A benefit segmentation analysis of tourists visiting Mpumalanga

Ms LT Nduna*
University of South Africa,
Pretoria, South Africa, 0081
P.O.Box 392, Pretoria
Tel: 012-433-4710
Email: ndunalt@unisa.ac.za

Professor Cina Van Zyl
University of South Africa
Tel: 012-429-6632
Email:vzylc@unisa.ac.za

Corresponding author*

Abstract

In South Africa, as in many other African countries, tourism is the most viable and economic development option. To promote tourism, further knowledgement is required to understand what benefits tourists' seek so that promoters can engage with distinct tourism market segments. In this study, survey data was collected from 400 respondents in Mpumalanga province using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was constructed to identify the key benefits tourists sought so that the significant market segments could be categorised. This study identified two segments of tourists in Mpumalanga: cultured–naturist and nature–escapist. The researchers conclude by developing a benefit segmentation framework as a tool for marketing planning.

Keywords: Tourism destination, market segmentation, benefit segmentation, Mpumalanga.

Introduction

Benefit segmentation is the process of grouping consumers into market segments on the basis of desirable consequences sought from the product (Bennett & American Marketing Association, 1995:23). The aim of benefit segmentation is to uncover the relative value consumers attach to different benefits (Haley, 1968). As an approach, benefit segmentation allows for better understanding of tourists' needs and determining behaviour (Almeida, Correia & Pimpão, 2014:6; Armstrong, Adam, Denize & Kotler, 2014:159; Dolnicar, 2008:130; Frochot, 2005:339). It has become important for destination marketers to move away from a one-size-fits-all approach and instead streamline marketing efforts towards identified segments. The volatile economic environment and growth in the number of tourist destinations in recent years has led to increased competition among destinations (Anholt, 2009:4). More emphasis is therefore on planning for marketing, most importantly as to ensure that the marketing segmentation approach selected results in a reasonable return on investment (Dolnicar & Grün, 2008:63). Marketing planning involves analysing existing consumers to identify opportunities and set realistic and achievable marketing goals (Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012:xxxv; Proctor, 2014:3). As an *a posteriori* approach, benefit segmentation relies on the analysis data to gain insight into the market structure and decide which segmentation base is the most suitable one (Dolnicar, 2008:3).

Previous studies have acknowledged benefit segmentation as a successful approach to segmenting tourists (Yannopoulos & Rotenberg, 2000; Jang, Morrison & O'Leary, 2002; Sarigöllü & Huang, 2005; Frochot, 2005; Molera & Albaladejo, 2007; Kim, Park, Gazzoli &

Sheng, 2011; Rudež, Sedmak & Bojnec, 2013; Dong, Wang, Morais & Brooks, 2013; Almeida et al., 2014). However, the focus has been solely on using benefits to promote a destination (Frochot & Morrison, 2000): integrating benefits, attractions and activities available at a destination to develop product and marketing planning tools has not been done. Jang et al. (2002:3770) suggest integrating benefit segmentation with other variables such as activities to provide useful information for marketing. Mehmetoglu (2007:659) integrates activities with benefits sought, but the focus is on the importance of benefits rather than participation. Further investigation of participation is important in future research to match benefits and activities in order to package activity offerings to promote to potential tourists. Recognising these research gaps indicated the need for further research to investigate the benefits that tourists seek in order to develop a benefit segmentation framework (using benefits, attractions, activities and information sources consulted) as a tool to plan for marketing.

Based on this concept, the aim of this study was to investigate the benefits tourists seek from a nature-based destination in order to propose a benefit segmentation framework based on benefits sought, activities engaged in, attractions visited and information sources consulted as a marketing planning tool. In line with these research aims, the paper first provides an in-depth review of the literature on market segmentation, followed by a review of benefit segmentation research in tourism. Next, the methodological approach and data collection process employed are described. The paper then presents the results, and finally, it discusses the managerial implications of the results and makes suggestions for future research. The role of tourism in economic development is widely recognised. For many developing countries such as South Africa, tourism has become an attractive economic activity. Growth in the number of tourist destinations in recent years has led to increased competition among them. Tourism authorities require accurate information on the characteristics of their various markets to develop effective marketing plans.

The information gained from target segmentation is fundamental to any marketing plan. The primary goal of market segmentation is to identify segments with an interest in specific goods and services in order to focus marketing efforts on them in the most effective way. Market segmentation is the process of classifying tourists into groups based on different needs, characteristics or behaviour, and this has strategic implications for marketing planning (Sarigöllü & Huang, 2005:278). It contributes to the competitiveness of a destination by differentiating its marketing strategy and uniquely positioning it within the market (Dolnicar, 2005:317; McCabe, 2009:147). Benefit segmentation has been considered by various researchers as the most suitable segmentation approach, as it allows for better understanding of tourists' needs (Almeida et al., 2014:6; Armstrong et al., 2014:159; Dolnicar, 2008:130; Frochot, 2005:339).

Literature review

Market segmentation

Market segmentation is sub-dividing markets into distinct groups with different needs, characteristics or behaviour, which might need dissimilar product offerings or marketing mixes (Kotler & Armstrong, 2013:64). When a destination or province knows and understands its target market it can direct its marketing strategies towards the right market segment, resulting in an overall improved position (Pesonen, Laukkanen & Komppula, 2011:303; Tsiotsou & Goldsmith, 2012:3; World Tourism Organisation (WTO) & European Travel Commission (ETC), 2009:5). Every market can be segmented in different ways and not all segmentation criteria are equal. The key to segmenting, is that the identified segment must be similar in their needs, wants and behaviour; the segment must be profitable; the segment can be reached and will react to marketing communication messages; and it must match the destination's strengths (Dolnicar & Grün, 2008:63).

The issue is in choosing the best way to sub-divide tourists. Various market segmentation criteria have been implemented in the tourism industry, based on variables such as expenditure, geographic, psychographics and demographics (Reid & Reid, 1997; Mok & Iverson, 2000; Kim & Prideaux, 2005; Mehmetoglu, 2009; Dixon, Backman, Backman & Norman, 2011; Thrane & Farstad, 2012; Chen, Wang & Lin, 2014) and benefit segmentation (Kastenholz, Davis & Paul, 1999; Frochot, 2005; Sarigöllü & Huang, 2005; Li, Huang & Cai, 2009). Dolnicar (2008) reported psychographic variables to be the segmentation criterion most often used (75%), followed by behavioural variables (21%) and a mix of both (4%). But what is the most effective segmentation criterion? Each segmentation approach serves a specific purpose: when the objectives of a segmentation strategy are defined the most suitable method or technique can be chosen (Frochot & Morrison, 2000:22). The fundamental issue in selecting a segmentation method is developing segments that will be practical in marketing a destination (Pulido-Fernández & Sánchez-Rivero, 2010:113).

Benefit segmentation in tourism research

Haley introduced benefit segmentation in the early 1960s as a method of strategic marketing (Kay, 2006:809). Segmenting according to benefits is a behaviouristic criterion, with an emphasis on understanding the reasons why people buy (McCabe, 2009:154; Park & Yoon, 2009:100). Such an emphasis is important to tourism marketers, as future behaviour can be predicted. Benefit segmentation identifies market segments by causal factors rather than descriptive factors (Pesonen, 2012:71). Haley (1968) never proposed a precise definition of benefits, which has led to mixed interpretations (Kay, 2006:811). Subsequently, several scholars have conceptualised benefit segmentation differently (Kim et al., 2011:32). Crompton (1979) describes benefit segmentation as a means by which visitors rate amenities and activities. Such a definition establishes itself in destination image research studies, which aim to measure *inter-alia*, visitors' perceptions of a destination's benefits.

Segmentation based on benefits offers tourism destination marketers an opportunity to better understand tourist behaviour and develop effective marketing strategies for scarce marketing resources (Dong et al., 2013:183; Frochot, 2005:338; Jang et al., 2002:367). 'This approach recognises that even though tourists may travel to the same destination or buy the same tourism services, it can be for different reasons and value' (Webster, 2009:22). Attributes seen as benefits are attached to a specific destination or activity and cannot be generalised (Frochot & Morrison, 2000:24; Pesonen et al., 2011:304). Benefits can also relate to travellers' push or pull motivations. The former refers to the intrinsic attributes motivating one to travel to a destination and the latter refers to destination attributes which tourists believe can match their needs (Crompton, 1979, 410; Pesonen et al., 2011:71).

As an approach, benefit segmentation has produced several studies (Frochot, 2005; Jang et al. (2002); Palacio & McCool, 1997 Sarigöllü & Huang, 2005). Frochot and Morrison (2000) reviewed 14 benefit segmentation studies in tourism conducted between 1984 and 1998. This review presented the rationale of the benefit segmentation studies, methodological approaches followed, and benefit segmentation as a criterion in tourism studies. Frochot and Morrison (2000) maintain that a focus on traveller's motivations is attributed to a growing interest in benefit segmentation in travel and tourism studies (Frochot & Morrison, 2000:23). Table 1 presents a summary of benefit segmentation research conducted in destination marketing.

Table1: Travel destination choice in previous studies

Authors	Title of the study	Focus and purpose of the study	Benefit segments identified	Location of the study area	Benefit
Yannopoulos & Rotenberg (2000)	Benefit segmentation of the near-home tourism market: the case of Upper New York State	Segment the US near-home tourism market by using survey data collected in the Upper New York State area.	Intangible amenities Active materialist Entertainment and comfort Cultured materialist Entertainment and shopping	Upper New York State	Entertainment Comfort amenities Shopping amenities Security and scenic beauty Affordable variety Culture appreciation
Jang et al. (2002)	Benefit segmentation of Japanese pleasure travellers to the USA and Canada: selecting target markets based on the profitability and risk of individual market segments	Use factor-cluster analysis to define three benefit-based segments of the Japanese outbound travel market (novelty/nature seekers, escape/relaxation seekers and family/outdoor activity seekers).	Novelty/nature seekers Escape or relaxation seekers Family or outdoor activity seekers	USA and Canada	Nature and environment Knowledge and entertainment History and vulture Outdoor activities Family and relaxation Escape Value New lifestyle
Sarigöllü & Huang (2005)	Benefits segmentation of visitors to Latin America	An effective segmentation of Latin-American tourists through benefit segmentation in order to provide invaluable input and guidance for destination marketers with regard to strategic planning for the region's tourist provision.	Adventurer Multifarious Urban	Latin America	Outdoor adventure Ecotourism Performing arts and events General sightseeing
Frochot (2005)	A benefit segmentation of tourists in rural areas: a Scottish perspective	Provide a deeper insight into the segments of rural tourists using benefit segmentation.	Outdoors Rurality Relaxation Sport	Scotland	Outdoor Rurality Relaxation Sport
Molera & Albaladejo (2007)	Profiling segments of tourists in rural areas of South-Eastern Spain	Understand the rural tourism market through market segment analysis using benefit segmentation.	Nature, environment and peacefulness Outdoor and cultural Typical rural life Time with friends	South-Eastern Spain	Nature peacefulness Physical and cultural activities Family Trip features Rural life

Kim et al. (2011)	Benefit segmentation of international travellers to Macau, China	Identify underlying benefits sought by international visitors to Macau, China, which has emerged as a popular gambling destination in Asia. Tourists were clustered based on benefits found from Macau.	Convention and business seekers Family and vacation seekers Gambling and shopping seekers Multi-purpose seekers	Macau , China	Cultural exploration Family togetherness Gambling Shopping experience
Rudež et al. (2013)	Benefit segmentation of seaside destination in the phase of market repositioning: the case of Portorož	Benefit segmentation of visitors to Portorož, which is a mature Mediterranean seaside destination, during a phase of repositioning, to understand whether the destination attracts visitors who seek benefits other than just passive leisure, which had characterised Portorož in the past.	Friends-oriented visitors Wellbeing visitors Curious passive visitors Multifarious visitors	Portorož, South-Western Slovenia	Escape Relaxation Physical activity Convenience Curiosity Spending a good time with friends
Dong, Wang, Morais & Brooks (2013)	Segmenting the rural tourism market: The case of Potter County, Pennsylvania, USA	Investigate characteristics and benefits which motivated individuals to visit rural destinations within the United States.	Experiential travellers Rural explorers Indifferent travellers	Potter County, Pennsylvania, USA	Personal growth Escape Nature Rural exploration, Relaxation Social bonding Family fun
Almeida et al. (2014)	Segmentation by benefits sought: the case of rural tourism in Madeira	Explore rural visitors' preferences and motivations and segment the market based on benefits sought by visitors.	The ruralist Relaxers Family-oriented Want it all	Madeira	Relaxing in nature Socialisation Rural life Cost factor Learning factor

Benefit segmentation literature is of importance for destination marketing, as these studies evaluate the state of the benefits tourists seek. Frochot (2005), Almeida et al. (2014), Dong et al. (2013) and Molera and Albaladejo (2007) identified various tourist benefit segments in rural areas and profiled operational segments for the particular destinations. Almeida et al. (2014) found the main benefit to be spending time with family and friends in a natural and calm environment. Studies (Almeida et al., 2014; Dong et al., 2013; Frochot, 2005; Molera & Albaladejo, 2007) have found that even though the destinations investigated were rural, numbers of tourists who sought rural benefits were low. For example, Frochot (2005) reports that the core segment of tourists dedicated to the attraction 'rural' was a minority compared to other segments. This result is similar to a finding by Molera and Albaladejo (2007) that 'rural life tourists', a group with an interest in rural activities and relationships with local residents, was a small group compared to other segments. These findings indicate that tourists formed their own experiences using a rural tourism product and were not primarily motivated by the rural product (Almeida et al., 2014; Dong et al., 2013; Frochot, 2005). It is therefore necessary to perform segmentation-based research and not to assume that tourists visit a destination for obvious reasons. The literature also indicates that tourists want to gaze upon tourist-related objects and collect memories of the place in a superficial and visual manner (Dong et al., 2013; Frochot, 2005; Urry, 2011). These findings highlight that segments cannot be broadly segmented solely on the speciality of a destination: for example, just because a destination is nature-based, one cannot assume that, for every tourist visiting that destination, nature is therefore the main benefit and that there will be many such tourists.

Benefit segmentation therefore uncovers tourists' true motivation for visiting a destination, which assists a destination to integrate other aspects of the destination and identify them in positioning strategies (Frochot, 2005:344; Rudež et al., 2013:139). Dong et al. (2013) found that tourists wanted to participate in cultural activities, dine at restaurants, shop and visit local historical sites. Frochot (2005) also found something similar: the most popular activities with tourists to a rural destination were eating out and partially experiencing the culture. Jang et al. (2002) found that tourists indicated value as the most important benefit of their holiday. The most important benefits – or rather benefits which were rated high – were nature and environment, knowledge and entertainment, family and relaxation. History, culture and outdoor activities and lifestyle were not regarded as important benefits of the trip. Sarigöllü and Huang (2005) found that security was affecting the Latin-American tourism industry, as security and the friendliness of the locals were considered more important than other factors. A study by Kim et al. (2011) examined differences between four cluster groups visiting Macau, China with regard to their behaviour, socio-economic and demographic segments using benefit segmentation. Amongst clusters identified by Kim et al. (2011), significant differences related to socio-economic, demographic and travel behaviour characteristics. Their study therefore suggests that further analysing benefit segments contributes to finding the specific characteristics of tourists who visit a destination and passing them on to the destination' marketer, which will assist in developing homogeneous markets. This finding is similar to that of Jang et al. (2002): they found benefits to be an appropriate research tool to provide information for marketing. Their study found the differences among the segments to be age, marital status, occupation, travel companions, number of people included in the travel party, season when the trip took place, region and type of trip. Studies that identified benefit segments for a destination are those of Yoon and Uysal (2005), Saayman et al. (2009), Van der Merwe, Slabbert and Saayman (2011) and Kozak (2002), amongst others, who researched benefits sought by visitors at seaside destinations. Yoon and Uysal (2005) identified excitement, knowledge/education, relaxation, achievement, family togetherness, escape, safety, fun, getting away and sightseeing as benefits which tourists sought on the coast of northern Cyprus. Furthermore, within the South Africa context, five factors underlying benefits found by Saayman et al. (2009) relating to two marine destinations in South Africa were escape and relaxation, destination attractiveness, socialisation, personal attachment and trip features. Correspondingly, Van der Merwe et al. (2011) found destination attractiveness, escape and relaxation, time utilisation and personal safety as factors underlying benefits of

the South African coast. Studies such as those of Kim et al. (2011) and Jang et al. (2002) regarding benefit segmentation in tourism studies highlight that it is beneficial to discover other factors, such as expenses, to prioritise marketing efforts further, thereby offering marketers more information so they understand their segments better in order to target the most suitable segment. Benefit segmentation offers managerial implications for marketers, such as advertising, promotion, holiday packaging and developing well-defined and clear marketing strategies.

Methodology

Data collection

The study was conducted on a sample of tourists who visited Mpumalanga province in South Africa, specifically the Kruger National Park (KNP), the Lowveld and the Panorama regions. Mpumalanga was chosen because it is one of the most famous destinations in South Africa, characterised by its mining towns, natural beauty and wildlife, especially the KNP. South Africa Tourism names KNP, the Lowveld and the Panorama region as three must-visit regions in South Africa. In this study guidelines for determining the sample size supplied by Nunnally, Bernstein and Berge (1967) and Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010) were followed, due to unavailability of a list of tourists to Mpumalanga. Calculation of the sample size was based on (i) the number of items in the questionnaire and (ii) the analysis method followed. A sample of 400 was selected. In this research, a multi-stage sampling design that included primary and secondary sampling methods was applied because it was not possible to obtain a complete list of tourists to Mpumalanga. Primary sampling comprised non-probability sampling, with quota sampling applied to select the three regions. A purposive sample was drawn based on the tourist-based screening questions to ensure that only tourists (by definition) were selected for the sample. A four-member trained research team conducted the survey. The researchers explained the research briefly to tourists and asked them if they were willing to participate in the project. Only tourists who had spent a night or more in the country were selected. Upon the tourists' consent, researchers distributed the questionnaire and assisted them to complete all the sections. Questionnaires were administered at four accommodation establishments and four tourist attractions spread over the Kruger Park, Lowveld and Panorama regions. In total, 50 questionnaires were collected at each accommodation establishment and tourist attraction, totalling 400 questionnaires.

Data analysis

Data screening was conducted included controlling for missing data, unengaged responses through standard deviations, and kurtosis to clean the data and ensure that it was useful, reliable and valid for statistical analysis. Furthermore, data screening revealed that all the results presented a normal distribution. In order to confirm the reliability and validity of items, statistical pre-analysis of the data began with Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

EFA was processed to ensure unidimensionality and internal consistency, as the constructs were taken from the literature but were modified to suit the context of the study (Ramikssoon, Smith & Weiler, 2013). The Kruskal–Wallis test was used to infer differences between respondents' residential origins with regard to the benefits tourists sought. This study conducted a two-step clustering to identify the groupings by running pre-clustering first and then hierarchical methods to cluster the tourists (Bacher, Wenzig & Vogler, 2004:4).

Discussion of results

Descriptive analysis suggests that the Mpumalanga tourism sector is dependent on more mature tourists, considering that 78% of the tourists were between the ages of 25 to 65 and only 22% of the sample was between 18 and 24 years of age (Table 2). In terms of spending, the three spending categories (R0-R5000; R5001-R10 000 & R10 000 +) were almost equally distributed. Data regarding academic qualifications suggests a rather well-educated sample: 50% of the sample were graduates and 27% held a postgraduate qualification. The sector exhibits overdependence on two main markets: respondents belong to the domestic market, specifically from Gauteng province (54.5%), and the international market (24.2%). Respondents travelled to Mpumalanga with their partners (25%) and as families with children (24.8%). Attractions visited by respondents while in Mpumalanga are illustrated in Figure 1. Tourists interviewed predominantly (91%) visited God's Window during their trip. About 86% drove through the Panorama route and 72% visited Graskop. Mpumalanga is often marketed alongside the KNP as a must-see iconic attraction. It is interesting to note that the KNP was visited by only 66.8% of the respondents. This is contrary to the South African Tourism listing, where the KNP is the top attraction in Mpumalanga (SA Tourism, 2017:1). Even though KNP is popular, the results provide alternative attractions to promote in the province. Results regarding activities participated in whilst in Mpumalanga (see Figure 2) point out game drives as the most preferred activity (66.5%), followed by hiking trails and birdwatching (28% and 19.8% respectively).

Table 2: Demographic information of respondents

Variables	Freq.	%
Gender		
Female	190	47.5
Male	208	52
Age		
18–24	87	22
25–65	313	78
Nationality		
International tourists		
Austria	1	0.97
Brazil	6	5.83
Canada	2	1.94
Denmark	2	1.94
England	3	2.91
France	25	24.27
Germany	31	30.10
Holland	6	5.83
Iran	1	0.97
Italy	2	1.94
Morocco	1	0.97
Netherlands	9	8.74
Nigeria	1	0.97
Norway	7	6.80
Spain	2	1.94
Swaziland	1	0.97
USA	3	2.91
Domestic tourists		
Eastern Cape	10	2.5
Gauteng	218	54.5
KwaZulu-Natal	18	4.5
Limpopo	23	5.8
Mpumalanga	18	4.5
North-West	2	0.5

|		
Western Cape	6	1.5
Not South African	94	24.2
Education		
Matric	66	16.5
Graduate	198	49.5
Postgraduate (Honours/Masters/Doctoral)	106	26.5
Professional	25	6.3
Disposable income		
R0 – R5 000	137	34.3
R5 001 – R 10 000	139	34.8
R10 001+	120	30
Travel party		
Travelling alone	7	1.8
Spouse / Partner	50	25.0
Family with children	99	24.8
Family without children	18	4.5
Family and friends	41	10.3
Friends	88	0.3
Member of a group	65	0.5

Figure 1: Attractions visited
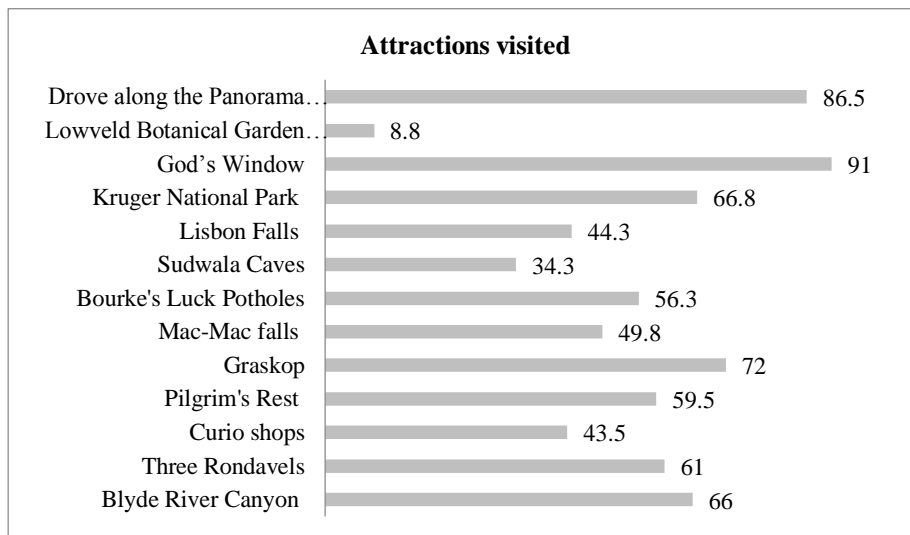
Figure 2: Participation in activities
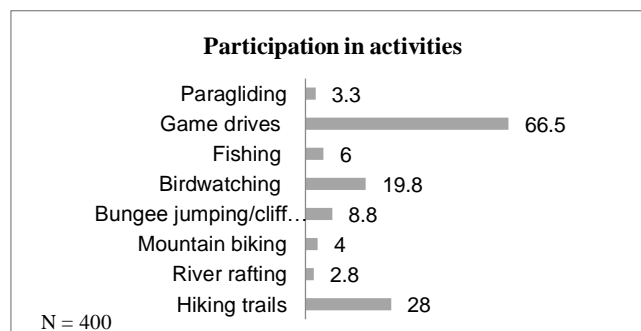
The results of the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy ranged between 0.611 and 0.809 and the Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated statistical significance

(all p-values equal to 0.000). EFA confirmed 16 constructs, but then the item 'spending a night surrounded by the sound of an African night was important to me' (under benefits of the natural environment) was deleted to improve the pattern matrix. Therefore, all the KMO values exceeded the recommended minimum value of 0.5 (Kaiser, 1970; Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's test of sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) indicated statistical significance at $p < .001$, supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix for benefits sought. Nine benefits were measured: each had between three and four items. The factor loadings, variance explained and measure of internal consistency for benefits tourists sought when visiting Mpumalanga are presented in Table 3.

The results indicate that each construct was reliable, as they all had an alpha of 0.671 or greater. According to Hair et al. (2006:137), a Cronbach's alpha estimate of 0.6 is deemed acceptable in exploratory research. Further analysis measuring central tendency, the standard of deviation and skewness and kurtosis measures of all constructs was conducted. The analysis confirmed unidimensionality for the 'spending time with loved ones', 'social bonding', 'relaxation', 'natural environment', 'outdoor adventure', 'history', 'culture', 'escape' and 'learning' constructs, as the analysis identified only one factor based on the eigenvalue criterion (eigenvalue greater than 1).

The literature on benefit segmentation consistently reports these nine factors (Almeida et al., 2014:10; Dong et al., 2013:188; Frochot, 2005:340; Jang et al., 2002:371; Kim et al., 2011:41; Molera & Albaladejo, 2007:76; Rudež et al., 2013:142). One item ('spending a night surrounded by the sound of an African night was important to me') was loaded on the factor 'natural environment' with a factor loading of 0.520, and the set of items resulted in a small negative Cronbach's alpha. If this item was removed, the Cronbach's alpha value increased to 0.828, and therefore this item was eliminated from further analysis.

Using Cronbach's alpha, the internal consistency (reliability) for all the factors indicated in Table 3 was found to be above 0.70, which is at the acknowledged threshold. Factor-based scores were subsequently calculated as the mean score of the variables included for all four factors. Asymmetry and kurtosis values for nine factors were considered acceptable (between -2 and +2) in order to prove a normal univariate distribution (George & Mallery, 2010). The results of the study suggest that tourists visiting Mpumalanga sought different benefits.

The most-sought benefits are to enjoy nature (mean score of 5.75), to escape (5.59) and social bonding (5.12). The second phase of analysis determined whether there were statistically significant differences between residential origins with regard to benefits sought. The Kruskal–Wallis test was used and the following hypotheseses were tested: H0: There is no statistically significant difference between the respondents' residential origin and each of the benefits measured; and H1: There is a statistically significant difference between the respondents' residential origin and each of the benefits measured. Mean ranks for each of the constructs are presented in Table 3 and the Kruskal–Wallis test statistics results are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 3: Factor loading, Cronbach alpha, variance, mean, standard deviation skewness and kurtosis extracted

	Factor items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance (%)	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
	Factor 1: spending time with loved ones		0.685	41.607	3.55	1.58	0.20	-0.83
b	Family engaged in leisure activities during our stay	0.848						
a	Family had an enjoyable time during this holiday	0.842						
c	Interested in discovering new places	0.360						
d	Important to visit family and relatives during my stay in Mpumalanga	0.326						
	Factor 2: social bonding		0.717	66.694	5.12	1.44	-0.56	0.24
d	Important to meet people from different cultural backgrounds	0.946						
c	Important to interact with the local residents during my holiday	0.940						
b	Interested to meet people who seek similar holiday experiences	0.926						
	Factor 3: relaxation		0.899	76.049	5.10	1.55	-0.44	-0.55
c	Feel rejuvenated after this visit	0.941						
b	Enjoy a well-deserved physical rest	0.936						
a	Relax in a quiet natural environment	0.722						
	Factor 4: natural environment		0.828	50.078	5.75	1.05	-0.56	0.67
c	Interested in spending time in a natural environment	0.940						
b	Interested in driving along the scenic routes across the escarpment of Mpumalanga (e.g. Panoramic scenic route)	0.799						
a	Mpumalanga is a tourism destination that offers pleasant weather	0.680						

	Factor items	Factor loading	Cronbach's alpha	Variance (%)	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
	Factor 5: outdoor adventure		0.71	39.133	3.53	1.56	0.00	-0.73
a	Important to participate in outdoor activities during this trip (e.g. hiking)	0.758						
c.	A visit to a natural ecological site was important (e.g. Sudwala Caves)	0.653						
b	Important to participate in wildlife-related activities (e.g. bush walk)	0.582						
d	Participating in adventure sport was important (e.g. bungee jumping)	0.475						
	Factor 6: history		0.874	65.824	4.49	1.58	0.07	-0.86
b.	Important to travel to different historical towns in Mpumalanga (e.g. Pilgrims' Rest)	0.893						
a.	Interested in learning about the history of Mpumalanga	0.884						
c.	Important to travel to different mining towns (e.g. Graskop) during stay	0.799						
d.	Important to visit some of the museums in Mpumalanga (e.g. Jock of the Bushveld)	0.645						
	Factor 7: culture		0.919	79.459	4.93	1.62	-0.23	-0.99
b.	Keen to learn about new cultures while on holiday	0.941						
a.	Interested in visiting a cultural attraction during this holiday (e.g. cultural village)	0.899						
c.	Important to visit local arts and crafts stalls while on holiday	0.831						
	Factor 8: escape		0.905	74.107	5.59	1.43	-0.84	0.09
c.	Experience a change of pace from my everyday life	0.964						
b.	Experience a change in my daily routine	0.906						
a.	Get away from the demands of home	0.849						

d.	Experience a change from a busy work life	0.703					
	Factor 9: learning		0.959	85.413	4.71	1.69	-0.04	-1.04
d.	Important to learn about nature during the trip	0.942					
a.	Important to increase my knowledge during this holiday	0.926					
b.	Important to learn about the heritage of the province	0.925					
c.	Important to learn about wildlife during the trip	0.903					

Table 4: Testing for statistical differences between respondents' residential origin with regard to benefits sought

Constructs	Chi-square	df	Asymp. sig.
Benefit_spend	18.938	5	.002
Benefit_social	25.449	5	.000
Benefit_relax	25.769	5	.000
Benefit_nature	113.216	5	.000
Benefit_adventure	34.547	5	.000
Benefit_history	93.073	5	.000
Benefit_culture	89.019	5	.000
Benefit_escape	33.481	5	.000
Benefit_learning	114.779	5	.000

There was a difference between the origin of residence groups at the 1% level of significance with regard to benefits: 'spending time with loved ones', 'social bonding', 'relaxing in nature', 'natural environment', 'adventure', 'history', 'culture' and 'escape'. Respondents originating from Mpumalanga valued spending time with loved ones (mean rank = 231.25) and relaxing (mean rank = 219.75). Tourists originating from Limpopo valued social bonding (mean rank = 274.24). According to the survey data, domestic tourists travel to spend time with their loved ones, socialise and escape daily routines. On the other hand, international tourists valued spending time in a natural environment, looking for adventure, learning about history, experiencing culture and learning more about the destination (mean rank = 288.89, 237.48, 282.21, 280.90, 292.84 respectively). The third phase of analysis, benefits dimensions scores was used to profile market segments. A two-step clustering to identify the groupings was done by running pre-clustering first and then by using hierarchical cluster analysis. The statistical clustering procedure led to a two-cluster solution that was supported by the silhouette measure of cohesion and separation (Bacher, Wenzig & Vogler, 2004:4). Cluster quality through the silhouette measure of cohesion and separation was acceptable (average silhouette 0.3) as indicated in Figure 3. Elements that were of high importance in forming these two clusters were origin of residence (importance = 1), culture (importance = 0.56), spending during holiday (importance = 0.61), natural environment (importance = 0.62), history (importance = 0.71), and learning (importance = 0.75)

Figure 3: Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation of the different clusters
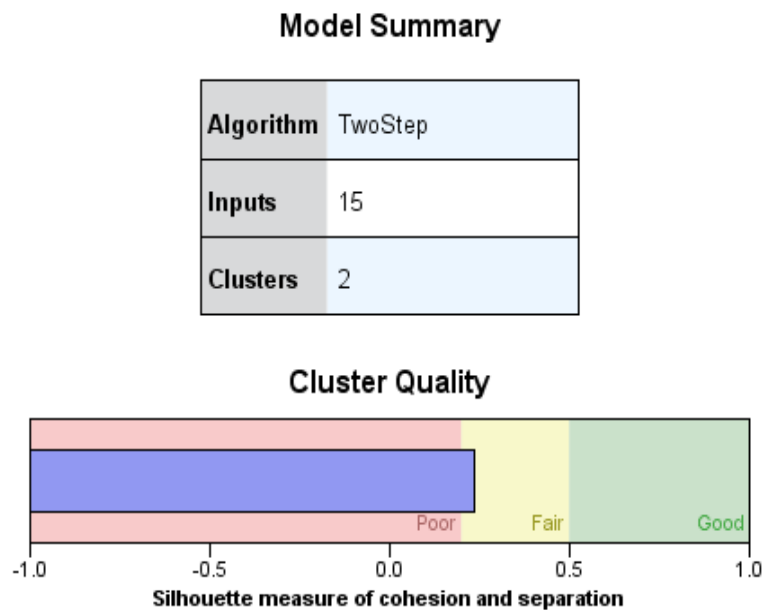
Table 5: Cluster analysis results of travel behaviour, tourist satisfaction and benefits sought as input predictors of tourists travelling to Mpumalanga

Elements	Cluster solutions	
	Cluster 1 Nature–escapist	Cluster 2 Cultured–naturist
Size	n = 293	n = 78
Percentage of sample	79	21
Traditional marketing source[1]	1.97	5.92
Travel planning	3.58	6.84
Origin of residence	Gauteng	Not SA residents
Percentage of sample	70.6	93.6
Benefit history	3.97	6.31
Online marketing sources	2.54	5.05
Benefit learning	4.17	6.55
Benefit culture	4.44	6.70
Tourist satisfaction[1]	5.65	6.71
Spending money	R5 001–R10 000 (41.6%)	R10 000+ (82.1%)
Tourist satisfaction[2]	6.11	6.83
Benefit escape	5.78	4.83
Benefit adventure	3.33	4.26
Number travelling in a group	7.76	13.40
Benefit social bonding	5.01	5.60
Online websites	1.32	1.70
Highest level of education	Graduate (36.5%)	Graduate (47.4%)
Benefit natural environment	6.41	6.68
Benefit relax	5.17	4.70
Number of nights spent in Mpumalanga	3.81	4.29
Gender	Female (54.6%)	Male (56.4%)
Benefit spending time with loved ones	3.55	3.32
Traditional marketing source[2]	1.56	1.72

Following the benefits dimensions' means, the clusters were labelled the *nature–escapist* and the *cultured–naturist.* To describe the segments' profiles in more detail, tourist satisfaction data and data on travel behaviour were used to cross-tabulate each cluster; inputs are presented in order of importance in forming the two clusters (see Table 5 for results). The *nature–escapist* segment (79% of the sample) forms the largest segment of tourists identified in this study. Tourists in this segment greatly desired spending time in a natural environment (overall mean of 6.41).

They also sought to escape daily routine and relax in natural surroundings (mean rating 5.78 and 5.17 respectively). The *nature–escapist* segment shows a higher percentage of females than the other segment, spent three nights on average and travelled in a group of eight. Regarding the travel behaviour profile of the *nature–escapist* segment, this cluster relied on blogs, TripAdvisor, social media, video clips, travel magazines and travel brochures as information sources that were consulted when planning their trip to Mpumalanga. The *nature–escapist* market is mainly visits from domestic tourists (Gauteng 70.6%). Tourists in this segment spent between R5 001 and R10 000 during their trip to Mpumalanga. Tourists interviewed in this study showed high levels of satisfaction for the hospitality received, cleanliness of the accommodation, service by the accommodation establishment, general infrastructure and overall stay in Mpumalanga. Low levels of satisfaction were related to safety and security, number of attractions and leisure activities available, availability of information, overall service and affordability of attractions. The second cluster identified by cluster analysis was characterised as *cultured–naturist*. Compared to cluster 1, respondents in this cluster valued experiences specific to Mpumalanga such as culture (learn about new cultures, visit a cultural attraction and visit local arts and crafts stalls); spending time in nature and learning (about nature, heritage, wildlife). The cluster is relatively smaller than the *nature–escapist* (21% of the sample). In terms of travel behaviour, the *cultured–naturist* resembles referred to travel magazines and brochures terms of information sources consulted when planning the trip, as well as trip satisfaction. The *cultured–naturist* cluster is characterised by a large proportion of long stays. Around 80% of tourists spent R10 000 and more during their time in Mpumalanga. The *cultured–naturist* cluster exhibits a high proportion of international tourists as well as males. Visitors affiliated to cluster 2 are well educated, with 47.4% being graduates. *Cultured–naturist* tourists put more effort into their decision-making, which was characterised by a high level of planning (mean rating 6.84) for the trip to Mpumalanga.

Discussion of results

The clustering of tourists' motivations proved to be a valuable measure to segment the tourism market in Mpumalanga: of the nine benefits dimensions confirmed by factor analysis, surprisingly the 'nature' benefit dimension that Mpumalanga is often associated with accounted for only 50% of variance explained. The 'learning' benefit had the strongest explanatory power (85.413% of variance explained), therefore it can be regarded as the distinguishing reason for visiting the province. The second-strongest explanatory power (79.459% of variance explained) was 'culture', which is therefore also an important distinguishing theme for visiting Mpumalanga. In this study, two market segments of tourists choosing Mpumalanga as a destination were identified based on benefits sought. A large segment (79%) seemed to value 'nature and escape' benefits more, hence were named the *nature-escapists*. Therefore, the focus of all management initiatives must revolve around recreating a peaceful, calming and pleasant aesthetic environment for the *nature–escapist* segment.

The segment *cultured–naturist* accounted for 21% of tourists interviewed. This segment is strongly characterised by a desire to experience Mpumalanga's culture, spend time in natural surroundings and learn more about the destination. From this, we conclude that the tourism industry in Mpumalanga could profit from a more diversified product offering that incorporates nature, culture and learning, given the high potential demand for these benefits identified in this study. Even though the *cultured–naturist* segment accounts for only 21% of the sample, they spent more money and more nights in the province. As these tourists consulted the internet as a source of information, it would be valuable for Mpumalanga to grow this segment using the internet to promote the destination and provide potential tourists with relevant information to assist in decision-making. Tourists in the *nature–escapist* cluster show a slightly higher proportion of female travellers. Interviewees in these two segments show high levels of

overall satisfaction although they were dissatisfied with safety and security, among other factors. In contrast to the other cluster, *cultured–naturists* are characterised by a slightly higher proportion of male tourists and a higher proportion of international tourists (93.6%).

Conclusion and recommendations

It can be concluded that a process of grouping consumers into market segments on the basis of desirable consequences sought from the product is effective. As it was found that even though nature can be considered the main driving benefit for Mpumalanga, and that it would be valuable to also consider culture and learning as benefits to be promoted to draw potential tourists. Significant differences that were found between the residential origins of tourists could be used to develop niche products to suit each potential market. Understanding the benefits sought by tourists visiting the province may be an effective tool in planning for marketing to ensure unique positioning messages that appeal successfully to each segment. A benefit segmentation framework is proposed based on the integration of the results of the study. Figure 3 presents the benefit segmentation framework developed for Mpumalanga using demographic differences, inferential tests and cluster analysis conducted in the study that can implemented by the Destination Management Organisation.

The framework provides Mpumalanga with:

1   the identifiers (age, activities, attractions and origin of residence) that would

2   enable the province to know what to market to whom and

3   how they can enhance tourists' planning processes to optimise satisfaction.

This is important, as market budgets are usually limited and the environment is becoming increasingly more competitive. Therefore, this study presents useful insights into the socio-demographic profile of the average tourist interested in the market segments described. The findings of this study can help the local destination's management to market the segment based on a well-defined and coherent marketing strategy. On the basis of our findings, Mpumalanga has a strong potential to diversify its tourism industry, which currently focuses almost solely on nature offerings. Our findings also highlight the importance of doing research before a destination begins marketing planning and promotion. In addition, the findings provide Mpumalanga tourism management with an in-depth understanding of their tourists; identify specific target segments on whom to focus marketing efforts and grow; and give clear insight into a communication strategy to follow with each segment in order to plan marketing strategies that effectively reach and promote target segments.

The framework suggests that once Mpumalanga develops its portfolio of experience opportunities, the identified information sources consulted by tourists when planning their trip can be used to market the offerings in order to optimise tourist satisfaction. The benefit segmentation framework will enable Mpumalanga tourism management to identify suitable segments, offerings, communications and media. Therefore, results of this study have important implications for all stakeholders involved in tourism marketing and development in Mpumalanga. The market segments and socio-demographic profiles described above can be used to develop marketing strategies and develop and target niche markets as part of a diversification strategy. Marketing can be most effectively planned only if the benefits tourists want to achieve are described, analysed, and understood

Figure 3: Benefit segmentation framework for Mpumalanga
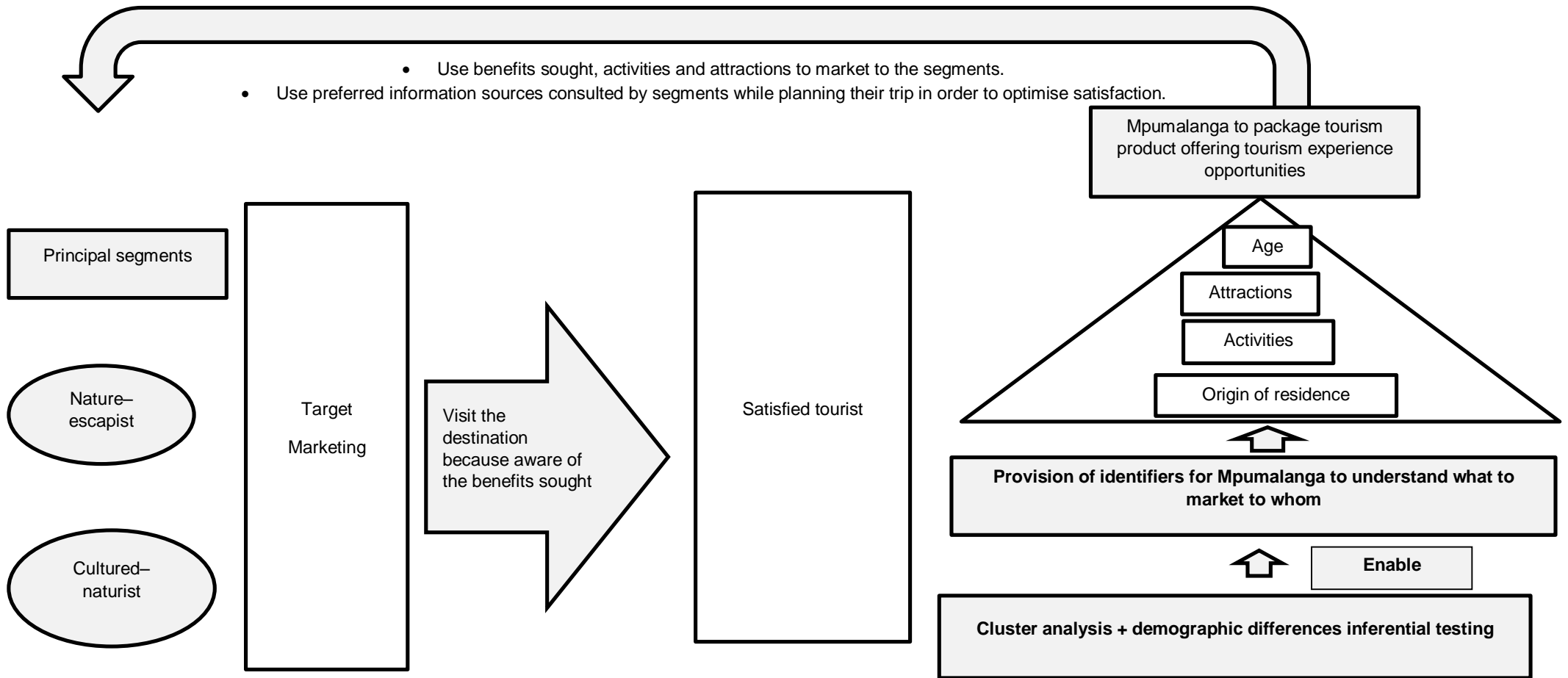
Source: Adapted from Nduna (2016)

.**Limitations and future research**

The study was based on Mpumalanga province only; consequently, results cannot be generalised. The study was conducted over one season, the Easter period; studies could be conducted over different periods and compared with our findings. When the fieldwork was conducted a population list of tourists visiting Mpumalanga was not available for selecting the sample elements. The study had an age restriction of up to 65, but it became apparent during data collection that Mpumalanga had a substantial proportion of tourists who were older than 65, especially those tourists with timeshares. As it is one of the marketing objectives of the province to target international and domestic tourists, it may be beneficial for future research to investigate international and domestic markets separately. For international tourists, the questionnaire can be shortened and be translated into the languages indicated in the responses (Dutch, German and French). Furthermore, working with travel agents and tour guides could increase the response rate from this market, which may lead to enhancement of the different clusters found in this study. Benefits sought by tourists when considering Mpumalanga as a destination may change over time; therefore, Mpumalanga tourism destination management should undertake this type of research periodically in order to improve its marketing strategy and gain the highest return from their investment. It could also be beneficial to explore and compare realised benefits versus sought benefits for tourists visiting the destination by using an in-depth consumer satisfaction measurement instrument. Future research should implement the effectiveness of the benefit segmentation framework designed in this study in the market.

References

Almeida, A.M.M., Correia, A. & Pimpão, A. (2014). Segmentation by benefits sought: The case of rural tourism in Madeira. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 17(9): 813–831.

Anholt, S. (2009). *Handbook on tourism destinations branding*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization.

Armstrong, G., Adam, S., Denize, S. & Kotler, P. (2014). *Principles of marketing*. Sydney: Pearson Australia.

Bennett, P.D. & American Marketing Association. (1995). *Dictionary of marketing terms*, Chicago, IL: NTC Business Books.

Chen, C.C., Wang, Y.C., Lin, Y.H. & Jiang, J.K. (2014). Segmenting Taiwanese tourists to China by ethnic identity and generation. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 20(2): 181–191.

Crompton, J.L. 1979. Motivations for pleasure vacation. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 6(4):408–424.

Dixon, A.W., Backman, S., Backman, K. & Norman, W. (2012). Expenditure-based segmentation of sport tourists. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 17(1): 5–21.

Dolnicar, S. (2008). Market segmentation in tourism. In: AG Woodside and D Martin (Eds). *Tourism Management: Analysis, Behaviour and Strategy*. Cambridge: CABI, pp. 129–150.

Dong, E., Wang, Y., Morais, D. & Brooks, D. (2013). Segmenting the rural tourism market: The case of Potter County, Pennsylvania, USA. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 19(2): 181–193.

Frochot, I. (2005). A benefit segmentation of tourists in rural areas: A Scottish perspective. *Tourism Management*, 26(3): 335–346.

Frochot, I. & Morrison, A.M. (2000). Benefit segmentation: A review of its applications to travel and tourism research. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 9(4): 21–45.

George, D. & Mallery, M. (2010). *SPSS for Windows step by step: A simple guide and reference, 17.0 update.* Tenth edition. Boston, MA: Pearson.

Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J. & Anderson, R.E. (2010). *Multivariate data analysis: A global perspective.* Seventh edition. New York, NY: Pearson Education.

Haley, R.I,. (1968). Benefit segmentation: A decision-oriented research tool. *Journal of Marketing*, 32(July): 30–35.

Jang, S.C., Morrison, A.M. & O'Leary, J.T. (2002). Benefit segmentation of Japanese pleasure travellers to the USA and Canada: Selecting target markets based on the profitability and risk of individual market segments. *Tourism Management*, 23(4): 367–378.

Kastenholz, E., Davis, D. & Paul, G. (1999). Segmenting tourism in rural areas: The case of North and Central Portugal. *Journal of Travel Research*, 37(4): 353–363.

Kay, P. (2006). Tourist benefits research: Old and new issues and uses in a cultural tourism context. In *CAUTHE 2006: To the City and Beyond: Proceedings of the 16th Council for Hospitality and Tourism Educators Conference*. School of Hospitality, Tourism and Marketing, Victoria University, 809–824.

Kim, S.S. & Prideaux B. (2005). Marketing implications arising from a comparative study of international pleasure tourist motivations and other travel-related characteristics of visitors to Korea. *Tourism Management,* 26(3): 347–357*.*

Kim, W.G., Park, Y., Gazzoli, G. & Sheng, E. (2011). Benefit segmentation of international travellers to Macau, China. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 12(1): 28–57.

Kotler, P.A., Armstrong, G., Harris, L. & Piercy, N. (2013). *Principles of marketing.* Harlow, England*: Pearson.*

Li, M., Huang, Z. & Cai, L.A. (2009). Benefit segmentation of visitors to a rural community-based festival. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing,* 26(5/6): 585–598.

McCabe, S. (2009). *Marketing communications in tourism and hospitality.* England: Butterworth Heinemann.

Mehmetoglu, M. 2007. Typologising nature-based tourists by activity: Theoretical and practical implications. *Tourism Management*, 28(3): 651–660.

Mok, C., Iverson T.J. (2000). Expenditure-based segmentation: Taiwanese tourists to Guam. *Tourism management*, 21(3): 299–305.

Molera, L. & Albaladejo, I. (2007). Profiling segments of tourists in rural areas of south-eastern Spain. *Tourism Management*, 28(3): 757–767.

Nduna, L.T., (2016). *Benefit segmentation framework for positioning Mpumalanga as a tourist destination* (Master's Thesis).

Park, D.B. & Yoon, Y. (2009). Segmentation by motivation in rural tourism: A Korean case study. *Tourism Management*, 30(1): 99–108.

Pesonen, J., Laukkanen, T. & Komppula, R. (2011). Benefit segmentation of potential well-being tourists. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 17(4):303–314.

Pesonen, J.A. (2012). Segmentation of rural tourists: Combining push and pull motivations. *Tourism and Hospitality Management,* 18(1):69–82.

Pike, S., & Page, S. (2014). Destination marketing organizations and destination marketing: A narrative analysis of the literature. *Tourism Management*, 41: 202–227.

Pulido-Fernández, J.I. & Sánchez-Rivero, M. (2010). Attitudes of the cultural tourist: A latent segmentation approach. *Journal of Cultural Economics*, 34(2):111–129.

Reid, L.J. & Reid, S.D. (1997). Traveler geographic origin and market segmentation for small island nations: the Barbados case. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 6(3): 5–22.

Rudež, H.N., Sedmak, G. & Bojnec, Š. (2013). Benefit segmentation of seaside destination in the phase of market repositioning: The case of Portorož. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 15(2): 138–151.

Sarigöllü, E. & Huang, R. (2005). Benefits segmentation of visitors to Latin America. *Journal of Travel Research*, 43(3): 277–293.

SA Tourism (2016). *Regions in South Africa: Top 10 Regions*. Retrieved from

http://www.southafrica.net/za/en/top10/entry/top-10-regions-in-south-africa   (Retrieved   22 November 2016).

Thrane, C. & Farstad, E. (2012). Nationality as a segmentation criterion in tourism research: The case of international tourists' expenditures while on trips in Norway. *Tourism Economics*, 18(1): 203–217.

Tsiotsou, R.H. & Goldsmith, R.E. (Eds). (2012). *Strategic marketing in tourism services.* Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

Webster, F.E. Jr. (2009). Marketing IS management: The wisdom of Peter Drucker. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 37(1): 20–27.

UN-WTO & ETC (United Nations World Tourism Organisation & European Travel Commission). (2009). *Handbook on tourism destination branding.* Madrid.

Yannopoulos, P. & Rotenberg, R. (2000). Benefit segmentation of the near-home tourism market: The case of upper New York State. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 8(2): 41–55.