



# Profiling and segmentation of international tourists in Lesotho

Dr T. Ramukumba\*

Nelson Mandela University (George campus)  
Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences, Tourism Department  
Private Bag X 6531, George, 6530, South Africa  
Email: [Takalani.Ramukumba@mandela.ac.za](mailto:Takalani.Ramukumba@mandela.ac.za)

and

Ms M.V.Moeketsi  
Lerotholi Polytechnic  
School of Enterprise and Management, Tourism Unit  
Maseru, Lesotho

Corresponding author\*

## Abstract

Tourists are not homogenous; they have different needs and wants regarding their ideal holiday. It therefore implies that tourists are heterogeneous and their needs keep on changing overtime. Given the above, market segmentation becomes an important strategy to assess the differences and similarities of the tourists. Market segmentation means the grouping of tourists into smaller market segments based on similarities in terms of needs but also separating market segments based on dissimilar needs from the other market segments. Market segmentation has been used in the tourism industry to maximise on opportunities for competitive advantage but also to ensure that the needs of tourists are met. It is therefore important to understand visitor needs and motivations that attract them to visit a particular destination. This is important to ensure sufficient demand for the destination but also to position the destination correctly in the market place. Further to this, the understanding of the pull factors for tourists to visit a particular destination is crucial for successful marketing and promotional strategies by the destination. The aim of this study was to profile the market segments of international tourists to Lesotho and what motivates them to visit the country. The study adopted a quantitative research methodology and used questionnaires as a data collection instrument. The survey was carried out over a 12 months period from April 2016 to April 2017, at eight border posts, namely: Calendonspoort, Maputsoe Bridge, Maseru Bridge, Peka Bridge, Qacha's Nek Gate, Sani Pass, Vanroovens Gate, and Moshoeshoe International Airport. A total of 5,264 questionnaires were successfully completed. Questionnaires were distributed throughout the whole year with approximately 500 completed each month. The research only focused on those visitors who stayed overnight during their visit in Lesotho. The results infer that the main segment of international visitors to Lesotho are leisure and visiting friends whilst religion and business tourists are the secondary segments.

**Keywords:** Segmentation, destination branding, pull and push factors, motivations, Lesotho

## Introduction

Tourism in Lesotho has experienced a substantial increase of tourists, and the tourism industry looks set to be the main economic sector in driving the economic growth of the country. According to Lesotho's annual tourism performance (2016), the number of international arrivals in 2016 increased by 10.5 percent reaching a total of 1, 196, 214 visitors with the strongest growth seen in the European (11.2 percent) and African (11.0 percent) continents. In 2016, the top five regional markets (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Swaziland and Malawi) represented 94.0 percent of all international arrivals while the top five overseas markets represented 3.2 percent. At the time of writing 1 Lesotho loti equalled 0,068 United States Dollars. Expenditure from accommodation establishments grew by 2.7 percent to M844 million in 2016 from M822 million in 2015. Although sourced from the 2016's visitor survey results, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and religion visitors represented 61.0 percent of all arrivals while leisure tourists represented 28.0 percent and business 11.0 percent respectively.



Overall, the occupancy rate for the 2016 was 21.0 percent, a slight increase compared to the previous year (2015) which was 19.0 percent. In 2016 direct employment declined by 5.7 percent where 53 percent of all workers were skilled and 47 percent were unskilled. However it is important to note that International visitation to the Kingdom of Lesotho has maintained consistent growth in arrivals over the past three years. Visitors increased from 1, 078, 510 in 2014 to 1, 196, 214 million in 2016 where the vast majority of these visitors were predominantly from South Africa (Lesotho's one and only neighbouring country).

Whilst Lesotho has witnessed the increase in tourist arrivals in the recent past, the country's tourism industry is not yet fully developed compared with other countries in Africa and more so if compared with developed countries around the world. The country's tourism resources that stems from its diversity, suggest that the country has the potential to attract many tourists from around the world only if it is able to have a structured tourism industry but also an understanding of the tourists market segments attracted to the country. According to Klenosky (2002), tourists base their choice of the destination around destination attributes such as attractions and tourist activities and therefore it becomes important that the destination clearly understands the different market segments who visit the destination and what motivates them to visit the destination.

### **Literature Review**

The motivations for tourists to travel are complex and they change over time (Pearce, 1993). Many research studies has been done in the past around tourist motivation to travel and resulted in two categories, namely; the push and pull factors. Given the above, it is imperative that destinations know and have an understanding of the factors that motivate tourists to visit so that they are able to be successful in attracting those tourists. It is also crucial that destinations are able to understand the thought process that tourists go through in deciding their holiday destinations. The above-mentioned two aspects are considered important for destinations if they are to develop a successful marketing and promotional strategies for the destination. The views of Bieger and Laesser (2002), suggest that push factors focus on the internal motivations of tourists and include amongst others: escape, seeking behaviour, family togetherness and health.

In the past research, a conceptual model was developed to understand the motivations for tourists both from push and pull factors in relation to destination attributes and it was found that pleasure-seeking tourists have emotional and experiential needs. Given the above, McIntosh and Goeldner (1984) came up with a summary of previous work on travel motivation and place them into four categories:

- physical motivators, including those related to physical rest, participation in sports, need for recreation at a beach, and those motivations directly connected with a person's bodily health;
- cultural motivators concerning the desire to gain knowledge about other countries in terms of cultural activities;
- interpersonal motivators, including a desire to meet new people, visit friends or relatives, get away from the routine conventions of life or to make new friendships; and
- status and prestige motivators, related to self-esteem and personal development.

However, there is evidence that pull factors to the destination appear to be different based on the origin of the tourist. Research has found that tourists will attach the level of importance to various factors about the destination and this is heavily linked with where they come from. Jomrozy and Uysal (1994), conducted a study on German tourists where they focused on the differences of push and pull factors to the destination for tourists. Their findings to a large extent reached a conclusion that there were variations in push motivations amongst the tourists depending on whether they were travelling in groups, families, couples and tour groups. In their study, Cha et al (1995), conducted a study to understand the push motivations of Japanese tourists who travelled overseas for the purposes of pleasure holidays. They results of the study came up with six distinct motivational factors which are:



- relaxation,
- knowledge,
- adventure,
- travel bragging,
- family, and
- sports

The same study further applied cluster analysis and the study concluded that three motivations, which are sports seekers, novelty seekers and family/relaxation market segments, could be identified. Laaksonen, Borisov, and Halkoaho (2006), conducted a study using visual collage technique for purposes of understanding the pull factors for the city of Vaasa in Finland. The results of the study concluded that tourists had their own subjective images of the city. Another study done by Vanolo (2008), in the city of Turin in Italy found that culture was an important pull factor for tourists visiting the city but also found that creative attributes such as art, diversity, nightlife, education, food, and wine were also important pull factors. A study conducted by Merrilees, Miller and Herington (2009) in the Gold Coast City, Australia found that tourists were attracted to the destination because of sun and surf but they were also attracted to the destination because of the feeling of safety of the destination, opportunities for business and diversity of activities relating to culture. In 2010, Prayag conducted a study in two African locations to understand the pull factors in these destinations. In one study, the destination was the city of Cape Town and the results revealed that the pull factors were scenery, friendly people, value, culture, beaches, and climate. The other study was conducted in Mauritius and the results here revealed that safety, value, food, good service, climate, beautiful scenery, and culture were the pull factors. It can therefore be safely concluded that different destinations will have different pull factors regardless of their locations.

Whilst research for pull and push factors is important, there was a need to further the research beyond these two motivational factors and in 1991, Echtner and Ritchie indicated that the pull factors could actually be categorized from a functional and psychological perspectives. In their views, specific details of the destination will constitute functional factors and such will include availability of transport, cost of services and availability of accommodation whilst the friendliness of the people, the safety of the destination and service quality will constitute psychological factors and are supplementary in nature. However, it is important to stress here that both factors are critical since they contribute to the image of the destination. Given the above, the views of Baloglu and Uysal (1996) are that the reasons for tourists to travel to a specific destination maybe linked with the benefits they thought from the destination. It is therefore important that marketers and destination marketing organisations should keep in mind that successful destinations are those that satisfy tourist's needs and create loyal customers out of them and they become repeat tourist to the destination. There is a need therefore to ensure that marketing efforts are focused on matching the destination's major attributes (pull factors) to the tourist's diverse psychological needs.

In his study in Australia, Jenkins (1999) stressed the importance of understanding the attributes that are crucial to destination positioning in the market place. The author argued that this should be done on a continuous basis to ensure that the image is kept in current and future potential market segments. The segmentation of tourists markets should be viewed as critical for the success of tourism destinations. In the past, many research studies conducted had largely focused on the use of demographic information (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Further studies conducted also focused on factors such as travel characteristics as grounds for segmentation (Diem, 2009).

Prayag (2010), conducted research study in Cape Town and Mauritius and came up with four market segments and they were tourists seeking novelty, shopping tourists, multifarious, and those seeking cultural experiences. However, a study done earlier by Diem (2009) in Vietnam, which used a combination of demographic and travel characteristics concluded that there were three market segments instead of four and those segments were of tourists that are passive,



enthusiastic tourists, and tourists seeking opportunities. Both the studies mentioned above produced similar results because both of them used factor analysis and the market segments were developed using demographic details of the tourists.

Jönsson and Devonish (2008), conducted a study to understand and identify the underlying motivations for tourists visiting Barbados. The focus of the study was to investigate if tourists from different countries had different motivations in visiting Barbados. The results of the study indicated a variation in motivation to visit Barbados correlated with country of origin and thus suggesting that tourists from different countries have different motives in visiting destinations. These results also infer that grouping of tourists by nationalities has the potential to give results about market segments with different motivations to visit a destination.

It is important to note here that the purpose of this current research/study was not to determine if there were any differences in motivations to visit Lesotho but to merely have a deeper understanding of who are the tourists to Lesotho and what motivates them to visit the country. An earlier study by Kozak (2002), conducted a study to find out if tourists who are coming from the same country are attracted to destinations by similar reasons or different reasons and whether tourists from different countries have similar or different motivations in visiting the same destination. The study used Independent T-tests and the results indicated that there were significant statistical differences between the motivations to visit the destination both from those coming from the same country and between those from different countries.

Based on the findings of past research, it can be safely concluded that whilst there are a variety of motivations for tourists to travel, the theory of understanding the push and pull factors is still appropriate to study and understand travel motivation. Although this research used the same approach to previous studies to identify motivations to travel to a destination, it adopted a slightly different approach in that it used specific travel motivations based on Lesotho as a tourist destination. In this regard, specific factors were identified as motivators to visit Lesotho and these were used to understand the motivations of tourists visiting Lesotho and ultimately used to cluster market segments of international tourists visiting Lesotho. The tourism system stipulates that tourism activities are based on disposable income on the part of the tourist as they make their purchase decisions. Given the above, the tourist is most likely to consider various factors before making a decision to go on holiday to a particular destination. Factors to be taken into consideration include amongst others the attractiveness of the destination relative to other competing destinations, the cost to the destination, safety of the destination and quality of service. The implication of the factors above implies that destination marketers and managers is that they need to utilise destination distinctive competitive competencies/advantages they have over other competing destinations to ensure their destinations are chosen by the tourists.

Pearce (2005) came up with the concept “tourist career” which can be compared with work career based on their characteristics. This concept implies that there are various factors that influences a tourist in making a decision to travel to a destination and these include amongst others lifestyles, previous experience at the destination, cultural and physical environment at the destination, level of education and influence from friend and relatives. The views of Pearce above can be summed up to suggest tourists will carefully consider these factors before they make a final decision to make a purchase so to ensure they do not suffer from post-purchase stress from the decision they make if they end up not satisfied by their holiday experience.

Leisen (2001) suggested the importance for destination managers and destination marketers in understanding tourist behaviours since these behaviours may affect the choice of the destination. However, there is always a problem for tourism marketers to understand the behaviours of tourists since these behaviours are not the same and they change over time. Contrary to the views of Leisen above, Mohsin (2005) suggested that market segmentation and market targeting could be successfully used to identify potential behaviours of tourists. His idea stemmed from that of Jain (1995) who indicated that that practically, it becomes complicated when trying to select a target market and therefore one requires a critical analysis



of factors such as demographics of the tourists, tourist behaviours and characteristics to potentially segment the market correctly. However, given the above, the importance of market segmentation is crucial for the success of any destination.

### Problem Investigated

The investigated problem was to understand visitors and the factors that pull them to visit Lesotho as a tourist destination. This was imperative for successful branding as visitor characteristics and salient attributes are used to differentiate and position the destination.

### Research Objectives

- To understand the profile of tourists visiting Lesotho
- To understand the purpose (what motivates them) to visit the country
- To understand their satisfaction levels of their experiences

### Methodology

The aim of this study was to profile the market segments of international tourists to Lesotho and what motivates them to visit the country. The study adopted a quantitative research methodology and used questionnaires as a data collection instrument. The survey was carried out over a 12 months period from April 2016 to April 2017, at eight border posts, namely: Calendonspoort, Maputsoe Bridge, Maseru Bridge, Peka Bridge, Qacha's Nek Gate, Sani Pass, Vanroovens Gate, and Moshoeshoe International Airport. 5,264 questionnaires were successfully completed. Questionnaires were distributed throughout the entire year with approximately 500 completed each month. The research only focused on those visitors who stayed overnight during their visit in Lesotho.

### Results and Findings

Table 1: Age and gender of visitors

Gender	
Male	58.0%
Female	42.0%
Age	
0 – 11 years	5.0%
12 – 17 years	2.0%
18 - 24 years	8.0%
25 – 34 years	23.0%
35 – 44 years	24.0%
45 - 54 years	20.0%
55 – 64 years	12.0%
65+ years	6.0%

The results of the study as shown in Table 1 above indicate that males accounted for 58% of all overnight visitors to Lesotho, with females making up the remainder 42%. The largest age group to visit Lesotho were those aged 35-44 (24% of all arrivals) closely followed by those aged 25-34 years (23%) as well as those aged 45-54 years (20%). The least group to visit the country were those aged 12-17 years (2%).



**Table 2: Country of origin and previous visit**

First visit	Yes %	No %	Total %
South Africa	26	74	100
Botswana	30.8	69.2	100
Netherlands	76.2	23.8	100
Germany	81	19	100
UK	62.6	37.4	100
France	81.4	18.6	100
USA	68.8	31.2	100
Rest of Africa	50	50	100
Rest of Europe	80.9	19.1	100
Rest of Asia/Pacific	70.8	29.2	100
Rest of the World	74.4	25.6	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.2</b>	<b>69.8</b>	<b>100</b>

The results in Table 2 above infer that many tourists who visited the country during the time of the survey were repeat visitors. The highest percentage of those who were repeat visitors were from Germany, France and Rest of Europe (81%) whilst the least repeat visit were from those coming from South Africa (26%). The results also show an interesting finding in that there was an equal split between tourists coming from the rest of Africa were those first-time tourists and returning tourists counted for 50% each. These results therefore infer that Lesotho as a country needs to take cognisance of where they need to market and promote the country to increase repeat visits (South Africa and the Rest of Africa) and Rest of Europe and USA for first time visitors.

**Table 3: Market segments visiting Lesotho**

Market segment visiting	Percentages
Leisure	<b>38%</b>
Business	<b>11%</b>
Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)	<b>28%</b>
Religion	<b>23%</b>

The results in Table 3 above indicate that the main market segment of visitors to Lesotho is the leisure market (38%) followed by the visiting friends and relatives market segment (28%). Religion is the third highest market segment (23%) and the least important market segment is the business market (11%) which is also disturbing.

These results may imply that Lesotho as a tourist destination pays attention to the different market segments and develop promotional materials that would be more appealing to each of them to ensure sustained demand to the destination (country). It would appear that the country would need to focus more on strengthening its leisure market and the VFR market segments whilst aggressively marketing for business market segments. This may infer that the tourism industry may need to link up with the department of Trade and industry to position Lesotho as an attractive option for business investment.



**Table 4: Motivation for the trip**

<b>Motivation</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
Mountains	30%
Scenery	22%
Culture	11%
Curiosity	10%
Diversity of attractions	8%
Skiing	6%
Climate	5%
Tranquillity	5%
Friends or relatives	2%
Value for money	1%

The results in Table 4 above show that the mountains in Lesotho are the main reason (motivation/pull factor) for tourists to visit the country (30%). These results also infer that many tourists are motivated to visit the country because of its scenery (22%) whilst culture (11%) and curiosity about the country (10%) are the other pull factors. It would appear that visitors to the country (1%) do not believe that the country offer value for money. These results seem to confirm the ideas of Klenosky (2002) who stated that when tourists make a choice of a destination, it is often based on factors related to features, attractions, or attributes of the destination itself. These results also appear to be contradictory to the findings of the ranking of market segments in Table 3 above because VFR was the second highest market segment but it would appear that those in that market segment do not see visiting their friends and relatives as their main motivation for visiting the country. It may therefore be concluded that those visiting friends and relatives would appear to be motivated by other factors in the country as their motivations.

**Table 5: Length of stay based on country of origin**

<b>Country of origin</b>	<b>Length of stay (nights)</b>
South Africa	12.7
Botswana	6
Netherlands	4.9
Germany	3.8
UK	3.4
France	2.7
USA	8.4
Rest of Africa	4.7
Rest of Europe	7.2
Rest of Asia/Pacific	6.9
Rest of the World	5.3
<b>Average length of stay</b>	<b>5.3 nights</b>

The depth of tourist activities in any destination is normally measured by the number of days the tourists would spend in the destination. The results in table 5 above show that the average length of stay in the country is 5.3 nights. The highest number of nights are from those visiting from South Africa (12.7 nights) and those from USA (8.4 nights). Tourists from France are the ones who stay less number of days in Lesotho (2.7 nights). The average nights spent in the country, 5.3 show that Lesotho as a country has enough tourist activities and attractions to



keep the tourists in the country for a long period and hence this is a good indication that the country can grow economically from these tourists who spend many days in the country.

**Table 6: Expenditure (Maloti)**

Expenditure	Acc	Food	Transport	Tours	Entertainment	Shopping	Other	Total
South Africa	406	188	101	30	28	44	42	<b>839</b>
Botswana	319	272	146	12	33	45	15	<b>842</b>
Netherlands	521	216	136	45	42	52	6	<b>1 019</b>
Germany	479	211	88	22	38	52	6	<b>896</b>
UK	610	273	92	27	44	63	84	<b>1 193</b>
France	436	178	58	44	30	33	5	<b>784</b>
USA	483	224	76	30	65	98	16	<b>982</b>
Rest of Africa	649	302	114	65	34	80	39	<b>1 239</b>
Rest of Europe	597	208	79	34	22	55	13	<b>1 010</b>
Rest of Asia/Pacific	565	200	145	22	47	49	27	<b>1 125</b>
Rest of the World	850	385	167	47	31	162	12	<b>1 650</b>
<b>Total (Average)</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>862</b>

Many developing countries like Lesotho are targeting the use of the tourism industry as a key economic growth and driver through foreign earnings and as a source of the much-desired employment. Tourism has the opportunity to generate foreign exchange earnings that are crucial for economic growth that is sustainable for many developing countries like Lesotho. Given the rising importance of the tourism industry in many developing countries, tourism as an industry has received much attention and studies by Schubert, Brida, and Risso (2011) examined the contribution of a small tourism-driven economy to the growth of the economy because of an increase in international tourism demand. The results of the study show that on average the amount spent by tourists in all the identified areas was above 780 Maloti, which resulted in an average spending of 862 Maloti across the different spending areas. These results therefore infer that Lesotho as a country can use tourism as an economic sector to grow and strengthen its economy and create employment as a direct result of this economic growth.

**Table 7: Rating of visit to Lesotho (%)**

Visiting rating	SA	Botswana	Netherlands	Germany	UK	France	USA	Rest of Africa	Rest of Europe	Rest of Asia/Pacific	Rest of World	Total
Very enjoyable	65.7	68.9	86	87.6	84.1	88.6	84.5	48.9	85.4	65.5	76.7	<b>66.9</b>
Enjoyable	28.3	22.8	13	10.2	14	11.4	12.7	42.7	13.2	27.9	22.1	<b>27.3</b>
Fair	5.5	8.3	0.5	1.6	1.9	0	2.2	8.3	1.4	6.6	1.2	<b>5.3</b>
Disappointing	0.5	0	0.5	0.6	0	0	0.6	0	0	0	0	<b>0.4</b>
Very disappointing	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>



The results in Table 7 above allow us to deduce that there was a general satisfaction with the visit to Lesotho by the tourists with an average of 66.9% of visitors indicating that their holiday was very enjoyable. The results further infer that 27.3% of the tourists enjoyed their holidays in the country with those disappointed and very disappointed only constituting 0.5% in total. It can therefore be safely concluded that Lesotho is an enjoyable country to visit for a holiday given the above results.

**Table 8: Recommending Lesotho to friends and relatives (%)**

Recommendation	SA	Botswana	Netherlands	Germany	UK	France	USA	Rest of Africa	Rest of Europe	Rest of Asia/Pacific	Rest of World	Total
Yes, definitely	83	82.8	81.1	84.3	87.9	87.1	89.5	77.6	88.6	80.7	83.4	<b>83.2</b>
Yes, probably	14.5	15.3	15.5	14.4	10.3	11.5	9.4	17.3	9.7	16	15.4	<b>27.3</b>
Possibly	2.4	1.9	3.5	1.3	1.9	1.4	1.1	5.1	1.7	3.3	1.2	<b>5.3</b>
No, probably not	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0.4</b>
No, definitely not	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0.1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Linking the results of Table 7 and Table 8 above, how tourists enjoy their holiday will have a bearing on whether they would provide word of mouth recommendations to their friends and relatives. The results in table 7 showed that there was a general high satisfaction levels of the holiday by the tourists and therefore it is not surprising that the results in Table 8 above show that 83.2% of the tourists from across the countries have indicated that they will definitely recommend the country to friends and relatives. It is also not surprising to see that 27.3% of these tourists indicate that they would probably recommend the country to their friends and relatives. A combined 0.5% of the tourists indicated that they will probably and definitely not recommend the country to their friends and relatives.

These results therefore may allow us to infer that Lesotho as a country is doing well in terms of the quality of services and the diversity of the attractions and tourist activities and as a country, they need to continue to focus on those to ensure repeat visits but also a good word of mouth recommendation from visitors.

### **Practical and managerial implications and recommendations**

The purpose of this study was to profile international tourists to Lesotho based on their motivations to visit or make Lesotho a holiday/vacation destination of choice. The results suggest that leisure and visiting friends and relatives were the main reasons for visiting Lesotho. The identified pull factors (motivations to travel) ranked in the following order: mountains, scenery, culture, curiosity, diversity of attractions, skiing, climate, tranquility, friends or relatives and value for money.

The findings of this study imply that those responsible for marketing and promotion of Lesotho as a tourist destination have to focus more on leisure tourists and visiting friend and relatives market segments, since these were ranked higher. Across all geographic and age categories of the visitors, mountains are the major pull factor identified by the largest or second-largest percentage of visitors. This suggests that the emphasis should be based on mountains, scenery and culture in marketing and promoting Lesotho as a tourist destination.

## Conclusion

Lesotho as a country has the potential to grow its number of international tourists and to ensure that this materializes, the tourism industry in the country needs to better understand what motivates tourists to visit the country. This will enable the tourism industry in the country to develop effective marketing and promotional strategies to attract tourists to the country. The country boast so much potential to grow economically from its tourism industry and thus provide the much-needed jobs in the country. In order to achieve this, the tourism industry in the country should have a better understanding on the pull factors (motivations to travel to the country) so that visitors are satisfied upon arrival. In a nutshell greater understanding of the factors that motivate international visitors to travel to Lesotho and the application of strong branding and segmentation strategies will enhance the country's ability to succeed in growing its efforts.

**Figure 1.** Lesotho location – an enclave nation in South Africa

**Source:** Arab Times Available online at <http://www.arabtimesonline.com/news/two-kuwaiti-diplomats-robbed-in-south-africa/southafrica/>



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