

# Sustainability Tools for Beach Management: Awareness of Integrated Coastal Zone Management and Current Compliance with Blue Flag Criteria at Eastern Beach in East London, South Africa



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**Abstract** Marine and coastal tourism continues to be documented globally as a vital niche of the tourism industry. In South Africa, various statutory beach management tools such as Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and the Blue Flag ecolabel exist, to facilitate the management of beaches for environmental sustainability. South Africa hosts a few well-managed beaches that have Blue Flag accreditation. Yet, several beaches lack resources, inclusive development and effective implementation of sustainable beach management tools. This is a widespread problem, which calls for urgent attention to sustainable marine and coastal tourism management. The focus of this research is on Eastern Beach in East London, which suffers from the abovementioned problems. This paper aimed to investigate sustainability tools for beach management in the context of Eastern Beach, particularly the awareness of ICZM and current compliance with Blue Flag criteria (with a view to attaining this status in future). Via virtual semi-structured interviews with twenty participants, who were tourism stakeholders, various closed and open-ended questions were posed. A few participants voiced that ICZM is useful for environmental conservation, planning and local beach upgrade programmes. Moreover, most participants voiced challenges regarding insufficient implementation of ICZM at Eastern beach. In terms of Blue Flag compliance, findings illustrate noncompliance concerning environmental education and information criteria, with no information to guide and educate users on appropriate use of the beach. As a result of challenges with sewage discharge to the sea, non-compliance with water quality criteria was reported, along with noncompliance regarding environmental management criteria, due to limited rest rooms and inadequate ablution facilities. Participants reported compliance with safety and services criteria, despite lacking emergency plans to cope with pollution risks. Through these management tools, this beach could be uplifted as a coastal

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tourist attraction, be accredited with Blue Flag status and managed sustainably for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

**Keywords** Sustainability · Marine and coastal tourism · Beach management · Integrated Coastal Zone Management · Blue Flag criteria · Blue Flag status

**JEL Classification** Fishing tourism · Maritime policy · Cultural ports

## 1 Introduction

Globally and locally, the tourism industry is continuously growing and has become an economically important sector for both developing and developed nations (León-Gómez et al., 2021). Tourism has economic, social and cultural significances and offers real prospects for sustainable and inclusive coastal and marine development (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2021). Marine and coastal tourism therefore continues to be documented as a vital niche (León-Gómez et al., 2021). Administrations are globally encouraging it due to its high multiplier effects with respect to the generation of employment, increase in foreign exchange earnings and stimulation of supply sectors such as transport, hospitality and gaming. These spin-offs can alleviate poverty and improve the living standards for local communities (Khan et al., 2021). Coastal and marine regions are, however, fragile and complex ecosystems, with a variety of land uses (Sakellariadou, 2007). The Ecosystems Approach (EA) has been globally presented and emerged as a leading paradigm for managing coastal and marine ecosystems (Sardá et al., 2015). This approach presents new prospects for sustainable use of the sea and improves understanding of how marine socio-ecological systems operate, how they generate goods and services, as well as how these benefits are captured and can be sustained (Farmer et al., 2012). The intense use of beaches has forced beach administrators to introduce sustainable beach management tools, such as the use of Performance Awards (for example, Blue Flag Ecolabel) and Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

The Blue Flag ecolabel remains a sought-after ecolabel (Foundation for Environmental Education, 2006), dating back to the 1980s (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). It applies environmental law (Coetzee, 2016) and focuses on the sustainable ecological management of beaches, marinas and boating tourism operators (Klein & Dodds, 2017). As a beach management tool, it plays two important roles—to guide the tourism industry to improve its performance by supporting operational guidelines; and to communicate to beach users the importance of and compliance with environmental, educational, safety and accessibility standards (Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa, 2021).

ICZM, on the other hand, is a tool to develop and use coastal natural resources to protect the best interests of the public and economy, while ensuring ecological sustainability (McLean & Glazewski, 2009; South Africa, 2016). Over the years,

ICZM has become a key model for sustainable development in coastal destinations. It has emerged in different contexts and been adopted for various purposes (Ameersingh, 2016; Phillips & Jones, 2005).

In South Africa, various statutory beach management tools, including ICZM and Blue Flag ecolabel exist, to facilitate the management of beaches for environmental sustainability (WESSA, 2021). The country currently hosts a few well-managed beaches that have Blue Flag status. As of 2021, 51 beaches across the provinces of the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal have been accredited with Blue Flag status. The Eastern Cape, however, contains only seven of these (Business Tech, 2021; WESSA, 2021), in spite of beach tourism being a strong component of the province's economic growth, drawing domestic and international tourists (Klein & Dodds, 2017). The province's coastline is rich with natural biodiversity and beautiful beaches such as Eastern Beach in East London, which currently does not have Blue Flag status. Moreover, several beaches lack resources, inclusive development and effective implementation of sustainable beach management tools. This is a widespread problem, which calls for urgent attention to sustainable marine and coastal tourism management. Therefore, the focus of this research is on Eastern Beach in East London, which suffers from the abovementioned problems. This paper aimed to investigate sustainability tools for beach management in the context of Eastern Beach, particularly the awareness of ICZM and current compliance with Blue Flag criteria (with a view to attaining this status in future).

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 *Statutory Tools for Sustainable Tourism Development in South Africa*

South Africa implemented a compulsory Tourism White Paper of 1996 to administer sustainable tourism development as a key driver to strengthen the country's tourism sector (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 1996). Post the inception of this policy, the country continued to implement coastal and marine tourism policies, which aimed at improving coastal sustainable tourism (Coetzee, 2016; National Department of Tourism, 2016). Amongst these, the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA) 107 of 1998, the National Tourism Sector Strategy of 2011, as well as the Integrated Coastal Management Act (ICMA) 24 of 2008 are noteworthy in the context of this paper and supplement the White Paper agenda (South Africa, 2016). Furthermore, the integrated environmental management (IEM) agenda in the country encourages coastal tourist destinations to emphasise the impacts of human activities on coastal or marine resources (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, 2017). The National Development Plan 2030 was also implemented and currently presents a similar notion of coastal or marine sustainability, to ensure that coastal ecosystems are conserved for current and future generations (South Africa,

2016). An Integrated Coastal Management programme has been developed over the past few decades to address multiple-use conflicts, plan for new uses and protect vulnerable ecosystems and marine biodiversity. The ICMA is classified as an adaptable multi-sectoral and governmental method that has proved to strike a balance between the development, use and protection of coastal surroundings (South African Institute of International Affairs, 2015).

## ***2.2 Integrated Coastal Zone Management as a Sustainability Tool***

Post the adoption of the ICMA, the country's approach towards coastal management transformed from being a conservation focused and bureaucratic approach, into a more human inclusive development based on sustainable development goals (SAIIA, 2015). In addition, the ICMA was later amended to ICM Act 36 of 2014, to clarify responsibilities for the organs of state, with reference to coastal areas (DEA, 2012). It has since been a baseline for ICZM and sustainable coastal development for coastal areas (DEA, 2012; SAIIA, 2015). ICZM relates to the effective conservation and utilisation of the coast, as a dynamic ecosystem at the interface between land and sea (Ameersingh, 2016). It is also considered as a beach management tool, aiming to ensure that development in the coastal zone is regulated to protect intrinsic environmental features and ecological processes (Glavovic, 2006). In addition, the Blue Flag programme is another valued instrument within the Integrated Environmental Management toolbox for sustainable tourism development and management. Due to its importance, South Africa adopted it and becomes the first country outside the European continent to be accorded Blue Flag accreditation rights for its beaches in 2001 (Blue Flag South Africa, 2020).

## ***2.3 Blue Flag Ecolabel as a Sustainability Tool***

Awareness of the Blue Flag ecolabel remains limited in most developing countries, like South Africa. Yet, the concept of beach and marine tourism in the country continues to be directly framed around sustainable standards of seashores, with the intention to promote and enhance coastal tourism (DEA, 2012; Lucrezi et al., 2016). This is possible with working beach management tools such as Blue Flag ecolabel. The literature positions the Blue Flag ecolabel as a sensitive beach management tool, which reinforces environmental sustainability (BFSA, 2020). The country adopted this ecolabel to utilise it as a sustainable approach, which ensures that local beaches can be promoted for their sustainable management, international standard of cleanliness, safety and environmental responsiveness (BFSA, 2020; NDT, 2016). The Blue

Flag criteria provide guidelines regarding the processes to obtain certification, as well as the related administrative processes to maintain the status (WESSA, 2021).

The Blue Flag programme requires beaches to meet 33 criteria, grouped under environmental education and information; water quality; environmental management; and safety and service (WESSA, 2021). It is vital that beach management or municipal representatives ensure that water quality aligns with internationally recognised standards (McKenna et al., 2011) and with the Blue Flag necessities regarding the microbiological parameter *Escherichia coli* (faecal coli bacteria) and intestinal enterococci (streptococci) (FEE, 2006). The Blue Flag award is given to all beaches that pass the criteria for a specific season (which officially opens on 1 December annually). Post the award, beaches must continue to comply with the standards set (Silwana, 2015) or risk losing this status. While South Africa's Blue Flag beaches do increase the attractiveness and standing of South Africa as an international destination (BFSA, 2020; Slatter & Mearns, 2018), since the award is moderately new in the country, a consideration of sustainability tools for better development and management of these local beaches is vital. If not, it may take more time for international tourists to visit the country due to its accredited beaches and for locals to notice the value of the award and its associated improvement in beach quality standards (Nahman & Rigby, 2008).

### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 *Sampling Technique, Sample Size, Inclusion Criteria, Participants and Ethical Considerations*

The primary researcher approached public and private stakeholders who are managers within their organisations. These participants are involved in tourism planning, coastal development and environmental management of East London's coastal attractions. Out of 52 active tourism stakeholders (Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality, 2018), purposive sampling was used to create a final sample of 20 (ten public and ten private stakeholders). Purposive sampling is used to select individuals or groups of individuals that are knowledgeable about the phenomenon of interest (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This approach assists in ensuring the validity and reliability of the data gathered (Palys, 2008). The inclusion criteria were that participants needed to be between the ages of 18 and 65 and be employed as a public or private tourism stakeholder in East London. Participants provided informed consent and anonymity was assured. Prior to the fieldwork, ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Applied Management at the University of South Africa.

### ***3.2 Research Instrument***

Primary data collection was done via virtual semi-structured interviews, based on an interview guide, whereby various closed and open-ended questions were posed. The questions were informed by literature and finalised by the primary researcher. The virtual nature of interviews was triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions imposed compelled the use of virtual communication tools and provided an opportunity to grow knowledge and understanding regarding using information technology effectively in fieldwork (Sah et al., 2020). Microsoft Teams (MS) was utilised to this end, with each interview being recorded with the consent of the participant.

### ***3.3 Study Area***

Eastern Beach in East London, which falls with the Eastern Cape province of South Africa, was the study site for this research (Fig. 1). The city of East London is found on the southeast coast of South Africa, within the Buffalo City Metropolitan Municipality (BCMM). East London's population is over 267 000 and covers 168,86 km<sup>2</sup> (Buffalo City Metropolitan Development Agency, 2016). BCMM is the local tourism district of East London (Ebomah et al., 2019).

### ***3.4 Data Analysis***

To assist the analysis, ATLAS.ti, version 9.0.18 was used. The use of ATLAS.ti allowed transcribed text to be linked back to original recordings and facilitated the organisation of codes, sub-codes and comment writing (Queiros & Mearns, 2019) for the open-ended questions. The recorded interviews were transcribed into word documents, the data was cleaned and then coded with codes and sub-codes developed by the primary researcher based on the themes emerging from the data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). Quotations are used to substantiate codes and are cited according to the participant number and the line within the transcript where the quote comes from. For example, "P9:54" refers to Participant 9, line 54. Quantitative questions are reported as per the number of responses, followed by a discussion of these findings.



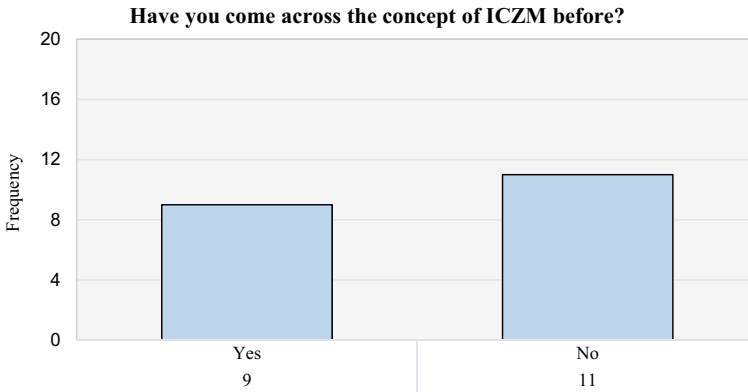
Fig. 1 Location of Eastern Beach within East London (East London Travel Guide, 2021)

## 4 Results

The findings in this paper are divided into two sections according to the two sustainability tools for beach management that form the focus of this paper, namely awareness of **Integrated Coastal Zone Management** and compliance of Eastern Beach with **Blue Flag** criteria. These findings are interpreted below, where relevant, findings are also compared with those of previous studies.

### *Awareness of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)*

Regarding awareness of ICZM, participants were asked a closed question on whether they had come across the concept of ICZM before. Their responses are depicted in Fig. 2. The majority (eleven) of these participants were unfamiliar with ICZM. Nine



**Fig. 2** Stakeholder awareness of ICZM

**Table 1** Code frequencies for Integrated Coastal Zone Management

Code: Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM)	
Sub-codes	Public and private stakeholders
ICZM: Framework use/application	14
ICZM: No ICZM implementation	12
Total	26

indicated that they had come across the concept before and were familiar with it from the organisations they work for.

In addition to the quantitative question above, participants were also asked a qualitative question relating to ICZM, namely “If yes, how is it used in your work?” Findings from this question are demonstrated in Table 1. Under the main code of ‘Integrated coastal zone management (ICZM)’, two sub-codes developed: ‘Framework use/application’ with 14 quotes and ‘No ICZM implementation’ with 12 quotes. These sub-codes capture how public and private stakeholders use ICZM in their organisations as well as responses regarding a lack of ICZM implementation.

#### 4.1 Framework Use/Application

The sub-code of ‘Framework use/application’ contained 14 quotations and responses were obtained from participants who had come across the concept of ICZM before. One confirmed that ICZM was adopted for a **beach development programme**: “... so, from my office, what we’ve also done has to do with what is called an **Integrated Beach Programme (IBP)** for all the beaches from East to West of East London”



(P3:123). Results revealed that the use of ICZM relates to environmental conservation and planning, as evidenced in the following quotations:

When I am developing management plans, then we have to look at ... what is going on in that protection zone, to see what activities are appropriate or not appropriate in that protected zone, so it's almost proactive planning (P4:77–79).

... I have used it in the planning side of things (P4:76).

I think it is a good tool for planning ... (P14:71),

The municipality is updated with that, and it is being used (P21:33).

Our organisation has a development unit, and we have a biodiversity and conservation unit, so you know it might have affected people within those units or they would have been part of that, but not from the marketing perspective (P18:40).

... it has actually been on a superficial level, I think in previous years, work was done to protect the shoreline in Nahoon Beach ... (P20:28).

I have heard about it in the areas where we manage the national reserves and the identified one was East London Coast Nature Reserve (P19:47).

The ICZM framework remains a recognised science-driven management approach for capacity development and sustainability, for all coastal tourist destinations like East London (Glavovic, 2006; Quesada et al., 2018; Republic of South Africa, 2003; United Nations Environmental Programme, 2010).

## 4.2 No ICZM Implementation

The sub-code of 'No ICZM implementation' contained 12 quotations. Implementation challenges emerged strongly in the data, as cited in the following quotations:

... I think implementation has been a challenge and I don't think its high on the priority list for Buffalo City (P2:97).

I have heard of it, but the plans in the metro, in my opinion, possibly have failed to implement that appropriately (P3:128).

... I think it's very limited in terms of actual implementation, so there are challenges with implementation (P14:71).

I've seen such plans and I believe BCMM should have that plan, so it is applicable, but it is not implemented ... (P10:31).

Results revealed that a gap exists concerning ICZM [*"I think there is a gap there"* (P4:81)] and things are fragmented [*"Perhaps things are fragmented and incoherent, I cannot exactly pinpoint as to what is the problem"* (P6:38)]. Even after 40 years of ICZM introduction around the world, there are still numerous challenges to be overcome with regard to its implementation (SAIIA, 2015). If a beach is missing ICZM, it is most likely that public awareness regarding complexities of the coastal area and active participation in the management of the coast becomes disjointed too (DEA, 2012; Republic of South Africa, 2003, 2008).

### ***Compliance of Eastern Beach with Blue Flag Criteria***

The current section provides results regarding compliance of Eastern Beach with Blue Flag criteria. The questions posed to participants in this section were closed questions in the form of statements derived from the mandatory Blue Flag criteria (Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5). The results are followed by discussions. Participants were asked to answer ‘Yes’, ‘No’ or ‘Not sure’.

**Table 2** Environmental education and information criteria

Environmental education and information criteria		Response frequency		
		Yes	No	Not sure
1	There is information presently displayed regarding the Blue Flag ecolabel at the Eastern Beach	0	17.0	3.0
2	Eastern Beach is promoting environmental education activities for the beach users	4.0	15.0	1.0
3	A beach map indicating the different facilities available is currently displayed at the Eastern Beach	10.0	10.0	0.0
4	Eastern Beach is currently offering a Code of Conduct, which is displayed and guiding beach users about the appropriate use of the beach and surrounding areas	11.0	8.0	1.0

**Table 3** Water quality criteria

Water quality criteria		Response frequency		
		Yes	No	Not sure
1	Eastern Beach is currently complying with water quality sampling and frequency requirements for the Blue Flag beaches	4.0	11.0	5.0
2	There is perceived industrial, wastewater or sewage-related discharges, currently affecting Eastern Beach	17.0	2.0	1.0
3	Eastern Beach is fully complying with the standards and requirements for water quality analysis	0.0	11.0	9.0

**Table 4** Environmental management criteria

Environmental management		Response frequency		
		Yes	No	Not Sure
1	A beach management committee appointed by the local authority/beach operator for the Eastern Beach already exists	3.0	13.0	4.0
2	Eastern Beach has clean facilities, which are meeting required standards for Blue Flag beaches	1.0	17.0	2.0
3	Facilities for the separation of recyclable waste materials (glass, tins, dry and wet waste), exist at Eastern Beach	5.0	15.0	0.0
4	At Eastern Beach, there is an adequate number of restrooms and ablution facilities for beach users	2.0	17.0	1.0
5	Eastern Beach has strict and controlled measures that are guiding the access of dogs and other domestic animals	6.0	14.0	0.0

**Table 5** Safety and services criteria

Safety and services		Response frequency		
		Yes	No	Not sure
1	Appropriate public safety control measures currently exist for beach users at Eastern Beach	13.0	5.0	2.0
2	Essential facilities and access for physically disabled visitors or residents already exist at the Eastern Beach	8.0	11.0	1.0
3	Emergency plans to cope with pollution risks currently exist at Eastern Beach	6.0	13.0	1.0

### ***4.3 Environmental Education and Information Criteria***

Table 2 presents the results obtained from participants regarding the compliance of Eastern Beach with the environmental education and information criteria.

As indicated in Table 2, the majority of stakeholders (17), indicated that information regarding the Blue Flag label is not on display, while the other three participants were not sure. Eastern Beach is also not promoting environmental education activities, based on the majority of participants' (15) replying 'no'. These findings might

mean that there is a lack of awareness of any environmental public initiatives at Eastern Beach.

Regarding the display of a beach map showing facilities, ten participants felt Eastern Beach complied with this, while ten felt it did not comply. Eleven participants agreed that a code of conduct was on display at the beach, while eight said 'no'. This could suggest a link between prevailing negative ecological impacts of beach users and limited sustainable information, which beach users should be cognisant of at Eastern Beach. Therefore, much effort is required in terms of environmental education and information criteria, to improve the current status of this beach. Such ecological efforts should be aimed at meeting South Africa's international obligations related to coastal and educational matters for beach users at Eastern Beach (Klein & Dodds, 2017; Republic of South Africa, 2001).

#### ***4.4 Water Quality Criteria***

Table 3 presents the results relating to compliance with water quality criteria.

With respect to compliance with water quality sampling and frequency, the majority (11) of interviewed participants selected 'no', indicating that this beach does not currently comply. It is concerning that the majority of participants (17) indicated that there are problems regarding industrial or sewage water waste at Eastern Beach. Such findings are concerning, especially when environmental legislation in South Africa puts emphasis on the proper execution of regulations, to avoid impaired coastal planning, land-use and unwanted sewage-related spills on its beaches (BFSA, 2020; WESSA, 2021).

As expected, most participants (11) subsequently disagreed that Eastern Beach is complying with the standards and requirements for water quality analysis. Other participants (9) were unsure about this criterion, indicating a concern or a gap which perhaps requires further research. Currently, and due to lack of Blue Flag status at this beach, there is no official encouragement from the city to abide by the Bathing Water Directive (BWD) policies. These policies are concerned with beach certification, water quality, beach safety, cleanliness and reliability (BFSA, 2020; WESSA, 2021). These results indicate that Eastern Beach is currently not complying with the standards for swimming water, which should be in line with the Blue Flag requirements for the microbiological parameters regarding faecal coli bacteria and intestinal enterococci (FEE, 2006).

#### ***4.5 Environmental Management Criteria***

Table 4 displays the results regarding Eastern Beach's compliance with environmental management criteria.

Interviewed participants disclosed a noteworthy negative response in relation to the existence of a beach management committee, which should be appointed by the beach operator or by the BCMM, to look after this beach. This finding reveals a lack of a joint coastal management effort, which should exist to ensure that there is a shared responsibility for planning, development, management and monitoring of this natural attraction, towards Blue Flag status. A high frequency of responses was received (17, 0) (the majority of stakeholders) for criterion 2, where participants indicated that Eastern Beach does not have clean facilities which is a required standard for a Blue Flag ecolabel. The results also indicate that this beach is not complying with the criterion related to the availability of facilities for the separation of dry and wet waste, with most (15, 0) participants responding with a 'no' answer.

Restrooms and ablution facilities for beach users are also not adequate; 17 participants responded with a 'no' answer to the criterion. This reveals a need for facilities at this beach to be sufficiently developed and then maintained. These results suggest that a degree of noncompliance exists at Eastern Beach, which oppose the required national standards and regulations on acceptable beach facilities. These results also signify that beach authorities, in conjunction with the BCMM, must ensure that facilities and activities under their responsibility comply with environmental criteria. While facilities are concerning at this beach, the management of the beach, its facilities and immediate surrounding areas must also comply with appropriate coastal development plans and monitoring, as per the planning regulations of the Republic of South Africa (2014).

Finally, Table 4 indicates that the majority of participants (14, 0) felt that Eastern Beach lacks strict and controlled measures to guide access of dogs and other domestic animals. Non-adherence to Blue Flag beach requirements on pets, as well as inadequate beach facilities, reveals a lack of a broad coastal public consciousness of policies and regulations, which should be positively influencing sustainable tourism practices at Eastern Beach.

## 4.6 *Safety and Services Criteria*

Table 5 presents three criteria relating to safety and services, where participants were asked if they feel Eastern Beach is complying or not complying.

In spite of incidents related to people drowning, robbery and other types of crime at this beach, appropriate public safety measures do exist. A high frequency of responses (13, 0) supported this. However, further research is needed to determine the extent of public safety control measures towards the prevention of previously mentioned safety issues at Eastern Beach.

In terms of facilities and access for physically disabled visitors, responses are mixed, with eight participants saying 'yes', 11 saying 'no' and one being unsure. The public and private stakeholders gave negative responses when it comes to the existence of emergency plans to cope with pollution risks at this beach (13 said 'no', six said 'yes'). This is therefore an area for future action, as beach management

should have contingency plans to manage oil, hazardous or toxic waste spills. As per the criteria, this beach should have defined plans for events that could lead to large-scale pollution impacts on the beach or bathing water (BFSA, 2020; WESSA, 2021). With respect to safety and services criteria, these results signify that there is a need for Eastern Beach to be managed based on the implemented safety plans of the Republic of South Africa (1998).

## 5 Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate sustainability tools for beach management in the context of Eastern Beach, particularly awareness of ICZM and current compliance with Blue Flag criteria (with a view to attaining this status in future). Through virtual semi-structured interviews, public and private stakeholders were questioned to contribute to the research gaps identified. These gaps indicated that despite the country's legislative beach management tools for sustainability, it still hosts few accredited beaches. Only seven are found in the Eastern Cape province, which hosts rich biodiversity and beautiful coastlines. Most beaches lack resources, inclusive development and effective implementation of sustainable beach management tools. Furthermore, there is limited research on sustainable marine and coastal tourism management, particularly at Eastern Beach in East London.

The paper first considered ICZM as a sustainability tool for beach management. It emerged from the data that the use of ICZM is linked to beach development programmes, environmental conservation and planning. Moreover, challenges regarding insufficient implementation of ICZM at Eastern beach were revealed. Considering that interviews conducted were with public and private stakeholders, it was surprising that the majority could not relate to the concept of ICZM. The results portray that the ICZM framework application is limited to a few organisations. Several references were made regarding the lack of ICZM implementation at Eastern Beach, and BCMM was professed as the main holder of this management tool.

This paper also provided findings concerning the Blue Flag ecolabel as a sustainability tool for beach management at the study area. Findings focused on the criteria required to achieve this status. This research firstly stressed noncompliance concerning *environmental education and information criteria*, with no information to guide and educate users on appropriate beach usage. In terms of the second criteria (*water quality*), most participants indicated noncompliance pertaining to industrial or sewage water waste entering the sea. The majority disagreed that Eastern Beach is complying with water quality criteria. Regarding *environmental management criteria*, participants were negative about the current lack of a beach management committee, which should be appointed by the beach operator (BCMM) to look after Eastern Beach. Furthermore, challenges were identified in terms of inadequate restrooms and ablution facilities. In terms of the *safety and services criteria*, the majority agreed that this beach has appropriate safety and security and hence

complies with the criterion. Finally, most participants disagree that Eastern Beach has emergency plans to cope with pollution risks.

This research highlighted findings regarding limited awareness of ICZM and limited compliance with Blue Flag criteria, as sustainable beach management tools. Through this research, guidelines can be developed to improve beaches lacking resources and sustainable and inclusive tourism development. Findings could be used by involved beach management stakeholders, providing a holistic picture of mandatory sustainability tools to be considered, to take Eastern Beach towards its desired future as a Blue Flag accredited beach. If this beach could be improved and sustained using these tools, it would be a victory for the disadvantaged East London and Eastern Cape province.

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