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Domestic Tourism in South Africa: Profiling Road Trip Tourists

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Abstract

Domestic tourism has garnered much attention recently as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, being identified as a key solution to the post-pandemic recovery. The worth of domestic tourism prior to the pandemic, however, despite its tremendous economic value, has largely been overshadowed in scholarship and amongst many governments in lieu of the more glamorous international tourism. Notwithstanding, the current emphasis on domestic tourism, a gap still exists in the literature on specific sub-segments of the domestic tourist market and understanding their profiles and perceptions in order to address issues related to growing such markets and thus contributing to the overarching growth of domestic tourism and strengthening its role in the recovery of the tourism sector. This paper thus seeks to unpack the profile of 297 domestic road trip tourists surveyed from the Gauteng province of South Africa. The results outline the socio-demographic characteristics in terms of age, race, income and education levels, and their travel preferences and behaviour. Findings reveal facets linked to the importance of youth tourists, the need to address access to travel, availability of products and facilities geared to the needs of domestic tourists, the conditions of roads and the ease of travel, as well as issues related to financial access to tourism through pricing and affordability. The study provides a springboard to better understand the domestic road trip market by uncovering key socio-demographic components of this lesser studied market in the context of South Africa and provides recommendations for addressing the issues at hand.

Keywords: domestic tourism; road trip tourism; tourist profiles; South Africa

Introduction

Pre-pandemic tourism statistics revealed that the domestic tourism market represented 72% of total tourism spend worldwide in 2019 (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2022: 6). Despite this considerable contribution to the global tourism sector, domestic tourism has habitually been eclipsed by international tourism which often served as a priority for many tourism receiving countries (Rogerson, 2015a, Scheyvens, 2007). Its substantial share in comparison to international tourism has seen progressive growth over time, with particular development in the global south, where countries have seen increases in the middle-class (Kharas, 2010; Scheyvens, 2007) and the shifting of economic and political power towards emerging economies (Kharas, 2010). The shock and aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic left the global tourism industry in a sudden crisis, forcing destinations to think creatively for ways to sustain the sector and to come back better and stronger (Adinolfi et al., 2021). Domestic tourism was flagged at the beginning of the pandemic as the most immediate starting point for recovery (Woyo, 2021). The WTTC (2022) reported that domestic tourism globally had increased to 85% of the global tourism sector in 2021 as international tourism continued to face restrictions related to the pandemic. The tables had thus turned and the tourism sector was forced to pivot in the direction of domestic tourism in the hopes of mitigating the severe impacts of the pandemic on international tourism.

Academia continues to emphasise the importance of domestic tourism as an ongoing recovery strategy and a key focus area for destinations (Nyikana & Bama, 2023). South Africa's domestic tourism had already been troubled by several unique challenges (Dzikiti & Leonard, 2016; Grundlingh, 2006; Mkhize, 1994; Ray & Wakelin-Theron; Rogerson, 2015a; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020). An interesting, yet under researched component of domestic tourism is road trip tourism, which is laden with potential for strengthening domestic tourism. As such, this paper seeks to unpack the profile of 297 domestic road trip tourists surveyed from the Gauteng province of South Africa and triggers an attempt to better understand the domestic road trip market by uncovering key socio-demographic components of this lesser studied market.

Domestic tourism in South Africa

South Africa's political history has played a pivotal role in shaping the country's domestic tourism sector (Grundlingh, 2006, Mkhize, 1994). The apartheid era saw major mobility restrictions for Black, Coloured and Indian race groups, thus impeding tourism for the majority population (Ray & Wakelin, 2018, Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020, Rogerson, 2015a). With the domination of tourism by White South Africans (Visser & Rogerson, 2004) during the 1960s and 1970s, an uneven geographic distribution of tourism developed (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2020; Rogerson, 2015a). The movement restrictions as a result of the apartheid era policy, heavily constrained the mobility of the majority Black population. This, coupled with the subsequent poor socio-economic status as a result of the political system, meant that leisure tourism was often being seen as 'a white man's domain' (Mkhize, 1994: 249) and out of reach for Black South Africans. In addition, the hindered participation of Black entrepreneurs in tourism-related development and infrastructure, further served to segregate the population. The couple of decades that followed post 1970, saw a minor improvement in tourism activities available to people of colour but still mostly restricted to the Indian and Coloured populations. Areas that saw the development of tourist infrastructure and accommodation facilities included the significant tourism nodes of Cape Town, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, and Johannesburg (Rogerson, 2015b). The latter three in particular, continue to be important domestic tourist receiving and generating regions. Efforts to include particularly poor Black and Coloured children in domestic tourism even during the apartheid era have also been documented in the literature through social tourism programmes (Adinolfi & Ivanovic, 2015). Nevertheless, the sector continued to face challenges, including the sanctions imposed against the country between the mid-1980s until the early 1990s due to the undue apartheid regulations. (Seyfi & Hall, 2019; Adu-Ampong, 2018), further limiting the growth of both international and domestic tourism.

With the abolition of the apartheid system and the rise of democracy, the tourism sector was emphasized as a critical avenue to promote economic growth. In the age of democracy, the majority Black population now had autonomy of movement and other civil freedoms which also led to the advancement of a Black middle-class, thus improving the prospect for engaging in leisure tourism (Mattes, 2015; Akoojee & Nkomo, 2007). The new democratic government quickly went to work on the sector's policy framework beginning with a crucial White Paper on the development and promotion of tourism in 1996, which was later followed by key strategy documents which included the National Tourism Sector Strategies of 2011 and 2016, as well as the Domestic Tourism Growth Strategies of 2004 and 2012. More recently, the South African Tourism Strategic Plan of 2020/1-2024/5 which guides the mandate for the national tourism marketing agency, South African Tourism, was released. Thus, the development of tourism in South Africa is heavily prioritised. Nonetheless, many gaps still exist, especially within the domestic tourism sector. It is thus imperative that research into this segment continue to unpack the layers within, such as in the case of road trip tourism.

Road trip tourism as a component of domestic tourism

Literature on domestic tourism has concentrated on the economic impacts of the sub-sector, its links to sustainability, and recently since 2020, has gained overwhelming attention due to its role in post-pandemic recovery. Although it has been acknowledged in these areas, little is known about more specific types of domestic tourism. In countries such as South Africa, air travel for the majority of domestic tourists is unaffordable due to the high cost of air travel as a result of increased fuel prices, the Rand/US Dollar exchange rate, and the reduced domestic flight capacity (Brederode, 2023). Thus, road travel is the more affordable option, although still expensive for many. As an alternative to other forms of more expensive transportation such as air travel, road travel becomes even more emphasised in domestic tourism. Domestic tourists have several road travel options including long distance or cross-country busses, mini busses (commonly used as taxis in South Africa), a variety of personal vehicle types, including the use of additions to these vehicles such as trailers and caravans, rental car services where vehicles can be rented for the purpose of longer distance travel both inter- and intra-provincially, and more recently e-hailing vehicle services, which have increased the mobilities of people (Giddy, 2019).

Road travel thus plays a pivotal role in domestic tourism by providing a means for families, groups, and individuals to explore and experience their own country. Notably, road travel provides flexibility, which allows tourists to visit multiple destinations and more remote or "off-the-beaten-path" destinations, which may not be accessible with other modes of transportation (Prideaux & Carson, 2015). With this flexibility, studies have also shown that road trips can offer a more immersive experience as tourists have control over where they can stop at their leisure (perhaps with the exception of cross-country busses and taxis), interact with local communities and also experience the journey itself to the destination (Prideaux & Carson, 2015; Taylor & Carson, 2009). Road trips therefore also allow for the exploration of diverse landscapes and opportunities to engage in natural and cultural heritage related activities. In order to explore these advantages of road travel further, it is necessary to profile the domestic road trip tourist.

Profiling tourists

The profiling of tourists plays an important role in tourism research. The availability of tourist profiles allows destination managers and marketers to gain an understanding of their visitor base, which enables them to customise products and services according to the needs and preferences of different tourist segments (Law et al., 2004). This tailored approach greatly enhances the visitor experience, thereby increasing the chances of repeat visits (Campo-Martínez et al., 2010). Additionally, tourist profiling aids in identifying emerging trends and markets within the industry. By analysing the demographics, behaviours and motivations of tourist groups, researchers and stakeholders can adapt their strategies to tap into segments, diversify their offerings and take advantage of evolving travel patterns and trends. Moreover, comprehending the characteristics of tourists assists in resource allocation by helping destinations allocate their budgets and efforts effectively towards reaching their target markets. Ultimately profiling tourists serves as a tool for optimising the social and economic benefits of tourism. As such, this study seeks to provide a profile of a key domestic tourism market segment in the hopes of better understanding their needs and wants, which in turn serves to improve and grow domestic tourism in South Africa.

Research design

Domestic tourism in the context of a developing country like South Africa, is a critical area for inquiry. In order to explore the sub-segment of domestic road trippers, this study employed a quantitative approach, utilising an online questionnaire to collect data from the specific market in question. A total of 297 responses were collected from Gauteng residents who were over the age of 18. The Gauteng province was selected as a focus area for this study as it represents the largest spending province on domestic tourism and the principal source province in term of number of domestic trips (SA Tourism, 2022). The questionnaire was created with Google Forms, which provided respondents with an efficient and user-friendly platform to submit responses. The data generated by the platform in an Excel spreadsheet was then analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29 in order to produce descriptive statistics which outline the key characteristics of the domestic road trip respondents. The questionnaire also included an open-ended question at the end for respondents to add any additional thoughts on domestic road trip tourism in South Africa. The open-ended responses were thematically analysed using Atlas.ti in order to organise and identify key themes related to domestic road trip tourism.

Findings and discussion

The demographic characteristics of the respondents reveals an interesting profile of an important domestic tourism market. The results of the study uncovered demographic information related to age, race, education levels, employment status and income levels, as well as vehicle ownership and types of vehicles used for road trips. Gender was excluded from the study due to the requirements of the ethical clearance obtained for the study. Race was however permitted within the ethical clearance as it is central to the historical development of domestic tourism in the context of South Africa as detailed in the literature above. Additionally, the study indicates a general travel behaviour profile related to aspects such as the frequency of trips, seasonality, geographic distribution, purpose of trips, companionship, accommodation choices, destinations choices, and spending.

Age and race

Respondents were relatively young with the majority (62.6%) falling in the 18–29-year age range. Given that South Africa has a large youth population where approximately 37% of the total population is aged 19 years or younger (Cowling, 2023a), the respondents reflect the age characteristics of the national population. Youth tourism is a significant tourist market globally as well as in South Africa (Correia, 2011) and is identified as a key market segment for the domestic tourism sector in South Africa (NDT, 2012). The challenges around improving access to domestic tourism for the youth in South Africa have been noted in the literature (Adinolfi et al., 2021; Ray & Wakelin-Theron, 2018; Dzikiti & Leonard, 2016; Adinolfi & Ivanovic, 2015). The race of the respondents mirrors that of the general South African population, with a majority (77.4%) Black respondents. South Africa’s population as of 2022 stands at 60.6 million with 49.1 million (roughly 81%) represented by the Black population (Cowling, 2023b). The literature on the development of domestic tourism in South Africa highlights the tribulations of the historically disadvantaged Black population with regards to access to the tourism sector (Rogerson & Rogerson 2020; Rogerson 2015a, 2015b; Grundlingh, 2006), thus making this group of respondents particularly important in understanding the domestic tourism market. In addition, the rise of a Black middle class in South Africa (Mattes, 2015) emphasises the value of the Black population as a key domestic tourist market.

Education levels, employment status and income levels

Overall, respondents were generally well educated (Table 1), with the majority (60%) collectively holding either a National Senior Certificate (Matric, also known as a high school certificate/diploma), a bachelor's degree or an undergraduate Diploma. The remaining 39,8% of the respondents held a post-graduate qualification of some sort and only one respondent had only completed primary school level education. As a result of higher levels of education, it is generally expected that the respondents were to have higher employment levels since there is a correlation between the two (Khukuvhe et al., 2021), as well as higher combined household incomes. Tables 2 and 3 indicate that respondents were for the most part (63.6%) employed in some form, either full-time (41.4%), part-time (11.4%), or self-employed (10.8%). The low proportion (10.8%) of unemployed in this sample could be attributed to the higher levels of education and residing in a province which is the economic powerhouse of the country (StatsSA, 2018).

Table 1. Highest level of education of respondents

Education level	Frequency (n=297)	Percent
Advanced Diploma/BTech	24	8.1
Advanced level certificate	3	1.0
Bachelor's Degree	70	23.6
Diploma	57	19.2
Honours Degree	39	13.1
Masters/MTech	29	9.8
MBA	5	1.7
National Senior Certificate (Matric)	51	17.2
PhD/Doctorate	18	6.1
Primary school	1	0.3
Total	**297**	**100.0**

Table 2. Employment status of respondents

Employment categories	Frequency (n=297)	Percent
Employed full-time	123	41.4
Employed part-time	34	11.4
Retired	2	0.7
Self-employed	32	10.8
Student	74	24.9
Unemployed	32	10.8
Total	**297**	**100.0**

Table 3. Combined monthly household income

Income categories	Frequency (n=297)	Percent
Less than R5 000	69	23.2
More than R50 000	55	18.5
R15 000 - R25 000	44	14.8
R25 000 - R30 000	15	5.1
R30 000 - R35 000	15	5.1
R35 000 - R40 000	16	5.4
R40 000 - R45 000	9	3.0
R45 000 - R50 000	11	3.7
R5 000 - R15 000	63	21.2
Total	**297**	**100.0**

The combined monthly household incomes reflected an interesting picture whereby 44.4% of respondent households earned a combine monthly income of between less than R5 000 and R15 000. This could be a reflection of who the bread winner in the household may be or whether the rest of the household holds higher or lower education levels, whether they are employed permanently or are unemployed. Since the combined disposable income of the households is unknown, it is difficult to ascertain as to whether these household incomes would have income that could be allocated to tourism services. Nevertheless, this group of respondents is generally a high earning cohort with the remaining 37.1% earning between R15 000 to R50 000, and 18.5% having a combined household income of more than R50 000 a month. Based on research into what is required in terms of earnings to be considered middle class in South Africa (Business Tech, 2023), this sample is representative of a middle and upper-middle class. Taking all into account, on paper, the respondents are ideal domestic tourists in terms of their demographic characteristics.

Vehicle ownership and types

Of the respondents, 46.8% own their own vehicles. However, 78.1% indicated that they prefer to travel in either their own vehicle or as a passenger in someone's private vehicle as opposed to using transportation that requires a booking. Reasons for the preference of private vehicles for domestic road travel included convenience (23%), safety and security (19%), privacy (18.2%), independence and freedom (17.7%), to save time (12%), and because it is more affordable (10.1%). These are all reflective of the advantages of self-drive or private road transportation in the tourism literature. Safety and security, however, is an ongoing problem in the context of South Africa and came out as the second strongest reason for using a private vehicle for road travel. One of the country's biggest challenges with regards to its competitiveness both as an international and domestic destination centres around safety and crime. Types of vehicles and accessories varied (Table 4). For the most part sedans/hatchbacks (19.8%), 4x4 vehicles (17.2%), long distance bus (15.4%), and minibus taxis (15%) were the most common vehicle types. Although camper vans (1.2%), caravans (2.7%) and trailers (4.9%) did feature in the responses, they were not very common. Interestingly there were mentions of the use of hybrid vehicles (2.5%), electric vehicles (1.5%), and e-hailing vehicles (10%). The use of e-hailing vehicles is an interesting one considering that road trips often mean longer distances than the usual commuting within an urban environment.

Table 4. Types of vehicles used for road trips

Types of vehicles used for road trips	**N**	**Percent**
Caravan	20	2.7
Trailer	36	4.9
Sedan/Hatchback	145	19.8
4x4	126	17.2
Minivan/Minibus	68	9.3
Taxi (minibus)	110	15.0
E-hailing service (e.g., Uber)	73	10.0
Camper van	9	1.2
Long distance bus	113	15.4
Hybrid vehicle	18	2.5
Electric powered vehicle	11	1.5
Other	4	0.5
Total	**733**	**100.0**

Frequency, seasonality of trips, and geographic distribution

The frequency of road trips amongst the respondents was predominantly within the 1-2 times a year (52.9%) category, followed by 2-3 times 23.2%), more than 4 times a year (14.1%), and 3-4 times a year (9.8%). This is understandable given that South Africa's domestic tourism seasonality centres around the December/January holiday season, and the March/April Easter period, with some peaks in the school holiday period especially in the months of June, July and September. These seasonal patterns were echoed in the responses where December (23%), September (11.2%), June (10.3%), and January (10.1%) dominated the seasonal peaks. With regards to geographic distribution (Table 5), KwaZulu Natal (17.9%), Mpumalanga (17.6%) and Limpopo (16.1%) were the most visited provinces for road trips outside of Gauteng. It is not surprising that these three provinces dominated as they are relatively close to Gauteng and also serve as key domestic tourism destination points. Travel within Gauteng was however excluded from the study, which therefore excludes shorter distance trips within the province. The least visited provinces were the Northern Cape (4.5%) and the Eastern Cape (9.5%). Of the remaining provinces, the Northwest (13.8%) province was the most visited, followed by the Free State (10.3%) and the Western Cape (10.1%).

Table 5. Provinces visited by road outside of Gauteng

Provinces visited by road	**N**	**Percent**
Limpopo	170	16.1
Mpumalanga	186	17.6
Northwest	146	13.8
Free State	109	10.3
Western Cape	107	10.1
Eastern Cape	100	9.5
Northern Cape	48	4.5
KwaZulu Natal	189	17.9
Total	**1055**	**100.0**

Purpose of trips

Holiday and leisure (25.3%) and visiting friends and relatives (VFR) (22%) were the most significant purposes of road trips (Table 6) undertaken by respondents, certainly linked to the seasonality patterns which are concentrated during key school and work holiday periods. The attendance of concerts or festivals (7.4%), and church or religious events, excursions or rituals (7.3%), and MICE (7.2%) are reflective of the respondents’ age and employment profiles as well indicating the importance of religion linked to domestic tourism. The least common purpose of trip included caravanning and hunting. The safari or game drive (5.9%) purpose of travel was also relatively low given that these lodges are often marketed at international visitors and unaffordable for the average South African.

Table 6. Purpose of road trips

Purpose of road trips	**N**	**Percent**
VFR	206	22.0
Holiday/Leisure	237	25.3
MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions)	67	7.2
Concerts/Festivals	69	7.4
Participate in sport tournament, match or race	31	3.3
camping	52	5.6
caravanning	5	0.5
hunting	6	0.6
safari/game drive	55	5.9
school/university trips	59	6.3
association/society trips	17	1.8
church/religious excursions/events/rituals	68	7.3
Sports events as spectator	31	3.3
4x4 adventure	16	1.7
Medical purposes/ procedures	14	1.5
Other	2	0.2
Total	**935**	**100.0**

Companionship

Companionship on road trips reveals an important characteristic of domestic road trippers. They typically do not travel alone (0.7%) or with pets (1.8%), however, friends (23.7%) and families with children (22.4%) were the most common companions amongst respondents. Given that VFR travel is a significant purpose of travel, travelling with children and family is expected to be a significant form of companionship on such travels. Other notable companions include a spouse/partner (16.1%), church/religious groups (7.3%), school/university (7.3%) and colleagues (7.1%), indicating the involvement of respondents in travel related to social and work activities.

Accommodation

With VFR being a significant purpose of travel (Table 7), it is surprising that hotels (16.1%) and Bed & Breakfast (13.6%) accommodation both exceed the staying in a friend or relative's home (12.7%), closely followed by guesthouses (11.2%). This is an indication that road trippers are extending beyond VFR based accommodation and making use of facilities that would commonly be used by international travellers. The use of Airbnb's (8.8%) and game lodges (8.7%) have relatively equal weighting, indicative of the increased popularity of the sharing economy platform and the growing importance of the domestic market for game lodges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 7. Types of accommodation

Types of accommodation	**N**	**Percent**
Hotel	181	16.1
Caravan	12	1.1
Bed & Breakfast	153	13.6
Airbnb	99	8.8
Resort	88	7.8
Chalets	75	6.7
Church owned accommodation	37	3.3
Game Lodge	98	8.7
Hostel	19	1.7
Own vehicle	20	1.8
School/university residence	26	2.3
Friends/relatives home	143	12.7
Guesthouse	126	11.2
Camping facilities	45	4.0
Total	**1122**	**100.0**

Destination choice

Destinations need to be aware of the reasons potential and repeat visitors may have when deciding on a destination. Table 8 details the aspects determining destination choice.

Table 8. Aspects determining destination choice

Aspects determining destination choice	**N**	**Percent**
Activities	221	15.5
Available amenities	127	8.9
Suitable accommodation	178	12.5
Evidence of service quality	83	5.8
Attractions	189	13.2
Accessibility (disability - friendly)	41	2.9
Good reviews on Google/TripAdvisor/Booking.com/Airbnb/etc.	137	9.6
Star ratings	91	6.4
Returning to a regularly visited destination	38	2.7
Social media posts by influencers	28	2.0
Social media posts by people I know personally	39	2.7
Distance/time to get to the destination(s)	104	7.3
Established/well known tourist routes	45	3.2
Discounts/special offers/packages	106	7.4
Total	**1427**	**100.0**

The available activities (15.5%) at a destination were the most common selection, followed by attractions (13.2%), and suitable accommodation (12.5%). Good reviews (9.6%) also featured as important, particularly on travel platforms (Table 8). Thus, the information obtained from user-generated content is considered when deciding on the destination. Word-of-mouth (2.7%) via social media and influencers (2%) were not significant influences on destination choice. The availability of discounts, special offers, or packages (7.4%) and the distance or time to get to a destination (7.3%) were equally important. Thus, indicating the budget consciousness and perhaps time sensitivity of respondents in relation to road trips outside of the Gauteng province. Star ratings (6.4%) also featured as an aspect of destination choice.

Spending

Questions on spending by respondents were divided into spending per trip (Table 9), spending prior to a trip, spending on fuel per trip, spending on toll gate fees, and spending at stops en route. Thus, there are several avenues for economic value with regards to the domestic road trip value chain, thereby making this market vital to the overall development of the domestic tourism sector. Spending could be related to several factors including whether the respondent was the sole contributor to the trips, discretionary income, dependants, expenses, fuel costs, distances and length of stay, type of accommodation and activities or attractions, for example. The bulk of respondents (46.1%) spent between R2001 and R10 000 per trip. Spending prior to the trip (excluding bookings) with 90.3% (cumulative percentage) spending somewhere between the R0 and R5 000 categories. Spending on fuel was interesting given that the respondents could have been contributing to group funded trips or using transportation such as a minibus taxi where they would not be paying for fuel themselves directly. The categories between R1 001 and R3 000 collectively (65.3%) were the most commonly selected with regards to fuel costs, which could also be indicative of the distances that respondents are travelling, mostly to nearby provinces. Toll gate fees were at 52.5% cumulatively for the R0 to R300 categories. Again, toll gate fees may not be necessarily paid directly by respondents depending on factors such as type of transportation, for example. When it came to spending on stops per trip, 77.% was represented by the R0 to R1 000 category and mostly related to fuel, and food/snack costs.

Table 9. Spending per trip

Spending Categories	Frequency (n=297)	Percent
R2001-R5000	77	25.9
R5001-R10 000	60	20.2
R501-R1000	47	15.8
R1501-R2000	33	11.1
R1001-R1500	26	8.8
R10 001-R20 000	22	7.4
R0-R500	17	5.7
R20 001-R30 000	9	3.0
R30 001-R40 000	3	1.0
R40 001-R50 000	2	0.7
R50 001-R60 000	1	0.3
Total	**297**	**100.0**

Overall thoughts on domestic road trip tourism

The open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire revealed key themes around the overall thoughts of respondents on domestic road trip tourism. In general, concerns were centred around safety and security, the condition of roads and road infrastructure, as well as costs, affordability and discounts:

"Unfortunately, road quality has deteriorated. Crime makes us nervous to travel. The collapse of rail freight systems puts too many heavy vehicles on the road. But road trips in SA are so enticing." (R249)

"Potholes on the road have become significantly worse over the last 3 years, bad roads have resulted in damage to my vehicle and unexpected costs to fix whole on a trip." (R135)

"... I feel like not much of attention is paid in-terms of advertising and discounts or specials to encourage more S. Africans to travel local" (R177)

Despite the challenges observed, a general positive sentiment was noted in the comments by respondents towards domestic road travel with regards to the opportunities to have meaningful experiences, as one respondent indicated:

"It's always a great and informative experience as it allows you to consume the diverse cultures of South Africa and also see the amazing architecture as well as nature" (R199)

Conclusions and Recommendations

The tourism industry will forever be changed due to the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. As destinations continue to recover from the impacts, domestic tourism maintains its role as a crucial means to 'bounce back'. However, the varying contexts of destinations may have historically not supported the growth of domestic tourism towards its full potential, such as in the case of South Africa. Efforts need to be made if domestic tourism is going to fulfil its potential and retain the attention of governments and other tourism stakeholders for the long run, especially as international tourism continues to rise and aims at reaching, if not exceeding pre-pandemic levels. In South Africa, the historical barriers to the development of domestic tourism continue to persist, particularly with regards to financial accessibility to tourism activity. The dissection of the domestic tourism sector and markets is fundamental to identifying areas of weakness and opportunity. Specific sub-categories of domestic tourism may unveil key areas that require the attention of policy makers, governments, and the private sector. The sub-category of domestic road trip tourism offers a unique market segment with varying needs, which may not have been met yet, and reveals an important sub-sector which is a significant piece of the domestic tourism puzzle.

This study flashed a spotlight on a lesser studied aspect of domestic tourism in the context of South Africa. The respondents represent a key market, being the youth, and mirrored the majority Black population of South Africa which is a major target market identified in the National Tourism Sector Strategy and the Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy. Further studies related to the affordability of domestic road trip tourism as well as on the child- and pet-friendly nature of domestic travel should be conducted, which will provide a deeper insight into this market segment. The collaboration between rental car companies, accommodation establishments and tour operators in offering discounts and targeted packages, for example, could be beneficial in providing access to basic and more specialised vehicles for use in a wider range of tourism activity both in rural and urban settings. Marketing around road trip tourism beyond the already existing domestic tourism campaigns could serve to encourage and diversify more domestic road travel. Additionally, the South African government and private sector should pay specific attention to the needs of this emerging market, through the continued implementation of policy and strategy related to growing and opening up access to domestic tourism in South Africa.

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