Sustainable Tourism Development for Clarens in the Free State Province of South Africa

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Abstract

Understanding what drives tourists is an important issue which can make or break a destination. Since tourists consume products and services and return visit/s and sustainability is desired by destinations, it is important to identify variables that influence the motivation, behaviour and satisfaction levels of tourists. The town of Clarens which is situated in the foothills of the Maluti Mountains in the Free State province of South Africa was the focus of this research study. It is labelled as the "Jewel of the Eastern Free State". Using a questionnaire survey, the researchers categorized tourists according to their demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Disconfirmation of expectations was measured using five point Likert-scales against eighteen selected variables. The findings of this study suggested that tourists were mostly satisfied with facilities, natural attractions and relaxation facilities provided by the destination. In essence, nature and adventure were experienced very positively. In contrast, tourists were disappointed with facilities such as local transport services, cleanliness and safety and security. The difference between tourist expectation and experience was diverse for different groups – for example *inter alia*, gender, age, international or local origin, but most of these differences were not significant. The findings presented should contribute to the development of tourism strategies which are intended to empower the town to better recognize and respond to the dynamic demand patterns of tourists and potential visitors from both the domestic and foreign market. These strategies aim towards sustainable tourism development in Clarens and the surrounding area.

Keywords: Clarens, South Africa, destination marketing, tourists, tourism development.

Introduction

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) proposed the concept of Sustainable Tourism Development (STD) in 1993 where after various sustainable development strategies have been formed and ultimately the United Nation General Assembly approved the adoption of 2017 as the International Year of Tourism for Development (http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2015-12-07/united-nations-declares-2017-international-year-sustainable-tourism-develop, downloaded on 2016-05-23). The purpose of this resolution is mainly to recognise the importance of international tourism, to sensitise and enhance appreciation for the rich heritage of various civilizations and to encourage the understanding of the inherent values of different cultures. Taleb Rifai (UNWTO Secretary General, 2015) acknowledged what was established by global leaders at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) affirming that "well-designed and well-managed tourism" can contribute to the three pillars of sustainability namely economic, social and environmental development. Therefore, the assessment of "sustainable tourism" and "sustainable tourism development" has become the focus of numerous studies on tourism (Lu and Nepal, 2009). Sustainable tourism development was defined as not only the meeting of needs of present tourists and host regions but also protecting and enhancing opportunities for future tourists (UNWTO, 2015).

It is critical to fully comprehend what it is exactly that influences tourists to visit certain destinations more than others (Correia and Pimpao, 2008). How and why tourists decide on destinations are important variables to consider since this can greatly assist the marketing as well as tourism development strategies and initiatives (Weaver and Lawton, 2006). The image that is formed in a tourist's mind about a destination is described by Reynolds (1965) as the development of a cerebral construct based upon some impressions selected from a wide range of information. Once tourists are interested in a potential destination, they are generally driven to investigate further on what is available in the media on that specific destination. This is why marketers in particular need to provide the media sources with positive and enticing information to influence the decision of the tourist (Gartner 1993). Beerli and Martín (2004) stated that tourism destinations employ promotion and marketing communication strategies to influence the image of a destination. Thus when we consider the image of a particular destination, it was to a large extent created by promotion including advertising, the judgments of family or close friends and travel and tourism employees, the media and pop culture. In the highly competitive tourism market consumer satisfaction measurement has a prodigious importance to guarantee loyalty (Ibrahim and Gill, 2005; Vela´zquez, Saura and Molina, 2011).

The literature informs us that family also plays a critical role in travel decisions as tourists are potentially influenced more easily by their kin (Caldwell and Darling, 1999).Tourist behaviour is influenced by a range of variables and constraints (Silva and Correia, 2008) that tend to either enable or promote a trip to the destination or limit or inhibit it. These variables are based on interpersonal, intrapersonal and/or structural aspects. The interpersonal aspect relates to how people are influenced by those around

them and here personality plays a significant role. Other important interpersonal factors that also influence decisions to travel to a destination are based on interpersonal relationships between couples or groups of friends or colleagues (Silva and Correia, 2008). Intrapersonal refers to reasons such as need to escape the proverbial 'rat-race', leisure time, meeting with other people, adventurous nature excursions, new experiences and even a sense of inquisitiveness (Correira and Oom do Valle, 2007).

The main restraint from visiting a destination is a lack of discretionary funding but there are also important structural aspects beyond a tourist's control that influences their decisions, such as a lack of time or even the family life cycle stage (Nyaupane, Morais and Graefe, 2005). These are the pivotal aspects that marketers need to fully comprehend when contending tourists' alternatives. Tourism strategies guarantees marketers to mitigate losing a tourist to another destination. An effective tourism destination planning and management strategy provides an important methodical framework to effectively modify attributes of the destination where humanly possible. This will allow an improved enlightenment of the many positive attributes and special benefits in a particular destination for the potential tourist. Once the tourists arrive at the destination, their overall impression will be affected and modified based on their personal experience and first-hand information available (Echtner and Ritchie, 2003). While the image created by promotion is slanted towards a set of positive experiences, the disconfirmation thereof, in terms of experiences that differ from their expectations, can be extremely negative and can harm the overall satisfaction with the destination. Ultimately the disconfirmation of expectations will determine whether the tourist will pay return visits and recommended the destination to others.

The article reports on the expectations and disconfirmation thereof through experiences of tourists visiting Clarens during the last week of December. The article aims to enhance tourism opportunities, identify the sustainability prospects and provide insight for the development of marketing strategies. The article furthermore illustrates the importance of sustainable tourist development and the promotion in building perceived images. The article is based on responses to a survey presented to 160 respondents and their opinions on various issues relating to Clarens. It reports the findings of a study in which the respondents from around the globe explained their reasoning and other travel destination issues that may impact upon the image of Clarens as a place that one 'has to visit'. The Clarens tourism authorities need to comprehend that successful tourism promotion and marketing are very dependent upon a broad range of variables.

The destination and immediate surrounds

Clarens is a quaint town situated in the foothills of the Maluti Mountains in the Free State province of South Africa which border the country of Lesotho. The Rooiberge mountain range virtually envelops the town.
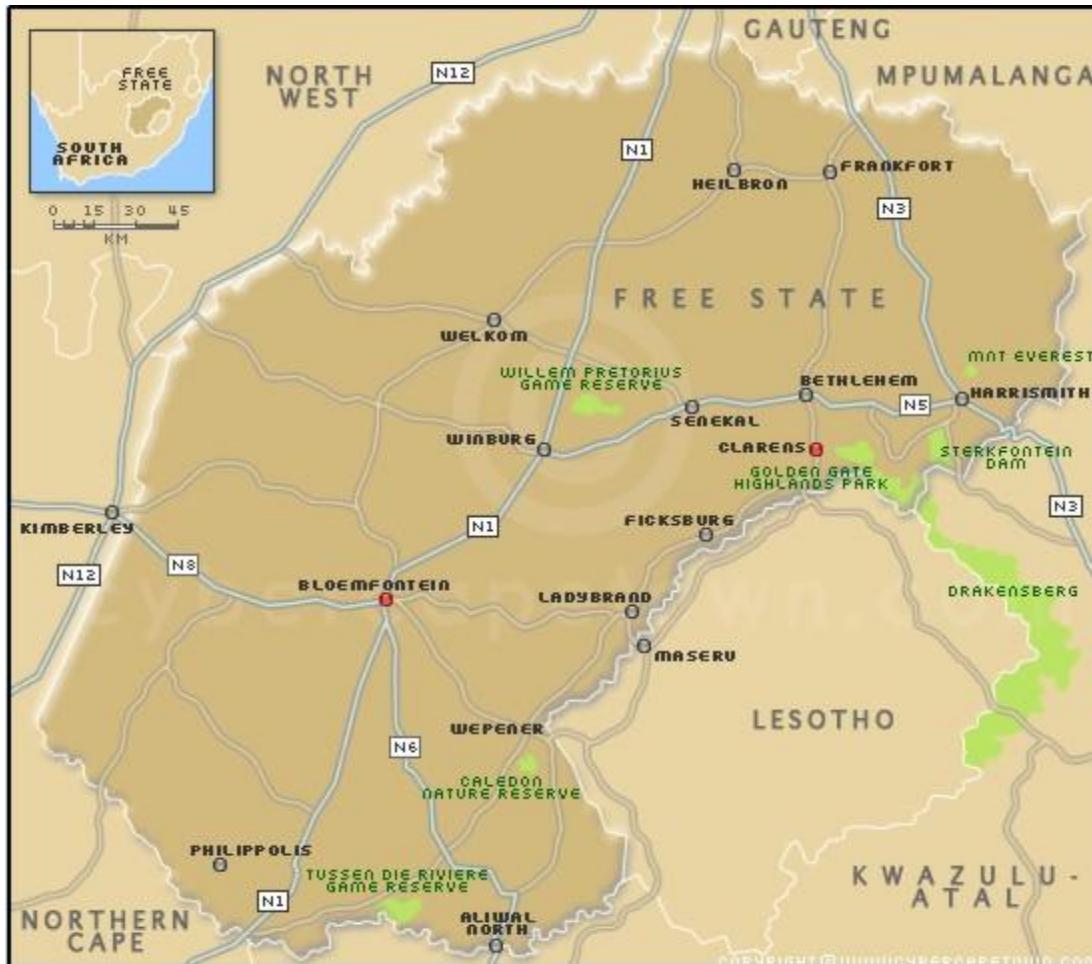
Map 1. Clarens
(Source: San Rock Guest House,   Clarens Free State South Africa)

Clarens was founded in 1912 and named after the town of Clarens in Switzerland where the exiled Boer leader and President of the Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) Paul Kruger spent his last days after the Anglo Boer war of 1899-1902. There is a Kruger Memorial Hall in Clarens which commemorates Kruger. Clarens is close to Ficksburg, a model farming area which is famous for its annual Cherry Festival and its many examples of Bushman rock art in the caves of the area (Jacana Media, 2007).It lies some 338 km from Johannesburg and about 390 km from the tropical beach city of Durban in KwaZulu Natal province. Clarens is part of the very scenic Highlands Route and it endowed with many art galleries that exhibit the works of renowned and very popular South African artists who either live in, or frequent the town, such as the renowned water-colour artist Richard Rennie. Clarens has in excess of twenty art galleries and visitors are invited to do the Art Route, or simply stroll from gallery to gallery to enjoy the wide variety of artwork on offer. Many of the galleries and artists also offer courses. Aspiring artists can select from a few hours of tuition in one of the local galleries or stay-over for a week of total immersion. Many crafters have made their home in Clarens, and their crafts vary from leatherwork and glass work, to hand-made

knives, candles and soft furnishings. Clarens is essentially an art-lovers paradise (Clarens News, 2015).

Activities in Clarens include *inter alia* horse riding, abseiling, hiking, fly fishing, fossil hunting, white water rafting and even golf. It is also common to hear live music on weekends. Clarens hosts cycle rallies and other events throughout the year. Places of interest in the Clarens area include the Titanic Rock, the Clarens Museum, the Ash River Outfall (one of the Highlands water scheme's view points on the Bethlehem Road about 8km from Clarens), Mushroom Rock, Surrender Hill, Golden Gate Highlands National Park (for hiking, bird viewing and Bushmen paintings on Schaapplaats farm) (Sanparks, 2016).

The area exudes an ambience of total relaxation with majestic landscapes and is enveloped by magnificent sandstone mountain ranges, an array of wildlife, sun-baked cliffs and poplar trees abound. The climate is mild and its proximity to *inter alia*, Johannesburg and Durban make it an ideal weekend and midweek getaway destination for city dwellers. There are numerous hiking trails of varying difficulty and idyllic trout fishing possibilities. Clarens has been commended as having the finest trout fishing in South Africa. There are a wide range of establishments which offer accommodation, including a top class hotel, bed and breakfast facilities, self-catering amenities, lodges, backpackers and farm guest houses. Just outside Clarens is the important outlet from the Lesotho Highlands Water Project that brings fresh water from Lesotho into the As River, the Liebenbergsvlei and Wilge Rivers which ultimately flows into the Vaal Dam from which water is then taken, treated and pumped to the Rand Water supply area of Gauteng, the industrial heartland of South Africa.

Figure 1. The Titanic of Clarens
(Source:http://clarensnews.co.za/event/golden-gate-birding-weekend/)

Golden Gate Highlands National Park

In close proximity, roughly 17 km away from Clarens, is the magnificent Golden Gate Highlands National Park which was proclaimed in 1963 and which covers an area of 340 km^2 and comprises11 600 hectares (Golden Gate Highlands National Park, 2016).

The nomenclature "Golden Gate" alludes to the many sandstone cliffs that are evident on either side of the valley at the Golden Gate dam. In 1875, a farmer called J. van Reenen and his wife, travelled through the area and named the location "Golden Gate" when they saw the last rays of the setting sun falling on the sandstone cliffs (Jacana Media, 2007). The park's most notable features are these golden, ochre, and orange-hued deeply eroded sandstone cliffs and rocky outcrops (Geological Heritage Tours, 2006). Several paleontological finds have been made in the park including dinosaur eggs and skeletons.

The park has many sandstone formations and cliffs which have been fashioned by water and were deposited during a period of aeolian deposition towards the end of the Triassic Period. The park also abounds in buck such as eland, springbok, gnu, hartebeest, oribi, grey rhebuck, mountain reedbuck and wildebeest. There are zebra, baboons and many birds, about 210 species, such as the bearded vulture, the endangered Cape vulture, bald ibis, black eagles, blue cranes, secretary birds guinea fowl, jackal buzzards and rock pigeons. Sun gazer lizards, water mongoose and twelve species of mice also inhabit the park. Various snake species can be found in the park including the puff adder, mountain adder, and rinkhals (South African National Parks, 2015).

Figure 2. A wildebeest roaming in the Golden Gate highlands National Park
(Source: http://clarensnews.co.za/event/golden-gate-birding-weekend/)

The park has abundant plant life including watsonias, arum lilies and red hot pokers and willow trees on the banks of the Caledon River. There are rest camps, health spas, hiking trails, trout fishing, horse riding and other pastimes to invigorate weary city dwellers. The Golden Gate Hotel in the Golden Gate Highlands National Park offers reasonably priced quality accommodation for adventurous travellers and is opposite the superb Brandwag Buttress and in front of a number of caves and shelters exhibiting Sanrock paintings. The park has highveld and montane grass land flora with in excess of sixty grass species Afromontane forests and high-altitude Austro-Afro alpine grasslands (Golden Gate Highlands National Park, 2016).

The Golden Gate Highlands National Park has a variety of good accommodation options and places of interest including Golden Gate Hotel and Chalets, Glen Reenen Rest Camp which has caravanning and camping sites with all amenities, Highlands

Mountain Retreat, a Basotho Cultural Village which mirrors an 18th century Basotho village with safe game viewing areas, Noordt Brabant Guest House and the Wilgenhof Environmental Education Centre with ancient rock art just a short walk away (Sanparks, 2016).

Figures. 3 & 4 Brandwag Buttress and the Golden Gate Hotel
(Source : http://clarensnews.co.za/event/golden-gate)

Expectation disconfirmation model

The actual performance or experience of a product or service compared to what was expected determines the level of satisfaction as was speculated with the Expectation Disconfirmation model that was based on studies by Santos and Boote (2003) and Fearon and Philip (2008). The level of satisfaction depends on the perceived degree in which a service or product exceeds, meets or falls short of what was expected (Oliver & Bearden 1985:235). The disconfirmation of expectations eventually influences the overall judgment and evaluation of the product or service (Oliver, 2010:181) and may affect any future service and loyalty.

There is a highly complex relationship between product and service satisfaction and loyalty in the tourism industry but it is simultaneously diverse and dynamic in orientation (Bigne et al., 2001) and this aspect should be borne in mind.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of the study was to investigate the disconfirmation of expectations of tourists to the town of Clarens as an important variable in developing and sustaining tourism marketing and planning strategies. The study to an extent analysed South African and foreign tourist behaviour patterns. Conclusions are drawn and some recommendations are made to the Clarens Tourism forum to consider as enhancement of sustainable tourism development. The study provides insights into the expectations of visitors (image of destination) and their experience thereof once they arrive. This insight will assist the improvement of product and service standards to meet tourists'

anticipations and needs. The study supports improved marketing initiatives as well as effective tourism strategies to meet and even exceed the needs of diverse tourist segments. It will generally add value to sustainable tourism development in the town of Clarens.

Methodology

The notion of measuring tourist satisfaction and other variables influencing visits to particular destinations has developed as a fundamental interest for many researchers (Yu and Goulden, 2006; Meng, Tepanon and Uysal, 2008; Neal and Gursory, 2008). The researchers followed a quantitative phenomenological approach in which they were primarily concerned with how tourists attached meaning to different experiences when they visited Clarens in relation to what they expected.

A survey instrument based on the Destination Visitor Surveys (DVS) that the Australian government used to determine tourist satisfaction for Queensland (http://tra.gov.au/research/VPS_Report_Gold%20Coast.html) was adapted specifically for Clarens and piloted on five selected respondents to confirm the clarity and validity of the questions. Modifications to some questions were made as a result of the pilot study. The findings of the pilot study have not been added to the article.

Completion of the survey instrument was conducted with 160 visitors to Clarens during the last week of December 2015 which is a holiday period and it was presupposed that there would be more respondents to select from. Purposive sampling of the visitors guaranteed that the researchers were able to reach an equitable sample of visitors, in a very cost-effective manner.

Survey interviewers discussed the survey questionnaire with respondents upon completion thereof to ensure consistent delivery and understanding of the questions.
Song, Veen and Chen (2010) recommended the use of self-administrated questionnaires to assess tourist satisfaction. Both open and closed ended questions were used that focused mainly on the variables identified in the original survey instrument (used in the pilot study). Additional questions were added based on variables identified in the literature review.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010) stated that when research involves human beings, they should be given a choice to participate or not to participate in the study. Participants must give informed consent to voluntarily be part of the study. Participants were assured of anonymity as some sensitive information might be shared. The researchers committed to report the research findings in a complete and honest fashion, without misleading others about the nature of the findings. Under no circumstance was the data fabricated to support particular conclusions arrived at. The researchers took all the appropriate measures to ensure the research did not cause any physical or psychological harm to research participants even though it should be noted that in this particular study there were no issues which were seen to pose any physical or

psychological harm. There were no financial enticements or other forms of inducements given to respondents to encourage participation. All the tourists that were approached were willing to voluntary participate in the research study and were given the survey to complete along with a pen and a hard board. The respondent profile should not be interpreted as a profile of all visitors to Clarens as it relates to tourists at a specific point in time.

Institutional consent was obtained in the form of an ethical clearance letter from UNISA-SBL as part of the review for ethical considerations. The researchers also obtained authority and consent from the relevant duly authorized representative of the Clarens Tourism Forum to whom feedback was provided on the research findings. The researchers adhered to the disclosure policy regarding the purpose and nature of this study as guided by the UNISA-SBL.

The data obtained through the survey instrument reported on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of tourists including gender, age, occupation, monthly income, place of origin and other travel-related aspects. Respondents were requested to rate their satisfactions and dissatisfaction level for eighteen selected variables on a five point Likert-type ordinal scale. The mean referred to a neutral stance while 1 and 5 indicate highest dissatisfaction and greatest satisfaction, respectively (Neal and Gursory, 2008; O'Neill et al., 2010; Eusebio and Vieira, 2011).

Analysis of findings

Demographic variables

Mostly male respondents, namely 66%, completed the survey, while 89 of the respondents were married (55.6%). One hundred and twenty eight of the respondents (80%) were employed, with an average age of 41 years. The youngest respondent was 22 and the oldest 73 years of age.

Most of the respondents, some 152 (94.4%) travelled to Clarens by motor car and were tourists that already knew about this destination 125 (77.6%). One hundred and eight of the respondents (67.1%) had been to the destination before.

Most of the respondents (34%) stayed for only one night while 44 respondents (27%) stayed for at least two nights at the destination. Eighty five of the respondents (52.8%) went to the destination to rest and relax.

In terms of the disconfirmation of the respondent's expectations of the overall image of Clarens the skewness and kurtosis values of the factors did not exceed the critical values of 2.00 and 7.00 respectively (West, Finch & Curran 1995), which is an indication that the data is normally distributed. The majority of the values of variables on the skewness scale were negative, ranging from -.17 to -.81, which is an indication that the distribution has relatively few small values (with 1 demonstrating dissatisfaction) and that the distribution of responses tails off to the left.

Only statistical and practical significant differences were reported in this article.

Effect sizes (Cohen, 1988) were used to determine the practical significance of the findings. Cohen's *d* presents the mean difference between groups in terms of standard deviation units. Cohen (1988) presented the following guidelines to interpret the value of *d* when comparing different groups:

- < 0.1 = trivial effect
- 0.1 - 0.3 = small effect
- 0.3 - 0.5 = moderate effect
- > 0.5 = large difference effect

(Cohen, 1988).

Effect sizes were calculated to provide an indication of the magnitude of the difference between the groups – to indicate whether the difference occurred by chance. Cohen's *d* was calculated and is reported in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Disconfirmation of expectations

Elements of tourist destination	Expectation_b			Experience_a			Expectation confirmation_(a-b)			Effect size
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	*d*
Safety & security	159	4.55	.59	158	3.78	.64	157	-.76	.86	1.26 [L]
Easy to reach	160	4.20	.73	160	4.14	.66	160	-.06	.87	.09
Cleanliness	160	4.47	.75	160	4.01	.91	160	-.46	1.18	.55 [L]
Unspoilt nature	160	4.53	.76	160	4.53	.65	160	.00	.95	--
Climate	160	4.34	.98	160	4.64	.62	160	.29	1.11	.31 [M]
Diversity of art	160	3.35	.99	159	3.45	.98	159	.10	1.22	.10 [S]
Quality accommodation	160	4.52	.72	160	4.66	.72	160	.14	.94	.20 [S]
Friendliness	160	4.40	.88	160	4.64	.74	160	.24	1.02	.28 [S]
Local transport	159	3.43	.75	157	2.39	1.10	156	-1.04	1.29	1.38 [L]
Local cuisine	157	3.79	.84	160	3.94	1.00	157	.17	1.13	.18 [S]
Shopping	156	3.97	.94	160	3.99	.98	156	.03	1.31	.02
Nightlife	160	3.86	.97	160	3.77	1.01	160	-.09	1.41	.01
Rest	160	4.17	1.09	160	4.40	.75	160	.23	1.22	.21 [S]
Sport & recreation	160	4.27	.81	160	4.14	1.03	160	-.13	1.22	.16 [S]
Cultural events	160	4.39	.78	160	4.20	1.06	160	-.19	1.24	.24 [S]
Nature & adventure	160	4.19	.67	160	4.67	.63	160	.48	.89	.72 [L]
Wellness offer	160	4.34	.84	160	4.63	.76	160	.29	1.06	.35 [M]
Conference offer	160	3.29	1.06	160	2.97	1.27	160	-.33	1.64	.29 [S]

Where: [L]: Large effect (*d*>.50); [M]:Medium effect (.30>*d*>.50), and [S]: Small effect (.01>*d*>.30)

Visitor's expectations were confirmed with their experience of the *ease* with which they could *reach the destination*, the *unspoilt nature*, *shopping* and the *nightlife*.

Safety and security expectations were however not met in terms of what was experienced at the destination (*M*=-.76, *SD*=.86) with a large practical significance effect (*d*=1.26).The expectation of *cleanliness* (*M*=-.46, *SD*=1.18, *d*=.55)and *local transport* (*M*=-1.04, *SD*=1.29, *d*=1.38) was also not experienced, but the expected *nature and adventure* (*M*=-.48, *SD*=.89, *d*=.72) was experienced in Clarens with large practical significant effects.

The expected *climate* (*M*=.29, *SD*=1.11, *d*=.31) and *wellness offer* (*M*=.29, *SD*=1.06, *d*=.35) was experienced with a medium practical significant effect.

The expectation of *diversity of art* (*M*=.10, *SD*=1.22, *d*=.10), *quality of accommodation* (*M*=.14, *SD*=.94, *d*=.20), *friendliness* (*M*=.24, *SD*=1.02, *d*=.28) and *local cuisine* (*M*=.17, *SD*=1.13, *d*=.18) were confirmed with the experience thereof at the destination with a small practical significant effect.

Independent sample t-test

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the *overall positive opinion* of **local and international** visitors to Clarens. Statistically significant scores were reported for the positive experience of international (*M*=4.16, *SD*=.50) and local (*M*=3.88, *SD*=.69; t(1)=1.66, *p*=.1) visitors. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean score difference=.27, 90%) was a moderate effect (Cohen's *d* = .41). This is an indication that international tourists were more satisfied with the overall image of Clarens.

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the *overall positive opinion* of **married and single** tourists to Clarens. No statistical significant differences were identified.

Thereafter an independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the experience of the *staff friendliness* variable between **male and female** visitors to Clarens. Statistically significant scores were reported for males (*M*=4.51, *SD*=.61) and females (*M*=4.33, *SD*=.61; t(1)=1.73, p=.1). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean score difference=.18, 90%) was small effect (Cohen's *d* = .30). This is an indication that male tourists experienced the staff at Clarens amenities significantly friendlier than females.

An independent sample t-test indicated the *respect for nature* experienced between **male and female** visitors to Clarens differed significantly. Statistically significant scores were reported for males (*M*=3.88, *SD*=.69) and females (*M*=4.14, *SD*=.64; t(1)=2.24, p<05). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean score difference=.26, 95%) was a moderate effect (Cohen's *d* = .38). Female tourists experienced the respect that Clarens facilities have for nature significantly higher than males.

T-test analysis was done to identify if there was a difference between the mean scores of **international and local** tourists' *disconfirmation of expectations* for different aspects in the destination. No statistical significant differences were identified.

ANOVA

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to identify if there was a disconfirmation of expectations between the mean scores of respondents with different **employment status** on various aspects in Clarens. Only statistically significant differences are reported below.

Significant differences were identified for respondents with different employment status on the disconfirmation of what respondents expected and what they experienced in terms of the *unspoilt nature* (p<.05) with F(4,159)=3.956, p=.004; and *nature adventure* (p<.05) with F(4, 159)=4.041, p=.004 and for the disconfirmation of all their expectations and experiences of Clarens (p<.05) with F(4,145)=2.702, p=.033.

Having established that there are statistically significant differences amongst the different employment status groups and the disconfirmation of expectations of *unspoilt nature*, *nature adventure* and disconfirmation of their overall expectation of Clarens, the next step was to determine where and what these differences were. This was done through a *post hoc* analysis which will be reported on below.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done to identify if there was a difference between the mean scores of **married and single** respondents on the disconfirmation of their expectations with their experiences on various aspects at the destination.

Significant differences were identified between married and single respondents on the disconfirmation of what respondents expected and what they experienced in terms of *safety and security* (p<.1) with F(1,149)=3.528, *p*=.062; and *diversity of art* (*p*<.05) with F(1,152)=4.787, *p*=.030 and for the *local cuisine* (*p*<.1) with F(1,152)=3.321, *p*=.070.

Married (*M*=-.67; *SD*=.92) as well as single respondents (M=-.9355; SD=.74374) were disappointed in their experienced of *safety and security* in Clarens. Married respondents (*M*=-.13; *SD*=1.09) also experienced the *diversity in art* lower than what they expected while single respondents were more satisfied in terms of their expectations on the *diversity of art* (*M*=.28; *SD*=1.25). Married respondents' expectations were met (*M*=.02; *SD*=1.24), while single respondents' expectations of *local cuisine* (*M*=.37; *SD*=.97) presented in Clarens were exceeded.

Post hoc analysis

Post hoc analysis indicated that the expectations of retired (*M*=.36, *SD*=1.03) and self-employed respondents were significantly exceeded on the *unspoiledness* of nature in Clarens. The expectations of *nature adventures* for retired respondents were however not met by their experience thereof (*M*=-.45, *SD*=.93).

Employed (*M*=.004, *SD*=.26) and self-employed (*M*=.01, *SD*=.29) respondents' expectations of the destination were met, while retired/renter respondents were a bit disappointed with regards to their expectations (*M*=-.27, *SD*=.24) of Clarens.

Pearson correlation analysis

Effects are reported according to the scale proposed by Pallant (2013):

> Small r=.10 to .29
> Medium r=.30 to .49
> Large r=.50 to 1

The following statistically significant relationships between **age** and the respondents' expectation of various aspects at the destination are reported:

Pearson correlation was done to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between age and the respondents' *expectations* on various aspects at the destination.

There was a small negative correlation on the expected *safety and security*(r=-.231, *p*=.004) and *unspoilt nature* (r=-.18, *p*=.03) for the different ages. A small positive correlation was reported for the expected *sport and recreation* (r=.15, *p*=.06) presented at the destination for the different ages.

Pearson correlation was done to describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between age and the *experience* of respondent on various aspects in Clarens).

The following relationships between age and the experience of various aspects at Clarens are reported:

There was a small positive correlation on the expected *friendliness* (r=.14, *p*=.08) and a small negative correlation on the *nature adventure* (r=-.18, *p*=.02) and *conference offer* (r=-.16, *p*=.05) for the different ages.

After the relationships between age and expectations and age and experience of various aspects were identified the strength and direction of the linear relationship between age and the disconfirmation of expectations of various aspects in Clarens were analysed.

Only a small positive correlation between the disconfirmation of expectations on *unspoilt nature* (r=.21, *p*=.01) and a small negative correlation on the *local cuisine* (r=-.14, *p*=.09) and *conference offer* (r=-.20, *p*=.01) for the different ages were identified.

Conclusions

It is evident that tourists' decision-making processes are highly complex and comprise of a number of lesser decisions which are made on an ongoing basis from before to deciding where to go, all the way to "what are we going to do when we get there" and even beyond the visit (Smallman and Moore, 2010). The findings of the study suggest that tourists to Clarens displayed divergent opinions on numerous destination services and attributes. It was evident that the satisfaction levels related to the perceptions (expectations) they had in terms of their experiences at the destination. Service quality variables such as friendliness and the way in which tourists were treated by employees of various businesses determined their travel behaviour and ultimately influenced their satisfaction levels. The findings of short discussions with various travellers indicate that the Protea Hotel, Clarens Brewery, Purple Onion Deli and the range of art galleries were considered to be the most popular town visit venues. Service and quality in these was rated relatively highly. The various hiking trails and natural splendour of the area as well as the proximity of Golden Gate National Highlands Park are significant attractions to Clarens. Tourism promotion as an image formation mediator is critical to sustainable tourism development. The level to which tourist expectations are met or exceeded during an actual tourism experience is imperative. A true destination identity is essential for tourists' return visits and personal marketing to their family, friends and colleagues ("word of mouth" advertisement). A disgruntled tourist may never again return to or recommend the destination. The image projected of Clarens should thus be maintained as a pristine and naturally splendid destination to visit (Noordman, 2004). However it must be stressed that the manner in which the destination is marketed should always be in line with the destination's identity and the realisation of expectations. The delivery of products and service, and all interactions with tourists must, as far as possible, be in line with their varied expectations.

The findings indicate the importance of applying tourism promotion within the wider framework of marketing communications. The Clarens Tourism forum needs to recognize that successful tourism promotion is dependent on an extensive range of variables. Most of the tourists were extremely satisfied with the natural beauty in which Clarens is situated and the hiking and nature trails, and especially the opportunity to relax "far from the madding crowd'. Tourists were delighted with especially the well managed Protea Hotel with its high level of quality service provision. Restaurants and coffee shops in the town were generally viewed as good. The Clarens Brewery was very popular and liked by most of the respondents who relished the idea of being served and enjoying great beers, ciders and distillates. Many visitors expressed delight at being able to taste beers and the way in which brewery staff explained the nuances, flavours, styles and techniques of beer and cider production and above all the quality beverages and light meals on offer. Art galleries were also an important consideration for visitation.

Food and beverage services and appropriate accommodation are an important part of the tourism offering so when there is unhappiness with food and accommodation this will invariably lead to dissatisfaction with the destination (Nield, Kozak & LeGrys, 2000).

Research conducted by Nield, Kozak & LeGrys (2000), confirms that tourists spend on average up to 25% of their total spending on accommodation and food and beverages. Mak et al., (2012) assert that this figure could actually be even higher and at least up to 35% of expenditure. Consequently, great care should be taken with all food and beverage operations to exceed customer expectations. What was problematic for Black visitors was the lack of availability of ethnic foods. Pricing of food was considered to be reasonable. Tourists tend to become dissatisfied when a host and all the intermediaries do not perform according to their anticipated promise.

Clean, comfortable and reasonably priced accommodation plays a substantial role in promoting a tourist destination (Hall, 1995). The cleanliness of the environment was a factor for some tourists that visited Clarens and they felt that the town could be a little cleaner and tidier. Most tourists who stayed over-night were unassumingly satisfied with the accommodation offering in Clarens but safety and security and the lack of local transport was a concern to a limited extent. The tourists' safety and security is a key role player when it comes to the success of destinations in the tourism industry and for societal transformation.

Safety and security of tourists and the development of a local transport service are important pointers for the successful tourism sustainability development of Clarens. Generally, tourists are unlikely to visit destinations which are perceived to be relatively unsafe as it makes them feel vulnerable and exposed.

By developing an understanding of the different variables in this research and how they in fact relate to one another, tourism marketers and planners will have a far better and more informed opportunity to drive the tourism of Clarens to sustainability. Creating satisfied tourists is essential as this can aid in customer retention and can lead to new business through satisfied tourists becoming promoters of the destination. The segmenting and targeting of potential tourism markets and the development of effective action plans is non-negotiable for a destination's sustainability. It is evident from the respondents' sample that the domestic market contributes hugely to the growth and development of the economy of the town of Clarens. It would be prudent to market the destination more vigorously abroad as it has culturally rich experiences and unique nature prospects to offer. Clearly there is a need to conduct similar studies at least bi-annually to develop a more comprehensive understanding of tourists' destination decision making and how to ensure Clarens a sustainable tourist destination. The global competitiveness of the tourism industry is growing which means that the challenges faced are mounting. Destination managers and tourism planners should thus pay close attention to enhancing their existing services and attend to issues that were negatively appraised by the tourists to Clarens in this study.

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