

Local Residents' Assessment of South Africa as a Domestic Leisure Travel Destination

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Abstract

Market research has realised that identifying tourists' needs and wants, and making concerted efforts to satisfying them is the hallmark of destination marketing. This study explores locals' perception of South Africa (SA) as a leisure travel destination, and ways of marketing the destination, using the case of Mtubatuba Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal. We used a structured questionnaire to collect data from 400 respondents. Results show that respondents perceive South Africa as a favourable leisure travel destination. Results also show that better promotion of South Africa as a domestic leisure travel destination should be made, mostly through the usage of Technology. Young (18-30 years of age), female, and employed residents, and those with tertiary education, show higher demand for domestic tourism than their counterparts. This study recommends that domestic tourism marketing efforts by South African Tourism should be amplified targeting these demographic groups. Intensive and continuous domestic tourism promotion (using social media and other modern forms of Information and Communication Technology), competitive pricing (through reduced operational costs and bundle pricing), and further improvements on national security are areas that still need national attention. Domestic tourism demand translates into international or foreign demand.

Keywords: Domestic tourism, local residents' perception, leisure travel, South Africa

Introduction

The National Government of South Africa recognised tourism as one of the six pillars for economic growth, and the commitment provided for in the National Tourism Sector Strategy called for the development of a Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy for South Africa. This follows the recognition that domestic tourism is a crucial contributor to the growth of tourism (Rogerson, 2011). Makhaola and Gerwel Proches (2017) maintain that domestic tourism is the cornerstone of economic development in South Africa. The authors portray the importance of domestic tourism to include job creation, poverty alleviation, and infrastructure development; but highlight that high pricing and inefficient transportation system do hinder this development. This study was conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South African where tourism is crucial and had a significant contribution in the local economy, growing from a R9billion contribution to the Provincial Gross Domestic Product in 2014 to more than R10billion by 2018 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2019).



Adinolfi and Ivanovic (2015) posit that tourism in South Africa has been prioritised as an industry, alongside mining and agriculture, and South Africa's government is concerned with the sustainability of domestic tourism owing that there is a lack of travel culture among the majority of South Africa's population. They, therefore, explored ways of engaging youths in social tourism, to take advantage of the emanating social and psychological benefits. This is in line with the earlier study conducted by Butler and Richardson (2013), which revealed that in as much as South Africa as a tourism destination has attracted high volumes of international tourists, attracting a wider spectrum of domestic tourists, remains a problematic issue. The authors state that the Black South Africans remain largely underrepresented in overall domestic visits, for example to South Africa's national parks (leisure tourism), and conclude that economic impediments are the major limiting factors. Ray and Wakelin-Theron (2018) present similar findings (economic impediments) in the case of higher education institution's students, who respond that they travel mainly to visit friends and relatives (VFR). Dzikiti and Leonard (2016), also explored barriers towards South African youth participation in domestic tourism and found that poverty, unemployment, the legacy of the previous apartheid government, lack of support from the government and private sector, power relations and exploitation, are the socio-economic ills that limit youth participation in domestic tourism. The authors put forward that this can be improved by engaging the civil society, government and private sector to work together to increase youth participation in domestic tourism. Encouraging training programmes, tourism information, and developing organised tours amongst the youth may become ways of increasing their knowledge and engagement in domestic tourism (Dzikiti & Leonard, 2016; Litheko & Potgieter, 2016). Without local residents' support and participation in tourism, the development and sustainability of tourism would be difficult (Litheko & Potgieter, 2016).

Domestic tourism demand drives international tourism demand and retaining much of the tourism expenditure by South Africans within South Africa, is necessary for local economic growth. This study was conducted in Mtubatuba Local Municipality, within KwaZulu-Natal Province, one of the nine provinces of South Africa. Mtubatuba Local Municipality has major tourist attractions (such as Isimangaliso Wetland Park (World Heritage Site), Nature Reserves and Crocodile Park) and receives significant number of tourists, including domestic tourists. This local municipality has heavy reliance on tourism as an economic activity, therefore it is worth to investigate the locals' perception of South Africa (SA) as a tourism destination, particularly for leisure, as this may translate into their willingness to also travel domestically (within South Africa).

Eugenio-Martin and Campos-Soria (2010) report that not all countries and regions are equally able to attract and retain domestic tourists. Rogerson (2015) posits that domestic tourism is relatively under-researched in tourism scholarship, although for many countries, such as South Africa, domestic tourism is a significant element of the tourism economy. Rogerson state that the South Africa's government endeavours to use domestic tourism as a pillar for addressing spatial unevenness in patterns and demands of tourism development; and pointed out that in relation to the spatial change of tourism development, at the time of writing his paper, it is evident that the most significant developments are the strengthening of eThekweni as South Africa's leading domestic tourism destination and the relative demise of Cape Town as a centre for domestic tourists. Prior to this study, the literature review conducted revealed that many studies have been conducted on domestic tourism and leisure travel (such as Adinolfi & Ivanovic, 2015; Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Butler & Richardson, 2013; Dzikiti & Leonard, 2016; Kanagara & Bindu, 2013; Khuong & Ha, 2014; Litheko & Potgieter, 2016; Makhaola & Gerwel Proches, 2017; Ray & Wakelin-Theron, 2018; Rogerson, 2011; Rogerson, 2015). However, not many studies of this nature have been conducted in sub-Saharan Africa,



especially in South Africa, where domestic tourism is gaining much ground in importance. Rogerson (2015) highlighted the under-representation of domestic tourism scholarship and also pointed out that eThekweni (an urban municipality) in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal, has become a leading domestic tourism destination. This study, using the case of Mtubatuba Local Municipality (a rural municipality with significant tourism development) in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, explored locals' perception of South Africa as a domestic leisure travel destination, and ways of promoting domestic tourism (study objective). This will contribute to the much-needed regional knowledge of this phenomenon in sub-Saharan Africa.

Literature review

Domestic tourism

South Africa's national Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy provides for enhanced focus on domestic tourism by the tourism sector. Domestic tourism is a significant contributor to the growth of the tourism economy and provides a basis for sustainable tourism growth and development, more especially in times of global uncertainties (Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy, (DTGS) 2018). However, the ring-fencing of additional financial resources is yet to translate into growth in volumes and revenue, thereby addressing job creation in the sector, geographic spread, and seasonality. The number of South African residents traveling to visit friends and relatives remains the biggest percentage of domestic trips and about 16% drop impacted total domestic trips for 2015 significantly. The consequences of this decline are seen in the decline in revenue and geographic spread. Affordability remains one of the key reasons for lack of interest in travel and also pricing structures that are not included have been raised as a barrier. In addition, the rising inflation and unemployment in the nation have put households' disposable income under pressure (DTGS, 2018).

Tourists may travel locally, provincially, or nationally, with the intention of visiting tourism destinations or friends and family (Makhaola & Gerwel Proches, 2017). Domestic tourism plays a critical role in driving the success of any tourism destination and hence is regarded as the backbone of the tourism sector. The Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) (2017) released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) reiterates that domestic tourism plays a critical role in the tourism sector generating more than half the internal tourism revenue. It contributes significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the nation. However, developing countries continue to neglect domestic tourism, compared to the well-developed nations who have taken domestic tourism seriously as a driver of sustainable tourism development (Ghimire 2013; Skanavis & Sakellari, 2011). The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) (2014) refers to domestic tourism as the activity where the resident travels within the country of reference but outside of his/her own environment. The purpose of travel could be holiday, business, medical, shopping, visiting family and friends. Litheko and Potgieter (2016) posit that developing interest in domestic tourism in developing countries is ascribed to the size, the rapid growth, the economic value, and domestic tourism's ability to counter the seasonality of tourism, as well as its immense contribution towards local development. This local development enhances the wellbeing of the community and the businesses within the area.

Domestic tourism is an under-researched theme in South Africa partly due to the difficulty of tracking domestic tourism, and also as a result of government and policy-makers placing more emphasis on the attractive higher expenditures from foreign visitors (Bui & Jolliffe, 2011; Ghimire, 2013). The use of domestic tourism for social integration has become a new concept in South Africa, evolving after the 1994 democratic election (Makhaola & Gerwel Proches, 2017). This is because South Africa's tourism became recognised after 1994 when the country opened itself up to the world. Makhaola & Gerwel Proches (2017) posits that



in South Africa, there has been a significant tourism growth since 1994, with the sector now becoming the country's key economic component. South Africa's recent governments and the tourism department are striving to promote tourism amongst residents, especially those who are previously disadvantaged during the apartheid era. Tourism has the most potential, either directly or indirectly (due to its most rapid growth rate), amongst all the industries, to achieve the country's major objectives of economic growth, job creation, and poverty alleviation in all provinces. In South Africa, domestic tourism has the potential to make valuable contributions toward local economic development for communities and lead to reductions in seasonality, as it allows for year-round flows of visitors (Visser & Hoogendoorn, 2011).

Residents' participation in domestic tourism

Tourism has been recognised as a means of enhancing the national and regional economy, and increasingly, destinations are turning to tourism as an important component in their economic portfolio (Litheko & Potgieter, 2016). Tourism may influence an individual's quality of life. An improvement of one's life can be experienced through the development of tourism products and services that can also be enjoyed by residents, such as festivals, restaurants, natural and cultural attractions, and outdoor recreation opportunities (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2010). An improved quality of life can, in addition, be realised through for example a higher personal standard of living, and also through the creation of employment opportunities and increased tax revenues (Andereck & Nyaupane, 2010).

Li, Meng and Zhang (2016) state that economic and leisure time are the main situational travel constraints. They (Li et al.) posit that residents who are not willing to travel domestically have low travel motivation and attitude, and are likely to be less healthy, below 25 years or above 55 years old, less educated and have small children and lower income. They do not have much regard of destination environment and attraction but focus on price and travel expenses when making travel decision and destination choice. Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) explain situational constraints to mean factors perceived or experienced that could limit an individual's preference formation and activity participation. Non-tourists are mostly inhibited by lack of knowledge, distance and transportation, and former-tourists are constrained by their earlier visitation experience (Kerstetter, Zinn, Graefe & Chen, 2002). Jensen and Svendsen (2016) put forward a number of pull factors that influence the choice of holiday destination for tourists, such as affordability, geographical proximity, availability of activities, availability of cultural and entertainment attractions, natural experiences, personal safety, relaxation, loyalty, and meeting new people.

Potential tourists' personal preference serves as another important factor that influences their choice of destination (Hsu, Tsai & Wu, 2009). Goodall and Cooper (1991) state that motivation generates actions and guide corresponding behaviours, but it is the preference that decides people's more precise choices. Although some earlier studies have explored travellers' preference (such as Suh & McAvoy, 2005), preference was not specifically addressed in the destination selection process (Hsu et al., 2009). The study by Hsu et al. (2009) relates motivational factors to tourists' destination preference ratings, supporting the understanding of factors or criteria that essentially drive preferences. This study is, however, exploring residents' perception of their own nation regarding domestic travel, and not specifically measuring which attractions within the destination that they prefer.

Marketing in the tourism industry

Recent developments and growth of information and communication technologies have significantly changed the traditional frame for marketing, and brought smartness into the tourism industry (Chetty, 2015; Jovicic, 2019). In the modern marketing era, with the presence



of the Internet, social media, blogs and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO); many platforms have been created for businesses or organisations (including tourism organisations) to share information with potential customers (or tourists). A strong online presence of any organisation is considered a valuable asset for its business operation (Chetty, 2015). Tourism businesses are increasingly using a variety of platforms of technology (such as TripAdvisor, Tripcast, social media, and HearPlanet) to share information about their organisations (Jovicic, 2019). The use of such platforms helps organisations to gain knowledge of what the tourists are expecting from the destination as they allow participant's review of the organisations and destinations. Thus, this makes it easier for marketing managers to understand the target market, their needs and wants. Tourism industry is therefore advised to take advantage of social media, as the industry relies on destination reputation, consumer opinion, word-of-mouth, and advertising (Gidarakou, 2015; Zeng & Gerristen, 2014).

Research methods

Accommodation facilities in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, compare favourably to the best hotels and resorts in the world (Nyawo & Mubangizi, 2015). Mtubatuba Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal receives and provides for a wide range of travellers. The strength of this municipality lies in its two major tourist attractions: iSimangaliso Wetland Park (a World Heritage Site) which encompasses the entire coastline of more than 200 km and Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park (Mtubatuba Municipality, 2017). Mtubatuba Local Municipality is one of the five municipalities in uMkhanyakude District Municipality (the most rural district in KwaZulu-Natal Province). St Lucia town in Mtubatuba Local Municipality is known as a tourism hub and service centre for the surrounding rural areas (Mtubatuba Municipality, 2017). We used surveys to explore residents' perception of South Africa as a domestic leisure travel destination. This study's research objective has more leaning towards a positivist research paradigm, hence this study used a quantitative research method (structured questionnaire survey) to collect data from a large number of respondents. A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population (Creswell, 2009). Much of the tourism research need quantitative data from respondents to get the required information (Ezeuduji & Mbane, 2017; Nkwanyana, Ezeuduji & Nzama, 2016). Variables that were introduced into the questionnaire to measure the constructs of 'local perception' and 'marketing strategy' were obtained from previous work (such as Bimonte & Punzo, 2016; du Plessis, Saayman & Van Der Merwe, 2015; Monterrubio, 2016; Nejati, Mohamed & Omar, 2014; Sharpley, 2014).

This study targeted Mtubatuba Local Municipality permanent residents' population. Respondents were selected at shopping malls and recreational sites. The researchers randomly distributed questionnaires within key places of the study area (St Lucia, Mtubatuba town, Nkodibe area, KwaMsane Township, Somkhele area and Dukuduku area). Only adults were surveyed (respondents aged 18 years and above for ethical reasons around opinion formulation). Non-permanent residents and minors were excluded from participation in the study, using screening questions. The screening questions were "are you a permanent resident of Mtubatuba Local Municipality?" and "are you 18 years or above?". If the respondents' answers were in the affirmative to both screening questions, they were selected for participation. 427 structured questionnaires were distributed to the participants using simple random sampling technique, and out of the 411 completed questionnaires received, a total of 400 questionnaires were usable for data analyses, as the researchers opted to use fully completed questionnaires that will not be excluded during the calculation of reliability statistics.



We employed descriptive statistics at the first stage of data analysis to generate frequency of respondents' responses (in percentages) and mean scores of responses. Thereafter, bivariate analyses were conducted at the second stage. Bivariate analyses (comparing two variables) used Spearman's Correlation (two-tailed) and Pearson Chi-square tests to check respectively for correlations and relationships between variables (Bolboacă, Jäntschi, Sestraş, Sestraş, & Pamfil, 2011). Spearman's Correlation (two-tailed) test (non-parametric test) was used to check for positive or negative correlations between measured ranked or ordinal variables (Veal, 2011). Pearson Chi-square test was used to examine relationships between nominal and/or categorical variables (Veal, 2011). We consequently recorded ordinal variables into nominal variables (agree, neutral, disagree), to allow for the Chi-square tests. Strongly agree and agree responses were recoded to mean 'agree'; neutral response remained 'neutral' and strongly disagree and disagree responses were recoded to mean 'disagree'. The third stage of data analysis conducted multivariate analysis: the reliability test (using Cronbach's Alpha) to check for the level of internal consistencies of variables used to explain the dimensions of 'local perception' and 'marketing strategy' respectively. Ezeuduji, November, and Haupt (2016) state that Cronbach's Alpha should be calculated as reliability parameter to check the internal consistency of the variables within a study dimension. Researchers agree that Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of between 0.5 and 0.7 are acceptable in social science research, to explain adequate internal consistency of variables (Chawla & Sondhi, 2011; George & Mallery, 2003). However, Tavakol and Dennick (2011) state that a low Cronbach's Alpha score may occur if there is a weak relationship amongst questionnaire variables used in the analysis, or when few variables are being used to explain a particular dimension. This study confidently accepts that the variables used in measuring the 'local perception' and 'marketing strategy' dimensions have internal coherence, as both calculated Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are above 0.7 (see next section; Table 2).

Results and discussion

Table 1 results show the profile of Mtubatuba Local Municipality residents who responded to this study.

Table 1: Respondents' profile and general information (N = 400)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Are you a permanent resident of Mtubatuba Local Municipality?	Yes	100
	No	0.0
Which age group do you belong to?	18-24yrs	27.5
	25-30yrs	48.3
	31-35yrs	20.5
	36-40yrs	3.3
	41-59yrs	0.0
	60+yrs	0.5
Gender	Female	63.7
	Male	36.3
Employment status	Working	54.3
	Not working	45.7
Educational level	Primary education or less	1.8
	Secondary education	40.8
	Tertiary education	57.5
Do you think tourism has a good influence in the community?	Yes	85.8
	No	14.2
How do you perceive tourism development in South Africa?	Very productive	44.5
	Mostly productive	39.8
	Neither productive nor unproductive	8.3
	Mostly unproductive	6.4
	Very unproductive	1.0



How do you perceive South Africa as a leisure tourism destination?	Very good	48.0
	Good	38.5
	Neither good nor poor	7.8
	Poor	4.0
	Very poor	1.7
Willingness to participate in domestic tourism	Strongly agree	32.3
	Agree	55.0
	Neutral	9.8
	Disagree	2.3
	Strongly disagree	0.6

The sample is relatively young as the majority of the respondents (about 76%) fall into the age bracket of 18 – 30 years. Moisa (2010), however, argues that the social ills experienced by young people, such as unemployment and poverty may hinder their participation in domestic tourism activities. A previous study conducted by Alzboun (2019) has shown that the main challenges of domestic tourism are related to economic, services and socio-cultural aspects. Alzboun's findings did not reveal any significant differences in respondents' perceptions between demographic groups in terms of gender, age, income, and level of education for domestic tourism challenges. The results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents are female (about 64%), and about 54% of them are employed. Previous authors (such as Moon, Yang & Lee, 2019; Nassuna, 2019) argue that females take domestic tours as an avenue to overcome their doubled disadvantaged position as ethnic minority (females) and as housewives under patriarchy. About 41% of the respondents in this study have secondary education, and about 58% have tertiary education, hence we argue that much of the respondents have adequate formal education. Majority of the respondents (about 86%) were positive about tourism having a good influence in the community's development. Manwa and Modirapula (2019) state that there are opportunities for the tourism industry to contribute to sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation in many local communities in sub-Saharan Africa. Jacobs and du Plessis (2019) also point out that the tourism sector in South Africa has contributed more to the economy than any other industry, such as agriculture.

It is good news that about 84% of the respondents perceive tourism development as either 'very productive' and 'mostly productive'; agreeing to previous authors that tourism contributes significantly to the economy and creates a huge labour market (such as Pham, Andereck & Vogt, 2019). The researchers' fieldwork experience revealed that, in most cases, those who do not work (unemployed) are negative towards tourism mostly due to the myth that 'tourism' is only for 'the rich people' of South Africa. The results, however, reveal that the respondents who perceive South Africa as a good or very good destination for leisure tourism were in the majority in Mtubatuba Local Municipality (about 87%). This is also good news for the South African domestic tourism. If local residents appreciate their own destination, they will likely participate in domestic tourism. About 87% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that they are willing to participate in domestic tourism. This is a very positive result for South African Tourism. Muchapondwa and Stage (2013) report that South Africa has beautiful landscapes ranging from mountain ranges to vast grassy plains, from coastlines to meandering rivers and desert dunes. The promotion of community participation in tourism initiatives is a critical component of growth, development and poverty alleviation in post-apartheid South Africa (see also Manwa & Modirapula, 2019).

Lee and Jan (2019) add that host communities generally view tourism activities favourably within their country, in particular, because of the economic benefits, including job opportunities, which are by far the most significant. In Table 2, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of variables in the questionnaire used by the study to assess general perceptions of South Africa as a leisure travel destination.



Calculating the correlations between local’s specific perceptions of South Africa as a destination for leisure travel on the one hand; and respondents’ overall perception of South Africa as a destination for leisure tourism, on the other hand, produces convincing results that the local residents strongly perceive South Africa as a leisure travel destination. All the variables used in measuring specific perceptions have strong correlations with the overall perception. Results show that about 87% of respondents strongly agree or agree that ‘spending holiday within South Africa will help in obtaining new experiences’. Department of Tourism (DoT) (2019) argues that tourism with its tremendous social and economic importance continues to improve the lives of millions of people in South Africa, the African continent and around the world. The findings also indicate that about 64% of respondents agree that ‘South Africa is a safe place to be visited’. Chili (2018) argues that South Africa is regarded as one of the safest destinations for tourism. However, the study by Visser and Rogerson (2004) recognise that the growth of tourism in South Africa is threatened by the relatively high level of car hijackings and crime in townships that surrounding major cities, which include both Johannesburg and Cape Town. From the findings of this study, there is much room for improvement regarding tourists’ safety in South Africa.

Majority of the respondents (about 80%) strongly agree or agree with the statement: ‘recreational facilities provided in the country make me want to travel’. This result supports the findings of Mandić, Mrnjavac and Kordić (2018), who argue that recreational facilities are recognised as the fundamental aspect of physical infrastructure which contributes significantly to the development of tourism and economic development by attracting more tourist to visit the country. South African Tourism (SAT) markets South Africa internationally and domestically as a preferred tourism and business events destination, which ensures that tourist facilities and services are of the highest standard (DoT, 2019). About 82% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that ‘South Africa is the most visited country because of its beauty as a tourism destination’. This gives hope that South Africa will continue to play an important role in the growth of tourism on the African continent (DoT, 2019). Not surprisingly, 84% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that ‘South Africa has beautiful landscape’.

Table 2: General perception and marketing of South Africa correlated with respondent’s perception of South Africa as a leisure tourism destination

<i>Statements^a</i>	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean Score	<i>^bCorrelation with respondent’s perception</i>
<i>Locals’ perception of South Africa as leisure travel destination (%)</i>							
(i) Spending holiday within South Africa will help in obtaining new experiences.	41.0	46.3	7.5	4.8	0.4	1.78	** (positive)
(ii) South Africa is a safe place to be visited.	28.8	34.8	26.0	9.8	0.6	2.19	** (positive)
(iii) The recreational facilities provided in the country make me want to travel.	28.8	51.3	14.0	4.8	1.1	1.99	** (positive)
(iv) South Africa is the most visited country because of its beauty as a tourism destination	30.8	51.5	14.5	2.8	0.4	1.91	** (positive)
(v) South Africa has beautiful landscape	34.0	50.0	11.3	3.7	1.0	1.88	** (positive)
<i>Reliability statistics (Locals perception on South Africa as leisure travel destination): Cronbach’s Alpha = .813, N of items = 5, Valid cases = 400 (100%), Excluded cases = 0 (0.0%), Total =400</i>							
<i>Marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination (%)</i>							
South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents.	49.5	40.3	6.8	2.8	0.6	1.65	* (positive)
Local residents in South Africa should be made aware of specific tourism attractions in South Africa.	49.5	39.0	8.5	2.8	0.2	1.65	No correlation



South Africa Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions.	48.8	42.0	6.0	1.8	1.4	1.65	* (positive)
South African tourist destinations and attractions are very expensive.	28.5	29.3	20.2	21.0	1.0	2.37	No correlation
Local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions.	32.5	28.0	19.3	18.0	2.2	2.30	No correlation
<i>Reliability statistics (Marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination): Cronbach's Alpha = .755, N of items = 5, Valid cases = 400 (100%), Excluded cases = 0 (0.0%), Total =400</i>							

*Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale: 1, Strongly agree (SA); 2, Agree (A); 3, Neutral (N); 4, Disagree (D); 5, Strongly disagree (SD).

^bSpearman's Rank correlation (two-tailed) test significance: *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$.

Also in Table 2, respondents were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement on the statements used to assess 'marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination' – and these variables were also correlated with the overall perception of South Africa as a leisure tourism destination. About 90% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that 'South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents'. About 89% of the respondents agreed that 'local residents in South Africa should be made aware of specific tourism attractions in South Africa'. Much of the respondents (about 91%) strongly agree or agree with the statement: 'South African Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions'. It is very important to note that 58% of respondents strongly agree or agree that 'South African tourist destinations and attractions are very expensive', and about 61% of respondents strongly agree or agree to this statement: 'local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions'. These latter results are addressed in the next section (conclusion and recommendations) of this paper. The results in Table 2 indicate that there are positive correlations between 'overall perception of South Africa as a leisure tourism destination', and these two statements: 'South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents' and 'South African Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions'. These will also be addressed in the next section of this paper.

Further inferential analysis was conducted to support South African Tourism (National Destination Marketing Organisation) target marketing efforts. The hallmark of marketing is identifying customer's need and fulfilling them, hence analysis in Table 3 unearths demographic groups that have a higher demand for domestic tourism and those who may have problems with domestic tourism development. These groups can then be targeted according to their own needs or problems. In Table 3, specific locals' perceptions of 'South Africa as leisure travel destination were compared with respondents' profile. The results indicate that those who are 18-30 years old agree more than others regarding these statements: 'South Africa is a safe place to be visited', 'the recreational facilities provided in the country makes me want to travel', and 'South Africa has beautiful landscape'. The respondents with tertiary education agree most to these statements: 'the recreational facilities provided in the country makes me want to travel', and 'South Africa has beautiful landscape'. The results of this study also show that females perceive South Africa as leisure travel destination more than males. Females agree more than males to this statement: 'South Africa is the most visited country because of its beauty as a tourism destination'. Furthermore, respondents who are employed agree more than the unemployed respondents to this statement: 'South Africa is the most visited country because of its beauty as a tourism destination'. From these results, it seems therefore that younger residents (18-30 years of age), females, the employed, and residents with tertiary education have a more positive perception of South Africa as a leisure travel destination.



Table 3: General perception and marketing of South Africa compared with Respondents' profile

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Compared with Profile</i>
Locals' perception of South Africa as leisure travel destination	
(i) Spending holiday within South Africa will help in obtaining new experiences.	N.S.
(ii) South Africa is a safe place to be visited.	**Age group 18 – 30 years agree more than the others.
(iii) The recreational facilities provided in the country make me want to travel.	**Age group 18 – 30 years agree more than the others. *Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most.
(iv) South Africa is the most visited country because of its beauty as a tourism destination.	*Females agree more than males. *Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed.
(v) South Africa has beautiful landscape	*Age group 18 – 30 years agree more than the others. *Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most
Marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination	
South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents.	**Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most.
Local residents in South Africa should be made aware of specific tourism attractions in South Africa.	*Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed.
South Africa Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions.	*Females agree more than males. **Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most.
South African tourist destinations and attractions are very expensive.	**Age group 18 – 30 years agree more than the others. **Unemployed respondents agree more than the employed.
Local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions.	*Males agree more than females. **Unemployed respondents agree more than the employed.

*Categorical variables – Pearson Chi-Square test significance: N.S., no significant results; *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$.

Also in Table 3, ‘marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination’ variables were compared with ‘respondents’ profile’ variables. The findings show that the respondents with tertiary education agree most to these statements: ‘South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents’, and ‘South African Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions’. Anwar, Carmody, Surborg, and Corcoran (2014) recognise the importance of using Information and Communication Technology in the tourism industry as tourism is an industry that is based on intensive information. Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed respondents to the statement: ‘local residents in South Africa should be made aware of specific tourism attractions in South Africa’.

The unemployed respondents did not surprisingly report that: ‘South African tourist destinations and attractions are very expensive’, and ‘local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions’. Female respondents agree more than males to the statement: ‘South Africa Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions’. Male respondents agree more than the females to this statement: ‘local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions’. It is evident, therefore, from these results that residents with tertiary education are very market-oriented regarding South Africa as a leisure travel destination. While the employed residents agree more that increased awareness of the domestic destination is made to the locals, the unemployed residents report that local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions, however, these are very expensive (young residents also agree that South Africa is an expensive destination). This is understandable regarding their economic power. Male residents report a low level of tourism awareness, and female residents recommend that South Africa Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions.



Conclusion

This study found that the local residents of Mtubatuba Local Municipality strongly perceive South Africa a favourable leisure tourism destination; however, some concerns were raised by this study, such as enhanced domestic tourism awareness and high costs of travel (expensive destination). International or foreign demand for tourism in South Africa can be promoted with encouraging higher domestic tourism demand. This will also help to address the socio-economic problems of seasonality in the tourism industry. We found that young residents, employed residents, female residents, and those with tertiary education, show a stronger perception of South Africa as a domestic leisure travel destination, than their counterparts. Hence, we recommended that domestic tourism marketing efforts by South African Tourism (the Destination Marketing Organisation) and the provincial tourism marketing offices should be amplified on these demographic groups. Intensive and continuous domestic tourism awareness creation (using social media and other modern forms of Information and Communication Technology), competitive pricing (through reduced operational costs and bundle pricing), and more improvements on South African national security are areas that need concerted national action. It is important for South African Tourism to explore further ways of growing domestic tourism awareness and engaging local residents in domestic tourism, such as highlighting the provincial and local tourist attractions to residents in those communities; and elaborating on the social and psychological benefits of domestic tourism. It is also crucial (in line with Dzikiti & Leonard, 2016; Litheko & Potgieter, 2016) to continue to engage the civil society, government and private sector to collaborate with regard to increasing local participation in domestic tourism. Some practical ways of achieving this would be for these stakeholders to work together to develop domestic tourism training programmes, provide domestic tourism information, develop and organised low-cost package tours for the local residents, especially the youth. These are some of the viable ways of increasing local knowledge and engagement in domestic tourism. Further studies may explore the perceptions of South African residents in other parts of the country towards domestic tourism, to compare with this study's findings.

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