour observations, and questionnaire surveys of tourists. From the collected data a number of interpretations were drawn. Firstly, ecotour guides' conceptualise a professional in their field in terms of their passion for nature and people. Secondly, certified EcoGuides did not report any tangible benefits of certification. Thirdly there are significant disparities between the perceptions of ecotour guides and key industry stakeholders in relation to professionalisation. In meeting the interpretivist imperative to provide useful, practical results, the study concludes by discussing the practical implications of the research findings. In the final analysis it is suggested that professionalism may yet be achieved if a collaborative professionalisation can be developed between ecotour guides and the ecotourism industry.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

> The professions dominate our world. They heal our bodies, measure our profits, save our souls. Yet we are deeply ambivalent about them. For some, the rise of professions is a story of knowledge in triumphant practice ... For others it is a sadder chronicle of monopoly and malfeasance, of unequal justice administered by servants of power ... Why should there be occupational groups controlling the acquisition and application of various kinds of knowledge? Where and why did groups like medicine and law achieve their power? Will professionalism spread throughout the occupational world? (Abbott, 1988, p. 1)

1.1 Professionalism

1.1.1 Introduction

While professionalism is a concept that is commonly and arbitrarily used by many to describe the world of contemporary work, Abbott (1988), above, points to a deeper, more profound sociological implication associated with the development of professionalism. The *Oxford Dictionary of English* defines professionalism as "the competence or skill expected of a professional" (2003, p. 1405). It defines a professional as "a person engaged or qualified in a profession...a person competent or skilled in a particular activity", and a profession is defined as "a paid occupation, especially one that involves prolonged training and a formal qualification" (2003, p. 1405). Professionalism is a concept that is widely accepted as an 'ideal state'[1] by most professions, occupations and workers (Evetts, 2003; Freidson, 1994, 2001). As the Oxford Dictionary definition suggests, the term professionalism is used in society with an underlying assumption that the performance of a professional, occupation or worker meets certain standards. However, defining professionalism in scholarly terms is an issue that has been discussed for decades. This is because professionalism represents "one of the major, if not the defining characteristics, of industrial societies" (Johnson, 1972, p. 9).

[1] Professionalism is understood as a way of organising the performance of work. The central principle revolves around an ideal that members of a group of specialised workers control their own work. Control in this context refers to the workers constructing and constituting the work that they do (Freidson, 1994).

1.1.2 The Professions and their Professionalism

In order to understand the definitional development of professionalism it is necessary to unpack the concept of profession (Evetts, 2003). The investigation of the professions as an area of inquiry can be traced back to Émile Durkheim and Karl Marx writing in the 19th century. Durkheim (1933) and Marx (1964), within the context of the division of labour[2], created the foundations for an analysis of the professions, and by extension, professionalism. A concise overview of how the initial analysis of the professions was developed within the work of Durkheim and Marx is discussed below. Their ideas underpin more recent investigations into the concepts of profession and professionalism which will be comprehensively discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Marx did not specifically locate the professions within his wider critique and theories of capitalism[3] (Burrage, 1990). He believed that increasing the specialisation of work would decrease workers' enthusiasm for production, and that work would eventually become repetitive (Marx & Engels, 1964). He initially dismissed the notion of the worker devoting their life to one specialty, however, he later accepted the notion of occupations specialising in one area of production (Freidson, 2001). Marx imagined the working class owning, making decisions about and guiding production. Nevertheless, he neglected to suggest how workers could deal with "authority relations in the sphere of social production, social authority in planning and directing production, and the social division of labour among planners, managers and producers" (Rapaport, 1976, p. 333). Despite the absence of recommendations on how workers could gain control over production, Marx's theory initiated ideas for understanding the professions as a group of

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[2] Division of labour "denotes any stable organisation, co-ordinating individuals, or groups carrying out different, but integrated activities" (Marshall, 1998, p. 166). The founding sociologists of the term – Marx and Durkheim – had different views on the division of labour, however, the underlying ideas are held together with the concepts of "power relations, ideology and moral regulation" (Marshall, 1998, p. 166).

[3] Marx and Weber's analysis and critique of capitalism was to become highly influential. Capitalism is understood as "a system of wage-labour and commodity production for sale, exchange, and profit, rather than for the immediate need of the producers" (Marshall, 1998, p. 53). For Marx, relationships of production are the basis for understanding capitalism. He claims that the labour-power of workers which is exploited for production, is commodified by capitalists (Marshall, 1998) rather than being used for discovering their self-identity and creativity. Further explanation of the worker and labour-power is illustrated in section 3.2 of this thesis.

workers losing their autonomy[4] and coming under the control of bureaucratic systems (Freidson, 1994).

Durkheim had differing ideas when it came to the specialisation in the division of labour. In contrast to Marx, he was a strong advocate of labour becoming more specialised (Bosanac, 2006; Freidson, 2001; Grint, 1998; Leicht & Fennell, 2001). Durkheim observed that people in modern society were unable to fulfil all of their needs for themselves as they had done in traditional society. Therefore, people in modern societies depended on others who possessed different specialisation skills to meet those needs (Durkheim, 1933). He believed the specialisation of an occupation was necessary to encourage individuality and freedom (Turner & Hodge, 1970). Despite Durkheim's optimistic outlook towards specialisation and the division of labour, it has from time to time stimulated class conflict and exploitation (Freidson, 2001). Nevertheless, Durkheim's stance on professions having a stabilising role in society influenced a number of studies carried out in the 1960s that focussed on differentiating professions from occupations based on certain traits which characterise professions (cf. Millerson, 1964a; Wilensky, 1964). Research on the professions, and by extension professionalism, has proliferated based on the founding ideas of the division of labour and occupational specialisation.

The early literature on professionalism follows two dominant approaches. These are the trait approach and the functionalist[5] approach (see Chapter Three for further discussion) (Johnson, 1972). According to the trait approach, occupations need to meet certain criteria in order to claim 'professional' status in society. The trait approach includes a taxonomy of traits[6] that is used to classify the professionalism of an occupation.

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[4] Autonomy is a characteristic of professionalism that is relished by a profession. It permits a professional to perform his/her work utilising their specialised knowledge and authority with responsibility (Moore, 1970). For Marx the loss of autonomy by a worker becoming a professional acts as a barrier to the development of the worker's self-identity.

[5] Functionalism views society as a system, a collection of individual means, which attempts to work together for society to survive as a whole (Marshall, 1998). Functionalists are recognised as one of the earlier theorists that analysed work and the professions (McCauley, 2006).

[6] Millerson (1964, p.4) outlines the traits of professionalism as: "a profession skill based on theoretical knowledge; the skill requires training and education; the professional must demonstrate competence by passing a test; integrity is maintained by adherence to a code of conduct; the service is for the public

Alternatively, the functionalist approach to professionalism argues that regardless of social divisions (e.g. class, religion or gender) society as a whole have a shared and common interest, therefore an occupation can only be recognised by society as a profession when its specialised skills demonstrate social responsibility and utility for the public good (Esland, 1980; Macdonald, 1995, 2006a). Over the years, these two approaches have been variously praised, dismissed and used to conceptualise professions and professionalism by various researchers (cf. Johnson, 1972). In the 1940s and 1950s, the importance of professions possessing complex formal knowledge and skills as a major characteristics of the professions was emphasised, whilst in the 1960s, the monopolistic power and status of the professions were highlighted (Freidson, 1986). In recent years, professionalism discourse has been the root of various occupational status analyses (cf. Dent & Whitehead, 2002; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Malin, 2000).

So how do occupations become professions? Some researchers argue that occupations go through a process called professionalisation to become professions (Vollmer & Mills, 1966). Thus, when an occupation goes through professionalisation and achieves professionalism, it then becomes a profession. The works of Caplow (1954) and Wilensky (1964) developed a natural history of professionalisation which consists of five stages: "(1) the emergence of the full-time occupation; (2) the establishment of a training school; (3) the founding of a professional association; (4) political agitation directed towards the protection of the association by law; [and] (5) the adoption of a formal code" (Caplow and Wilensky cited in Johnson, 1972, p. 28). In addition, professionalism has variously been described as: a way of gaining stable freedom from industrial and governmental bureaucracies (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933); a scale that has defining characteristics of a profession (Moore, 1970); an influential factor in professional and organisational relationships (Bartol, 1979); a performative where amateurs become professionals (Taylor, 1995 cited in Fournier, 2002); influenced by accountability and flexibility that can easily adapt to change (Quicke, 2000); and a set of normative values; and, an ideology of control (Evetts, 2003). Although these notions

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good; and the profession is organized." Some of the research that has employed the trait approach to understanding certain occupations has produced a similar taxonomy to that of Millerson (cf. Sims, Fineman, & Gabriel, 1993). See Chapter Three for further discussion of the trait approach.

of professionalism are acknowledged as useful, this study will follow the work of Eliot Freidson (Freidson, 1970b, 1986, 1994, 2001). Freidson's work will be used to structure, analyse, and interpret professionalism and professionalisation.

Eliot Freidson was an influential sociologist who studied professions and professionalism from the 1960s until his death in December 2005. Freidson evaluated the professions and the related process of professionalisation in a "unique, vital, and compelling manner that brings out the significant and powerful effect that professions and work have on our lives" (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006, p. 2). Freidson (2001) claimed that genuine professionalism (which is positioned as an ideal state) is only achieved when the members of the occupation control their work, as opposed to managers and consumers. Freidson provides valuable insight into the historical development of the professions. He defines a profession as "an occupation which has assumed a dominant position in the division of labour so that it gains control over the determination and substance of its own work" (Freidson, 1970b, p. xvii). Freidson highlights the problematic nature of the term 'profession' which he views as underpinned by unresolved issues. These include how they create, direct, maintain and organise their own autonomy, and, how their knowledge and practice relates to and associates with professional organisations and the non-professional world (Freidson, 1970b). Freidson chooses to use the term profession despite its problematic conception:

> While few if any occupations can be said to *fully* control their own work, those that come close are called "professions" ... [however] the word has other meanings ... The most rational method of dealing with this problem might be to avoid using the word entirely, but because neologisms have rarely been successful, I feel I have no choice but to use it. (Freidson, 2001, pp. 12-13, original emphasis)

Freidson's tentative use of the term raises an important issue here; that is use of the term 'profession' is used in many contexts to describe a plethora of occupations without considering the theoretical implications of its use.

1.2 Development of the Study

1.2.1 Some Background

In modern Western societies many occupations struggle for legitimacy by trying to gain professional status (Frost, 2001). Many occupations have attempted to achieve professionalism, and this has served as the basis for ongoing discussions as to which occupations are professions and which are not. Historically, medicine and law claimed their position as the primary professions. However, since the industrial revolution, the advancement and inclusion of specialised technical occupations in society has expanded the boundaries of what constitutes a profession (Freidson, 1994). Recent literature from various disciplines including accounting (Birkett & Evans, 2005), social work (Payne, 2002), leisure management (Fleming, 1996), journalism (Aldridge & Evetts, 2003), engineering (Jefferies & Evetts, 2000) and the 'conservation trade' (Auer, 2004) argue that occupational practice in their field should also gain professional recognition. In light of other newer types of occupations achieving professionalism, this study explores the occupational group of ecotour guides in Australia; a group that is currently in the throes of attempting to achieve professional status and professionalism. The following section provides a context in which to explain the concepts underpinning the work of ecotour guides.

1.2.2 Who Are Ecotour Guides?

Historically, research concerning *tour guiding* has been regularly published in the academic literature[7] (cf. Black, 2003; Black & Ham, 2005; Chang, 2006; Cohen, 1985;

[7] Within the outdoor recreation, education and program planning literature there is an existing body of knowledge on roles and responsibilities of program (tour) leaders (guides) (Fennell, 2002) . For example, specific focus on guides': educational philosophy and approach towards nature (cf. Blackwood, 1973; Gass, 1998; Goodman, 2008; Hawkins & Vinton, 1973; Smith, Carlson, Donaldson, & Masters, 1972); outdoor leader skills and roles (cf. Gass, 1998; Green, 1982; McLaren, 2008; Priest & Gass, 1997; Priest & Gass, 2005; Russell, 1982);competency levels and training needs (cf. Beck & Cable, 1998; Buell, 1983; Corbin, 1959; Ewert, 1989; Galloway, 2002; Gass, 1998; McAvoy, 1978; McLaren, 2008; Smith et al., 1972); nature interpretation methods and skills (cf. Beck & Cable, 2002; Gilbertson, Bates, McLaughlin, & Ewert, 2006; Hammerman, Hammerman, & Hammerman, 1994; Knudson, 1984); and, outdoor recreation program planning (cf. Knudson, 1984; Russell, 1982) are acknowledged. Although these different aspects of guiding in the outdoor recreation literature are recognised it does not directly influence analysis of the specialised roles of Australian ecotour guides. This is due to the various

Fine & Speer, 1985; Gurung, Simmons, & Devlin, 1996; Holloway, 1981; Lopez, 1981; Macdonald, 2006b; Mossberg, 1995; Roggenbuck & Williams, 1993; Salazar, 2006; Schmidt, 1979; Weiler & Ham, 2001a, 2001b). Studies specifically relating to *ecotour guiding* however are far less prevalent. As a result, literature on tour guiding is used in the literature review of this study to provide a basis for understanding the occupation of the ecotour guides. Nevertheless, in parallel with the increase in the popularity of ecotourism, studies on ecotour guiding, its importance and influence on the visitor, and by extension, the ecotourism industry[8] has also increased in recent years. The term, ecotour guide (or ecotourist guide), is used by the ecotourism industry and in most ecotourism literature when referring to a:

> Nature-based guide who is working for an ecotour operator and is therefore expected to guide in a manner consistent with the principles of ecotourism. This includes interpretation of the natural cultural environment, using minimal impact practices, and ensuring sustainability of the natural and cultural environment. (Weiler & Crabtree, 1998, p. 4)

Furthermore, the most recent, comprehensive work on ecotour guiding defines an ecotour guide as:

> Someone who is employed on a paid or voluntary basis who conducts paying or non-paying visitors around natural (but may include cultural) areas or sites, utilising ecotourism and interpretation principles. In other words, s/he strives to communicate and interpret the significance of the environment, promote minimal impact practices, promote the sustainability of the natural and cultural environment, and motivate those visitors to consider their own lives in relation to larger ecological or cultural concerns. (Black, 2002, p. 26)

The above definitions provide a brief overview of the subject of this study and outline the roles and responsibilities of an ecotour guide. Further contextualising discussion of ecotourism and ecotour guiding is undertaken in Chapter Two of this thesis.

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elements that may come into play when conducting research on guides working in the broader outdoor recreation scenes (e.g. school trips, adventure tourism, camping, volunteer services) compared to guides specifically working in commercialised ecotours.

[8] Black (2002, p. 6) defines the ecotourism industry as a "sum of those commercial and industrial activities which produce goods and services that are wholly or mainly consumed by travellers participating in ecotourism". A discussion of the principles of ecotourism is provided in Chapter Two.

1.2.3 Justification for Research

The emergence of professionalism in the ecotourism industry has been noted (cf. Fennell, 2003a; Wearing, 1995; Weaver, 2001a, 2008). However, there is a lack of literature that addresses the professionalism and the quality control of ecotourism (Black & Crabtree, 2007; Black & Weiler, 2005; Weaver & Lawton, 2007). Although empirical research on professionalism in ecotour guiding and the ecotourism industry is virtually non-existent, professionalism as it relates to ecotourism emphasises accreditation, certification and guide training, and educational programs (Fennell, 2003a). In the context of ecotour guiding, and the wider tour guiding industry, the terms profession and professional have been adopted as unproblematic, and are used arbitrarily and interchangeably in describing the occupation of tour guiding without clarification as to exactly what *professional* tour guiding involves (cf. Ap & Wong, 2001; Pond, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001b). Thus this study begins with the following research question:

What is a professional ecotour guide?

In order for ecotour guiding to gain professional status it is argued that it is imperative to understand what professionalism means for ecotour guiding. This represents an important juncture for the industry because the ecotour guiding occupation and ecotourism generally, is moving towards professionalism and going through a professionalisation process, as characterised by Caplow (1954) and Wilensky (1964). In many countries, ecotour guiding and tour guiding in general is a full-time occupation supported by occupational education and training courses, and professional associations that represent its members (see Chapter Three for further explanation). However, while codes of conduct for specific professional associations exist, tour guiding lacks the legal protection of its professional associations. Nevertheless, with the emergence of professional associations, professional certificates, and guide training and educational programs, it is evident that ecotour guiding is an occupation that is moving towards achieving professionalism. This is not surprising given that many occupational groups are striving to secure professional status and to portray levels of professionalism. The discourse of professionalism is increasingly used to attract and motivate employees in a range of occupational groups.

> It is attractive for workers to perceive themselves as professionals ... [Professionalism] is a discourse of self-control, even self-belief, an occupational badge or marker which gives meaning to the work and enables workers to justify and emphasise the importance of their work to themselves and others. (Aldridge & Evetts, 2003, p. 555)

This seems to be the case for ecotour guides in the Australian ecotourism industry where work performance and standards, and quality control are promoted through the concept of professionalism (Black & Crabtree, 2007). For example, the provision of professional ecotour guiding certification programs are perceived to be raising the levels of ecotour guiding professionalism (Black, 2007). In this context, it appears inevitable that ecotour guiding, and ecotourism as a whole, will head towards professionalisation and professionalism. Indeed professionalisation may be perceived as necessary (Weaver, 2001a) as the advantages of professionalisation involve:

> High standards, reduction of risk and poor services for society, with advantage to the professional membership of social status, job satisfaction through control of standards and economic advantages accrued as a result of social status and monopoly positions. (Wearing & Darby, 1989, p. 3)

Nonetheless, there is an important caveat here. Professionalisation in ecotour guiding and ecotourism may prevent creativity and improvement of work performance through standardisation (Wearing, 1995; Weaver, 2001a). Furthermore, professionalisation may bring negative impacts as the privileges that society grants to the profession may be abused such that membership is restricted to increase economic rewards, dishonest members rather than customers may be protected, and the bureaucratic structure and conservative nature of the profession may stifle innovation within the profession (Wearing & Darby, 1989, p. 3).

Despite the potential negative impacts, professionalisation has the potential to raise the standards of inadequate ecotourism workers and operators, act as a quality control mechanism, and motivate best practice. Therefore, the aim of this study is to understand and interpret the impact professionalisation has had on the work of ecotour guides. This leads into the second research question which is:

What impact has professionalisation had on the work of ecotour guiding?

Tour guiding as an area of inquiry and in-depth research has been almost completely ignored (Weiler & Ham, 2001b). Tour guiding is considered to be a "low-status profession, characterised by low pay, poor working conditions, and seasonal and casual employment conditions" (Weiler & Ham, 2001b, p. 261). Despite this typically bleak synopsis, existing research also emphasises the importance and specialisation of ecotour guides and their critical role in achieving and operationalising the ideologies of ecotourism (Weiler, 1991; Weiler & Black, 2002; Weiler & Crabtree, 1998; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Weiler, Johnson, & Davis, 1992). Since the industrial revolution, the structure of the workforce and delineation between traditional professional roles in industrial societies has become increasingly blurred, decreasing the exclusivity of the professions (Middlehurst & Kennie, 1997). Thus, in order to prevent ecotour guides becoming detached from their specialisation and merging into the body of general guides, a move towards obtaining professionalism through theoretical and empirical applications is vital.

To provide an alternative view, this study links the area of professional studies with the work of ecotour guiding from a sociological perspective. At this stage there have been no theoretically rigorous applications of the terms 'profession' or 'professionalism' in studies of tour guiding despite their regular and casual use. This inquiry does not set out to criticise writers using the term 'professions' without regard for its implications. It does, however, seek to raise the level of conceptual sophistication by which the study of ecotour guiding is theoretically understood and how this might assist the occupation in moving toward a genuine professional state. Additionally, this inquiry seeks to understand what is meant when the term professional is applied to ecotour guiding.

1.3 Thesis Aim and Objectives

In developing the parameters for this inquiry and to provide direction and guidance the following aims and objectives were established.

The aim of this inquiry is to understand whether professionalisation, as a process, influences the ecotour guiding occupation actually attaining professionalism as defined by ecotour guides and key ecotourism industry stakeholders.

The following objectives were established in order to achieve the aim of this inquiry.

1. To analyse ecotour guiding as an occupation in light of the professionalisation literature.

2. To apply the concepts of 'work' and 'professionalisation' to the actual work experiences of ecotour guides.

3. To examine the influence of the professionalisation process on the work of ecotour guiding.

1.4 Approach to Study

1.4.1 Introduction

The theoretical and methodological approach taken in this study shaped and moulded the structure of this thesis. It is argued that this approach was the most effective method for achieving the aim and objectives of this study. Although Chapters Three and Four provide an in-depth description of the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted, a brief outline is set out below.

1.4.2 Theoretical Perspectives

As previously mentioned, the theoretical approach to understanding and interpreting the professionalisation discourse and theories of professionalism in this study was heavily influenced by the work of Eliot Freidson (1983, 1986, 1994, 2001). Freidson argues that an occupational group experiences the process of professionalisation when the central work activities become specialised requiring expert knowledge and skills that cannot be performed nor reproduced by others in society. The professionalisation process is traditionally initiated and progressed by members of the occupational group in order to gain an ideal-state of professionalism – autonomy of work. Various processes of professionalisation can occur and no process of professionalisation is the same across occupational groups. Hence, Freidson contends that professionalisation needs to be studied on a case by case basis.

In addition to Freidson's work, notions of self-identity and emotional labour, Ivan Illich's ideas of professionalisation[9], and Karl Marx's theory on work and alienation[10] are incorporated into the analysis. This approach enables a previously unseen level of theoretical rigour to analyse the professionalisation of ecotour guiding.

1.4.3 Methodological Approach

This study adopts an interpretivist approach to study the professionalisation of ecotour guides. In this approach the people being studied provide their own explanation of their situation or behaviour (Veal, 1997, p. 31). In addition, an instrumental case study approach that follows the interpretive paradigm involving both qualitative and quantitative methods within different phases of the research process was adopted as the research strategy. The case study approach is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 2003, p. 13). The case study approach is considered the most appropriate, as this study is exploratory in nature. Thus, the researcher is empowered to engage research methods best suited to understanding the case at hand, be they qualitative, quantitative or a combination of the two. Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Certification Program (or the EcoGuide Program) served as a case study to analyse the influence of professionalisation on ecotour guiding. The EcoGuide Program was considered the most appropriate case study because it is a professional certification program that specifically caters for ecotour guides and is a well established, real-life contemporary program. The case study was investigated using semi-structured in-depth interviews, participatory observation, the writing and analysis of field notes, and self-completed questionnaire surveys at different phases of the research process.

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[9] Ivan Illich's *Disabling Professions (1977)* argued that in industrialised societies, professionalisation leads clients (customers, consumers) to believe that professionals have answers to their problems. Illich contended that these problems are in fact created by the professionals themselves. He also protested that professionalisation emotionally detaches professionals from their clients as they are required to perform to acceptable, regulated standards, approved by professionalisation, rather than trying to understand the clients' needs on an individual basis.

[10] The concept alienation is central to Marxist sociology. It describes the process and outcome of individuals who have become separated and isolated from one another, or from a particular situation (Marshall, 1998). There are a number of philosophical and sociological implications of Marx's concept of alienation. These implications are used to understand the professionalisation of ecotour guiding.

1.5 Contribution of the Study

The theoretical and empirical contributions of this inquiry to the existing body of knowledge are outlined below.

1. Whilst previous research has analysed the sociological roles and functions of a tour guide in the guided tour context, no known research has applied sociological perspectives to interpret the meanings ecotour guides ascribe to their own work. This study utilises the sociological concepts of 'work' discussed in the literature to understand the meanings of ecotour guiding work.

2. This study is the first to conduct a theoretically and empirically rigorous exploration of professionalisation in the context of ecotour guiding.

3. This study investigates the perspectives of ecotour guides, the practitioners of ecotour guiding, to understand the impact of professionalisation. Previous research in relation to ecotourism professionalisation such as professional guiding certification programs looked into the operators' and tourists' perspective of certification, never the ecotourism workers' values and opinions.

4. The case study of a professional ecotour guiding certification program not only provides theoretical and practical applications for analysing ecotour guiding professionalism, it also addresses the benefits and shortcomings of the program.

5. The study draws links between the impact of professionalisation on ecotour guides achieving the industry-driven concept of professionalism, while providing suggestions for future research.

1.6 Summary

This chapter introduced the concept of professionalisation as a historical process. In most occupations, the terms profession or professional are casually applied to describe professional status. Ecotour guides, as an occupational group, are no exception. In the analysis of the status of an occupation, casual, non-specific use of the terms 'profession' and 'professionalism' comes at the expense of ignoring a long and well respected

academic tradition. Therefore, the discourse of professionalisation as an influence on ecotour guides becoming professionals, and by extension gaining professionalism, is an important area of study.

Evidence that ecotour guiding is moving towards professionalism includes the creation of full-time employment, guide training programs, professional associations, and certification programs. Despite the ecotour guiding occupational status being driven towards professionalism, no research has attempted to understand the influence professionalisation has on the ecotour guides. Therefore, this inquiry investigates the issue by looking at a case study of professional certification. A number of objectives and questions were outlined in order to meet the aims of this study. In addition, a conceptual framework was devised by combining ideas from Freidson, Illich and Marx. This will act as a lens through which to analyse the influence of professionalisation on ecotour guides themselves.

The following section provides an outline of this thesis, how the research questions were answered, and how the study's aim and objectives were achieved within the theoretical and methodological framework.

1.7 Thesis Outline

Chapter Two explores the roles and functions of tour guides in a guided tourism experience by examining the general tour guiding literature and research. General tour guiding roles and functions are identified and the specialised role ecotour guides play that is unique to the ecotourism experience is analysed.

Chapter Three introduces the sociological concepts of work that are relevant to the work of ecotour guiding. The meanings ascribed to the work of ecotour guiding are used as a basis for understanding the impact of professionalisation on achieving work professionalism. The different sociological schools of thought that have analysed the professions provide insight into the various ways to interpret the impact of professionalisation on ecotour guides. This theoretical foundation of professionalisation is used to demonstrate the professionalisation of ecotour guides within the Australian ecotourism industry.

Chapter Four discusses the theoretical and methodological underpinnings that were employed to collect and analyse the data presented in this study. The interpretivist approach provided the philosophical and epistemological foundation for undertaking a qualitative case study of Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Certification Program..

Chapter Five sets the contextual foundation for Chapter Six. Chapter Five will explore the meanings ecotour guides ascribe to their work which are interpreted through the concepts of self- and social-identity. Furthermore, the expert knowledge and skills required to perform the specialised work of ecotour guides are identified by the study participants and are analysed and interpreted in relation to the professionalisation discourse.

Chapter Six addresses the first research question: what is a professional ecotour guide? Definitions of what the practitioners of ecotour guiding consider their profession to be are analysed and interpreted in the context of professionalism. Participants' values and opinions of a professional are contrasted with what actually happens in practice in the ecotourism industry to achieve ecotour guiding professionalism.

Chapter Seven addresses the second research question: what impact has professionalisation had on the work of ecotour guiding? Firstly, an analysis of the case study provides a perspective on understanding the impact of the EcoGuide Program on the work of ecotour guides. This sets the basis for expanding the analysis of the certification program by interpreting the impact professionalisation has had on ecotour guides. Industry stakeholders and ecotour guides hold different views on the impact of professionalisation, demonstrating the difficulty in achieving an agreed professional status and professionalism.

Chapter Eight concludes by discussing the challenges that ecotour guides face in achieving professional status and professionalism. Finally, the results of the research questions are analysed and factors influencing ecotour guides' professionalisation are discussed in terms of their implications for the industry and possible future research directions.

CHAPTER TWO: SETTING THE CONTEXT FOR ECOTOUR GUIDING

> When you let professionally trained tour experts eliminate all the worrisome details that plague the independent traveller you save time and money ... and headaches! After all – you wouldn't build a house without an architect – or start a business without a lawyer. So why consider taking a trip abroad – one of life's greatest adventures – without professional guidance! (Olson Travel Company, 1973 cited in Schmidt, 1979, p. 442).

2.1 Introduction

The quote above is an excerpt of advertising copy identified by one of the founding sociological studies on tour guiding in the late 1970s (cf. Schmidt, 1979). The advertisement presents a persuasive logical argument for taking guided tours when on holiday. The term 'professional' casually positions tour guides as the professional peers of architects and lawyers. In determining whether tour guiding is indeed comparable to architecture and law, the roles played and expert skills and knowledge involved in tour guiding need to be explored. To set the context of this study this chapter provides reviews of literature in the field of tour guiding, ecotour guiding, ecotourism and environmental interpretation[11]. This will act as a foundation for understanding what the work of an ecotour guide entails, and which aspects of ecotour guiding may be impacted by professionalisation.

Firstly, due to the lack of literature and research on ecotour guides, there is a need to examine the wider guiding literature. This sets the background for understanding the roles and functions of tour guides. Two seminal tour guiding studies by Holloway (1981) and Cohen (1985) establish the importance of tour guiding roles in the tourism

[11] Ham (1992, p. 3) explains that environmental interpretation "involves translating the technical language of a natural science or related field into terms and ideas that people who aren't scientists can readily understand. And it involves doing it in a way that's entertaining and interesting to these people". Ecotour guides' role as environmental interpreters of ecotourism experience is discussed in more detail in section 2.2.

experience[12]. In addition, recent studies that introduce various aspects of tour guiding such as personal emotions involved in tour guiding, raising professionalism, tourist and guide interaction, and tour guides' influence on tourist satisfaction, are outlined in order to explore and understand the issues involved in working as a tour guide. Secondly, adhering to ecotourism principles is one of the specialised roles of ecotour guiding (Black, 2002; Weiler & Crabtree, 1998), a brief summary of ecotourism principles is therefore provided. Although there is a large body of literature available in the field of ecotourism, this chapter illustrates the generally accepted ecotourism principles that are applicable to the work of ecotour guides. Furthermore, this chapter includes an analysis of the specialised roles and tasks that are unique to the work of ecotour guiding. In this context, ecotour guides are required to meet the various roles of general tour guides, as well as the specialised roles of an environmental interpreter to instil conservation values and encourage environmentally conscious behaviour in tourists (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Haigh, 1997; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Ormsby & Mannle, 2006; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Weiler *et al.*, 1992). The importance of ecotour guides in influencing the ecotourism experience is explored in the final sections of the chapter. In summary, literature is reviewed highlighting the different aspects of tour guiding, and introducing the specialised roles and skills of ecotour guiding.

As a result of the in-depth review of the tour guiding and ecotour guiding literature it is clear that it lacks empirical research and theoretical application (Weiler & Ham, 2001b). However, it has been possible to identify the key specialised roles required of ecotour guides, which sets the context for this study by developing a conceptual understanding of what comprises the work[13] of ecotour guiding.

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[12] Tourism is an economic activity that creates and sells experience as a product or service. Ryan (2002) argues that to adequately understand tourism a number of elements need to be considered. These include the tourist [visitor] experience and an appreciation of the relationships, the network of communications that exist between competing and complementary roles, the context of place, time and action within which such communication exists, and the relationship between the tourist as actor and acted upon (Ryan, 2002, p. 2). The complexity of understanding the visitor experience stems from the numerous, multi-dimensional variables that need to be considered when assessing visitor experience (Beeho & Prentice, 1997; Tian-Cole, Crompton, & Wilson, 2002). This study does not examine the visitor experience in ecotourism, however it does attempt to understand the influence ecotour guiding may have on the visitor experience as illustrated in the ecotourism literature.

2.2Tour Guiding

2.2.1 Introduction

A guide is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "a person who shows the way to others, especially one employed to show tourists around places of interest" (2003, p. 771). A tour is defined as "a journey for pleasure in which several different places are visited" (2003, p. 1865). In simple terms a tour guide is a person who shows the way to others who are on a journey for pleasure. In the 1985 special edition of *Annals of Tourism Research* dedicated to tour guiding, the editor-in-chief Jafar Jafari (1985, p. 1) noted that the topic of tour guiding was "a subject which has received little attention in tourism research". Since then, academic interest in the diverse roles of tour guiding has grown considerably (cf. Adib & Guerrier, 2001; Ap & Wong, 2001; Bowman, 1992; Cohen, Ifergan, & Cohen, 2002; Geva & Goldman, 1991; Macdonald, 2006b; Pearce, 1984; Pond, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001b). The following sections provide a review of literature that illustrates the history of tour guiding and explains the various roles and skills involved in the work of tour guides.

2.2.2 Tour Guiding in the Past

Tour guides may have accompanied ancient Egyptians, Persians and Assyrians when they travelled in an organised manner (Pond, 1993). The recognition of tour guiding as a form of work can be traced back to ancient Greece where tour guides accompanied Greeks travelling abroad. An ancient Greek author, traveller and the father of history in Western culture, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, more than likely provided the first description of guides. During his Egyptian travels Herodotus' term for his interpreter translates as "he who explains" (Dewar, 2000, p. 175). During the period of the Roman Empire a more commercialised version of guiding was introduced to Ilium, the fable lands of Homer. Guides directed ancient Roman tourists to the specific places of attraction noted in the *Iliad* (Casson, 1974; Dewar, 2000; Pond, 1993). Throughout

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[13] Discussions on what constitutes work in the sociology literature are immense and complex. Chapter Three furthers the discussion on work and the occupation of ecotour guides. For this chapter, work is defined as the "supply of physical, mental, and emotional effort to produce goods and services for own consumption, or for consumption by others" (Marshall, 1998, p. 706). Work is therefore defined in this study as the physical, mental and emotional effort that a tour guide expends conducting a tour for tourists.

these ancient times tour guides were required to "ensure safe-conduct as much as to show the way" (Casson, 1974, p. 319).

The origin of the contemporary tour guide probably lies in the Grand Tour[14] of the 17th and 18th century (Cohen, 1985; Dewar, 2000; Urry, 1990). During this period, young British aristocrats travelled to undiscovered lands and unfamiliar destinations for cultural and educational experiences which were considered a capstone for their academic studies (Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Pond, 1993; Towner, 1985, 1996). Fundamental to these journeys was the presence of expert guides who would educate the travellers (Dewar, 2000), and lend legitimacy and prestige to the tours (Morse, 1997). These guides have been variously identified as teachers/interpreters (Dewar, 2000), personal tutors (Pond, 1993) or travelling tutors (Mead, 1914). The educational component of these tours was particularly significant and as such guides were:

> Intended to be articulate, multilingual, and well-versed in many subjects, including history, literature, architecture, and current affairs. Many of the tutors and guides on the Grand Tour era were distinguished clergy, students, schoolmasters, writers, and historians. (Pond, 1993, p. 5)

In some accounts Grand Tour guides have also been described as "shadowy characters ... with a preference for strong drink and womanising", perhaps the result of caring for young spoilt aristocrats for three or more years (Dewar, 2000, p. 176). Nevertheless, the Grand Tour of the 17th and 18th century contains the historic roots of the modern tour guide (Cohen, 1985). Grand Tour guides were considered by many to be "the most esteemed guides in European society, entrusted with representing their region and its history and educating privileged young men of the British aristocracy" (Pond, 1993, p. 2).

The 19th century saw a rapid growth in guided leisure travels in Europe. The industrial revolution resulted in technological advancements and a change in the socio-economic status which allowed the European middle class to travel (Hall, 1995). Mass tourism

[14] The establishment of the Grand Tour occurred during the reign of Elizabeth I, where the "... circuit of western Europe undertaken by the wealthy in society for culture, education, health and pleasure, is one of the most celebrated episodes in the history of tourism" (Towner, 1996, p. 96). It was during this period that the modern concept of guides was introduced. Tours took three years on average and included private tutors/guides to assist the travellers' education.

was established and propelled by the package tour programmes of Thomas Cook[15] who acted as a tour guide and tour coordinator. This is where the various roles of modern tour guides were shaped and structured (Pond, 1993). With the increase in leisure time and services in Western countries after the Second World War, mass tourism prospered and grew into an industry requiring large numbers of workers in accommodation, tour operations, transportation and other tourism-related sectors including tour guiding (Hall, 1995). Tracing tour guiding back to ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome, serving 17th century aristocracy, its increasing popularity during the industrial revolution and its massive growth and establishment after the Second World War, one could argue that tour guiding is "... among the world's oldest professions" (Pond, 1993, p. 1). For the purpose of this study tour guiding is not described as a profession, but rather a form of work or an occupation[16]. Chapter Three explores professionalisation theory in order to discuss the work of tour guiding in the context of the professions.

Throughout history tour guides have received mixed reviews of their roles and their importance in tourism practice and the tourist experience. Guides were sometimes described as "nuisances, opportunists, charlatans, and zealots" and disliked for their aggressive behaviour and touting to gain business (Pond, 1993, p. 1). The quality of interpretation during tours was questioned as "the average hearer had no way of checking up" on the accuracy of the content (Casson, 1974, p. 266). Early 20th century travellers like Mark Twain enjoyed ridiculing their guides. Despite his mockery, much of Twain's writing (in the *New Pilgrims Progress* and *The Innocents Abroad*) is clearly influenced by the knowledge and interpretation provided by his guides (Dewar, 2000).

Some researchers have been moved to comment that "guides have not improved very much in the course of two thousand years" (Casson, 1974, p. 264). However, in most

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[15] It is generally agreed that the tourism agent Thomas Cook was the pioneer of modern leisure group travel. Thomas Cook organised his first fee-paying trip in 1841, and by the 1860s he already organised trips to Europe and America. He managed to cater for more than one million travellers in his first nine years of business (Holloway, 1998; Page, 1999).

[16] In this chapter, occupation is understood as an economic role that one performs outside household activities for "... an industrial enterprise, formal organisation, or socio-economic structure" (Marshall, 1998, p. 457). These roles are part of a wider division of labour within the modern economy. Therefore, tour guiding is an occupation.

contemporary tourism industries this is no longer the case. Though still relatively scant, over the last 20 years interest in tour guiding as a subject for research has increased steadily and this has revealed the central importance of tour guiding in tourism practice.

2.2.3 Learning About Contemporary Tour Guides

Previous studies have observed and analysed the roles and functions of a guide in guided tours from a sociological perspective (cf. Cohen, 1985; Holloway, 1981; Pearce, 1984; Schmidt, 1979). The paucity of research on tour guiding has also been acknowledged (Ap & Wong, 2001; Holloway, 1981; Pond, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001b). However, in the last 20 years, a variety of dimensions for understanding tour guides have emerged in the academic literature. These studies were not limited to identifying tour guiding roles, but also included: analysing the work of tour guiding as a form of cultural mediation (Dahles, 2002; Macdonald, 2006b; McGrath, 2004; Salazar, 2006; Weiler & Yu, 2007); examining service quality in tour guiding (Chang, 2006; Lopez, 1981; Wang, Hsieh, & Huan, 2000); understanding the personal emotions involved in tour guiding (Adib & Guerrier, 2001; Guerrier & Adib, 2003); and the specialised roles of tour guiding in ecotourism (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Black, Ham, & Weiler, 2001; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Ormsby & Mannle, 2006; Yu & Weiler, 2006).

In the literature, the term tour guide is often used interchangeably with tourist guide (Cohen, 1985), tour leader (Chang, 2006; Weiler & Davis, 1993), tour representative (Adib & Guerrier, 2001), guide (McGrath, 2004), and local tourist guide (Bras, 2000). Indeed, some tour guides prefer particular titles (see Chapter Five). Tours are conducted in diverse environments such as cities, museums, parks, on buses and aboard cruise ships. Many different roles are played by the tour guides (Cherem, 1977; Pond, 1993), and thus the occupation tends to attract a range of different titles (Holloway, 1994). Providing a widely acceptable job description is, therefore, difficult. Throughout this study, the term 'tour guide' is used instead of 'tourist guide' as it places the focus more squarely upon the subject of this study, ecotour guiding. In this respect, ecotour guides are defined as people who actively put ecotourism principles into practice (Black, 2002;

Weiler & Crabtree, 1998) in their ecotours[17] rather than just leading tourists as the term tourist guide may imply.

One of the first academic studies on tour guides was conducted by Holloway (1981). He looked at one-day excursions, managed by driver-couriers and registered guides[18] in Great Britain. At the time of publication (1981), he stated that social theory had not been widely applied to the study of tourism let alone tour guiding. Building on Nash's (1978) observation that guides play the role of mediator between tourist and host interactions, Holloway examined the roles involved in tour guiding as an occupation. Holloway revealed that the role of a tour guide is a multifaceted one that has subsidiary and contradicting sub-roles including "information-giver and fount of knowledge, teacher or instructor, motivator or ambassador for one's country, entertainer or catalyst for the group, confidant, shepherd and ministering angel, and group leader and disciplinarian" (1981, pp. 385-386). The most significant point Holloway raises for this study is that tour guides held their information-giver role higher than any other roles. Indeed the guides' perception of the importance of their role was much higher than the perceptions and expectations of tourists and the tour guides' employers. Holloway (1981, p. 377) explains that the tour guides themselves may have identified the information-giver role as the most significant function of their occupation due to their "drive for professional status". In the context of this study it is interesting to note that Holloway indirectly assumes that the information-giving role of tour guides equates to professionalism.

Erik Cohen's (1985) sociological work on understanding the roles of the guide through a guide-tourist relationship is often cited in the tour guiding literature. He states that,

[17] For the purpose of this study, an ecotour is understood as a sub-unit of ecotourism where visitors take a guided tour within a natural setting. The ecotour is delivered by an ecotour guide who attempts to meet the principles of ecotourism, that is: increasing environmental consciousness, disseminating environmental knowledge, raising conservation issues, and supporting local community development (Boo, 1990; Fennell, 1999, 2003a; Honey, 2002; Wearing & Neil, 1999; Weaver, 2001a, 2008, 2001b).

[18] The driver-couriers for Holloway's (1981) study are coach drivers who also have guiding functions but no formal qualifications and, are likely to have become driver-couriers due to their personalities and abilities to entertain tourists. Registered guides are individuals who took a course of training and are recognised by the British Government when they pass an exam administered by one of the Regional Tourist Boards.

historically, tour guiding stemmed from the act of guides being a "pathfinder" for tourists who were unfamiliar with the places they visited and, a "mentor" for tourists who wanted to be educated about these unfamiliar places (p. 7). He posits that pathfinders are geographic guides who are usually native to the area and have a good knowledge of the places tourists visit, but do not have any formal training. The mentor role is explained as a more complex and heterogeneous role, like a spiritual advisor on a pilgrimage or a personal travelling tutor. To understand the modern tour guide, he unites and expands the traditional guiding roles of being a pathfinder with an added emphasis on being a mentor. He also mentions that these two roles do not always merge harmoniously. Figure 2.1 shows the dynamics of tour guides' role during guided tours. Cohen (1985) isolated the roles into components as original guide, animator, tour leader and professional guide.

Figure 2.1 The dynamics of the tourist guide's role

	Outer-Directed	Inner-Directed
Leadership Sphere	(1) Original Guide (Instrumental Primacy)	(2) Animator (Social Primacy)
Mediatory sphere	(3) Tour Leader (Interactionary Primacy)	(4) Professional Guide (Communicative Primacy)

Cohen, E. (1985). The Tourist Guide: The Origins, Structure and Dynamics of a Role. *Annals of Tourism Research, 12*(1), pp. 17.

As can be seen from figure 2.1, Cohen (1985) categorises the role of pathfinder and mentor, respectively, into two spheres - the leadership sphere and the mediatory sphere. These spheres each have an outer- and inner-directed aspect. The leadership sphere is an extension of the traditional pathfinder, one who geographically leads the way (Cohen, 1982, 1985; Ter Steege, Stam, & Bras, 1999). Within this sphere, he adds that the traditional role of being a pathfinder is not just leading tourists to certain sites but also allowing tourists to access areas difficult to reach on their own. This is understood as the outer-directed instrumental function of the guide (cell 1). The inner-directed aspect of the leadership sphere includes the guide's role as a social leader within the tourist group (cell 2). This requires good communication skills that encourage group members to socialise with each other, further enhancing the tour experience (Black, 2002; Bras,

2000). Pond (1993) adds that the leadership role of a tour guide also requires good communication skills, but also administrative, management and business skills.

Cohen's (1985) mediatory sphere stems from the traditional guiding role of a mentor. Within the mediatory sphere, the outer-directed aspect of the tour guiding role is the interactionary function (cell 3). This is where the tour guide acts as an intermediary between the tourists and the places they visit. The tour guide represents his/her tourists to the places they visit and vice versa. The more interesting function of the mediatory sphere, for this study, is the inner-directed communicative function of the tour guide, the professional guide (cell 4). Firstly, this communicative function includes tour guides selecting and directing what the tourists will see and hear. Secondly, it includes disseminating correct and precise information of the places tourists visit. Cohen noted that tour guides perceive this as their primary role, which takes on "an almost academic character" (1985, p. 15). This reflects Holloway's (1981) characterisation of a professional guide as one in possession of comprehensive information and skilled in their delivery to tourists. Thirdly, Cohen identifies interpretation as the most distinguished communicative function of a tour guide. Lastly, Cohen includes fabrication as a part of the communicative function, where tour guides may take tourists "surreptitiously to a false destination on the tour, but present it in a manner intended to convince its members that it is the one promised in the program" (1985, p. 16). However, "inappropriate commentary content and communication style have been shown to ruin an entire holiday" (Hughes, 1991, p. 166). Inappropriate in this context relates to descriptive history and dates that remind tourists of the classroom when they are on holidays. This latter point raises the question of why Cohen put fabrication into the communicative function as it leads to guides providing misinformation, a practice carried out by unethical tour guides in the industry today (Pond, 1993). The issue of tour guides giving misinformation to tourists has been questioned in the past and may be explained as a "passion to connect whatever they could with the heroic days of mythological times, a passion no doubt nourished by the eagerness with which the customers lapped up such nonsense" (Casson, 1974, pp. 266-267). The topic of misinformation is further discussed in Chapter Six.

According to Cohen's (1985) analysis, the role of tour guiding transforms from the *original guide* (the simple pathfinder, cell 1) to the *professional guide* (with the more

sophisticated communicative function, cell 4) when the guide's role moves away from the outer-directed leadership role to the inner-directed mediator role. This is where the transformation of an original guide to a professional guide begins. Cohen explains that the communication and interpretation functions of guiding are the keys for an original guide to be a professional guide. This notion is supported by much recent tourism literature (Markwell & Weiler, 1998; McArthur & Hall, 1996; Pastorelli, 2003; Wressing, 1999). However, Pond (1993) contends that the contemporary guide is a hybrid of Cohen's original and professional guide, and that the roles of guiding cannot be neatly divided into Cohen's spheres. Cohen's work on guiding proposed key conceptual foundations for tour guiding roles. However, in reality the roles go beyond Cohen's suggestions. Pond (1993, p. 70) states that:

> The extent to which a guide operates more dominantly in one role or another often depends less on the professionalism of the guide than on the circumstances of a particular tour, the wishes of the guide's employer, and the needs of the visitors. It is virtually a requirement that guides not only embody all of Cohen's components but swing easily into different modes, as the situation demands.

Since the publication of Cohen's study in 1985, there has been a relatively steady amount of research conducted on tour guiding. The following sections review the recent tour guiding literature to explore the multifaceted roles of ecotour guiding. As mentioned in Chapter One, no research hitherto known applies a professionalism discourse to the study of tour guiding. As such the term professional has been applied informally and without clear definition – this study will take a different approach.

2.2.4 Beyond Tour Guiding Role Studies

Since the seminal work of Holloway (1981) and Cohen (1985), academic research on tour guiding continues to gain attention. The complexity involved in comprehending the various roles and functions of tour guiding has led researchers to identify various aspects of the occupation. For example a range of studies have focused on tour guides' interests in: achieving specialised skills (Black, 2002), working in developing and less developed countries (Bras, 2000; Crick, 1992), mediating cultural differences (McGrath, 2004), professional tour guides (Ap & Wong, 2001; Pond, 1993), personal emotions involved in tour guiding (Guerrier & Adib, 2003), and guide-tourist interactions (Pearce, 1984). Despite progression in the understanding of tour guiding there remains a lack of

research into the role and value of tour guides (Weiler & Ham, 2001a). To establish an understanding of working as a tour guide, the following sections illustrate the discussions and issues that have been raised in the tour guiding literature.

Why Take Guided Tours?

An earlier tour guiding study explains that people take guided tours to simplify and solve the problem of "what to see within a limited amount of time ... [as] ... the itinerary condenses a larger geographical area into a selective smorgasbord of 'highlights' of many tourist attractions" (Schmidt, 1979, pp. 442-443, original emphasis). The following quote raises the question of a person's need for a tour guide that goes beyond the need for pure 'guiding'.

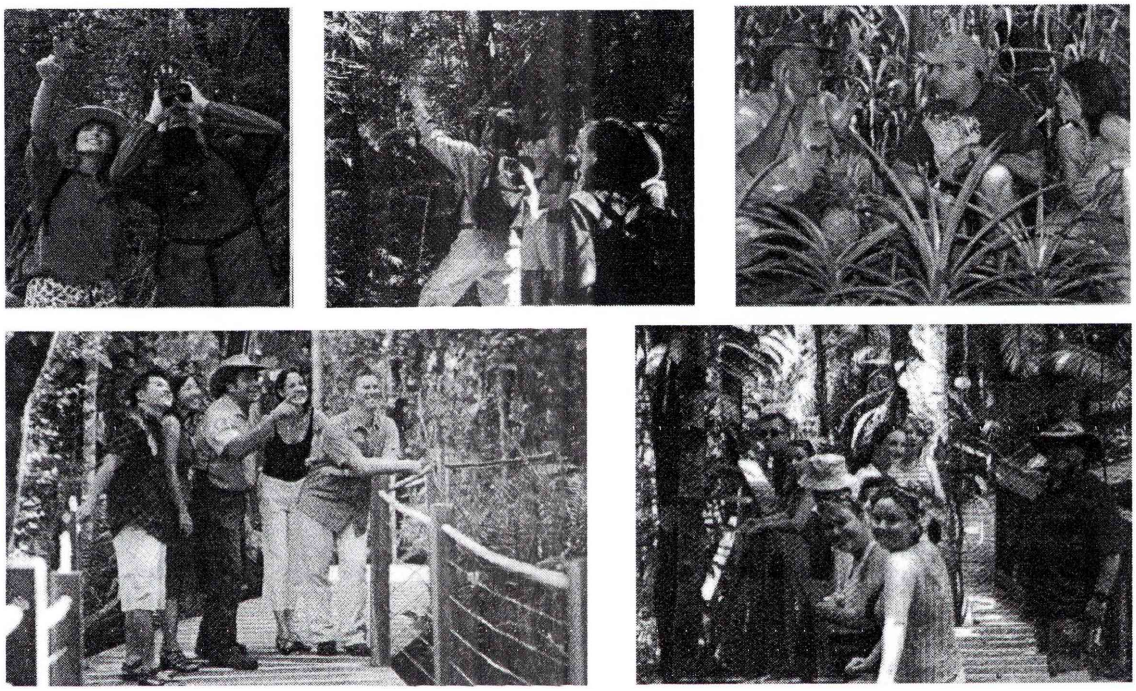
> Why does one encounter these almost ubiquitous speakers, who conduct tourists through sights, all the while recounting the grand and not so grand stories surrounding them? What role do these public speakers play? Are they simply to be understood as a combination of educator, sales person, and caretaker, who inform tourists, whet their interest in buying souvenirs, while simultaneously keeping curious fingers from handling valued heirlooms? (Fine & Speer, 1985, p. 75)

One of the reasons may be due to guided tours having access to places that may be restricted to the general public (Cohen, 1985; Schmidt, 1979). Also, in cross-cultural settings "many tourists still need a guide since such visitors frequently break social rules and intrude upon others privacy" (Pearce, 1984, p. 136). Some tourists take guided tours when they themselves do not have sufficient expert knowledge of the places being visited, and thus require a guide to fulfil their needs. These needs may even be the desire to learn about the flora and fauna of a place (Weiler & Crabtree, 1998). In this context, guided tours are particularly worthwhile for those who seek educational types of tourism (Schmidt, 1979). However, this is only under the assumption that the tour guide is competent in terms of expert knowledge.

Furthermore, tour guides can enhance tourists experiences as "they [tourists] will rarely achieve a coherent sense of what they visit, whereas a guide encourages them to develop a sense of having visited the 'real' place" (Bowman, 1992, p. 123, original emphasis). However, the concept of 'real' is debatable as there is a stereotypical image of the group packaged tour where tourists are "travelling by coach, on a fixed itinerary,

with scheduled stops and with a virtually uninterrupted commentary by a tour guide" (Weiler & Ham, 2001b, p. 257). How much of the 'real' place is experienced through guided tours of this nature is questionable. Nevertheless, as can be seen from Figure 2.2 when it comes to images of ecotours these brochures no longer project the restricted, limited and controlled image.

Figure 2.2 Images of ecotour guide brochures



Source: Clockwise from top left, promotional brochures from Lamington National Park, The National Tour Company, Rainforest Station Nature Park, Billy Tea Safaris, and Skyrail Rainforest Cableway

The captured image of these ecotour guides in Figure 2.2 demonstrates that guides act as path finders, group leaders, information givers and companions on these tours. The images show ecotour guides directing tourists to points of attraction whilst providing environmental knowledge. This type of tourism promotion creates "the pull-factors of the place" (Dann, 1981, p. 201) where potential visitors create imageries, expectations and travel motivations from the tourism product and services depicted (Dann, 1996). Therefore, tour operators that promote tour guides as a part of the tourism product through their brochures create tourist expectations for tour guides that need to be satisfied. When people take guided tours, the quality of tour guiding performance influences the visitor experience and satisfaction levels (Ap & Wong, 2001; Geva & Goldman, 1991; Lopez, 1981; Mossberg, 1995). Meeting tourist satisfaction through

quality tour guiding has been the focus of recent tour guiding research (cf. Ap & Wong, 2001; Chang, 2006; Geva & Goldman, 1991; Wang et al., 2000). These studies assert the significance of guide training and education in improving quality tour guiding standards. Tour guide training and education programs are discussed in relation to the professionalisation discourse in Chapter Three.

Are Tour Guides All the Same?

Another factor that influences the diverse roles and aspects of tour guiding is different tour settings and the subject of interpretation (Cherem, 1977; Pond, 1993). For example the work setting of a tour guide who interprets the history behind the architecture of a city would be different from a guide who interprets paintings in an art museum. The titles of these guides may even differ, such as 'city guide', and 'museum guide'. According to Cherem (1977), other categorisation tools that may influence types of tour guides are employment status (that is, full-time, part-time, seasonal, casual, paid or volunteer), employer types (that is, commercial business, government National Parks or non-profit organisations) or even whether they are licensed or unlicensed (Bras, 2000). Pond (1993) categorises guides in a similar manner. In her book *The Professional Guide* she uses different terms to differentiate guides including urban guides, government guides, driver-guides, business or industry guides, adventure guides and tour managers.

In the tour guiding literature, categorises of tour guides are broadly based on North American standards. In Australia, the backdrop of this study, the Professional Tour Guiding Association of Australia (PTGAA) and the Institute of Australian Tourist Guiding (IATG) identifies guides based on two criteria – tour setting and tour subject matter. Black (2002) adopts the PTGAA and IATG guiding identification criteria and created a typology of Australian tour guides as seen in Table 2.1. For the purpose of this study, Table 2.1 adopts the concepts of tour setting and subject matter from the perspectives of tour guides as their work environment and work respectively.

Table 2.1 A typology of Australian tour guides

Type of guide	Examples of guides	Tour setting	Subject matter
General guides (day tours or overnight stay tours)	Tour escorts, driver guides, tour managers	Urban, rural, natural or cultural, or combination of above	General subject interpretation
Nature-based guides (for site based or transport based day tours)	Ecotour guides, adventure guides	Natural e.g. national parks, zoos, wildlife parks, sanctuaries, botanical gardens, farms, marine parks	Specialised interpretation on ecology, botany, ornithology, agriculture, marine biology
Culture-based guides (site based)	Historic site guides, indigenous guides, museum and gallery guides	Cultural e.g. historic sites and areas, archaeological sites, indigenous sites, museums	Specialised interpretation on architecture, archaeology, history, indigenous culture
Urban-based guides (city based or site based)	Shopping guides, theme park guides, industrial guides	Urban e.g. cities, shopping areas, theme parks, tourist attractions, industrial sites, conventions	Specialised interpretation depends on clients and site.

Adopted from: Black, R., 2002, *Towards a Model Tour Guide Certification: An Analysis of the Australian Ecoguide Program*, PhD Thesis, Monash University, p.23.

According to Table 2.1, Australian tour guides operate in urban, cultural and natural sites or a combination of these sites. The table indicates that ecotour guides may be categorised as nature-based guides and that they are commonly site-based or transport-based for daily ecotours. Table 2.1 also shows that there is a diversity of guides in the Australian tour guiding sector and this relates to the different skills that may be required to perform their work in different settings. Depending on the guide's work environment, their work, including responsibilities or roles, may change. In addition, depending on the tour setting, the tourist-guide relationship also changes (Pearce, 1984). Therefore, the following sections explain the specialised skills that are unique to the work of ecotour guiding.

2.3 Ecotourism and Tour Guiding

2.3.1 The Significance of Ecotourism

In line with the definitions of ecotour guides provided by Weiler and Crabtree (1998) and Black (2002), the work of an ecotour guide can be better understood when ecotourism concepts are placed at the forefront. Therefore, the following section discusses the significance of ecotourism and provides an overview of ecotourism principles that reflects the work of ecotour guiding.

Ecotourism is undeniably a significant international tourism phenomenon. The magnitude of ecotourism has been and is influencing the practices of world tourism organisations, national tourism government bodies, non-government organisations, commercial businesses, and tourism academia (Weaver, 2008). For example, the United Nations' World Tourism Organisation endorsed ecotourism by designating 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. The scholarly journal *Journal of Ecotourism* has been dedicated to ecotourism research since 2002. Numerous travel Websites, tourism magazines, tour operators and, tourism-related corporations appropriate the term ecotourism (or eco-) for their business titles.

Australia, which is considered to be one of the most influential and successful countries for ecotourism in the world (Dowling, 2002), governments at both national and state levels are committed to developing and promoting ecotourism (Allcock, Jones, Lane, & Grant, 1994; Tourism Queensland, 2002; Tourism Queensland Research Department, 2002). Providing a detailed account of the history of ecotourism and its development falls outside the scope of this study[19]. However, it is necessary to examine the core

[19] For additional reading on the history, principles, concepts, issues, practice and application of ecotourism, see Boo (1990), Honey (1999, 2002), Honey and Rome (2001), Fennell (1999, 2003a), Fennell and Dowling (2003), Weaver (1998, 2001a, 2008, 2001b), and Wearing and Neil (1999). One such concept of ecotourism is that of Weaver's (2002) ecotourism spectrum. Weaver (2002) explains that the ecotourism spectrum consists of the 'hard' to 'soft' variants of ecotourism. Hard ecotourism types entail small groups, tourists who are more environmentally aware, physically challenged and aware, longer specialised trips that boasts on deeper interaction with nature. Soft ecotourism types consist of shorter trips that pursue shallow interaction with nature, larger groups, tourists are physically passive and seeks comfort during the trip, and rely on travel agents and tour operators to structure their travel. This study does not enter into the debate of 'soft' to 'hard' ecotourism spectrum within the ecotourism

concepts of contemporary ecotourism, its components and underlying ideologies as it assists in characterising the work of ecotour guides.

2.3.2 Summarising Ecotourism Principles

Though ecotourism is a relatively new term in the tourism literature, it has been extensively discussed and debated since its inception. Authors continue to debate the timing of when ecotourism first emerged as a concept. Dates range from the 1960s (Blamey, 2001; Ham, 2004), the 1970s (Honey & Stewart, 2002), and the 1980s (Diamantis, 1999; Weaver, 2008). Hetzer (1965) is noted as one of the first to develop the concept, describing ecotourism as a form of responsible tourism that follows four requirements. These are: "minimizing environmental impacts, respecting host cultures, maximizing the benefits to local people, and maximizing tourist satisfaction" (Blamey, 2001, p. 5). These four requirements are not far removed from contemporary understandings of ecotourism. Perhaps the most often cited ecotourism definition in the tourism literature is that of Hector Ceballos-Lascurain (1987)[20] popularised by the book *Ecotourism: The Potentials and Pitfalls* by Elizabeth Boo (1990) (cited in Weaver, 2008).

Ecotourism has been associated with many ideologies. In the 1960s ecotourism was developed as a response to the negative environmental, cultural, social and often economic impacts that were caused by conventional mass tourism, particularly in developing countries (Boissevain, 1996; Cooper & Lockwood, 1997; Griffin, 1990; Holden, 2000). During the 1970s, under the auspices of the global environmental movement, ecotourism became a tool to reverse, alter and amend the destruction of conventional mass tourism production (Honey, 1999). Throughout the 1980s ecotourism

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discussion as the aim of the thesis is to understand the professionalisation of ecotour guides by using certification programs as a case study. This study provides a concise literature review on the ecotourism principles as it affects the work activities of ecotour guides and the ecotourism spectrum does not enter into the literature when ecotourism principles are discussed.

[20] For Ceballos-Lascurain (1987, p. 14) ecotourism is "travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas". Although this study does not accept this definition, it is noted here because it is one of the most commonly cited in the ecotourism literature.

matured into a phenomenon and philosophy advocating sustainable tourism practices (Honey, 1999). Today ecotourism is promoted as an instrument that brings local employment and tourist dollars into local economies, which in theory (if not always in practice) sustains the quality of the local environment (Chryssides, 2001; Dowling & Fennell, 2003; Eagles, 1997; Lindberg, 2001; Page & Dowling, 2002; Tao, Eagles, & Smith, 2004; Weaver, 1998).

Over the decades, ecotourism stakeholders have spawned a proliferation of ecotourism definitions and principles (Fennell, 2003a; Page & Dowling, 2002). The focal themes of definitions may have disappeared and re-appeared over the decades, and as a result tourism academics have tended to assess reoccurring themes when ecotourism was defined (c.f. Diamantis, 1999; Donohoe & Needham, 2006; Fennell, 2001; Sirakaya, Sasidharan, & Sönmez, 1999).

Most stakeholders agree that ecotourism: is nature-based (Ecotourism Australia, 2008; Fennell, 2003a; Weaver, 2008); fosters nature preservation and conservation (Ecotourism Australia, 2008; Wight, 1993a); assists community development (Fennell & Dowling, 2003; Wearing & Neil, 1999); enhances ecological sustainability and management (Fennell, 2003a; Weaver, 2008); and encourages environmentally friendly behaviour (Fennell, 2003a; Fennell & Dowling, 2003), amongst many other debated concepts. As can be seen, ecotourism is associated with a variety of themes, ideologies and beliefs. Tourism academics, international tourism organisations, government agencies, non-government conservation organisations and other ecotourism stakeholders have created the meanings of ecotourism and, these definitions are used by a diverse range of stakeholders to suit their interests (Ayala, 1996b; Honey, 1999; Valentine, 1991; Wearing & McLean, 1998).Weaver (2001b, p. 658) summarises these themes to suggest that ecotourism is:

> A form of tourism that is increasingly understood to be: (i) based primarily on nature-based attractions; (ii) learning-centred; and (iii) conducted in a way that makes every reasonable attempt to be environmentally, socio-culturally and economically sustainable.

The discussions on ecotourism definitions and ideologies in the tourism literature are ongoing and extensive. Some mention that the intensity of debate determining conceptual makeup of ecotourism definition has subsided (Blamey, 1997), while others

insist that the debate is ongoing (Donohoe & Needham, 2006). Some state that it is pointless to develop a definitive description of a specific tourism form (Blamey, 1997), while others argue that a strict theoretical definition for ecotourism is necessary (Björk, 2000). Furthermore, recent ideas suggest that the concepts of ecotourism are embedded in Western ideologies (cf. Cater, 2006; Nowaczek, Moran-Cahusac, & Fennell, 2007).

It should be noted that this study does not intend to reiterate the definitions of ecotourism nor explore the much debated operational ecotourism principles (cf. Björk, 2000; Blamey, 1997; Donohoe & Needham, 2006; Higham & Carr, 2003; Sirakaya *et al.*, 1999). However, the fundamental ecotourism principles have been outlined to facilitate an understanding of ecotour guiding roles and responsibilities within ecotourism. Although cultural and heritage components are integral to discussions of ecotourism (Weaver, 2008), due to the scope and focus of this study these components are not factored into discussion of the work of ecotour guides. This is to minimise the complications that may be involved in researching ecotours that focus heavily on cultural and heritage components to those that focus on environmental interpretation. The following sections outline the specialised role ecotour guides play that is unique to the work of ecotour guiding.

2.3.3 Achieving Ecotourism Principles Through Ecotour Guides

Ecotour guides are considered key to providing an ecotourism experience that reflects ecotourism principles (Page & Dowling, 2002; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). To do this, ecotour guides need to be many things.

> To be an ecotour guide requires more than mastering natural and cultural history, practising environmental interpretation, navigating confusing trails, speaking multiple tongues or basking in the applause of fervid park visitors. To be an ecotour guide is to carry the flying colours of ecotourism, promoting conservation of natural and cultural heritage through tourism. (Kohl, 2007, p. 337)

Within the tourism industry, tour guides are perceived as front-line workers as they have face-to-face contact with tourists and a direct influence on the tourist experience (Ap & Wong, 2001). In this context, front-line workers generally have direct customer contact and are involved in delivering quality service and quantity of production

(Korczynski, Shire, Frenkel, & Tam, 2000). Hence, for the ecotourism industry ecotour guides are the front-line workers who facilitate the ecotourism experience by having direct contact with visitors during ecotours, and providing satisfactory experiences – often working over-time to complete their tours. Within this front-line service work, one of the more significant roles of ecotour guiding is environmental interpretation (Ham & Weiler, 2002a; Weiler, 1991; Weiler & Black, 2002).

Organised nature-based tours, such as ecotours, promote the idea that through mediation (environmental interpretation provided by ecotour guides) tourists will become closer to nature. Ecotour guides can mould tourists' perceptions towards nature, and hence construct the tourist and nature relationship (Markwell, 2001). The environmental interpretation ecotour guides provide is underpinned by the assumption that "if people feel connected to nature, then they will be less likely to harm it, for harming it would in essence be harming their very self" (Mayer & McPherson Frantz, 2004, p. 512). This is aligned with the nature conservation imperative of ecotourism. In theory the environmental interpreter role has an influence in shaping the visitor experience, and ecotour guides can help tourists feel more closely connected to nature which may in turn result in environmentally conscious behaviour (Arnould & Price, 1993; Cynn, 2002; Haigh, 1997; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Roggenbuck & Williams, 1991; Wearing, Cynn, Ponting, & McDonald, 2003c). Despite wide recognition of the important role ecotour guides play in influencing the ecotourism experience, there is a dearth of information on ecotour guides (Fennell, 2003b). Nevertheless, the following section identifies the limited amount of research that has been conducted specifically on ecotour guides and their specialised role within ecotourism.

2.3.4 Conceptualising Ecotour Guides

The concept of ecotour guides is likely to have first appeared as 'ecotourism guide' in a 1994 Manidis Roberts Consultants report. The consultants were commissioned by the Australian Government to conduct research on developing ecotourism accreditation schemes (Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1994). For the purpose of this study, an ecotour guide is understood as a tour guide who:

> Strives to communicate and interpret the significance of the environment, promote minimal impact practices, promote the sustainability of the natural and cultural environment, and motivate those

> visitors to consider their own lives in relation to larger ecological or cultural concerns. (Black, 2002, p. 26)

The above definition suggests that an ecotour guide, as the term implies, needs to understand and follow ecotourism principles to perform their roles for ecotour operators, visitors, and by extension the environment. Therefore, the following sections are loosely structured around Black's (2002) description of ecotour guiding roles. As previously mentioned, due to the scope of this study, cultural components of ecotourism are excluded from this study.

Academic Research on Ecotour Guides

One of the first studies closely related to the work of ecotour guiding is that of Weiler, Johnson and Davis (1992). Their research on nature-based tour operators analysed the role guides play in achieving environmentally responsible tourism. Through their analysis a third sphere was added to Cohen's (1985) dynamics of tour guiding roles (Figure 2.1) specifically for tour guides working in natural settings. This third sphere is resource management which consist of two roles. According to Weiler *et al.*'s work based on the *Code of Environment Practice* developed by the Australian Tourism Industry Association, the resource management sphere of nature-based tour guiding explained the roles of being a motivator for pro-environmental behaviour, and of being an environmental interpreter (Black, 2002). This resource management role is also supported by more recent work by Haigh and McIntyre (2002) who examined how commercial ecotour groups viewed the role of the guide. According to Weiler and Ham (2001a), there has been no research that adopts the theoretical frameworks of Holloway (1981), Cohen (1985), Weiler *et al.* (1992) and Weiler and Davis (1993), with the exception of Haigh (1997)[21]. The purpose of Haigh's research was to explore tour guiding roles in an ecotourism experience. Tourists who purchased ecotourism products valued the guiding role as the most important followed by interpreter, teacher and motivator for environmentally responsible behaviour. The latter role concurs with the results from Weiler *et al.* (1992). Despite Haigh's convenience sample and cross-sectional research design, his study highlights the roles of ecotour guiding for ecotourism. He also notes that further research should include the voice of the tour

[21] More recently, Randall and Rollins (2009) have adopted Weiler *et al.*'s (1992) model (presented in Weiler and Davis (1993)) to understand visitors' perceptions of the role of tour guides in kayak tours.

guides themselves when attempting to understand the influence of ecotour guiding on tourists' environmental attitudes and the success of tours. Weiler (1996) also contends that leadership skills of ecotour guides are key to instilling conservation values in tourists.

Tour guides working in the area of ecotourism and/or nature-based tourism play specialised roles (Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). However, only a limited amount of empirical research has attempted to identify these specific, specialised roles and skills. Table 2.2 shows the key roles identified in the ecotour guiding literature in conjunction with other types of tour guiding roles. The table also shows the most significant role of ecotour guiding is that of environmental educator and interpreter. Thus, the role of being an environmental interpreter and educator can be categorised as one of the specialised roles of ecotour guiding. Black's (2002) definition of ecotour guides incorporates these roles suggesting the need to follow ecotourism principles. Furthermore, recent literature contends that ecotour guides need to go beyond being environmental interpreters and customer (tourist) service workers, to contribute to the larger objectives of ecotourism (Kohl, 2007) by encouraging environmentally conscious behaviour and instilling conservation values to tourists through interpretation. Weiler *et al.* (1992, p. 233) explain that:

> Tour leaders as role models for visitors must exhibit environmentally responsible behaviour, must hold environmentally responsible attitudes, and most importantly, must have the skills and abilities to promote these attitudes in visitors.

Due to the importance of ecotour guides for ecotourism, Weiler *et al.* (1992) argue that only ecotour guides with competent skills and knowledge should carry out this role. Environmental interpretation is one such skill.

Table 2.2 Key roles of general and ecotour guides in tour guiding literature

	Schmidt (1979)	Holloway (1981)	Cohen (1985)	Almagor (1985)*	Hughes (1991) *	Weiler & Davis (1993) *	Pond (1993)	Gurung *et al.* (1996) *	Haig (1997) *	Ballantyne & Hughes (2001) *	Haig & McIntyre (2002) *
Information giver	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Interpreter/Educator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Motivator of conservation values/role model	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social role/catalyst	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Leader		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Navigation/safety	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	
Cultural broker/mediator		✓	✓							✓	
Tour & group manager/organiser			✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
Public relations/company representative		✓	✓				✓				
Access to non-public areas	✓		✓						✓		✓

* Empirical studies based on ecotourism and nature-based tours

Adopted from: Black, R., 2002, *Towards a Model Tour Guide Certification: An Analysis of the Australian Ecoguide Program*, PhD Thesis, Monash University, p.23

2.3.5 Specialised Skills – Environmental Interpretation

A growing body of research has come to recognise that environmental interpretation is a key communication and management tool for nature-based tourism, ecotourism and sustainable tourism (Madin & Fenton, 2004; Moscardo, 1998; Munro, Morrison-Saunders, & Hughes, 2008; Orams, 1995b; Weiler & Ham, 2001a; Weiler & Markwell, 1998). Environmental interpretation is often trusted to influence visitor knowledge, attitude and behaviours towards nature in a positive light (Hughes & Morrison-Saunders, 2005; Kuo, 2002; Moscardo, 1998). It is also valued as a desirable way of managing visitor use of nature and increasing their enjoyment (Beckmann, 1988; Kuo, 2002; Moscardo & Woods, 1998; Orams, 1995b). Furthermore, environmental interpretation, in theory, assists in developing the intellectual and emotional connection between visitors and the natural environment (Armstrong & Weiler, 2003).

Understanding the scope of interpretation is broad and complex. The seminal work of Freeman Tilden (1977) is often quoted when interpretation is defined. According to Tilden, interpretation is "an educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships ... rather than simply to communicate factual information" (Tilden, 1977, p. 8). Moreover "any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile" (Tilden, 1977, p. 11). Therefore in a nature-based environment, the educational activity of interpretation "is trying to produce mindful visitors; visitors who are active, questioning and capable of reassessing the way they view the world" (Moscardo, 1996, p. 382). To achieve this, ecotour guides need to provide environmental interpretation that is enjoyable, relevant and well organised in a way that resonates with visitors rather than just presenting undiluted scientific facts (Weiler & Ham, 2001a).

In the context of interpreting nature, Enos Mills is identified as the first person to provide interpretation in a National Park in 1888. He conducted a guided nature hike in the Rocky Mountains National Park as a part of an entertainment program for people who were staying at his inn (Dewar, 2000). He is also recognised as one of the first people to use the term 'interpret' to explain guided nature tours and even expressed interpretation as a new form of occupation that inspires and educates others (Beck &

Cable, 2002). Darier (1999) states that "justifying human actions in the name of 'nature' leaves the unresolved problem of whose (human) voice will be legitimate to speak for 'nature'" (p. 24, original emphasis). Although interpretation is understood as a general role of tour guiding, interpreting nature is a specialised skill that distinguishes ecotour guides from other types of tour guides (Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Ham, 1992; Ham & Weiler, 2002a; Orams, 1995b; Page & Dowling, 2002; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). Thus for the ecotourism industry, the 'legitimate human voice speaking for nature' may be identified as ecotour guides.

Environmental interpretation is commonly conducted in natural settings for the purpose of recreation (Butler, 1993; Moscardo, 1998). However, when education is received through environmental interpretation in nature-based recreational settings, such as ecotours, this encourages visitors to actively participate (Butler, 1993; Markwell & Weiler, 1998) and utilise their senses (Moscardo, 1999; Newsome, Moore, & Dowling, 2002) in nature. Some authors claim that visitors who choose nature-based tourism or ecotourism already have a positive attitude towards nature and are interested in pro-environmental activities (Ballentyne & Eagles, 1994; Hatch, 1998). Some believe that the environmental awareness gained through travel will eventually lead to more environmentally conscious travel (Gossling, 2002). This is based on the assumption that tourists who purchase ecotourism experiences may have different sets of perceptions and values to those that just go fishing, swimming or canoeing (Burton, 1998; Fennell, 2000). However, some research suggests that this assumption is unsound and not empirically grounded (Cynn, 2002; Forestry Tasmania, 1994; Wearing, Cynn, Ponting, & McDonald, 2003b). The physical presence of people in natural settings does not automatically create pro-environmental attitudes (Wearing, 1986), therefore if positive attitudes towards the environment are to be encouraged, environmental interpretation for education within ecotourism is imperative (Armstrong & Weiler, 2003; Haigh, 1997; Ham, 1992; Ham & Weiler, 2002a; Page & Dowling, 2002; Pastorelli, 2003; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001a; Weiler et al., 1992).

In reviews of ecotourism definitions, nature conservation and preservation are the second most commonly mentioned component in ecotourism definitions (Donohoe & Needham, 2006; Fennell, 2001). Perhaps "increasing global concern for disappearing cultures and ecosystems" has caused ecotourism to become increasingly conservation

driven (Kutay, 1990, p. 34). The concentration of ecotourism principles on conservation over the years has created a widely accepted perception of ecotourism as a form of travel that creates minimum impact towards the natural and local environment and supports nature conservation and sustainability[22] (Boo, 1992; Ecotourism Australia, 2008; Fennell, 1999; Tao et al., 2004; Valentine, 1991; Weaver, 2008; Wight, 1994; Young, 1992). The concept of sustainability is complex to define and, in the context of tourism, the term creates many ideological challenges (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). This may be due to conflicts between tourism stakeholder interests as tourism is an economic activity that cuts across many sectors (Cater, 1995).

Although sustainability for tourism may not be clearly defined, the criteria often used for sustainability in tourism are: ecological, social, cultural, and economic (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). In addition, sustainability has an inherent relationship with conservation as "it relies on the ability of the environment to renew itself without impairing or damaging its ability to do so" (Wearing & Neil, 1999, p. 16). Therefore, when ecotourism principles are discussed, ecological sustainability – in other words the conservation of nature – in ecotourism destinations is often the central focus (cf. Boo, 1992; Fennell, 2003a; Scace, 1993; Tao et al., 2004; Valentine, 1991; Wallace & Pierce, 1996; Wight, 1993a; Young, 1992; Ziffer, 1989). However, more recently, socio-cultural and economic sustainability are also becoming equal partners in ecotourism definitions in conjunction with nature conservation (Fennell & Weaver, 2005).

The nature conservation theme of ecotourism is implicitly linked to environmental interpretation and education. Hence, it may be argued that environmental education and interpretation is the most important component of the ecotourism experience (Blamey, 2001). This may be due to the fact that it plays a pivotal role in structuring a satisfactory ecotourism experience for visitors and may change visitors' attitudes, intentions and behaviour towards the environment in a positive manner (Beaumont, 2001; Edwards, McLaughlin, & Ham, 2001; Kimmel, 1999). The prevailing discourse is that the relationship tourist's form with the natural environment through environmental

[22] The World Commission on Environment and Development (1987, p. 8) explains the concept of sustainability and sustainable development as a human ability to "ensure that it [humanity] meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

interpretation provided by ecotour guides ideally instils environmentally responsible behaviours. The question thus arises as to whether environmental interpretation truly succeeds in influencing visitor attitudes and behaviour towards the natural environment (Munro et al., 2008). Achieving this is a difficult task. For ecotourism operations the onus is on environmental interpretation provided by ecotour guides to influence tourists' attitudes and behaviour.

Effective environmental interpretation programs are generally interpersonal (face-to-face) rather than non-personal (Hughes & Morrison-Saunders, 2005). Face-to-face interpretation creates spontaneity and responsiveness that directly meets the changing needs of visitors (Wearing & Neil, 1999). Therefore, face-to-face interpretation has been called "the heart and soul" of guiding (Weiler & Ham, 2001a, p. 549). This is where the role of ecotour guiding is considered crucial for ecotourism. An empirical study conducted on guides working in ecotourism operations expressed the importance of the guide in facilitating visitor interaction, connection and relationships with the natural environment.

> Guides, through the various roles they undertake, hold one of the keys to facilitating the environment-client's [tourist's] experience ... guides are an important part of the commercial ecotourism experience. They may therefore play the role of an active agent at the interface between the environment and the tourist by contributing to the experience as interpreters, organisers, motivators, and entertainers. (Haigh & McIntyre, 2002, p. 45)

Therefore, ecotour guides can develop dynamic interactions with their tourists through environmental interpretation and satisfy ecotourism principles (Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). In addition, environmental interpretation can provide knowledge, generate respect for nature and instil conservation values which may result in environmentally friendly behaviour (Black 2002), add value to visitor experience and enhance their enjoyment (Wearing & Neil, 1999; Weiler & Davis, 1993). To achieve all of this, interpretation needs to be powerful (Beck & Cable, 2002) and persuasive (Ham & Weiler, 2003).

> When interpreters talk about using persuasive communication, they, too, must recognise that their expressed intent is to manipulate how their audiences think, feel and behave. Yes, we invoke a variety of euphemisms to justify our need to manipulate our audiences (e.g., "use of interpretation

> as a management tool", "managing visitor behaviour", etc.), but there is little doubt that we are squarely in the manipulation business. We may want people to think or know certain things so that they will have a rich experience; we often want them to value what we value; and we almost always want them to behave in certain ways (and not in others) when they are in the midst of the places and things we interpret. That is, we want to manipulate them to think, feel and behave in certain ways. There is perhaps more of a Machiavellian underpinning to contemporary interpretation than we'd like to admit. But there is no mistaking the fact that interpreters are in the manipulation business. (Ham & Weiler, 2003, p. 1, original emphasis)

Due to the significant role ecotour guides play in environmental interpretation for ecotourism, issues have been raised on the quality and type of interpretation that is provided for tourists (Black, 2007; Kohl, 2007; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). The quality and type of interpretation that is provided by tour guides may differ from one guide to another especially where there is no regulatory mechanisms (Bras, 2000; Dahles, 2002). Drawing on Schmidt's (1979) observation on tour guides, Cohen (1985) comments that:

> The guide may select the "objects of interest" in accordance with his personal preferences and taste, his professional training, the directions received from his employer or from the tourist authorities, or the assumed interest of his party. In any case, his selection will, to a considerable extent, structure his party's attention during the trip: not only will they see what he wants them to see, but perhaps more importantly, they will not see what he wants them to see. (Cohen, 1985, p. 14, original emphasis)

Furthermore, recent debate has positioned ecotourism as a Western ideology and has begun to question who decides what sustainability is, what needs to be sustained, and how sustainability is to be achieved (cf. Cater, 2006; Duffy, 2006; Zanotti & Chernela, 2008). In the context of this study, the question is who gets to decide what parts of nature are interpreted and how they are interpreted for visitors? This question extends to whether goals of sustainability are being attained through the work of ecotour guides, and how this could be measured. This in turn raises issues of quality control in ecotourism and ecotour guiding. Exploring how these issues are being addressed and what influence this is having on ecotour guides is the focal point of this study.

This chapter presented information on the roles and functions that are performed through ecotour guides' work activities identified from literature. The following chapter

utilises this information as the basis to apply the sociological concepts of work, professionalisation and professionalism to achieve the study aim.

2.4 Summary

The aim of this chapter was to establish a context for this study by conceptualising the roles played and skills involved in ecotour guiding. Due to the paucity of research specifically concerning ecotour guiding, a review of the literature included general tour guiding, ecotourism and environmental interpretation, as well as that relating specifically to ecotour guides.

It was explained that the concept of the modern tour guide is rooted in the traditional guiding roles of pathfinder and mentor. More recent research has expanded these roles and examined the multi-faceted nature of tour guiding. Amongst these roles, the interpreter/educator role of tour guides had the most significant relevance to the unique roles of ecotour guides. The role of an environmental interpreter to encourage environmentally conscious behaviour and instil conservation values in tourists was recognised as a 'specialised ingredient' of an ecotour guide that influences the ecotourism experience (Weiler et al., 1992).

Despite the lack of empirical research and theoretical application in ecotour guiding studies, the literature explains the significance of environmental interpretation skills of ecotour guides. Environmental interpretation is widely recognised as a tool to improve visitor management and the nature experience (Armstrong & Weiler, 2003). For ecotourism, ecotour guides are able to adhere to ecotourism principles through environmental interpretation (Haigh & McIntyre, 2002) that instils conservation values, motivates pro-environmental behaviour for visitors, and as a result minimise environmental impacts. Thus, this chapter highlighted the importance of the environmental interpretation skills of ecotour guides and raised questions about the style and technique of ecotour guides' interpretation skills.

CHAPTER THREE: PROFESSIONALISM IN AUSTRALIAN ECOTOUR GUIDING

> Let me only indicate that in my own studies I passed from the false question "Is this occupation a profession?" to the more fundamental one, "What are the circumstances in which the people in an occupation attempt to turn it into a profession, and themselves into professional people?" (Hughes, 1971, p. 340)

3.1 Introduction

Hughes' (1971) thoughts on the circumstances in which an occupational group attempts to achieve professional status informs the structure of this chapter. To comprehend how ecotour guides are becoming professionalised within the Australian ecotourism industry, this chapter aligns with the first objective of this study: to analyse and understand ecotour guiding as an occupation in light of the literature on professionalism. Eliot Freidson's (1970a, 1970b, 1972, 1983, 1986, 1994, 2001) ideas on professionalisation and professionalism are employed to guide the literature review presented in this chapter. Freidson (1994) explains that the professionalisation of occupational groups needs to be studied on a case by case basis due to the unique contextualising factors (social, cultural, historical, political and legal) that compose each occupational group. In addition, Freidson notes that the process of professionalisation is undertaken with a view to achieve the ideal state of professionalism – autonomy of work, free from the influence of outside interests (Freidson, 1994, 2001). Hence, the professionalisation of ecotour guides is treated as an individual case with professionalisation theory used to inform the direction of the study.

This chapter begins with a discussion on the meanings of work; understanding the meanings of work is central to understanding professionalisation. Firstly, the work of Marx (1967) and Hughes (1971) is engaged to provide a context for theorising the key concepts of work and occupations. Secondly, subsequent research which builds upon Marx and Hughes' theoretical foundation is analysed (c.f. Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 1970a, 1970b, 1972, 1983, 1986, 1994, 2001; Larson, 1977). A range of different theoretical approaches to understanding professions are discussed. Professionalisation is

then defined in terms of a process that occupational groups experience to achieve the ideal state of professionalism. As such, the concept of professionalism is adopted as a means to examine the stages of professionalisation being undertaken by the Australian ecotourism industry in its attempt to achieve professional status and to raise ecotour guides' level of professionalism.

A number of particularly significant professionalising events for ecotour guides in the Australian ecotourism industry are noted, including: the creation of professional codes; the establishment of professional associations; the provision of education and training courses; and, an increase in professional certification programs. The chapter concludes by summarising these professionalising events (see Table 3.2) and arguing that professionalisation is happening in a unique way for ecotour guides in the Australian ecotourism industry.

3.2 Conceptualising Work

3.2.1 Introduction

In order to achieve the objective of analysing the work of ecotour guides in light of the professionalism literature, it is imperative to explore the range of concepts and theories concerned with the professionalisation of work and occupations. The discussion of work and occupations in the sociological literature is substantive, the various subfields of work included in these discussions involve gender, status mobility, unions, income, labour, social control of work, work organisations, labour markets, race, inequality in work experience, unemployment, technology and manufacturing employment (Abbott, 1993, pp. 191-192). As such, this study selectively explores the meanings of work and occupations that are uniquely applicable to understanding the work of ecotour guides, and ecotour guiding as an occupation.

In Chapter One of this study, the definition of work adopted was "the supply of physical, mental, and emotional effort to produce goods and services for [one's] own consumption, or for consumption by others" (Marshall, 1998, p. 706). Hence, the work of ecotour guides can be understood as: the physical, mental and emotional effort to produce ecotours for consumption by tourists. Work, however, is not a simple concept. The notion of productive work is divided into "economic activity or employment,

unpaid domestic and leisure activities, and volunteer community service" (Marshall, 1998, p. 706). In this context, ecotour guiding can be interpreted as work whether it is through paid employment or volunteering.

According to Bosnac and Jacobs (2006) the characteristics of work may change with different types of professions or occupations (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006). Perceptions of work are a product of social construction, and therefore contrasting and conflicting views are to be expected (Bosanac, 2006; Mills, 1951). As a result, defining, qualifying, and interpreting work activities is a complex and problematic task (Grint, 1998). Theoretically, any human activity may be explained as work. The approach taken here views work as symbolic in nature. This means that:

> The language and discourse of work are symbolic representations through which meanings and social interests are constructed, mediated and deployed. In short, the meanings of work ... are created, challenged, altered and sustained through the contending discourses: if particular forms of activity are represented through discourse as valued or valueless then the activities themselves take on such characteristics for those appropriating such a discourse. (Grint, 1998, p. 8)

In this context, what one regards as the work of ecotour guides does not depend on the activities or skills that ecotour guides perform, but rather on how one sees and interprets ecotour guides' work. While the essence of ecotour guiding activities do not change, the way one person sees these activities may differ from others, and thus the perceptions of ecotour guides' work varies amongst people. Chapter Two illustrated how researchers perceive the work of ecotour guides in terms of various roles and skills. However, the way ecotour guides see and interpret their own work is yet to be explored. As the focus of this study is to analyse the impact professionalisation is having on the work of ecotour guides, it is imperative to provide an alternative, theoretically grounded and philosophically sophisticated perspective of work that is yet to be incorporated into ecotour guiding literature and research. This alternative perspective is likely to produce a new theoretical lens through which to analyse the impact of professionalisation on ecotour guiding. Thus, the following sections discuss the meanings and ideas of work applicable to the occupation of ecotour guiding.

3.2.2 Meanings of Work – Creating Self-Identity

One of the most influential scholars in the analysis of work is Karl Marx (Cornfield & Hodson, 2002; Grint, 1998; Korczynski, Hodson, & Edwards, 2006). Marx states that the special element which differentiates humans from other species is humans' ability to engage in the production of its own means of subsistence (Marx, 1967). Hence, according to Marx, humans are fundamentally producers, and this unique activity of producing goods and services is described as labour or labour-power. Marx (1967) distinguishes labour and labour-power respectively into, 'the activity itself' and 'a person's ability to labour'. For Marxists, in capitalist societies, the owners of labour or labour-power (the labourers) exchange their efforts for a wage with the owners of the means of labour production (the capitalist) (McCauley, 2006). Marx further explains that in a capitalist society this labour-power, the ability to work, becomes a commodity to be bought and sold. Therefore, a certain quantity of labour-power is exchanged for a certain quantity of wage (Marx, 1995).

According to Urry (1981), labour-power cannot be produced like other commodities, therefore it contains unique characteristics. The seller of labour-power is also the bearer of the labour-power, and therefore labour-power as a commodity cannot be separated from the seller/bearer like other commodities (Urry, 1981). Labour-power constitutes work in Marxist theory. For Marx, labourers find their self-identify and express creativity through work, the labour-power exchange creates a labourer's perception towards society (Marx, 1967; McCauley, 2006). Therefore, the products of labour-power such as goods and services are reflections of a labourer's self-identity and creativeness (Grint, 1998). Furthermore, work, which engages one's labour and labour-power, is also a way of forming one's position and identity, as through work one projects self-realisation of individual significance in society (Grint, 1998). Hence, Marx identified work "as the primary arena in which people become who they are" (Leidner, 2006, p. 427). Work and its potential to facilitate self-realisation in the life of the worker, is central to Marx's theories. However, Marx stresses that under capitalism, these unique qualities and intrinsic values of humans – producing their own means of subsistence and uncovering self-identity and creativity through work – are continuously challenged (Grint, 1998). For Marx, workers under capitalism are prevented from realising their potential through work. He describes this notion in terms of alienation,

which occurs when work is organised under capitalism where it separates workers' activities from their intentions and goals (Leidner, 2006).

The meanings of work for the individual can also be found in identity formation and development within society. Everett C. Hughes (1984), an eminent sociologist states that work can be used to judge a person, but it can also be used for a person to judge him/herself[23]. He explains that:

> Many people in our society work in named occupations. The names are tags, a combination of price tag and calling card. One has only to hear casual conversation to sense how important these tags are. Hear a salesman, who has just been asked what he does, reply, "I am in sales work," or "I am in promotional work," not "I sell skillets." (Hughes, 1971, p. 338)

Hughes demonstrates that the names and titles of occupations reflect an individuals worth and status. Further, a sense of identity is developed through the name or title of one's work. The creation of more favourable names (for example, 'I do promotional work' rather than 'I sell skillets') suggests that there is an audience interpreting the social values of work titles. Hence, according to Hughes, individual identity is created through work and social interactions where the title of our work is used as a means by which others come to evaluate us. In this context, the various titles describing tour guides and ecotour guides (see Chapter Two) may not only reflect the types of work implied by each title, but may also reflect a desire to maximise the social value of the guides' occupational status (see Chapter Five).

During the 1950s and 1960s a range of studies questioned the degree to which identity formation is based on work. These various studies revealed that industrial workers (Dubin, 1956), well-paid factory workers (Goldthorpe, 1968), and middle-class workers (Mills, 1951) did not deeply associate their identities with their work. For most people work is "a sacrifice of time, necessary to building a life outside of it" (Mills, 1951, p.

[23] In the original quote Everett C. Hughes (1984, p. 339) describes work as "a man's work" which implies a gender specific concept (Leidner, 2006). It is not the purpose of this study to clarify the gender related issues in the sociology of work, however it is worth indicating that a number of recent and worthwhile studies are dedicated to this specific topic (cf. Bosanac, 2006; Runté & Mills, 2004). Nevertheless, this study does not accept the gender specific quote due to its gender ambiguity, but rather interprets the term 'man' as referring to human kind.

228). In this context, work is viewed as a source of extrinsic reward where it provides income, status and power, as opposed to intrinsic rewards such as satisfaction and self-actualisation (Snir & Harpaz, 2002). Extrinsic rewards are particularly important for workers who do not control their own work; in this situation it is unlikely that opportunities for intrinsic rewards will be available (Leidner, 2006).

More contemporary research focuses less on the nature of work itself, and more on the broader social implications of work. These include "the changes in the organisation of society, modes of exercising power and work related cultural shifts" (Leidner, 2006, p. 429). The economic, social, and political globalisation that has come to characterise the 21st century has had a profound effect on the process of self-formation. This is due to the demise of relatively stable institutions, such as family, community, and religious observances, which once provided a 'wider web of meaning' (Baumeister, 1987; Geertz, 1973). The demise of traditional institutions has meant that self-identity has become a much more open matter – a highly reflexive project where multiple choices, ideologies and beliefs are filtered through abstract systems and commodification (Bauman, 2001; Giddens, 1991). Therefore some would argue that the importance of work in people's lives, as a domain for self-expression and self-identity formation, has decreased (Featherstone, 2007; Leidner, 2006). While it is undeniable that the process by which self-idenity takes shape in modern Western society has changed, work still structures many aspects of everyday life, and for many people it continues to shape their sense of self-identity:

> Those with the greatest economic and education resources, who presumably are most able to determine the shape of their lives, often exercise choice by investing heavily in a work-based identity. (Leidner, 2006, p. 430)

More people have turned to work to create a sense of belonging and recognition (Snir & Harpaz, 2002) as traditional family and community ties have weakened (Hochschild, 1983). Therefore, the self- and social-identity meanings ascribed to one's work are more important for the individual than they possibly were in traditional societies prior to the industrial revolution.

There is an underlying assumption that work is a way of creating an identity for workers in society and a way of obtaining financial remuneration. The following section discusses 'emotional labour' an aspect of work commonly cited in the service-work literature, including tourism (cf. Anderson, 2006; Van Dijk & Kirk, 2008), to provide an additional facet to understanding the meanings that ecotour guides may ascribe to their work.

3.2.3 Work as Emotional Labour

Understanding the individual work experience of ecotour guides is a stepping stone to exploring the impact professionalisation has on their work. In recent years, the personal management of emotions involved in work has captured great academic interest (Hochschild, 1998). The term 'emotional labour' was coined by Arlie Hochschild to describe "the display of expected emotions by service agents during service encounters" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, p. 88). This definition implies that emotional labour is related to work that entails service[24]. Hochschild (1983, p. 147) initially established the types of work where emotional labour was carried out. These types of work have three main characteristics: face-to-face, voice-to-voice or facial contact with the public; producing an emotional state from the customer; and, employers having some form of control over the employee. The following discussion explains how the work of ecotour guides involves emotional labour in accordance with these three characteristics.

Firstly, tour guides (including ecotour guides), are often described as the front-line workers of the tourism industry because they come into direct contact with tourists (Adib & Guerrier, 2001; Ap & Wong, 2001; Guerrier & Adib, 2003). The work of ecotour guides involves direct 'face-to-face, voice-to-voice and facial contact' with tourists, which entails some type of emotional labour. Performing emotional labour

[24] 'Service' is a term that loosely defines labour-intensive economic activities which involve professions providing personal care (Marshall, 1998). In the context of tourism, it is "essentially a service industry or, perhaps more accurately, an amalgam of service industries" (Otto & Brent Ritchie, 1996, p. 165). Thus, tourism is a service product that makes a tourism-related business distinctive and competitive. This aspect of tourism-related business generates continuous challenges in how an organisation provides quality service (Obenour, Patterson, Pederson, & Pearson, 2006). In this context, services provided by ecotour guides may influence the tourists' experience and the business operations of employers.

during direct contact with tourists (customers) can be viewed as either 'surface acting' where the displayed emotions are not really felt or, 'deep acting' where attempts are made to experience the emotions displayed in behaviour (Anderson, 2006; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Hochschild, 1983). Deep acting often requires the worker to "psych" themselves into the desired emotional state (Mann, 1997, p. 7). It is interesting to note that either through surface or deep acting, emotional labour is described as 'acting'.

In this context, front-line workers in leisure and tourism[25] need to 'act' in a way that "conveys a sense that the employee is not engaged in work, so that the consumer is not reminded of the world of work and can get on with the happy task of buying, eating, gambling and so on" (Bryman, 1999, p. 43). Ecotour guides then perform emotional labour through shallow or deep acting by conveying a sense that they are not 'at work' so that tourists can enjoy their tours. Thus, it is incumbent on the ecotour guide as a front-line service worker to become "a one-minute friend to the next customer who approaches" even if they do not genuinely feel like doing so (Albrecht & Zemke, 1985, pp. 114-115). This leads to another characteristic of work that involves emotional labour – allowing employers to have some form of control over the employee (Hochschild, 1983).

Ecotour guides who work for tour operators or tourism organisations are controlled to some extent by employers and management to act in a particular way – to perform the desired persona. Due to the lack of research on emotional labour related to ecotour guiding, this study seeks to examine more general research conducted in the field of leisure service work. In this context, from a managerial perspective, emotional labour is "the effort, planning and control needed to express organisationally desired emotion during interpersonal transaction" (Morris & Feldman, 1996, p. 987). Workers in the field of leisure service (including tourism) perform emotional labour where they are required by their employers to express emotions that will bring benefits to their

[25] Tourism is often proposed as a form of leisure (Leiper, 1990). Both fields share a number of similarities with one another and separating the two would be a difficult task (Crick, 1989). Leisure theory underpins much sociological analysis of tourism (cf. Cohen, 1995). Thus, it can be argued that front-line workers in tourism (such as ecotour guides) perform similar work to front-line leisure workers (Guerrier & Adib, 2003). This study subscribes to the location of tourism and ecotour guides within the broader leisure theory field.

organisation – to feel genuinely happy rather than just looking happy. To achieve this desired effect, employers and mangers attempt to control and standardise the emotions of workers (Bulan, Erickson, & Wharton, 1997; Erickson & Wharton, 1997).

Employers and managers may control and manipulate their workers' feelings and emotions during work by providing service manuals, training, and educational programs designed to assist workers to act in a standardised way (Erickson & Wharton, 1997; Korczynski, 2002; Korczynski *et al.*, 2000). In this context, Hochschild (1983, p. 7) explains that emotional labour is "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value". She also contends that workers have to manage their emotions for their wage, and may thus become alienated from their authentic selves (Hochschild, 1983). As such, ecotour guides can be perceived "as an actor performing on stage for an … audience" (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993, p. 90). However, this assumes that workers perform their work in an inauthentic manner and that a true self uncontaminated by social expectations actually exists deep inside the workers psyche, which represents an authentic-self

Authenticity occurs when "one's emotional expression or display is consistent with the display rules of a specific identity that one has internalised (or wants to internalise) as a reflection of self" (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000, p. 195). In contemporary societies people are encouraged to know themselves, be themselves and be true to themselves, especially through their leisure activities (Gabriel & Lang, 2006; Wearing & Wearing, 1991). In this context, if work is a projection of one's identity and a reflection of the self then theoretically workers in tourism can express their authentic selves in their work. For example, Bauman (2000) and Guerrier and Adib (2003) argue that leisure work (which includes tourism work) can be another form of leisure if a worker's authentic self can be expressed during work. For ecotour guides who are often working in small self-owned companies, in pristine natural settings, may not be performing emotional labour for a wage but actually expressing their self-identity, and by extension their authentic-self. While work is generally understood as the opposite of leisure (Guerrier & Adib, 2003) – "something we have to do, something we may prefer not to do and something we tend to get paid for" (Grint, 1998, p. 10) – the work of ecotour guides involves the leading

and supervision of activities generally considered to be leisure activities (for example, walking through nature).

Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour has been applied to a diverse range of situations and contexts (cf. Leidner, 1999). However, some argue that the negative elements of emotional labour have been overstated, particularly in the field of customer service (Fineman, 1993; Korczynski, 2002). Not every worker's experience is the same. Not all service workers have purely formal employee-customer relationships (Guerrier & Adib, 2003). The pleasures of customer service work often come from treating interactions with customers as person-to-person rather than employee to customer (Fineman, 1993; Korczynski, 2002). In addition, some leisure service workers work in environments they would frequent during their own leisure time (Adler & Adler, 1999; Crang, 1994; Guerrier & Adib, 2003). In this context, ecotour guides who conduct their work in natural environments may not perceive leading an ecotour as work, but rather a person-to-person social exchange in a natural setting. Therefore, nature is not just a backdrop for work but a place where ecotour guides socialise with others and it may be possible to express their authentic selves. However, controls imposed by managers and employers to standardise the emotional labour of workers could potentially shift the social exchange inherent in the person-to-person approach to work into a more formal customer-employee relationship. This raises questions as to whether standardisation, a noted result of professionalisation (Blumer, 1966), impacts the way ecotour guides perform their work. Hence, the professionalisation of ecotour guides' work may trigger the performance of emotional labour. The following sections introduce and explore various theories of professionalisation that provide an understanding of how work can be professionalised to achieve a professional status and how professionalism may be attained.

3.3 Professionalisation and the Professions

3.3.1 Introduction

An analysis of professionalisation would not be complete without first understanding what constitutes professions, professionals, and professionalism (Fleming, 1996). Profession, professionalisation and professional "are all extremely ambiguous words" as their meanings are intertwined, and they are often confused or used interchangeably

(Freidson, 1994, p. 101). By way of clarification, Freidson (1994) argues that professionalisation can occur at three different levels: an individual who shows individual characteristics of being a 'professional'; an organisation that conducts 'professional' practice; and, a 'professionalised' industry (Freidson, 1994).

A range of different theories have been devised to explain how workers become professionals, and how occupations become professionalised industries (cf. Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 1970b, 1986; Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977; Turner & Hodge, 1970; Vollmer & Mills, 1966; Wilensky, 1964). The following sections explore professionalisation and the professions with a view to establishing links between professionalisation theory and the practice of ecotour guides.

3.3.2 Defining Professionalisation

Many occupations in contemporary society have sought professional status and undergone a professionalisation process to become professions (Abbott, 1988; Goode, 1969; Millerson, 1964b; Wilensky, 1964). Earlier studies have analysed professionalisation as a 'process' in the context of "specialised skill and training, minimum fees or salaries, formation of professional associations, and codes of ethics governing professional practice" (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933; Vollmer & Mills, 1966, p. 2). These concepts of professionalisation have not changed drastically over the years. When professionalisation is explained as a process, the overall consensus is that the process involves occupations attaining professional status and professionalism (Auer, 2004; Birkett & Evans, 2005; Evetts, 2006b; Kyrö, 1995; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Larson, 1977; Siegrist, 1990; Vollmer & Mills, 1966).

Recent literature continues to interpret professionalisation as a 'process' where an occupation attempts to reach certain types of end-states such as: exclusive rights to perform particular types of work (Vollmer & Mills, 1966); attain professional status and public recognition (Jackson, 1970; Siegrist, 1990; Wilensky, 1964); gain authority and autonomy in work (Beckman, 1990); standardise practice amongst professionals (Kyrö, 1995); and, market control by expertise of work (Freidson, 1970a; Larson, 1977). Although the literature describes the outcomes and processes involved in professionalisation, explicit definitions of professionalisation are rare (Birkett & Evans,

2005). In addition, interpretations of the professionalisation process vary as different occupational groups involve different processes. Therefore, professionalisation is explained as a sum of all processes, rather than a single designated process, that are intrinsic to the development of occupations becoming professions (Siegrist, 1990).

One of the most significant professionalisation processes required to achieve professional status occurs when occupations claim to possess a set of expert knowledge and skills[26] that cannot be reproduced by other occupations (Vollmer & Mills, 1966). According to Larson (1977, p. xvii) professionalisation is "... an attempt to translate one order of scarce resources – special knowledge and skills – into-another – social and economic rewards" that may lead to upward social mobility[27] and market control. When expert knowledge and skills are obtained, the professional group "obtains the exclusive right to perform a particular kind of work, control training for and access to it, and control the right of determining and evaluating the way the work is performed" (Vollmer & Mills, 1966). Through professionalisation, the producers of expert knowledge and skills (the professionals) can establish and control their market. In this context, the professionalisation process takes on an almost academic character in that expert knowledge and skills can "only be obtained in higher institutes of learning, professional practice being limited to those who successfully complete entrance examinations and obtain the respective title" (Siegrist, 1990, p. 177). Typical examples are medical physicians and lawyers, although an increasing number of other occupational groups are following this trend (cf. Birkett & Evans, 2005; Etzioni, 1969; Payne, 2002). Thus this 'respective title' or "honorific title" (Porter, 1992, p. 720)

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[26] Authors in the professionalisation literature use either 'special' or 'expert' to describe knowledge and skills that are required by occupational groups to achieve professional status. For example Freidson uses mainly 'specialised' in his book *Professionalism, The Third Logic* (2001). However, in *Professionalism Reborn* (1994) he uses expertise. The key point is that whether 'special' or 'expert' knowledge and skills are required for an occupation, they are required to perform 'specialised work' (Freidson, 1983, 1986, 1994, 2001). Thus, the work of the professions are considered 'special', whether 'expert' or 'special' is used to describe the knowledge and skills of professionals is inconsequential. To reduce confusion, this study will refer to 'expert knowledge and skills' required to perform 'specialised work'.

[27] Social mobility is the movement of individuals, and at times a whole group (for this study, ecotour guides), within the social stratification of a society (Marshall, 1998). In the study of professions, social mobility refers to changes in occupational prestige (Birkett & Evans, 2005). Through the professionalisation process occupational groups may gain professional prestige.

acquired through professionalisation raises "the social standing of an occupational group mainly by means of higher requirements for formal training" (Beckman, 1990, p. 117). In addition, the professionalisation process may also involve separating and excluding other occupations as professional groups create exclusiveness, and monopolise the market place and satisfy them in a way that they have devised (Larson, 1977; Millerson, 1964b; Siegrist, 1990).

Professionalisation often leads an occupational group to become professionalised and form a professional group. Once established, this professional group is nurtured and protected by governing bodies within its discipline in order to maintain its economic and social advantages (Illich, 1977; Turner & Hodge, 1970; Voller & Mills, 1966). Governing bodies range from academic institutions that provide skills and knowledge, to trade unions that set rules and regulations of practice, to associations that create standards through certificates and qualifications (Jackson, 1970; Larson, 1977; Millerson, 1964b; Siegrist, 1990; Stickweh, 1997; Wearing & Darby, 1989). In order to protect, control and nurture professional groups, professional associations are created and certificates and training programs are developed with educational institutions that are given permission to teach and qualify people in the various professions (Auer, 2004; Illich, 1977, 2003; Jackson, 1970; Larson, 1977; Siegrist, 1990). Hence, professionalisation is a way of "organising jobs and work in a division of labour" (Freidson, 1994, p. 62) and "inducing a normative pattern" (Millerson, 1964b, p. 10). Through professional institutions, unions, organisations and associations, the scope of professional practice is defined and controlled, and moreover, professional recognition from society and government is gained (Siegrist, 1990).

Although different occupations may experience different professionalisation processes, overall, an occupation moves towards a professional status and achieves professionalism resulting in a generalised system of knowledge and relatively homogeneous practice between professionals (Goebel, 1996; Jackson, 1970; Kyrö, 1995; Millerson, 1964b). In addition, any form of work that obtains professional status provides the individual worker with a sense of pride, security and achievement (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006). In the context of this study the question is whether the homogenisation of practice and knowledge through professionalisation (Macdonald, 1995; Millerson, 1964b) impacts the work of ecotour guides.

It has been presented in this section that although there may be differing processes involved in professionalisation, regardless of the process, where professionalisation has been successful the result is an occupational group that becomes a professional group. The professional group, called the professions in professionalism literature, are discussed throughout history by evolving sociological theories. The following section provides a historical outline of how the professions have been viewed and developed over the years, and examines the differing theories and explanations of the professions within society. This sets the basis for establishing ways of analysing and interpreting the impact professionalisation has on the work of ecotour guides and their roles and functions within the Australian ecotourism industry.

3.3.3 Different Ways of Understanding the Professions

Industrial societies have a tendency to professionalise occupations raising questions about the nature of professions (Goode, 1969). However, defining the professions is problematic and complex to the point of being avoided altogether by some authors (Evetts, 2003; Freidson, 2001). As a result, theoretical perceptions of the professions have changed over time. Studies attempting to delineate which occupations are qualified as professions lack of consensus (Freidson, 1983; Millerson, 1964b). Hence, the characteristics of the professions, and more importantly the process of how professions obtain, maintain, and lose their positions in society, have been discussed in detail (Leicht & Fennell, 2001).

Qualifying Occupations and Professions

The first issue related to differentiating professions from occupations is understanding which types of work activities qualify as occupations. An occupation may be understood as an economic role resulting from growth in markets for labour (Marshall, 1998) which encourage occupations to become increasingly diversified and skilled (Haralambos & Heald, 1980). In order to qualify as an occupation, work activities are evaluated on the basis of specialisation – "the use of a circumscribed body of knowledge and skills thought to gain particular productive ends" (Freidson, 2001, p. 18).

From an individual's perspective, an occupation is more than a simple set of work activities. An occupation is performed by individuals who purposefully sought out the

required skills and knowledge (Hughes, 1971). If work is a way of forming individual and social identity (see section 3.2.2) then an occupation, which includes work activities, also plays an important role in individual identity construction. In contemporary societies, one's occupation is often used as an indicator of status. This means that the economic role of occupations acquired a social category where its labour power has an important role in the exchange economy (Elliott, 1972).

Like professions, occupational groups tend to continuously enhance the degree of specialisation in an effort to protect their occupations (Vollmer & Mills, 1966). The difference between professions and occupations begins when people's knowledge and skills in producing goods and services is established, and advances to a level that distinguishes them from others who perform similar tasks (Rowling, 1987). Occupations are differentiated from full professions by a variety of terms including quasi-professions (Moore, 1970), semi-professions (Etzioni, 1969), para-professions (Freidson, 1970b), or status and occupational professions (Elliott, 1972). These terms were created to deal with the different autonomy and status occupational groups possess but more importantly, to imply which occupations are 'non-professions' (Macdonald, 1995). The division between occupations and professions has intrigued sociologists in the field of professionalism discourse for many years. This may be due to the fact that the conception and development of the professions contributed to one of the most significant occupational changes in contemporary society (Parsons, 1972). A key concern has been determining what does and does not constitute a profession.

> Occupations differ from professions in that they generally require less advance training, fewer credentials, and tend to offer lower wages and less substantive benefits packages. This is not to diminish the value of occupations, nor is it to neglect the reality that many occupations provide high quality jobs. However, within Western society, professions have generally been privileged over occupations because of the generally rigorous and lengthy periods of training required before someone can take up a professional position. (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006, p. 2)

In the 19th century English speaking world[28], the fields of divinity (which include university teaching), law and medicine (Evetts, 2003; Freidson, 2001; Larson, 1977) became established as professions. Since then, many other types of occupations have surfaced and evolved to join the professions. For example, in the early 1900s, certified accounting, dentistry and some disciplines in engineering were recognised as professions (Wilensky, 1964). Depending on the classification used, more professions from the field of social work, psychiatry, educational psychology and various forms of counselling appeared (Esland, 1980). Many other occupational groups such as accounting and engineering continue their efforts to gain professional status to this day (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). With the distinctions made between occupations and the professions in the literature, the following section introduces one of the foundation theories in understanding the professions.

Functionalism and the Professions

Until the 1960s, functionalist sociologists adopted Emilé Durkheim's ideas on the division of labour and professional ethics to investigate the professions (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Macdonald, 1995, 2006a; McCauley, 2006). Of the founding fathers of sociology to theorise work (Max Weber, Karl Marx and Emilé Durkheim), Durkheim alone discussed professions in relation to their functional performance in society (Burrage, 1990). Durkheim (1933) believed that societies produce a division of labour where workers are joined into an overall system. Within this system the divisions of labour integrate with each other to create a harmonious economic society. Thus, Durkheim's main interest on the division of labour is in "the moral consequences; that is, its effect on the underlying solidarity of the society" (Marshall, 1998, p. 166). In his view, professions play an intermediary role between individuals and the state where they would prevent societal breakdown (Macdonald, 1995). Durkheim's main concern

[28] The historical and theoretical developments of understanding and analysing the professions vary between the Anglo-English countries and some Continental European countries. The English term professions does not translate into equivalent European languages (such as French, German or Finnish) and hence, has different cultural interpretations (Auer, 2004; Burrage, 1990; Geison, 1984). Many writers acknowledge the difference between the development of the professions amongst nations (cf. Burrage, 1990; Collins, 1990a; Elliott, 1972; Larson, 1977; Macdonald, 1995). The Anglo-English conceptions of the professions and professionalism are adopted for use in this study.

was in "the organic integration of society[29]" which he thought was "threatened by unrestricted individual aspirations and hence a lack of social discipline, principles or guiding norms" (Watson, 2003, p. 28). To resolve this uncertainty, Durkheim explains that professions are functional forces or roles in society that promote relationships between individuals and economic states (McCauley, 2006). These roles are interpreted as moral authority. For Durkheim, professions assist in the regulatory function of social order and have a stabilising effect on societal structure (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933). Durkheim's interpretation of the professions were, however, based on French professions that were more formalised, hierarchical and closer to the state than Anglo-English professions (Macdonald, 2006a).

Although criticism and rejection of functionalism began in the early 1970s (Macdonald, 1995), the functionalist approach still provides insightful analyses of the roles, structures and statuses of the professions within contemporary society (McCauley, 2006). Firstly, functionalism is aligned with Durkheim's theory on moral authority where the social functions and roles of the professions within society are interpreted as 'collective orientation' rather than self-orientation (Parsons, 1954). This means that the professions have a social functioning role that provides interconnectedness within social structures. Thus, professions engage in 'intellectual disciplines' and utilise their competence for socially responsible causes which aims to achieve a common set of beliefs and values for social order (Parsons, 1972). Professions get 'the calling' to acquire education and skills to serve society (Moore, 1970). According to functionalist beliefs, professions achieve and contribute to the functional society through altruism, out of concern for others in the whole of society (Marshall, 1963). In this context, professions operate as "morally inspired reaction to the disintegrating effects of the egoism and self interest" (Watson, 2003, p. 51). Therefore, professions are perceived as 'upper-level' occupations and a moral community (Goode, 1957) that are distinguished from other occupations by their "altruistic concern for the common good and service" (Johnson, 1972, p. 13). It is noteworthy that Durkheim did not care for the elites, however, his ideas have been expanded by others to explain the roles of professions

[29] Durkheim's main concern with the division of labour was its moral consequences which restrain increased individualism (such as egoism) (Marshall, 1998). In order to achieve a harmonious functioning society, ethical individualism rather than psychological egoism was essential for Durkheim (Grint, 1998).

within society (McCauley, 2006). The functionalist differentiation of the professions from occupations directed the theoretical movement to identify professions by testing occupational groups against a listing of the ideal-type of professional characteristics (cf. Etzioni, 1969; Goode, 1969). This has been expressed as the 'trait approach' in many professions studies (Harris, 2004; Johnson, 1972; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). Trait models were popular during the 1950s and 1960s (cf. Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933; Goode, 1957; Parsons, 1954; Wilensky, 1964). Table 3.1 provides a summary of the characteristics required to be a profession under the trait approach.

Table 3.1 Defining characteristics of professions

1	Knowledge based on theory; complex intellectual techniques
2	Mastery of knowledge base requires long period of training, usually university based, which is technically specialised and designed to socialise trainees into the culture and symbols of the profession
3	Tasks are inherently valuable to society, relevant to key social values (health, technological progress, legal rights, etc)
4	Practitioners are motivated by service to the client's welfare and to the profession
5	Performance of tasks characterised by high degree of autonomy
6	Practitioners exhibit long-term commitment to their profession
7	Practitioners enjoy a well-developed sense of community within the profession
8	The profession has a well-developed code of ethics that guides professional behaviour and defines the profession's values

Source: Leicht, K., & Fennell, M. (2001). *Professional Work: A Sociological Approach.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Inc., p. 26.

The characteristics mentioned in Table 3.1 are not definitive. Debate continues on the traits of the professions. This uncertainty has opened opportunities for professions to add or delete traits according to their interests (Abbott, 1988; Millerson, 1964b). Furthermore:

> ...questions of the relevance of traits led to questions of whether different traits were substitutable; would strict licensing compensate for lack of control over credentials? Could strong professional associations "bid up" the rewards and prestige of an occupation without control of education and licensing? Does it matter whether professionals actually adhere to a

> professional code of ethics or does the mere existence of the code itself constitute sufficient justification in the eyes of consumers? (Leicht & Fennell, 2001, p. 26, original emphasis)

Beyond being unable to agree on a definitive set of traits, another key criticism of the trait approach (and functionalism in general) concerns the altruistic functional roles associated with the professions. For example, like many other organisational groups in modern society, the professions were influenced by bureaucracy and managerialism where they were pushed into becoming administrative machines (Mills, 1951). The professions were increasingly pressured to systematise their knowledge, like many other organisational groups, which often resulted in standardised knowledge and routinised practice (Macdonald, 1995, 2006a; Mills, 1951). In this context, the professions no longer held that element of 'specialised knowledge' (Macdonald, 1995).

Functionalism was the prevailing approach during the early stages of studying the professions. However, sociologists recognised that studying the professions involved other aspects of sociology (where professions' altruistic roles were questioned and other approaches emerged) that incorporated political and ideological disputes (Collins, 1990a). Thus, functionalism was not fully endorsed in analysing the professions (Macdonald, 1995, 2006a). Nevertheless, the trait approach provides a set of useful theories that assist in identifying occupational attempts, movements and changes towards reaching a professional status (Leicht & Fennell, 2001).

Symbolic Interactionism and the Professions

Within the sociology of occupations, symbolic interactionism has maintained an alternative perspective to functionalism when analysing the professions. If functionalism links the concept of the professions to social structure and function, symbolic interactionism interprets the professions with action and social interaction (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Macdonald, 1995, 2006a). Symbolic interactionism examines the social construction of reality through day-to-day and micro-sociological levels where meanings emerge through action and interaction between individuals and groups (Marshall, 1998; McCauley, 2006; Watson, 2003). Hence, the professions are studied at the level of individual workers and how they construct their social world and work with others (Macdonald, 1995, 2006a). For symbolic interactionists, the roles of professions are "less than perfect human social constructs" (Macdonald, 1995, p. 4). For

example, physicians are perceived as holders of power rather than serving human good (Freidson, 1970a; Illich, 1977, 2003). Therefore, under symbolic interactionism, professions are no longer understood as a group of altruists and servants of the social good (Freidson, 1970a), but rather as symbols or ideologies used by occupations for their own interests (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006).

The symbolic interactionists' approach to the analysis of work, occupations and professions developed out of the Chicago School[30] during the 1930s. One of the most influential scholars to analyse work, occupations and professions through the lens of symbolic interactionism was Everett C. Hughes' who authored the books *Men and their Work* (1958), and *The Sociological Eye* (1971). Hughes (1971) explains that "professionals *profess*. They profess to know better than others" (p. 375, original italics). He believed that occupations and professions presume to know what is right and wrong for society, and as a result they determine for themselves the way to solve problems which they do within their discipline (Hughes, 1958). Furthermore, professions are at times understood to be obsessed with the control of work and to achieve this, monopolise markets and reduce competition (Abbott, 1988). This description of the professions is exemplified by professional members claiming the exclusive rights to practice, derived from their special set of knowledge that is, what they 'profess' to know. This type of interpretation of the professions leads to a different approach exemplified by Eliot Freidson as *professional power.*

Freidson and Professional Power

As noted in Chapter One, Eliot Freidson is an influential author in the study of professions. He was initially a member of the symbolic interactionism school of sociology under Everett C. Hughes, and led a new kind of study of the professions – the power approach. Freidson (1970b, p. 1) rarely used the term 'power' itself, preferring to use *organised autonomy* to reflect the dominant characteristics of the professions (Macdonald, 1995). Freidson (1970b), who inspired other influential authors in the professions literature such as Larson (1977) and Abbott (1988), initially explained

30 The Chicago School or Chicago sociology refers to the tradition of sociology that is associated with the Department of Sociology at the University of Chicago. This school of sociology dominated the discipline in North America for the first four decades of the 20th century with an emphasis on fieldwork and empirical studies (Marshall, 1998).

professions as a form of occupation that assumes dominant positions within society through the control of their own work. Throughout Freidson's (1986, 1994, 2001) work on the professions, the specialisation of knowledge forms the foundation of his analysis and is interwoven with formal training, autonomy, credentials and monopolisation. This is due to his belief that the specialisation of knowledge creates a market shelter (Timmermans, 2008) that assures 'power' for the professional group, and distinguishes them from other occupational groups (Leicht & Fennell, 2001). This market shelter enables governing bodies of the professions to have unified and codified standards of practice which control the practice of work, and allows professional workers to negotiate their rewards and exclusivity (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006).

> The profession claims to be the most reliable authority on the reality it deals with ... In developing its own "professional" approach, the profession changes the definition and shape of problems as experienced and interpreted by the layman. The layman's problem is re-created as it is managed- a new social reality is created by the professions. (Freidson, 1970b, p. xvii, original emphasis)

As can be seen from this statement, Freidson explains knowledge not as an objective form but, staying true to symbolic interactionism, as a social construction. In this context, socially constructed problems are created by the professions and the professions provide a socially constructed knowledge that answers these problems. Hence, Freidson (1994) believes that to analyse the professions there cannot be a generalised theoretical base (as suggested by the trait approach), instead each profession should be studied as an individual case. Freidson's approach to analysing occupational groups as individual cases is used to guide the case study approach adopted in this study.

Furthermore, building upon the historical analysis of the professions from the perspective of functionalism, interactionism and professional power, the following section suggests a new wave of understanding the professions that provides a valuable insight into analysing the professionalisation of ecotour guides.

New Directions for the Professions

Traditionally, American research has focused on the practice of law and medicine, and emphasised the power and privilege aspects of occupations and professions (Evetts,

2006b). Additionally, American research emphasises the freedom for practitioners to control their work (Collins, 1990a). By contrast, European scholars take a variety of different approaches (cf. Geison, 1984). For example, the French approach to analysing the professions is concerned with observing occupational identities (Evetts, 2006b), while other European studies stressed the professions' possession of academic credentials (Collins, 1990a). Nevertheless, "for most researchers, professions are regarded as essentially the knowledge-based category of service occupations that usually follow a period of tertiary education and vocational training and experience" (Evetts, 2006b, p. 135).

However, recent studies argue that attempts to clarify and define 'professions' whilst differentiating them from occupations are considered a waste of time (Evetts, 2006b). As McKinlay (1973) states, "there is no logical basis for distinguishing between so-called professions and other occupations. It is rather the accepted practice to look for common characteristics between occupations and professions rather than drawing a line between the two social forms" (p. 77). Professions and occupations do share similar characteristics and it is therefore difficult to clearly divide the two groups (Elliott, 1972). 'If the distinction between occupations and professions is unclear, why do so many occupations strive to become professions?' Perhaps moves to professionalise occupations are attempts to emulate the increased social status and income achieved by successful professional monopolies such as law and medicine (Collins, 1990a). Perhaps it is an attempt to emulate the established professions' ability to control their own work (Freidson, 1972). Despite ongoing debate, two points are clear. Firstly, professions have a special place in contemporary society, and secondly, the growth of contemporary professions increases the division of labour within society.

Some writers, including Freidson, are hesitant to use the term 'profession', preferring to describe the professions as an ideal type of occupation (Vollmer & Mills, 1966). The study of the professions has moved on from macro levels of analysis to a 'conscious occupational strategy' (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). The following sections reflect the most significant characteristic of occupational change that follow this 'conscious occupational strategy' – analysing professionalism as an ideology – in relation to the occupational group of ecotour guides.

3.4 Professionalism and Ecotour Guiding

3.4.1 Introduction

The notion of professionalism is approximately 200 years old (Abbott, 1991a). Traditionally, professionalism was linked to knowledge-based work that required extensive education and vocational training to be performed for the common good, for example medicine (Freidson, 2001). However, with the emergence and growth of the middle classes during the early 19th century, the concept of professionalism expanded to encompass a broader range of occupations (Cruess, Cruess, & Johnston, 2000; Elliott, 1972). The rise in work professionalism was perhaps due to professionalism often being used as an indictor and predictor of occupational commitment, maintenance of standards, and professional ethics (Bartol, 1979). In addition, professionalism was presumed to represent occupational trust (Evetts, 2006a). Today the label of professionalism is used by various occupations that undertake professionalisation (Birkett & Evans, 2005).

Professionalism is the goal of many occupational groups seeking to obtain power and control in the market (Abbott, 1988; Birkett & Evans, 2005; Freidson, 1994, 2001; Johnson, 1972). Furthermore, professionalism is applied to esoteric and intellectual aspects of expert knowledge that are supported by "familiar institutional structures ... [such as] ... professional associations, licensing, disciplinary procedures, arrangements for training, and so on" (Abbott, 1991a, p. 27). Freidson (2001) explains that "in the most elementary sense, professionalism is a set of institutions which permit the members of an occupation to make a living while controlling their own work" (p. 17). However, this notion of professionalism is continuously challenged as every occupation possesses varying degrees of professionalism (Evetts, 2003). Thus, gaining legitimate professionalism is an ongoing struggle for occupations (Frost, 2001). Nevertheless, ideally, professionalism should be a motivator for and facilitator of occupational change whether it is encouraged 'from within' or 'from above'(Evetts, 2003). Professionalism is demanded 'from within' for highly stratified professions such as medicine, however, for new occupations professionalism is imposed 'from above' as:

> The concept of professionalism is being used as an ideological instrument ... In effect, professionalism is being used to convince, cajole and persuade employees, practitioners and other workers to perform and behave in ways which the organisation or the institution deem to

> be appropriate, effective and efficient. And 'professional' workers are very keen to grasp and lay claim to the normative values of professionalism. (Evetts, 2003, pp. 410-411, original emphasis)

While research in the past doubted that workers in the arts and entertainment could be categorised as a professional (cf. Mills, 1951), more recent authors propose that amongst many disciplines of occupations, professions are indeed engaged in entertainment, the arts and leisure disciplines (Evetts, 2006b; Olgiati, Orzack, & Saks, 1998). Although there has been virtually no theoretical application of the professionalisation discourse in the tourism literature, hospitality (cf. Keiser & Swinton, 1988), events (cf. Harris, 2004), and leisure (cf. Coalter, 1986; Fleming, 1996). In the tourism literature there are no known empirical studies on this topic with the exception of Sheldon (1989) who studied aspects of professionalism in the tourism workforce. Sheldon (1989) analysed the level of professionalism across five different sectors in the Hawaiian tourism and hospitality industry using twelve characteristics of professionalism criteria and conducted industry stakeholder surveys. After identifying fourteen different definitions of professionalism, Sheldon (1989) illustrated twelve criteria of professionalism for tourism which include:

> The length of training required, the existence of a code of ethics, whether or not the occupation is organised, the complexity of the occupation, whether the occupation involves altruistic service, the existence of a body of knowledge relevant to the occupation, the occupation is people-oriented, whether it is licensed, the level of prestige that the occupation holds, whether employee competence is tested, whether the occupation lends itself to self-employment, and the level of income received. (p. 493)

Sheldon's (1989) research concludes that the accommodation sector has the highest level of professionalism and the travel agent/tour operator sector have the lowest. Although the results may indicate the levels of professionalism amongst the tourism sectors determined by the criteria, it fails to explain the theoretical justification for these criteria. The selection of these criteria were based on the frequency at which they were cited in the literature, however, the suitability of these criteria for the tourism workforce was not explained. As Freidson (1994) explains, the process of professionalisation varies for different occupations, and therefore should be studied on a case by case basis. Thus, when analysing the professionalism of an occupation the research design should be developed in a way that suits the uniqueness of the occupational discipline. For

example, in Sheldon's (1989) study, one of the professionalism criteria included 'level of income', which is perhaps based on the traditional understanding of the professions (cf. Goode, 1969). This notion raises the question, 'If an occupation does not receive a high income does this mean their work lacks professionalism?' In this context, the level of professionalism of tour guides who have one of the lowest levels of income within the tourism workforce (Weiler & Ham, 2001b) makes it uncertain. It is argued that it is more effective to examine the signs of professionalisation of ecotour guides towards professionalism using the support of the related literature, than it is to tick off criteria devised from other occupations to inspect whether ecotour guiding is a profession.

In the context of the ecotourism industry, the rise of professionalism is mainly demonstrated by "accreditation, certification and guide training" (Fennell, 2003a, p. 119). The tour guiding sector of the tourism industry became subject to professionalisation as guide training programs emerged and regulations to the practice of guiding were introduced (Pond, 1993). These represent the familiar characteristics of a profession – body of knowledge, ethics and certification (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006) – and there has been continuous efforts by ecotourism professional associations, educators, practitioners and government agencies to develop these characteristics. Prior to conducting an analysis of how the Australian ecotourism industry attempts to achieve professional status and professionalism for ecotour guides' through professionalisation, the following section provides a theoretical context for this analysis by applying the concepts of professional and professionalism to ecotour guides.

3.4.2 The Concept of Professional Ecotour Guides

Freidson (1994) explains that a professional worker is a full-time specialist who is committed to their work activities. In addition, for professionals, the meanings of their work is beyond labour and income, it is "for the pleasure of something more" (Freidson, 1994, p. 200). Conceptions of professionals involve dimensions of altruistic commitment such as service ethics (Kyrö, 1995), high levels of education or training (Freidson, 1986; Goebel, 1996; Jackson, 1970; Kyrö, 1995), and earning a living (Freidson, 2001; Kyrö, 1995). Through these concepts, occupational groups attain professionalism which, "enhances group standards, behaviours, and values that establish hierarchies, membership requirements, informal rules, and coping strategies

(accommodation and resistance) vis-à-vis the 'outsider'" (Visano, 2006, p. xvii, original emphasis).

Despite the complex concepts involved in understanding professionals, the term 'professional' is used loosely to describe, for example, "specialist, trained, qualified and licensed expert to professional as a term used in recognition of almost any job done well, in any context" especially in the service industry (Fleming, 1996, p. 248). Similarly, the Professional Tour Guide Association of Australia (PTGAA) defines a professional tour guide as, "a person who leads groups or individual visitors around sites and attractions of a city or region. The tour guide should strive to provide an enjoyable interpretive experience within the prescribed tour itinerary" (PTGAA, 2008, p. 2).

However from an academic perspective, combining the concepts of 'professional' and 'tour guide' to reach a definition of a 'professional tour guide' is a little more complicated than the above definition would suggest. Given the difficulties of defining a professional, it may be more practical to ask "how professionalised", or more specifically, "how professionalised in certain identifiable respects", an occupational group may be (Vollmer & Mills, 1966, p. vii). Especially in the context of ecotour guides, it may be more practical and productive to investigate how professionalised ecotour guides are as an occupational group, rather than attempt to determine whether ecotour guiding is a profession. Hence, it is more realistic to explore whether a 'new' type of occupation, such as ecotour guiding, has successfully proceeded through the professionalisation stages to achieve levels of professionalism, than to compare it to the traditional professions (Fleming, 1996).

Like many other disciplines, the tourism literature has very loosely defined the term professional, and the context of tour guides is no different (cf. Salazar, 2006; Wressnig, 1999). In the context of the Australian ecotourism industry, however, the concept of a 'professional' ecotour guide reflects the ecotourism industry's intentions to raise work performance, standards and levels of professionalism. Since the mid 1990s the Australian ecotour guiding sector has been inundated with mechanisms designed to facilitate professionalism such as training, professional certification, licensing, awards of excellence, codes of conduct and professional associations (Black, 2002; Black & Weiler, 2005; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). Although the specific term of professionalisation

was not used, 'quality assurance' (Black & Weiler, 2005) of ecotour guiding practice and producing 'quality guides' (Kohl, 2007) has been the focus of the ecotourism industry for decades. Specifically in Australia, it is believed that increasing the level of professionalism of the ecotourism industry will lead to the long term viability and sustainability of the industry (Black & Crabtree, 2007; Black & Ham, 2005).

Raising Professionalism in Tour Guides

Regulation and professional control to produce standards of quality practice is an acknowledged stage in the professionalisation process (Freidson, 1970a, 1994). The first known evaluation and regulation of tour guiding practice was in 1885. At the Battlefield of Gettysburg National Military Park in the United States, tourists started to employ guides to locate the graves of their relatives or acquaintances. Following an increase in tourist visitation rates, and complaints about guides, the War Department instituted regulations allowing only licensed guides to operate in the park in an effort to ensure guiding capabilities. The regulations established the fees, solicitation, conduct, length of tours and guide's personal cleanliness. The guides' knowledge was also examined (Pond, 1993). Since then, various training, licensing, certification and accreditation programs have been introduced for the tour guiding occupation. "History has shown that training, evaluation and regulation of guides yields great rewards not only for travellers and guides but also for sites, cities and whole societies as well" (Pond, 1993, p. 12).

Although the work of a tour guide is perceived as unskilled and unorganised (Weiler & Ham, 2001b), guide training is becoming common practice in most developed countries including the USA, UK, Canada, Austria and Australia (Knudson, Cable, & Beck, 1995; McArthur, 1996; Pond, 1993). In some countries tour guides are recognised as professionals.

> In Israel, for example, most of those who currently lead tourists have taken the formal courses offered by the Ministry of Tourism. Their professional status clearly distinguishes them from the tourists they lead. The guides' attitude, behaviour, posture, and clothing set them apart, as does the prominent place they assume at the head of the group. (Cohen *et al.*, 2002, p. 921)

Developing countries such as Indonesia and Madagascar have also embraced stages of professionalisation in the tour guiding sector. In Indonesia, a tour guide is required to

have a government licence to be employed by local tour operators and there are regional guide associations in place (Bras, 2000; Dahles, 2002). Mandatory licensing by the state is a classic characteristic of the professionalisation process and standard mechanism for raising the professionalism of an occupation (Larson, 1977). Another example is from Madagascar. To become a guide at Masoala National Park, the aspirant guide needs to sit rigorous written and oral exams, speak a language additional to French and local Malagasy, and be accepted by the guiding association of the park (Ormsby & Mannle, 2006).

Raising the professionalism of tourism workers assists them to feel more competent and confident in their work (Fennell, 2003a). In this respect, the Australian ecotourism industry began to introduce initiatives such as professional training programs, and professional certification and accreditation programs beginning in 1995 (Black, 2002). Evidence suggests that the ecotourism industry has also taken on board the professionalisation of ecotourism organisations, associations, products and services in a systematic way (Gossling, 2005). In addition, raising professionalism through 'quality assurance' of ecotourism products (Black, 2002) has been recommended in the literature (cf. Issaverdis, 1998; Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1994). It has been suggested in the professionalism literature that these kinds of efforts to ensure quality standards are undertaken in order to achieve the ultimate aim of professionalism – creating trust in professional workers (Evetts, 2006b).

> In other words, lay people *must* place their trust in professional workers (electricians and plumbers as well as lawyers and doctors) and some professionals must acquire ... knowledge ... Professionalism requires professionals to be worthy of that trust, to put clients first ... and not use their knowledge for fraudulent purposes. (p. 134, original emphasis)

In this context, if the key roles of the ecotour guide are to provide environmental interpretation and education that instil conservation values, and to motivate tourists to act in an environmentally conscious manner (Haigh, 1997; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001a), then tourists should be able to trust in the professionalism of ecotour guides, and their ability to successfully carry out these roles.

It is maintained that the professionalism of an occupation can be raised through the development of professional associations, vocational training, and certification programs (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Leicht & Fennell, 2001). In this context, the Australian ecotourism industry is attempting to raise professionalism and instil trust in ecotour guides and ecotourism through:

> A range of ecotourism strategies, setting up national and local ecotourism associations, the publication of an annual industry guide, hosting international ecotourism conferences, establishing an international research centre, establishing best practice ecotourism techniques, setting up ecotourism education and training courses, and developing the national ecotourism accreditation scheme. (Dowling, 2002, p. 89)

Therefore it could be argued that the Australian ecotourism industry is a good example of a pro-active approach to pursing professionalism. Despite this, Weiler and Ham (2001b) maintain that:

> tour guides and guided tours are falling short of what they could be delivering, a high quality experience that excites, changes people, motivates and rejuvenates them, while maximising the benefits for operators, host communities and the environment. (p. 262)

The following section demonstrates that Australian ecotour guides are moving towards achieving a professional status and professionalism. The analysis involves a review of ecotourism promotional brochures, ecotourism industry related Internet Websites, industry reports and previous research.

3.5 Events of Professionalisation for Australian Ecotour Guides

3.5.1 Stages of Professionalisation

This section provides an illustration of the efforts by the Australian ecotourism industry to professionalise ecotour guides. Table 3.2 links the stages of professionalisation to events in the Australian ecotourism industry by applying Caplow's (1954) and Wilensky's (1964) concepts (see Chapter One). Although the 'trait approach' is not applied to analyse the impact of professionalisation for this study, it is used to highlight the events that are occurring in the Australian ecotourism industry that demonstrate the professionalisation of ecotour guides.

Table 3.2 Stages of professionalisation in the Australian ecotour guiding sector

Professionalisation stages (Caplow, 1954; Wilensky, 1964)	**Australian ecotourism industry and ecotour guides**
The emergence of the full-time occupation	Although the nature of tourism work is widely understood as seasonal and casual (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2004), the emergence of ecotour guiding as full-time work is clear as the demand for tour guides specialising in ecotourism has increased (Hawkins & Lamoureux, 2001). It is not specifically dated when the ecotour guiding occupation became predominately full-time. However, "nature-based guided tours have been part of the Australian tourism industry for some time" (Black, 2002, p. 28).
The establishment of a training school	Educational and training courses that teach the knowledge and skills of ecotour guiding are now provided by various educational institutions including universities, TAFE, public and private institutions (cf. Black & Weiler, 2001).
The founding of a professional association	The creation of Guiding Organisations Australia, Savannah Guides and Ecotourism Australia now represent ecotour guides.
Political agitation directed towards the protection of the association by law	Government involvement and funding was established during the development of the Guides of Australia accreditation program (GOA, 2009), however, there is no legal protection for the association.
The adoption of a formal code	Guiding Organisations Australia, Savannah Guides and Ecotourism Australia each have their own codes of conduct that are required to be followed by their member tour guides (see Appendix One).

In addition to the professionalisation stages outlined above, the increase in professional ecotour guiding certification programs and accreditation programs are significant signs of professional groups attempting to establish its professional credentials (Collins, 1971; Evetts, 2006a). In terms of Caplow (1954) and Wilensky's (1964) professionalisation stages (with the exception of legal protection for professional associations), it is clear that Australian ecotour guides are going through a professionalisation process and attempting to raise professionalism. Tracing the chronological order of professionalising events is difficult, if not impossible, as the trade of ecotour guiding includes nature-based guided tours (Black, 2002). Therefore, the following sections are structured around presenting professionalising stages in order of increasing significance (from

codes of conduct to professional certification) rather than via a chronology (Black & Weiler, 2005).

3.5.2 Codes of Guiding Practice

Work ethics, which are fundamental to the analysis of work, lie at the heart of understanding knowledge workers who comprise the professions (Legge, 2006). For example, "justice for the legal, altruism for the medical, and honesty for the accountancy professions", forms trust, which is essential in working relationships between knowledge workers and clients (Legge, 2006, p. 311). In the context of ecotour guides, trust is formed by the provision of accurate interpretation for tourists (Pond, 1993). Therefore, codes of ethics (or conduct), are created, not to act as a manual, but to show workers how the work should be carried out. Professional codes stipulate desirable standards of behaviour from professions, and are perceived as an indication that an occupation is transforming into a respected profession (Pond, 1993). One of the more important purposes of such codes is to persuade the public that the establishment of formal codes justifies trust in, and therefore professional status of, an occupation. Codes show what is involved with the work of the occupation in an effort to gain the trust of the client (Freidson, 2001).

In theory, codes are developed to guide, translate and clarify work ethics for practitioners (Freidson, 2001), although in the tourism industry codes are mainly aimed at the operator and visitor rather than the tour guides (practitioners) (Black & Weiler, 2005; Mason & Mowforth, 1996). Codes within the tourism and ecotourism industry have proliferated in recent times (Font & Buckley, 2001), and in the Australian tourism industry alone, many sectors have introduced 'Codes of Professional Conduct' (Harris & Jago, 2001). However, codes can be "vague, voluntary and based on a system of self-regulation" (Weaver, 2001, p. 28). It has been suggested that, in the context of ecotourism, codes are more focused on awareness-raising than on raising quality standards of work (Font & Buckley, 2001; Weaver, 2001; Weiler & Ham, 2001a), and thus levels of professionalism. In addition, ecotourism codes are used as marketing tools, bringing into question the genuine intent of codes to improve practice (Mason & Mowforth, 1996). Furthermore, although codes and professional certification programs are both voluntary in nature the voluntary levels cannot be regarded as the same. Codes

of practice are vague and self-regulated, while a certification process involves time, money, effort, and is regulated by an organisational body (Black & Weiler, 2005).Nevertheless, the development of codes of ethics indicates that an occupational group is making attempts to become professionalised (Freidson, 1994; Pond, 1993).

For the tour guiding occupation[31], the Guild of Professional Tour Guides of Washington, D.C possibly had the first and most complete code of ethics to address standards and responsibilities of tour guiding in the 1930s (Pond, 1993). Since then, different professional tour guiding associations have developed various codes for members. In Australia, Guiding Organisations of Australia, Savannah Guides and Ecotourism Australia, like other professional associations, have their own codes available for its members (see Appendix One). The codes illustrate the expected responsibilities and standards of behaviour expected of tour guides who are members of each organisation. Savannah Guides' and Ecotourism Australia's code of ethics emphasise the specialised role of ecotour guides such as motivating conservation values and acting as an environmental interpreter. Nonetheless, the focus on guaranteeing high guiding standards in the codes is insufficient (Black, 2002; Weiler & Ham, 2001a).

The three professional associations mentioned also request that members abide by these codes, and in this way codes are used as a way of sustaining memberships with the association (see Table 3.3). For professional associations, developing codes is a way of leading, organising and controlling its members (Freidson, 1994). However, monitoring how codes influence the work of association members is an under-studied aspect of professionalisation. In the context of ecotour guiding, efforts to follow codes through to analysing their efficacy in raising the quality of guiding work have been minimal (Black, 2002).

The following section moves on to discuss training and education programs devised for

[31] This section focuses on literature that discusses codes of ethics specific for tour guiding. However, further discussion on codes of ethics as they apply to the broader context of the tourism industry, tourist and host can be found in the general tourism literature (cf. Cole, 2007; Garrod & Fennell, 2004; Genot, 1995; Holden, 2003; Holden, 2005; Malloy & Fennell, 1998; Mason, 1997; Mason & Mowforth, 2000; Mihalic, 2000; Parsons & Woods-Ballard, 2003; Payne & Dimanche, 2004).

ecotour guides that are perceived to be more effective in achieving 'quality assurance' than codes of conduct (Black & Weiler, 2005).

3.5.3 Expert Knowledge and Skills - Training and Educational Programs

Previous sections of this chapter positioned the concept of specialised knowledge and skills as one of the most important factors in understanding the professions. One of the prerequisites for occupational professionalism is formal recognition that an occupation uses a complex body of specialised knowledge and skills to conduct work (Freidson, 2001). This recognition may come in the form of tertiary education institutions designing professional training, and professional knowledge attained from formal education (Freidson, 2001). In this context, professional knowledge can be a form of cultural capital from which a professional can derive income and power (Larson, 1977). Functionalists believe that professional knowledge enables the defence of a profession's standing in society and cannot be duplicated or taken away by other occupations (Macdonald, 1995). Hence, the rise of formal education through professionalisation is one of the distinctive characteristics of a profession, and formal education becomes a credential for professionals (Freidson, 1986). In this context, one of the purposes of professionalisation is to show that customers can trust the professionals as evidenced by credentials (McKinlay, 1973). Credentials such as training and educational programs are ways for occupations to establish their occupational standing as experts in society.

The ecotourism literature advocates various methods to raise ecotour guides' professionalism and quality guiding skills (cf. Black *et al.*, 2001; McGrath, 2004; Page & Dowling, 2002; Weiler & Black, 2002). One of the methods is through education and training programs. In Australia alone, formal education for future ecotour guides is available by a variety of institutions offering various types of diplomas, degrees, and certification courses and programs. Although it should be noted that these courses and programs target the wider tour guiding field rather than ecotour guides specifically. At Bachelor and/or Masters degree level there are courses available in environmental education, ecotourism, natural and cultural resource management, leisure management, tourism management, and outdoor education. In addition, Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges in Australia and other vocational training and educational institutions offer certificate level programs in tour management and guiding, outdoor

recreation, tour driver guiding, and heritage and interpretive tourism (cf. Black & Weiler, 2001). In 2001, there were 78 educational and vocational training courses offered by 44 institutions in Australia (Black & Weiler, 2001) which were relevant to the knowledge and skills required to perform the work of an ecotour guides. The number of courses in 2001 was a significant increase from 1996 (42 courses) (Black, 2002), and may be interpreted as a recognition of the expert knowledge and skills required by ecotour guides (Weiler & Black, 2002). The development and proliferation of educational and training courses is inevitable in the process of professionalisation (Freidson, 1994). As a result, the proportion of professionally skilled workers increases through professionalisation (Collins, 1971; Freidson, 1994). However, it is interesting to note how and why there is an increase in the number of education and training programs designed to develop the expert knowledge and skills required by ecotour guides.

It has been argued that tourism employers and managers should recognise the importance of tour guides and assist them in improving their tour guiding skills to increase customer satisfaction (Chang, 2006). This is one of the characteristics of a new type of occupation (differentiated from the traditional professions such as doctors and lawyers) becoming professionalised 'from above' (Evetts, 2006b). For example, in Australia many of the courses offered for ecotour guiding education and training are based on national competency standards introduced by the Commonwealth Department of Tourism (Commonwealth Department of Tourism, 1996). In this context, the nature of work is dictated by an industry (Freidson, 1994). Similarly, the nature of ecotour guiding work increasingly reflects the needs of the ecotourism industry rather than individual ecotour guides (see Chapter Eight). However, Freidson (1983, 1986, 1994, 2001) mentions that professions can only truly gain professional standing in society when professional workers themselves create, maintain and control their own professional work.

Nevertheless, education and training programs for the practice of tour guiding have benefits. For example, some research shows that trained tour guides have a positive influence on the satisfaction levels of tourists (Lopez, 1981; Roggenbuck, Williams, & Bobinski, 1992). An increase in the variety of training opportunities may also influence the tour guides' motivation to achieve higher standards and qualification levels (Whinney, 1996). However, arguments have been put forward advocating competency-

based training methods for tour guiding (Black, 2002; Christie & Mason, 2003). In this view, effective training should lead to a change in practice including attitudes and behaviour rather than just knowledge and skills (Christie & Mason, 2003). In addition, credentials based on education and training courses do not necessarily guarantee employment for tour guides (Black, 2002), as 'days of experience as a tour guide' is perceived to be a tradable commodity within the ecotourism industry (see Table 3.3).

As discussed education and training are widely understood as instruments to raise occupational standing through defining the area expertise and the scope of the occupation (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). However, compared to other professions (such as accounting, engineering, and university teaching) where qualifying for employment mainly relies on credentials (such as degrees and certificates) for ecotour guiding 'work experience' remains a tradable commodity within the industry.

The following section moves on to the subject of this study's case – the EcoGuide Certification Program. However, prior to discussing the certification program the range of professional certification programs available in Australia for ecotour guides are discussed. This demonstrates the significance of professional guide certification programs and the increasing interest in its influence on the ecotour guides' work performance and standards (Black, 2002, 2003, 2007; Black & Ham, 2005; Black & Weiler, 2002).

3.5.4 Professional Certification Programs by Professional Associations

Professional associations are generally understood as formal groups of professionals. The introduction and creation of professional associations of an occupation are often interpreted as increasing its occupational standing. Functionalists explain the purpose of professional associations as regularising the professions' education, credentials, and work ethic codes mainly to demonstrate guarantees of professional-client relationships (Macdonald, 1995). By contrast, those authors assuming the 'power approach' (such as Freidson and Larson) perceive the central interests of professional associations to be the creation of a market monopoly rather than relational control (Abbott, 1991b). Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) explain in one of their earlier books on professionalisation discourse – *The Professions* – that not all special interest work groups are professional

in character. They argue that professional associations can be distinguished by different degrees depending on what the professional association seeks to establish, whether it is: creating minimum qualifications for entry into professional practice; devising rules and codes of conduct amongst professional association members; or setting professional status of the professional group in society.

Professional associations are like a 'community' where workers share training and work experiences (Goode, 1957), and a sense of identity (Evetts, 2006b). Associations establish, protect and nurture their professional members, control their professional practice (Freidson, 1994), and generally offer certification programs that represent professionalism (Leicht & Fennell, 2001). Being members of a professional association demonstrates that one is dedicated to the profession (Black, 2002), and in the context of tour guides, associations are considered to be beneficial for improving the performance and practice of tour guiding (Pond, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). In the last 30 years, a number of state-based professional tour guide associations have been established in Australia (Black, 2002).

For example, Tour Guides Western Australia (TGWA) has been providing tour guide training courses since 1979. The organisation provides a contact point for industry operators with its member guides who are qualified through TAFE courses or foreign language speaking tour guides (GOA, 2009). The Professional Tour Guide Association of Australia (PTGAA) began in 1985 where it was established in Melbourne, Victoria. The PTGAA has links to government and non-government bodies, and offers certificates for members who self-complete its 'Professional Development Program' (PTGAA, 2009). The PTGAA not only have tour guides as their members, but also accept tour operators and convention organisers. The South Australian Tourist Guide Association (SATGA) was established in 2003 in order to represent South Australian 'professional and volunteer' guides, promote and maintain high standards of service, and provide public networking meetings (GOA, 2009). Other state-based tour guiding professional associations include Tour Guides Association of Northern Territory (TGANT) (Black, 2002) and the Queensland Tour Guide Association (QTGA) (GOA, 2009).

In 1993, the Institute of Australian Tourist Guides (IATG) was established to develop a national certification program for all types of tour guides (Black, 2002). However, the IATG's most current accessible information for the public via the Internet shows a listing of its 'qualified' tourist guides and no other types of information such as mission, goals or its aims. The term 'Institute' is omitted from the IATG' Website and is titled Australian Tourist Guides (ATG, 2009). The title seems somewhat misleading as a national tour guiding professional association as its members comprise 115 guides from New South Wales, 1 from Victoria, 2 from South Australia, 3 from Western Australia and 8 from Queensland (cf. ATG, 2009). There are also other types of related professional associations such as Interpretation Australia Association (IAA) and the International Association of Tour Managers (IATM) Pacific Region that may represent Australian tour guides. In addition, rather than solely representing tour guides, tour guiding associations often include diverse groups of stakeholders such as tour managers, tour operators, educators and others (Pond, 1993).

Professional Certification for Australian Ecotour Guides

Professions are regularly required to demonstrate their qualifications and credentials through formal education, systematised knowledge, and professional certification (Siegrist, 1990). Certification in particular is often perceived as a guarantee of effective work, and notions of ethical practice are also linked to certification programs (Åmark, 1990). It has only been in the last 15 years that the concept of professional certification of ecotour guides has begun to emerge in Australia (Black, 2002). Indeed, the initial conceptualisation of certification programs for tourism focused on ethical practice in sustainable tourism and ecotourism (Font, 2007).

> Certification programmes are one such instrument that assumes market interest in the ethical forms of production and a desire for market transparency, and as such promotes market-based approaches to sustainable production. Tourism, not unlike other sectors, is moving ahead in the process of understanding and seeking ways to implement sustainability. (Font, 2007, p. 387)

In the past 10 years there has been a proliferation of quality assurance tools to facilitate professionalism and standardisation of ecotourism and sustainable tourism practice (Black & Crabtree, 2007; Fennell, 2003a; Fennell & Dowling, 2003; Font & Buckley, 2001; Harris & Jago, 2001; Honey, 2002; Issaverdis, 1998, 2001). Worldwide there are

over 250 voluntary initiatives including codes of conduct, awards, best practices and benchmarking programs, labels and seals to assure consumers of business competence and standardised performance in tourism (Honey & Stewart, 2002; Sharpley, 2001). Within this, there are approximately 80 certification programs for ecotourism and sustainable tourism that are either operating or in development (Honey, 2007). At times the terms, 'certification programs' and 'accreditation programs' are used interchangeably, and this has caused confusion across the industry and consumers (Black, 2002; Issaverdis, 1998). Nonetheless, there is a conceivable difference between the two. Accreditation for tourism involves, "programs or processes which provide a means of establishing or developing, the extent to which a business that offers tourism experiences to consumers, meets industry nominated standards and encourages the delivery of consistently high quality products" (Issaverdis, 1998, p. 24). Therefore, accreditation can be used in relation to educational or training courses that are offered by institutions (Fennell, 2003a). For example, Tourism Training Australia accredits courses by private providers, training and educational institutions and in-house programs (Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1994). Through accreditation the profession can demonstrate its standards of professional knowledge (Freidson, 1986).

Certification for tourism, on the other hand, entails a process "by which an individual is tested and evaluated in order to determine his or her mastery of a specific body of knowledge, or some portion of a body of knowledge" (Fennell, 2003a, p. 120). Thus, certification programs deal with individuals and may be offered by public or private agencies (Buckley, 2002). Some say that accreditation is a "higher-tier process" as it accredits the certification schemes and programs (Buckley, 2002, p. 197). Within the ecotourism industry, the concepts of accreditation and certification have been rapidly adopted as instruments to raise industry standards, to regulate practices and to satisfy consumers (Diamantis & Westlake, 2001; Issaverdis, 1998). In this context, ecotour guiding professional associations may use accreditation and certification programs for their intrinsic value (for example, ecological sustainability and management, encouraging environmentally benign behaviour, local community development) or for their economic value as marketing tools (Bendell & Font, 2004; Honey & Stewart, 2002). The growth and increase of professional certification programs in ecotour guiding may indicate consumers' recognition of quality products and services, and industry's response to assure quality services (Black, 2007). The first program to

introduce ecotour and nature-based guiding practice standardisation was endorsed by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) in 1996 in response to the *National Ecotourism Education Strategy* in 1995 (Black, 2002). In 1997, an interim report was written by Weiler, Crabtree and Markwell titled *Developing Competent Ecotour Guides: Does Training Deliver What Tourists Demand?*, for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), which commented on the status of the Australian ecotour guiding sector as follows:

> In Australia there is no national guide association as such for ecotour guides, nor are there any prescribed standards for recruitment, selection and promotion, nor are guides in Australia required to be trained, qualified or registered. Tour guide training courses need not be accredited, and a practising tour guide may have completed an accredited course, a non-accredited course, an in-house training course, on-the-job training, any combination of these, or no training whatsoever. (Weiler, Crabtree, & Markwell, 1997, p. 33).

Weiler *et al.* (1997) emphasised the unstructured, uncoordinated, unorganised and un-professionalised status of the Australian ecotour guiding sector in the late 1990s. As a result of this report, a database of ecotour guides and nature-based guides was formulated and is governed by Ecotourism Australia (Black 2002). It is widely perceived that professional associations, such as Ecotourism Australia, are focused on promoting and improving the professionalism of their members including ecotour guides. "However, tour guiding associations are often fully occupied with their other activities such as maintaining contact and meeting the needs of a diverse group that may include tour guides, tour managers, tour operators and educators, and their limited resources may restrict their involvement schemes" (Black & Weiler, 2005, pp. 28-29).

Nevertheless, with the establishment of Guiding Organisations Australia in 2003, a professional association dedicated to tour guides, and the development of the EcoGuide Program by Ecotourism Australia, it is evident that Australian ecotour guides are professionalising with the 'founding of professional associations' (see Table 3.2). Guiding Organisations of Australia, Savannah Guides and Ecotourism Australia are Australia's three most prominent associations providing professional certifications directly and indirectly related to the work of ecotour guiding (Black & Ham, 2005). Although Black (2002) contends that professional associations are one the weakest mechanisms for improving guiding standards and performances, the certification and

accreditation they offer represents an increasing trend in the ecotourism industry. Table 3.3 provides a summary of the key features of each of these programs. This table however does not include the most recently developed two-day course accreditation program developed and accredited by Pilbara TAFE in Western Australia. This is due to the fact that this tour guide accreditation program was launched in October 28th, 2008, after this study's period of data collection and analysis. One of the major purposes of the development of this accreditation program was to "give the profession the status, respect and esteem it deserves and enjoys in many other parts of the world" (Global Gypsies, 2009). It is evident from the interchangeable use of the terms 'accreditation' and 'certification' that there is wider confusion across the industry when it comes to naming programs. For example, Ecotourism Australia's previous Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) intended use was as a certification program (Font, 2002).

It can be seen from Table 3.3, that unlike the traditional professions which require a high level of education delivered by a widely recognised prestigious institution, ecotour guides are granted a qualification for not just having completed a certificate course, but also for work experience. This reflects a trend in newer occupations to enable professional bodies to grant credentials (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006; Macdonald, 1995; Turner & Hodge, 1970). In this regard, the standardisation of work practice through performance reviews, occupational training, and certification programs may be considered a new form of professionalism – organisational professionalism – where the control of work is being increasingly concentrated with managers in work organisations (Evetts, 2006b). This contrasts with traditional occupational professionalism which focuses on constructing a discourse within professional groups, which is monitored by its members, and operationalised and controlled by workers (Evetts, 2006b).

Advocates of certification programs believe the possession of certification by an individual is a way of showing his/her legitimacy (Medina, 2005), and within the tourism industry (Harris & Jago, 2001), and specifically tour guiding (Yu & Weiler, 2006), certification is perceived as a way of raising levels of professionalism (Black & Ham, 2005). Perceptions of certification for individuals are that it gives qualification and a competitive advantage for possible employment for ecotour guides (Crabtree & Black, 2000). However, certification is not necessarily a guarantee of employment as an

ecotour guide. Furthermore, the presumed recognition of ecotour guiding professional certification (Crabtree & Black, 2000) is somewhat questionable. Professional certifications for ecotour guides in Australia are voluntary (Black, 2002), and may raise awareness of professionalism issues (Black & Weiler, 2005). However, the influence certification has on the level of work professionalism of ecotour guides is yet to be explored. Table 3.3 below summarises the professional certification and accreditation programs available for tour guides in Australia.

Table 3.3 Summary of professional certification and accreditation programs available for tour guides in Australia

Name of Organisation (Year of Establishment)	**Guiding Organisations Australia (2003)**	**Savannah Guides (1998)**	**Ecotourism Australia (1991)**
Name of Certification (Year of Inception)	**Guides of Australia (2006)**	**Savannah Guides (1998)**	**EcoGuide Australia Certification Program (2001)**
Selection criteria	200 days tour guide experience, or 100 days tour guide experience in the past year, or Certificate III in Tourism (guiding) with 30 days tour guide experience in the past year	Demonstrate essential communication skills, Reasonable knowledge of technical matters	12 months of tour guide experience, or Certificate III Tourism (tour guiding), or other relevant qualifications with a minimum of 3 months tour guide experience
Compulsory certificates	First Aid Certificate Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)	First Aid Certificate	First Aid Certificate
Formal assessment task	Tour/Activity Field Evaluation Relevant Tour/Activity Plan	Savannah Guides School	Workplace assessment Video assessment
Supporting references	Yes	N/A	Yes
Involvement with administration of accrediting body	Abide by the Australian Tour Guides Code of Practice Abide by the Guide of Australia Accreditation Rules	Abide by professional Code of Conduct Commitment to conservation values	Abide by Code of Practice
Period	1 year	1 year	1 year
Approval process	Independent evaluator	Peer group assessment	Independent assessor
Renewal process	Dependent upon meeting professional development requirements, Current first aid and CPR certificates	Attend Savannah Guide Schools	Automatic upon the payment of annual fees
Appeal process	Yes, in writing within 14 days of the decision	No	No
Cost	$300, not members of a tour guiding organisation $125, members of an organisation not providing assessment or evaluation $100, members of an organisation that currently provides assessment or evaluation Additional travel costs for the evaluator paid by applicant	$65, joining fee $195, annual fee	$45 registration fee, $125 assessment fee, $165 annual fee, Onsite assessment fee (approximately $80/hour)

Source: EcoGuide Certification Program. Retrieved February 10th, 2009, from http://www.ecotourism.org.au, GOA. (2009) Guides of Australia – National Tour Guide accreditation, Retrieved February 10th, 2009 available http://goa.org.au, Savannah Guides. (2009). Protectors and Interpreters of the Outback. Retrieved February 8th, 2009, from http://www.savannah-guides.com.au

Guides of Australia - Guiding Organisations of Australia

One of the most recently created professional associations that represent Australian tour guides is Guiding Organisations of Australia (GOA). With its full members including Ecotourism Australia, IATG, IAA, IATM, PTGAA, QTGA, Savannah Guides, SATGA and TGWA it claims to be the peak industry body for tour guides. In 2003, the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism (ASCOT) and the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources financially supported its incorporation as the peak industry body for Australian tour guides (GOA, 2009). The mission of GOA is to "represent, promote and protect" the agreed interest of Australian tour guides and improve the quality of tour guiding services by: developing best practice and promoting professionalism; raising awareness of the importance of the tour guides' roles; and maintaining cooperative relationships with tourism industry organisations (GOA, 2009). GOA encourages tour guides to join a professional association for the benefits of "networking, training, familiarisations, discounts and recognition" (GOA, 2009).

The Guides of Australia accreditation program attempts to provide quality assurance for tourists who use GOA's accredited tour guides. It also acts as an umbrella of national tour guide accreditation where it embraces other types of programs such as EcoGuide Australia Certification Program and Savannah Guides. This accreditation is voluntary and suitable for any types of tour guides in Australia. Its purpose is to promote best practice and provide industry recognition (GOA, 2009) although no research has been carried out at this stage to confirm this recognition. Tour guides who have 200 days of experience working as a tour guide, or 100 days in the previous year to accreditation application, or hold a Certificate III in Tourism (Guiding) with 30 days experience in the previous year to application may apply to obtain the accreditation. Other criteria for eligibility to apply for accreditation are: holding a current First Aid Certificate and CPR; reference from employer or client; successful demonstration of guiding skills and knowledge to the independent evaluator; agreement to the Australian Tour Guides Code of Practice; and agreement to the Accreditation Rules which includes "ongoing professional development requirements" (GOA, 2009). GOA also receives support from the government due to its national tour guiding accreditation which represents a vital industry initiative as Australia does not have a national accreditation framework (PTGAA, 2008).

Savannah Guides – Savannah Guides Limited

Savannah Guides Limited is a professional association related to the work of ecotour guides and the principles of ecotourism in Australia. Established in 1988 as a non-profit company with assistance from the Gulf Local Authorities Development Association, Savannah Guides Limited claims to be a network of "professional tour guides" that focuses on "knowledge and professionalism" of guides in the tropical savannah regions of Australia (Savannah Guides, 2009). The mission of Savannah Guides is to promote ecologically sustainable tourism principles which will in turn enhance regional lifestyles, and encourage the protection and conservation of the natural resources of northern Australia. In order to achieve their mission, Savannah Guides maintains a "sound, community-based, professional body" through high standards of "interpretation and public education, training and guiding leadership, and natural and cultural resource management" (Savannah Guides, 2009). Savannah Guides provides enterprise, individual, social and corporate memberships which can be gained by either: demonstrating a commitment to the organisation's mission; achievements of formal accreditation, licences or qualifications; attending Savannah Guides Schools; satisfying peer assessment of guiding or managerial skills; or being nominated by the Board of Directors. There are joining and annual fees to be paid to maintain a Savannah Guides membership (Savannah Guides, 2009).

As of 2009, there are 3 Savannah Guide Stations, 2 Savannah Guide Master Operators, 5 Savannah Guide Sites, and 4 Savannah Guide Operators[32] based in Northern Australia (Savannah Guides, 2009). This is 3 enterprise members less than 2004. Concerned with the requirements of more traditional professional associations (Macdonald, 1995), Savannah Guides emphasises the importance of expert knowledge in being accepted as a member.

Savannah Guides treat training as a core organisational value holding 'Savannah Guide Schools' a minimum of 3 times a year. These Schools provide members opportunities for ongoing contact with other tour guides and companies, facilitating communication, cooperation, resource and information sharing amongst guides. Savannah Guides

[32] The level of enterprise membership is determined by the level of involvement with Savannah Guides and their marketing activities.

promote stringent membership selection in order to ensure high standards of guiding quality. Membership involves abiding by Savannah Guides' philosophy of "knowledge and professionalism" portrayed through "essential communication skills, reasonable knowledge of technical matters" (Savannah Guides, 2009). Guides who are members of Savannah Guides are also required to regularly attend training schools to maintain and improve their skills and knowledge. The standards set by Savannah Guides holds "a high level of professionalism and training participation". The "camaraderie and mutual support of peers, mentors and trainees" is an important characteristic of the Savannah Guides. In this context, the 'community' characteristic of Savannah Guides as a professional association is evident. Collegiality can often increase the notion of professionalism through a shared work culture of a professional association (Evetts, 2006b).

EcoGuide Certification Program – Ecotourism Australia (EA)

Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Certification Program has been chosen as the case study in which to meet the objectives of this study. Reasons for choosing the EcoGuide Certification Program for the purpose of this study are explained in more detail in Chapter Four.

Ecotourism Australia, formerly Ecotourism Australia Association, was established in 1991 as a non-profit organisation to act as the ecotourism industry's peak body (Ecotourism Australia, 2009b). The main mission for the association is to grow, consolidate and promote ecotourism through sustainable practices. The association has a diverse range of members from ecotourism accommodation, tour and attraction operators, academics, students, to tour and attraction operators. Ecotourism Australia holds national conferences annually in conjunction with workshops and seminars which facilitate networking, information sharing, decision making and marketing for its members. Ecotourism Australia pioneered ecotourism specific accreditation programs in Australia by launching the Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) in October 1996 (Honey, 2002). The accreditation program, which is in effect a certification program despite its title (Font, 2002), provides three levels of certification including nature tourism, ecotourism and advanced ecotourism. Tourism operators offering products and services in "tours, skippered cruises and bareboat charters, attractions, accommodation or a combination of these" may apply for the certification

programs (Ecotourism Australia, 2009b). The program is now named ECO Certification Program, and is being used internationally as the International Ecotourism Standard. The association is scheduled to launch another program which embraces the concepts of ecotourism – the Climate Change Program (Ecotourism Australia, 2009b).

The Ecotourism Australia certification program most relevant to this study is the EcoGuide Certification Program, often referred as the EcoGuide program. "The EcoGuide Australia program provides a credential, endorsing the recipient as a guide who will deliver an authentic, environmentally responsible, and professional ecotourism experience" (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a).

The certification program recently developed a 'new generation' EcoGuide program by offering potential applicants the opportunity to attain the national Guides of Australia accreditation and the EcoGuide certification in a single application. The benefits of being an certified EcoGuide include: provision of an EcoGuide Australia badge and certification with a GOA identification card; discount on guide training materials and equipment; listing on the Green Travel Directory (a booklet that lists Ecotourism Australia's accredited and certified products and members which can be purchased by the public); networking opportunities; listing on the association's website for job vacancies; receive and contribute to the association's newsletter; discount on the annual conference; voting rights within the association; and opportunities to be involved in further developing the association (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a).

When a potential EcoGuide completes an application to receive the certification, the association designates an independent, trained assessor to review the application and assess the applicant. Once the application is approved, a provisional certificate and badge is sent to the applicant and the association grants the applicant the right to promote him/herself as a genuine EcoGuide. In the meantime, Ecotourism Australia organises an onsite assessment within the first 12 months after the provisional certification is given to the applicant. The assessor conducts a workplace (or simulated workplace) assessment where the applicant may choose between an actual on-the-job assessment, 'mock' tour assessment, or a video assessment where the applicant provides a prepared video featuring the applicant leading an actual or 'mock' tour (Ecotourism Australia, n.d.-a). The competencies that the guides are analysed against are explained

in more detail in Appendix Two. In addition, annual certification renewals are simple fee payments rather than ongoing quality assessments (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a).

For ecotour guides, a professional certification program may be understood as the peak of voluntary initiatives as it "endorses skilled expertise or best practice rather than regulating for a minimum acceptable standard" (Black & Crabtree, 2007, p. 20). Although these professional associations may not solely dedicate themselves to ecotour guides, they have a direct and indirect relationship with the work of ecotour guides. The establishment of professional associations, codes of conduct, and the provision of education and training programs assist ecotour guides, the ecotourism industry, and by extension the tourism community to define and understand the expert knowledge and skills required to perform the specialised work of ecotour guides.

3.5.5 Caveat - Professionalisation for Ecotour Guides

Professionalisation and raising professionalism should not only be about creating professional associations, providing educational and training programs, establishing codes of conduct, and qualifying and disqualifying individual workers through accreditation and certification programs. An important element often left out in discussions on this topic is the need to focus on establishing professionalism philosophies and values (Evetts, 2006a). This is to prevent professionalisation becoming a process of commodification (Abbott, 1991a) where workers are packaged with seals and logos, accredited and certified by professional associations or governing bodies which allow them to promote and sell themselves within the marketplace. Adequate assessment of professional institutions is therefore critical in formulating effective professional certification programs (Freidson, 2001).

Professional associations should be distinguished by the way they operate, whether it is through minimum qualifications for entry to professional practice, enforcing rules and conduct amongst group members, or raising the status of the professional group (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933). Professionalisation should not automatically be assumed as positive or progressive for an occupation or type of work. The notion of an expert, created through professionalisation, implies the idea that one believes him/herself to have a problem that needs to be solved (that a professional has answers for customers'

problems) (Illich, 1977, 2003). In the context of tourism, this notion may create a dependency which allows the tourist to do less and less for themselves in a natural environment where they could be discovering and exploring nature on their own (Wearing & Darby, 1989). Furthermore, as an effect of professionalisation, some professionals may simply follow a systemised itinerary enforced by programs and certificates which may lead to the loss of innovative and intrinsic creativity often related to nature based activities such as ecotours (Fennell, 1999) creating a social distance between the ecotour guide, the tourist and nature (Wearing, 1995). The tourist experience may be influenced as ecotour guides' performance and practice become restricted by professionalisation. However, the professionalisation of ecotourism is not only inevitable (Weaver, 2008), but well underway. The pattern of professionalisation is summarised by Abbott (1988).

> Professions begin when people "start doing full time the thing that needs doing." But then the issue of training arises, pushed by recruits or clients. Schools are created. The new schools, if not begun within universities, immediately seek affiliation with them. Inevitably, there then develop higher standards, longer training, earlier commitment to the profession, and a group of full time teachers. Then the teaching professionals, along with their first graduates, combine to promote and create a professional association. The more active professional life enabled by this association leads to self-reflection, to possible change of name, and to an explicit attempt to separate competent from incompetent. Reflection about central tasks leads the profession to delegate routine work to paraprofessionals. At the same time the attempt to separate competent from incompetent leads to internal conflict between the officially trained younger generation and their on-the-job-trained elders, as well as to increasingly violent confrontations with outsiders. This period also contains efforts to secure state protection, although this does not always occur and is not peculiar to professions in any case. Finally, the rules that these events have generated, rules eliminating internal competition and charlatanry and establishing client protection, coalesce in a formal ethics code. (Abbott, 1988, p. 10, original emphasis)

Despite efforts to raise levels of professionalism in ecotour guiding through professionalisation, no research to date has been undertaken to understand the influence of professionalisation on Australian ecotour guides and their work (Black & Weiler, 2005). This study aims to address this gap in knowledge.

3.6 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the work of ecotour guides in light of the professionalism literature. This provides a theoretical basis for an analysis of the professionalisation of ecotour guides as an occupational group. A review of the literature in the field of work revealed that the meanings of work relevant to ecotour guides were concepts such as full-time employment, exchange of labour for a wage, creating self-identity and the notion of emotional labour. It was noted that in contemporary societies, work that qualifies as an occupation generally attempts to go through the professionalisation process to become a profession (Abbott, 1988; Wilensky, 1964). When occupations attempt to rise to the status of a professional group it contributes to social change (Goode, 1969). The reasons behind occupations attempting to gain professional status were explained. One of the most distinctive characteristics of the professions were noted as autonomy of work, control of work and recognition of professional status through society (Freidson, 1970a). In this context, the term profession is described as "an occupation that controls its own work, organised by a special set of institutions sustained in part by a particular ideology of expertise and service" (Freidson, 1994, p. 10).

Increasing recognition of the futility of dividing professions from occupations with universally applicable lists of attributes was noted within the professionalism literature (Evetts, 2003, 2006b). A new direction in the professionalisation discourse was identified which places the emphasis on occupations obtaining professionalism (evidenced by, for example, the trust of consumers) rather than on qualifying or disqualifying occupations as legitimate professions according to a disputed list of attributes. This approach may also be applied to the professionalisation of ecotour guiding. Thus, a review of literature in the field of professionalisation and professionalism investigated the influence of professionalisation and rising professionalism on Australian ecotour guides.

Occupations that achieve professionalism go through a series of stages such as extended vocational training and experience, higher education, licensed for market closure and occupational control. Through this professionalisation process, workers gain outcomes

such as standardisation of practice, monopoly of the market, increased status and income, and work autonomy.

The professionalisation process is influenced by the characteristics of the economic, cultural and physical situations within the society, and a specific time in history (Auer, 2004; Larson, 1977; Siegrist, 1990). Therefore, the events that have occurred within the Australian ecotourism industry relate to the professionalisation of ecotour guides were explained. These events included the:

- creation of professional associations that represent ecotour guides such as Guiding Organisations Australia, Savannah Guides, and Ecotourism Australia
- establishment of professional codes that are applicable to the members of each professional association
- increasing number of education and training programs available at various institutions, and
- provision of professional certifications and accreditation programs for ecotour guides.

This analysis demonstrated that the Australian ecotourism industry is attempting to become more professionalised. Despite this, the influence of professionalisation on the practice of ecotour guiding is yet to be explored. The following chapter provides an illustration of the theoretical paradigm and research methods employed by this study to address this gap in knowledge.

CHAPTER FOUR: THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

> The point of research is not typically to proclaim one's own voice as superior to all others. Rather, most interpretivists attempt to give voice to the subjects of their inquiry, to enable them to speak in their own ways about what matters to them. In this way, their subjects are not reduced to objects but are given an opportunity to legitimate their modes of being within broader circles of society. (Gergen, 2002, p. 187)

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and discuss the theoretical and methodological approaches undertaken to collect and analyse data for this study. The chapter begins by explaining the philosophical and epistemological orientation of interpretivism, and justifying its suitability as a framework for understanding the influence professionalisation has on the work of ecotour guides.

Interpretivism seeks to understand social action by interpreting the words individuals ascribe to their own experiences. Thus, the focus of an interpretivist study is to understand the meanings people give to their experiences within the context of social action. For this study, this means that the social action of professionalisation is understood through interpretation of the words presented by the research participants through the research process. From an interpretivist perspective, understanding the professionalisation of any type of work is only meaningful when the experiences of the work practitioners are the subject of investigation. The values and opinions of key Australian ecotourism industry stakeholders were used to establish a framework for investigations of ecotour guides' experiences of professionalisation.

Interpretivist epistemology guided development of the study questions. This chapter explains how the research questions were established and why a qualitative case study approach was believed to be the most appropriate research strategy. In addition, the validity of, and ethical issues involved in, conducting a qualitative case study from an interpretivist approach are discussed. Throughout the case study process, different data

collection methods were employed, as such, the procedures undertaken during the research process are explained in detail. The final section of this chapter outlines the process by which the collected data were analysed, and discusses the strengths and limitations of the interpretivist qualitative case study approach.

4.2 Interpretivist Approach to Methodology

As mentioned in previous chapters, there is a lack of theoretical and empirical research concerning ecotour guides. This being the case, the study ventures into an under-researched area which requires an exploratory approach. The exploratory nature of the study guides the research strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000a, 2005), suggesting a qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) that enables observation of people's motives, beliefs, emotions, desires, and thoughts (Berg, 1998; Schwandt, 2000). The qualitative research undertaken in this study was underpinned by an interpretivist theoretical and philosophical paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000a, 2005; Schwandt, 1994, 2000, 2007). The interpretivist paradigm assumes that unearthing the 'meanings' of human 'action' (how people participate and make sense of the world) is fundamentally a process of interpretation (Schwandt, 2007). Hence, the interpretivists' approach to research seeks an interpretive understanding (*verstehen*[33]) of meaning and action (Marshall, 1998).

> From an interpretivist point of view, what distinguishes human (social) action from the movement of physical objects is that the former is inherently meaningful. Thus, to understand a particular social action ([for example] friendship, voting, marrying, teaching), the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action ... To find meaning in an action, or to say one understands what a particular action means, requires that one interpret in a particular way what the actors are doing. (Schwandt, 2000, p. 191)

In the context of this study, the researcher understands or interprets the 'social action' of professionalisation through 'grasping' the meanings constituted in the professionalisation of ecotour guides. From an interpretivist perspective, how these

[33] *Verstehen* is a German word signifying interpretive understanding of the meaning of human actions (Marshall, 1998; Schwandt, 2000). Thus, *verstehen* should be treated as a generic technique of investigation of all social interaction (Giddens, 1976).

meanings are 'grasped' or 'interpreted in a particular way' by individual researchers will vary (Schwandt, 2000). This means that:

> Although they [interpretivists] have no problem with the idea that there is a reality "out there", they argue that the idea of no theory-free observation/knowledge means that as finite humans we can never access that reality as it really is. There is no way to factor out or eliminate the influence of the particular interest and purposes of particular researchers .... They [interpretivists] are nonrealists, meaning they believe that there may be a reality "out there", but our descriptions/interpretations of that reality are not "out there." Social and educational reality is always something we make or construct, not something we find or discover ... There is no theory-free knowledge and, accordingly, no foundation on which to adjudicate different claims to knowledge. This means that no interpretation or construction of reality can be judged as uniquely right or wrong. Various constructions of what is happening in a social setting at any particular time can be given, but none is free of further interpretation and reinterpretation based on different interests and purposes. (Smith, 2008, p. 460, original emphasis)

Interpretivist qualitative inquiry seeks to understand social action through participants' perspectives and opinions (Angen, 2000; Schwandt, 2000; Smith, 1984, 1990, 1992, 2008; Veal, 1997, 2006). The key to interpretivist research is the researcher's "interpretation of the interpretations people give to their own actions and activities" (Smith, 2008, p. 461). This is underpinned by the belief that social reality is constituted in conversation and interaction (Bubrium & Holstein, 2000). Thus interpretivist understanding is derived through the analysis of language (Schwandt, 2000). For this reason, interpretivist thinking is often linked with constructivist paradigms, which are based on the assumption that all reality and interpretations are socially constructed (Bhattacharya, 2008). Therefore social reality may be considered a function of the meanings people ascribe to their situational experiences through language. As such, social reality varies from one individual to the next.

In practice, interpretivists employ procedures that are no different to other qualitative researchers. However, interpretivists do not agree with the idea that certain methods must be adopted to conduct a valid study.

> Interpretivists do not accept that certain techniques are necessary minima and argue that exactly what an inquirer does when in the field or how fieldnotes are analysed can vary from situation to situation ... However, just because interpretive inquirers do not see any particular procedures as

> mandatory does not mean that they see them as arbitrary. Inquirers always are obligated to make a case for the procedures they employed and did not employ. (Smith, 2008, p. 460)

From an interpretivists' perspective, good research/interpretation and practical accomplishment are achieved through continuous dialogue throughout the research process (Smith, 2008). This means that interpretivism permits flexibility by involving ongoing data collection (Veal, 1997, 2006), which promotes modifying and adjusting research techniques according to the data revealed until the research question is answered (Schwandt, 1994, 2000). This enables the research to focus on the interpretive understanding of the interpretation people give to their own actions and activities and as such is suited to the exploratory nature of this study. The following section explains how the study questions were developed, and how the research process was conducted.

4.3 Developing The Research Questions

Professionalisation is a process occupations undertake to achieve various end-states in contemporary societies (see section 3.3). Depending on the occupational group, these end-states may include increasing professional status in society, standardising work practice, monopolising the market and gaining work autonomy. The initial literature review in this study revealed that professionalisation is taking place within the Australian ecotourism industry with the aim of raising levels of professionalism among ecotour guides. It is also apparent that despite the casual use of 'professional ecotour guide' in tourism research and practice, the philosophical traditions behind the term 'professional' hold complex theoretical implications for the work of an ecotour guide. In the context of Australian ecotour guiding, professionalisation is being initiated by ecotourism industry stakeholders (such as academics) rather than the practitioners of ecotours. This stands in opposition to traditional professions which create, sustain, control, and regulate their own work practice, and establish their own position and role within society. The professionalisation of ecotour guides is symbolic of a 'new' type of professionalism where movements towards professional status are driven by external interest groups of the discipline (Evetts, 2003, 2006b; L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). Thus the question arises as to whether Australian ecotour guides, like other 'new' types of occupations (Evetts, 2003), are influenced by this 'new' form of professionalisation imposed from above rather than generated from within? In addition, if influenced by

this new form of professionalisation, has this influenced their levels of work professionalism? And, if levels of professionalism were not influenced, why were they not influenced? The question of what exactly constitutes a 'professional ecotour guide' also arises. As interpretivism involves understanding subjective first-person experiences of social action (Schwandt, 1994), studying the individuals (ecotour guides) who are the subject of social action (professionalisation) becomes the focus of this study.

In order to create a basis for this study, the author/researcher began with two key questions: 1) What is a professional ecotour guide?, and 2) What impact has industry professionalisation had on the work of ecotour guides? These two questions were designed to facilitate an interpretive understanding of the inner experience (Schwandt, 2000) of ecotour guides in relation to their levels of work professionalism, and the professionalisation process.

Under the interpretivist approach, attempting to understand social reality as a whole is considered too complex, if not impossible. Thus an aspect of social reality is scrutinised in detail with a view to understanding social action (Schwandt, 2000; Smith, 2008). As such, a case study approach was deemed appropriate for this study. The following sections explain the case study approach adopted in this study, and the research methods employed.

4.4 A Case Study of the EcoGuide Australia Certification Program

4.4.1 Why Study The Case?

A case study is a research strategy (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, 2000a, 2005) often employed in qualitative studies (Stake, 2000, 2003, 2005). It incorporates a number of data-gathering methods to study a single individual, a group, or an entire community (Berg, 1998). The focus of a case study is to collect rich and detailed information to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Berg, 1998; Yin, 2003). The rationale for choosing a case study approach as the research strategy and Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Program as the case will now be discussed.

A case study is not a methodological approach to research but rather a choice of what is to be studied (Stake, 2000, 2003, 2005; Yin, 1994, 2003). Chapter Three outlined different professionalisation stages occurring in the Australian ecotourism industry for ecotour guides. Amongst these, professional certification holds the most potential for understanding the influence of professionalisation on ecotour guides.

Among the 3 different types of case studies discussed in the literature (intrinsic, instrumental and multiple case studies (Stake, 1995, 2000, 2003, 2005)), an instrumental case study is most suited to this study. Instrumental case studies are carried out when:

> A particular case is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalisation. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case is still looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinised and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps us pursue the external interest .... Here the choice of case is made to advance understanding of that other interest. (Stake, 2005, p. 445)

It is argued that an instrumental case study provides an interpretive understanding of the professionalisation of ecotour guides by inferring interpretations from an examination of the EcoGuide Program[34]. The EcoGuide Program plays a supportive role to facilitate a broader understanding of professionalisation on the work of ecotour guides. The EcoGuide Program has been certifying Australian ecotour guides since 2001 (Ecotourism Australia, n.d.-b), and as a real-life contemporary case it has the potential to provide new perspectives, knowledge and understanding (Yin, 1994, 2003). A previous PhD dissertation analysed the EcoGuide Program during its developmental period (cf. Black, 2002), however, no research to date (based on the author's research) has examined the EcoGuide Program since its inception. Indeed the professional certification of ecotour guides remains an under-researched area (Black & Ham, 2005).

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[34] A comparative case study including different certification programs is not considered for this study. This is due to the numerous variables that may come into play when comparing, for example, an EcoGuide to a Savannah Guide. Every individual certifying organisation has its own certification programs varying with membership types, certification criteria and processes. It was decided that the inclusion of several different kinds of certification programs with different histories of development and organisational philosophies, structure and culture may weaken the main focus of this study – understanding the influence certification has on ecotour guides.

In selecting an appropriate instrumental case study, rather than a typical or representative case, "we [case study researchers] can learn the most" (Stake, 2005, p. 451). Therefore, when a case study is chosen for its learning potential, it expands the understanding of a particular problem, issue and concept (Stake, 1995). At the beginning of this study in 2004, Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Program, was the latest professional certification program that solely targeted ecotour guides, it was therefore selected as the case from which the most could be learnt about the influence of professionalisation on ecotour guiding professionalism (Stake, 1995, 2005). This decision was based on the accessibility of program members both in terms of information and geography and the initially high level of research support offered by Ecotourism Australia.

Another reason for choosing the EcoGuide Program as the case study is due to its voluntary nature. Among the various ways in which ecotour guides can promote their professionalism (cf. Black, 2007; Black & Ham, 2005; Fennell, 2003a), voluntary initiatives are considered to attract best practice in sustainable tourism (Black & Crabtree, 2007; Tepelus, 2005). Certification programs such as Ecotourism Australia's ECO Certification Program and EcoGuide Program are both voluntary initiatives and are often cited as best practice in recent tourism literature and research (cf. Black, 2007; Black & Ham, 2005; Buckley, 2001a; Buckley, 2001b; Font, 2002; Honey, 2002; Medina, 2005). In addition, the EcoGuide Program is the only voluntary certification program that specifically caters for ecotour guides Australia-wide. Through the EcoGuide Program, Ecotourism Australia seeks to provide: a competitive edge for employment; environmentally sensitive quality services for tourists; and a way of recognising quality guides for employers through their program (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a).

Furthermore, the EcoGuide Program is considered a comprehensive guide certification program. The program has been used as a basis for developing Guides of Australia, and is currently being used as a benchmark for an expanded global guiding certification program (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a). International recognition of a profession's professional qualification is becoming increasingly significant amongst many disciplines (Jefferies & Evetts, 2000) and this is also the case for ecotour guiding. In

addition, obtaining the EcoGuide certification involves assessment by an external assessor highly trained and experienced in the competencies that adhere to ecotourism principles. In this sense certification programs are intended to be a mechanism for achieving professionalism within ecotourism practices (Black, 2007). Therefore, the EcoGuide Program is well suited to function as an instrumental case study to explore issues surrounding the professionalisation of ecotour guides.

Professional certification programs are believed to increase the professionalism of ecotour guides, and enhance the competitiveness, viability and long term survival of the ecotourism industry (Black & Ham, 2005). Professional guiding certification programs are also perceived as the ecotourism industry's recognition of, and response to, an increase in customer expectations for high service quality that includes improved safety, and awareness of environmental issues (Black, 2007; Black & Weiler, 2002). In order to provide a 'control population', a number of non-certified ecotour guides were also sampled. This was not intended to serve as the basis for a comprehensive comparative case study between certified and non-certified guides, but rather to provide an additional means of gaining insight into the effect of professionalisation on the work of ecotour guides – both certified and non-certified. That is to say that professionalisation may effect the work of both groups.

The following sections explain the theoretical and methodological considerations and procedures undertaken to develop the case study, as well as research issues, and the methods and procedures that were addressed and incorporated during the research process.

4.4.2 Validity and Reliability of the Study

Addressing validity and reliability in qualitative research is an on going debate (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). Validity of data generally refers to what extent the collected data truly reflects the phenomenon under study, and the reliability of methods refers to what extent the research findings will be the same if the research was repeated (Veal, 1997, 2006). Thus the research method's reliability is an indicator of validity (Altheide & Johnson, 1994). In recent years, debate has hinged on the concept of validity (Angen, 2000). Many qualitative researchers attempt to dismiss the notion of reliability and validity as these concepts traditionally stem from positivist quantitative

research traditions where validity relies on rigorous methodological rules and standards (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Angen, 2000; Seale, Gobo, Gubrium, & Silverman, 2004). The focus of qualitative research is on understanding rather than validating, and thus depending on one's choice of philosophical and epistemological orientation, research is defined accordingly (Altheide & Johnson, 1994; Smith, 2008). Therefore, new ways of validating qualitative research have emerged (Angen, 2000; Seale *et al.*, 2004).

Attempting to establish validity in qualitative interpretivist research is perceived in a different light to the traditional ways of positivist quantitative research. As mentioned in previous sections, interpretivists are non-realists (not anti-realists) in the sense that they believe reality is out there but that the researchers' descriptions of reality are not and never can be reality (Smith, 1992, 2008). Reality is something that people construct, not something that is discovered or found. In this context, there is no single, tangible reality, only multiple realties (Flick, 2002). Hence, there is no privileged position to interpret the world and no interpretation of reality can be judged as uniquely right or wrong (Smith, 2008). This philosophical and epistemological orientation of interpretivism influences the traditional concepts of objectivity, subjectivity and relativism. For most research, objectivity rests on the ability of the researcher to detach themselves from phenomenon under investigation (Berg, 1998). Subjectivity, on the other hand, is closely related to the concept of bias as it relates to the failure of the researcher to remain detached from the phenomenon under investigation (Berg, 1998). These concepts of objectivity and subjectivity are "unintelligible to interpretivists" (Smith, 1992, p. 101). The philosophical grounds of interpretive understanding cannot be separated from context. This means that:

> Truth, from an interpretive perspective, is no longer based on a one-to-one correspondence to objective reality. It is acknowledged that what we can know of reality is socially constructed through our intersubjective experiences within the lived world, which results in a form of truth that is negotiated through dialogue. (Angen, 2000, p. 386)

Thus, for interpretivists, interpretation is never theory- and value-free, nor time- and place-free (Smith, 2008). Numerous interpretations of a reality under investigation can be given depending on what is occurring in reality, in any particular time and in any particular setting. Furthermore, these are not free from further interpretations,

reinterpretations or revisions at a later point in time (Smith, 1992). For interpretivists, neutrality and impartiality are impossible standards to achieve, and thus knowing is a partial perspective and open to reinterpretation (Angen, 2000). In this context, one might question the existence of a good piece of interpretivist research amongst "anything-goes relativism where every interpretation is just as good as every other interpretation" (Smith, 1992, p. 101). This assumption of 'anything-goes relativism' is not accepted as a legitimate criticism (Angen, 2000; Smith, 1992, 2008). This is where the significant reformulation of validity in interpretivism takes place.

The general notion of validity often discussed in quantitative research is perceived differently for a qualitative interpretivist study. Validity is a moral, ethical and pragmatic concern that becomes the centre of interpretivist studies (Angen, 2000; Gergen, 2002; Smith, 1992, 2008). For interpretivists, researchers make decisions on what is valuable and useful, and how it should be studied, judgments should be based on not just practical, but also moral matters (Smith, 1984). Rather than just focusing on the rules and standardisation of methodological criteria as judgement, the validity of research should stem from the moral, ethical and practical underpinnings of an inquiry (Mishler, 1990). For interpretivist research, validity becomes a moral question that is addressed from the inception of the research until its end (Angen, 2000; Smith, 1992, 2008). According to Angen (2000), the decision on how to carry out interpretivist research (methodology) is guided by 'ethical validation' and 'substantive validation'[35].

Ethical validation refers to perceiving human inquiry as an ethical issue rather than an epistemological one (Smith, 1990), and thus the choice of methods by researchers have ethical and political implications (Mishler, 1990). This means that benefiting the subject under study should be the fundamental basis of the research agenda and practice (Angen, 2000). Therefore, interpretivist studies provide an insightful understanding that is helpful for the target population (Angen, 2000; Gadamer, 1994; Smith, 1984, 1990, 1992, 2008; Unger, 1992). As the purpose of this study is to understand the influence

[35] Angen (2000) prefers to use the term 'validation' rather than 'validity'. Validation means confirmation, whereas validity refers to something being supported (Angen, 2000). In this context, the basis for evaluating the quality of research is to confirm its trustworthiness through "open-ended, always, evolving, enumeration of possibilities that can be constantly modified through practice" (Smith, 1990, p. 178) rather than convincing or supporting.

professionalisation has on the work of ecotour guides, it attempts to provide beneficial recommendations and suggestions concerning the professionalisation of work for ecotour guides and ecotour guiding stakeholders. In addition, substantive validation considers how one comes to an understanding of something. This means that the process of understanding the topic under study includes all the various present, historical, and inter-subjective understandings of the study topic (Angen, 2000). This study has taken into account the various viewpoints of professionalisation of work within the literature and applied them to the work of ecotour guides in the Australian ecotourism industry. The procedures undertaken for conducting fieldwork (explained in the following sections) also reveal that this study has undertaken substantive validation by incorporating multiple stakeholders relevant to ecotour guiding in Australia for interviews, undertaking multiple data collection methods and confirming interpretation results with an external source. For the interpretivist researcher, "what we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning", thus the researcher becomes an instrument for research (Heisenberg, 1958, p. 288). In the interest of transparency, a value statement is provided to give insight into how the social reality of the researcher influenced the interpretive understanding of this study (see Appendix Three).

Although the philosophical and epistemological underpinnings of the interpretivist approach influence the overall study question, strategy, process and procedures, this should not dissuade the researcher from controlling quality of the qualitative research methods (Seale *et al.*, 2004). A research process that embraces the concept of rigor, the "transparency, maximal validity or credibility, maximal reliability or dependability, comparativeness, and reflexivity" (Saumure & Given, 2008), is considered most reliable. Triangulation is regarded as particularly useful in case study research. Triangulation involves employing multiple data collection methods in order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation and to clarify the meaning behind social action by seeing the case from a range of perspectives (Flick, 1998, 2002; Silverman, 1993; Stake, 2005).

Another way of adding rigor to the qualitative case study is the constant comparative method of data collection and analysis which ensures that the newly developed understanding is complete in terms of data saturation (Flick, 1998, 2002; Silverman,

2000). In this instance the researcher collected information until no new interpretive understanding was obtained from the additional data.

This study also checked credibility of the data and data analysis to add rigour to the case study by having the research and analysis scrutinised by independent experts in the ecotourism accreditation field (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999). In the first instance, an expert in the field of ecotour guiding professionalisation in Australia reviewed the case study's interview questions and the results of analysis of the key industry stakeholders' interviews. Transcripts of interviews were not revealed due to ethical considerations. Additionally, a sustainable tourism academic scrutinised the research process and analysis and validated controls designed to enhance rigour, and further, supported the researchers' analysis of the data.

The credibility of a case study is built through triangulation and interpretation, rather than a single step (Stake, 2005). Denzin (1978, p. 291) explains that triangulation is "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomena". By employing multiple data collection methods, triangulation reduces the likelihood of misinterpretation and can clarify the meaning behind social action and construct validity through diverse indicators (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Fontana & Frey, 2003; Given, 2008). This study employed multiple data collection methods including semi-structured interviews, observational techniques, and questionnaire surveys. These methods are explained in detail in section 4.5.

Despite the inter-researcher credibility checks and quality control employed in this study, the researcher acknowledges that no matter the validity and reliability checks, research cases are necessarily a simplified version of reality (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Thus, the researcher accepts that the focus of this interpretivist study is on interpreting the interpretations (Smith, 2008) provided by the key industry stakeholders and ecotour guides. However, rather than relying on a single research method to provide interpretative meanings of professionalisation of ecotour guides, a research approach that involved triangulation, constant comparative method, data saturation, and independent academic credibility checks was considered preferable in terms of rigour and validity.

4.4.3 Interpretivist Case Study Ethics and Politics

> Those whose lives and expressions are portrayed risk exposure and embarrassment, as well as loss of standing, employment, and self-esteem. (Stake, 2005, p. 459)

There is a moral obligation on the qualitative research community to protect research participants from the types of harm outlined as noted by Stake (2005) above. Additionally, for interpretivist researchers, research topics should have value, and be relevant and beneficial for those concerned (Angen, 2000). These ethical considerations were instituted into the research process in a number of ways.

Firstly, the subjects under investigation had the right to know what was being researched, what the nature of the research is, and should be informed of their right to withdraw at any time during the research process (Christians, 2000, 2005; Punch, 1994; Ryen, 2004). During the recruitment process, the researcher provided a formal letter that introduced the purpose of the research, and the participants' role within the research if agreeing to participate. The potential participants were fully aware of the researcher's contact details in line with the UTS ethics policies, which were provided with an additional university contact person. The survey questionnaires also included written detail of the research aim with the inclusion of the researcher's and university contact details. A standard consent form that explained the participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time were provided prior to the interviews with the researcher's contact details (see Appendix Four).

Secondly, the participants' identity and location of the research was kept confidential in order to safeguard participants from unwanted exposure (Christians, 2000, 2005; Ryen, 2004). This is especially crucial for this study as the member details of Ecotourism Australia's ECO Certified businesses and EcoGuides are available to the public and location details would immediately reveal the identity of participants. Throughout the data analysis process, participants' names, employer information, and location of business operation were withheld and remained anonymous to protect the participants' identities.

Thirdly, prior to undertaking field work the researcher submitted an 'Ethics Application' form as required by the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) to gain

permission to undertake research involving people. The research adhered to the *Research Ethics Guidelines For Research Involving Humans* established by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the university at all times. As mentioned, a statement of purpose of the research and participant consent form were read and completed by the participants prior to interviews and observation. How these ethical considerations were factored into the actual fieldwork is explained in the following sections.

4.5 Case Study Research Process and Procedures

4.5.1 Introduction

> Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives. (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2)

In order to understand the meanings ecotour guides ascribe to the professionalisation of their work, this study employed a number of data collection methods. These included: analysing ecotour promotional brochures; conducting in-depth face-to-face and telephone interviews; observing ecotours; recording ecotour guide commentaries; taking field notes and photographs during observation; examining guest book entries; and a self-completed questionnaire survey completed by tourists[36]. The chronological order of data collection began with interviews of key industry stakeholders, secondly, conducting ecotour observations, thirdly collecting self-completed questionnaire surveys carried out by tourists, and finally interviewing ecotour guides. The following sections present the justification of data collection methods used and the research

[36] It is acknowledged that the term ecotourist is often used in the ecotourism literature to describe tourists engaged in ecotourism experiences. However, defining an ecotourist is problematic, and falls beyond the scope of this study, the focus of which is ecotour guides. Rather than engaging in the debate over definitions of ecotourists, the term 'tourist' is used. For further information on ecotourists see Ballentyne and Eagles (1994), Eagles (1992), Fennell (1999, 2003a), Tao, Eagles and Smith (2004), Weaver (2001a, 2002, 2008), and Wight (1996).

procedures carried out during the period August - November 2005, and April - September 2007 in various Queensland locations.

4.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviewing is a way of retrieving knowledge through a conversational practice between an interviewer and an interviewee (Brinkmann, 2008). Therefore, an interview may be considered a special conversation (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003), a "verbal interchange in which one person, the interviewer, attempts to elicit information or expression of opinion or belief from another person or persons" (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995, p. 62). Although the structure of an interview may vary from highly structured to semi formal,, all interviews are interactional (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003). This study employed semi-structured interviews due to the free flowing informational exchange they facilitate through "predetermined but open-ended questions" (Ayres, 2008, p. 810) which help interviewees "to speak spontaneously and unrestrainedly" (Decorp, 1999, p. 47). In addition, semi-structured interviews are generally conducted to elicit spontaneous descriptions and narratives from interviewees (Brinkmann, 2008).

Interviews can also take place in different ways including face-to-face, telephone, surveys or over the Internet (Brinkmann, 2008). This study initially adopted face-to-face interviews, however, this changed to telephone interviews at a later stage of the research process. Although the advantages of face-to-face interviewing such as interactive power and contextual naturalness are acknowledged (cf. Shuy, 2003), telephone interviews were adopted for a range of pragmatic reasons. Firstly, participants were spread across the Australian continent including Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. This presented a financial and temporal limitation on the study. Secondly, the majority of ecotour guides who were interviewed by telephone encountered the researcher face-to-face during the earlier ecotour observation period which reduced feelings of unfamiliarity that may occur during telephone interviews (Shuy, 2003). Other ecotour guides that were not included in the ecotour observation exchanged emails and telephone conversations with the interviewer to schedule their interviews to increase familiarity. All interviews were

digitally recorded with the interviewees' consent, and the interviewer took notes during the interviews which were analysed in conjunction with the audio-taped interview data.

Recruiting Key Industry Stakeholders

Although it was noted in Chapter Three that the subjects of this study are not employers, managers, or government agents (referred as key industry stakeholders in this study), key industry stakeholders were interviewed to provide a context for designing the interview guidelines for ecotour guides and to contextualise the data analysis. The fact that the inception, establishment, and development of the EcoGuide Program is driven by the ecotourism industry (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a), and largely by managers (cf. Ecotourism Australia, n.d.-b), triggered the researcher to investigate the key industry stakeholders' perceptions and opinions on the professionalisation of ecotour guides. In addition, as there is a lack of research conducted on industry stakeholders' perspectives on professional certification programs (Black & Ham, 2005). As such, professional guiding certification programs were the focus of interviews with the industry.

In order to recruit potential interviewees, the researcher/interviewer was given a listing of 29 key industry stakeholders' contact details that were considered influential in the professionalisation of Australian ecotour guides. These stakeholders are involved in ecotour guiding and ecotourism-related government agencies, non-government organisations, non-profit organisations, private organisations and academics. The initial listing of potential interviewees was provided by the researcher's external supervisor, Dr Rosemary Black who was on the project team for the development of the EcoGuide Program. Dr. Black's PhD dissertation analysed the EcoGuide Program, therefore she is perhaps the foremost expert in the field of professional guiding certification programs. She has published books and academic journal articles dedicated to the professionalisation of tour guiding which are often cited. The listing of stakeholders was crossed checked by Dr. Alice Crabtree who was the project manager for the development of the EcoGuide Program. She is the Asia-Pacific Representative for The International Ecotourism Society, and is currently a private consultant specialising in ecotourism certification programs. She is also a well-respected world-leading stakeholder within the ecotourism industry. In addition, at the end of the interviews, the researcher asked the participants to recommend a key industry stakeholder that would

be appropriate for the study aim. This process yielded only one additional participant to the group originally put forward by Drs. Black and Crabtree.

The suggested 29 key industry stakeholders were initially contacted via email with a supporting letter that explained the purpose of the interviews. Out of the 29 potential interviewees contacted, 14 agreed to be interviewed for this study. All interviews were held at the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism, University of Technology, Sydney via telephone. The interviews varied from 35 minutes to 50 minutes, except for Shane (alias, key industry stakeholder). Despite the fact that Shane initially agreed to be interviewed and cancelled two previous scheduled interviews when the researcher called, the third scheduled interview was cut short after 10 minutes.

Formulating Interview Guidelines for Key Industry Stakeholders

A semi-structured interview checklist for the key industry stakeholders was informed by questions raised through the literature review. This checklist covered a range of topics, but also allowed flexibility in order to probe into issues related to understanding the professionalisation of ecotour guides as they arose.

The interviews began with the researcher asking the participants' how they first became involved with the Australian ecotourism industry, and specifically with ecotour guiding. This helped participants feel comfortable at the beginning of the interview and provided useful data when understanding the perspectives of the participants. In the remainder of the interview, participants were asked about:

- the changes or trends they have noticed in Australian ecotour guiding within the ecotourism industry in the last 10 years, and their opinion about the reasons behind these changes or trends;
- how they would define a professional ecotour guide, how professionalised Australian ecotour guides are, and the skills one would need to possess to be considered a professional ecotour guide
- the signs of professionalisation within the Australian ecotourism industry for ecotour guides and their effectiveness, and
- other recommendations to increase the level of professionalism of Australian ecotour guides.

The interviews with key industry stakeholders were designed to create a basis for understanding the values, beliefs and opinions of participants directly involved with pursuing a professionalisation agenda in Australian ecotour guiding.

Recruiting Ecotour Guides

Chapter One suggested that an ecotour guide may be "employed on a paid or voluntary basis" (Black, 2002, p. 26). Although concepts of work often include unpaid work such as volunteering and domestic activities (Grint, 1998; Marshall, 1998), for this study, in relation to ecotour guiding, work is considered to be "done for financial remuneration" (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006, p. 2). This approach was adopted to reduce variables that may have influenced data collection and analysis. For example, if work is considered to be activities that are compensated with extrinsic rewards such as financial remuneration (Hughes, 1971; Runté & Mills, 2004; Snir & Harpaz, 2002), then levels of income can influence self- and social-identity and the relative status of workers (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006; Grint, 1998). Indeed, paid work is key to understanding the formation of self-identity in capitalist societies (Wearing & Wearing, 1991). However, when work is conducted as a volunteering activity, rewards may be more intrinsic. Altruism and selflessness are often associated with the motivation for volunteering, nevertheless, people also volunteer to satisfy their social and psychological goals such as self-esteem and life-satisfaction (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Wilson, 2000). It is beyond the scope of this study to identify the motivational goal of volunteer ecotour guides and as such they are omitted. Instead the focus was solely on ecotour guides who work for a wage.

The case study examines both EcoGuide Program certified guides (EcoGuide) and non-certified ecotour guides. To reduce variables that may influence the research results, all interviewees either owned or were employed by an ECO Certified tourism operator certified by Ecotourism Australia. Therefore, all the ecotours under study were certified by Ecotourism Australia. This provided the researcher with a consistent standard across ecotours, allowing the study to focus on examining the ecotour guides. The researcher began to identify the research population by using the Green Travel Directory 2005/2006 published by Ecotourism Australia. The directory is an annual publication that lists Ecotourism Australia's certified members according to their type of certification. The directory can be purchased for AUD$25 and is available to the public.

According to the Green Travel Directory 2005/2006, there were 47 EcoGuides[37]. At the beginning of 2007 when recruiting interviewees, according to Ecotourism Australia's Website, there were still 45 EcoGuides. The researcher used both the Directory and the Website to gather contact details of the EcoGuides, and sent emails with an attached formal letter that asked for their participation in the research. Two weeks later, the emails were followed up with telephone calls. Out of the 47 EcoGuides contacted, 9 agreed to take part in the interviews with 4 agreeing to participate in research observation (see Table 4.1). Although 13 EcoGuides out of 47 is perceived as a low participation rate, it is to note that 29 EcoGuides worked for 4 different companies and 2 of these companies only allowed one of their EcoGuides to participate in the study. In this context, when one deducts the 27 EcoGuides working for 4 different companies the participation rate can be perceived as 13 EcoGuides out of 20 EcoGuides.

To recruit non-certified ecotour guides, the researcher contacted ECO Certified tour operators that did not employ EcoGuides. The recruiting process also involved emails followed by telephone calls. As the majority of EcoGuides who agreed to participate were located in Queensland, the researcher chose non-certified ecotour guides also operating in Queensland to reduce cost and variables. For example, some EcoGuides and non-certified ecotour guides conducted ecotours in the same location. This allowed the researcher to not only minimise transportation costs but also provide the opportunity to observe ecotours in the same natural setting. There were 11 non-certified ecotour guides who participated in the interviews, with 6 agreeing to participate in the observations. As the research population was relatively small, the final number of interviews was determined by the number of volunteers that were willing to participate.

Interviewing Ecotour Guides

The initial aim of the researcher/interviewer was to conduct face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the ecotour guides participating in tour observations. However, after the first 3 face-to-face interviews with non-certified ecotour guides in Queensland it became apparent that face-to-face interviews raised problems. The research was

[37] It appears in the 2005/2006 Green Travel Directory that there are two different companies catering for Japanese tourists. During the fieldwork process it was revealed that these two companies were owned by one company. Therefore, 11 out of 47 EcoGuides (23%) were Japanese EcoGuides. Only one Japanese EcoGuides was allowed to participate in the study with his/her company's consent.

conducted during Queensland's tourism season (June - August, 2007), and as such the ecotour guides were conducting tours nearly every day and were unwilling to be interviewed on their days off work. Therefore, telephone interviews were conducted through September - October 2007, after the peak holiday period. Interview times ranged between 45 to 70 minutes. Two non-certified guides who had their ecotours observed and agreed to be interviewed via telephone did not return the researcher's communication attempts to schedule the interviews. Therefore, the researcher recruited 2 additional non-certified ecotour guides during the interview period by using the same participation letter followed by telephone communication. Ultimately 9 EcoGuides, and 9 non-certified ecotour guides were interviewed. The total number of interviewees was deemed sufficient as the researcher recognised no new interpretive understanding after the 6th Ecoguide and 5th non-certified ecotour guide during the interview process. All the interviews were digitally recorded.

Interview questions were guided by a checklist used for both EcoGuides and non-certified ecotour guides. The interviews began with broad questions concerning the interviewees' background in ecotour guiding and motivations for becoming an ecotour guide. Once the interviewees were comfortable talking about their work questions focused on addressing the research questions. Themes explored in the interviews included:

- descriptions of ecotour guiding as work, and the skills required to be successful
- involvement in and influence of, guide training or educational programs and professional associations
- definition and perception of a professional ecotour guide, and
- career development, satisfaction and motivation of ecotour guiding.

With respect to the EcoGuide Program, EcoGuides were asked to explain why they obtained certification with Ecotourism Australia and what influence it had on their work, and their level of ecotour guiding professionalism. EcoGuides were also asked to comment on the value of the certification and their overall satisfaction with, commitment to, and need for, the program. The non-certified ecotour guides were asked if they were aware of the EcoGuide Program and if they had considered becoming certified. This was followed with questions designed to reveal participants' opinions

about ecotour guiding professionalism and professionalisation. Interview questions for ecotour guides were based on data previously collected in interviews with key industry stakeholder interviews, and the professionalisation literature reviewed. Interviews were immediately transcribed and analysed and continuously compared with other interviews throughout the sampling period. The interviews were deemed complete when no new information emerged from additional data collection. It is to emphasise that the interview questions were formulated and structured to generate naturally occurring responses rather than biased ones.

Pilot interviews were conducted with both key industry stakeholders and the ecotour guides. The pilot interviews represented a 'trial run' of the research instrument (Veal, 1997, 2006), and provided opportunities for adjustments before proceeding with the bulk of data collection (Schreiber, 2008). Two key industry stakeholder interviews were piloted resulting in a modification in the flow of questions. One certified EcoGuide and one non-certified ecotour guide interview were piloted, which resulted in neither requiring adjustment.

4.5.3 Ecotour Observation

Observation is considered one of the oldest and most fundamental of all research methods (Adler & Adler, 1994; McKechnie, 2008). When used as a strategic ethnographic method, it requires researchers to participate and observe routines of a group through meticulous observation and note taking (Bernard, 2002). It involves direct contact between the researcher and participants where data can be collected through audio- or video- recording and field-notes (McKechnie, 2008). As observational techniques explore topics that are little known and seek new information with flexible and emergent research designs (McKechnie, 2008), the observation method suits the exploratory nature of this study. In addition, when observational techniques complement interviews, it generates deeper and fuller understanding of phenomena (McKechnie, 2008). Hence, in order to support this study's in-depth interviews non-verbal observational information are also collected and analysed. As such ecotours conducted by both EcoGuides and non-certified ecotour guides were observed in the field.

With a view to complementing data collected through interviews, ecotour guide commentaries, and dialogue between guides and tourists were audio-recorded, and physical gestures and body language of participants were noted (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000, 2003). In addition, to support the audio-recorded data, the researcher took fieldnotes during the observation, and photographs were taken from angles where the tour participants and ecotour guides could not be identified. The field-notes were developed into full descriptions of what was observed within 24 hours of the observation, and the photographs were saved into digital folders that are only accessible by the researcher.

Observation is highly dependent on the researcher as they become the research instrument. Therefore, the validity and reliability of observation and the subjective interpretations of situations are at times questioned (McKechnie, 2008). However, observer bias can be addressed by the use of reflective journals, the triangulation of data sources, and production of detailed descriptions of the situation being observed (McKechnie, 2008). This study employed other data collection methods to retrieve more accurate and credible meanings from the participants under study. These included reading guest comment books, collecting brochures that describe the ecotours under observation, and taking photographs of tour sites, and ecotour guide and tourist interaction. In addition, the verbal and physical interactions between ecotour guides, tourists and nature were noted throughout the ecotours. These were interpreted by recognizing casual conversations, language intonations and physical actions that could not be recorded by audio-recording the guides commentaries.

Observation in the Field

> observation of people *in situ*; finding them where they are, staying with them in some role which, while acceptable to them, will allow both intimate observation of certain parts of their behaviour, and reporting it in ways useful to social science but not harmful to those observed. (Hughes, 2002, p. 139, original italics)

When recruiting ecotour guides to participate in the research, the researcher asked whether the ecotour guides were willing to take part in ecotour observations where the researcher would be taking part as a tourist in the ecotours and audio-recording the guides' commentaries. More than 10 participants agreed to participate in the observation

however, due to time and financial constraints the researcher undertook observations with 4 EcoGuides and 6 non-certified ecotour guides in various Queensland locations. Although, 2 of the non-certified ecotour guides could not be reached after the observation to schedule an interview, observation of their tours is still included in the analysis of this study. All 10 of the ecotours were ECO Certified with Ecotourism Australia.

The researcher paid attention to reduce intrusiveness and reactiveness that observational techniques may incur during the field work process by acting as a tourist rather than a researcher. At the beginning of the ecotours, the researcher was introduced by the ecotour guides to the tourists for ethical considerations to minimise intrusiveness, which is one of the criticisms of observational methods (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000, 2003). The ecotour commentaries were recorded by attaching a small microphone to the ecotour guides' collar, but in cases where participants were uncomfortable with the microphone, the researcher carried the microphone and stayed close to the ecotour guide with the guides' consent. The ecotours ranged from 4 to 8 hours, including travelling time, depending on the tour itinerary.

Table 4.1 summarises the background and type of participation undertaken by each key industry stakeholder and ecotour guide. To respect participants' anonymity, each participant was given an alias. The participants' work location and organisation are also not revealed as the numbers of EcoGuides are small, and exposing this information will lead to the identification of the participants.

Table 4.1 Details of research participants

Key industry stakeholder participant alias	Affiliation with the ecotourism industry	Type of participation
Anna	Private ecotourism consultant	Telephone interview
Beth	Ecotourism academic	Pilot telephone interview
Brian	Ecotour guide trainer for vocational institution	Telephone interview
Chris	Ecotour guide trainer for vocational institution	Telephone interview
Drew	Tourism manger for government agency	Telephone interview
Gil	Ecotour guide trainer for private organisation	Telephone interview
Jason	Private ecotourism consultant	Telephone interview
Jordon	Trainer and author of ecotour guiding	Telephone interview
Lane	Ecotourism PhD candidate	Pilot telephone interview
Patrick	Tourism manager for government agency	Telephone interview
Ronda	Ecotour guide trainer for private organisation	Telephone interview
Ron	CEO of guiding organisation	Telephone interview
Shane	CEO of guiding organisation	Telephone interview
Scott	Tourism manager for government agency	Telephone interview
ECO Guide Participant Alias	**Background as ecotour guide**	**Type of Participation**
Ben	25 years as guide Full-time sole owner and operator of ecotours Bachelor in science	Observation, telephone interview
Will	EcoGuide assessor, 10 years as guide Casual employment with ecotour operator Retired outdoor environmental education teacher	Telephone interview
Don	17 years as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator Bachelor in English literature, Masters in teaching	Observation, telephone interview
Gerry	4.5 years as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator Bachelor in linguistics Certificate III in tour guiding	Observation, telephone interview
Jack	7 years as guide Full-time joint owner and operator of ecotours Certificate III in tour guiding	Telephone interview
Ken	EcoGuide assessor, 10 years as guide English is second language Full-time employment with ecotour operator	Observation, telephone interview
Penny	30 years as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator Bachelor of Arts	Telephone interview
Sean	25 years as guide Full-time sole owner and operator of ecotours	Telephone interview
Marcus	7 years as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator Bachelor in protected area management	Telephone interview

Table 4.1 Details of research participants (continued)

Non-certified ecotour guide participant alias	Background as ecotour guide	Type of participation
Adam	14 years as guide Part-time sole owner and operator of ecotours Diploma in teaching	Telephone interview
Erin	12 years as guide Freelance ecotour guide	Observation, telephone interview
Greg	10 years as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator	Observation, telephone interview
Joe	9 years as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator	Observation, telephone interview
Matt	10 years as guide Casual employment with ecotour operator Diploma in teaching	Telephone interview
Marco	22 years as guide Full-time sole owner and operator of ecotours	Telephone interview
Rob	10 years as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator	Face-to-face interview
Sam	5 years as guide: English is second language Full-time employment with ecotour operator Bachelor in environmental science	Observation, face-to-face interview
Wyatt	5 years as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator	Face-to-face interview
Liz	6 months as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator Bachelor in marine science	Observation
Kevin	4 months as guide Full-time employment with ecotour operator	Observation

4.5.4 Questionnaire Surveys of Tourists

Collecting self completed questionnaire surveys was also employed as a component of the overall case study (see Appendix Five). No research to date has followed up on ecotourism certification programs to examine levels of public awareness (Weaver & Lawton, 2007), and although it is not the focus of this study, the perceptions and values tourists have of their ecotour guides is considered useful in contextualising the professionalisation of ecotour guides. Questionnaire surveys are often used in quantitative research to bring consensus to the generalisability of statistical results (Veal, 1997, 2006). However, questionnaire survey research is not wholly quantitative in approach, and can be largely qualitative depending on the types of questions asked (Julien, 2008). Questionnaire surveys that focus on open-ended questions where the questions enable participants to respond freely are valuable when extracting meaningful in-depth data. In addition to the open ended questions, the questionnaires also included Likert scales (ranging from: 5 extremely important - 1 not at all important) and ranking questions (ranging from: 5 very satisfied - 1 very dissatisfied) not for statistical generalisation, but for creating a general understanding of tourists' motivation and satisfaction with the ecotour, and importance of having an ecotour guide during the tours.

Formulating the Questionnaire and Conducting the Surveys

The questionnaire survey for tourists started with a scale on the level of importance for undertaking guided ecotours, and the roles of ecotour guides. The content of these scales were based on previous research and literature relevant to studying guided tours and the roles of ecotour guides. Open-ended questions on tourists' experience of the guided ecotours, level of satisfaction with guide, and opinions on formal ecotour guiding certification were also included in the survey. Questions on the recognition of the EcoGuide Program were additionally asked of tourists that undertook guided tours with an EcoGuide. Further information on the tourists' demographics, previous experience of guided tours and suggestions for the ecotours and ecotour guides were retrieved through the questionnaire surveys

Taking part in the ecotours opened up opportunities to interact with the tourists and made it more comfortable to distribute questionnaire surveys to tourists at the tour's

conclusion. During the process of recruiting ecotour guides, the researcher asked permission from the ecotour guides and their relevant managers to survey their tourists. All 10 organisations that participated in the observations agreed for their tourists to be surveyed after they had inspected the questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed to be self-completed because of time and budget restrictions (Veal, 1997, 2006). When introduced to the tourists at the beginning of the ecotours, the researcher asked for tourists' participation in completing the surveys at the end of the tour. In total, 14 surveys were completed by tourists who went on ecotours with EcoGuides and 32 by tourists with non-certified ecotour guides. The number of surveys completed, however, is of less importance for this study as the questionnaires were surveyed to create context and perspectives of tourists' opinions on the professionalisation of ecotour guides rather than a statistical generalisation of tourists who take guided ecotours. All questionnaires were completed on the tour transportation (bus or cruise) by the tourists on the way back from the ecotour location to their accommodation.

4.5.5 Data Recording and Transcriptions

All of the initial email communications made with potential participants are recorded in digital format in the researcher's computer that is only accessible with a password. The content of these mails is also included in the data analysis to facilitate a deeper understanding of the background of individual participants. All interviews were digitally recorded with an Olympus Pro digital recorder. The collected interview data were transcribed with Olympus Pro digital transcription software then changed into rich text format Microsoft Word software documents for data analysis (see Appendix Six). The audio-recording of ecotour commentaries were also digitally recorded with Olympus Pro digital recorder and transcribed with Olympus Pro digital transcription software. It is to note that the interviews and ecotour commentaries are transcribed and quoted verbatim, however, a number of grammatical changes were made within the thesis for clarity. Additional data derived from the ecotour observation such as field notes, photographs and guest comment books were digitally recorded into the researcher's computer at the end of the observation day while memories were still fresh. The completed questionnaire surveys were categorised into EcoGuide and non-certified ecotour guide groups with the ecotour guides' name on each questionnaire survey. These recorded questionnaire surveys are kept in locked drawers of the researcher's

work desk. No statistical computer software was used in the analysis of surveys as the sample size was small and the purpose of the survey was to provide context for data analysis rather than providing a basis for statistical generalisation.

4.5.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Interpretation of collected data (the interpretations participants give of their own social actions and the actions of others) is the focus of interpretivist research (Smith, 2008). Within the interpretivist approach to *verstehen* (interpretive understanding), collected data are transcribed into text and are brought to clarity by interpreting the text as a whole rather than individual words (Rainbow & Sullivan, 1987). This means that:

> To understand a text is to follow its movements from sense to reference, from what I say to what it talks about ... This means that the intelligibility of any action requires reference to its larger context, a cultural world ... This is the art of interpretation. The aim is not to uncover universals or laws but rather to explicate context and world. (Rainbow & Sullivan, 1987, pp. 13-14)

Therefore, the cultural world of ecotour guiding as work is revealed by the words of the participants, and interpreted to provide an understanding of the professionalisation of ecotour guiding. The conversations carried out and recorded during the interviews, observations, questionnaire surveys, and other collected materials are interpreted and analysed to create a meaning of the social action of professionalisation. In this respect qualitative research is:

> An activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b, p. 3)

To facilitate this naturalistic understanding of the influence professionalisation may have on the work of ecotour guides, all the digitally recorded interviews were transcribed using a word processor. Following the qualitative research tradition, the written texts were read and reread to draw a picture of the cultural world under study,

and to derive their meanings (Peräkylä, 2005). This process was done prior to transferring the data into a qualitative data analysis computer software package. Although there are various issues related to using computer software packages (cf. Richards & Richards, 1994), they are a helpful device for systematically filing written text. NVivo is a computer-based qualitative data analysis software that is designed to use a coding system that generates relationships between elements of the data (Smyth, 2008). One of the capabilities of NVivo is to record memos of the researcher's thoughts, separate from the actual data which act as a reminder of implications and directions for analysis. NVivo was found to be a useful data management tool for this study, however it did not replace the actual task of analysis.

The initial process of analysing collected data was adopted from Sarantakos (1998) who proposes to start analysing data from data reduction, where certain issues and themes may emerge from the data. The construction of themes and theories evolved from the collected data through iterative examination of the transcripts. This was conducted through analysing chunks of text by treating it as a whole rather than breaking it down into individual words. This is the coding process which relates to identifying themes from texts (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). In the early stages of coding, whole texts were grouped into similar themes. The researcher started by identifying more specific and detailed themes such as 'wear clean uniform', 'humour and entertainment', 'full-time work', 'good communication with tourist', and 'have accurate scientific knowledge', which were then grouped into a larger theme as 'requirements of a professional guide'. NVivo was particularly useful during this systematic categorisation of these texts. The arranging, consolidating and grouping of similar themes was conducted repeatedly to examine whether the same or similar themes emerged. This process then naturally led to a stage where relationships between themes were made (Huberman & Miles, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Through this analysis, relationships of themes are established and negative cases that do not fit into themes are considered or suggested as a new conception that needs to be addressed (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). This interpretation stage of data analysis involves "making decisions and drawing conclusions related to the research question" (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 316). Thus, the reduced and coded data are transformed into meaningful information through interpretation. To provide validity and quality of the interpreted interview data, observation and questionnaire surveys are

analysed to support and provide alternative insight into the themes themselves, and relationships between the themes.

The audio commentaries recorded during observation were transcribed into digital documents, and whole texts were coded with NVivo into ecotour guiding competencies based on Ecotourism Australia's Eco Guide Program. This was to identify the types of commentaries provided by ecotour guides that add context to the interpretations of interviewed data. For example, when a participant mentioned the importance of providing accurate scientific knowledge to tourists, but provided inaccurate botanical information during the observation, this was indicated in the data analysis. In addition, the naturally occurring data that were collected during observation, such as conversations between ecotour guide and tourist, comments made by tourists to the researcher, and photographs taken by the researcher also assisted in analysing the interview data (Peräkylä, 2005).

The questionnaire surveys also complimented the interview data. For example, if an EcoGuide participant mentioned that they believed certification was not being recognised by tourists, this was confirmed by questionnaire surveys of tourists that did not recognise the EcoGuide badge that was on display through the 5 hour ecotour. This type of opinion from interviews provides insights into industry practitioners' viewpoints on certification programs, and by extension the levels of ecotour guiding professionalism. Therefore, the integrity and richness of the interview data and its interpretation are enhanced by the use of observation and survey data. The data collected from the questionnaire are presented in a way that supports the interviews of the ecotour guides. As the focus of the study is the professionalisation of ecotour guides and how they perceive their professionalism, the tourists' perception of the tour guides' performance during the tour play a supportive, rather than central role in the data analysis. Furthermore, relevant literature and previous research were compared to support or contrast these findings. These different types of data are interwoven through out the analysis to allow the case to tell its own story in accordance with the interpretivist ethos (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 2003).

4.6 Strengths and Limitations of the Case Study Approach

The intention of this study was to explore the influence professionalisation has on the work of ecotour guides and their levels of work professionalism by using a contemporary guide certification program as a case study. It was found that an interpretivist case study approach captured rich and complex sets of data that provided interpretations of social actions (professionalisation) in the words of the ecotour guiding practitioners. This opened up new and alternative ways to understand the professionalisation of ecotour guides that goes beyond the pre-existing body of knowledge. However, a number of strengths and limitations of the research need to be acknowledged.

Firstly, as interpretivists focus on understanding the individual experience (Gergen, 2002), the interpretivist approach is limited in its potential to make broad universal generalisations (Smith, 2008). As such, new forms of understanding derived from interpretivist studies are generally used as a basis to further investigate and research the field under study rather than as a basis for a meta-theory designed to be 'the final word' on a topic (Gergen, 2002).

Secondly, the instrumental case study approach is limited in its applicability as the basis for generalisation beyond the specific case study under investigation. Even if a sample of multiple cases were used, this does not automatically guarantee a macroscopic study (Yin, 1993, 1994). The focus of studying a case is on establishing parameters, which can then be applied more broadly (Yin, 1993, 1994, 2003). This allows generalisation to theory, not to populations (Yin, 1994, 2003). Nevertheless, to ensure quality and rigour this study adopted multiple data collection methods (triangulation) to study a single case.

As the research participant population was relatively small and heavily concentrated in the state of Queensland, ecotour observations and face-to-face interviews were limited to several Queensland destinations (the 10 different organisations were located in 4 locations). Although the interview questions remained the same between face-to-face and telephone interviews, it is possible that slightly different interpretations of questions and answers were made due to the absence of non-verbal communication such as eye contact, facial expressions and physical behaviour (Shuy, 2003).

The decision to adopt an interpretivist paradigm in this study was made after careful consideration of other potential theoretical and philosophical approaches. The level of concern one may have regarding this approach and its interpretation into the research design will depend to a large degree on the reader's own philosophical and epistemological orientation. Therefore, how one chooses to conduct research is not a declaration that one approach is superior to others, what is important is how knowledge is developed for moral and practical reasons (Gergen, 2002; Smith, 2008).

4.7 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a theoretical, philosophical and methodological basis for collecting and analysing data concerning the influence of professionalisation on the work of ecotour guides. The selection of an interpretivist approach was based upon the exploratory nature of the research, and the lack of empirically based knowledge on the field of ecotour guiding. An interpretive study focuses on interpretation of the words people use to interpret their own reality. Thus the interpretivist approach is well suited to understanding the impact professionalisation has on the work of ecotour guides from the perspective of ecotour guides, in addition to the key industry stakeholders. In line with interpretivist philosophy and epistemology, the research questions developed for this study were established in a way that is ethical, moral and pragmatic. A qualitative, instrumental case study approach was adopted as it is an accepted research strategy suited to cases in which new understanding can be revealed by exploring real-life phenomena.

The case study focuses on Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Program by exploring the influence of certification programs, as an example of professionalism, on the work of ecotour guides. A multi-method approach to data collection was adopted starting with semi-structured interviews with 14 key industry stakeholders to contextualise the professionalisation of ecotour guiding in Australia, and to assist in designing interview questions for interviewing ecotour guides. Semi-structured interviews were then conducted with 9 EcoGuides and 9 non-certified ecotour guides to understand the influence, value and guides' opinions of the certification program and by extension professionalisation. In addition, 4 ecotour observations of EcoGuides and 6 ecotour

observations of non-certified ecotours were conducted, and a total of 46 questionnaire surveys were completed by tourists on the ecotours under observation.

A number of measures were used to ensure that ethics protocols were followed. Firstly, to protect the identity and location of the participants, information that could potentially expose participants' identity, the identity of their employers, and the location of their tour were protected with pseudonyms. Secondly, the research process followed the university's ethical guidelines for human research which included informing the research participants about the purpose of the research, the nature of the research, and the voluntary nature of their participation at any stage in the research process. In order to provide wide ranging quality data and analysis, the study adopted triangulation in order to check the credibility of the data, and continuous comparative data analysis.

The following chapter outlines the first phase of the data analysis which describes the cultural world of Australian ecotour guides creating a contextual basis for understanding the influence professionalisation has on the work of ecotour guiding.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONTEXTUALISING THE SPECIALISED WORK OF AUSTRALIAN ECOTOUR GUIDES

> Ecotour guides have a really important role to play .... so when you're talking about the Great Barrier Reef, you're talking about an enormous area, larger than the states of Victoria and Tasmania. There's no way it can be policed. So what happens is that the ecotour guides that are often the policemen as well to ensure that things don't get damaged or don't get broken, that people will show proper respect as well as inspiring them to want to leave as ambassadors. (Anna, key industry stakeholder)

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to create the context for answering the study's two research questions – 'What is a professional ecotour guide?', and 'What impact has professionalisation had on the work of Australian ecotour guides?' Despite the Australian ecotourism industry's attempts to raise levels of ecotour guiding professionalism, Chapters Two and Three identified a gap in knowledge in relation to the impact professionalisation has on the work of ecotour guides. This chapter develops a theoretical and empirical basis for understanding what constitutes work for Australian ecotour guides.

Chapter Two established that ecotour guides are engaged in work that adheres to ecotourism principles (Black, 2002; Weiler & Crabtree, 1998). The statement provided by Anna (above) emphasised the importance of ecotour guides being the "policemen" for environmental protection and inspiring tourists to become "ambassadors" for nature conservation. A small component of the ecotourism literature has addressed these specialised roles ecotour guides play in the ecotourism experience[38] (Almagor, 1985;

[38] Although there is a limited amount of research that links the relationship between guiding quality and satisfactory tourist experience (cf. Geva & Goldman, 1991; Hughes, 1991; Lopez, 1981), it is argued by various general tour guiding literature that tour guides play an influential role on the overall tourist experience (Bowen, 2001; Chang, 2006; McArthur, 1996; Mossberg, 1995; Pond, 1993).

Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Gurung *et al.*, 1996; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Hughes, 1991; Ormsby & Mannle, 2006; Weiler & Davis, 1993). However, these studies fall short of providing a theoretically and empirically rigorous context for understanding the specialised work of ecotour guides from the practitioners' perspective. Specialised work for ecotour guides is considered to be instilling conservation values and motivating environmentally conscious behaviour in tourists and by extension achieving the ecotourism principle of environmental sustainability. Ecotour guides are directly involved in the movement to achieve environmental sustainability, one of the major social issues of this century (Mayer & McPherson Frantz, 2004), and this differentiates them from other types of tour guides. This chapter is structured around the analysis of the specialised work of achieving environmental sustainability through ecotour guiding and the expert knowledge and skills it requires.

According to professionalism discourse, the practitioners' view is of central concern to an occupation's move towards becoming a professional group, as professionalisation traditionally occurs 'from within' rather than 'from above' (Evetts, 2003). Hence, to analyse and interpret meanings ecotour guides ascribe to their work, this chapter begins by analysing the values practitioners ascribe to their work and their varying job[39] titles. This is to shed light on work-related self- and social-identity as it is closely related to the ecotour guides' interpretations of the specialised work they perform (Hughes, 1971; Leidner, 2006). Chapters One and Two explained that, although the term 'professional' is often cited within the Australian ecotourism industry and academic ecotourism literature, its use is arbitrary and not grounded in theoretical tradition or empirical evidence. As such, by illustrating the expert knowledge and skills involved in performing the specialised work of ecotour guiding, the chapter provides the context for analysing practitioners' perspectives of what constitutes a professional ecotour guide in Chapter Six.

This chapter's contribution to knowledge lies in the links made between professionalisation theory and the work of ecotour guiding. According to Freidson

[39] Participants used the terms 'work' and 'job' interchangeably. 'Job' is defined "as collections of tasks designed to be performed by one employee, and 'tasks' as the assigned pieces of work that employees complete" (Grant, 2007, p. 395). In this context, a 'job' is carrying out the smaller pieces of 'work', and therefore the participants' reference to 'job' is used to understand 'work' of ecotour guides.

(1986, 1994, 2001), expert knowledge and skills are required to perform professional (specialised) work. It is the possession of expert knowledge and skills that differentiates professionals from other occupational workers. This chapter identifies the expert knowledge and skills that differentiate ecotour guides from other types of tour guides and which might allow them to achieve professional status through the process of professionalisation (Siegrist, 1990).

5.2 Specialised Work of Ecotour Guides

5.2.1 Work Responsibility

Ecotour guides closely related their work activities to perhaps the most widely recognised ecotourism principle – environmental sustainability (cf. Beaumont, 2001; Björk, 2000; Blamey, 2001; Burton, 1998; Fennell, 1999, 2003a; Weaver, 2001a, 2008, 2001b). The role that most clearly differentiated ecotour guides from other types of tour guiding was their "responsibility" (Sam, non-certified ecotour guides, below) to achieve environmental sustainability by disseminating conservation messages to tourists.

> We have the responsibility to send a strong message about conservation in this sort of special natural place. (Sam, non-certified ecotour guide)

Increasing awareness of the need for preservation and conservation of the natural environment during travel is one of the key emphases of ecotourism (Boo, 1992; Ecotourism Australia, 2008; Honey, 2002; Richardson, 1993; Wight, 1994; Zografos & Oglethorpe, 2004). The participants' saw their primary work 'responsibility' as protector and defender of the environment, and disseminator of the conservation message.

> To give people a positive experience in regarding both natural and cultural values. To instil a lot of respect for that environment, demonstrate to people how to minimise the impact on your site. (Penny, EcoGuide)

> It's to stage the experience for these people in such a way that has a context in the here and now and in the future. In our case, well no in all cases, to encourage and develop conservation awareness. (Matt, non-certified ecotour guide)

> Really to impart the importance of the environment that you're actually travelling into and make them have a better understanding of the processes and the natural environment and why they are so important to protect for the next generation. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

> Interpret the environment, tune people, inspire them to look around them and look after it really. (Gerry, EcoGuide)

> Well, to interpret what people are seeing, interpreting the rain forest and how it fits into the overall ecosystem that you know. Ensuring that when they come they saw things about having to learn how the rainforest survives and the rest of the world so it's a little bit of an ecotourism, ecological sort of message. These sorts of places are worth saving not only because they look good but also because while they survive we human beings survive. (Joe, non-certified ecotour guide)

This type of work 'responsibility' is considered specialised compared to other types of tour guiding work as ecotour guides meet a social and moral responsibility of environmental sustainability when they successfully conduct their every day work (Mayer & McPherson Frantz, 2004). When work is specialised, it may be considered as professional work and the expert knowledge and skills to perform professional work distinguishes a professional group from occupational groups (Freidson, 1970a; Larson, 1977). In order to perform the specialised work of ecotour guides, unique expert knowledge and skills were identified in the collected data. Before discussing these, the following section explores the meanings ecotour guides ascribed to their own work. This reveals how ecotour guides represent their work to others, and how they interpret their work within themselves and through interactions with others.

5.2.2 The Title of 'Ecotour Guide'

The self-reflective expressions ecotour guides use in relation to their work are of interest when explored through the concept of identity. The notion of identity is often used as a basis for conceptualising work (Leidner, 2006). The meanings associated with one's work are considered to be expressions of one's self- and social-identity (Hughes, 1971), particularly in the context of service work where individual subjectivity is inseparable from the process of work (Hochschild, 1983). This study considers participants' expressions of their identity to be a meaning of work that may be influenced by professionalisation. In addition, members of most professions generally agree on a work description, however, this is usually not the case for non-professional

positions as a publicly recognised understanding of their work does not exist (Ghidina, 1992). A sample of the language used by ecotour guides to introduce themselves to tourists serves as a starting point for analysis of the meanings and self- and social-identity bound up in the title of 'ecotour guide'.

> Alright, we've got everybody here, let's go. Ok, folks, I am your bus driver for the next three days ... If you have any questions about anything don't hesitate to ask since I am the bus driver, I know about everything. (Don, EcoGuide commentary, July 17th, 2007)

> G'day, I'm ***. I will be guiding you through your tour today. (Ben, EcoGuide commentary, July 23rd, 2007)

> Looks like everyone's here. Ok, all ready to go? Let's go for a ride. (Greg, non-certified ecotour guide commentary, July 5th, 2007)

> My name is ***, welcome to *** [location]. Let's go take a walk, I'll show you a couple of things around here. (Sam, non-certified ecotour guide commentary, June 29th, 2007)

The introductory comments made by ecotour guides above during the observation process did not represent a clear explanation of their role in the ecotourism experience. Self-definition of work is an important way of identifying oneself in society (Ghidina, 1992; Hughes, 1971). Thus, the way that ecotour guide participants identify their occupation provides an insight into what they perceive as their work. Perhaps reflecting an Australian self-deprecating sense of humour, Don, above, introduced himself to the tourists during the observation as a 'bus driver'. However, during the interview his description of work broadened.

> Well my initial definition of ecotourism is to teach people that are insane in society to become environmentally well adjusted. So that's my primary directive and then I will water it down to suit whoever is there. So if I've got a yobbo footballer, even a whole bus load of them, I will aim at their level but I will try to do that to whatever window is open in their head. (Don, EcoGuide)

Don described his primary work as following ecotourism principles, and therefore explained his work as 'watering down' environmental knowledge to the tourists so they can become 'environmentally well adjusted'. An ecotour guide's role in providing environmental information to instil conservation messages and encourage environmentally conscious behaviour has already been addressed in the literature (cf.

Black, 2007; Ormsby & Mannle, 2006; Weiler & Crabtree, 1998). However, ecotour guides' recognition and practice of these roles have never been studied. As such, the role of instilling conservation messages and encouraging environmentally conscious behaviour to the tourists is explored further in section 5.4.

Despite the use of the term 'ecotourism guide' (cf. Manidis Roberts Consultants, 1994), 'ecotour guide' (cf. Australian National Training Authority, 2001; Black, 2007; Black *et al.*, 2001; Weiler & Crabtree, 1998), and Ecotourism Australia's 'EcoGuide' (cf. Crabtree & Black, 2000; Ecotourism Australia, 2009a) in the tourism industry, ecotourism literature and research, none of the observed ecotour guides voluntarily used the term 'eco-' when describing their work title.

> This [guiding] is a part of my job, but I don't view myself as an ecotour guide. I am more of a ranger. (Sam, non-certified ecotour guide)

> When people ask what I do I say "I am a naturalist". I don't say I'm a tour guide. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

The following comments explain Sam and Rob's reasons for using these terms to express their work.

> A part of our job is guiding, but we're not only guides we are also rangers we protect this area. We don't just talk, we manage this environment [the tour route] as well. (Sam, non-certified ecotour guide)

> Because a tour guide is someone who, like the backpacker tour guide, they pick them up they tell them a few things, et cetera. I know that, but being a naturalist is someone being dedicated all their years in self study and absorbs the information and passion, it's just someone who lives it. I live it. I pride myself learning and soaking up the knowledge and understanding it as much as I can. So I label myself as a naturalist, and I say "Hey I've been doing this for a few years now. I am a naturalist." I have a wide knowledge of these subjects and I am an expert being a generalist, not necessarily being an expert in being a specialist in terms of specific subjects. I can talk about a lot of things and I can get into a lot of details if you want me to. So therefore, I call myself as a naturalist, so I have an understanding of the ecology I'm talking about. So tour guide no, I put myself at the next level. For me, after 10 years I feel that I have the privilege and the right to give myself that title. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

The ecotour guides'[40] description/title of work formulates their self-identity and establishes their meanings of work. For example, Sam, above, self-identifies as a 'ranger' because he "protect[s] [and] ... manage[s] this environment". He sees his work as going beyond just guiding. Furthermore, Rob gives his work the title of "naturalist", a person who understands ecology. Sam and Rob had specific explanations of their work identities that reflected their self-identities. 'Ecotour guiding' was seen as something less valuable than the work they did. This type of discrepancy between a worker's perception of their work and the prescribed work description is common in low-status occupations (Ghidina, 1992). When this type of discrepancy exists between work identity and the image projected by the title of the work, workers create self-concepts which "make their work tolerable, or even make it glorious to themselves and others" (Hughes, 1971, p. 342). In addition, Freidson mentions that "professionals develop intellectual interest in their work, so they are concerned with extending and refining it and they believe in its value in society" (Freidson, 1994, p. 200). Hence, Sam and Rob have developed new titles for their work as they appear to perceive ecotour guiding as a low-status occupation that is beneath their perception of what they do. Rob's somewhat derogatory comparison of a low-skilled, dispassionate ecotour guide to himself, a 'naturalist', serves to confirm his position "at the next level". He feels he has 'the right' to what he considers to be a better job title because of his passion for his work.

> Even though you see it written [the term, ecotour guide] and heard about it I've never used "hey I'm an ecotour guide." When I say "I'm a naturalist" that includes, I'm an ecologist and environmentalists, so that comes under a naturalist. I say I'm a naturalist which means that I have natural passion for the outdoors and mother nature and you might as well include ecologist and environmentalist because it gives a bit more. So eco would cover that but people don't necessarily understand what they mean by an ecotour guide. So I say a naturalist and break it down, "Yes, I am an ecologist and environmentalist put together so hence naturalists. It's a different title", that's how I explain it to people. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

[40] Some participants used different titles for 'ecotour guide'. Although the participants' preference in their work title is respected, this study continues to call them ecotour guides to minimise confusion. As mentioned in previous chapters, any participant that conducts an ecotour (as promoted by their employers or organisation) are categorised as ecotour guides for this study.

Rob's reasoning for not using 'ecotour guide' as a work title not only reflects his self-identity but is also indicative of his social identity. His desire to be recognised as an ecologist and environmentalist reflects the meanings of work he ascribes to being a 'naturalist'. Sam also explained why he did not want to attach the term 'ecotour guide' to his work.

> Ecotour guides. Maybe ecotour guides are doing guiding jobs every day and especially in *** [location] we have a lot of tourists here and each time their [ecotour guides] talk is the same. I try to put my message there as well because I want every one to put a strong message out to tourists as well, not only talking about for example our tour. Not only talking about trees or species, but also we should think about caring about the rain forest or we will loose it one day. (Sam, non-certified ecotour guide)

Sam categorises ecotour guides as "they", suggesting that he does not associate his work to that of an ecotour guide. Further, he characterises ecotour guiding commentaries as being the same all the time. Even though Sam and Rob both work for ECO certified organisations (by Ecotourism Australia) that promote themselves as providing ecotours, they both refused to be called ecotour guides.

If work structures and shapes people's identities, and these identities are reflected in the way workers create values, self-conceptions and the orientation of their social reality (Leidner, 2006), then in this context, the work identities contested as 'bus driver', 'ranger', 'naturalist' and 'ecotour guide' are neither superior nor inferior, but rather a reflection of individual identity construction (Miehls & Moffatt, 2000). Nevertheless, the participants' interpretation of their work description shows the various identities that may exist within the ecotour guiding sector. Furthermore, the poorly defined nature of ecotour guiding reflects a general lack of an agreed work description amongst practitioners, industry stakeholders and society at large – a characteristic of an occupation which has yet to achieve the status of a profession.

Although ecotour guides recognise their specialised work in achieving ecotourism principles, an agreed and widely understood title for ecotour guides remains elusive. However, the insights into the meanings ecotour guides ascribe to their work provides a contextual basis for interpreting which aspects of ecotour guiding work may be professionalised. With the self- and social- identification of the meanings to work, the

following section ventures into understanding the expert knowledge and skills required to perform the specialised work of ecotour guides – promoting environmental sustainability.

5.3 Knowledge and Skills of an Ecotour Guide

The general tour guiding work activities of ecotour guides acknowledged in the academic literature and research (see Chapter Two) were also empirically established by this study. Though the more generic tour guiding work activities of ecotour guides were identified by the study participants, it does not represent new knowledge for this study nor can these activities be considered specialised for ecotour guides. However, the more generic tour guiding roles are illustrated in Table 5.1 as they contribute to the performance of ecotour guides' specialised work.

Table 5.1 Empirical support for the work (roles) of ecotour guides identified in the literature

Identified work (role)	Previous literature	Empirical support from interviews
Information giver	Ballantyne and Hughes (2001), Cohen (1985), Haig (1997), Haig and McIntyre (2002), Holloway (1981), Hughes (1991), Schmidt (1979), Weiler and Davis (1993)	Well, it's giving good information delivered in a good manner (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide).
Interpreter/ educator	Almagor (1985), Ballantyne and Hughes (2001), Cohen (1985), Gurung *et al.* (1996), Haigh (1997), Haigh and McIntyre (2002), Holloway (1981), Hughes (1991), Pond (1993), Schmidt (1979), Weiler and Davis (1993)	Well, to interpret what people are seeing, interpreting the rain forest and how it fits into the overall ecosystem you know ensuring that when they come they saw things about having to learn how the rainforest survives and the rest of the world so it's a little bit of an ecotourism, ecological sort of message (Joe, non-certified ecotour guide)
Navigation/ safety	Cohen (1985), Gurung *et al.* (1996), Pond (1993), Schmidt (1979)	Duty of care issue, you are responsible for them while you've got them with you and you have to act in a way that is going to ensuring their safety. I give people warnings when they are in the army duck don't do this don't' do that it's dangerous that kind of thing and that extends to people having things like first aid certificates or having somebody available that does have that sort of knowledge and the like (Greg, non-certified ecotour guide).
Access to non-public areas	Cohen (1985), Haig (1997), Haig and McIntyre (2002), Schmidt (1979)	I would've checked all the emails to make sure that everything complies with the statutory regulations for example *** [name] National Park visitations and so forth as we are one of the few companies that can get in there, and making sure on the commentary sides of it (Marco, non-certified ecotour guide).
Leader	Almagor (1985), Cohen (1985), Gurung *et al.* (1996), Haig (1997), Haig and McIntyre (2002), Holloway (1981), Pond (1993) , Weiler and Davis (1993)	They need to be well organised, so good organisational skills, good leadership skills because guides are always in a leadership position, whether they see themselves as that or not (Brian, key industry stakeholder).

Table 5.1 Empirical support for the work (roles) of ecotour guides identified in the literature (continued)

Identified work (role)	Previous literature	Empirical support from interviews
Tour and group manager/ organiser	Ballantyne and Hughes (2001), Cohen (1985), Haig (1997), Haig and McIntyre (2002) Hughes (1991), Weiler and Davis (1993)	A typical day at work would be start the day, be there at 7.30am. Talking to the guests not just the ones that are coming on the guided activity but also those who may be doing things for themselves ... Organise meals and lunches if it already hasn't been done ... get ready for walks that I am taking which involves taking safety equipment, take first aid kits and also you know communication devices radio satellite phones, whatever happens to be and then also things like toilet paper. Utensils, making sure that I've got morning tea, obviously making sure I've got all the facilities, just making sure that I've got enough food and water for myself also packing things like a camera, binoculars, a knife just for many number of reasons it can be something as mundane unlikely like someone's glasses' screws falling out of their glasses having to repair it. You've got to be prepared for these things. That is just making sure depending on the weather rain coats and that sort of thing (Ben, EcoGuide).
Public relations/ company representative	Cohen (1985), Holloway (1981), Pond (1993)	It's about that, it's about adding quality and variety to the tourism experience. So it's both important from an environmental point of view but obviously important from a good business point of view (Drew, non-certified ecotour guides).
Social role/ catalyst	Ballantyne and Hughes (2001), Cohen (1985), Haig (1997), Haig and McIntyre (2002), Holloway (1981), Hughes (1991), Pond (1993) Schmidt (1979), Weiler and Davis (1993)	Then everyone knowing each other's faces, introducing myself to make sure that I get to know everyone's names or learn their first names and remember their first names. Making sure that they have got what they require, proper shoes, suitable footwear, suitable clothing for that particular activity and also raincoats or whatever if the weather is likely to change (Ben, EcoGuide).
Cultural broker/ mediator	Ballantyne and Hughes (2001), Cohen (1985), Haig (1997), Haig and McIntyre (2002) Holloway (1981), Hughes (1991), Weiler and Davis (1993)	I give the Aboriginal culture I give the Caucasian history blend it all into a day long story so that it's not just to see gorges but it's going up there hearing stories real people and at the end of the day wanting those people to be thoughtful about the place (Jack, EcoGuide).

As illustrated in section 1.2.2, Black (2002) provides a functional definition of an ecotour guide that encapsulates their many roles and responsibilities. To fill in the gap in understanding what a 'professional' ecotour guide means in practice in Australia, this study steps away from this definition and empirically explores with ecotourism practitioners the work activities involved in being an ecotour guide, and, by extension, a professional ecotour guide. To achieve this, the expert knowledge and skills required to perform work as an ecotour guide are discussed. Table 5.1 (adapted from Table 2.2) presents the various roles of tour guides identified in the literature and links these to supporting data from the field. The data provided in Table 5.1 above presents the general tour guiding roles that contribute to achieving the specialised work of ecotour guides.

Table 5.1 shows that the collected data reflects not only the specialised work activities carried out by ecotour guides, but also the general guiding roles discussed in the literature. The following section explores the expert knowledge and skills required by ecotour guides to achieve environmental sustainability. Firstly, the theoretical importance of possessing expert knowledge and skills for an occupational group going through professionalisation is explained.

5.4 Performing Specialised Work

5.4.1 Expert Knowledge and Skills

Freidson (2001) uses the terms 'skill' and 'knowledge' in similar contexts. He reasons that both are essential to work and notes that the application of substantive knowledge to a task is dependent upon a worker possessing the skills to facilitate the application of that knowledge.

> Skill may thus be taken to refer to the capacity to *accomplish* a task, which may be kept analytically separate from the substantive knowledge connected with the task itself. While skill is itself a kind of knowledge, namely, of the techniques for using or applying substantive knowledge, it is *facilitative* in character. (Freidson, 2001, p. 25, original italics)

As mentioned in Chapter Two, one of the most significant work activities of ecotour guides is to influence tourists by raising conservation awareness and values, and encouraging environmentally conscious behaviour (aligned with the principles of

ecotourism) through environmental interpretation. Thus, according to Freidson (2001) the central 'task' of ecotour guiding is conducting environmental interpretation to achieve ecotourism principles. The ecotour guide must not only be knowledgeable about the surrounding environment, but must also possess expert skills to effectively communicate this knowledge to tourists. Furthermore, through these expert skills, an ecotour guide not only attempts to influence tourists' satisfaction levels, but also instil conservation values and encourage environmentally conscious behaviour. For example, ecotour guides may share the same substantive *knowledge* of nature, however, the delivery of their ecotours may differ due to different levels of communication *skills*. In the general professions literature, possessing expert skills to apply the expert knowledgeW necessary to successfully perform specialised work is what distinguishes professions from other occupations (Freidson, 1986, 1994, 2001). The following section discusses the central task that ecotour guides perform to achieve their specialised work.

5.4.2 Central Task - Environmental Interpretation

It is acknowledged in this chapter that the general tour guiding roles are played by ecotour guides to perform their specialised work. Amongst these various roles, the role of interpreter/educator (in Table 5.1) is of central focus for ecotour guides. Although the interpretation skills of tour guiding do not differ from ecotour guides, the expert knowledge and skills that assist ecotour guides' interpretation to achieve the ecotourism principle of environmental sustainability is of importance.

Although the subject of interpretation may differ depending on the tour context, one of the primary roles of any tour guide is interpretation (Resinger & Steiner, 2006). Interpretation is both an art and a science and is at the centre of successful guiding practice (Beck & Cable, 1998, 2002; Fine & Speer, 1985; Grater, 1976; Ham, 1992; Knudson *et al.*, 1995; Lewis, 1981; Pond, 1993; Resinger & Steiner, 2006; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). For example, Weiler and Ham (2001a, p.549 describe interpretation as "the heart and soul of what any good tour guide can and should be doing". The majority of tour guiding literature mentions the role of interpretation in guiding work (see Table 2.2). As noted in Chapter Two, according to the literature, one of an ecotour guide's specialised roles, in the context of interpretation, is to instil conservation values and encourage pro-environmental intentions, attitudes and behaviour in tourists through

environmental interpretation (Haigh, 1997; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Ham, 1992; Ham & Weiler, 2002a; Orams, 1995b; Ormsby & Mannle, 2006; Page & Dowling, 2002; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). However, interpreting nature is not an easy task (Pond, 1993).

> Well in our field you don't know what you're going to see, you know the core of the tour, like I said in the beginning what a typical tour would be but you've gotta toss in a couple of hundreds of things in there. You've got to toss in the signs of fish you're going to see. The schools of bait fish the soaring albatrosses, some of the pretty horrible things we've seen like the bloated seals that went past or the killer whales actually killing .... You've got to grab all of that. The whale, you just don't know what's gonna happen and that goes back to the depth of knowledge and also the relating that to the conservation theme so you know, "That seal used to be shot." This is going back to the conservation theme. "That's what we used to do but we protect seals now, we preserve our biodiversity." All that sort of stuff comes in, not only one or two minutes of interpretation. (Matt, non-certified ecotour guide)

Matt explained that a guide's ability to respond to the changing environment and be able to spontaneously interpret newly found subjects to the tourists exemplifies the intricacies of ecotour guiding. Unlike other types of guides that generally interpret static objects, an ecotour guide needs to have the capacity to respond to the constantly changing natural environment. For example, during an observation, Ben (EcoGuide, field-notes, July 23rd, 2007), pointed out a koala that could have easily been missed if the tourists were not on a guided tour. Ben pointed out that it was unusual for a koala to be so close to the walking tracks and expressed his enthusiasm for such a rare moment. He also expressed his concern that a recent deliberately lit bush fire in the area may have pushed the koala closer to the walking tracks. The tourists and Ben hastily pulled out their cameras to get a good photograph of the koala. The tourists recorded that seeing the "koala" was the most memorable experience during their ecotour in their surveys. In this context, Ben not only facilitated the highlight of the ecotour but also influenced the tourists' overall satisfaction of their trip to the destination. In this context, interpretation was not conducted in a pure information-giving fashion, but in a spontaneous, meaningful way that made the tourists' experience more memorable. This type of memorable interpretation supported by ecotour guides' expert skill in spontaneity can increase tourists' conservation awareness (Ham & Weiler, 2002a).

Key industry stakeholders also cited the key skill of ecotour guides as the ability to interpret the environment, and described the distinctiveness of the skill. For example, Drew (key industry stakeholder), below, argued that being able to provide good quality interpretation is a personal quality that one is born with rather than something that can be taught.

> Is interpretation an art or a science? I argue on the side that it's an art more than it is a science. It is certainly techniques into it but if I think of a painter there's plenty of people who's become great painters with whatever natural talent. So there are naturally good communicators who can be good interpreters or whatever. But there's a whole bunch who can go to art school and learn a lot of the techniques and whatever and equally become good artists. But if you say it's an art form then all of a sudden you start to seek for the reasons why. (Drew, key industry stakeholder)

Drew also explained that interpretation is an "art" rather than a science. The specific knowledge and skills are the key ingredients of successful interpretation, nevertheless, the presentation of interpretation should be conducted in a way that is informative, entertaining and enlightening – "a work of art" (Beck & Cable, 2002, p. 31). Anna (key industry stakeholder), below, also had an opinion on how interpretation skills may be obtained.

> A lot of people still say that they're [ecotour guides] born, you can't train them. Can you train somebody to be charismatic to make an impact when they are interpreting? Um, no you can't, but you can train a good guide to be an excellent guide and a poor guide to be a reasonable guide. (Anna, key industry stakeholder)

Although Anna agreed that personal qualities such as "charisma" for "impact" was an inherent personal quality for interpretation, she also believed that the general quality of guiding skills can be improved through training. The impact professional guide training has on ecotour guides' work activities is discussed in Chapter Seven. Nonetheless, it is accepted by both the literature and the empirical results of this study that guides who interpret nature have a specialised role (Black, 2002; Black *et al.*, 2001; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Page & Dowling, 2002; Weiler & Davis, 1993; Weiler & Ham, 2001a).

> I think interpretation is the key to a lot of things. Because if people are aware of what interpretation is and they can practice good interpretation, then a whole lot of other things flow. A whole lot of conservation messages, awareness of impact, you know, understanding of your own

> operations and what you're doing well and not so doing well. All of these things flow if you've got strong interpretation. And you also feel like you're talking the talk so you'd better walk the walk. (Ron, key industry stakeholder)

Ron's comment as a key industry stakeholder places interpretation at the core of an ecotour guide's work, and suggests that through good interpretation, an ecotour guide can reflect the quality of his/her own practice. Ron also explained that good interpretation can deliver the conservation message to tourists, bringing attention to not only talking the conservation talk, but also "walk[ing] the walk". Thus, the content and delivery of interpretation is designed to influence tourists. Table 5.2 shows the results from a selection of questionnaire surveys completed by tourists in relation to the most memorable experiences from their ecotours.

Table 5.2 Most memorable experience from ecotours

Ecotour guide	Memorable element	Age group	Nationality	Gender
Gerry	"learning about bush medicine"	60 and over	Australian	Female
Ben	"bird life knowledge" "historical significance of the area"	40-49	Australian	Female
Ben	"learning about new plants, trees, animals (seeing them in the wild)"	40-49	American	Female
Sam	"Strangler tree" "Kauri pine"	40-49	Australian	Female
Sam	"snake and crocodiles" "think about global warming"	30-39	German	Male
Ken	"learning about fig trees and its aggressive aspect" "rainforest's potential – medicine, knowledge"	19-24	Japanese	Female
Joe	"about the history of the trees"	25-29	Australian	Male
Joe	"so much interesting information, history, facts, local information"	30-30	Australian	Female
Erin	"great knowledge of area, plants, environment"	40-49	American	Female
Greg	"learning more about the rainforest"	40-49	American	Female
Liz	"vegetation and birdlife" "coral formation"	40-49	Australian	Female
Liz	"guides' knowledge of environment"	40-49	Australian	Male

The table above indicates the most memorable experiences were in relation to learning about the natural environment. Although the depth of environmental knowledge the tourists acquired is unknown, Will (EcoGuide) reasoned below, that this is not

necessarily important, it is more about getting the "take home message" across to the tourists.

> Well it's to really come back to your group of people you have with to talk about, educating them interpreting involving them with interacting with the environment make sure they have a take home message if you'd like. Something that they will remember about the whole thing. Of course they are not going to remember the specific number of species, and they don't have to, it's about going back thinking and acting differently. So I think really whatever group you've got that's your focus to make sure that those things are involved, education interpretation of course, a take home message is pretty important. (Will, EcoGuide)

Anna (key industry stakeholder) and Jason (key industry stakeholder) below, also explained that the scientific depth of environmental knowledge is not imperative, providing that the environmental interpretation itself has an impact on tourists' pro-environmental attitudes and behaviour.

> I think where guides are really pivotal is in interpretation. If you've got a good guide, people are going to leave and they're going to remember something pivotal about that environment. As such that they're inspired to be ambassadors to protect it ... And I think that's why interpretation is so pivotal. For me the Great Barrier Reef is 2,300km long with 2,900 systems, and 4,000 different species. Anybody can do that, but to put it into a way where people think, "Wow this is somewhere special, this is somewhere really important and this is somewhere worth protecting." So that even when they go back to their mundane life whether it's within Australia or overseas, or adjacent to the Reef, they think more you know they think, "The Reef is so special, I must remember the next time I wash the car put it on a lawn, wash it on a lawn rather than letting the soap drip into the storm drain." So this is the sorts of things. Or they've visited a gorilla house in Manhattan and think "Oh, if I just wore a jumper and reduced my heating by two degrees I'd save this much carbon dioxide." You know so, it's all that generation of conservation ethic that interpretation can succeed in doing and why I think it is a critical thing for tour guides is because ecotourism is supposed to do much more than just minimise impacts but maximise the positive. So if tourism is going to be used for a fair bit of good, then interpretation is one of those vehicles that will make sure that it does. (Anna, key industry stakeholder)

> In half an hour or I mean in 5 minutes after a tour, you could run a questionnaire with the average visitor and when I say average you know probably 80% of the visitors say "Well is this fact true or false?" and they will probably go "Well I don't know can't remember." Because they just don't retain the information and this is where it comes back to my comments at the beginning about yes the guide can establish credibility by having technical knowledge but at the end of the day what are the two or three things that you really want that visitors to walk away from. Now if you're

> doing a tour of, well to me the global issues of, is that visitor gonna go away having a better understanding of the importance of water, whether you're in a dessert or marine or whatever environment, is that visitor going to go away having a better understanding and an appreciation of ecosystems generally? So when they look at their garden they go gee things actually make sense, I don't know what sense it makes but I recognise that it has a place. And there might be a couple of other things. Are they going to remember the life cycle of the koala or the every time that's been identified on a rain forest tour? No they're not. They're not. We, traditionally, I think our industry has been under pressure because the historical hierarchy was always about technical knowledge. ... There's a large proportion of visitors who're going out there on an ecotourism experience know very little about the marine environment, the bush the river system, the rain forest or whatever. But if you blow them away with technical information they're not going to retain it. (Jason, key industry stakeholder)

Although the impact environmental interpretation has on tourists' attitudes, intentions and behaviour is yet to be confirmed (Powell & Ham, 2008; Wearing, Cynn, Ponting, & McDonald, 2003a), the key industry stakeholders above emphasised that the importance of environmental interpretation is not only giving scientific facts to tourists, but facilitating an influential experience that makes tourists reflect on nature. Thus, the impact of interpretation should not be measured by tourists' recollection of facts, but by the inspiration it provides to perceive the subject of interpretation differently (Ham & Weiler, 2002).

As Ron suggested above, interpretation is the key to achieving the specialised work of ecotour guiding – instilling conservation values and encouraging environmentally conscious behaviour. The following section moves on to discuss how additional expert knowledge and skills are required by an ecotour guide to support environmental interpretation.

5.4.3 Expert Skill – Providing Meaningful Experiences of Nature

It has been noted that the central skill required to perform the specialised work of ecotour guiding in achieving ecotourism principles is environmental interpretation. In order to instil conservation values and motivate environmentally conscious behaviour it is crucial that ecotour guides provide meaningful experiences of nature (Haigh, 1997; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Ormsby & Mannle, 2006; Powell & Ham, 2008; Weiler & Davis, 1993).

A person's experience with the natural environment can create a dedication to conservation which influences their view of the natural environment and their own lifestyle (Harding, 1997; Selby, 1996). However, simple physical contact with nature, or just being in a natural setting does not automatically catalyse tourists to develop a positive attitude towards nature (Wearing, 1986). Some authors posit that environmental education and interpretation delivered in natural settings may assist in developing intrinsic values such as awareness of environmental conservation (Fennell, 1999; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Ham, 2002; Weiler, 1991; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). To facilitate environmental education and interpretation, the ecotour guide acts as a motivator for pro-environmental awareness through environmental interpretation (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Gurung *et al.*, 1996; Haigh, 1997; Ormsby & Mannle, 2006; Weiler & Davis, 1993). The literature suggests that environmental interpretation does increase tourists' knowledge of the natural environment and conservation issues, and may encourage pro-environmental intentions, attitudes and behaviour, even conservation philanthropy (Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Kimmel, 1999; Kuo, 2002; Madin & Fenton, 2004; Munro *et al.*, 2008). However, Ben (EcoGuide) stated below that it takes more than just environmental interpretation to influence change.

> Well, it [work] is to provide a high level of interpretation within guided activities, but it's also to provide all those other things such as safety, security, being a friend and providing a comfortable and friendly and safe environment in which people to walk and to enjoy natural places. As well as that it's providing information that is presented in a way that makes people think rather than just presenting it as pure facts and knowledge. It's trying to make that experience an interactive one but one that people will go away and make them thinking about their experience and hopefully thinking about when they go away with lessons that they can apply in their own lives. If they go away with just a set of facts and knowledge, the ecoguide hasn't achieved their job. They've got to go away buzzing with the experience and thinking about how they can apply some of the knowledge and lessons they have learned in their own environment. (Ben, EcoGuide)

According to Ben, in addition to the general guiding roles of providing a tour ensured with 'safety, security, being a friend' it is also the responsibility of the guide to provide tourists with information about the natural environment. However, he emphasised that his role is not just being an 'information-giver' (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Bras, 2000; Cohen, 1985; Haigh, 1997; Holloway, 1981; Hughes, 1991; Pond, 1993; Schmidt,

1979; Weiler & Davis, 1993) of "facts and knowledge", but explains that "achiev[ing] the job" of an ecotour guide involves influencing tourists to reflect on their newly learned knowledge of the environment and applying it in their own lives. As previously noted, although the potential of ecotourism experiences to provide enhanced tourist understanding of the natural environment has been documented in the literature, the actual impact these experiences have on tourists' intentions, attitudes and behaviour towards the environment is yet to be explored (Wearing *et al.*, 2003a; Weiler & Ham, 2001a). However, Ben believed that by providing an 'interactive experience' for tourists, ecotour guides can influence tourists' reflections on nature. Drew (key industry stakeholder) also stated below that interactive communication is influential in comparison to one way communication.

> I think there's too many one way communicators, and the tour should be a two way thing to leave a mark on people. (Drew, key industry stakeholder)

The interactive communication skills required to instil conservation values and encourage environmentally conscious behaviour among tourists, is thus an expert skill required by ecotour guides to perform their specialised work.

> Undoubtedly it's the ability to be able to talk with people in such a way that you actually engage with them. Whether it be actual interpretive spiels as we say, or whether it's just simply sitting by the campfire or sitting in a tour vehicle and chatting to them. The whole point there is to be able to engage with people at a level they feel comfortable with. And of course the aspects of friendliness and personalities, all these other things come into it as well and to some extent that's how you make people listen. They will listen to the conservation message that you've got to say because you made an effort to make them feel at ease with you. The communication skills are quite broad and it all boils down to the way they interact verbally particularly with their clients. (Chris, key industry stakeholder)

Chris reasoned that interacting with tourists in a way that makes them feel comfortable can lead to more influential ecotourism experiences. Furthermore, the importance of the type of 'interaction' between ecotour guides and tourists, and its influence on performing ecotour guides' specialised work (instilling conservation awareness and encouraging environmentally conscious behaviour) was also observed during the data collection process.

During the observation of Don's (EcoGuide) ecotour (field-notes July 17th, 2007), a number of tourists became upset with his lack of interactive communication skills. At one point he left the group of tourists to walk through a trail by themselves and instructed them to meet him at the end of the trail. Prior to even recognising the risk management implications of this action, the tourists started to complain to the researcher (fully aware of the researcher's purpose in joining the tour) that Don did not even give them a chance to respond or ask questions. In addition Don's interpretation during the tour, strangely, had more to do with religious beliefs and drug use than the natural environment. In the post-tour questionnaire one tourist (19-24 years old, German male) noted that he "Didn't learn anything about *** [location], but did learn about drugs. He [Don] didn't stay with the group." The same tourist made the recommendation that in the future Don should "stay with the group and stop talking non-sense."

In the case of Don's (who is a certified EcoGuide) ecotour, abandoning the tourists for significant periods without adequate explanation and talking about topics unrelated to the tour confused the tourists and left them dissatisfied with their experience. Don's lack of interactive communication failed to positively influence the tourists' values towards nature – none of Don's tourists noted learning about the environment as a memorable element of their tour. By contrast, during the observation of Sam's (non-certified ecotour guide, field-notes June 29th, 2007) ecotour Sam constantly asked for tourists' responses beginning with "Where are you from?" to "How are you feeling today?", "It's a bit chilly, isn't it?", "What are you interested in?", "What do you want me to focus on?", "Have you seen this before?", "It looks interesting, doesn't it?", and much more. As a result the tourists expressed their satisfaction of Sam' service in the questionnaire by writing "good communicator" (60 and over years old, Australian male), "great communicator, humorous, informative, 'a lot of fun'" (40-49 years old, Australian female), and "knowledgeable and entertaining as well as very enthusiastic" (60 and over years old, Australian female). It can be seen from Table 5.2 that Sam's tourists remembered nature-related subjects which suggests that he provided successful environmental interpretation which was reflected in the things tourists remembered and valued from their tour with Sam. This type of interpretation may result in new and profound understanding of the natural environment (Ham & Weiler, 2002).

Hence, through different types of interactive communication skills or the lack of them, ecotour guides may or may not be able to instil conservation values and motivate pro-environmental behaviours. Nevertheless, it is evident that interactive communication is an expert skill of tour guiding required to 'accomplish' ecotour guides' central 'task' of environmental interpretation (Freidson, 2001). It is interesting to note that despite his achievement of EcoGuide certification, Don's work performance did not result in a positive experience for his tourists.

Furthermore, ecotour guides believed that ecotour guiding requires more than just providing environmental interpretation. For example, the ecotour guides' specific verbal direction or physical demonstration as environmental role models are also ways of encouraging environmentally conscious behaviour and instilling conservation values (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Cohen, 1985; Gurung *et al.*, 1996; Haigh, 1997; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Holloway, 1981; Pond, 1993; Schmidt, 1979; Weiler & Davis, 1993).

> I think it's important to, apart from talk about the environment, actually act upon and show people what it is that you do in terms of what do I do at home to help the environment. I can talk about it but do I practice what I preach, that's the point. So it's important to let people know when you're out what you can and can't do in national parks. You got to be strict about that, don't touch that timber don't climb the tree, don't take that rock away from here, you need to get very strict on people in terms of understanding the protected area and respect it so you need to give people that impression that we are an ecotour and try to practice that as the friendly ways as much as possible. You need to present that side to the people. It's not just a day out in a vehicle we're actually here to make you understand and this is what we need to do to improve. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

> An ecotour guide I say to people jokingly at the end of the day I say look my aim is to bring you all back in one piece tired dirty and happy. I know that's a little bit of a quip. But I take people up there to give them an experience of something that is really unique in nature ... Me as an ecotour guide, I have learnt things over the years about the flora and fauna the geology and the aboriginal culture, I mean I don't know every complete thing to do with the flora fauna geology but I know the overview and I give the Aboriginal culture I give the Caucasian history blend it all into a day long story so that it's not just to see gorges but it's going up there hearing stories of real people and at the end of the day wanting those people to be thoughtful about the place. I don't know if this is ecotourism but things like not leaving things behind and I make a point that if it's [waste] too much I will pick it up. (Jack, EcoGuide)

It is interesting to note that Jack mentioned picking up litter during their tours. During observation, after he had finished his tour, Ken began (field-notes July 24th, 2007) picking up litter from the National Park ecotour site. On seeing this, tourists also started to pick up litter. In this context, the behaviour and physical actions of the guide may have influenced tourists to pick up litter rather than the environmental interpretation (Littlefair, 2003). In accordance with Rob's (non-certified ecotour guide) idea of verbally instructing the tourists to act and not act in certain ways during the tour, during an observation of Kevin's tour (non-certified ecotour guide, field-notes July 6th, 2007) showed that a guide's comment can directly influence behaviour. In this case during a toilet-stop en route to the ecotour site a German tourist threw her cigarette butt onto the pavement next to a grass lawn. Once he observed this behaviour Kevin immediately told the tourist to pick up the butt and throw it in a garbage bin. She agreed and later on during the tour, the researcher observed the same tourist looking for a garbage bin in which to deposit another cigarette butt. When she could not locate one she put the butt in her bag.

The following section moves on to introducing the substantive expert knowledge that is required to 'facilitate' the environmental interpretation and interactive communication skills to perform the work of ecotour guiding (Freidson, 2001).

5.4.4 Expert Knowledge - Accurate Environmental Knowledge

Weiler and Davis (1993) discuss environmental interpretation in relation to its educational value in providing the tourist with insight into the interrelationships and systems of the environment they are touring. The guiding literature considers the ecotour guide's role as an 'information-giver' and 'fount of knowledge' to be highly significant (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Cohen, 1985; Haigh, 1997; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Holloway, 1981; Hughes, 1991; Schmidt, 1979; Weiler & Davis, 1993). This role provides guides with an opportunity to demonstrate their substantive knowledge (Holloway, 1981) and prowess in this area. Dedication to maintain and update this knowledge appears to be a centre of self- and social-identity construction for guides.

> I think an essential first step, if you mean for an ecotour guide you should know a fair bit about the environment you're interpreting. I carry a note book and if I get questions that I can't answer I take notes on those or make notes on other questions that occur to me and I follow those up at home in

> my library. I've got quite an extensive collection on natural history. Just looking at it now is probably about 6 meters of shelving and I went through it pretty thoroughly last year as well. I've got friends that are professional scientists at the CSIRO institute in the rainforest studies unit. I've got a lot of access to people who can provide me with information and I spend time in the bush with those people as well. I ring them up and say I know a study site where you can look at this and that and I need to be able to get a vehicle to it ... The environmental knowledge I am happy with the way I am continually updating them. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

> I mean good accurate information of the place that they are looking at so when people ask specific questions about ecosystems give them good honest answers, don't fob them off with something you made up because I know that accurate information is really important. A good range of information is necessary, you'll be expected to know a huge amount about, a huge variety of things and if you don't know then that makes a difference to people's perception of the place that's why I think it's important to be accurate. (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide)

According to the participants, having accurate knowledge and adequate depth and variety of knowledge of the subject being interpreted is fundamental to being an ecotour guide. It is also considered important to continuously update and expand knowledge of the subject content for interpretive delivery. As Erin explains above, the accuracy of information is crucial in presenting the correct perception of the visited area and it appears particularly crucial in the context of ecotour guiding amongst the guides themselves.

> I think it's pretty simple. To be an ecotour guide you need to be truthful for starters - none of the bullshit. Don't make it up as you go along. If you can't answer the question when I get new guides come on [the tour] and when I do their training, I say look don't make it up because it will come back and bite you on your back side. Someone is going to hear about it or they might know us and say anything and you're going to be brought down. It's not good for the company so be truthful as a guide if you don't have the answer be honest, but that's something for you to work on when you come home. That's more research and something for you to work on. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

Adam and Rob's comments reflect a sense of pride associated with the depth and accuracy of their knowledge. Thus, the provision of false information or 'making up' information by other guides was an issue for them. In addition, Rob showed a level of concern for the business image being tainted by providing false information. The business skills involved in ecotour guides' professional work are further discussed in

section 6.5. Confirming Rob's concern, Ronda (key industry stakeholder) related an incident where she received a complaint from a tourist due to "either the methodology or the information, the accuracy of the information" provided by an ecotour guide. The importance of providing accurate knowledge, especially in the case of an ecotour guide, due to the expectations of the tourists, was recognised by the ecotour guides during the interviews.

> From the customer's point of view, you have to have people that can answer questions. The customers these days to me, I see it that they want to get out there they want to have a look at the bush and for me, it's no use if you go "Oh look there's a bit of tree there's a bit of sand and a bit of whatever." Why? There are people that are just happy for you to shut up and explore their own thing but there are other people that's got a lot of questions. So to be a good guide you have to be able to answer those questions which mean that you have to do some study of your own. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

Marcus explained that a good guide would improve their environmental knowledge on their own, or as Rob commented, it's "something for you [guide] to work on when you come home. That's more research ...". There is an underlying assumption that being an ecotour guide in Australia involves significant ongoing private study to perform successfully. Although the need for this additional knowledge is recognised by both guides and their employers, it is not factored into the guides' remuneration, and demonstration of ongoing research, learning and professional development is not a requirement for re-certification with the Eco Guide Program. However, it is interesting to note that none of the ecotour guides expressed dissatisfaction with the extra hours spent outside of their work environment to improve their knowledge of the environment, even though the time spent outside their working hours did not lead to extra remuneration. The subject of income is further discussed in Chapter Eight.

Sean (EcoGuide) explained below that the increase in tourists' desire to learn about the environment being visited should encourage guides to be knowledgeable.

> Certainly in terms of the expectations of the clients, there's been a big change I think. Prior to 10 years ago, perhaps even less there wasn't the same expectations of service and what they've expected to receive from guiding products. Certainly when I started guiding 25 years ago the emphasis there was on safety and getting people through safely and comfortably and so they enjoyed themselves and most people were happy with that. But these days, they appear to want a

> lot more. So their expectation is all what I've previously mentioned plus they're looking at getting an understanding of the environment people take them into. So they wanna know all about the flora in the area, the fauna in the area, the Aboriginal history, the European history to a particular place. So I think that expectation from the client has gone up, and it is changing significantly so therefore the guide needs to change as well ... Certainly more information, but not just information. They want a good understanding. They want to do it in such a way that they're enjoying themselves too. It's still gotta be an enjoyable experience, but guides have to be far more aware of what people needs and expectations are and try to meet those. (Sean, EcoGuide)

Questions about the area that was being toured were asked by the tourists in all the observations, and most of them were answered by the ecotour guides. However, during an observation with Kevin (non-certified ecotour guide, field-notes July 6th, 2007), when a tourist asked about a plant unique to the area, Kevin hesitated to answer. He initially responded that the plant was a tree, then quickly changed his mind to a fern, then changed his mind back to a tree before finally settling on a fern. When the same question arose during an observation with Ellen (non-certified ecotour guide, field-notes July 7th, 2007), she confidently answered that it was a tree. The tourist that went on the ecotour with Kevin left for her home country, Malaysia, with inaccurate information about a key endemic flora species from the environment she visited. This may be similar to Cohen's (1985) idea of 'fabrication' where inaccurate interpretation results from a lack of accurate knowledge and poor guiding skills rather than a deliberate invention or deception. Despite some participants acknowledging that some ecotour guides do indeed 'make up' information, there is a gap in knowledge in analysing how much inaccurate information is being disseminated in the ecotour guiding industry and its effects on the ecotourism experience.

In addition, during an observation of Sam's ecotour (non-certified ecotour guide, field-notes June 29th, 2007), he commented that "In September we can see Christmas orchid, Golden orchid" then he paused for several seconds and then continued "Yeah, lots of orchids". In response to this commentary, an American couple standing next to the researcher looked at each other, and mimicked "Yeah, lots of orchids. Like what?!" Observations (discussed earlier in this chapter) support industry practitioners' claims that tourists are interested in environmental knowledge, and that the depth and accuracy of the information provided by ecotour guides influences their ecotourism experience. Questionnaire surveys completed by tourists during the study support the importance of

an ecotour guides' knowledge of the environment for tourists. The following statements by tourists were made regarding what satisfied them about their ecotour guide.

> Gave us information about everything and it was interesting. (Don's ecotour, 19-24 year old British female)
>
> She was very knowledgeable and friendly. (Gerry's ecotour, 60 + year old Australian female)
>
> Very knowledgeable about the rainforest. (Joe's ecotour, 19-24 year old Chinese female)
>
> Because I learned something. (Erin's ecotour, 19-24 year old Australian female)

The literature demonstrates that tourists are increasingly showing preferences to view beautiful natural scenery, do sporting activities in nature, use the natural setting for meditation, and learn about nature during their holidays (Christensen & Beckmann, 1998; Department of Industry, 1997; Filion, Foley, & Jacquemont, 1994; Meric & Hunt, 1998). From the tourists' responses above, it can be seen that their need to learn about the environment during their holidays was satisfied by ecotour guides who, in the tourists' minds, had an accurate knowledge base. Providing depth and accuracy of knowledge is a part of the ecotour product and represents the ecotour operator's responsibility. However, Ken (EcoGuide) below believed that to demonstrate operator responsibility, the quality of knowledge needs to be standardised.

> The customers are paying a lot of money and if there is no standard or if the guide does it by themselves it is unstable for the [business] label. Some people pay $150 for this tour, which guide do you want to be experienced by? Do you want an experienced guide or not? Do you want to get a knowledgeable guide or not? (Ken, EcoGuide)

Interestingly, in contrast to Rob and Marcus' opinions, Ken's comment that guides "doing it by themselves", which relates to self-studying to increase their knowledge levels, was not portraying a coherent image for the business. This showed Ken's support for the standardisation of knowledge, however, his position may have been influenced by the fact that he was not only an ecotour guide, but had also trained other ecotour guides for his employers.

Ken's managerial role as a guide trainer and his view of standardisation contrasts with Anna's (key industry stakeholder) perspective on standardising guiding knowledge.

> One other thing that's really important, that is the backbone to it [ecotour guiding] is this specialist competent knowledge, on specialist subjects. But I'd hate to set a standard whereby there was, you know, you're tested on knowledge. After that I would say they need specialist knowledge, but I wouldn't like them to be necessarily tested on whether they know the historical dates and the Latin names of plants or things like that. After the competency standards, they should look towards researching information in order to deliver effective communication or an effective tour. I think if you wanted to be called an ecotour guide, you're talking about somebody that is really providing specialist knowledge. (Anna, industry informant)

For Anna, the competency for specialist knowledge was crucial, however, she also thought that ecotour guides should "research information" on their own which results in more uncompensated time for the guides. However, Patrick's comment below explained that the accuracy of knowledge is not the only distinctive task of an ecotour guide.

> The best guide I know is trained as an air-conditioning motor mechanic, nothing else. So it's about communicating the interpretation, it's about people enjoying being out there with you. Making them want to come back, making them want to go with you again tomorrow. If you've achieved that you've achieved a lot. It's not just that technical information. (Patrick, key industry stakeholder)

Patrick reiterated the importance of interpretation skills of ecotour guides, but also the communication and entertainment factors that supports a satisfactory tourist experience. Patrick's statement on the importance of the ecotourism experience introduces other elements of knowledge and skills that are required to achieve the specialised work of ecotour guides. These are discussed in the following section.

5.4.5 Achieving Overall Tourist Satisfaction

As previously discussed, the work of ecotour guides is differentiated from other types of tour guides as the ultimate goal of ecotour guiding is to achieve environmental sustainability, a moral and social goal (Mayer & McPherson Frantz, 2004). Expert knowledge and skills such as interactive communication and accurate knowledge were identified by ecotour guides and key industry stakeholders as imperative in successfully

performing the work of ecotour guiding. However, expert knowledge and skills are of no use if tourists are not satisfied with their tour. Previous research shows that tour guides, as representatives of the tour operators, can influence levels of satisfaction levels with a tourist experience (Chang, 2006; Geva & Goldman, 1991).

> Well, as a guide you are the front person of the business. You are the person who is delivering the end product. Our guides are very important for our business. (Marco, non-certified ecotour guide)

> The better job we do in the guiding situation the more satisfied the customers are from their experience and more likely they are going to mention *** [business name] than "We just went to the rainforest.". I think sort of that influence on the experience will reflect positively on the company and therefore the company activity increases and hopefully it also prospers. I believe that has been happening because the numbers are up from previous years and I think that is because we are operating as a professional organisation. (Joe, non-certified ecotour guide)

Ben (EcoGuide) described below his first-hand experience of recognising the significance of a tour guide's performance on the overall tourist experience when he was a tourist on a nature-based tour.

> Well, good interpretation good guiding is a positive influence because it's just a part for the people that enjoy that experience and that's part of enjoying the whole experience. The key part of it. Undara lava tubes is a good example when I took a tour there recently when we went for the tubes the experience was amazing I mean it was great to go to those tubes but the presentation of it was terrible. People were going "You know it's a wonderful place but we couldn't understand what the guide was saying, talking too fast" so I was there to fill in their gaps and their knowledge but what could've been an amazing experience just became a satisfactory one. Their influence on how the experience was, the food the accommodation was good enough for me but the bloody guide was awful. You want them to be going away saying "Wow that was amazing." But they were going "Hmmm?" To me if people are doing guided activities if you came to *** [tour location] on your own that's fine but those who do the guided activities, if they go away with a really positive guided activities then they will go away feeling other things. They will go away with a very positive experience of their holiday. (Ben, EcoGuide)

Another supporting role ecotour guides play to satisfy tourists was identified by the key industry stakeholders as the role of entertainer. This role was explained as having the potential to influence tourists' pro-environmental behaviour.

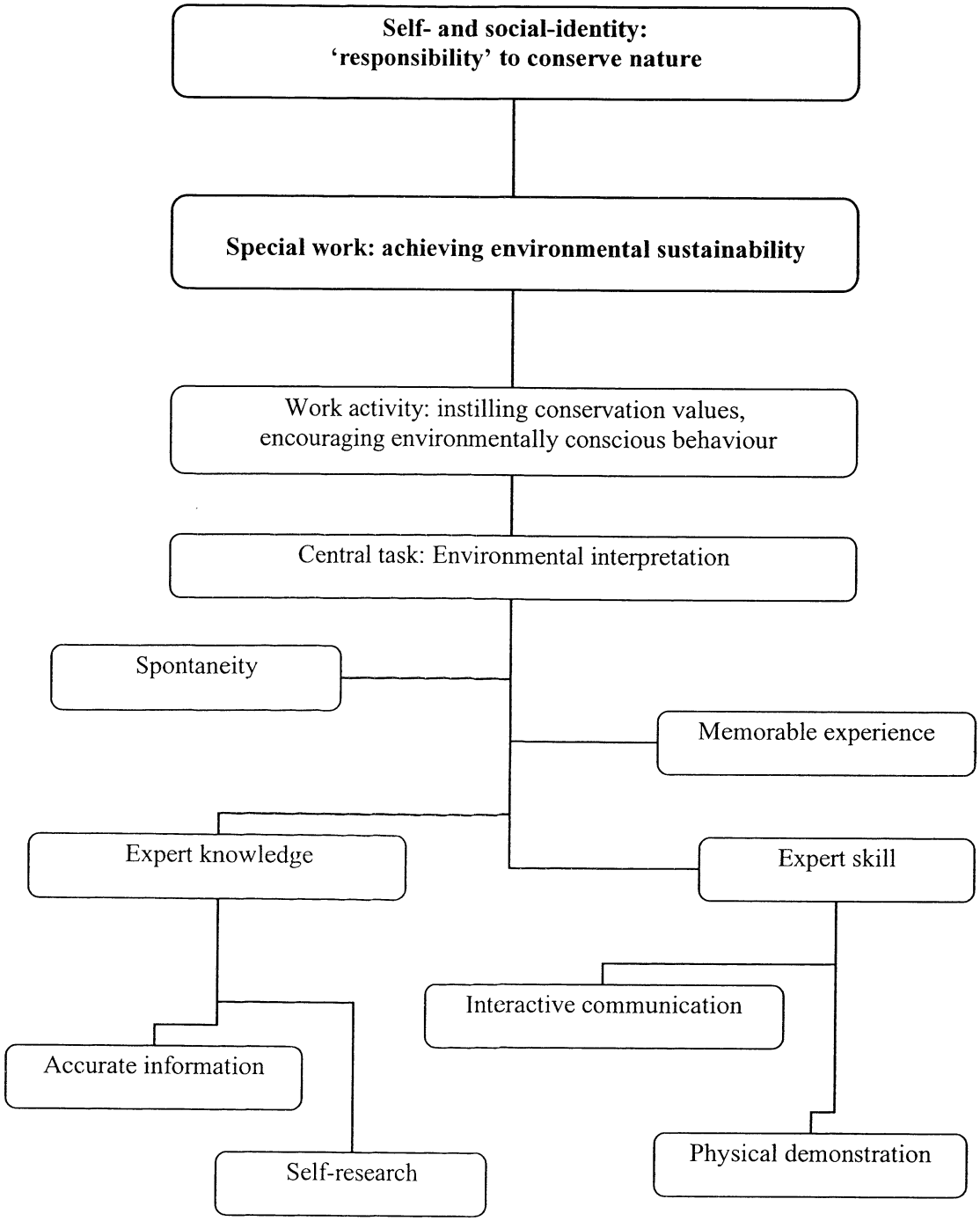
> "Oh, we're not here to entertain people we're here to educate them". And I think that's the problem, if people focus too much on educate all of a sudden, what comes into my mind is what I got when I was at school, you're sitting on a chair and it's a one way communication of teachers standing up there just hitting you with all these facts and whatever with no great style or entertainment. (Drew, key industry stakeholder)

> Within that, if you want to split that down further, some guides can get away with a lot more out of the good feeling of the tour just based a lot more on their communication skills and their entertainment rather than the content of factual information or change of message if you'd like. I think someone that is a very good entertainer can be perceived to be a better guide even though they don't necessarily carry very strong messages. (Ronda, key industry stakeholder)

According to Drew and Ronda, ecotour guides need to be involved in developing and delivering environmental interpretation that is not only factually informative, but also entertaining. This relates to the 'social/catalyst' role of tour guiding mentioned in Table 5.1. A tour guide's sense of humour whilst being sensitive is a recognised tour guiding quality that is known to influence the tour to be more comfortable, sociable and enjoyable, which eventually influences the overall satisfaction level of the tour experience (Pond, 1993). Thus, for ecotour guides, presenting environmental interpretation in an entertaining way may lead to not only informed, but satisfied tourists. This raises the question of how and where ecotour guides learn these "techniques" and "tricks" (Ham, 2002, p. 3) and the impact professionalisation has on the guides.

Figure 5.1 provides a visual summary of the expert knowledge and skills required by ecotour guides to conduct the task of environmental interpretation which in theoretical effect achieves their specialised work of environmental sustainability.

Figure 5.1 Expert knowledge and skills for the specialised work of ecotour guides



Having established an understanding of the expert knowledge and skills required to perform the specialised work of ecotour guiding, the following chapter moves on to analysing the first research question of this study, 'What is a professional ecotour guide?

5.5 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to set the contextual basis for this study to answer the first research question. The views and opinions of the key Australian ecotourism industry stakeholders and ecotour guides provided an understanding of the expert knowledge and skills required to perform the specialised work of ecotour guides.

The chapter began by discussing the specialised type of work ecotour guides perform which differentiates them from other types of tour guides. This was followed by an analysis of the meanings ecotour guides ascribe to their work, which revealed to their sense of 'responsibility' to achieve environmental sustainability through their work activities and instil conservation values in tourists and motivating pro-environmental behaviour. The central task that was required by ecotour guides to achieve environmental sustainability was identified as environmental interpretation. The expert knowledge and skills required to perform this task were identified as accuracy of environmental knowledge and interactive communication skills.

This chapter represents the first empirical work carried out to specifically understand the work of ecotour guiding from the practitioners' perspective. Although, literature has emphasised the potential influence ecotour guides have on the ecotourism experience, it was crucial to confirm that the ecotour guides themselves, agreed with the key industry stakeholders' opinions, genuinely believed in their specialised work, and the expert knowledge and skills that are necessary to achieve ecotourism principles. Therefore, the participants' identification of the specialised work of ecotour guides provides a basis for understanding a 'professional' ecotour guide. This is the focus of Chapter Six.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCEPTUALISING PROFESSIONAL ECOTOUR GUIDES

> Am I professional? I feel so. I always try to be professional and when I do guided tours, I always push myself as well. So you know I don't want to do my guided tours with 80% of my knowledge or 80% of my energy I always want to put in 100%, 120%, and then just extra things that will help to make the tourists happier, so I push myself. So I think I try to be professional all the time. I don't know what a real professional is, but maybe some people might say professional certificate. I think professional is definitely making them feel, how do I say it? Well, the target is if they are interested in the forest and feel similar to how I feel after my tour then I did a great job. If I did a great job I can be a professional, but we also have to accept our weaknesses as well. I don't get that comment often but if they tell me they wanted more about something or if someone said something like that, I shouldn't get upset and I should improve myself, that's a professional. If I did a great job and if they are happy and satisfied and with my professional morals and stance as well, I think I can be a professional. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

6.1 Introduction

This chapter addresses the first study question, 'What is a professional ecotour guide?', in order to achieve the second objective of this study, which is to apply the concepts of work and professionalisation that were discussed in Chapter Three to the actual work experiences of ecotour guides.

In Chapter Two, it was revealed that the knowledge and skills delivered in ecotour guide training and certification programs have been heavily influenced by more conceptual, abstract notions of what ecotour guiding should be (Christie & Mason, 2003). Where traditional professions are professionalised from within (Evetts, 2003), the professionalisation of Australian ecotour guiding has been driven by business management imperatives and professional associations. As such there is likely to be a gap between the competencies that form the focus of professional ecotour guide training and certification programs, and the competencies that ecotour guides themselves feel define a professional ecotour guide. From an interpretivist perspective it is important to understand the practitioners' interpretation of what a 'professional' ecotour guide is. As

such this chapter provides a conceptual model (see Figure 6.1) that summarises the elements identified by practitioners when defining a professional ecotour guide. Figure 6.1 is presented at the beginning of this chapter to provide an overall picture of the themes that emerged from the data analysis and the relationships these themes have with each other. The figure also acts as a point of reference for the rest of the chapter when new themes are explained.

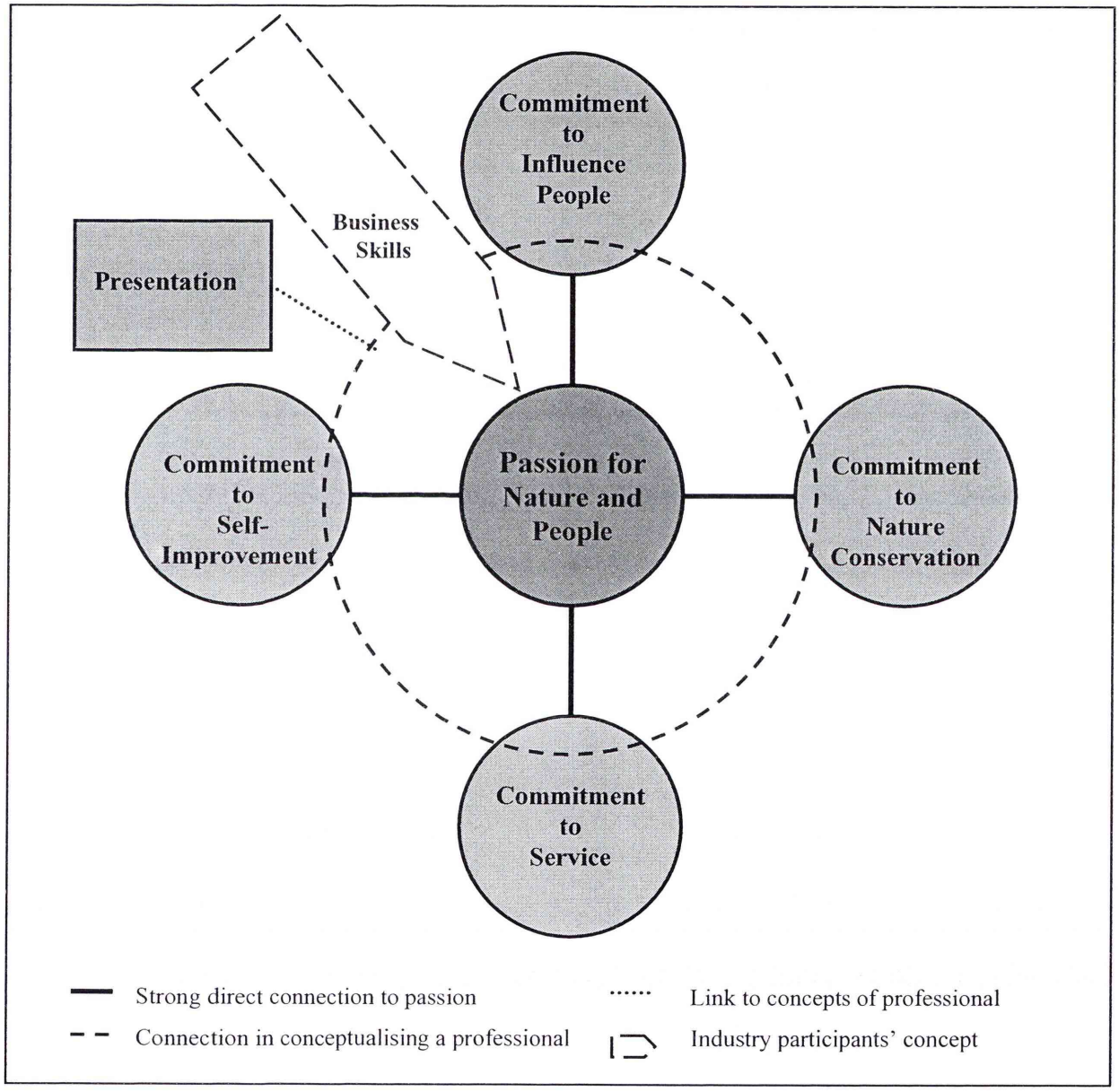
The structure of the chapter follows the emergence of themes from data analysis and interpretation. Data showed that ecotour guides consider passion for the natural environment and people to be the central element of being 'professional'. Hence, passion forms the centre of the conceptual model of a professional ecotour guide in Figure 6.1, and leads as the central theme of this chapter. Passion is strongly associated with interpreters of nature such as ecotour guides. The theory that "passion is the essential ingredient for powerful and effective interpretation – passion for the resource and for those people who come to be inspired by it" (Beck & Cable, 2002, p. 155) was supported by ecotour guides' explanations of the concept of professional.

According to Averill (1985) and Boverie and Kroth (2001), when deep passion is experienced in the context of work it leads to a strong commitment to achieve high quality work performances. During the interviews, ecotour guides also noted a professional ecotour guides' commitment to: nature conservation, service, self-improvement, and influencing people. All of the commitments are anchored by passion. This is reflected in the conceptual model of a professional ecotour guide with the four elements of commitment connected in forming conceptions of a professional ecotour guide, and all strongly related to and anchored by the ecotour guides' passion for nature and people.

An additional element of being a professional that was noted by ecotour guides though not interpreted as a commitment, and thus not strongly connected to passion for nature and people, was personal presentation. This is shown in Figure 6.1 as a presence in the conceptualisation of a professional ecotour guide, but not a central component directly and strongly linked to passion. Furthermore, key industry stakeholders also believed that a professional guide should not only be passionate about nature and the environment, but also possess business skills and knowledge of the ecotour guiding

operation. This is considered noteworthy since the professionalisation of ecotour guiding in Australia is being guided by the ecotourism industry, and as such the key industry stakeholders' opinions are influential in practice. Hence, this component is added to the conceptual model as an industry perspective entering from outside the circle of ecotour guides' perceptions of a professional.

Figure 6.1 Ecotour guides' conceptual model of a professional



Ecotour guides' impressions of the value and importance of being a professional are presented in the chapter with the support of the professionalisation literature.

The following sections provide a detailed analysis and discussion of the individual components shown in Figure 6.1, with passion being the central theme for being a professional ecotour guide.

6.2 Professional Guides are Passionate Guides

Practitioners' descriptions and interpretations of a 'professional' ecotour guide begin to address the first research question of this study: what is a professional ecotour guide? According to Freidson (1994), the idea of professionalism in professionals is neither a refined, static nor a systematised concept as through everyday social usage it is renegotiated and subject to change. As such, the concept of a professional in a given discipline is cultivated by its practitioners (Birkett & Evans, 2005). Thus, the practitioners' interpretation of a 'professional' ecotour guide provides insight into the meaning of professionalism, and thus the impact of professionalisation.

In analysing ecotourism practitioners' perceptions of a professional guide, the most significant theme to emerge was that of 'passion'.

> The job of an ecotour guide is to be passionate about their job. They themselves have to be a people person who is passionate about their environment and where we go, and also have some affiliation with all the people who live in all the places we go ... Yeah, you are putting across a good news story, but we also want to make sure that our customers go away having learnt something and maybe be better people from their experiences. We subtly put over to them to be environmentally conscious themselves and stuff they can take away and practice themselves. (Marco, non-certified ecotour guide)

> Love nature and love people. That's really important. If you do ecotour guiding as work, it doesn't matter how you do it, but you have to have passion ... That's the really important thing. (Ken, EcoGuide)

Marco explained that the job of an ecotour guide is to be passionate. For Ken, having passion is the most important element for being an ecotour guide. People who interpret the natural environment possess passion for the resource that is being interpreted and are passionate about sharing the information of the resource with others (Beck & Cable, 2002). In a previous study, Pond (1993) also found passion to be the foundation for a successful guide.

> At the core of these and all other successful interpreters is passion for a subject, a desire to share it with others, and a wide array of communication techniques that they have honed over time. Like master artisans, seasoned guides conduct themselves with seemingly little effort and a palpable sense of joy, so that anyone observing them feels drawn to the place, the experience, and the guides themselves. (Pond, 1993, p. 138)

Both Marco and Ken expressed that the subjects of a professional ecotour guides' passion are nature and people, thus raising the question 'what does this passion for nature and people mean for the work of a professional ecotour guide?'

Passion is defined as a "strong and barely controllable emotion" in the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2003, p. 1286). Passion is often associated with a deep sense of love, exploration, excitement, challenge, adventure and inspiration (Boverie & Kroth, 2001). Thus, passion is a human condition that may be experienced in different ways, but can be a part of any person's life. When passion is used in relation to the work environment, it is often perceived as "the cumulative, emotional effect of every employee interacting with his or her work" which resides internally, but is observable (Boverie & Kroth, 2001, p. 7). Thus, in the context of work, passion is considered as an emotional effect that influences work. For ecotour guides, passion is an emotional effect that influences 'professional' work. As shown in Figure 6.1, passion for nature and people are core to conceptualising professional ecotour guides, and are the basis for stimulating and motivating the commitments identified by practitioners as the characteristics of a professional ecotour guide[41]. According to Averill (1985):

> A passion, in the sense of commitment, implies a 'decision' to respond because of some general principle, or because response reflects one's 'true' self. The person who is committed cannot help responding the way [s]he does – not if [s]he wishes to remain true to his convictions, or to him[her]self. (1985, p. 106, original emphasis)

Hence, a professional ecotour guide's 'decision' to respond to passion-motivated commitments is a reflection of his/her 'true' self. The following sections analyse how the emotional effects of passion are applicable in the context of a 'professional' ecotour

[41] In Figure 6.1 the passion for people and nature are put together in the same sphere. As section 6.2 demonstrates tour guides do not separate or distinguish their passion for people and nature into different categories.

guide, and how passion influences their 'professional' commitments. The sections are separated into passion for nature and passion for people according to participants' responses. This is not to say that participants prioritised or separated their passion for nature and people as they expressed both subjects simultaneously at various points in the interviews. As such, Figure 6.1 still shows both passion for nature and people together at the centre of being a professional, however, they are presented independently for analysis and discussion purposes.

6.3 Passion for Nature

6.3.1 Working for Nature

The first subject of passion for a professional ecotour guide was identified as nature. As such, participants often used words such as 'love', 'passionate', or 'commitment' when describing their relationship with the natural environment. However, as an individual's experience is unique, when work is related to the subject of passion it can be experienced in various ways (Boverie & Kroth, 2001). For example, Marcus (EcoGuide) expressed his passion for nature through his work experiences in the changing conditions of nature.

> That's the beauty of being a tour guide, the environment that you are in constantly changes. If you've been to *** [location] or the sand on the beach, you know it's windy, the tides are up, it's down, it's sun shining, it's raining. Different seasons, different plants, different flowers, different animals are out certain times of the year. You can look at the whales coming out of the water few hundred meters off shore. So every tour was different even though you're doing the same thing. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

Wyatt (non-certified ecotour guide), an Aboriginal ecotour guide, described below his new found passion for nature in relation to his ancestral connection to the natural environment which was triggered through working as an ecotour guide.

> Oh yeah I mean to walk on your own land and explain about your own land it's a real sort of an achievement for me. I was in construction and I wasn't even thinking about trees and stuff like that. In the past 5 years working here and working with my uncle it opened up my mind right up about the planet itself I reckon. (Wyatt, non-certified ecotour guide)

For Rob (non-certified ecotour guide), his passion for nature grew through his work experience in nature.

> I love nature, to go out and see something new for the first time you've read about and you've never seen. For example, 10 years looking at cassowaries in the rainforest I've read about it. For the first time 2 weeks ago the male with his 3 chicks feeding off a dead bandicoot! Cassowaries eat fruit most of the time but they apparently eat meat. Here they were swallowing meat! That was just absolutely, wow, that was incredible. 10 years, it took me 10 years to see that so it's moments like that about wildlife. When you see something new for the first time that really is fantastic, this is amazing. Because you have such a build up because in some respects scientists that do basic research on flora and fauna will go in to the field and come back after 3-6 months and have a written documentations of what they believe in what they see is what they see that's what's written on their paper. But if they came to us guides with 10 years of experience, we've seen so many things we can re-write those books. Because I've seen books where I can say that's not true what the experts have written down, I've seen different to that. Being so long in the environment in that field you really have this feel, you see so much you can build up an amazing repertoire of that basic knowledge. Personally, for me I like that that makes me feel on a normal, not a guide's point of view, as a person. I feel very fortunate to see that myself. Being able to go out in the environment, fresh air, wonderful scenery, and seeing the wildlife and talk to people and sharing that with them on a daily basis. That's the most. To make them feel that they are part of it, saying, you see what we're looking at do you realise? You know? That's what I love. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

Marcus' experience with the changing environment, Wyatt's experience sharing information about his land, and Rob's unique wildlife experiences were facilitated by their work. In this context, being passionate about a subject that is related to work translates into a more authentically enthusiastic attitude towards work (Boverie & Kroth, 2001). In addition, passion for a subject can also lead to strong commitments to sharing the passion with others (Pond, 1993).

> Professionally good ecotour guides have a personality and passion for sharing information with their clients. He is passionate about the environment and culture and preserving the environment and showing people and conducting the tour in an environmentally and economically sustainable manner. A person who loves the bush, primarily loves the bush and the outback and, yeah, accompanying other people who are willing to learn and be entertained. (Marco, non-certified ecotour guide)

Marco explains that being a professional ecotour guide not only involves being passionate about the natural environment, but also sharing this passion with tourists by providing environmental interpretation and encouraging pro-environmental values. It is clear from the ecotour guides' comments that their passion for nature reflects a close connection to the natural environment that is facilitated through their work. Personal connectedness to nature is considered to be "the extent to which an individual includes nature within his/her cognitive representation of self" (Schultz, 2002, p. 67). Given ecotour guides' sense of connectedness to nature, the question arises as to a professional's willingness to "act in the best interest of nature" (Schultz, 2002, p. 68), and how this might be expressed in their work. The following section discusses professional ecotour guides' commitment to nature conservation stimulated by passion for nature, and its effects on their work activities.

6.3.1 Commitment to Nature Conservation

According to the participants, a professional ecotour guide's passion for nature motivates one of their most significant commitments - nature conservation. Contributing to the conservation of nature is also a key principle of ecotourism. Over the past four decades, global awareness of the natural environment has become increasingly prevalent among individuals, organisations and political parties. The increase in people's concern for the environment has been witnessed through various sources. For example, strong support for environmental protection is demonstrated through public polls in the U.S.A, the U.K, Germany and Australia (Department of Environment and Conservation (NSW), 2003; Mainieri, Barnett, Valdero, Unipan, & Oskamp, 1997). In addition, various eco-labels are used by commercial organisations to display environmentally benign products and services (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1998). More political parties are incorporating environmental issues into their political agendas (Lubbert, 2001) and environmental sustainability and conservation are considered as one of the major social issues of this century (Mayer & McPherson Frantz, 2004).

Some organisations with sustainable practices find it difficult to create a green organisation culture and resort to forcing their staff to commit to pro-environmental values (Crane, 2000). In the outdoor recreation literature, there is an existing body of

knowledge that shows motivating employees is a key role of management and employers to create a successful organisational culture (Townsend, 2004). Ecotour guides, who also work in the outdoors in an industry committed to sustainability, however, do not seem to require external motivation from management or employers, but already hold personal motivation and passion to work as guides in the ecotourism industry.

> I think you can probably see where they're [ecotour guiding practitioners] coming from. They have strong environmental backgrounds so it's not like you're talking to people who are working in a tourism organisation or where we come from, a marketing point of view or a purely tourism point of view. But, their interest from the environmental point of view and from a guiding point of view were spawned from an environmental perspective ... It became very clear to me early on that if we want to get people more environmentally responsible and live more sustainable, yeah you can do it by TV programs and ramming it down their throat and that sort of thing, but to me the best way to do it is when people are in their recreation or leisure mode and that they're open to new things or whatever. It's not rammed down their throat and it's done in an entertaining way ... Part of the reason why I'm passionate is because I've been a conservationist for a long time. I've been involved politically and I fought really hard to achieve a lot of things both locally and on a State level. So I've got that level of commitment to those things and I try to draw on that, because it's that tackling bigger pictures. I think our industry has got a responsibility to communicate at a wider level about, you know, sustainability issues on a global scale. (Drew, key industry stakeholder)

Drew, a key industry stakeholder who comes from an ecotour guiding background, explained that ecotour guides generally come from "strong environmental backgrounds". As an ecotourism industry representative he believed that the best way of communicating environmental issues was when people are in "recreation or leisure mode", such as ecotours. In Drew's mind, ecotour guides' passion for nature is reflected in their guiding work. Ecotour guides expressed their passion for nature through a commitment to protect the natural environment, and through sharing this commitment with tourists.

> I became a tour guide because I love nature. I wanted to be outside and I wanted to be a part of the solution rather than be part of the problem with conservation and saving the environment. And, I share the stuff, the love I have, with people. (Gerry, EcoGuide)

> I wanted to work in a beautiful natural environment, so that was the first thing. But I also have a strong conservation mind as well. I didn't mean to become a guide, but I just wanted to work in nature and also telling people was very very important. It's a very high responsibility for us because many people think "Oh this rainforest is beautiful." and that's it, but we want to tell them more about how special this rainforest is, then they might be careful. I think it's a really good job. Originally it wasn't like I wanted become a guide, I just wanted to work in this environment. Now I feel that guiding is very very important because everyday of the *** [name of organisation] walk tour I meet people and I can tell them about this rainforest and also about the other environments as well. So I think it's very very important. (Sam, non-certified ecotour guide)

Gerry and Sam both reasoned that their passion for nature led to their desire to work in the natural environment. When this desire was fulfilled by working as ecotour guides, their passion motivated them to try and influence tourists by sharing their perspectives on nature, conservation and sustainability.

Through their commitment to nature conservation and instilling conservation values in tourists, ecotour guides are providing a service to their customers, local regions, and by extension to society (Pond, 1993). Having the opportunity to be a positive influence, to influence people's attitudes and behaviour and to make a difference in society can be a motivator for employees to commit to their professional work (Grant, 2007). Hence, personal passion associated with work can be driven by a commitment to achieve a vision or societal change. This notion requires closer examination to understand how this commitment influences the work of ecotour guiding.

Commitment to Nature Conservation as an Expression of Self

Ecotour guides explained that their passion for nature and people influenced their commitment to nature conservation, which was also a way of constructing and expressing their self-identity.

> I really wholly and thoroughly believe the importance of educating people about the environment because if you don't, what are we going to have to hand down the next generation? Not much! So yeah, I love to stay in the game. (Marco, non-certified ecotour guide)

> I feel as though in the small group tours I think there is a certain point in time, you need to be a bit political. What I mean by being political is when you drive around for the day as I do it's not all beautiful and wonderful. As I explain to people the beach looks beautiful but it's not beautiful

> we're all in the same boat the whole world is in the same boat. We do have our environmental problems and issues and all I present to people is the basic points about Australia and the wet tropics and what's going on here. And I say "Look, if I don't present to you today some of the ugly facts you will go away with no idea of what this place is really about.", so with the good I share some of the bad and the ugly. People laugh and we joke, but I do include some of the basic environmental points. People, and I find Australians, when I get a few Aussies on board I ask them the basic questions about natural history and the natural environment, and you can see that they can't answer it. I think that's relative. U.S.A? Australia? How many people know much about their own backyard? Not many. So by presenting those facts to people I've done my bit. I am very happy at the end of the day, especially Australians saying "Rob thanks, I didn't know that.", I get one person, just one person out of the whole group that goes home and thinks twice about his backyard, his environment and thinks about how he or she can change it then I've done my bit. I am very happy about that. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

It is clear from Marco and Rob's comments that their passion for nature is transferred into "educating", and "explain[ing]" to tourists about the environment as a way of influencing tourists' conservation awareness. According to Rob, influencing even one tourist provided him with satisfaction for achieving his commitment to nature conservation. As mentioned in Chapter Five, instilling conservation values through environmental interpretation is an example of the specialised work that sets ecotour guides apart from other tour guides.

Environmental interpretation is a skill in the performance of ecotour guiding work. The world of work is a place where workers can realise their true human potential (Grint, 1998; Marx, 1970, 1975). Thus, work can be a way of experiencing self-expression and self-actualisation (Grint, 1998; Klotz, 2006), and the results of one's labour-power produced through work is an expression of one's creativity and self-identity (Cox, 1998; Grint, 1998; Hughes, 1971). In the context of this study, the labour-power of ecotour guiding is an expression of an ecotour guide's creativity and self-identity which allows ecotour guides to share their passion and their commitment to conservation with others.

In the interactionist professionalisation literature, professional groups have autonomy and control of their own work. This is referred to as professional power and is made possible with societal support (Freidson, 1970a). Although the work of Australian ecotour guides is controlled by employers, the ideological context of professional power provided by Freidson (1983, 1986) implies that ecotour guides can still have a form of

autonomy and control of their work through self-expression. Thus, the way ecotour guides express themselves and their passion for nature and people through work is not controlled. This means that the skills of environmental interpretation differ amongst ecotour guides allowing creativity and self-expression reflecting self-identity.

Sean (EcoGuide) explained below that personalising the ecotourism experience for the tourist in an entertaining way is the work of a professional ecotour guide.

> Putting it in simple terms, it's the story behind what people are seeing. You can have the best destination and you can have the best bus and best accommodation or whatever, but in terms of environmental interpretation, it holds it together. The stories, the experiences people get, and people get experience not just by feeling, smelling, touching and seeing, but by learning the story behind what they're seeing and this is where I come in. I do it by being both knowledgeable in terms of the facts, but clearly I impart that information in an entertaining way, and that's what I see interpretation as: turning all these facts, putting it in a fashion that suits the customer ... If a guide is a really quality guide and gives some wonderful experience because that person is a good communicator and has been able to personalise it, being able to weave a story in there has been able to add anecdotes of things of the past, that's the bit people then take. It's not only "Well I saw the rock", but, "Hey there was this great guide who just gave me so many insights to what that rock means to the traditional owners" and you start to talk to people. Invariably the thing that makes a difference with people is the way the guide really allowed them to have fun and was entertaining and all that sort of thing, but at the same time they learned something. (Sean, EcoGuide)

Thus, a good quality guide does not just explain the facts, but presents information in a way that is entertaining, memorable, *and* educational. It has been argued that interpretation, especially in the context of ecotourism, should be conducted in a way that is pleasurable, non-academic and easy for tourists to understand (Weiler & Ham, 2001a), and furthermore enjoyable, relevant, organised and thematic (EROT) (Powell & Ham, 2008). One example of the technical skills employed to achieve influential interpretation in getting an environmental message across is given by Adam (non-certified ecotour guide) below.

> Sometimes I've been on a guided tour where nothing's been said for about 15 minutes as you track through an area. You get to a certain location and something really profound has been said, and then nothing more. So sometimes not saying anything is more valuable than saying something

> because it makes something really stick in your time and it's really poignant. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

According to Adam's comments, influential interpretation is not necessarily comprised of continuous verbal communication, pauses for impact are also considered important (Pond, 1993). It has been argued that one of the key components of interpretation is the art of storytelling (Dahles, 2002; Fine & Speer, 1985), and at its best, interpretive storytelling is highly persuasive (Beck & Cable, 2002). However, personal subjective interpretation is an element that is disapproved of and discouraged by some training authorities in certain countries (cf. Bras, 2000; Dahles, 2002). For example in Indonesia, standardising the practice of tour guides at the government level has led the guides to conform to a rigid tour structure such that the same dull facts and figures are delivered at the same sites on every tour (Bras, 2000). Standardisation of professional practice is an end-state of the professionalisation process (Blumer, 1966; Kyrö, 1995). In this context, competency-based guide training may discourage self-reflective guiding skills (Christie & Mason, 2003). Furthermore, institutionalised interpretation associations that provide standardised interpretation techniques in countries such as the UK, the USA, Australia and Canada may standardise interpretation practice, and by extension the ecotourism experience.

Under Marxist theory, in a capitalist society workers are "not free to choose what work to do and how to do it", and thus become passive (Freidson, 1986, p. 111). The worker loses control over their self-expression through production (Grint, 1998), which pushes workers to become further removed from understanding and expressing their own creativity, and by extension their self-identity. In this context, workers are devalued and undermined as they are given a wage in return for their labour-power, not their creative input (Cox, 1998; Grint, 1998). In addition, results of professionalisation such as standardisation of practice, the organisation of division of labour, and hierarchical control and supervision of a planned system of work exacerbate the alienation of the worker from his work (Freidson, 1994). For example, the standardisation of ecotour itineraries and the imposition of structured forms of interpretation may stifle ecotour guides' ability for self-expression through environmental interpretation which is strongly linked to their passion for nature.

Workers' dignity at work is constituted through opportunities for expression of their potential through creative, meaningful and productive work (Legge, 2006). When a worker does not feel ownership of their own work (an attribute of the professions (Freidson, 1970a, 1986, 1994, 2001)), their commitment to work weakens, and when they do not feel involved in their work, they become alienated. Thus, self-expression through environmental interpretation, to reflect ecotour guides' commitment to nature conservation induced by passion for nature is crucial for an ecotour guide to be a professional. The following section analyses another key commitment attributed to professional ecotour guides – commitment to self-improvement.

6.3.2 Commitment to Self-Improvement

> I had such a love for nature all my life. I had a broad spectrum of knowledge as I thought I did, so I went into it and kicked straight into it, and of course I only got more and more into it over the years. I loved it. I love it. Definitely because it's a passion, it's a passion of mine. It's not a job it's a hobby and with anything that's a passion or a hobby, as you should know, I think it's very easy to feed yourself. Pick up a book you see something new and it's like you take it and you love it so you just take it in, take it in. So that's where I find it. I find that way better than taking courses. If you're just stepping into the industry a basic course in flora and fauna and hospitality is important. But because it's my passion, my hobby, and I've done it for many years I think I find it easier to learn to do it in my own way. Because people say "Why don't you go to university? You could get qualified to do that.", but I say "Yeah, I could, but I am just really happy with what I'm doing now." (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

Rob explained that when his 'love' (passion) for nature led into work, it linked to his yearning to learn more about nature. He noted as a result of his passion for nature, he found it easy to absorb new environmental information. He also considered his self-motivated desire to learn to be more beneficial than taking formal courses as he has been guiding for a long time and he was satisfied with his current practice. (A discussion of the implications of on-the-job learning in contrast to gaining formal credentials is further developed in Chapter Eight).

Rob's passion for nature triggered his motivation to improve his environmental knowledge. This may be considered a commitment to self-improvement induced by passion for nature. This commitment was also important for other ecotour guides when conceptualising a professional.

> Well someone who's very passionate about it, someone who is prepared to constantly learn and improve their skills and their knowledge. (Ben, EcoGuide)

> I always look out for tips and points on ways to get information out of that and seeking for information that are related to spotlighting mammals and that's just an on going thing. Birds Australia also puts out interesting manuals through National Parks and I have access to lots of interesting information, and that's also gathering information which is an on going thing just out of interest. (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide)

According to Ben and Erin, professional ecotour guides continuously strive to learn about the natural environment and improve and update their knowledge and their skills to interpret the natural environment. This is also induced by their passion for nature and people.

At work, when commitment is triggered by passion for a subject, passion goes beyond an emotion, it becomes an activity, a practice for:

> Knowledge transmission ... the passion for knowledge object which underpins an occupation or a skill is also an 'organising' practice: it creates organisations, and organised groups within organisations. Passion therefore socially sustains work practices, and the continuing practice of the latter requires constant discussion among the practitioners on what constitutes a good practice. (Gherardi, Nicolini, & Strati, 2007, p. 323)

In this context, knowledge and skills to perform professional work can be organised through the practice of passion. Furthermore, through passion, knowledge and skills become specialised. Thus, the expert knowledge and skills achieved through commitment to self-improvement are induced by passion for nature, and thus the will to conduct professional work. Passion for nature therefore becomes imperative not only for ecotour guides, but also for tourists and employers, as the levels of expert knowledge and skills presented through ecotours influence the tourist experience. Ken, an EcoGuide who is also involved in training his colleagues, explained below his view that passion for nature can be taught for the benefit of tourists and ecotour operators.

> If you are guiding people you've got to be passionate, that's really important. If you are not passionate it will get boring because you think everyday is the same. It's not. No, no, no. You are going to the same place but each nature keeps on changing. You got to start training them from

> there. You've got to teach them not just knowledge you've got to teach them how to see the nature, how to feel the nature, how to find nature. Nobody wants a boring guide, that's not good for business. (Ken, EcoGuide)

Ken acknowledged that an ecotour guide needs to be passionate to be a professional. However, he further explained that passion – in his terms of appreciating the subtleties of nature changing - can be taught in terms of 'what to sustain and how to sustain'. Cater (2006) questions this kind of hegemony in ecotourism (cf. Cater, 2006) and brings in to question the notion of an ecotour guide's work as creative self-expression, self-actualisation and an expression of self-identity. Given that passion is an organising activity and becomes standardised through training, passion can be socially produced, and therefore be reproduced in societies (Gherardi *et al.*, 2007). This questions the authentic 'self'-motivated commitment to passion (Averill, 1985). However, in contrast to Ken's position, key industry stakeholders maintain that passion cannot be taught or constructed.

> Well, professionalising I don't believe has anything to do with tour guiding. I think professionalism comes into the way the business is run in terms of the guides there at the time ... In terms of the content and the messages that the person's putting over, I think it's not professionalism. I think it comes back to passion. and passion is not something that you can train, because it comes from the inner-self, it doesn't come from an external source. Although external sources can help stimulate you into it, that passion is coming from deep within you. Unless you've got that commitment to get really connected with those issues it's not going to come through. (Drew, key industry stakeholder)

> I find passion, accuracy, and detail all that sort of thing much more important for me than professionalism. I can deal with someone that's not quite professional if I find that the passion of what they're doing actually provides a return to nature, and to the community. (Gil, key industry stakeholder)

Drew and Gil (key industry stakeholders) explained that professionalism was not related to delivering a quality ecotour, but passion was a key component. It is interesting to note that although both ecotour guides and key industry stakeholders agreed that passion was the central element to being a professional ecotour guide, their ideas differed in relation to professionalising work through passion. Ecotour guides considered passion as a motivator to professionalising knowledge and skills, however,

key industry stakeholders believed ecotour guides had to have passion to be professionalised.

The following section discusses professional ecotour guides' passion for people, and the commitments it induces.

6.4 Passion for People

6.4.1 Working for People

Tour guiding is front-line service work that involves direct interactions with tourists (Ap & Wong, 2001). Thus, it is not surprising that ecotour guides identified passion for people as a fundamental component of a professional ecotour guide. Ecotour guides expressed their passion for people by citing experiences they encountered through work.

> People send me emails when I get home saying being with me was the highlight of their visit to Australia and when I come to visit to their country be sure to come and stay. Sometimes I am able to find that special bird for them. It is rewarding. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

> Being in wonderful places where you meet people and being able to share those places with interesting and interested people. (Ben, EcoGuide)

> Seeing people really enjoy the place. Seeing them go away with, you know, seeing people that are genuinely interested and thinking really well of the place and having thoroughly enjoyed the place. (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide)

Ecotour guides' passion for people is expressed in terms of meeting new people, finding objects of interest, sharing wonderful places and seeing tourists genuinely enjoying themselves. Will (EcoGuide) further clarified that when his passion for people, experienced by providing effective communication, is diminished due to work conditions (excessively large group sizes), his enjoyment of work decreased.

> Well, the environment you work in is pretty stimulating, but the people you meet, you just meet some great people. When you are on tour particularly if, I have a real thing, I think it's really important to emphasise numbers on tours you know, when I did the *** [tour name] and when I did some of these other tours you've got 50 people on a tour and you are really no more than a traffic policeman. It's very hard to communicate effectively with 50 people. You are far more effective when you are with smaller groups. It's just more effective you know. It's just like a classroom you are more effective with 20 kids than 30 kids. So the other tours I did at ***

> [employer name] I didn't enjoy them at a great deal because you are not being effective, you don't make connections with the people, you are dealing with so many people in short periods of time. (Will, EcoGuide)

The following sections examine the commitments that are induced by passion for people and how they relate to practitioners' conceptualisations of a professional ecotour guide.

6.4.2 Commitment to Service

The work of ecotour guiding, and tour guiding in general, is categorised as part of the tourism workforce, and thus work activities are fundamentally based on service work (Adib & Guerrier, 2001; Ap & Wong, 2001; Guerrier & Adib, 2003; Leidner, 1993). For example, the moment a tour begins, guides are working for tourists. Whether guiding alone or with another colleague, guides are continuously in direct contact with tourists during the tours (Pond, 1993). Whether the tour consists of a single tourist or a group of tourists, the guided-tour requires interaction between the tour guide and tourists, and as a result levels of tourist satisfaction can be influenced by the tour guide's performance (Chang, 2006; Geva & Goldman, 1991; Hughes, 1991; Lopez, 1981). A key industry stakeholder explains the importance of a professional ecotour guide's work focusing on service.

> It's people skills. It's people and communication skills undoubtedly. That to me is the most important area of guides' skills. The biggest area of complaints and I must admit, this is completely anecdotal but the biggest area of complaints you hear about guides is not about their technical knowledge, it's about their treatment or management of groups' individuals how they dealt with specific situations. And so I don't think that obviously, if you're an expert in something and you can communicate it really well, you're going to be at a much, you're going to deliver a better experience than somebody that's not an expert in a particular topic but can still communicate it well. That person who communicates it well but doesn't have the knowledge will find a way of ensuring that the visitor walks away going "Wow that was just awesome, didn't they know so much." (Jason, key industry stakeholder)

Jason believed that being focused on people resulted in satisfying tourists by utilising "people skills". In accordance, it has been recognised in the literature that people skills[42] is one of the more significant work activities of tour guides (Yu & Weiler, 2006). When ecotour guides described the work of ecotour guiding, the term 'people' appeared frequently.

> I think the first job is to take care of the people that they [ecotour guides] are with. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

> It's providing information that is presented in a way that makes people think rather than just presenting it as pure facts and knowledge. (Ben, EcoGuide)

> To give people a positive experience in regarding possibly both either natural cultural values. (Penny, EcoGuide)

> We want to make sure that our customers go away having learnt something and maybe be better people from their experience. (Marco, non-certified ecotour guide)

Whether it is to 'care', 'provide', 'teach', 'make sure', or 'give', the focal point for ecotour guides is serving 'people'. Therefore, when the passion for people induces the commitment to serve tourists it sets the foundation for being a professional ecotour guide. Although other types of tour guides may also possess passion for people service, as previously mentioned, ecotour guides are perceived to be performing specialised work as their passion to share nature with people is portrayed through their commitment to conserve nature, an ecotourism principle that is also a social and moral responsibility.

> A professional is someone that has a thorough understanding of the environment that they're working in and has a genuine concern to impart that knowledge to people. To enjoy working with people and to make that trip with that group of people the best you could do at the time and to lead those people with a sense of enjoyment or really have enjoyed your tour. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

According to Marcus, a professional 'enjoys working with people' and has a 'genuine concern to impart' environmental knowledge. In addition a professional puts their best

[42] For this study, people skills refer to the verbal and physical ways ecotour guides communicate and interact with people (tourists) during their work activities. People skills are used to provide satisfying ecotourism experiences.

efforts into service to make the tour enjoyable for tourists. In relation to providing environmental knowledge, Will (EcoGuide) further explained that the 'method' of putting the message across for tourists is more crucial than delivering scientific knowledge. Like Jason, Will articulated this as 'people skills' below.

> I think good people skills, obviously good knowledge and how to get that knowledge over I mean you can have the best knowledge you can know everything but getting it over, it's no good. You've also got to have a good knowledge base but you also have to know how you get what you want to get over to people really. Yeah, methodology if you'd like, probably apply to guiding. (Will, EcoGuide)

Although the importance of the accurate information interpreted for tourists were mentioned by the ecotour guides in section 5.4.4, Jason and Will contended that people skills are more important than correct technical knowledge.

> The difference between a professional guide and one that's really a professional guide is having the right mixture of knowledge and delivery. That's the difference, you see plenty of good guides that are knowledgeable but they don't have the delivery. The truly professional guides are the ones who can deliver it ... I mean often I found the best guides are probably the ones that don't have as much of the technical knowledge, and they're just generally good communicators. They are people who just by their nature, are great at communicating with people and know how to do it. Now, you can learn that by some various techniques, by understanding the need to question, and whatever, but I do think those things are really quite separate from learning about the technical aspects of what you're trying to interpret. The actual interpretation skills, the delivery and the engagement with people is a critical area. And again, it'll be the one that I think there's been a less of a focus on, I think the focus is more on the technical and less on the delivery. (Drew, key industry stakeholder)

Drew made a similar statement to Jason and Will by stating that "delivery" of the tour through good communication is the key to being a 'real' professional guide. In the following comment Marcus (EcoGuide) explained that the Australian ecotourism industry is focused on assisting the ecotour guides to improve interpretation/communication skills through workshops and conferences.

> Well there's certainly, there's been no lack of workshop and training exercises where you know, the likes of the *** [name of an academic] and whatever has been brought out to you know to speak at conferences and run workshops and whatever about interpretation stuff, and telling these people that's been doing it for 20-30 years about how to do it? (Marcus EcoGuide)

Supporting Marcus' opinion, during an observation with Ben (EcoGuide), he stated that "Yeah, thematic interpretation seems to be the new it [fashionable] word, it is relevant and important, but it's much more than just that" (field-notes July 23rd, 2007). He showed a sign of awkwardness when mentioning Ecotourism Australia's drive for certain ecotour guiding skills hinting at a discrepancy between how the industry says to practice and what ecotour guides believe is the best way to practice. Professionalisation that is driven by non-practitioners of the occupation does not suit the ideal-type of professionalism development as managerial control without consulting the practitioners of a discipline is not considered to be occupational professionalism (Freidson, 2001). Although the ecotour guides were consulted in the development process of the EcoGuide Program, the final decisions were made by the project team and the steering committee that consisted of government agency representatives, academics and tour operator representatives. If a gap between industry and practitioner ideas about how to serve tourists exists, it is necessary to further understand how a professional's commitment to service induced by passion for people is impacted through work. The following section explores the themes that relate to challenging experiences working as an ecotour guide, and how these challenges were reflected in the guides' commitment to service.

People Skills – Dealing with Emotions

Important characteristics of service workers are having customer focused and oriented personalities and values (Korczynski *et al.*, 2000). However, when tourism employees are interacting with tourists as service workers in direct contact with customers (Leidner, 1993), emotional labour can be experienced to achieve tourist and employer satisfaction (Hochschild, 1983). The following participant explained the challenging aspects of their work generated by tourists.

> Grumpy people. People who don't appreciate how good it is here. (Gerry, EcoGuide)

Gerry, a self-proclaimed nature enthusiast explained her challenge in conducting tours for people who do not appreciate the natural environment. This personal attitude difference towards nature between Gerry and tourists may require her to perform emotional labour by either surface or deep acting to suppress her emotions (Hochschild,

1983) to facilitate satisfactory tourist experiences. In this context, working for tourists proves to be a challenge for Rob (non-certified ecotour guide) at times.

> I mean I guess you get sometimes when you get the movie star that's very well known you think "Oh god how will it go today". Some days, I guess when you get the big groups or individuals that you get no response from, you sit there thinking "Oh my god this is going to be a real interesting day". That's a challenge never knowing or not if they're bored out of their brains already, whether they're just not emotional people because you do get people who are just not that emotional. And you go ahead and you complete your day you normally would, the best you can, and at the end of the day then you find that they had a good day. That's the challenge, not knowing with those particular people, the strange people, the quiet people whether or not you've actually are giving them what they wanted. That's the biggest challenge. At the end you find out really how they felt. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

Rob explained the emotional discomfort of self-analysis that occurs during his tours when tourists are not responsive. Although he is guessing how the tourists are receiving his services, he performs emotional labour by 'completing' his tour 'the best you can'. This type of emotional labour occurs due to the constant interaction guides have with people (Pond, 1993). Marcus (EcoGuide) expressed his emotional state when he encountered difficult people from various backgrounds.

> Oh well you're dealing with people, because you've got people that ask those stupid questions, like you feel like hitting them on their head and going "Are you that stupid?" I can tell you some great stories. Like the guy that comes up and asks you things like "I'm going on your tour that's going to a lake do I need to take a towel?", "What time does a nine o'clock tour depart?". I mean people who ask those questions are people who are in high management level or run their own business, and you've also got a lot of international tourists whose English skills are not that great or their mannerisms are different a lot to our culture that don't necessarily say "Thank you" or use "Please" or whatever so you have to have a good understanding of other people's cultures. So you can say that's another skill that you need. You do have to have some sort of understanding of people. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

Marcus' statement reflects emotional labour, the act of maintaining levels of "publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). Although Marcus vividly explained his desire to "hit them [tourists] on the head" for asking "stupid" questions, he resolved to an emotional labour of surface "understanding". Thus to achieve the specialised professional work of ecotour guides (instilling conservation

values and encouraging environmentally conscious behaviour) "another skill" (emotional labour) is required by professional ecotour guides.

For occupations that 'serve' people, customers become the central focus in the execution of their work (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Leidner, 1999; Mann, 1997; Morris & Feldman, 1996), and thus for many tourism employees emotional labour has become a key requirement to perform work (Van Dijk & Kirk, 2008). Previous research shows that emotional labour occurs as a behavioural response to the frequency and variety of emotions (Brotheridge, 2006; Van Dijk & Kirk, 2008), and emotional labour may occur more often for ecotour guides who are involved in long verbal interaction with tourists.

During observations of ecotours, the act of emotional labour was observable on several occasions. For example, Joe (non-certified ecotour guide, field-notes July 1st, 2007) had to clean the tour bus prior to departure for the tour destination as a tourist on a previous tour had stepped on dog faeces and then walked it through the bus without knowing. Ellen (non-certified ecotour guide, field-notes July 7th, 2007) had to pull over on her way to the tour destination as one of the tourists vomited in the bus. She cleaned the bus whilst the tourists were waiting outside the bus. Kevin (non-certified ecotour guide, field-notes July 6th, 2007) had to mange three German tourists who refused to continue with the journey to the tour destination, as they did not agree to the itinerary. He phoned his employer to be given directions on how to manage the situation and eventually sent the tourists in a taxi back into the city. The managed emotions of Joe, Ellen and Kevin were all observed as positively controlled. Maintaining a positively controlled emotion during challenging situations is significant for performing work as the tour guides' emotions are observable, and tourists may respond accordingly (Van Dijk & Kirk, 2008). Therefore, this controlled emotion which requires a co-ordination of intellect and emotion (Hochschild, 1983), is part of working as an ecotour guide. Although, this is common to the work of tour guiding it is necessary to achieve a satisfactory tourist experience and thus in achieving ecotour guides' specialised work. Hence, dealing with a variety of situations through emotional labour is a part of being a professional ecotour guide.

It is argued that customer focused and orientated personalities for service work can be improved through educational training to support workers (Korczynski *et al.*, 2000). This results in customer service skills in conflict resolution and communication which support effective performance and minimise the exhaustion of emotional labour (Anderson, 2006). Nevertheless, although emotional labour may be managed and controlled through forms of professionalisation (such as training, service manuals and courses) (Hochschild, 1983; Korczynski *et al.*, 2000; Leidner, 1993), the exhausting emotions generated from work may influence the commitment to service of professional ecotour guides. However, emotional labour of ecotour guiding may not apply to all ecotour guides (Fineman, 1993; Korczynski, 2002). The following section examines another commitment that is induced by passion for people to be a professional ecotour guide – the commitment to influence people.

6.4.3 Commitment to Influence People

There has been a recognition of people's desire to involve themselves with nature-based leisure or recreational activities to feel a closer connectedness to nature (Mayer & McPherson Frantz, 2004). For example, a significant proportion of tourists are seeking to engage with nature by choosing tourism destinations that are perceived to have pristine and beautiful nature (Filion *et al.*, 1994; Furlan, Meneghello, & Minghetti, 2004; Holden, 2000; Murphy, 1999). As a result of these trends in society, it is believed that experience of and contact with nature may raise intrinsic conservation values (Mayer & McPherson Frantz, 2004). People who associate a positive emotion such as passion with their work create a vision and purpose, which transfers into making a difference in society (Boverie & Kroth, 2001). For ecotour guides, this difference is achieving environmental sustainability.

> I will keep doing guiding until I drop. Probably until I can't do it anymore because I enjoy doing it. I want to make a difference for nature. (Ben, EcoGuide)

Making a difference for Ben is related to his passion for nature, but also a commitment to influence people induced by his passion for people. In this context, Anna, who started her career in the ecotourism industry as an ecotour guide, explained that the guide's role in influencing the ecotourism experience is pivotal.

> As a working guide and sort of a middle manager, I was really passionate about being really pivotal to the ecotourism experiences. It's the place they like to work or quite passionate about a particular environment. (Anna, key industry stakeholder)

For ecotour guides, this passion for nature to "make a difference" is mixed with being a professional, and the passion for people which triggers the commitment to service and commitment to influence people. Matt's (non-certified ecotour guide) passion for people is expressed below in his ways of "look[ing] after people" and 'staging an experience'.

> Professional guide, they look after their people, they know their stuff, they're approachable they're, staging an experience for the people, you are putting on a performance if you like ... And that you've got to take it as it comes you know you're going to grab opportunities as it comes but you know what you're about and the people know that. And another thing about a professional is you measure how things are going, you look at your group and you adapt if you feel as if things are not going well as they might. So you're looking at three things. Getting feedback from the people whether it's body language, questions or they come right up and say something to you. (Matt, non-certified ecotour guide)

Both Joe (non-certified ecotour guide) and Jack (EcoGuide) explained below that being a professional is a people-focused service where the emotions of 'happiness' or physical expression of 'smiles' are observable from tourists.

> Someone who looks after his customers builds them on their knowledge and gives them a greater understanding of the surrounding environment sending them away happy giving them a varied experience. (Joe, non-certified ecotour guide)

> I think I found passion by accident. I hear people say "I wish I could do that I wish I could." I never really planned out to be a passionate person and I never thought I'd be a passionate tour guide for people. I thought this was an occupation which is going to put the bread and butter on the table, but I tell you what when I see the faces of the people that get off my bus smiling I think "I've done it, I've done that." I'd never felt like that ever in my life. Never. (Jack, EcoGuide)

Therefore, the ecotour guides suggested that a professional ecotour guide stages ecotourism experiences that are centred on satisfying tourists. In this context, front line service workers, such as ecotour guides, can find meanings and satisfaction of work through the direct interactions they have with their customers (Korczynski *et al.*, 2000).

Nevertheless, the nature of service work may require them to perform emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983). In this context, workers are exploited or controlled by those that buy and sell the products workers produce under capitalism (Cox, 1998). Even though guides can play a significant role in influencing the tourist experience (Cohen, 1985; Ham & Weiler, 2002a; Roggenbuck & Williams, 1993; Weiler, 1991; Weiler & Davis, 1993) ecotour guides may be controlled and restrained in their delivery of ecotours by the demands and expectations of tourists or employers. Thus, guides are forced to contain and mask their emotions when delivering services and may become alienated from themselves and others. This results in inauthentic acts of work which act as a barrier for workers to express their authentic selves.

> The commitment to communicate good information and to a respect looking after people. Feeling like this isn't a ho-hum job, getting yourself into the mood of thinking this is one of days. You should do the best you can for this person on this day and you shouldn't be any of your hangovers impinging on their day. If you had a bad day the day before, if you are tired, that's nothing to do with them and that should come into account when you should be treating their day as a fresh new interesting good day for them. (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide)

Erin's people-focused comment on "feeling like this isn't a ho-hum job" and "getting yourself into the mood" reflect her experience with dealing with her emotions when at work. In this context, Hochschild's (1983) argument on workers being required to manage their emotions in return for a wage may have alienated Erin from herself. This may influence Erin's authentic passion for servicing people and nature, and as a result her self- and social-identity through work. Nonetheless, Erin and Adam explained that a professional ecotour guide who has passion for nature and for people shows their commitment to influence tourists by instilling conservation values.

> I suppose the most important thing is that it should come from the heart. You need to cultivate people who are genuinely interested in the educational process I think rather than just being a way to put in 8 hours and getting paid at the end of it. Being able to cultivate those interests in the ecosystems that you are looking and the people that are looking at it if you look genuinely interested in other people you've done a good enough service. (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide)

> An ecotour guide, a professional ecotour guide, they practice and support conservation. They lead by example, you know? They're not doing things that are detrimental to the ecosystem in which they're operating. They're not interfering with the wildlife for the benefit of the tour. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

Having passion for nature and people motivate professional ecotour guides to educate tourists about the natural environment which reflects their commitment to influence tourists' intentions, attitudes and behaviour towards the environment.

This section explained that to be a professional ecotour guide the possession of passion for nature and people are required to stimulate commitment to: nature conservation; self-improvement; service; and, to influence people. The following section explains the additional elements of a professional ecotour guide cited by participants.

6.5 Other Professional Elements

One of the more recognised personal qualities for a professional ecotour guide to hold was to maintain a professional physical appearance and presentation and as act as a role model in terms of pro-environmental behaviours.

> I would say appearance because how you are groomed all that kind of thing, that is important. You can put a basic layer if you'd like but there's always going to be exceptions to that. (Will, EcoGuide)

> Professional tour guide, I go out clean I come back dirty ... As a professional tour guide, you need to clean your boots before you go out. (Jack, EcoGuide)

Will and Jack believed that being physically presentable was an important factor. In certain countries, for example Israel, a tour guide's physical appearance such as posture and clothing is interpreted as their 'professional status' (Cohen *et al.*, 2002). Rob (non-certified ecotour guide) below agreed with this notion, but explained further that it is more the delivering the ecotour side (as in instilling conservation values and encouraging environmentally conscious behaviour) of the presentation that needs attention to be a professional ecotour guide.

> Presentable, well mannered, being yourself I guess just knowing your boundaries with your people, knowing how far you can and can't go. Some days there are certain things I talk about you've got to be careful some of the words you use even if it is a joke, so you just have to know your people and being well presented and being yourself. ... For example, you're a guide you walk out with your group and you get out of your vehicle and pull out a cigarette and you toss it out into the river or the forest. Well hey that's just defeated the whole purpose of being an ecoguide, because you've

> just done the worst thing. You've just shown your people you don't really have much respect for the environment so all you talk about or what you've done today has gone down the gutter. So, you have to be honest about what you do and what you don't do. You have to present to your people as a professional guide, "Hey no we don't do this, piss off". So it's all about presentation. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guides).

Rob emphasised that a professional sends out an environmental message and presents it in a way that demonstrates pro-environmental behaviours. Being a role model for environmentally responsible behaviour is a specialised role of guides who practice in ecotourism (Ballantyne & Hughes, 2001; Christie & Mason, 2003; Gurung *et al.*, 1996; Haigh, 1997; Haigh & McIntyre, 2002; Ormsby & Mannle, 2006; Pond, 1993; Weiler & Davis, 1993). Despite this, Greg (non-certified ecotour guide) explained below that having a good work ethic is more important for a professional than the content of the ecotour.

> Somebody good as opposed to adequate has a personal interest in the subject matter, a good disseminator of information and disseminate information in a factual and entertaining manner and has a usual work ethic that is common to any good worker. Professionals turn up on time they turn up here, they don't take multiple sick leaves and things like that and that shows diligent duty of care when they have people to look after and that pretty much defines it. Of all of those three I would put at the bottom of the scale having an interest in subject matter at hand because if they have a work ethic they are going to learn enough about the subject to do the job adequately and I would much rather have somebody working for me that will turn up everyday with an adequate amount of knowledge and entertaining people and disseminating it than somebody who was extremely knowledgeable took 20 sickies and bored the hell out of everybody because they were like lectures you know. (Greg, non-certified ecotour guide)

Greg believed that having an interest in the subject that is being presented was a good quality of an ecotour guide, but to be a professional, punctual and committed to quality service for the organisation were imperative. It is noteworthy that Greg's answer may have been influenced by his dual role as ecotour guide and middle manager involved in hiring and training ecotour guides for his employers.

One aspect of ecotour guiding that was overlooked by ecotour guides, but included by key industry stakeholders when defining a professional was the business aspects of ecotour guiding. The opinions of stakeholders are included as they provide valuable

insights into the discrepancy between ecotour guides' and stakeholders' views when defining a professional.

> So a professional guide would have for a start, they'll be spot on in terms of the business side like their safety and risk management. (Brian, key industry stakeholder)

> The difference between a professional ecoguide to a non-professional guide, I would simply define it as one that has a stimulating work environment and has a safe stimulating work environment, that has the credential to develop a career within the business, and that enjoys strong on going relationships with the clients of the business. (Scott, key industry stakeholder)

> I think the professionalism of the guide is also related to their ability to, if you like, contribute to the business. And I know it's sounding a little bit hard nose, but often there is a distance between the guide and the business, you know the guide loves being out there in the bush, but doesn't necessarily see the value in up selling a customer to a night through a sunset walk or a recognising that they have such a big influence on the customer they have a great opportunity to contribute to the overall success of the business. And I think the more professional guides, the more savvy they are about this sort of overall business side of things. (Jason, key industry stakeholder)

The key industry stakeholders suggest that professional ecotour guides are aware of the 'business' side of their work where their performances are reflected on the business operations of their employers. According to the stakeholders, professional ecotour guides should consider the risk and safety of tourists during ecotours, gain credentials, and ensure tourist satisfaction for the benefit of the business. Thus, the stakeholders' views on ecotour guides' organisational commitment may influence the way professionalism is conducted in Australian ecotour guiding as current movements towards professionalisation are being driven by the ecotourism industry. For example, the initiation of Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Certification Program was largely industry driven. This type of occupational change to raise professionalism 'from above' influences the identification of professionals, and by extension the work of the practitioners (Evetts, 2003). The key point of this concept is that as Australian ecotour guides do not possess the 'control of work' as most traditional professions do (Freidson, 1970a), achieving an ideological conception and definition of a professional ecotour guide may be challenging. Nevertheless, the conceptual requirements for a professional defined by the practitioners create a basis for the following chapter to explore how industry-driven professionalisation has impacted the work of ecotour guides in achieving professional status and professionalism. Therefore, the next chapter moves on

to address the second research question of this study, 'What impact has industry professionalisation had on the work of ecotour guides?

6.6 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to apply the concepts of work and professionalisation discussed in the literature to the actual work experience of Australian ecotour guides. This aim facilitated the interpretation and understanding of which characteristics the practitioners regarded and conceptualised as professional.

Ecotour guides revealed that passion for nature and people were the most significant qualities required to be a professional ecotour guide. This passion was transferred into commitments that were carried out through their work. Firstly, it was identified that a professional who holds the passion for nature expresses their passion by showing commitment to nature conservation through environmental interpretation and delivering a conservation message. Secondly, the passion for nature also motivates a professional ecotour guides' commitment to self-improvement. Practitioners felt that a professional that is passionate about nature would actively seek, learn and acquire new knowledge and skills to express their passion. Thirdly, the passion for people leads to the commitment to serve. As ecotour guides are front-line service workers that have constant contact with tourists, professionals who have passion for people would naturally commit to servicing people. However, it has also been identified that ecotour guides experience emotional labour due to the continuing interactive service work they conduct. Lastly, the passion for people stimulates the commitment to influence people for a professional ecotour guide. This commitment is not only to influence tourists' with satisfactory experiences, but also and more importantly, influence tourists to have an enjoyable ecotourism experience where tourists leave with a conservation message.

An additional theme that emerged from the data analysis that was not strongly linked to the passion for nature and people, but identified as a professional quality was personal presentation. The presentation of physical appearance and physical behaviour of guides during ecotours were perceived necessary to be a professional. In addition, the data analysis showed that the only discrepancy that existed between the views of the ecotour

guides and key industry stakeholders when conceptualising a professional, were business skills.

The interpretive understanding of what constitutes a professional ecotour guide from the minds of practitioners outlined in this chapter and summarised in Figure 6.1, allows the study to move forward to understanding what impact industry-driven professionalisation has on ecotour guides achieving professional status and professionalism.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE IMPACT OF PROFESSIONALISATION ON ECOTOUR GUIDES

> People are now taking a much more professional approach to tour guiding. When I started 30 years ago we could've been straight out of school. Might have been keen bush walkers, so you'd know a little bit. These days your tour guides have either a wealth of experience behind them or have done more formal training, and, they probably have certificate. They probably would've done something on risk management and probably more on a better understanding of the impacts that groups especially have on environments and cultural values. So I think there's a much better, much more professional approach to leading groups. (Penny, EcoGuide)

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the second research question 'What impact has professionalisation had on the work of ecotour guides?' In Chapter Three, professionalisation theory was applied to the changes that have occurred within the ecotourism industry for ecotour guides. A number of events such as the increase in guiding-related training and educational programs, the establishment of professional associations, and the provision of professional guiding certification programs were identified as evidence of a professionalisation process in Australian ecotour guiding. Furthermore, from Penny's perspective, presented above, professionalisation has resulted in a more "professional approach". This chapter provides an interpretation of the experiences of ecotour guides and key industry stakeholders as the broader Australian ecotourism industry moves through a process of professionalisation.

The chapter follows Freidson's (1994, 2001) position that an occupational group achieves the 'ideal state' of professionalism through the professionalisation process. Freidson (1986) also contends that the process of professionalisation is driven by the members of the occupational group, not external interest groups. In this context, no professionalisation process is the same and each should be studied as an individual case (Freidson, 1986). Therefore, in this case, the values and opinions established by the research participants' experiences of professionalisation are used to analyse and interpret the impact professionalisation has had on the work of ecotour guides.

The structure of this chapter is guided by the central themes that emerged during data analysis and interpretation. The chapter begins with a brief justification of the use of Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Certification Program (EcoGuide Program) as a case study to address the second research question, and to provide insight into the impact of professionalisation on the work of ecotour guides. Due to the unique industry-driven model of professionalisation evolving in Australian ecotour guiding, the key industry stakeholders' values and opinions are included along with ecotour guides themselves. The chapter then explores three broad thematic areas to emerge from the data: motivations/lack of motivation for obtaining professional certification; the impacts of the EcoGuide Program on EcoGuides; and, interpreting and understanding the impact of professionalisation by exploring the role of external interest groups and increasing demand for credentialism within the ecotourism industry. Key themes within these broad thematic areas are linked with the professionalisation and certification literature in order to provide a theoretical context for understanding the impact of industry-driven professionalisation on work, and by extension professionalism.

7.2 Impact of the EcoGuide Certification Program

7.2.1 Introducing the EcoGuide Program

Traditional professions such as medicine and law drive the professionalisation of their own work (Freidson, 1970a). The professionalisation of ecotour guides in Australia is developing in a different way. According to Freidson (1994, p. 10) professionalism involves "a particular ideology of expertise and service" requiring expert knowledge and skills to perform specialised work. In this context, the professionalisation of an occupational group involves various stages (Abbott, 1991b), and this study chose to explore how professionalism is being achieved in ecotour guiding through professional certification programs (in this case the voluntary EcoGuide Certification Program).

For the Australian ecotourism industry, professional certification programs such as the EcoGuide Program represent an attempt to increase levels of work professionalism, and provide formal recognition of an individual's knowledge and skills (Black & Weiler, 2005; Harris & Jago, 2001; Issaverdis, 1998). If voluntary certification is a way of demonstrating a worker's expert knowledge and skills within the relevant industry, then

it should also be a way for ecotour guides to demonstrate their level of professionalism (Morrison, Hsieh, & Wang, 1992). In order to understand the impact the EcoGuide Program has had on the professionalism of ecotour guides, the following sections analyse and interpret certified EcoGuides', and non-certified ecotour guides', experiences of professionalisation (i.e. the EcoGuide Program). The EcoGuides' motivations for obtaining voluntary professional certification are explored, and then balanced by the counterpoint of non-certified ecotour guides' reasons for not pursuing certification.

7.2.2 Motivation/Lack of Motivation

The EcoGuide Program is a voluntary industry initiative provided by Ecotourism Australia (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a). Due to its voluntary nature, understanding the motivation, or lack of motivation, for seeking certification provides insight into the impact the EcoGuide Program is having on ecotour guides' levels of professionalism.

> I think when you're going to accreditation and certification where it's a voluntary initiative, you are really trying to promote excellence, and say, "Hey look this is something that is a really special standard." So you are much higher than normal and you are promoting yourself for being, as they say, the crème de la crème. (Anna, key industry stakeholder)

According to Anna, the voluntary nature of the certification program attracts ecotour guides whose standards are "higher than normal" and who represent "the crème de la crème" implying the different levels of professional conduct compared to other ecotour guides. Anna implied that voluntary certification is a way of showing and promoting an ecotour guide's dedication and excellence. The literature claims that undertaking voluntary initiatives such as the certification program demonstrates a level of commitment to best practice and professionalism (Carlsen, Jago, Harris, & de Silva, 2006). To further examine this notion, the following sections present themes that may explain why ecotour guides did and did not acquire the EcoGuide certification. Firstly, the EcoGuides' rationale for undergoing the certification process is discussed, followed by non-certified ecotour guides arguments for not pursuing certification.

EcoGuide Motivation: Company Drive

EcoGuides Ken, Gerry, Will and Don below explained their decision to become an EcoGuide was actually made for them by their employers.

> My boss introduced it [EcoGuide Program] to me. (Ken, EcoGuide)

> I didn't have the expectation from before. You know, it's not something that I wanted to do because I didn't research it. It was *** [company name] said "Hey we are going to do this." (Gerry, EcoGuide)

> *** [company name] was already a member of Ecotourism Australia. So yeah, everything that we were doing was already directed by what Ecotourism Australia recommended but then half way through we got certified ... I think it was part of ***'s [company name] push to become accredited, they wanted all their guides to become accredited[43]. I think for them the part of their advertising, for promotion is to be an accredited and certified ecotourism business. (Will, EcoGuide)

> We did this thing as a group. They [employer] wanted us to be members of this thing and I said, "Look I don't particularly approve of this organisation, I don't think it represents anything. The badge means nothing to me you know." They still wanted us to be accredited guides you know and I said "These badges don't mean anything to me." I can see some guides, they want to go somewhere else and they want to have an accredited tour guide badge or whatever. As far as I'm concerned I am not interested in going into it but look I've been a tour guide for 15 years. Why don't you just put me through as a prior recognition, recognition of prior learning, "RPL"? They push most of it through like that. Apparently I am a member of the, what is it called?, ... Ecotourism Australia but like it's because I told them. They [employer] can put all the papers in if they want us to be accredited. I said if you want me accredited put me through but I am not doing a course, so they did. (Don, EcoGuide)

Incidentally these 4 EcoGuides work for large ecotourism businesses where the majority, if not all guiding staff are EcoGuides. These businesses' products and services are also

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[43] Throughout the interview process, both key industry stakeholders and ecotour guides used the terms accreditation (for a program of study or an institution that meets certain standards) and certification (for individuals) interchangeably despite the different meanings and applications of these terms (discussed in Chapter Three Morrison et al., 1992). Often, when the participants mention 'accreditation' in relation to the EcoGuide Program they are in fact referring to 'certification'. It has been noted in the literature that the arbitrary use of these two terms continues to cause confusion amongst consumers and industry stakeholders in the Australian ecotourism industry (cf. Black, 2002; Honey & Rome, 2001; Issaverdis, 1998).

certified under the ECO Certification Program with Ecotourism Australia. According to Ecotourism Australia's Green Travel Directory 2007/2008, out of the 53 EcoGuides across Australia, 6 large ECO Certified businesses employed 33 of them. In Will's opinion, his company wanted their guiding staff to become EcoGuides to align with the company's attempts to brand themselves as an "accredited and certified ecotourism" business. In this context, professionalisation can be used to satisfy the ecotourism industry's need to promote best practice and professionalism by establishing accreditation, professional certification and licensing programs (Black, 2002; Buckley, 2001b; Carlsen *et al.*, 2006; Honey, 2002; Weiler, 1995). However, the assumption that certification programs reflect actual best practice and attract more tourists is untested. Will provided an example during the interview where his ECO certified employer did not necessarily reflect 'best practice' in his mind.

> The walks around the *** [location] there are some new ones that we've created and then the tour I worked on at *** [company name] was sort of aimed at the up market. It was more expensive and called the *** tour. So I've actually restricted the numbers well kind of changed a bit it was supposed to be 17 and it went to 24 and it went to 30. After I left doing that tour I think it went to 50 so it lost its way a bit in terms of small numbers the tour that I was doing. (Will, EcoGuide)

Will's comment shows that his perception of ecotourism is small-scale and much of the ecotourism literature supports the notion that for ecotourism to be successful it needs to be small-scale (cf. Epler Wood, 2002; Gossling, 2005; Lück, 2002; Orams, 1995a; World Ecotourism Summit, 2002). In this context, despite Will's employer being certified under the ECO Certification program, which claims to adhere to ecotourism principles, at least one of the principles of ecotourism is not applied in the guiding certification process.

In addition, Don and Gerry did not show personal or professional attachments to the EcoGuide Program as they were directed by their employers to become certified. Although Don did not approve of being a member of Ecotourism Australia, he was coerced into becoming certified with the organisation. Don made it clear to his employers that "the badge" of certification did not provide any additional personal or professional meaning to his work. Regardless, due to employer pressure Don's certification was rubber stamped without any assessment out of respect for his years of

experience. This may be the reason for Don not clearly recognising the name of the organisation he was certified with, and also a member of. When the concept of professionalism is used by external interest groups such as employers:

> In effect, professionalism is being used to convince, cajole and persuade employees, practitioners and other workers to perform and behave in ways which the organisation or the institution deem to be appropriate, effective and efficient. (Evetts, 2003, p. 411)

Thus, perceiving EcoGuides as workers voluntarily declaring and promoting their dedication to professionalism through certification is misleading. The following section outlines another motivation for pursuing certification cited by the EcoGuides.

EcoGuide Motivation: Personal Connection With Ecotourism Australia

Another key reason for EcoGuides undergoing the certification program with Ecotourism Australia was due to their personal connection with the association.

> *** [name of Ecotourism Australia staff] is a good friend of mine and he nominated me. He knows what guiding is all about, he runs Ecotourism Australia which is the leading ecotour guiding organisation in the country ... The whole certification occasion was built in with a conference. So if you're not a member of EA then you wouldn't have known about it. (Jack, EcoGuide)

> Probably because I have been involved with EA right from its inception and when *** [individual's name] was getting it all started and things. So I've always been involved through *** [company name] and I've been to a few of the conferences and things so I've always supported their development. So it was a logical progression to their accreditation rather than anything else. But also it's the only one that has the ecotourism focus. (Ben, EcoGuide)

Jack explained that his friend working for Ecotourism Australia asked him to become certified during a conference he attended. Ben's interest and involvement with Ecotourism Australia, and recognising the EcoGuide Program as ecotourism-focused, made it "a natural progression" for him to become an EcoGuide. Although Jack's primary intention to become an EcoGuide was encouraged by an external party, Ben's support for raising the professionalism of ecotour guiding through the certification program was sincerely voiced.

> Because I think it's [EcoGuide] primary. I think it's valued and I hope it's going to grow. And if I, as a senior person, pull out I think that's another nail in the coffin. I might be reading too much into that, but I think it's important that those of us that are involved support it. (Ben, EcoGuide)

Ben has been guiding in nature-based environments for almost 25 years. He received Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Award and according to the tourist survey conducted for this study, tourists were 'very satisfied' with Ben's performance. Although the EcoGuide certification program was initiated, developed and delivered by an industry body, Ben was the only ecotour guide encountered during the research who embraced certification completely of his own volition ('from within' rather than 'from above'). He explained that it was his responsibility as a "senior person" within the industry to lend his support to the professionalisation of ecotour guides. During the observation period with Ben (field-notes July 23rd 2007) he mentioned that despite his dedication to be involved in the professionalisation process by applying to be an assessor of the EcoGuide Program he has had no response from Ecotourism Australia. The EcoGuide/assessors (Will and Ken) the researcher encountered during the data collection process were employed by major ECO Certified ecotourism businesses to assess their staff. Ben is a sole owner and operator of his own ecotour business and freelances for other tour operators. Perhaps Ben was not accepted as an assessor as he does not work for a large company that employs many ecotour guides, or perhaps he was not 'qualified' enough for Ecotourism Australia (despite being qualified enough to attain certification and receive and award).

To provide a counterpoint to EcoGuides motivations for becoming certified, the following sections explore the rationale for non-certified ecotour guides non-participation in the EcoGuide Program.

Non-Participation in the EcoGuide Program: Lack of Value for Money

At a glance, the uptake of the EcoGuide Program has been rather slow. According to Ecotourism Australia's Green Travel Directory there was an increase of just 6 EcoGuides between 2005 and 2008. Scott (key industry stakeholder) below shared his opinion as to why this was the case.

> It's because the guides themselves, I don't believe, have really understood the benefits. They haven't recognised the needs and understood the benefits. And, probably at a lower level, the issue

> of cost. But I really don't see that as a major barrier to be honest. I think if people see value and benefit, cost is not an issue in general. (Scott, key industry stakeholder)

Scott believed that there was a lack of recognition on the ecotour guides' part of the needs of the EcoGuide Program. Furthermore, in his opinion, the cost of certification (see Chapter Eight for a further discussion on cost) would not be an issue if guides "really understood the benefits" of the certification program. The non-certified ecotour guides thought otherwise.

> As long as it has good quality assurance associated with it then it may be worth my time and effort in having this stamp of approval. Otherwise, it's not. I think I get that recognition and approval through guiding for magazines and journals and responding to things on the travel forums. That sort of thing, that's how I have become known as someone that is knowledgeable about the wildlife of north Queensland. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

> I don't mind going through a certification process if there is something that will guarantee that I get to participate in the industry. From memory, from the pilot assessment, I think there was quite a lot of cost going through the course and in annual fees. Now I think it's a good thing to do but I haven't had the need of it so far. But, if I needed to get more work, and if I thought it would make a difference then I will do it but I haven't needed to so I haven't done it. (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide)

For Adam, an owner and operator of his own ecotour business, the EcoGuide Program did not provide satisfactory "quality assurance" for his ecotours, and he explained that there are other ways of receiving recognition for the depth of his knowledge and the quality of his service. Without assurances of participation in the industry Erin, a freelancing ecotour guide, raised the issue of cost. She also mentioned that there was no guarantee the EcoGuide Program would provide her with increased employment opportunities (see section 7.2.3 for further discussion), and thus she did not feel the "need" for certification. For Adam and Erin, the cost of the certification program was an issue as they represented (and therefore would have to pay for) themselves. For Greg (non-certified ecotour guide) below, an increase in income was a pre-requisite for obtaining certification.

> Most of the guys [guides] here and I go and say, "Ok the company has said from now on we're all going to be a part of this certification, you all have to study." The first thing they are going to say to me is "What's in it for us?", and quite justifiably. As I said, this is a lot of labour and personally

> if I was to do a 3 week course for instance and I could go do a 3 week course as a security guard and be on $50,000 a year so why do a 3 week course as an ecotourism guide when there is virtually nothing in it for me. (Greg, non-certified ecotour guide)

Greg did not believe that ecotour guiding needed certification and if he was to take the time and effort to be certified it should result in an increase in remuneration. In Australia, qualifications are not required to work as a tour guide, and thus qualifications are not rewarded with an increased income (Weiler & Ham, 2001b).

From Scott's perspective, ecotour guides generally do not understand the value of and need for the EcoGuide Program, and if they did, the cost of the certification would not be an issue. However, in the personal judgements of the non-certified ecotour guides the time and cost of becoming certified with the EcoGuide Program was not justified in terms of an increased recognition of their expert skills and knowledge or in terms of increased remuneration. Hence, there is a discrepancy between the industry stakeholders' perspective and the ecotour guides' perspective concerning the value of and need for professional certification programs. Discrepancies between practitioners and industry have been recognised in the accreditation of general Australian tourism businesses where accreditation programs are mostly industry-developed and the market (consumers of accreditation) becomes increasing confused by the lack of communication and information on the programs (Carlsen *et al.*, 2006). This has also been observed in the context of the professionalisation of ecotour guiding and is explored in the following section.

Non-Participation in the EcoGuide Program: Lack of Information

Another reason behind non-participation in the EcoGuide Program was the lack of information guides had about the program.

> I've heard of it. That's the knowledge I have on it, 2 years ago they were talking about marking you on your ability and that was coming on to your tour physically and randomly and marking you on your tour. That's all I heard, but since then I haven't heard anything about it. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

> I think I heard from one of our staff, but not really detailed. They have a brochure [of the EcoGuide Program], I've seen the brochure but I don't know the details. (Sam, non-certified ecotour guide)

> Not yet, this [the interview] is probably the first time I've heard about it. (Wyatt, non-certified ecotour guide)

> I've heard quite a few things like that but not specifically as I recall. (Greg, non-certified ecotour guide)

Marketing the EcoGuide Program to the wider community of ecotour guides was noted as an issue during the development of the program (Black, 2002). The comments above and the very modest increase in the number of EcoGuides over the last 5 years indicate that promoting the program is still an issue. To provide context, Appendix Seven presents collected questionnaire survey data of the tourists' recognition and perceived values of the EcoGuide Program.

As EcoGuide Jack suggested earlier, non-Ecotourism Australia members were not aware of the program. In addition, EcoGuides Gerry and Marcus mentioned that even as members of Ecotourism Australia they do not attend the annual conferences.

> There's invitations to attend the annual conference but it's not something we [the guides at her work] do. It's our managers who do that. (Gerry, EcoGuide)

> They have all of these great conferences and all the rest of it as an EcoGuide. But it's very, very hard to be able to afford and do those things. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

Ecotourism Australia promotes itself as the peak ecotourism industry body, its primary objective, like any other professional association, lies in looking after the interest of its own members (Freidson, 2001). However, the EcoGuide group are far from the sole concern of Ecotourism Australia whose membership includes business, international, academic and student members. The expense of conference registration may be beyond the reach of ecotour guides who are on a low income (see Chapter Eight). Furthermore, the nature of working as an ecotour guide often involves being in remote areas. This reduces opportunities for networking makes it difficult for Ecotourism Australia to disseminate their information, and expensive for EcoGuides to travel to attend

conferences. Nonetheless, even with the provision of sufficient information of the EcoGuide Program, the data suggests that some guarantees are necessary to encourage ecotour guides to become certified.

> I would be interested in something like that [the Ecoguide Program] if it was something that was worth the effort, and if the organisation was putting in, assisting and encouraging guides to know their stuff and the skills and delivery of information. Yes I would be interested. One of the limiting factors would be the expense. So it would have to be providing for me, not just the stamp of approval, but opportunities for professional development as well. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

Rather than receiving a badge for certification, opportunities for "professional development" in the context of "assisting and encouraging guides to know their stuff [environmental knowledge] and the skills and delivery of information" were necessary for Adam. Professional development was also a desired tangible benefit identified by stakeholders during the development of the EcoGuide Program (Black, 2002). Adam implied that the opportunities to develop his career had to be the driving force for him to seek certification. In this context, the benefits of the EcoGuide Program for ecotour guides are promoted by Ecotourism Australia (n.d.-b, p. 8) as:

- A recognised industry qualification;
- Baseline benchmark to determine the degree to which their services meet the standards of best practice nature and/or ecotour guiding;
- An opportunity to promote guiding services as genuine nature/ecotourism;
- A defined competitive edge rewarded through factors such as better job opportunities;
- Access to relevant, appropriate and reduced cost training materials and networking opportunities; and
- Pathway to nationally recognised and portable formal qualifications within the Australian Qualification Framework (Certificate III Tourism (Tour Guiding)).

In addition, during the development of the EcoGuide Program, stakeholders in the program articulated their desire for tangible benefits such as "improved employment opportunities, professional development, industry discounts, newsletters and insurance" as well as intangible benefits such as "improved guiding standards and increased professionalism" (Black, 2002, p. 225). Despite this, the data shows that for most EcoGuides it was their company's drive and their personal connection with Ecotourism

Australia that had caused them to become certified. For non-certified ecotour guides a perceived lack of value for money and a lack of information about the certification were behind their non-participation in the program. If the EcoGuide Program is indeed a way of achieving the tangible and intangible benefits listed above, then the impact the certification program has had on the EcoGuides is of interest. The following section explores the experiences of Eco Guides and their perspectives of the impact of the EcoGuide Program.

7.2.3 The Impact of the EcoGuide Program on EcoGuides

Professional certifications are a way of gaining professional recognition for individual workers (Harris & Jago, 2001).

> Certification is certainly a form of recognition and I think that's important for guides, to have their skills and experience recognised. What incentive then do they have to improve what they do and get better at what they do if there's no form of recognition of their professionalism? I think there's a place for that, certainly. (Brian, key industry stakeholder)

According to Brian, certification for ecotour guides is a way of getting their "skills", "experience" and "professionalism" recognised. Hence, certification is associated with competent workers and quality service. The following sections examine whether this notion is shared and experienced by certified EcoGuides.

Overall Impact on Work Activities

When the EcoGuides were asked to illustrate the impact of the certification program on their work performance, they found it difficult to identify direct, tangible benefits.

> I don't really think so, no. I couldn't say, I'm not particularly into having a badge such as, "Hey I am eco-certified I am a better tour guide", it doesn't mean that to me. It might be for some people who look for a badge. (Gerry, EcoGuide)

> Well I just thought it was just another pointless piece of advertising and like I just call that politics. (Don, EcoGuide)

> No, I don't think so ... I don't think it made any difference really. (Jack, EcoGuide)

Gerry and Don who were both driven by their employers to achieve their certification did not notice any impact of the EcoGuide Program on their work activities and had no personal attachment to their certification. Jack who was motivated to be certified through his personal connection with Ecotourism Australia also did not notice any difference in his work practice after obtaining his certification. The lack of influence on their work activities may be due to the fact that they were encouraged by others to acquire the certification program. Furthermore, when EcoGuides categorised the advantages of being certified, there were mixed reviews.

> No [advantages]. Not really. I'm not really fully involved in it. I can't see any advantages of being a certified guide. (Will, EcoGuide)

> Advantages. Well to be honest, this is part of the problem because there isn't much advantage. Yes, it was big for me because almost immediately I won the national ecoguide award. They paid for me to go to the conference in Tasmania and that sort of thing. Yes it was a big advantage but had it not happened, there isn't very much of an advantage ... I mean that's the problem with the whole system because there isn't much advantage. (Ben, EcoGuide)

Will who was directed to be an EcoGuide and an assessor of his colleagues by his employer explained that he was not deeply involved with the program as there were no perceived advantages. Ben reasoned that except for winning the EcoGuide Award of Excellence there were no advantages of being an EcoGuide. It is interesting to note that despite Ben's interpretation of the award being "national" as nominations are only taken from EcoGuides (a total pool of 53 guides). This is not surprising as it is the nature of professional associations to satisfy the interest of their members (Freidson, 2001).

The following statement provided by Ken (EcoGuide) who also acts as an assessor for new guides for his company provides an insight into the subjectivity involved in the certification of guides in the EcoGuide Program. Ken is employed by an ECO certified business that employs EcoGuides that recently merged with another ECO certified business that also employs EcoGuides.

> I was a little bit confused with Ecotourism Australia. The *** tour company [Ken's employer] guides they are trained and they studied hard. I didn't assess [merging company EcoGuides] ***, [assessor name] did and she's very strict. But for the *** [merging company name] she's been to the glow worm tour and because it was at night time she can't write at that moment. She was very

> pregnant, she wasn't very well, so that's why I think they just passed easily. They shouldn't have let her assess, if that could be possible ... Yes. I find a big difference [between his company EcoGuides and merging company EcoGuides]. They need to do training again and it is a waste of time. Also the trust of certified EcoGuide is down, if you know what I mean? That's why I made the tests to train the EcoGuides properly. What is ecotourism? The origins of ecotourism even mass tourism? You have to learn. They have to know. They need to speak this to the customer but they need as a knowledge to keep high consciousness and pride ... Knowledge, motivation, attitude, mind – everything is low. I'm not saying that because I am in *** [company name], I like to train people so I'm not saying that because the two companies merged ... It's just that I have to train again. Just more work. (Ken, EcoGuide)

Ken's opinion of the quality of EcoGuides (in an emerging new company) who were assessed by another assessor was poor compared to the EcoGuides working with him. Although this may seem a biased statement, it is interesting to note that Ken's value in the EcoGuide Program has been degraded due to his perception of subjective assessment. Although professional associations primarily work for the interest of its members, not all members need to agree with the professional association in its intentions and decision making (Larson, 1977). In this context, in Ken's opinion, the other assessor who was provided by Ecotourism Australia, negatively influenced the overall quality of the EcoGuide Program. This also raises the question of how Will and Ken, who only assess colleagues within the same business that employs them, can be considered as the 'independent' assessors promoted by Ecotourism Australia (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a).

> You can actually see the problem for me because I became an assessor as well. Then I could see that *** [company name] wanted to assess all their guides, and I found that a very difficult position to be in. Because you are working with this group of people. *** [company name] would have about 30 guides, I think they've got the largest group of private rangers in Australia, so you are working with these people on a daily basis and we had a really close group. I could see that I didn't want to be in a position where I had to assess those people that I was working with. I don't think it's a healthy thing to do and I could see there was going to pressure for me to do it because they wanted everybody to be an EcoGuide, to have their little badge on their shirt. (Will, EcoGuide)

Will expressed his discomfort of being an assessor of his colleagues. The impact the certification program has had on Will may have pressured him to conduct emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), where he had to please his employers as well as being

included in his "really close [working] group". Penny (EcoGuide) also provided an insight into how she obtained her certification.

> I guess I came in through the back door. There was a bit of prior acknowledgement. One lady in particular from Ecotourism Australia has seen me work here for many years and has seen me training other people and she was very much involved in Ecotourism Australia at the time and when they came down the coast to run the course they actually invited me to be a co-assessor and out of that I received my certification. So I actually didn't have to present, it was more learning from watching others and being a part of that assessment. (Penny, EcoGuide)

Penny explained that she did not apply to be a certified guide, but that she was chosen to be assessed during the pilot study of the EcoGuide Program. She added that she was not assessed, but received her certification anyway.

Despite the perception that professional certification will improve ecotour guides' work standards and performance (Black, 2007), this was not felt by the EcoGuides in this study. Research in other disciplines such as nursing also challenged the general view of professional certification, and provided empirical data that self-perceived benefits of certification do not necessarily include the enhancement of work performance (Redd & Alexander, 1997). However, it is not reasonable to generalise that professional certification programs lack any impact on work performance and standards, as employer or customer evaluation of ecotour guides work performance may differ to self-evaluation (Redd & Alexander, 1997). Nevertheless, if Ecotourism Australia wants to increase the intake of ecotour guides into the certification program, direct benefits and values of certification for work performance and standards need to be demonstrated to the ecotour guides.

Due to the lack of empirical data to support an argument of improved work performance and standards amongst EcoGuides, the researcher probed further to examine the experienced and perceived benefits of the certification program. Firstly, the EcoGuides provided a mixed review of the experienced and perceived benefits in terms of employment opportunities.

EcoGuide Certification: Employment Opportunities

One of the benefits of the certification program that Ecotourism Australia promotes is an increase in employment opportunities (Black, 2002; Ecotourism Australia, Unknown). The EcoGuides had mixed reviews when it came to expressing their opinions on any perceived changes in their employment opportunities.

> I'm a registered EcoGuide somewhere in the EA website and things but no one has ever approached me because they said, "I saw you that you were an EcoGuide we'd like to employ you.", or whatever. So I don't know that apart from saying that I am and people saying "Oh that's nice.", there hasn't been a big advantage. (Ben, EcoGuide)

Over 4 years as a certified EcoGuide, Ben has not experienced any additional work originating from the EcoGuide Program. This not only implies that there was no increase in employment opportunities for Ben, but also reflects the lack of recognition of the qualification by the industry (another benefit promoted by Ecotourism Australia) as Ben also freelances for other ecotour operators. However, Marcus and Penny (EcoGuides) below had differing views of the employment opportunities derived by the certification program, though this was speculative in nature.

> Well the advantages are that you can get recognition. Like you could go use it if you were applying to get a job somewhere else because you have the accreditation that would put you on top of the list against probably people that didn't take any of those. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

> I think you could also use it like I was saying if you were applying for other jobs if you wanted to promote your businesses having credibility. (Penny, EcoGuide)

Marcus expressed his belief that certification would "put you on top of the list" for employment, and Penny stated that the certification was also a way of assuring "credibility". However, when the researcher asked whether they have actually experienced being employed as a result of being a certified guide, they replied no. This may be due to the EcoGuide Program only being 5 years old (at the time of the interview process). Despite Ecotourism Australia's promotion of the benefits of EcoGuide certification, EcoGuides are yet to experience them. Therefore, the researcher moved on to questioning the EcoGuides' experiences of the assessment for certification

to facilitate reflection on any possible intangible benefits resulting from the certification program.

EcoGuide Certification: The Experience of Assessment

Both Penny and Sean explained that the certification assessment process provided opportunities to learn, and the opportunity to reflect on their work activities.

> I think it's the process that's more important for me personally. A bit of a certificate, a bit of paper doesn't hold a lot for me but I think the process of going through it was important and the book work, the theory behind it, the assessment tools, all of that was helpful. (Penny, EcoGuide)

> Having the chance to look at yourself it's part of the process and it can only help ... I think, we have to look at it in a slightly different way, it's more a feeling than anything else that I can't put down on a paper and show you how it happened. Again, having to look at things slightly differently on what you do has made a difference. (Sean, EcoGuide)

When a worker subjects themselves to forms of auditing such as a certification program where there is an assessment involved, the direct benefits are not always tangible. However, the value of being able to identify areas in need of improvement may be recognised (Issaverdis, 1998). Rather than the direct impact of certification on work performance and standards, EcoGuides related more strongly to the intangible benefits experienced when going through the certification process.

> At the time we were certified there were certainly benefits because it involves training and more knowledge and that always improves your professionalism. Since then, I suppose, it's getting the newsletter so I know what's happening around the country. (Gerry, EcoGuide)

Gerry explained that the benefit of going through the certification program was receiving more knowledge to improve her level of work professionalism. In this context, Gerry's perception of an increase in her professionalism supports the ideologies of the professional guiding certification literature (Black, 2007; Black & Ham, 2005). In addition, one of the EcoGuide Program's benefits - receiving the EcoByte newsletter to keep members informed of the news in sustainable tourism (Ecotourism Australia, 2009a) - is also recognised by Gerry. The following section ventures further into understanding the intangible benefits felt by EcoGuides as a result of the certification program.

EcoGuide Certification: Intangible Benefits

When workers with certification self-assess their work performance after obtaining certification they may report the lack of any difference in their work performance, however, they may also acknowledge the increase in self-esteem and self-achievement (Redd & Alexander, 1997). This appears to be the case for EcoGuides.

> How did I feel? I don't know. It was an acknowledgement I supposed for the skills that you've got. Maybe not as much to me, because I've always been in teaching, but I actually was quite pleased about it. (Will, EcoGuide)

> Personally I think it was great because you got a badge that you were proud to wear and say that you were at a certain level whereas general tour guides in a lot of places didn't. People were certainly knowledgeable, particularly people that have been in the industry or knew the environment that they were in very very well. They mightn't necessarily have accreditation or whatever that was just as good but I think it was important to have it yes. But I don't think it affected me. Being certified, it was nice to have a badge and think yes I am a certified member of this and people can look at you and that's as far as it went ... I felt proud ... I thought it was great you know that there was some recognition of your skills and everything else like that. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

Will and Marcus both explained that although they did not recognise changes in the way they conducted their work, the certification was "an acknowledgement" and showing "you were at a certain level", and the emotions of "pleased" and "proud" were felt after acquiring the certification. Ben below also expressed similar emotions.

> I felt wonderful, just this joy of, "ahhhh". I was very pleased because I put quite a lot into the submissions and things ... I was really pleased. I think it's an honour, I think it's quite nice to have that sort of qualification ... Yeah, I guess it was good for me but also I felt it was helping the industry as well. Because I suppose I am considered to be a senior guide if you'd like, I felt it was important that people like me to get involved. (Ben, EcoGuide)

For Ben as a "senior guide", he felt it was an "honour" as well as a responsibility to support the ecotourism industry by undertaking the certification program. In this context, workers who are certified can feel a sense of formal and informal responsibility to act and 'help the industry' (Piazza, Griffin, Donahue, Fitzpatrick, & Dykes, 2006). Certification can also bring a sense of confirmation of work standards to the worker (Piazza *et al.*, 2006).

> Of course I knew from experience that, here it says in the [company] manual, your guiding technique needs to be suitable for the customer so your body language your voice tone, are you looking eye to eye all that. That has improved a lot. That means human to human very important. It changed, not changed, it improved a lot. I was scared of the body language voice tone and having this for customers and finding them nature. But I was doing the right thing. That's why it wasn't a change, I was happy about it. I was more sure afterwards. At the same time it gave me lots of confidence. Before that I wasn't sure if I was doing right or wrong sometimes but this certificate made me sure that I was on the right path. (Ken, EcoGuide)

For Ken, it was a sense of confirmation of his work standards that he was "doing the right thing" and that he could feel "more sure" of his work performance after he achieved his certification. Although, EcoGuides did not notice the impact of certification on their work performance, self-esteem and self-pride do appear to be linked to attaining certification. Therefore certification can empower EcoGuides with self-esteem and a sense of responsibility that can raise their sense of professionalism.

It is interesting to note that the benefits of obtaining the certification recognised by EcoGuides differed from the benefits that were anticipated to result from the EcoGuide Program. Although a sense of increase in professionalism can be inferred from the identified emotion of self-esteem and pride, the desired intangible benefits of 'improved guide standards' and 'increased professionalism in guides' (Black, 2002) were not directly expressed by the EcoGuides.

As outlined in Chapter Six, the conceptual foundation of a professional ecotour guide in Australia is anchored by passion for nature and people. In this context, intangible benefits of the EcoGuide Program such as self-pride and an enhanced sense of responsibility for the success of the industry and the conservation of nature may raise levels of professionalism. Therefore, although the benefits of professionalisation reported by ecotour guides differ from the anticipated and promoted benefits of the program, the certification process may still assist ecotour guides achieve professionalism.

This section analysed and interpreted the impact of the EcoGuide Program experienced by ecotour guides. The following section address the participants' perceptions and

values of ecotour guiding professionalisation which provides further insight into the impact of professionalisation.

7.3 Conceptualising the Impact of the Professionalisation Process

7.3.1 Introduction

As previously discussed, professionalism is an outcome assigned to occupational groups that have gone through the professionalisation process (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 1994; Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977; Macdonald, 1995). To achieve professionalism, work often becomes professionalised through credentials, special skills, education, codes of ethics, and experience (Abbott, 1991b; Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006). This professionalisation process is normally driven by members of the professionalising occupation (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 1970a; Illich, 1977; Larson, 1977). However, for Australian ecotour guides, professionalisation has been initiated and maintained by business operators, industry bodies, and government agencies. In essence, professionalism is being imposed "from above" rather than "from within" (Evetts, 2003, p. 410). This represents a growing trend amongst new occupations where organisations are using the ideal concept of professionalism to promote controlled occupational change (Evetts, 2003). The following sections interpret and analyse the themes that emerged from the data to understand participants' perceptions of professionalisation.

7.3.2 Interpreting and Understanding the Impact of Professionalisation

The general tour guiding occupation is understood as a 'low-status' profession (Weiler & Ham, 2001b, p. 261). However, the transition towards raising the level of Australian ecotour guides' professionalism through professionalisation was recognised by both key industry stakeholders and ecotour guides.

> [In the past] often people have very little experience and virtually no qualifications. They may have had a little bit of an interest in plants or something, or bush walking, or they might have done some abseiling. So they got the job and they kind of learned on the job. Very few people back then had any formal qualifications. (Ben, EcoGuide)

According to Ben, in the past, ecotour guiding was a low-skilled job that did not require qualifications more formal than an interest in the natural environment. This comment

implied that Ben believes there are 'formal qualifications' now in place to practice as an ecotour guide in Australia. As mentioned in Chapter Three, there is in practice no legal requirement nor qualification to practice as a tour guide in Australia. In this context, interpretations of participants' experience and observation of professionalisation in the last 10 years show which aspects of ecotour guiding are central to professionalism. These perspectives present an insight into how and by whom ecotour guides are being professionalised. This section is divided into the themes that emerged from data analysis and interpretation. Interestingly, key industry stakeholders and ecotour guides had differing views on the impact of professionalisation. The opinions of the industry stakeholders are presented first.

Key Industry Stakeholders: Roles of External Interest Groups

Historically, once an occupational group decides to raise its level of work professionalism, professional associations are normally formed by its elite (that is, particularly successful) members (Freidson, 2001). For ecotour guides in Australia, this is not entirely the case. Firstly, there is no professional association that has ecotour guides as its sole membership, and secondly, Ecotourism Australia, which embraces ecotour guides as members, was not created by elite ecotour guides. Nonetheless, participants, especially key industry stakeholders, mentioned Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Program as an attempt to raise ecotour guides' levels of professionalism. It is worth noting that the key industry stakeholders' reference to Ecotourism Australia may have been influenced by this study's focus on the EcoGuide program. However, the EcoGuide Program is the only certification program that caters specifically for ecotour guides - this may have also influenced participants' comments.

> I think overtime it [ecotourism industry] has certainly become more professional. You know through the 1990s it was really the time when ecotourism was designed in Australia through the Ecotourism Australia Association [previous name of Ecotourism Australia], the National Ecotourism Strategy [by the Commonwealth Department of Tourism 1996] and all of those kinds of things that came into play ... When we started at *** [location] in 1990, there were no tour guides up there who wore shoes and the concept of uniform and the concept of interpretation as a science or something like that really just didn't exist ... I guess over time the main change has been the gradual embracing of those concepts by organisations such as *** [his company name] and other tour operators, the growth of those concepts within the strategies of tourism organisations,

> and I guess, the fact that those sustainable tourism concepts now underpin a lot of government and private tourism strategies. (Ron, key industry stakeholder)

Ron (key industry stakeholder) identified the impact of professionalisation as wearing uniforms and shoes, and the awareness of interpretation. According to Ron, these changes in ecotour guides' work activities were influenced by stakeholders such as Ecotourism Australia and the federal government. Ron's interpretation of the involvement of government in the professionalisation of ecotour guides is interesting. Generally in theory generated in the English speaking world (such as Australia) occupational groups drive initiatives to become a professional group to achieve autonomy from external parties such as governments (Siegrist, 1990). However, the professionalisation of Australian ecotour guides demonstrates characteristics more in line with the older, top-down European concept of professionalisation where the state structures and controls occupational realms (Siegrist, 1990). For Ron, industry-initiated and government-initiated professionalisation processes meant that tour operators (including his own company) embraced concepts such as interpretation.

According to Lance (key industry stakeholder) increasing regulation of "what happens in the industry" by "industry bodies" is another impact of raising levels of professionalism for ecotour guides.

> Certainly I guess the trends that I have seen is certainly more professionalism. Um, and so I guess there's, and when I say more professionalism, I mean that it's more controlled. Not controlled in a sense of people out there dictating what happens in the industry, but more regulated by industry bodies itself. (Lance, key industry stakeholder)

The primary purpose of industry bodies such as professional associations is to serve the interests of its members (Freidson, 2001). For example, Ecotourism Australia may raise ecotour guiding professionalism through credentials such as the EcoGuide Program, but only for its members, not the whole Australian ecotour guiding community. Although, the impact of professionalisation initiated by Ecotourism Australia may motivate other ecotour guides to become members, it does not appear to directly influence their work activities. However, in the minds of the key industry stakeholders, professional associations (such as EA) play vital roles in increasing ecotour guides' level of work professionalism.

> The guiding sector, as opposed to the ecotourism in general, I think it's becoming quite professional in that there's certainly recognition that people should be properly qualified and trained. And there's certainly demand for specialised certification, whether that's linked directly to training or whether it's sort of in some ways retrospective of assessment of competence through industry certification schemes like the EcoGuide or Savannah Guide or even some of the other guiding associations. If I think, there's actually quite a strong call for that, and I think there's quite a lot of people in the industry itself, employers, the standards that they require their guides to have is becoming higher and higher. (Anna, key industry stakeholder)

> Most of the work that Ecotourism Australia's been doing in terms of setting up their certification program, that was great work ... recognising the value of professional quality ecotourism experiences. (Jordon, key industry stakeholder)

Jordon and Anna both recognised the impact of professionalisation as the creation of professional certification programs created by professional associations such as Ecotourism Australia or Savannah Guides (see Chapter Three). According to Jordon and Anna, the value of ecotour guides for the ecotourism experience is reflected through requirements to test competency, be qualified, and have received training. In light of professionalisation theory these observations require further attention.

Traditionally, those who are qualified to work in a professional group hold the key to achieving the ultimate goal of professionalisation: professionalism (Freidson, 2001). These elite form, shape and characterise professional associations to empower members to control their practice without outside influence (Freidson, 2001). As previously noted, professionalisation of Australian ecotour guides is happening in a different way. Firstly, there is no universal concept of a 'qualified' ecotour guide. Unlike tour guiding occupations regulated by government agencies in Indonesia (cf. Dahles, 2002), and certain cities in the US (cf. Pond, 1993), gaining entry into the field of ecotour guiding in Australia does not require any mandatory licensing. Hence, not only do Australian ecotour guides not have a professional association dedicated to their occupation, there are also no 'qualified' ecotour guides to form a professional association. Secondly, professional associations such as Ecotourism Australia, Savannah Guides and Guides of Australia have a variety of ecotourism stakeholders as their members, not just ecotour guides. Thus, the methods selected to raise ecotour guiding professionalism are influenced by interests other than those of ecotour guides.

Drew (key industry stakeholder), below, presented another interesting aspect to understanding the impact of professionalisation which differs from other key industry stakeholders.

> With professionalisation you can set apart the good quality from the bad quality. Those who see themselves at the top end, they want to continue to look for ways to separate between them and the others... I believe the whole idea of EA going to have Eco Certification was about trying to make a statement nationally and probably internationally "Hey, look this is what we've got to offer in terms of destination experience." I mean Australia's got a lot to offer with trees and rainforests and the rock and all that sort of thing. We've got great destinations, but other places in the world have got their particular attributes so how can we, and where can we have differences. Yeah there's only one rock but in terms of the operators that might be operating at the rock, how do you differentiate between the good and the bad. And that's what accreditation is saying. It's a form of differentiation. It's also a form of trying to say that well not only are you getting a good experience you will get a great service from these guides because they're trained and skilled and whatever. It all falls into that thing of you know two star, three star, four star, five star experiences. I think a lot of this has been driven by the standards and quality. (Drew, key industry stakeholder)

Drew firstly addresses one of the classic purposes of traditional professions (law and medicine) achieving professionalism: "look[ing] for ways to separate between them and the others". Through the process of professionalisation, professions attain publicly recognised professional status which reflects their work control and autonomy and an image that portrays that it is only the profession that can perform a particular task (Beckman, 1990; Jackson, 1970; Siegrist, 1990; Wilensky, 1964). In addition, according to Drew, professionalisation is being used as a means for individual operators to establish marketing advantage over competitors rather than an attempt to raise professionalism across the entire sector of ecotour guides. Regardless of underlying intentions, Drew sees the value in certified ecotour guides as "trained and skilled" workers, and accreditation as a way to allow tourists to differentiate between good and bad quality ecotours. Importantly, Drew also mentioned the role of academics and those involved in supplying the means to professionalisation (education institutions) in driving the professionalisation process in this context.

> Academics as well, look I'm not trying to be critical about academics, but it's like in ecotourism, every academic's got their own definition of ecotourism and that sort of thing. So there's a big push there where academia thinks "Hey this is an interest area you know, I'll get involved in it and

> study and where can I focus on". And then, it's all of a sudden, "We can make it more professional by having accreditation or whatever." That's not saying that it's a bad thing, but that's all part of it. As soon as something becomes the flavour of the month then you get a whole bunch of people interested and looking for ways and means to have a piece of the action. Same with the TAFE colleges, they can see "Hey gee there's a market, potentially a market out there." Particularly those TAFE colleges that want to stay in business, they want to continue to get their funding from the government or from whatever so they'll run topical courses they think they can get people to fill. (Drew, key industry stakeholder)

Patrick also agreed that external stakeholders are involved in the professionalisation of ecotour guides and influenced the concept of ecotour guiding professionalism.

> It probably is moving to that direction just because people now have to have in certain areas, have to have, will it be the EcoGuide Certification or certificate at TAFE courses, those things are available they weren't there before. So somebody's been making them up so I think... There's also just what drives that demand, it's not just market force it's also regulatory and insurance companies and things like that, and of course there's academics. (Patrick, key industry stakeholder)

Drew and Patrick's opinions of the involvement of external interest parties such as academics and tertiary education institutions present an interesting point. According to Wilensky (1964), in the traditional sequence of professionalisation academics are introduced later in the process.

> At first, the respective occupation becomes full-time in character. Second, the pertinent group lays claim on certain areas and functions which are relevant to the respective occupation. The third stage of progress provides for places of training which eventually become academic institutions unless the educational programme is not already represented as a university faculty. Teachers at these institutions or leading professionals establish at the fourth stage a professional organisation which continues to expand ... (Siegrist, 1990, p. 181)

It is common during the professionalisation process for members of a professionalising occupation to engage with the tertiary education sector to develop appropriate courses of study which serve as a right of entry into the newly established profession. However, Drew renders the nature of academic's interest in the professionalisation of ecotour guides as a self-interested attempt to establish and protect their own research and funding niche, and that of training institutions as self-interested product development.

In summary, unlike the traditional professions of law and medicine where the members of the professional group drove their own professionalisation to raise levels of professionalism (Freidson, 1970a, 1986, 1994, 2001), according to the key industry stakeholders, Australian ecotour guides are being professionalised by employers, professional guide associations, government bodies and academics. This is a new type of professionalisation where professionalism is imposed 'from above' as an ideological concept to motivate and facilitate occupational change for the interest of organisations and institutional bodies rather than individual workers (Evetts, 2003). Thus, according to the key industry stakeholders, the impact of professionalisation on ecotour guides is the increasing role of external interest groups (that are not practitioners) in initiating and controlling professionalisation to achieve their own concepts of professionalism.

The following section moves on to explore ecotour guides' perceptions of the impact of professionalisation.

Ecotour Guides – Increase in Demand for Credentialism

Tourism employers in general may not actively seek employees with credentials (Morrison *et al.*, 1992). However, in the ecotour guides' experience, this appears not to be the case in the Australian ecotourism industry, though the required credentials are not those of the various professional certification programs.

> Most of the time people now have a degree of some kind and it's become almost an expectation. Most of the ads these days for guides will require people to have a degree so there's a higher basic qualification in some places ... Most jobs, say at *** [employer name] they've had ads in the last 15 years and when they've advertised for activities staff [including guides] almost all of those ads asked for someone with a degree like in environmental science or something along those lines. (Ben, EcoGuide)

> I think it's become much more professional as the years have gone by and I think that the owners and operators are becoming a lot more aware that qualifications like training is a necessary thing. (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide)

> Well I've noticed in people [ecotour guides] instead of having the license to drive, jump on the bus, and take the people out, there's more professionalism. They [employers] are looking for people with better skills and knowledge. Like when I was working for *** [company name], their

> requirement at that moment was you had to have a degree to be hired as a guide. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

Ecotour guides associated the impact of professionalisation with increasing demand by employers for credentials such as a university degree in a related area. An occupational group that is raising its credentialism through "the pursuit of academic qualifications, certifications, and higher education", is most certainly experiencing the professionalisation of work (Scott, 2006, p. 254). However, the pursuit of credentialism within a professional group is generally carried out by its members to test individuals on entry, and to ensure that non-members cannot practice in the trade (Scott, 2006). The professionalisation of ecotour guides again deviates from theory. Firstly, the creation of credentials has not been initiated by ecotour guides. Secondly, credentials are used by ecotourism business operators (rather than ecotour guides themselves) to control entry into the field of ecotour guiding. Thirdly, credentials required by employers are not guiding specific, they are in fact higher requirements than those that might be considered appropriate for the low-status, low-paid job of an ecotour guide (Weiler & Ham, 2001b). Fourthly, where guiding-specific credentials are required or encouraged by ecotour operators they are used to develop a particular image for marketing advantage rather than to raise standards and levels of work performance of ecotour guides. In the minds of the ecotour guides, employers are driving these changes. This is in line with generic corporate behaviour, as ecotourism business operators control what their company wants to achieve, choose who gets hired, and train employees to achieve the company's aims (Freidson, 1994). Although no 'formal' qualifications are required to work as an ecotour guide in Australia, work is given to people that employers think are appropriate and evidence shows that higher education (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 1994; Goode, 1969; Larson, 1977), training, certifications and qualifications (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006; Fleming, 1996; Scott, 2006), are increasingly preferred. Joe (non-certified ecotour guide) also added that this type of control for entry by employers creates competitiveness amongst ecotour guides.

> Maybe it's a little bit of competition for guides, you want to ensure that your guides all impart the same sort of knowledge and expertise that you do. (Joe, non-certified ecotour guide)

Joe explained that employers' desires to provide standardised products and services for tourists by hiring guides with credentials created a competitive environment for ecotour

guides. When professionalisation is driven by external interest parties intra-occupational competition occurs to achieve social recognition (Abbott, 1988). Furthermore, credentials are not only an effect of professionalising work (Bosanac & Jacobs, 2006), but are also used as tools to make workers more attractive employees for employers. For example, Ecotourism Australia (2009a) promotes one of the benefits of the EcoGuide Program as its competitiveness for guides when being employed (although previously recognised as not experienced). In this context, the practice of using the concept of professionalism for recruitment campaigns to motivate employees is increasing amongst employers (Aldridge & Evetts, 2003). For this study, this kind of practice brings into question how the discourse of professionalisation is used to achieve the end-state of ecotour guiding professionalism (Evetts, 2003; Fournier, 1999).

It is interesting to note that key industry stakeholders and ecotour guides' perceptions of professionalisation differed. Key industry stakeholders interpreted the impact of professionalisation as the roles professional associations, government agencies, and ecotourism interest groups played, whereas ecotour guides noticed the impact of professionalisation as an increase in credentialism for employment. In this context, the disparity in perceptions of professionalisation between key industry stakeholders and ecotour guides may influence the way ecotour guides are professionalised, and by extension the concept of ecotour guiding professionalism.

Illich (1977) noted that professionalisation encourages the creation of imputed needs. He explained that professionalisation enables professional groups to feed on societies' needs in order to enhance their own position in society. In Illich's example within the field of medicine, he explains that people have hybridised needs (a mixture of health and comfort) to be solved and doctors guide people to believe they need immediate care from doctors (the professionals). Therefore, people are no longer capable of coping with the slightest sign of discomfort or indisposition without seeking the services of a health professional, and as a result of the professionalisation of medicine, people are led to believe that they have a need to be prescribed with a treatment for their discomfort. Hence, societies' needs are created and moulded by professions who in effect take away an individual's ability to meet or satisfy those needs. In the context of Illich's ideas with the comments made by ecotour guides, the question arises, 'How did the need for ecotour guides to achieve credentials develop?' If professionalisation is a way for

ecotour guides to achieve work professionalism, then it should be initiated, controlled and regulated for the benefit of ecotour guides. However, if the process of professionalisation and the need for professionalism is driven by groups within the ecotourism industry other than ecotour guides, professionalisation may be pursued to raise industry status and standardise industry practice, for the whole ecotourism industry, rather than specifically for ecotour guides. In essence the need for ecotour guides to obtain credentials may be an imputed need driven by the ecotourism industry.

The answer to the second research question concerning the impact professionalisation has had on the work of ecotour guides in Australia was unanticipated. Despite the events that have occurred in the ecotour guiding sector of the Australian ecotourism industry which are suggestive of a new form of occupational change to raise professionalism (Evetts, 2003), ecotour guides failed to identify significant tangible impacts stemming from professionalisation. The data collected from the key industry stakeholders present the impact of professionalisation as a way of external interest groups driving professionalism for ecotour guides. However, ecotour guides perceive this as increasing pressure to attain credentials rather than a positive influence on work performance and standards. The data from within the EcoGuide program is very similar, the industry driven certification program is largely influenced by employers and business operators, and EcoGuides were unable to identify direct impacts on their work performance and standards. However, the data analysis and interpretation has shown that the process of certification itself and the emotions experienced post-certification were valuable benefits for ecotour guides.

The following final chapter of this study uses the empirical data provided in this chapter and previous chapters to discuss implications and provide recommendations for future research in light of the results of the study.

7.4 Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to understand the impact professionalisation has had on the work of Australian ecotour guides. The application of professionalisation theory provided an insight into the unique situation of Australian ecotour guides as they attempt to achieve professionalism.

The chapter began by discussing the motivations (or lack of motivation) for acquiring the EcoGuide Certification. It was shown that most EcoGuides had been driven by their employers to achieve certification or had become certified because of a personal connection with Ecotourism Australia. Non-certified ecotour guides stated they did not see value in the program and a number reported insufficient information about the program. Although professional guiding certification is a way of raising the professionalism of work performance and standards, the EcoGuides' self-evaluations revealed there was no impact of the certification program on their work activities. In addition, the expected benefits of the EcoGuide Program such as increased employment opportunities were discussed but found lacking from the experience of EcoGuides. However, a number of benefits such as self-analysis for improvement of work conduct were identified by the EcoGuides when they reflected on the EcoGuide Program assessment process. Furthermore, intangible benefits such as enhanced self-esteem and pride were derived by participants in the EcoGuide Program.

The chapter also revealed there was a difference in the perceptions of the impact professionalisation had on ecotour guides between the key industry stakeholders and ecotour guides. The key industry stakeholders explained the roles of ecotour guiding interest groups have played in driving the professionalisation of ecotour guiding, whereas ecotour guides identified professionalisation in the forms of credentialism. These varying perspectives of professionalisation provided an insight into the forces 'driving' moves towards professionalism among Australian ecotour guides. The implications of these findings and recommendations for future research are discussed in the next, concluding chapter.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

> Those who choose the guiding field choose a field of service ... Guiding is a noble profession, one that many come to regard as a privilege. Those who are most successful and most highly respected are those who are not only willing to serve others but are, in fact, proud to serve. Virtually any aspect of life involves both serving others and relying on those who serve us, which is why the best guests make the best host (Pond, 1993, p. 233).

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to understand and interpret the impact professionalisation has had on the work of ecotour guides. In the context of ecotour guides the term professional has a history of loose, ill-defined, and arbitrary use in academic research and ecotourism businesses. Theoretical conceptualisations of a professional were explored by engaging the professionalisation discourse within the sociology literature to conceptualise ecotour guides' professional status and their perceptions of professionalism. Two key research questions guided the study: 1) What is a professional ecotour guide? and 2) What impact has professionalisation had on the work of ecotour guiding? The research approach was underscored by the adoption of interpretivist epistemology and the accompanying moral responsibility to present a practical understanding of research that benefits the subjects of research (Angen, 2000).

The study found that a professional ecotour guide is characterised by a passion for nature and people which translates into a commitment to influence people, conserve nature, engage in self-improvement and deliver quality service. Through an instrumental case study of Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Certification Program, the impact of professionalisation on the work of ecotour guides was found to be limited, indeed certified ecotour guides reported no direct impacts on their work practice. However, the study also yielded data that while not relating directly to the research questions, shed light on how professionalisation that benefits ecotour guides in practice might be achieved. As such, this chapter concludes the study by linking the theoretical implications of the research findings with practice. Ecotour guides' perspectives of the challenges they face in attaining professional status and achieving professionalism are

discussed in light of the research findings[44]. Based on these discussions, suggestions are made for ensuring that the professionalisation of ecotour guides in Australia is a process which respects both the needs of ecotour guides, and the ecotourism industry's need to deliver economically viable, high quality ecotourism experiences. In this way the study aims to fulfil a key objective of interpretivist inquiry by influencing the transformation of action in society based on new found knowledge (Angen, 2000).

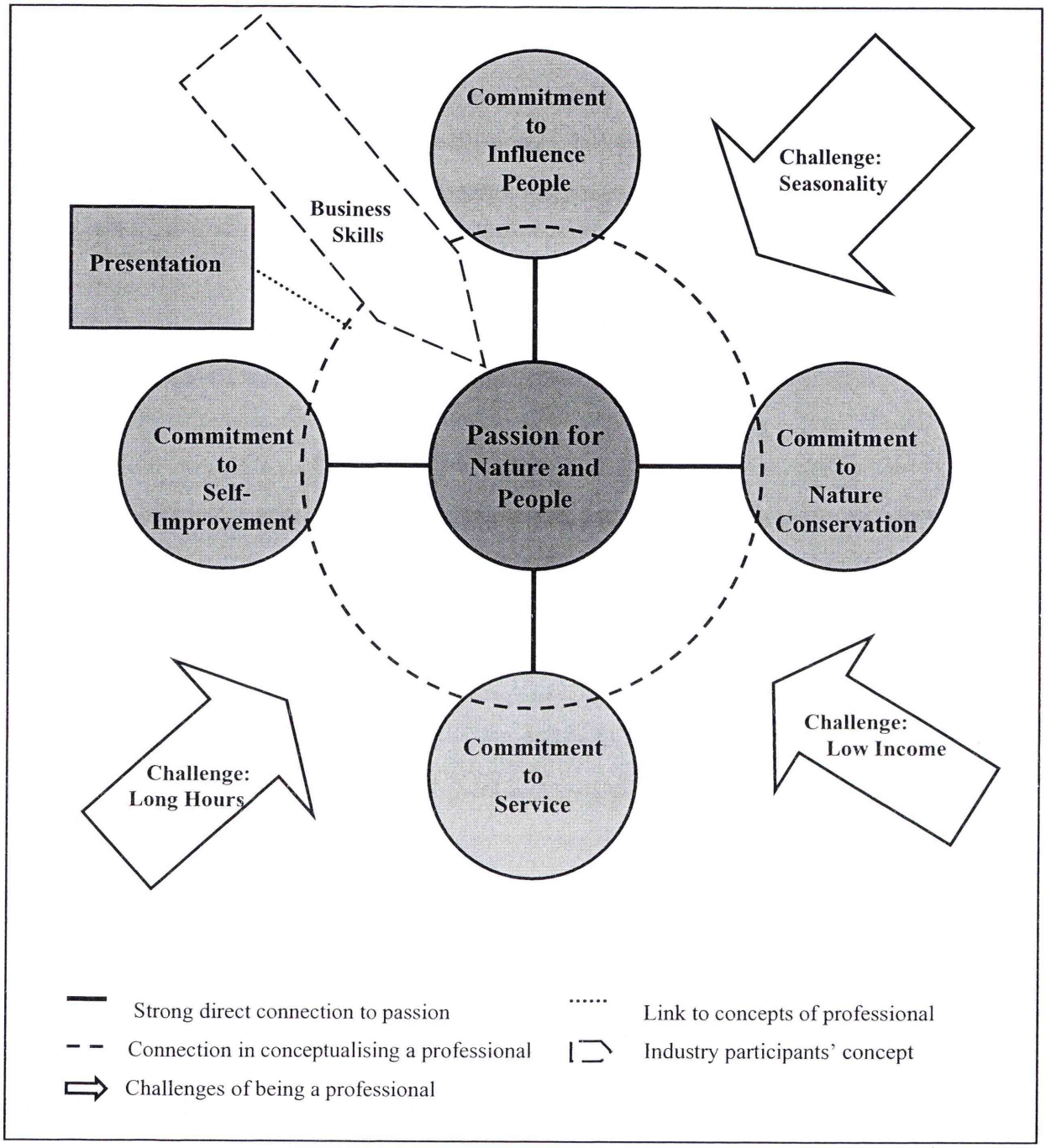
8.2 Interpreting and Applying the Study Results

8.2.1 Challenges of being a Professional Ecotour Guide

Ecotour guides identified having passion for nature and people as the hallmarks of professionalism in their field. In addition they noted that a professional ecotour guide has a strong commitment to influence people to become more environmentally conscious, effect nature conservation, provide excellent service, and to engage in professional self-improvement. Ecotour guides also described how the seasonality of work, long hours and low income challenge their ability to maintain passion and commitment, and achieve professional status. These challenges are integrated into Figure 8.1 below which first appeared in Chapter Six. The conceptual model of a professional ecotour guide now also shows the challenges to professionalism threatening its core of passion and commitment. These challenges are explored in light of the results of the study in the following sections.

[44] Additional data collected during the research process is presented at the beginning of this chapter. This is due to the fact that the additional data: is insufficient to warrant a stand alone chapter; does not answer the specific research question; and does not blend into Chapter Six and Seven. It does however provide valuable insights into the conclusions of this study and helps to direct opportunities for future studies.

Figure 8.1 Challenges to being a professional ecotour guide



Tourism literature positions tour guiding as one of the most unstable, unstructured and unorganised occupations in the tourism industry (Black, 2002; Weiler & Ham, 2001b). This was confirmed by the experiences of ecotour guides. EcoGuide Ben explains.

> Part of the problem of the industry is that a lot of this work is casual, and so you can still be thoroughly professional and be a casual employee, but the problem is so many of the jobs especially in North Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef, in those areas they are casual so you

> end up with a casual approach too. They end up doing this for a bit and then they are moving on. So they never really get to be good. All these graduates from marine biology working as casual guides, only a few of them can stay on all the time or full-time. Most of them are on casual on slow times but because of that nature of casual employment it means it's really hard for people to develop their life - buying a house and having a family. People ask you well what do you do and you say "I'm a casual tour guide", people will say "go get a real job". So as long as that approach is there, you are not going to develop a professional approach. All I'm saying is that people who have their professional approach and their attitude are the ones that make a career out of it, it is very difficult. So that's where the whole industry has to look at, how they employ people and how they support people. If you want people to be professional at their jobs you need to pay them accordingly and treat them well. (Ben, EcoGuide)

Ben encapsulates the difficulties ecotour guides face in attempting to achieve and maintain a "professional approach". Importantly, he also highlights the disconnect between industry rhetoric about professionalisation and raising the performance standards of ecotour guides while working conditions and rates of pay remain unchanged. The follow sections unpack and examine these challenges.

Seasonality and Long Hours

Almost all tourism work is inherently seasonal. This inevitably leads to a significant proportion of tourism industry employees being employed on a part-time, casual basis (Andriotis & Vaughan, 2004). Seasonality and part-time employment were identified as a challenge to the retention of quality ecotour guides (see Appendix Eight for additional data).

> Up here particularly, the worst part of being a tour guide is because of the wet season you've virtually only got work between May to October, November. There are certain positions you can go all year round but there aren't a lot of them ... during the peak season, you're working very very long days so when you calculate your hourly rate it's absolute crap. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

Marcus noted that in his location there was only steady work for ecotour guides for six months of the year and during these times the working day was extremely long. Being paid by the tour, rather than by the hour, meant that when spread across the hours of work involved in guiding an ecotour, Marcus' wage is, in his own terms, "absolute crap". Clearly these conditions pose challenges to ecotour guides' passion and

commitment over time. The influence seasonality has on an ecotour guide's work quality and performance was also cited by Anna (key industry stakeholder) below.

> When you're working unsocial hours, 7 days a week in the busy season and 2 days a week in the non, you've got to transition into part-time or casual staff ...But because guides are working casual hours, they might be working 7 days this week, but no hours next week, or working 2 or 3 different jobs. I mean this happens often. Surprisingly often. We've got a highly-respected wildlife park here where it's actually Ecotourism Advanced certified [with Ecotourism Australia]. They deliberately will not hire their guides more than 2 days a week because they reckon it keeps the guides fresh. And you know it's true. Its big time burn out when you're dealing with large numbers of people and repetitive type tours. The problem is you have to find another job to make ends meet so that, you know, there's always this catch 22 scenario. (Anna, key industry stakeholder)

According to Anna, ecotour guides are "surprisingly often" forced to take second or third jobs to remain financially solvent through variations in seasonality, or as a result of the rostering policies of their employers. Ben (EcoGuide), Adam (non-certified ecotour guide) and Matt (non-certified ecotour guide) provided evidence to support Anna's claims as they each indicated that they had taken on second jobs. Anna mentioned that she was aware of an employers' policy to give no more than 2 days work a week to guides. This action was undertaken to avoid what Anna described as "burn out", noted in the literature as resulting in guides becoming 'information repeaters'[45] (Weiler & Ham, 2001b). Anna could see the logic of this approach but described it as a "Catch 22" situation for ecotour guides who despite their employers' need for "fresh" guides, also need to make a living that two days of work a week on low

[45] For this study, information repeaters refer to tour guides who give repetitive information to tourists due to conducting the same tours day after day. Will (EcoGuide) below calls this event as burn out.

> Well, you see some guides, if you do the same tour day after day you loose that, it becomes stale, I just call it burn out really ... If I was doing it 6-7 days a week, and you can see it in the guides that were doing the *** [product name] tours there [company name] as well which is 3 days, they're a lot of hours because you start 6 in the morning and those guys they're with people until 10-11o'clock at night and when you start doing back to back after 4 days you are tired. It becomes, you loose your edge really it just becomes stale for me. (Will, EcoGuide)

According to Will conducting long-hour tours repetitively influences the work performance of an ecotour guide.

wages is not going to provide. This raises an interesting point for ecotour guides achieving work autonomy which Freidson (1994, 2001) positions as an ideal state of professionalism. According to Marxist theory, workers are coerced to labour under the control and authority of capitalists and are not given the option to choose when, where and how they want to work (Cox, 1998). In this context, labour is a pure economic activity rather than a way of expressing creativity and self- and social-identity (Freidson, 1994; Grint, 1998). Ecotour guides currently cannot control their work and are forced to negotiate the peaks and troughs of seasonality and rostering practices which fail to acknowledge their need for a consistent income. Clearly this represents a challenge to achieving professionalism in terms of work autonomy.

The Catch 22 to which Anna refers becomes clear when juxtaposing the ecotour guides' need for consistent work with the concept of 'burn out' and Marx's notion of alienation. In the context of work quality, repetitive tours may impede the ecotour guides' ability to convey fun, playfulness and creativity when producing services, and impair their ability to produce work as a projection of self-identity (Wearing & Darby, 1989). For example, during the observation with Joe (non-certified ecotour guide) he mentioned "Let's face it, we do this over and over again, I feel like a robot sometimes. I go to one tree and blurb, go to the next point and blurb ..." (fieldnotes July 1st, 2007). In this context, due to a detachment from their own work performance, ecotour guides may become physically and mentally alienated from their ecotours. However, although the repetitive nature of guiding is noted and the concept of guide 'burn out' has been raised, its relationship to professionalisation was not directly investigated in this study. Addressing the apparent paradox between the guides' need for regular work and the concomitant threat of alienation and burn out would be a valuable topic for future research.

Anna also mentioned that ecotour guides often work 'unsocial hours'. Ben linked the low pay and long hours associated with ecotour guiding to the difficulty ecotour guides face in "develop[ing] their life, buying a house, and having a family". Will (EcoGuide) provided a real-life example of how these pressures impact the lives of passionate, committed ecotour guides attempting to develop their lives with ecotour guiding as their focus and sole source of income.

> There was a young guide named Tim [alias] he's a young guy has two young kids a 4 year old and a 2 year old. An excellent guide. He's been working in IT for 2 years fixing computers and things like that, but was just really bored with it and wanted to do something different. He came up to us did the course ... and worked as a guide. He was there for a couple of years. Back in Brisbane they owned their own house so they sold that came up here and were renting, but because of the poor salary they were actually going backwards. He was working long hours you know, he's leaving at 6 in the morning coming back at 9 quick sleep on the couch gets up does it again the next day and does it again the next day, so he's not seeing his kids. Besides that, he really enjoyed it and he was really good at it so he probably did it for 2-3 years. But in the end because they were going backwards financially they had to move back to Brisbane and he had to go back to IT. Pretty sad because his marriage broke up. I kind of blame the whole guiding thing really. She was home with two little kids with no support and yet they were a great couple and he was a great guy. To me *** [employer name] response should've been better. Tim could've been there for 25 years and been the head guy and because he got along with people they should've looked after him but he was just another guy to come and go. To me, that's not the right way to do things. To me, they own the place so you've got the money, you're the ones calling the shots. But that is a thing for the whole industry to look at - guides. They're loosing really good young people. For one, because it's poorly paid, job hours are terrible and it just doesn't fit in with family life. If you want to have a relationship, unless it's another guide who understands what you're doing, I think it's a pretty tough. I think they're all things that the industry has to deal with. (Will, EcoGuide)

Long hours[46] during peak season can negatively influence relationships within a family (Runté & Mills, 2004). The odd working hours and low pay not only contributed to the breakdown of Tim's relationship with his family, but also forced him give up the work he enjoyed. If professionalisation is a way for an occupation to receive credibility in society (Jackson, 1970; Siegrist, 1990) and to gain more business for employers (Evetts, 2003), then professionalisation needs to address the issues of unstable, long working hours for ecotour guides as these are features commonly associated with "workers at the bottom of the labour market" rather than members of a profession (Runté & Mills, 2004, p. 242). Tim's story also highlights the lack of a clearly defined and accessible career path for ecotour guides. Will considered Tim to be an excellent guide with the potential to have a long and successful career with his employer, however, his employers actions

[46] It is to note that working long hours is common to the work of tour guides in general. However, ecotour guides may overall work longer hours than other types of guides (for example, museum guides, city guides) as ecotour guiding often involves vehicle check up prior to tour, meal preparation, tourist pick-up, drop-off at accommodation, and drive to and return from often distant destinations. For information on ecotour guides' descriptions of their normal day at work see Appendix ***.

(or lack of action) betrays a level of indifference towards ecotour guides who attempt to establish a career in the field. Despite the key purpose of professionalisation being to protect and sustain its discipline (Timmermans, 2008), professionalisation is yet to usefully contribute to the establishment of a viable career structure for ecotour guides.

Low Income for Professional Work

Low income was emphasised by ecotour guides as an ongoing challenge to their passion, and their commitment to the occupation (see Appendix Eight for additional data).

> I enjoy doing it but I certainly intend to do consulting and things involved in guiding because guiding itself isn't sufficient to provide enough income. If I could make enough income out of guiding I would but it's very hard to do that, it just doesn't pay enough ...Probably, no matter how good you are, guiding alone, it's hard to earn a reasonable income because guiding is not recognised as being valued high enough as part of the whole ecotourism experience or hospitality in general. (Ben, EcoGuide)

> Well I'd like to move on because I don't really want to be making $40,000 for the rest of my life. I will probably do a degree later on and it will be something irrelevant to this industry. Because unless you want to go up in management in this kind of company then pretty much I've reached the end of the pole already. So those are the facts. Unfortunately you're not really going to make an affluent living doing this kind of work so that's the only regret I've got. Apart from that I enjoy the work reasonably well but not to the point where I would be sad to wave good bye. (Greg, non-certified ecotour guide)

The possession of specialised knowledge and skills differentiates professions from occupations and generally results in increased income (Collins, 1990b; Freidson, 2001). Despite, ecotour guiding representing specialised work, incomes remain low and do not increase with certification. It is clear from Ben and Greg's comments that failing to receive a satisfactory, or even adequate income for their work is an issue. Greg implied that his low income will eventually force him out of the industry as there is no chance of promotion or career advancement. In his own words Greg has already 'reached the end of the pole' in terms of career development. In addition, Ben explained his view that the work of ecotour guides is an under-valued part of the ecotourism experience and that this is reflected in their level of income.

Key industry stakeholders' gave markedly different responses when the question of guides' income was raised.

> I think it's because a lot of people now think that money is not necessarily the sort of the end and I know people that who did a fair bit of guiding as a long term career option, but there's still lots of guides. I mean surveys that *** [researcher name] and I have done show that there are guides that's been doing it for 10-15 years and that is a long term career option if you're looking at the tourism industry. I mean not long term compared to banking but anything else. You know, there's a lot of people who are quite passionate about guiding and really enjoy that sort of lifestyle. I think most guides, and if guides go in there for a relatively long term, most ecotourism guides are in there relatively long term, there's this great passion. I think that's one of the reasons why a lot of people are guiding because they've got the passion. So it's a bit harder for ecotourism and ecotour guiding in that people are often doing it for themselves rather than necessarily for the industry. They're guiding partly because they love being out there, they've got a passion for the natural environment, or the cultural sort of traditions of the area, so and so forth. So often it's an amalgamation of work and leisure. (Anna, key industry stakeholder)

While ecotour guides recognised passion as the central element of professionalism in their line of work, ironically the ecotourism industry appears to justify ecotour guides' position at the bottom of the labour market (Runté & Mills, 2004) in terms of that same passion. The subtext of Anna's argument seems to be that although conditions and pay are poor, ecotour guides are passionate about the environments in which they work and therefore consider themselves lucky to be able to work in those environments regardless of income and conditions. Anna goes on to devalue the work of ecotour guides, suggesting that they are "doing it for themselves" and that it represents "an amalgamation of work and leisure" as though this is justification for unsustainably low rates of pay, poor conditions, and almost no possibility of career development. The perceptions of ecotour guides starkly contradict Anna's position. The study has shown that in order to maintain a liveable income, ecotour guides may have to take second or third jobs or leave the occupation altogether. The industry appears to believe that ecotour guides do not work for the money, but as an expression of their passion for the natural environment. How, and to what extent ecotour guides' passion for work is influenced by the challenges of seasonality, long odd hours, and low income is an area that might usefully be researched in the future. Nevertheless, it is clear that these challenges influence the work of ecotour guides and their perceptions of professional work.

> Some people will say "Look it's what I enjoy doing it's my passion and the pay is not terribly important". My point of view is that I'm worth more than that. I am good at what I do ... the whole industry does need a bit of a kick in the back side sort of thing and to change their outlook towards employees and realise that, you know, we have to look after them better ... They can't see it or they don't care. Some of them don't care, they're not seeing what's going on. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

Perhaps in the minds of some key industry stakeholders and ecotour guides, a professional who has passion for nature and people will not be influenced by these challenges. After all, due to passion "people do what they do for the love of what they do not for the money" (Gherardi *et al.*, 2007, p. 315). This may be the case for Rob who continues to work as an ecotour guide despite his assessment that the industry doesn't seem to care that ecotour guides struggle to maintain a living wage, however, it is certainly not the case for all participants. These challenges may influence ecotour guides' ability to achieve a professional status, and thus cannot be ignored. While in theory professionalisation protects disciplines and leads to increased remuneration (Collins, 1990b), the industry-driven model of professionalisation that is transforming the ecotour guiding occupation may actually place an increased financial burden on ecotour guides by requiring professional certification to enter the occupation (which cost time and money) but does not reward those who achieve certification with higher rates of pay (Weiler & Ham, 2001b).

The following section explores the differing perspectives of ecotour guides and ecotourism industry stakeholders and the challenges that these differences present for the professionalisation of ecotour guides.

8.2.2 Challenges in Achieving Ecotour Guiding Professionalism

This study has shown that that key industry stakeholders' and ecotour guides' experience of professionalisation differs. While key industry stakeholders highlighted the importance of their own role in professionalising ecotour guides, arguing that standards should be imposed from above to ensure that industry developed standards are rigorously and objectively implemented, ecotour guides experienced professionalisation as an increase in pressure from their employers to gain credentials. Thus, although the ultimate aim of professionalisation is to achieve an ideal, consensus based, concept of

professionalism (Freidson, 1994, 2001) a significant disconnection in perception between ecotour guides and the key industry stakeholders exists on a number of levels. These are outlined below

The Relationship between Work Experience and Professionalism

When discussing the concept of ecotour guiding professionalism, ecotour guides concluded that credentials were unnecessary was expressed by ecotour guides, despite acknowledging an increase in demand for them by employers. Rather than credentials, ecotour guides considered experience to be the key factor in achieving professionalism (see Appendix Eight for additional data).

> I would suggest that professionalism comes with experiences, no other way to put it. You've got to make mistakes to learn and that involves many, many different skills and the higher your skills base the higher your base is ... that level of professionalism will only increase with field experience. (Sean, EcoGuide)

> You can't surpass experience. You can appreciate enthusiasm, someone who's young and really keen that certainly makes a big difference. If they come across as I wanna get up there and soak it up as much as possible I think that makes a big difference but of course, not getting out there seeing the seasons and seeing what happens which can change. So many years, years of experience makes a difference, definitely. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

In contrast to the traditional professions, ecotour guides have historically relied heavily on 'work experience' and personality as a tradable commodity and these elements are still held in higher regard than certification by ecotour guides.

Freidson (1970b, p. 169) describes the credentials required to qualify as a member of a certain profession as "book knowledge" and the experience required to conduct work as "first-hand experience". Although, 'book knowledge' can be obtained through structured systems of higher education, professional training and certification offered by professional groups, 'first-hand experience' cannot be systematised nor codified and learned in a classroom, and is thus unique to the professional (Freidson, 2001). If the expert skills acquired through experience are accepted requisites for a professional to achieve certification, then the type of experiences and skills required should be specified. Although, work experience is acknowledged as a requisite for applying for

the EcoGuide certification program, there is no stipulation that the guiding experience had to be with ecotourism businesses or even be nature-based.

> How can someone be interpreting something that they haven't seen go through the full season? I mean they can of course, but not with the same empathy for the environment to say well it's like this at the moment but as soon as it rains this is what's going to happen or this is normal, this isn't normal they just don't know. They haven't had that experience and many of them don't have the background in science or natural history either. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

Adam sheds light on the necessity for work experience based on the relatively dynamic nature of the natural environment. This level of familiarity with a site, to have the expert knowledge and skills to respond to a changing environment that is subtly different during each tour is unique to the work of ecotour guiding. The ecotour guide's ability to interpret nature and relate their own broader knowledge of that environment and its daily and seasonal changes to the tourist also influences the quality of the tourist experience. Acknowledging the importance of experience in the field for the quality of ecotour guides' work performance creates difficulties for those advocating and implementing professional credentials as a means to raise levels of professionalism. Many ecotour guides who had been practicing for a long time often declined the opportunity to be certified citing their wealth of experience and confidence in their own skills and knowledge.

> I've been doing this for 10 years I don't think I need anything else but self research. (Rob, non-certified ecotour guide)

> I'm bloody good at what I do, I've been doing it for such a long time. (Adam, non-certified ecotour guide)

> I am comfortable with what I know, I've been working continuously. (Erin, non-certified ecotour guide).

Rob, Adam and Erin imply that experience is regarded by long-term ecotour guides as a guarantee of quality work performance, over and above certification. Some key industry stakeholders had a different view, interpreting the resistance of long-term ecotour guides to the introduction of certification as arrogant and defensive.

> I think often you get fairly defensive reaction [from ecotour guides]. Um that "I don't need to do that I've been doing this for 10 years, I know what I'm doing", sort of thing? But I think behind that is the actually feeling threatened that they may not come up to the standard expected? (Ronda, key industry stakeholder)

> Well, I think that it's good that there's that pressure coming from new entrants into the industry because it keeps pushing the bar up. One of the things that is a great risk in tourism as well as in any industry I'm sure is that those who've been in it for long-term think, that "Well I'm already the best so, you know all these people don't have the experience than I have because they haven't been doing it as long as me." But you know that's pretty arrogant attitude and I think people need to see the change that's coming into the industry and you know be aware of what's good in that and see that as a means to your own self-improvement. If you've been guiding for 20 years and somebody comes in with a great new technique or some new facts or new energy or whatever, then you should look at that and say "Gee, that was good, maybe if I really am as good as I think I am, I should be doing that as well.", and you improve yourself step by step. It is a continual process and people shouldn't be threatened by new entrants but see it as an opportunity to learn new things. (Ron, key industry stakeholder)

Ronda and Ron believed that ecotour guides who refuse to go through any form of industry qualifications may feel "threatened" by the expected standards, and "pressured" by new entrants, holding credentials, into the field. By contrast, the study showed that rather than feeling threatened by the process of certification, ecotour guides simply (certified and non-certified) did not see the benefit in spending the time, effort and money to become certified. Aside from improved self esteem and pride in some cases, ecotour guides reported no tangible benefits in terms of employment opportunities. Any 'pressure' or 'threat' that was felt by ecotour guides was not generated by new entrants and concern over meeting standardised criteria of credentials, but by industry stakeholders.

> I was involved in the early 1990s, they were asking the industry what to do and it got a bit too academic for the operators at times. They had one guy out here in *** [location] that already been in the industry for 30 years. They were telling him that he wasn't qualified and to go back and get a degree to do what he'd been doing for 30 years. (Sean, EcoGuide)

Sean explained that his colleague who had been practicing as an ecotour guide for 30 years was told by an industry stakeholder to obtain credentials. Although ecotour guiding is traditionally an occupation that equates professionalism with work experience, though some long standing guides were 'rubber stamped' through the

EcoGuide program based on their experience, this was not formally reflected in the industry-driven professionalisation process. This issue represents a gap between ecotour guides' and key industry stakeholders' perceptions of the relationship between work experience and professionalism, and vastly different perceptions of the reasons behind resistance to industry-driven professionalisation in the form of ecotour guide certification.

The challenges posed for ecotour guides achieving professional status, and the role of work experience when conceptualising ecotour guiding professionalism have been discussed in conjunction with the study results and literature. Professionalisation may have increased ecotour guides' awareness of demand for credentials, however, it can be argued that professionalisation in its current form has not had a drastic impact on the ecotour guides' work performance. Nevertheless, this study revealed potential areas for change, improvement and further research. These are discussed in the following section.

8.3 Implications and Future Research

8.3.1 Introduction

The professionalisation of ecotour guides and by extension the Australian ecotourism industry appears to be inevitable. This section explores implications stemming from the study and offers suggestions for developing ecotour guides' professional status and professionalism in a more sustainable and equitable way for all interest groups. The work of Abbott (1991), Evetts (2003) and L'etang and Pieczka (2006), who build upon Freidson's seminal work on professionalisation theory are used to guide the direction for future research.

8.3.2 Ecotour Guiding as Professionalised Work

The analysis of professionalisation undertaken in this study incorporated sociological perspectives of the meanings of work. In this way an understanding of ecotour guides' work was developed that goes beyond a simple break down of their roles and functions in the tourism experience. By interpreting their own work activities, ecotour guides provided insight into their work as a way of expressing self-identity and as the performance of emotional labour. This study did not support a conclusion that the

emotional labour performed by ecotour guides was a direct impact of professionalisation. Future research could investigate the impact that industry-driven professionalisation has on tour guides in relation to performing emotional labour and expressing their passion for nature and people.

This study showed that ecotour guides' ability to express passion for nature and people through their work is an important component of their self- and social-identity and is central to their perception of professionalism. Future research could usefully explore whether the process of professionalisation influences ecotour guides' passion for nature and people and their ability to express it. Researchers could seek ways to nurture and develop passion through professionalisation.

Ecotour guides considered a professional in their discipline to be someone who was passionate about nature and people and who was committed to perform the specialised work required to achieve environmental sustainability. However, this secular definition may raise the argument in the professionalisation literature "about whether certain marginal groups 'really are' professions" (Abbott, 1991a, p. 27, original emphasis). Nevertheless, discussing whether an occupation is a profession is no longer practical, if not meaningless (Evetts, 2003). The importance lies in understanding how ecotour guides define their own discipline's professional practice and how this leads to achieving professionalism. This perspective creates a basis for future research to establish ways to achieve professional status for the wider ecotour guiding community.

8.3.3 Maximising the Benefits of Certification

The case study of the EcoGuide certification program revealed that EcoGuides could not immediately identify any tangible benefits stemming from their certification. However, on deeper reflection, a number of less tangible benefits were identified that demonstrate potential for the program to be more effective, and to yield benefits that are more easily recognised by its participants. Future research might develop a system of quantifying the benefits would make the value of the certification program more apparent. Quantifying the benefits may involve measures of the increase in work opportunities experienced by EcoGuides, enhanced levels of tourist satisfaction and employer recognition and valuing of the certification. If assessment is the most valued

aspect of certification, the current arrangements where guides are assessed once and then simply pay an annual re-certification fee without any ongoing assessment or support for professional development appears to be missing an opportunity to add value to the credential. An improved re-assessment strategy involving on-the-job assessment similar to the initial certification process that facilitates self-reflection and highlights areas and methods for improvement would provide opportunities for professional development and strengthen the existing system.

8.3.4 Professionalism in Practice

The following sections provide recommendations to address the challenges identified by ecotour guides in achieving professional status and professionalism in practice.

Career Structure and Development

Ecotour guiding is not the type of occupation in which opportunities commonly open up for individuals to move into managerial positions within a business operation. This lack of mobility was exemplified by ecotour guide participants in the study who were employed at the same level though their experience in the job ranged from 3 months to 25-30 years. Individuals may move up in the organisational hierarchy to train new ecotour guides, but only rarely are more responsibilities given within the business operation. The lack of mobility and opportunities for professional development in the occupation creates real challenges for the retention of talented and ambitious individuals. If an ecotour guide is capable of and willing to move into a position with greater responsibility and greater income, then ideally a career structure should exist for them to do so. Ways of recognising the relative value of both credentials and work experience are required to develop a more structured career path for ecotour guides that provides opportunities for professional growth and career development. Unfortunately this is far more easily said than done and the lack of an immediately obvious career path for ecotour guides reflects the paradox of industry-driven professionalisation in which the industry is pushing for professional ecotour guides but providing none of the benenfits normally associated with achieving professional status. It is difficult to imagine a 'profession' in which rates of pay are capped at the level of entry without the possibility of promotion or career advancement. Exploring long-term career options for ecotour guides would be a useful direction for future research.

Financial Remuneration

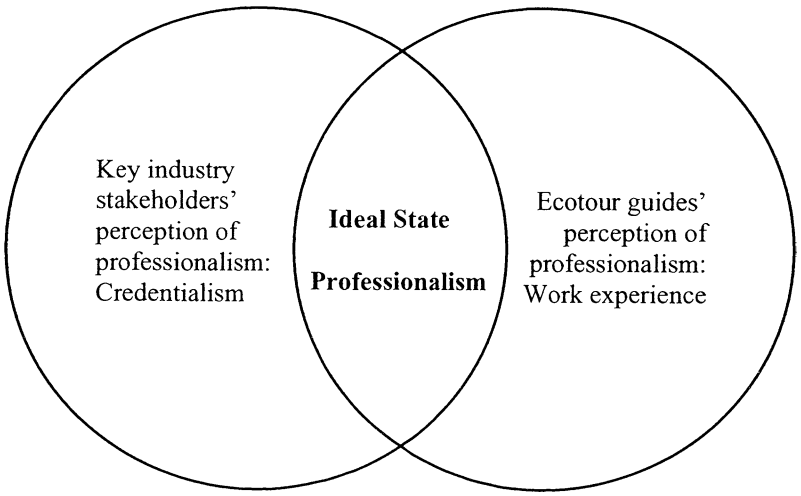
The study showed that the low income of ecotour guides is de-motivating and forced some to discontinue working in the occupation. In light of widespread recognition of the importance of ecotour guides in the ecotourism experience by tourism research and key industry stakeholders, it is difficult to understand the reasons behind such low rates of pay, poor working conditions, and the industry's acceptance of the inevitable attrition that results. This may be due to the fact that as credentials of any kind are not formally required to enter the occupation, replacement ecotour guides are easy to find. It may be a reflection of the industry not taking the work of ecotour guiding seriously as a long-term career and an expectation that ecotours will be staffed by a small core of deeply passionate long-term ecotour guides and a revolving door of short-term casual staff. Nevertheless, if the ecotourism industry wants to raise the levels of ecotour guiding professionalism, it should begin to formally incorporate strategies which recognise the importance of ecotour guides to the ecotourism experience in their level of remuneration. In addition, if the ecotourism industry wants to increase the requirements for credentials for ecotour guides, it should recognise those credentials in financial terms. The professionalisation of ecotour guiding may provide a vehicle for ecotour guides to reclaim some power in this negotiation. If the barriers to entry into the occupation for new guides are raised by the requirement of a specific professional credential that requires a significant investment of time and effort, the pool of potential ecotour guide candidates would immediately shrink considerably, guides entering the market would be limited to those highly motivated to join the occupation, and by virtue of reduced supply, the value of ecotour guides should increase.

A New, Collaborative Form of Professionalisation

According to the professionalisation literature, the ideal state of professionalism is achieved when professionalisation is driven by the practitioners of the occupational group. It has been noted in this study that the professionalisation of Australian ecotour guides is being driven by external interest groups and it seems very unlikely that ecotour guides will ever be the sole-drivers of their own professionalisation. However many of the issues and challenges raised in this study could be addressed by a new, or at least revitalised, collaboration between ecotour guides and key industry stakeholders to develop a collaborative vision for an ideal state of professionalism which bridges the differences between the industry's focus on credentialism and the ecotour guides' belief

in the primacy of experience. Figure 8.2 provides a simple conceptual representation of this notion.

Figure 8.2 Striving for an ideal state of ecotour guiding professionalism



A collaborative approach of this kind would allow ecotour guides and key industry stakeholders to work together to a) identify a mutually agreeable ideal concept of professionalism, b) design an effective professionalisation process that addresses the challenges raised by ecotour guides in light of the economic realities faced by their employers, and c) closes the gaps in perception between the ecotour guides and key industry stakeholders. Professionalism should be adopted in a way that has specific occupational goals (L'Etang & Pieczka, 2006). Hence, future studies could identify the relative efficacy of work experience and the credentials required by ecotour guide employers with a view to developing ecotour guiding qualifications which are mutually agreeable to both groups and which are grounded in research and demonstrably appropriate, effective and valuable to both ecotour guides and their employers.

Professionalism should instil trust in customers of the professional group (Evetts, 2006a). If professionalism is not recognised by customers, the time, effort and expense involved in attaining ecotour guiding credentials may be wasted. As such, future research could examine tourists' responses to ecotour guiding professionalism with a view to maximising its capacity to establish the trust of tourists.

8.4 Concluding Comment

For ecotour guides, the professionalisation of their work has become disconnected from their everyday work performance. In the context of Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Program, the desired impacts of professionalisation are not being achieved. This study has argued that professionalisation driven solely by the ecotourism industry cannot achieve ecotour guide professionalism in a theoretical or practical sense. By employing professionalisation theory in an interpretivist research paradigm this study has concluded that ecotour guides should be an empowered partner in, if not the driving force of, the professionalisation of their work in association with the ecotourism industry. In addition, the application of professionalisation theory has provided an alternative perspective for understanding the professionalisation process as it applies in the Australian ecotour guiding sector, and further has broader applications for understanding new types of occupations that attempt to achieve professional status and professionalism.

In conclusion, as shown in Figure 8.2, a way forward for the professionalisation of Australian ecotour guides lies in the development of a new type of professionalisation process that is not practitioner focused like the traditional professions, nor industry driven like the new types of occupations, but a collaboration of practitioners and industry stakeholders working to attain a shared vision professionalism. This will lead to professional ecotour guides who, supported by their industry, embrace passion and commitment for their work with the ultimate aim of achieving environmental sustainability. Ecotourism Australia originally developed the EcoGuide Certification Program in a collaborative spirit with ecotour guides. However, at some point, ecotour guides became disconnected from the process of developing the Program. Developing a sense of ownership and ensuring the support in active participation of key industry stakeholders *and* ecotour guides to a collaborative process, then maintaining this connection is the key to successful professionalisation of ecotour guides.

Appendix One: Code of conduct

Appendix One-a: Guiding Organisations Australia

Guides of Australia – Code of Guiding Practice

This Code of Guiding Practice outlines the responsibilities and standards of behaviour expected of Tour Guides working within Australia.

1) To provide a professional service to visitors – professional in care and commitment, and professional in providing an objective understanding of the place visited – free from prejudice or propaganda.

2) To ensure that every effort is made to present true and accurate facts and ensure that a clear distinction is made between this truth and stories, legends, traditions, or opinions.

3) To act honestly, fairly and professionally in all dealings with all those who engage the services of guides and with colleagues working in all aspects of tourism.

4) Ensure that guided groups treat with respect the natural, cultural and heritage environments, and minimise impacts on these at all times.

5) As representatives of Australia, to welcome visitors and act in such a way as to bring credit to the country and promote it as a tourist destination.

6) Regularly update and upgrade my guiding skills and knowledge through training and professional development activities.

7) Declare to customers any relevant personal commercial interests, including commissions, and never force visitor purchases or solicit tips.

8) Be mindful at all times of duty of care and other health and safety issues.

9) Provide all goods and services as presented in the tour itinerary and promotional material.

10) Abide by all national, state or territory legislation governing the operation and conduct of tours, tour operators and tour guides.

I will demonstrate the *Australian Tour Guides' Code of Guiding Practice* in my own actions and encourage its implementation across the industry through my interactions with tourism businesses, organisations and other Tour Guides.

Source: Guiding Organisations Australia (GOA). (2009). *Code of guiding Practice.* Retrieved February 9th, 2009, from http://goa.org.au/AboutGoa.aspx

Appendix One-b: Savannah Guides Limited

Savannah Guides

All members of the company shall abide by the following ethical principles:

1) Adherence to By-Laws and Standards

   A member will abide by the standards, requirements and dress codes as set out by the Company that are designed to ensure the level of interpretation, service provision and commitment to sustainable tourism is consistent throughout the network and at the forefront of the guiding profession.

2) Unrealistic Expectations

   A member will refrain from encouraging unrealistic expectations or promising guests experiences or services that are either unattainable or uncertain.

3) Professional Standards

   A member will only conduct tours when they have the necessary knowledge and equipment to do so to ensure the standard of interpretation does not discredit the Company or the guiding profession.

4) Duty of Care

A member will ensure guests' personal safety is held in the highest regard at all times and be proactive in implementing appropriate and reasonable measures which maximise guests' personal safety when in their care.

5) Prices

A member will advertise tour prices on appropriate marketing material in advance or, where special tours are involved, finalise negotiations prior to the acceptance of engagement by both parties.

6) Approach

A member will maintain a fully professional approach in all dealings with guests and the general public.

7) Appropriate Avenue of Criticism

A member will refrain from public or personal criticism of another members' business or expertise and recognise the appropriate avenue for raising such concerns is through the Joongai.

8) Code of Conduct

A member will ensure all personnel conducting guiding activities on their behalf are conversant with and abide by the Code of Conduct.

It is the responsibility of the Joongai and the Chapter Committee to ensure members are presented with a Code of Conduct and fully understand the ethical principles.

It is the responsibility of all members to ensure they abide by the Code of Conduct.

Members will be subject to disciplinary proceedings if they breach these ethical principles or partake in discreditable behaviour.

Source: Savannah Guides Ltd (1999), cited in Black, R. (2002). *Towards a Model for Tour Guide Certification: An Analysis of the Australian Ecoguide Program*. Melbourne: PhD Thesis, Monash University, pp. 320-321

Appendix One-c: Ecotourism Australia

EcoGuide Program – Code of Ethics

All guides are required to sign off on a Code of Ethics that has been generated by drawing on material provided by the United Nations Environment Program and other existing codes of practice. This code was endorsed through extensive consultation with guides, operators and protected area managers.

In becoming signatories to the code guides are clearly declaring their intent to provide high quality nature and ecotourism experiences in a safe, culturally sensitive and an environmentally sustainable manner.

The certified nature or ecotour guide:

- Adopts best practice standards in relation to safety, interpretation, customer service, product promotion and their own leadership and presentation.
- Is committed to implementing minimal impact principles and practices.
- Endeavours to maximise the positive and minimise the negative economic, social, cultural and experiential impacts of the tours they conduct.
- Is committed to ecoefficient resource use.
- Respects and, where appropriate, seeks to build good relationships with local people, colleagues, customers and any other visitors to an area.
- Is committed to ongoing professional development.

Through the Code of Ethics the EcoGuide Program seeks to encourage guides' commitment to the long-term viability of the natural and cultural resources on which nature and ecotourism depends. Expanding the summary points of the code, the nature or ecotour guide:

1) Adopts best practice standards in relation to:
    - safety, based on a combination of legal requirements, organisational policy and their own trained judgment;
    - communication, interpretation and the education of visitors, including the provision of accurate information;

- customer service, by taking responsibility for the health, comfort and satisfaction of visitors;
- product promotion, including the generation of realistic expectations; and their own leadership and presentation.

2) Is committed to implementing minimal impact principles and practices. This includes introducing appropriate minimal impact principles to visitors (depending on the environment being visited), leading by example, and encouraging visitors' adoption of the corresponding minimal impact practices. Where appropriate, this point also includes guides' willingness to engage in monitoring visitors' use of areas to:
   - generate awareness and understanding of the environment;
   - assist science and research;
   - provide resource managers with information to make management decisions; and
   - create a professional relationship with resource managers.

3) Endeavours to maximise the positive and minimise the negative economic, social, cultural and experiential impacts of the tours they conduct by:
   - demonstrating an understanding of and respect toward local cultures and environments;
   - operating in accord with any guidelines or local rules of the host community, expressed or implied;
   - operating in accord with relevant legislation and regulation;
   - conveying to visitors the value of local cultures, promoting appreciation for local traditions and environments;
   - portraying realistic, authentic and preferably sanctioned images of the host community and the environment in question;
   - explaining what it is that constitutes acceptable behaviour in the areas being visited;
   - leading by example, using positive reinforcement and taking corrective actions where necessary, to gain visitor compliance with suggested practices; and

- seeking to purchase appropriate consumables, equipment and services from the community in which they operate.

4) Is committed to ecoefficient resource use by:
   - playing their part in reducing energy, resource use and waste – causing less pollution and contributing to more environmentally sustainable practices.

5) Respects and, where appropriate, seeks to build good relationships with local people, colleagues, customers and any other visitors to an area, based on:
   - justice – fairness and good faith in dealings;
   - competence – the delivery of services as promised;
   - utility – in practical terms, a determination to plan and deliver tours with maximum benefits for all concerned;
   - expecting and respecting differences in ability, ethnicity, culture, religious beliefs and personal values, including giving consideration to the space and privacy needs of all parties; and
   - allowing adequate time for observation and reflection by customers.

6) Is committed to ongoing professional development, such as by participating in training, workshops, networking sessions and other activities that will help upgrade their ability to communicate with and manage clients within natural and cultural settings.

You will become a signatory to this Code by signing the relevant section on the application form. You will be able to find more information on accepted industry best practice on minimal impact for a range of environments and activities, plus details on how to be ecoefficient, in the *Nature and Ecotourism Accreditation Program Manual* (NEAP 2000).

Source: Crabtree, E. and Black, R (2000), cited in Black, R. (2002). *Towards a Model for Tour Guide Certification: An Analysis of the Australian Ecoguide Program.* Melbourne: PhD Thesis, Monash University, p. 325-326

Appendix Two: Summary of EcoGuide Certification Program competencies

Due to the confidential information of this report (EcoGuide Assessors Manual), the competencies assessed for EcoGuides are only provided in themes.

1. Assessment of core guiding industry competencies
    - Follow health, safety and security procedures
        - Knowledge of safety, security and OHS regulations and issues
        - Knowledge of legal, liability and insurance issues
        - Ability to follow procedures to eliminate or in the least minimise risk to self and others
        - Ability to manage emergency situations
    - Work with colleagues and customers
        - Effective interpersonal communication techniques
        - Basic written communication skills
        - Apply communication principles and techniques to a team situation
        - Identifying and managing conflict and difficult situations
        - Ability to provide high quality levels of customer service
    - Develop and update tourism industry knowledge
    - Work as a guide
        - General knowledge of the tourism industry and in particular of the tour operations sector
        - Knowledge of the varying roles and responsibilities of guides
        - Knowledge of relevant industry associations and their role
        - Knowledge of the relevant legal, ethical, safety and liability issues affecting guiding operations
        - Knowledge of appropriate practices to minimise impacts on the cultural, social and natural environments
        - Ability to communicate in English
    - Lead tour groups
        - Techniques for managing group dynamics and movements
        - Leadership ability

- Ability to manage conflicting needs within a group situation

- Prepare and present tour commentaries or activities
  - Knowledge of subject matter
  - Effective presentation techniques
  - Appropriate safety, minimal impact and group management practices
  - Ability to structure an activity
  - Ability to incorporate a message and theme into a commentary
  - Ability to incorporate interpretive technique into an activity and commentary
- Develop and maintain the general knowledge required by a guide
  - Knowledge of the structure and roles of various tourism industry sectors
  - Ability to research relevant information on the tourism industry
  - Knowledge of legislation and industry issues relevant to the tourism industry
- Provide first-aid

2. Assessment of prescribed EcoGuide competencies
   - Plan and develop interpretive activities
     - Knowledge of interpretive principles
     - Creative communication skills
     - Ability to develop and evaluate an activity
     - Project management skills
     - Relevant subject knowledge
   - Plan and implement minimal impact operations
     - Knowledge of environmental, social and cultural issues pertaining to relevant tourism operations
     - Knowledge and commitment to minimal impact principles and practices
     - Knowledge of impacts associated with tourism operations
   - Research and share general information on Australian indigenous culture
     - General knowledge of Australian indigenous culture
     - Knowledge of appropriate methods and protocols for researching Australian indigenous culture
     - Ability to research Australian indigenous culture in a culturally sensitive manner

- Knowledge of protocols for sharing information on Australian indigenous culture

- Prepare specialised interpretive content
  - Research skills for acquiring and maintaining specialised knowledge
  - In-depth knowledge of key concepts and subject areas associated with specialised knowledge
  - Ability to apply specialised knowledge to tour situations taking into account the needs and interests of customers
  - Ability to incorporate specialised knowledge within a commentary

Source: Ecotourism Australia. (n.d.). EcoGuide Australia Assessors Manual. Brisbane: Ecotourism Australia.

Appendix Three: Value statement

I was born and raised in Seoul, South Korea a city of 10.5 million people, skyscrapers, highways and residential apartments. As a child, my interactions with the natural environment were limited to climbing mountains and swimming in lakes and oceans during limited school holidays. My interactions with nature were largely limited to the landscaping around the 30-story apartment blocks I lived in. I undertook my undergraduate studies at the University of Technology, Sydney in Tourism Management and completed an honours thesis supervised by Dr Stephen Wearing related to ecotourism as a result of chance rather than design or personal interest. Similarly my PhD topic is the product of opportunity and research needs rather than a topic that I felt compelled to pursue because of a long personal connection. I have never been employed in the ecotourism industry. On a personal level I am probably more environmentally conscious than average in terms of sustainable living in the urban environments I find myself in. While I do enjoy and appreciate natural environments and am moved emotionally by spectacular displays of nature's grandeur, my interest in ecotourism and ecotour guiding is as a social researcher rather than a passionate advocate of the field.

Appendix Four: Consent form

Consent to participate in research

I_____agree to participate in the research project Exploring practitioner conceptualizations of professionalism and the impact of professionalisation on the work of Australian ecotour guides by Sandra Ponting at the University of Technology, PO Box 222 Lindfield NSW 2070 Ph +61 2 9514 5315 for the purpose of her PhD degree.

I understand that the purpose of this study is to understand the professionalisation oof Australian Ecotour guides.

I am aware that I can contact Sandra Ponting at +61 2 9514 5313 or her supervisor Dr Stephen Wearing at +61 2 9514 5432 if I have any concerns about the research. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my participation from the research project at any time I wish and without giving a reason.

I agree that Sandra Ponting has answered all my questions fully and clearly.

I agree that the research data gathered from this project may be published in a form that does not identify me in any way. Pseudonyms will be used in the thesis and any other published material.

_____ __/__/____
Signed By

_____ __/__/____
Witnessed by

NOTE:
This study has been approved by the University of Technology, Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any complaints or reservations about any aspect of your participation in this research which you cannot resolve with the researcher, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officer, Ms Susanna Davis (ph: +61 2 9514 1279, Susanna.Davis@uts.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated fully and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix Five: Self-completed questionnaire surveys

It is to note that the format and presentation of the questionnaire is modified to suit the presentation of this thesis.

My name is Sandra Cynn-Ponting. I am a PhD candidate at the School of Leisure, Sport and Tourism, University of Technology, Sydney (U.T.S). My research is also supported by the Sustainable Tourism CRC. The aim of my research is to understand the importance and professionalisation of Australian ecotour guides. As a participant of this nature-based/ecotour, I would greatly appreciate a few minutes of your time in completing this survey. The information you provide is strictly confidential. If you have any questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to ask me. Thank you for your contribution.

Firstly, I would like to understand the reasons why you've decided to go on this ecotour. How important were the following statements when you chose this ecotour? For each comment, please circle the rating that suits your opinion the most for this ecotour. (1= not at all important, 5= extremely important)

	not at all important				extremely important
• being directly involved in nature	1	2	3	4	5
• experiencing the tour with friends and/or family	1	2	3	4	5
• learning about the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5
• having a guide during the tour	1	2	3	4	5
• being with people with similar interest	1	2	3	4	5
• visiting an area where you normally would not on your own	1	2	3	4	5
• having fun	1	2	3	4	5
• having low environmental impact	1	2	3	4	5
• other, please specify_____	1	2	3	4	5

Now I would like to understand what you consider as important when you are having a good experience with an ecotour guide. How important are the following statements for you to have a good experience with your ecotour guide? For each comment, please circle the rating that suits your opinion the most for your ecotour guide. (1= not at all important, 5= extremely important)

	not at all important				extremely important
• being a good organiser	1	2	3	4	5
• being a good leader	1	2	3	4	5
• being a good communicator	1	2	3	4	5
• being a good entertainer	1	2	3	4	5
• being knowledgeable about the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5
• providing an environmental experience	1	2	3	4	5
• encouraging environmentally friendly behaviour	1	2	3	4	5
• ensuring safety/risk management for visitors	1	2	3	4	5
• other, please specify	1	2	3	4	5

1. What were your two most memorable experiences from the tour?

   a. _____

   b. _____

2. How satisfied were you with your guide?

   a. Very satisfied
   b. Satisfied
   c. Neither satisfied or dissatisfied
   d. Dissatisfied
   e. Very dissatisfied

3. What were the reasons for you feeling this way about your guide?

   _____

   _____

4. Do you have any recommendations for the guide to improve his/her services in the future?

   _____

   _____

5. Australian ecotour guides can undertake formal ecoguide certification programs. Do you think it's important for ecoguides to have these types of formal ecoguide certification programs?

    a. Yes, why?

    _____

    b. No, why not?

    _____

6. Did you know that your guide is certified with the Ecotourism Australia's EcoGuide Certification Program? *(skip question for non-certified ecotour guides' tourists)*

    a. Yes, how did you know about it?

    _____

    b. No

7. Is this your first visit to this destination?

    a. Yes
    b. No

8. Is this your first time on a guided ecotour?

    a. Yes (please go to question 11)
    b. No

9. How many times have you participated in guided ecotours?

    a. 1 or 2 times
    b. 3 to 5 times
    c. 6 to 10 times
    d. More than 10 times

10. Have you had any particular good and/or bad experiences on any of these guided ecotours?

    a. Yes, please give examples

    _____

    b. No

11. What is your gender?

    a. Male
    b. Female

12. Which age group do you belong to?

a. 19 – 24
b. 25 – 29
c. 30 – 39
d. 40 – 49
e. 50 – 59
f. 60 and over

13. What is your nationality?

_____

14. What is your highest level of education?

a. High school graduate
b. Completed certificate, diploma or similar
c. Completed undergraduate degree
d. Completed postgraduate degree
e. Other, please specify, _____

15. Are you a member of any environmental and/or conservation organisations?

a. Yes, please specify, _____
b. No

16. Would you recommend this tour to others?

a. If yes, why?

_____

b. If no, why not?

_____

17. Do you have any additional comments on the importance and professionalisation of Australian ecotour guides?

_____

_____

Thank you very much for taking the time in completing this survey. If you have any further questions about the research please contact Sandra Sun-Ah Ponting at Sandra.Cynn@uts.edu.au or 0415 263 570.
Note: This research is approved by the UTS Human Research Ethics Committee. If you have any reservations or complaints about the ethical conduct of this project, you may contact the Research Ethics Officer at the Research & Commercialisation Office, UTS.

Appendix Six: Example of interview transcript

The following is a transcript from an in-depth interview with Ben (EcoGuide).

Name:
Organisation:
Position: Owner, freelancer
Area of tour: Queensland, South Pacific, New Zealand
Employment status: Full Time
Age: 55
Years of experience as a guide: 25 years
Education: Bachelors in Biology, ecology and natural resource management

Sandra: Could you briefly give me an explanation on what a typical day at work would be like for you?

Ben: A typical day as a guide at *** [company] is different from a typical day on a two week tour or a bird watching day. A typical day at work would be start the day, be there at 7.30am. Talking to the guests not just the ones that are coming on the guided activity but also those who may be doing things for themselves, just help them to organise their day, providing them with advice on walks and other activities, where they want to go on their own, what they might see answering questions they have. Organise meals and lunches, if it already hasn't been done. So that's the general thing all the guides do at *** [company] we do mornings where you start the day, just get ready for walks that I am taking which involves taking safety equipment, take first aid kits and also you know communication devices radio satellite phones, whatever happens to be and then also things like toilet paper. Utensils making sure that I've got morning tea, obviously making sure I've got all the facilities, just making sure that I've got enough food and water for myself also packing things like a camera, binoculars, a knife just for many number of reasons. It can be something as mundane, unlikely, like someone's glasses' screws falling out of their glasses having to repair it. You've got to be prepared for these things. That is just making sure depending on the weather rain coats and that sort of thing. And then everyone knowing each other's faces, introducing myself to make sure that I get to know everyone's names or learn their first names and remember their first names. Making sure that they have got what they require, proper shoes, suitable footwear, suitable clothing for that particular activity and also raincoats or whatever if the weather is likely to change. If it is a perfect day like today it doesn't matter but if it's going to be changeable weather you need to make sure that they've got layers suitable for those changing conditions, hats and things like that. Also enough water. Asking questions or providing information that they may have, you may not know what knowledge they have but if you can solicit that from that time, asking for their special interest and if they have special interest then you can focus on that during the walk. Just making sure that people are comfortable to ask and share their knowledge. Start out generally, tell people what's on during the journey, if it's a full day journey maybe slowly early on with the interpretation because I like to get people aware of their surroundings. If you are doing a 20km walk you can't be doing it constantly you can't be stopping all the time and asking them to look at this and that, so even on shorter walks I tend to walk slow because there is so much information and make sure that those information are absorbed and people are taking in their surroundings. It's not just

the knowledge but also sparking their interest and their surroundings. I really enjoy it when they appreciate it a bit more so that's the point of the exercise.

Sandra: Could you tell me how and why you became a guide?

Ben: By chance, I used to work for national parks in Queensland and when I left that, I travelled overseas for 18 months and spent 3 months of that in the U.S and Canada visiting national parks and looking at things. I got a little bit interested in interpretation that is still happening there, and when I came back I really didn't know what I was going to do so the first week back in Australia I rang up a friend that was working had a job in *** [company] and the person that answered the phone was the new manager that I have seen. I recognised his voice and he offered me a job over the phone to come and run the camp site at *** [company] as a temporary thing while I looked around. I did that I stayed around for a few weeks and he offered me to stay as long as I'd like so I stayed on and a couple of months later he asked me to become one of the activities people, be a guide so that was it, that's how I got into it just by chance. If he didn't ask me I probably wouldn't have done it I probably would've gone and done something else.

Sandra: So there was no your own motivation to become a guide, it was just by chance

Ben: Just by chance.

Sandra: Have you been in involved in any forms of training, educational programs that is related to guiding?

Ben: No. Not really I think I did one workshop one day at Brisbane forest park but that was more of a, no not really.

Sandra: During the 25 years in the industry as a guide have you noticed any changes or trends in the practice or performance in the Australian ecotour guides in the last 10 years?

Ben: Well yes. Certainly in the level of qualifications the basic qualifications of a guide has increased so whereas 25 years ago people would be guiding just because they were forest people like me happen to be at the right place at the right time. [In the past] often people have very little experience and virtually no qualifications. They may have had a little bit of an interest in plants or something, or bush walking, or they might have done some abseiling. So they get the job and they kind of learn on the job. Very few people then had any formal qualifications. Most of the time people now have a degree of some kind and it's become almost an expectation. Most of the ads these days for guides will require people to have a degree so there's a higher basic qualification in some places.

Sandra: Really.

Ben: It certainly not every where. But through all that it doesn't mean to say that people are getting more passionate or less passionate about it, I think that some how in the past, I think people today it's more a job people tend to do it and they tend to expect to work strict 8 hours a day or something. It's kind of more of a normal job where as in the people did it for a little while and they threw in their heart and soul into this. That is probably with the expectation that they are only doing it for a little while and they were

going to move on to something else but the other thing is where there was and still is the notion that if you drive a bus you can be a guide. And I think from my understanding that still applies in places like North Queensland, almost the basic qualifications for you to get a job as a guide is to have a bus license you've got a bus license that's alright we will make you a guide you know you can just learn the guiding stuff as you go so I think that applies still does apply a lot now.

Sandra: You've mentioned the changes in terms of people having more qualifications as in degrees, do you mean like university degrees or TAFE

Ben: No, like university degrees. Most jobs say at *** [employer name] they've had ads in the last 15 years they've advertised for activities staff [including guides] almost all of those ads asked for someone with a degree like in environmental science or something along those lines.

Sandra: So why do you think there's been an increase of organisations asking for people with degrees to do the job?

Ben: I think one side of the thing is that there are more people out there with degrees then there were 25 years ago especially environmental science degrees so you know people can be a little bit, employers can have those expectations and expect people with degrees to apply whereas 25 years ago probably most people with degrees will find something else to do. I'm sure it's driven, well the serious players in ecotourism I think it's driven by the desire to be more professional. I think that's driven by the whole process you know the ecocertification accreditation things where the requirements are you provide a high level of interpretation and things that's part of it, I think that's driven the desire for having staff with more qualifications because the expectation now with those certification, expectation by the clients the customers of these places are that the guides will be knowledgeable and qualified.

Sandra: Do you think the clients and guests actually recognise these certification programs?

Ben: Um, I think a lot of them do. I'm not sure about the ecoguide because there's not a lot of ecoguides out there, it's not a brand that is particularly well known. I think the ecoaccrediation is recognised I don't know the percentage but it's known.

Sandra: Just going back on ecotour guiding, what do you think a job of an ecotour guide is?

Ben: Well, it [work] is to provide a high level of interpretation within guided activities, but it's also to provide all those other things guiding such as safety, security, being a friend and providing a comfortable and friendly and safe environment in which people to walk and to enjoy natural places. As well as that it's providing information that is presented in a way that makes people think rather than just presenting it as pure facts and knowledge. It's trying to make that experience an interactive one but one that people will go away and make them thinking about their experience and hopefully thinking about when they go away with lessons that they can apply in their own lives. If they go away with just a set of facts and knowledge, the ecoguide hasn't achieved their job. They've got to go away buzzing with the experience and thinking about how they

can apply some of the knowledge and lessons they have learned in their own environment. It's providing information that is presented in a way that makes people think rather than just presenting it as pure facts and knowledge.

Sandra: So you've mentioned what a guide's influence can be on the visitors and the environment, what do you think it is to a business?

Ben: Well, good interpretation good guiding is a positive influence because it's just a part for the people that enjoy that experience and that's part of enjoying the whole experience. The key part of it. Undara lava tubes is a good example when I took a tour there recently when we went for the tubes the experience was amazing I mean it was great to go to those tubes but the presentation of it was terrible. People were going "You know it's a wonderful place but we couldn't understand what the guide was saying, talking too fast" so I was there to fill in their gaps and their knowledge but what could've been an amazing experience just came a satisfactory one. Their influence on how the experience was, the food the accommodation was good enough for me but the bloody guide was awful. You want them to be going away saying "Wow that was amazing." But they were going "Hmmm?" To me if people are doing guided activities if you came to *** [tour location] on your own that's fine but those who do the guided activities if they don't go away with a really positive guided activities then they will go away feeling other things. They will go away with a very positive experience of their holiday.

Sandra: What do you think it takes to carry out your job successfully?

Ben: Well you've got to have knowledge for one thing, a good strong set of knowledge of the environment, you have to be very patient, you have to have very good presentation skills, you've got to be friendly and sociable, and you've got to be a very carrying person really. Also you've got to have a certain knowledge of safety and that sort of thing so you've got to have skills that apply in case something goes wrong, you've just got to be really sincere people. Good knowledge, presentation skills, sincere, honest, friendly caring people not too much to ask is it?

Sandra: Are you a member of any of the guiding organisations or associations?

Ben: The EA, GOA. I was in IAA but I haven't renewed my subscription this year.

Sandra: Is there a reason why you didn't?

Sandra: It was getting just a bit too expensive really. All of those things that I am paying, I am in Birds Australia and other things as well and you know there's only so much a small business like mine can afford. It has been costing me more than $1,000 a year and it's getting a bit too much.

Sandra: What were the reasons for joining these?

Ben: Well, yea. One is I suppose industry credibility when you are out there selling yourself I think it's good to be able to say that you are a member of an organisation there's something, I don't know whether people look at it or not but I think people, I've met a quite a few of clients and potential clients that look at that and see that as just as

important as having a degree and things it just shows that you're not only out there advertising yourself but you are involved in the industry. Also I think it looks good on the business card, on the website it's a bit of a marketing thing from that point of view. The other thing is just being involved if you are going to take the industry seriously, if you want to be a part of it, I think you need to be active in the industry so you can have a say. If there are aspects of the industry that needs involving I am prepared to get in there and try to do something about it and not just by selling my say knowledge as a consultant but also being actively involved in the organisations then it's more about solving the problem than just criticizing. By supporting industry associations you are helping to be a part of that so there's no problems.

Sandra: Did you get what you were looking for by joining these associations?

Ben: Um.... The problem with the IAA I didn't, see a lot of that comes down to how much you are prepared to get involved. You get out of it what you put into. It is very true. With the IAA I didn't really get involved and that was that, so it didn't really do me any good. With GOA I was involved in the process of the steering committee for the national accreditation system, sort of an accreditation, I am now having some discussions with people about that. With the EA I have been more involved and I've been to a few conferences and I won the award for ecoguiding, I haven't got much out of it as I'd like to at this stage. I have offered to get more involved and that offered hasn't been taken up so I've got to follow that up as well. For example, for a long time I have offered to be an ecoguide assessor and they're not doing anything about it, I keep offering. I've also offered to be on the steering committee for the ecoguiding committee and again, I was asked and I said yes and again there hasn't been any follow up to that. Again, in that sense I'm probably not getting out of it as much as I expected. A lot of the EA stuff is a lot of marketing support for business and I'm probably not, I am not big enough to take advantage of that so, and that's ok it's my choice. So the simple answer is that with the EA I'm probably getting some of the expectations there's room for more, GOA is not really going anywhere at this stage so I need to get more involved and with the IAA I pulled out because I wasn't getting much out of it.

Sandra: When you became certified with ecoguide from the EA what made you seek this certification?

Ben: I think it's important that we have professional guides. I've been a guide for so long most of the people come and go in the industry and as a result the standards are very low. I want to be part of the process that raise the standards so I saw that as an opportunity to do that by getting a certification myself and setting an example and then helping other people. Helping other people is proving to be more difficult but so, that was my main motivation to be part of the process that is going to raise the bar. For years now I've been saying that we need to have a career structure for guides. Guides are just seen as bus drivers and tell a few jokes but there's more to it than that.

Sandra: And do you think the EA is doing that?

Ben: No. No I don't because they haven't really promoted it and they haven't pushed operators and things to get involved and therefore I think that's where the drive is going to be from the operators' than the guides themselves. Guides don't get paid very much for them to go and spend three, four, five hundred dollars on getting a qualification and

accreditation then they also have to do Cert III which is a lot of money. To do that for something that you are only going to do for a couple of years and low pay, and there not going to get an increase in pay or extra support from the employer to do it, even if they want to do it they simply can't afford to. So I think the drive has to come from operators and perhaps from government support as well.

Sandra: Right. You've mentioned accreditation raising the standards, do you think it does that as well?

Ben: If it was more universal and there were far more guides doing it and there's an expectation that guides should have these certain qualifications to do their job then yes I do think it will raise the bar.

Sandra: So how did you find out about this certification program?

Ben: I've been involved in the EA right from the beginning.

Sandra: How long have you been certified?

Ben: Um, that's a good question. I've got to go have a look at it. When I went out on my own, when I was at *** [company]I had the forms there but you know, I wasn't getting any push from *** [company] and you know it was pretty busy and I kept putting it off. But since I went out on my own I said I need to do this I've got to go support the industry, also it will help me and it did I mean straight away I won the award. It was very helpful.

Sandra: So how did you feel when you first became certified?

Ben: I felt wonderful, just this joy of, "ahhhh". I was very pleased because I put quite a lot into the submission and things. I was fortunate because of my experience it wasn't a long process I've received recognition of prior learning, so it was a fairly simple process for me. I was really pleased. I think it's an honour, I think it's quite nice to have that sort of qualification.

Sandra: Was it something that you were expecting?

Ben: Oh yea, I expected to get it I didn't expect to get knocked back.

Sandra: After you got certified, do you think the certification made an influence on you as a guide in the way you do things?

Ben: No. Not really because I haven't changed the way I do things. I've been doing it for so long you see.

Sandra: It didn't change the way you did things as a guide but you felt happy when you got it

Ben: Yea, I guess it was good for me but also I felt it was helping the industry as well. Because I suppose I am considered to be a senior guide if you'd like, I felt it was important that people like me to get involved.

Sandra: Was there anything you didn't get out of certification that you were expecting?

Ben: No.

Sandra: What do you think the advantages or disadvantages of being a certified guide?

Ben: Advantages. Well to be honest, this is part of the problem because there isn't much of advantages. Yes, it was big for me because almost immediately I won the national ecoguide award. They paid for me to go to the conference in Tasmania and that sort of thing. Yes it was big advantage but had it not happened, there isn't very much of an advantage. I'm a registered EcoGuide somewhere in the EA website and things but no one has ever approached me because they said, "I saw you that you were an EcoGuide we'd like to employ you.", or whatever. So I don't know that apart from saying that I am and people saying "Oh that's nice.", there hasn't been a big advantages. I mean that's the problem with the whole system because there isn't much advantage.

Sandra: What made you chose the EA program as opposed to other types?

Ben: Probably because I have been involved with the EA right from its inception and when *** [individual's name] was getting it all started. So I've always been involved through *** [company name] and I've been to a few of the conferences and things so I've always supported their development. So it was a logical progression to their accreditation rather than anything else. But also it's the only one that has the ecotourism focus.

Sandra: Sure. In your opinion how important is on the job experience as opposed to training, educational programs, certification and the like?

Ben: I think it's very important to have a lot of experience but of course you can only get it from being there. There are a lot of experienced guides that are still not very good so as well as their experience is not enough I think these days you need to have all these other things like training but I think the combination of the experience and training is important. Because you see people out there with experiences that doesn't seem to get any better and they're not going to get any better unless they get training so experience alone is not enough.

Sandra: You've mentioned the word professional couple of times in the interview, how would you define a professional ecotour guide?

Ben: Well someone who's very passionate about it, someone who is prepared to constantly learning and improve their skills and their knowledge.

Sandra: It's interesting you've just mentioned full time do you think that's quite important to be a professional ecotour guide?

Ben: Auh, well I think that's not the right term. I mean you can still be thoroughly professional and still be casual or whatever. Part of the problem of the industry is that a lot of this work is casual, and so you can still be thoroughly professional and be a casual employee, but the problem is so many of the jobs especially in North Queensland and

the Great Barrier Reef, in those areas they are casual so you end up with a casual approach too. They end up doing this for a bit and they are moving on. So they never really get to be good. All these graduates from marine biology working as casual guides, only a few of them can stay on all the time or full-time. Most of them are on casual on slow times but because of that nature of casual employment it means it's really hard for people to develop almost their life - buying a house and having a family. People ask you well what do you do and you say "I'm a casual tour guide", people will say "go get a real job". So as long as that approach is there, you are not only going to develop a professional approach. All I'm saying is that people who have their professional approach and their attitude and the ones that make a career out of it, it is very difficult. So that's where the whole industry has to look at, how they employ people and how they support people. If you want people to be professional at their jobs you need to pay them accordingly and treat them well.

Sandra: Right. Do you see yourself as a professional ecotour guide?

Ben: Yea.

Sandra: Why would you say that?

Ben: Well because I am committed and I am very focused and I'm making a living out of it and I'm doing it on a regular basis and I think I've got the right attitude towards it and I think I am pretty good at what I do.

Sandra: Do you think Australian ecotour guides in general could be described as professionals?

Ben: Some of them but no, not really.

Sandra: Do you see guiding as a long term career for you.

Ben: Well yeah, after 25 years.

Sandra: That's right 25 years.

Ben: I will keep doing guiding until I drop. Probably until I can't do it anymore because I enjoy doing it. I want to make a difference for nature.

Sandra: Wow

Ben: I enjoy doing it, but I certainly intend to do consulting and things involved in guiding because guiding itself isn't sufficient to provide enough income. If I could make enough income out of guiding I would but it's very hard to do that, it just doesn't pay enough.

Sandra: Would that be the most dissatisfying aspect of the job?

Ben: Probably, no matter how good you are, guiding alone, it's hard to earn a reasonable income because guiding is not recognised as being valued high enough as part of the whole ecotourism experience or hospitality in general.

Sandra: What aspects of the job makes you most satisfied?

Ben: Being in wonderful places where you meet people and being able to share those places with interesting and interested people.

Sandra: Do you intend to maintain your ecoguide certification?

Ben: Yes.

Sandra: Is there a reason?

Ben: Because I think it's [EcoGuide] primary. I think it's valued and I hope it's going to grow. And if I, as a senior person, pull out I think that's another nail in the coffin. I might be reading too much into that but I think it's important that those of us that are involved support it.

Sandra: Do you want make any other comments or the value of EA's certification process

Ben: I think that the association and the industry needs to give it a lot more support to make it successful.

Appendix Seven: Customers' recognition and perceived values of the EcoGuide Program

The following data collected from the tourists' surveys are categorised into themes. It is also to note that none of the tourists that went on tours with EcoGuides were aware of their guides' certification with the EcoGuide Program.

1. Ecotour guides need to be certified for:
    - Knowledge/Skills

"So they can give other people knowledge and know what they are talking about." (19-24 years old, Australian female)

"So that the guide can present a common and knowledgeable tour." (50-59 years old, Canadian female)

"They can learn better ways to conduct their ecotours." (19-24 years old, Australian female)

"An educated population demands valid information." (60 years and over, Australian male)

"If that means more knowledge." (50-59 years old, New Zealander female)

"So they can be properly knowledgeable." (19-24 years old, American female)

"To give accurate information to visitors." (60 years and over, Australian female)

- Standards/Guarantee

"Make the ecotour more professional." (19-24 years old, Chinese female)

"It would be helpful in choosing the level of tour you want." (50-59 years old, American female)

"To ensure a high standard in the industry." (40-49 years old, Australian male)

"For professional standards." (25-29 years old, Australian male)

"To ensure that you booked a qualified tour, supporting the right people." (19-24 years old, German male)

"Otherwise everybody can be a guide." (25-29 years old, Swiss male)

"Perhaps the message regarding the environment-care can be delivered in a consistent way." (30-39 years old, Australian female)

"Then we definitely know he 'knows' what he is talking about." (40-49 years old, Australian female)

"Assure quality for guests." (25-29 years old, Dutch male)

"Proves they are 'eco'." (19-24 years old, British male)

"Makes sure their information is accurate." (60 years and over, American female)

"We can be certain the information is correct." (60 years and over, Australian female)

"Need to guarantee expertise." (60 and more years, American male)

2. Ecotour guides do not need to be certified because of:

- Personal Experience/Communication

"May not need formal programs, experience may be enough." (40-49 years old, American female)

"They tend to be over educated and cannot communicate with every day people with down to earth experiences." (50-59 years old, Australian female)

"I think it really depends on how much the person is committed to the profession. Programs are not important." (19-24 years old, Japanese female)

"The person is important and his guiding." (25-29 years old, Germen female)

"When you don't like the person it is not important." (25-29 years old, Germen male)

- Satisfaction with no certification

"After all, Steve Irwin was self-educated!" (40-49 years old, American male)

"He [the non-certified ecotour guide] had all information that was required." (40-49 years old, Australian female)

"All of the guides that I have known have been very competent." (50-59 years old, American male)

"It's not an absolute necessity, I don't believe in diplomas to make so good at something." (19-24 years old, French female)

Appendix Eight: Additional interview data

The following interview data are in accordance with the subheadings in Chapter Eight.

Seasonality and Long Hours

> It does take a lot of time up being a guide because you can be away for up to 3 weeks at a time and you're back for probably back for 4-5 days and you're gone again and you do this for 8 months and basically you've got to earn in the 8 months enough to carry you for 12 months. That's kind of how it works. A bit like if I was a farmer. (Marco, non-certified ecotour guide)

> Because as we know there's a need for portability of recognition and that's important for guides because a lot of guides move around, given that the work they do is seasonal. (Brian, key industry stakeholder)

> They're more part-time and they're more casual than what they may have hoped for in the industry. It's certainly something that we've seen over quite a period of time. I mean that's not to say that, some of our graduates haven't had reasonably long fruitful careers. That's not the case, but nevertheless there's still significant issues, I think, with some of the temporariness of their position. in the industry (Chris, key industry stakeholder)

Low Income for Professional Work (Ecotour guides)

> I am going to get lots of work but in the end our team, this is all confidential stuff but we, our guide cost in terms, and I can say this as the coordinator is about $58,000 so you've got to split that amongst 6 people. So it's not really and so what happened was quite a few people came down for interviews from Sydney, in fact some of them would come down ... They soon discovered when they moved here, that there wasn't a living to be made from it? They had to do something else? And some of them are still around the area but in the end they had to move away to put together satisfactory distance. (Marco, non-certified ecotour guide)

> When I took the job at *** [employer name] the first thing that really struck me was how they treat their staff. It's just like, wow! Not necessarily me because when I went over there I had a bit of a standing if you'd like, although it didn't really reflect on the money because they paid everyone pretty badly. But I think I got $30,000 a year or something like that, with teaching [Will's previous occupation] you get $55,000 or whatever ... The money they get paid $11-$12 an hour for a guide who is driving a half a million dollar bus and looking after 50 people. It sort of hits you in the face and you think wow! It's actually not fair and they are working from 6 in the morning until bloody 11 at night. (Will, EcoGuide)
>
> What can drive me out of the industry is the lack of pay and I mean that it is the trouble in the hospitality industry everywhere because I consider guiding to be tied in very very closely with the

hospitality industry. The hospitality industry in this particular employment market is finding it very very difficult, and it's very very difficult this year again to get decent tour guides. (Marcus, EcoGuide)

Low income for Professional Work (Key industry stakeholders)

Maybe the one is the communication side of things and also knowledge of and care and respect for the environment would be another one, absolutely. So the environment that you're in, you obviously feel passionate about it and you're willing to do everything to protect it whereas an un-professional guide might be more interested in a pay check at the end of the week or whatever it happens to do. (Lance, key industry stakeholder)

We're talking about people here that, people don't get into the guiding sector of the industry to make lots of money. (Brian, key industry stakeholder)

The relationship between Work Experience and Professionalism

It's [experience] absolutely the key, not just years on the job but what's important is the system ... Like a new guide has a flat tyre, panics, and the guests are all freaking out if the driver freaks out. I mean this happened with a new driver the other day. Just didn't know what to do. He was obviously nervous. If I have a flat tyre I would say "Ok, we're going to walk that way for 15kms if you want to start walking I will fix the tyre and meet you there in half an hour so." ... The guy [previous employer] at *** [location] said to me you need 3 days to be a tour guide. I know you are going to be crap on the first day. You'll be better on your second day. If you're good enough on the third day I will send some people along to see, if I think you are good enough on the third day you've got the job if you're not you're out of here. After that he said "I know you are going to get better and better at it.", and I think it's a very wise understanding of this job. There is no way of training for it, you've got to do it, you've got to basically get on the bus and do it. And, if you are the right type of person, you'll like it and you'll be doing a good job at it. (Don, EcoGuide)

I was talking with some of my colleagues about what makes a good tour guide and it comes back to someone who's got authenticity. Being able to connect you with the place that they know about ... And the thing that I really picked up on was the tour guides that did a really good job were the ones that had personal experiences in the places that they were talking about. And there's that authenticity issue but it was belief in the accuracy of the information and knowing people that were connected to the place and the event that they were talking about. That's what makes a good ecotour guide. You can't actually give that to people. They have to actually experience it for themselves and no one currently in the ecotour industry is going to give that stuff to people and that's where I think. We fall down a lot. We train someone to give out information, but we can't really train people to be representative of the place ... Doing an EcoCertification can't give you that stuff. Like I said if you look close it's the competency based. All they'll give you is "Alright you're competent in it.", but just because you're competent at something doesn't make you excel

at something. It comes back to memorable guides that you've ever been with. They're highly competent in their skills and their knowledge base is extremely broad, extremely detailed, and they have a perfect connection to it all. Their lives are woven through it all. So, and that makes it real for people, and it gets people's attention. You tend to listen more attentively, and if there are messages that are woven through the talk you've got a good guide, they'll be touching on the themes and messages all the way through and you can pick up on them. You don't have to be someone that's done the training or experience that I've had to be able to pick up on them. The average person can pick up on that. To some degree you can be trained to deliver those messages, but if it's just from a person that's done the training and learnt it all from a book they don't seem to be authentic. (Gil, key industry stakeholder)

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