

Muddling Through Destination Marketing: Experiences from the North West Province, South Africa

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Abstract

Globalization propagates the dominance of internationalization and the shortage of resources to strengthen competitive edges is apparent. The 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) in developing countries is still a wish rather than a reality, putting more strains on destinations located in developing countries and hampers destination marketing strategies. This paper examines the rationale for destinations' confusion over their positioning status, using the North West Province as a reference point. The paper adopts a qualitative design which was sourced through reviews of destination marketing strategies, white paper tourism policy and provinces' tourism websites. The reviews were further analyzed using content analysis. The results indicate that the province positions itself as a cultural and heritage destination and that cultural and heritage activities account for less than 5%. Also, the results indicate a mismatch of the province's strong attributes and marketing positioning strategy. The paper concludes that the province would become the hub of destination marketing and huge patronage if it focuses on its strengths and main competitive edge, namely the social activities, shopping, eating out, nightlife, and natural attractions such as the sun, dunes, and platinum mines.

Keywords: Destination, marketing, strategies, tourism, positioning

Introduction

Marketing and business in tourism destinations have grown and been pointedly transformed as a result of extensive diffusion of information and communication technologies (ICTs), globalisation, competitive travel services (Choi, Lehto, Morrison & Jang, 2012; Dolnicar & Ring, 2014; Mazanec, 2016; Morrison, 2019). Scientific evidence shows that the above factors (globalisation, ICTs among others) considerably influenced the tourism destinations marketing, its processes of supply and tourists' consumption attitude (Crouch, 2011; Standing, Tang-Taye & Boyer, 2014; Sotiriadis & Gursoy, 2016). Given this background, the number of academic studies concentrating mainly on tourism destination marketing has been progressively on the increase in the academic space (Sotiriadis, 2021). In view of the foregoing, this paper offers a comprehensive understanding of factors affecting destinations positioning offerings and patronage at destinations by grounding hypotheses within the theory of muddling-through. Muddling-through is a decision-making theory that is based on incrementalism, in which the ability to make decisions is based on interface and shared adaptation among a multiplicity of actors advocating different values, representing different interests, and possessing different information (Guo & Augier, 2016). In the available



evidence, Sotiriadis (2021) argues that the ability to muddle-through decisions about tourism destinations is sometimes determined by the marketing strategy, in terms of creating awareness of the image and positioning of the destinations. Marketing and tourism destination marketing are broad research fields that require academic investigation (Morrison, 2019). Marketing management, according to Kotler and Keller (2019) is the analysis, planning, implementation and control of programs designed to bring about desired exchanges with target audiences for the purpose of personal and mutual gain. Sotiriadis (2021) defined tourism destination marketing as the planning and programmes specifically designed to attract tourists to a certain location or destination.

Sotiriadis's view on tourism marketing shows that even though the strategy for marketing direction is important, it can also stifle creativity, especially if it is rigidly enforced. In an uncertain and ambiguous world, fluidity can be more important than a finely tuned strategic compass (Pickering & Byrnm 2013; Albuquerque, Costa & Martins, 2018). When a strategy becomes internalized into a marketing culture, it can lead to a group mentality (Morrison, 2019). It can also cause an organization to define itself too narrowly, an example of this is marketing myopia (Morrison, 2019). For instance, the rural area of North West Province has partly remained as one of the reasons for the low patronage of tourists compared to other provinces in South Africa. Consequently, making rural part of North West Province, not a marketable tourism destination. The case of rural areas in North West Province above brings to the fore the concept of destination marketing, which has received considerable attention over the last couple of years – and not always positive, especially in times where popular destinations are threatened by overcrowding, or “over-tourism (Galelekile, 2019). Destination marketing is about engaging with key players to drive awareness of the destination, thereby driving interest so that people visit the destination (Sotiriadis, 2021). It is about finding creative ways of communicating the destination's value proposition, therefore, creating the reason for people to visit destinations (Galelekile, 2019).

Similarly, Obed (2017) sees tourism destination marketing as a management process for “identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer -tourists' requirements and profitably” This might have made Donohoe (2012) concludes that tourism marketing destination is an important segment of tourism, due to an attempt of designing plans and communications suitable for target tourists, mainly for-profit motive. Albrecht (2016), however, cautioned that marketers of tourism destinations, sometimes, constitutes a threat to the sustainability of the destinations, during advertisement due to their negligence of including in their promotion or advertisement, information about the sustainability of the tourism destination (Albrecht, 2016). Thus, tourism destination marketing is the ability to determine or enhance sustainable travels and attitudes in tourist development at the destination in their marketing processes (Jamal & Camargo, 2014).

In addition, destination marketing focuses on the attraction of visitors – tourists, investors, university students, or a skilled labour force to destinations (Morrison, 2019). Similarly, Kamel (2019) notes that the utility of destination marketing is to build destinations international reputation, attract investment and visitor spend, and help destinations expand globally to create additional jobs and economic growth for the city. Destination marketing is capable of improving the socio-economic development of destinations cities through an effective muddle-through strategy (Pike & Page 2014). The foregoing is consistent with Cooper's (2019) observation that destination marketers largely just market a place, city, province, or location. For Chang, Chen and Hsu (2012), destination managers do that but are also active leaders in community development and preservation efforts (It also means a fundamental change in the culture of the DMO. This philosophical realignment has a bearing on what our job is, how we do our job, the team involvement, and their skill sets.



The above definitional perspectives of destination marketing might have made Kamel (2019), concludes that destination marketing has never been the same since the economic recession and the rapid evolution of digital tools such as social media, analytics, and mobile apps. The rise of personalization in travel experience has also highlighted the ‘social dimension of destination marketing from both a global and a local perspective (Bregoli, 2013). Given this background, the paper seeks to unravel the connection between destination marketing and the socio-economic development of the North West Province. It examines North West Province as a marketing destination through a muddle-through strategy. In the literature, many researchers have considered destination positioning offerings, competitive edge, and strength.

This has created some limitations in addressing the implications of confusion destinations over their competitive edge, positioning offerings and identification of their strength. However, few studies have pointed out poor marketing skills, the primitiveness or geographical location of the destinations and the inability to market destinations based on their strength, uniqueness and known service rendition (Burkley, Burkley, Curtis & Hatvany, 2018; Herjanto, Scheller-Sampson & Andreani, 2019). Evidence shows that the identification of the destinations’ strength and positioning offerings in terms of their competitive edge advantage attract higher patronage of tourists, customers, and visitors (Gehrisch, 2019). The destination of tourism, especially in terms of beauty, safety, leisure and hospitality, is a major consideration for customers or tourists. Thus, marketing tourism destination requires good advertising marketing skills, because not all locations or sites are attractive to tourists.

One of such destinations is the North West Province. Its geographical location is not conducive and attractive for tourism. It is a totality of rural coverage made up of 657 villages. Focusing only on the province’s strengths as a marketing positioning and image strategy is not effective. Additionally, destinations fail to identify their competitive edge due to the amalgamation of tourism products at the destination (Soteriades, 2012). Besides, the dependency on Transnational corporations (TNCs) as a competitive edge poses a danger to many destinations (Clark, Clark & Jones, 2012). The North West Province identified Sun City Resort, a multinational hotel chain as its positioning strategy. The unreliability of TNCs is acknowledged by many researchers. (Hjalager, 2007; Mpofu, 2009; Mazilu, 2011). The reliance on marketing strategy on globalization rather needs to incorporate the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) in the marketing strategy to position the destination and create a desirable destination image. To achieve this, the influence of globalization on the 4IR on the destination position and image were studied to form the base of arguments in the study. Firstly, the literature review is provided to give a background and an overview of the study area; North West Province in South Africa. This is followed by the description of the methodology and findings, before conclusion and recommendations.

Background of North West Province

As a platinum province, North West Province is situated in the northwest of South Africa, hence the name. The province is believed to be situated centrally to the subcontinent. With its railway line connecting Cape Town to Zimbabwe (North West Province Annual Performance Plan 2017/18, 2017). The province has an extensive road network connecting it to the major commercial centres of the province to the rest of the 1 785 km of national roads. In the past, the province had positioned itself around business tourism. This has shifted to sport, comedy, and music festivals (North West Province Annual Performance Plan 2017/18, 2017). On the website of its destination marketing organization (DMO), the North West Tourism Board positions itself as a culture and heritage destination. Provincial facilities are constantly under renovation and construction to complete these resources for future use and tourism

attractions. Rebranding, repositioning, and renewal are the current economic development strategies that the province adopted (North West Provincial Government: year unknown).

The highlights of North West Province as a tourist destination

According to North West Province Annual Performance Plan 2017/18 (2017), several facilities have been highlighted as prominent for tourism attractions. The Royal Bafokeng Sports Palace and Marang Hotel in the Bojalana District, the University of North West Potchefstroom campus which offers an Olympic sized swimming pool, the historic towns which include Groot Marico, Hartebeespoort and Lichtenburg, mining and agriculture towns such as Potchefstroom, Rustenburg and Vryburg are all areas known to have a potential to attract more visitors in the province. These towns could boost both mining tourism and agritourism activities in the province. Generally, Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District is known as the center of a large mining and agricultural economy and currently boasts as the second largest grain co-operative in the world. The backbone of the North West Province economy is mining, with the main minerals being gold that is found in Orkney and Klerksdorp; while uranium, is mined at Klerksdorp; platinum found at Rustenburg and Brits; diamonds on one hand is mined at Lichtenburg, Christiana, including Bloemhof. There are only two provinces in South Africa that mined platinum; Limpopo and North West Province, while the province is also proven to have a competitive edge over other provinces in the agriculture sector. Nevertheless, North West Province continues to be amongst the three least visited destinations in South Africa in terms of domestic trips and international arrivals (South African 2014 Annual Report). Litheko and Potgieter (2016) argue that the main challenge facing the destination marketing organization is the lack of budget.

The globalization of destination marketing positioning

Globalization in the views of Iris and Zorica (2014) is seen as a process of economic, social, cultural, and political activities that crosses national boundaries and affects tourism and destination marketing. ICT acts as a catalyst due to faster transfer of information and increased networking activity that amplifies the effect of globalization (Dolnicar & Grün, 2013). Owing to globalization, the world has become a global village, and these changes affect people both at the local and global levels (Lopez-Sanchez & Pulido-Fernandez, 2016). In the context of globalization, it was argued that tourism, through global interactions and digital technologies for creating an awareness of destinations, has shaped cultural values, transformed cities and improved technology (Mariani, Buhalis, Longhi & Vitouladiti, 2014). On the effect of globalization on destination marketing positioning, especially in the direction of tourism, scientific evidence shows that its combination with tourism does not necessarily hurt local economies (Mariani & Borghi, 2019). It has been observed that globalization and foreign tourists can reduce prices and increase foreign exchange and local offers, thereby stimulating further development of production (Agnieszka, 2018). With increased tourist expenditures, globalization has a positive impact on macroeconomic trends and the welfare of the population (Morrison, 2019). These findings are consistent with that of Agnieszka (2018) who opines that due to globalisation, tourism recorded about 12% of the world gross product in 2016 and that progress has been recorded in areas such as commodities accommodation, transportation, entertainment and attractions of these industries accommodation services, food and beverage services, retail trade, transportation services and cultural, sports and recreational services (Mossaz & Coghlan, 2016).

From these submissions, one of the key arguments in favour of destination marketing positioning relates to the necessity of understanding the critical trends and using their positive effects while at the same time neutralizing or avoiding the negative ones (McCamley &



Gilmore, 2016). This is similar to what Iris and Zorica (2014) observed that intensive changes in the physical dimension of the macro-environment (like fear of greenhouse effect and pollution) directly affect new trends in destination marketing positioning, about tourists who choose destinations with safe, eco-friendly products, thus, affecting new traveling trends and new motives that will lead to new innovative products (Silva & Correia, 2016). For them, Iris and Zorica (2014), global trends have a great influence on certain activities. Production factors such as natural resources, capital, technology, labour, products, and services in the global economy move freely with the upward trend in communication speed and movements of people, goods, and services. On a global level and in the long run wage rate will be equalized, which is known as “factor price equalization” (Soteriades, 2012). This creates opportunities for transition countries where globalization acts as “creative-destructive force” that drives production factors and distributes them worldwide, thus crossing the territorial and cultural barriers (Simon, Narangajavana & Marques, 2014).

Globalization trends strongly affect destination marketing positioning and result in the following major effects: a sudden increase in potential tourist demand for different destinations (Holowiecka, Grzelak-Kostulska & Kwatkowski, 2011). It must be emphasized that tourists looking for experience are not interested only in the “nearby” destinations, but a potentially competitive destination (Slobodan, Vukadinović & Knežević, 2015). Similarly, Simon et al. (2014) notes that the desire for competitive tourists’ destinations has become very strong, with more destinations competing by adapting their offer to the requirements of potential tourists.

Thus, emphasis on innovation, specialization and better quality of products and services increased the need for additional capital to finance the necessary investments for future goals (Silva & Correia, 2016). And achievements to remain competitive in the market, including problems for developed destinations arising from relations with suppliers who are often not heterogeneous, and do not apply the quality standards (Iris & Zorica 2014). This could lead to a tendency of traditional positioning strategy whereby marketers rely on destinations competitive edge, in other words, dependence on destinations strengths is no longer an effective positioning strategy as destinations strive to fight an ever-increasing competition, led by globalization and the 4IR (Larry, 2015; Dujmović & Vitasović, 2017). Globalization refers to interdependence or interconnections globally at diverse levels, socio-economic and political systems at various developmental stages of different countries (Larry 2015; Welzel, 2013; Ivanov & Webster, 2013). It is imperative to note that through globalization, tourism, became very popular and the marketing of destination of tourism, is facilitated by major components of globalization (Welzel, 2013). Larry (2015) avers that most countries are not able to be in control of globalization due to their primitive stage of technology, science, and innovations. However, the negative impacts caused by globalization on tourism cannot be overlooked which include, acculturation, pollution, leakages of imports of goods and services which are consumed by tourists (Ivanov & Webster, 2013). Pike (2017) reveals that the success for effective positioning in the tourism industry is being able to choose the market which is not yet fulfilled and able to identify the leading destination’s weakness and capitalize on them. For instance, Dujmović and Vitasović, (2017), specifically observed that the ability to attract tourists to tourism destinations is part of the 4IR. Additionally, a focus should be on long term strategy for destination marketing, which includes analysis of customer perception on destinations (Ávila-Robinson & Wakabayashi 2018; Pike, 2017).

In the light of the above, Sotiriadis, (2021) opines that destination position through cognitive, affective, and conative perceptions assist DMOs that are struggling to identify one or more features from their diverse and multi attributed product range to differentiate their



destination meaningfully. Cognitive refers to the ability to choose or identify alternatives which supported by the beliefs and knowledge about a thing, affective refers to feelings and the evaluation of the alternatives that have been identified (Cai, 2016; Jan & Brian, 2016). Thus, the ability to choose destination positioning is part of the cognitive skills a marketer should possess in tourism destination marketing. Given the above, destination positioning relies on the choice that marketers make once they have evaluated the alternatives, hence conative becomes important in positioning strategy. According to Jan and Brain (2016), the essence of destination positioning is to cognitively determine the best tourism destination that can effectively promote the positive image of any destination positioning. Pike (2017) argues that a core focus in destination positioning is an image, which needs a full understanding of the destination's strengths and weaknesses in comparison to its competitors. Within the complexity of destination position, Pike (2010) identifies a range of factors that leads to destination positioning complexity. Multi attributed amalgamations of tourism products, stakeholder diversity, competition, and stakeholder different interests (Truong & Hall, 2016). Positioning goes beyond mere image creation which formulated based on the destination strengths (Jan & Brian, 2016). It includes competition over adequate and appropriate tourism destinations among marketers who compete over good sites or locations for tourism (Sharpley & Pearce, 2014).

Thus, competition in the global, macro-level increasingly affects destinations, making them innovative in product creation and communication through advertising and distribution (Truong & Hall, 2016). The emphasis must be on the reallocation of resources and knowledge to meet tourist requirements as much as possible to obtain value-added transactions (Cai, 2016). To promote value-added transactions for tourists, Jan and Brian (2016) advocated that sophisticated technologies can facilitate effective advertisement or marketing of the destinations, thus leading to greater satisfaction and reorganization of communication strategies and business of service providers. Relatedly, Tse and Qiu (2016) argued that, through technologies, better efficiency, interoperability, personalization, and networking of market participants are achieved. In addition to the utilities of technologies, efficient time management is crucial to a competitive position in tourism, and the application of new technologies in all business segments facilitate activities that are prerequisite to the coordination of tasks and performance of functions, with particular importance of contribution to the segment of business activities and efficient task performance through the partial sum of performed activities that contribute to overall business (McCamley & Gilmore, 2016).

In the global market, as a result of circumstances in a macro-environment, there is an apparent evolution of needs turned to self-identification, multicultural views, and specific interests that lead to further market division (Liu & Chou, 2016). The reasons for the connection and concentration of entities lie in the necessity determined by competitive market conditions and challenging tourist demands (McCamley & Gilmore, 2016). Specific integration combines the interests of tourism entities into a common goal, strengthens the market approach enables easier product placement and expands the range of products, which facilitates the adjustment to high criteria of potential consumers, with possible cost reduction and competitive prices (Iris & Zorica, 2014). Buttressing the foregoing, Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus and Naipaul (2013), revealed that tourism is a product of globalization, resulting from processes of migration, interactions, civilization, and hospitalization, which has increased the volume of travels and trade across the globe. Similarly, Larry (2015) attributed the spread and popularity of tourism and hospitality to globalization, especially, its spread to Africa, which in the long run contributes to the slogan of the global village. Tourism unifies and projects the world as a single entity (Cai, 2016).



Destination image in the 4IR industrial revolution era

Developing countries are still in the process to address the accessibility of ICT, while the 4IR is a dream rather than the reality in most destinations in the developing countries, indeed an opposite scenario from developed countries (Gupta & Gulla, 2010; Kiprutto, Kigio & Riungu, 2011; Xiang, Vincen, Magnini & Fesenmaier, 2015). For instance, ICT has affected the global development of tourism which has changed business practice and development strategies (Porter, 2001). Online reservations systems, global distribution systems, and the internet are crucial tourism marketing destinations because tourists are able to get and receive information about popular tourist destinations (Cai, 2016). Thus, distance disappears” with new technologies and the mobility of tourists increases. Globalization is possible owing to technological changes, and ICT functions as a catalyst for changes in the surroundings, and it has a strong influence on tourists. ICT contributes to spatial and temporal convergence. Innovative approaches and new business techniques are evident in the creation, distribution, and information on tourist products. The 4IR is a dawn of “cyber-physical systems” which emanate from the 3rd industrial revolution where the embedment of technology development with the society and human bodies took place. The 4IR on one hand focuses on the capabilities of people and machines in changing their ways of life, for instance, the persuasion of computer-generated product design and three-dimensional (3D) printing (Xu, David & Kim, 2018). Many DMO spend lots of money in marketing tourism products that are found to be inconsistent with customers’ motivations, expectations and beliefs (Xu et al., 2018), the 4IR reverses will reverse this through the use of driverless cars, robotics and the Internet of things (IoT).

Technological changes, with their creative destruction, bear the consequences and continue the process of transforming the needs of individuals and entities, as evident in globalization. The needs that have evolved into secondary needs support the evolution of prerequisites which are important for their realization. For the realization of needs, it seems necessary to consume products and services that meet customer preferences, and for efficient product placement and achievement of satisfaction, technology is important. The technology “tailored for tourists” will be responsible for efficient product placement. Apart from innovative solutions and applications, Welzel (2013) points out that the advantages of Internet are easy transfer of knowledge, bonding and strengthening of relationships in groups with similar or the same interests, beliefs, hobbies forums, socializing, and interactive approach. The internet will reduce the stress of marketers, as they can now relate to customers’ requests online and through other digital technologies.

These digital technologies assist marketers in a number of ways, for instance, marketers will no longer guess the customers’ expectations as customers will control the machinery to their desired results or experiences. Greenwood and Dwyer (2015) hold the view that destination marketing organisation should put into consideration the perception of tourists or customers about the destination and their level of satisfaction about the tourism products. A two-way relationship exists between tourists’ image and satisfaction about service that exists due to experiences (Greenwood & Dwyer 2015). Unlike during the 3rd industrial revolution, where services were performed through the workers’ bodies, in the 4th Industrial Revolution service is performed with the workers’ minds (Xu et al., 2018). The effectiveness of the destination image is assessed in four ways; the image should be valid, believable, simple, appeal, and distinctive (Day, Skidmore & Koller, 2001). These, in turn, will make most environments very competitive as tourism destination centres.

Considering the spate of highly competitive environment that is facing destinations, image plays a critical role in differentiating and achieving a different positioning of the destination (Guzman-Parra, Vila-Oblitas & Maqueda-Lafuente, 2016; Slabbert & Martin,

2017). A positive image has a strong influence on destination positioning. Destination image is an attitudinal concept consisting of the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a tourist holds of a destination (Crompton, 1979), a perception of a place or a photo of a place (Day, Skidmore & Koller, 2001). Image influences the destination choice and the three areas cognitive, affective, and behavioural/conative should always be the base while assessing the destination image. The research on image varies, others indicate affirmation on cognitive, others on affective while others lean towards conative. Slabbert and Martin (2017) found affective and conative playing a major role in influencing a festive image. Several authors such as (Morrison, 2019; Zang et al., 2014; Welzel, 2013; Greenwood & Dwyer, 2015; Larry, 2015) propose that tourist forms the cognitive image, based on which affective components are developed and then the conative image is constructed.

Methodology

This study is an exploratory research that explores the gaps that exist in the development and marketing of tourism products in South Africa. The qualitative research design with content analysis was followed to compile the study. The paper adopts a qualitative design which was sourced through reviews of destination marketing strategies, white paper tourism policy and provinces' tourism websites. The reviews were further analysed using content analysis. The content analysis enabled the researchers to answer the questions on which, when, and what type of questions. The qualitative design further focused on the literature which assisted in identifying the shortcomings in relation to domestic tourism and international arrivals within the nine provinces of South Africa, the provinces are shown in Figure 1 below.

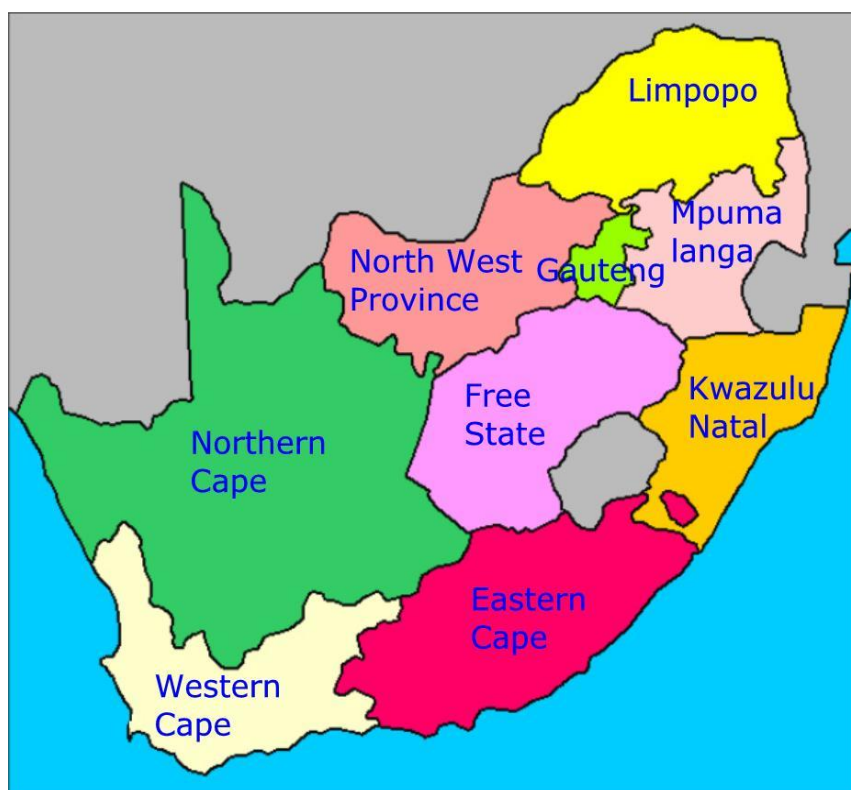


Figure 1: Map of South Africa's Provinces. Source: www.southafrica.to

Findings

Table 1 showcases tourism activities in each of South Africa's provinces. It provided information on attractions, leisure, and other tourism inducing activities that tend to attract or



motivate tourists to visit the provinces in South Africa. The essence is to equip tourists with information that can help shape their decision on the province to visit.

Table 1: Tourism Activities in South African Provinces

South African 9 Provinces									
%	Gauteng	Western Cape	Eastern Cape	Kwazulu Natal	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Free State
Shopping	70	68	48	67	81	52	34	32	41
Nightlife	6	17	9	7	1	3	6	5	6
Eating out	52	81	80	60	35	42	42	33	17
Entertainment	8	14	9	7	2	3	4	4	4
Social	38	45	36	55	11	40	30	28	42
Visiting natural attractions	6	69	54	25	6	20	7	21	3
Business	14	11	8	8	1	1	3	10	1
Wildlife	4	42	52	17	9	29	9	16	1.5
Cultural, historical 7 & heritage	16	49	26	18	3	16	4	10	1
Beach	-	48	36	40	-	-	-	2.3	-
Church	8	3	3	3	4	3	6	5	15
Trading	8	3	1	2	3	1	1	1	0
Theme parks	3	17	6	7	1	1	2	2	0
Adventure	2	30	25	10	2	5	2	5	1
Education & training study	5	7	5	6	1	1	2	3	10

Source: Tourism Annual Report (2017)

Table 2 shows perceptions on destination positioning strategy adopted by provinces in South Africa. The essence is to showcase at a glance, tourism incentives and strategies attractive to tourists in each province. It also intends to provide information on the provinces' destination marketing website, that is, to identify, the province that has an effective marketing website that can be used for the marketing of tourism facilities or products. It contains a discussion by TripAdvisor members concerning the perceptions on South Africa (SA) provinces' destination positioning strategy. The discussion was closed to any additional postings as of Nov 1, 2016.

Table 2: Perceptions on South African provinces' destination positioning strategy

Provinces	TripAdvisor		Provinces' Destination Marketing website
Eastern Cape Province	A paradise for nature lovers		Adventure destination Home of legends
Free State	This province boasts with wide horizons and blue skies and is home to many farmers		Discover and Explore. Make the Free State 's Big 5 Your Next Holiday Route South African included
Gauteng	Gauteng means "place of Gold". This is the smallest of all 9 provinces, but it has the highest population density.		No information provided
KwaZulu Natal	This province combines the old traditions of the Zulus with modern elements of modern time		No information provided
Limpopo	Limpopo border Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mozambique and makes it a good starting point to explore those regions of Africa. This province was formerly known as "Northern Province".		A region of infinite scenic beauty and rich cultural heritage
Mpumalanga	The Kruger Park, with its Big Five - Lion, Elephant, Buffalo, Rhino and Leopard - is the main attraction of		No information provided

	this province.	ranges.	
Northern Cape	Famous for red sand desert	The Kalahari" and the diamond fields around Kimberley.	South Africa's premier destination for extreme escapism, exploration and adventure.
North West	Sun City with its casinos, superb hotels and waterparks attracts most visitors to this province. But the North West province is also home to South Africa's biggest National Park - the Pilanesberg.	No information provided	Welcome to the heritage tourism destination in SA. South African brand name included
Western Cape	Most foreign tourists visit the Western Cape on their trip to South Africa. Cape Town is known as mother city	Known for Table Mountain	Welcome to wesgro The Official Tourism, Trade & Investment Promotion Agency for Cape Town and the Western Cape. Let us help you do business in an inspiring place.

Tripadvisor (2016)

Figure 2 below indicates individual South African provincial tourism branding by the respective destination marketing organisations. This subsequently gives the destination an identity.



Figure 2: South Africa's provinces tourism branding
 Source: Provinces DMOs web page

Discussion

On the rationale for destinations' confusion over positioning status of tourism destination, using the North West Province, results showed that, while the province had repeatedly laid claim to cultural and heritage (5%) as the strategy for marketing North West Province as a tourism destination, the province had been very popular as eatery (42%), shopping (34%), and social activities (30%) destination. This can be further interpreted to mean that the results indicated confusion over positioning status of North West Province as a tourism destination because tourists are misled by the marketing strategy that made them believe or understand that the province is a cultural and heritage destination. This confusion can be attributed to a lack of knowledge of the market's preferences. This aptly affirms findings in (Almeida-Santana & Moreno-Gil, 2017; Byun & Jang, 2018), that unverified news or information on mass media, fake news, overzealous hyping of destinations can confuse or significantly have a severe on tourists' decisions for visitation to destinations. This is well captured in Galí, Camprubí and Donaire (2017), that tourism slogans in tourism destinations can be confusing and misleading, hence, the need for proper analysis of the words and slogans used by



marketers during the marketing of destinations. In addition, the above results were particularly more revealing in Jiang, Tan, Liu, Wan and Gursoy (2020). For them, lack of knowledge on market preferences has pushed many tourists into destinations remarkably different from the ones described by marketers. Deliberately most marketers, have devised the strategy of attracting tourists to destinations over what is non-existence in the destination (Lee & Gretzel, 2012). This has negatively affected most destinations, such that the customers or tourists could lose trust in the destinations, irrespective of its image branding or corrections (Garcia, Gomes & Molina, 2012). Secondly, results indicated a stiff confusion regarding marketing the North West Province as a tourism destination because the province still claims its identity around the Sun City (see table 1) which is run by Sun International group. This can be interpreted to mean that false marketing information about destinations is not only reducing the tourism image or potentials of the affected destination, but it is also equally misleading the tourists. This had earlier been affirmed in the findings of Mariani, Felice and Mura (2016) and Molinillo, Liébana-Cabanillas, Anaya-Sánchez and Buhalis (2018), that the image and intention to visit, are core issues in determining tourism destination.

From the above results, it is clear that the North West Province require a unique brand strategy to market itself more attractive tourism destination. The brand strategy should focus on strong experiences that are taking place in the province rather than the perceived brand-Sun City. This might have made Kamel (2019) suggests that the South African government should be more pro-active in making tourism the economic hub of the country, through resource allocation, political power, public-private partnerships, among others, this is because tourism has been proven (Sharpley & Pearce 2014; Truong & Hall 2016; Polido-Fernandez, Andrades-Calidito & Sanchez-Rivero, 2015) to be highly contributory to the achievement of sustainable development. This means moving from planning to implementation – many of the excellent plans that have been drafted for national and local destinations lie idly on the shelves and are in urgent need of practical implementation. It was further revealed that the only way in which true, sustainable tourism development can be achieved in South Africa, is through a solid partnership between the government and the private sector. Kamel (2019) notes that he has been privy to the power of such partnership marketing initiatives while working at a senior level in post-apartheid government service in South Africa and have since been a strong proponent of a partnership approach in destination marketing. It is imperative to note that should the Sun International group close down their hotels, this usually affects the image of the destination especially if the destination depends entirely on its existence for bringing customers. What will happen when the 99 years for the hotel come to the end? At Moroleng in the North West Province, the Sun International Hotel closed down and it became difficult for the area to market itself (Mudramthoo, 2019).

Conclusion

Practically, this paper advances new knowledge in the possibility of revealing to societies, countries, or continents that tourism, especially, adequate marketing of tourism destinations, that are based on truth or realities of incentives in the destination countries or societies, is highly instrumental not only to socio-economic development, but the attainment of sustainable development (Sharpley & Pearce, 2014). For instance, the massive influx of tourists to destinations that appear to be conducive, safe, hospitable, and depiction of what they represent in the marketing strategy, is a potential source of economic growth and development in the destination. Thus, the paper provides information that societies or countries that seek to become tourism destinations, should ensure that the information about



their destination as a marketing strategy is not fake, confusing or misleading (Lee & Gretzel, 2012).

Similarly, destination marketing organizations or marketers, in practical terms, can learn from the results of this paper, especially in areas of adequately and honestly providing true information about destinations during the marketing of tourism destinations. As the article's results revealed that, accurate information about incentives in the tourism destinations, would make tourists feel satisfy and trust the destination during their visits (Jiang, Tan, Liu, Wan & Gursoy, 2020). Practically, the article has been able to contribute to general knowledge on how marketers or DMOs can base their marketing strategy about their tourism destinations on the unique realities or incentives that are physically available and not just on perceived or praised incentives that are rarely available at the tourism destinations. Importantly, the article findings contribute to practical knowledge, especially, in the possibility of learning how the South African government can be more pro-active and effective with the implementation of appropriate policies on tourism marketing destinations and strategies. For instance, its results that indicated the usefulness of brand strategy, will not only practically equipped marketers or DMOs, with the requisite skills of marketing tourism destinations, but the government can also equally learn to implement a policy that can promote the unique brand of each province in South Africa.

Theoretically, the results of the article were able to contribute to the muddling through theory, especially in the area of incrementalism, which, explained the rationale for DMOs or marketers' behaviour for increasing the image of destinations, even though, those destinations are far from possessing such unique qualities or incentives. For instance, the results of this paper provided information on how tourists can analytically make a decision on visiting a destination that significantly adds value or increases their benefits. This is aptly inconsistent with the incremental model of muddle through theory (Guo & Augier, 2016). The paper contends that experiences in the North West Province, as regards the attraction of tourists through muddle-through destination marketing indicated a strong weakness of the province to identify areas where it had a competitive edge and positioning offerings, hence, low patronage of some of the beautiful services in the province. Some of the factors contributing to poor destination marketing of the North West Province, is its rural geographical setting, the inability of the marketers to identify the positioning offerings of the province, slow internalization of globalization tenets and poor public-private partnership. There is a need to translate the rural villages into global cities using technological apparatus and export the products/services that give the province a competitive edge through an effective muddling-through marketing method. This suggestion had been affirmed in Larry (2015) who reported that the globalization of the tourism industry into a more global export product has brought many positive impacts to African countries. However, the impacts that accrue to each country depend upon its level of development; the degree of incorporation into the world economy; as well as the investment climate of each country.

To fully benefit from the positive impacts of destination marketing, the paper recommends that the North West Province needs to understand and identify all its strength in terms of qualitative services, uniqueness, and areas of competitive advantage and to improve their image on the world stage. It is critical to realize that tourism is a very sensitive sector that involves the movement of people and as such, most tourists will always consider their safety first before choosing a destination whose security is, from their point of view, unpleasant. Finally, while striving to benefit from this tourism and positive destination marketing, the North West Province needs to closely monitor the negative economic, socio-cultural, and environmental aspects of tourism. This way, it can control the negative influence on tourism and globalization on the local people at the village level.



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