



Tourist perceptions of factors influencing destination image: a case study of selected Kimberley resorts

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Abstract

Destination image is the sum of perceptual beliefs, knowledge, affective feeling, and total impression that a visitor holds about a particular destination, and it plays a critical role in determining purchase decisions in the destination-choice process, and the attractiveness of a destination. In order for a destination or resort to be differentiated from its competitors, destination management must have a correlative perception and image of quality, as the consumer does. The formation of image is determined by the attributes or characteristics a destination has to offer, and by the exposition of information the tourist receives about a destination. These factors are known as the external factors. Image formation is also influenced by personal factors like motivation, past experiences, attitudes and expectations, which are known as internal factors. Tourist destination images are important because they influence the decision-making behaviour of potential tourists. A good perception leads to a positive destination image, leads tourist satisfaction – which in turn results in destination loyalty.

The aim of this research was to determine whether the perception of the resorts has an influence on the visitation levels of the resorts. The resorts have reported consecutive years of low visitation and profit levels. A questionnaire was used to collect data from visitors to resorts. Unfortunately, the results indicate the visitors perceived the overall satisfaction as well the experience of staying at the resort as being average to poor. In order to ensure sustainability of the resort, it is suggested that resort management focus on improvement of resort's image.

Keywords: destination image, destination choice, Kimberley, resorts, tourist perception.

Introduction

Destination image is the sum of perceptual beliefs, knowledge, affective feeling, and total impression that a visitor holds about a destination, and it plays a critical role in determining purchase decisions in the destination-choice process, and the attractiveness of a destination (Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Destination choice is determined by the attributes a destination offers, and also by the characteristics of the tourist (Lopes, 2011).

The White Paper on Development and Promotion of Tourism in the Northern Cape (NCPG, 2005) suggests that understanding tourists' perceptions of a destination is of paramount importance, as they play a valuable role in the marketing of a destination. Image plays an important role for destination marketers – to differentiate the destination in this highly competitive market (Yilmaz, Yilmaz, Dçigen, Ekin, & Utku, 2009). The Tourism Master Plan for the Northern Cape Province identifies the province, and, in particular, Kimberley, as being a region which could be developed into a successful and competitive tourism destination in South Africa and in the international market space (NCDT, 2004).

In order for a destination, like the Northern Cape, to be differentiated from its competitors, destination management must have a correlative perception (Zouni & Kouremenos, 2008) and image Moutinho (2000:41) of quality, as the consumer does. The formation of image is determined by the attributes or characteristics a destination has to offer, and by the exposition of information the tourist receives about a destination (Molina, Gomez, Martín-Consuegra, 2010). These factors are known as the external factors. Image formation is also influenced by



personal factors like motivation, past experiences, attitudes and expectations (Chen, Chen, Lee, *et al.*, 2011), which are known as internal factors (George, 2008:169). From this it can be deduced that individuals hold different images, and these images are based on individuals' perceptions.

This research explores important concepts of (i) tourist perception, (ii) destination image and (iii) the internal and external factors that influence destination image, and also the (iv) tourist decision-making process. The research then gives an explanation of the relationship between these four concepts.

Literature review

Tourist perception

Perception can be defined as the process by which an individual select, organises and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the destination (Cant, Strydom, Jooste & Du Plessis, 2009:79; Jordaan & Prinsloo, 2004:177; Rajesh, 2013). Perception comprises consumers' motivations, learning, attitudes, and previous experience. It is subjective in nature and will therefore be different for each consumer. This, in turn, will result in the consumer attitudes towards a product and/or service provider that may fluctuate over time. Perception thus refers to the way in which consumers interpret messages via their senses in order to make a decision when buying a product.

Consumers generally perceive what is expected of the product/service, which is normally based on familiarity, previous experience, values and motivations (Bajs, 2011; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Cakici & Harman, 2007; Chaudhary, 2000; Henkel, Henkel, Agrusa, Agrusa & Tanner, 2006).

Krippendorf (1982) indicates that tourists' perception of a destination can be more important than its tangible attributes, and that "the tourist goes to a destination to see the image rather than the reality". Perception remains one of the most engrossing concepts in marketing and tourism. A variety of perception studies exist in the tourism field (Bajs, 2011; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Cakici & Harman, 2007; Chaudhary, 2000; Frochot & Kreziak, 2008; Henkel *et al.*, 2006; Jenkins, 1999; Kim & Brown, 2012; Mohammed, 2014; Prebezac & Mikulic, 2008).

Due to the intangible nature of tourism offerings, tourists must make decisions based on how a destination is perceived (George, 2008:169). Thus, understanding tourist perception is extremely complex, as each individual has unique perceptions – and measuring perceptions is even more challenging due to the diverse characteristics of tourism products, specifically at a resort (Mohammad, 2014). Differences in perceptions often lead to variations in tourist behavioural intent, and a key implication of this for tourism is that perceptions, like attitudes, are crucial in constructing tourist involvement, destination image, satisfaction, and service quality (Cohen, Prayag & Moital, 2014). In order to promote tourism and market destination, it is important to study tourist attitudes, behaviour and demands (Mohsin, 2005). Factors that affect perception and destination image are discussed later in the research.

Given the information possessed about a destination, the tourist will form an image of it (Bajs, 2011). This image is a description of the tourist's attitude towards a number of cues related to a destination's attributes. Physical attributes of a destination act only as stimuli inducing certain associations, and thus the image is not what the product actually is but what the tourist's beliefs tend to construct (Kim & Brown, 2012). Perception and image are terms that are closely related and it can be deduced that the perception process affects the image a tourist has of a destination. Destination image and the factors which affect destination image are discussed in the next section.

Destination Image

Destination image is one of the most discussed topics in modern tourism (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003; Pan & Xiang, 2011). Definitions of destination image have developed over the years.

Ultimately, researchers agree that destination image is a valuable concept with regard to tourist destination choice (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Destination image is also a key marketing tool that can have a powerful influence over tourist decisions about where to take their vacation (Echtner & Ritchie, 2003). According to Lopes (2011) a destination with a strong image is more easily differentiated from its competitors, and tourists are more likely to consider and select destinations with stronger and more positive images. Aksoy and Kiyici (2011) support this by adding that destinations with strong infrastructure, sufficient investment, positive images, and a variety of products gain much more share from the market.

Factors that Influence Destination Image

Destination image, as identified by Baloglu and McCleary (1999), is formed by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors are the individual (tourist) characteristics like, among others, personality, past experiences, and motivations that influence the formation of tourists' destination image. External factors are stimulus factors and include socio-economic factors like culture, price, destination marketing, and as factors that influence destination image formation. Figure 1 (below) depicts the internal and external factors that influence the formation of tourist destination image. Each factor is then discussed individually.

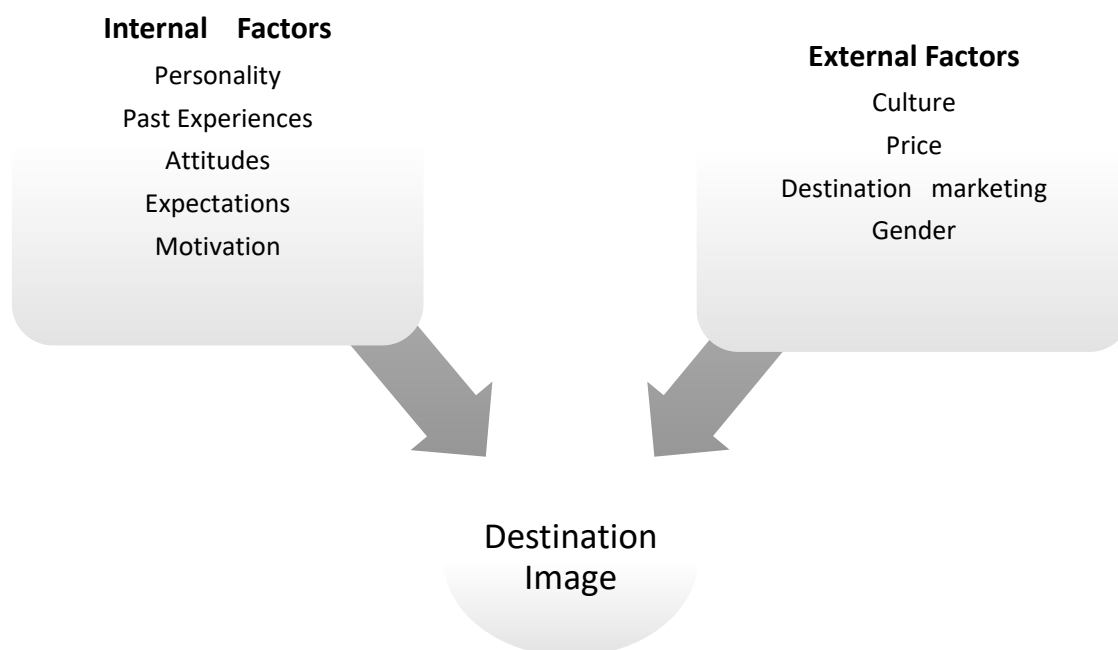


Figure 1: Factors that influence destination image

Source: Author's own compilation

Internal factors

Internal factors are those psychological factors such as personality, past experiences, attitude, learning, expectations and motives that affect an individual's perceptual process to a considerable extent (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Cakici & Harman, 2007). These factors, in turn,



affect tourists' formation of destination image. Factors that are compatible with a tourist's learning, interest, attitude and personality are likely to get more attention than others Moutinho (2000:46). Ryan (1991) describes holiday tourism as "the means by which people seek psychological benefits that arise from expectations, new places and new situations that are of a temporary duration, whilst free from constraints of work, or normal patterns of daily life at home". Internal factors that influence destination image are now discussed.

Personality

Personality refers to those psychological characteristics of people which determine and reflect their reaction to environmental influences (Cant *et al.*, 2009:83). It can be defined as the configuration of a person's characteristics and ways of behaving, which determine his/her adjustment to the environment in a unique way Moutinho (2000:44). According to (Lubbe, 1998), personality is created by patterns of behaviour and mental structures, while Moutinho (2000) adds that it is an emphasis of an individual's past history on their current behaviour.

George (2008:171) states that marketers have discovered that personality is associated with self-image, which is how consumers like to see themselves, which in turn affects their buying behaviour. While researchers (Aksoy & Kiyici, 2011; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Moutinho, 2000) seem to indicate that individual traits are not good predictors of behaviour, it is a well-known that marketers use personality traits to describe individuals and to differentiate between them. The consideration of personality traits is important in order to appraise destination behaviour trends.

Past Experiences

When tourists visit a destination, experience of that destination is gained through a variety of sources. The tourist then builds an inventory of destinations comprised of good and bad experiences. This information/inventory will be stored and used as future reference, when selecting a tourism destination in future (George, 2008:171). Past experiences have an impact on what tourists perceive. According to Beerli and Martin (2004), every person has a unique perception which is affected by all events in the individual's life. These events affect tourist thinking and play a vital role in perception. Learning from previous experiences has a critical effect throughout the stages of the perceptual process.

Moutinho (2000:48) states that past experiences are closely associated with everyday life and play a major role in consumer choice. Therefore, positive experiences that are reinforced in similar situations may generate strong biases towards that situation which in turn influences the consumer's final choice.

Attitudes

Attitudes are a combination of knowledge and positive and negative feelings about an event, person or object (Aksoy & Kiyici, 2011; Lubbe, 1998). An attitude encompasses an individual's value system, which represents personal standards of what is good and bad and also right and wrong (Cant *et al.*, 2009:82). Moutinho (2000:50) defines an attitude as a predisposition created by learning and experience – to respond in a consistent way towards an object such as a product or destination. If tourists have a negative experience at a hotel or resort, it is likely that a negative attitude is developed which will deter them from returning.

Expectations

Expectations are pre-trial beliefs a tourist has about the performance of a destination. This is used as the standard or reference against which the actual performance is judged. Zeithaml, Berry and Parasuraman (1993) have developed a model of consumer expectations.



Motivation

Motivation can be defined as a need or set of needs that is the driving force within individuals, and which pushes them into action or to seek satisfaction of a need or set of needs (Ivanovic, Keyser, & Wakelin-Theron, 2010). Moutinho (2000:49) defines motivation as a state of need, or a condition that exerts a 'push' on the individual toward certain types of actions that are seen as likely to bring satisfaction. Travel factors are the internal factors at work within individuals – expressed as needs, wants and desires – which lead some people to a place much higher in value than others, and influence the type of destinations and tourist experiences chosen.

External factors

The ways in which consumers think, believe and act are largely determined by the external factors in society. The needs consumers experience, the alternatives considered, and the ways in which they are evaluated, are all affected by external social forces. There is a strong link between internal (personal) factors previously discussed and the external factors. The description of external factors begins with culture, price, destination marketing, and gender.

Culture

Moutinho (2000:43) describes culture as values, ideas, attitudes and meaningful symbols, as well as artifacts elaborated in a society. He further states that these elements are transmitted from one generation to another and serve to shape human behaviour. Culture has been described as a "diverse pool of knowledge and shared realities and norms that constitute learned systems of meaning in a particular society" (Ting-Toomey, 1999:9). Schiffman and Kanuk (2004:513) define culture as the sum of total beliefs, values and customs that serve to direct the way consumers behave in a particular society.

South Africa has many cultures and subcultures. An example is the 11 official languages in the country. The different cultures distinguish members of one group from another, and are dynamic because each generation adds something of its own before passing it on. In the words of McLaren (1998:15) Culture is a human phenomenon and affects the way in which individuals respond to others, events, and to the environment; it can therefore be said that culture affects the way in which a tourist forms an image of a destination.

Price

Consumers do not buy products because of the actual value of the products, but because the price of the product closely matches the perceived value of the product. According to Haarhoff (2007) and George (2008:244), price must accurately reflect the value of the offering. When purchasing tourism offerings, consumers often use price as an indication of quality – which means that price gives them the first indication of how to determine the quality of an offering. With tourism, price information is readily available on the Internet, in newspapers and other media – as well as through any travel agency. If the offering is priced too high in relation to what consumers think it is worth – then consumers will not buy it. If the price is too low, however, the offering may be perceived as being of inferior quality, and, again, consumers will not buy it.

It is crucial that the quality of the offering meets the expectations that the price has generated in consumer minds. Prices that compare favourably with the reference point are deemed fair, while prices that compare unfavourably are deemed unfair. Perceptions of price fairness in turn will influence consumer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Campbell, 1999). Price is linked to performance, expectations, perceptions of quality and prestige, satisfying needs, and perceived benefits (Cant *et al.*, 2009:324).



Destination Marketing

Destination marketing plays a vital role in communicating offerings of the organisation to tourists Jordaan & Prinsloo (2004:5). It plays a role in informing, educating, persuading and reminding tourists about the resort (Du Plessis, Bothma, Jordaan, & Van Heerden, 2005:2). This information directly affects the perception the tourist has of the resort. Some of the information is designed by marketers of the resorts, while some comes from different sources like opinions of friends, personal experiences, and comparisons with competitors' advertising (Etzel, Walker & Stanton, 2004).

Understanding how consumers acquire information is important for marketing management decisions. This is especially true for services, travel and tourism products (Molina *et al.*, 2010). External information sources are used by tourists and form the basis for destination choice. McCartney, Butler and Bennett (2008) results reveal that a communication mix strategy could be considered to more effectively manage tourist destination image perceptions. Numerous elements in the marketing communication strategy have been identified by various authors and researchers. The marketing mix are tools which facilitate image formation – the tourist makes an evaluation and forms a judgment of the destination. In order for this evaluation to be positive, a marketer's promotional efforts must be highly coordinated and complementary in order to have a positive impact on tourists' destination image.

Gender

Learning about the interests and activities of potential visitors from a gendered perspective is vital to the planning and marketing of tourism resorts. McGehee, Loker-Murphy, & Uysal *et al.* (1996) found that male and female tourists placed different importance on some push and pull motivational factors. Women were more likely to be motivated by culture and opportunities for family bonding and prestige, while men placed more importance on sports and adventure when engaging in the pleasure travel experience. Collins & Tisdell (2002) in a study of life cycle patterns of outbound Australian travellers found that there are more women than men travelling for holiday purposes in all age groups up to 65 years of age. In the same study it was also found that there are more women than men travelling to visit friends and family all age groups up to 65 years of age and there are fewer women than men travelling for business purposes.

Recent studies indicate that women are more likely to be the primary leisure vacation planner and 'gatekeeper' of household tourism decision-making among western couples and families (Mottiar & Quinn, 2004; McGehee *et al.*, 1996). Carr (2001) found several gendered similarities and differences with regard to young tourists' perceived danger and its influence on the use of leisure spaces and times. It was observed that men were more likely than women to perceive virtually no danger or a low level of danger in public spaces. Nichols and Snepenger (1988) and Fodness (1992) revealed that women were more likely to be the dominant decision maker in families with children at home, and thus were the primary vacation planner (Meng, 2008).

Tourist Decision-Making

Understanding the Tourist Decision-Making Process

As Pearce (2005) mentioned, academic and scholarly studies can understand tourist decision-making better and even help to influence the choice process – and therefore these studies are likely to be seen as amongst the most relevant tourist decision-making research for practitioners. Much research (Chen, 2007; Poria, Reichel & Biran, 2006; Yan & Morrison, 2007) has been conducted in the area of tourist decision-making to understand who travels where, how and why – i.e. the motivation of tourists, the destination-choice process, typologies of tourists and their decision-making. The greatest emphasis in the tourist decision-making



literature has been on the model of destination choice, which helps to articulate the interplay between destination image, profiles of visitors, and destination selection.

Tourist decision-making is that behaviour that tourists display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products or services that are expected to satisfy their needs (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004:5). To predict travel behaviour, it is important to understand how the individual characteristics of a person interact with the characteristics of the situation – thereby promoting understanding of the positive and negative evaluative factors influencing destination choices of tourists (Laws, 1995; March & Woodside, 2005).

Travel decision-making is therefore considered an important field in the tourism research literature (Huang & Xiao, 2000; Lam & Hsu 2006). The prediction of travel decision-making and knowledge of travel motivation, play an important role in tourism marketing to create demand and to assist tourists in decision-making (Decrop 2006; Mazanec; March & Woodside, 2005). Thus, by having adequate knowledge and understanding of tourist behaviour, strategies and policies can be developed and implemented to increase the demand for tourism (Law *et al.* 2004; March & Woodside, 2005).

Effective tourism marketing requires that managers understand not only what people do on vacation, but also how they make leisure travel decisions (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Fodness, 1992). It is imperative that businesses consider consumer preferences and choices when making decisions regarding product and service attributes (Verma, Plaschka & Louviere, 2002). When individuals take the decision to travel for leisure, it is done for different reasons or motives (Beerli & Martín, 2004). In tourism research, many models of the decision process in the choice of tourist destination, also show that the individual's demographic and socio-economic status are internal inputs that influence their decision (Beerli & Martín, 2004) – and travel trip characteristics have also been used to predict vacation choices.

Travel decision-making models are of particular interest to this research due the consideration of travel and tourists. George (2008:176), Mathieson and Wall (1982:29) and Moutinho (2000:54) have described the process of travel decision-making. Figure 2 (below) outlines an integrated travel decision-making process of the above-mentioned authors.

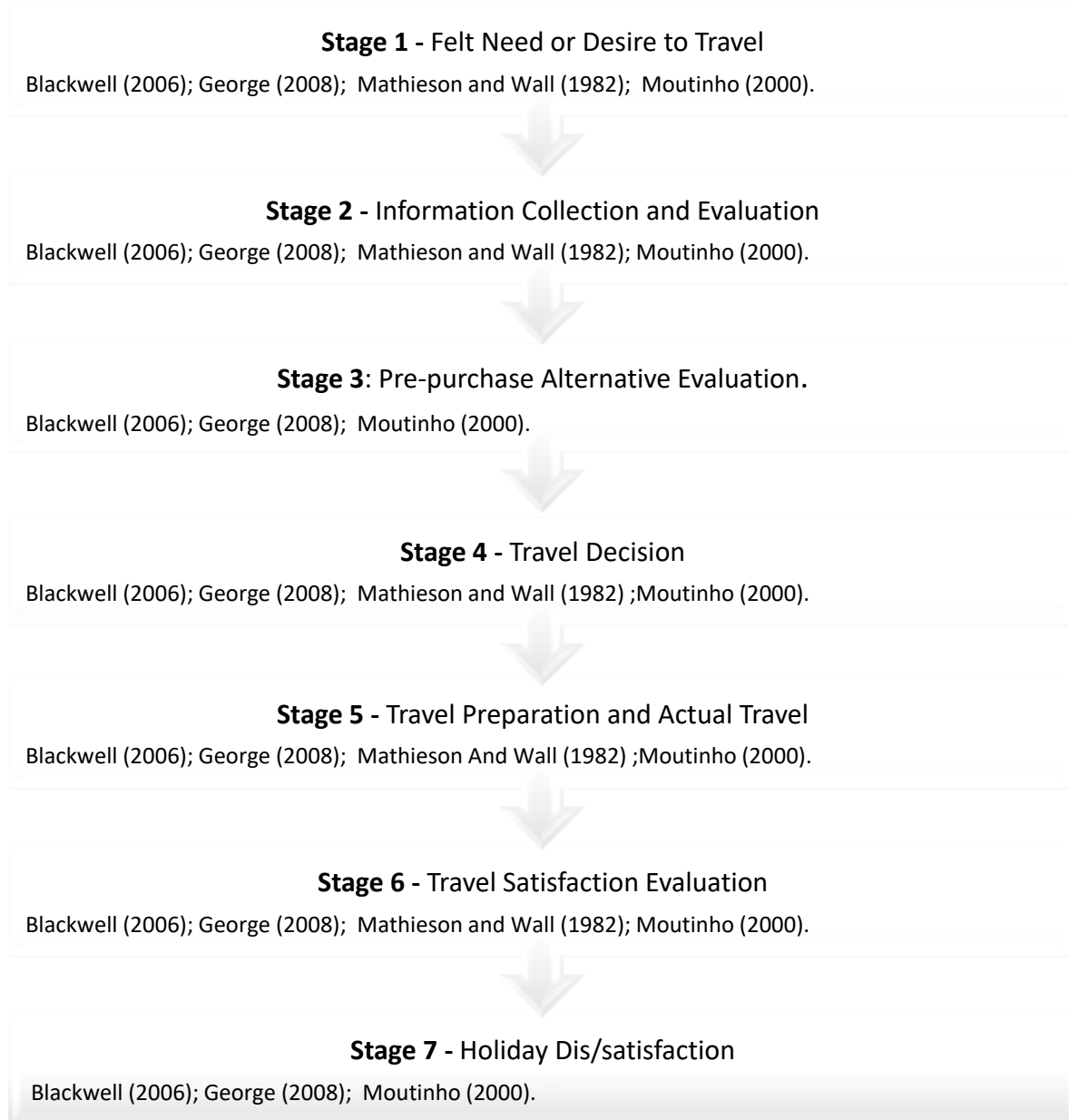


Figure 2: Travel Decision-Making Process

Sources: George (2008:176); Mathieson and Wall (1982:30); Moutinho (2000:54)

George (2008:178) further adds that the decision-making process is not always as straightforward as it appears, as the prospective tourist can withdraw at any stage prior to the actual purchase. It is also uncommon for some stages in the process to be skipped.

Relationship Between Tourist Perception, Destination Image and Tourist Decision-Making

Tourist destination images are important because they influence both the decision-making behaviour of potential tourists (Crompton, 1979) and the levels of satisfaction regarding the tourist experience (Chon, 1992). Mayo (1975) states that the image of a destination area is a critical factor in a tourist's destination-choice process

The effect of destination image, tourist satisfaction, and loyalty has been a trendy research topic in tourism research. Murphy, Prichard and Smith (2000) have identified the positive relationship of environment, infrastructure, quality, value and intention to revisit – with tourist

experience and perceptions. Javier and Bigné (2001) have revealed that destination image had a direct relationship with perceived quality, satisfaction and intention to return, and also willingness to recommend to others.

Gengqing (2005) developed and tested the theoretical model for building destination loyalty by using destination image and satisfaction. George (2008:178) investigated the direct relationship among post-purchase decision-making, place attachment, intention to revisit, and novelty seeking. Alcaniz (2005) revealed that the resident decision-making had a direct influence on destination image, tourist experience and future behaviour intentions. Yoon and Uysal (2005) tested the casual relationship among the pull and push factors of motivation, tourist satisfaction, and destination loyalty.

Research on tourist decision-making has to begin with information search Moutinho (2000:52). One of the most influential factors in the purchase of a tourist product (destination) is information about tourist goods and services. Moreover, tourists differ in the information sources used, before making a decision Moutinho (2000:53). Destination image is certainly a determining factor of tourist decision-making. Woodside and Lysonski (1989) demonstrated that there is an evident relationship between positive perceptions of destinations and positive purchase decisions. Although these perceptions may not be based on fact or first-hand experience, it nevertheless exerts a vital influence on a potential tourist's decision to visit a destination. Similarly, negative images, even if unjustified, will deter potential tourists – and result in a decision not to purchase (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998:52).

Overall destination image impacts on the antecedents of tourist loyalty (Prayag, 2012). Figure 3 (below) explains the impacts that positive tourist perception and destination image can have on a destination.

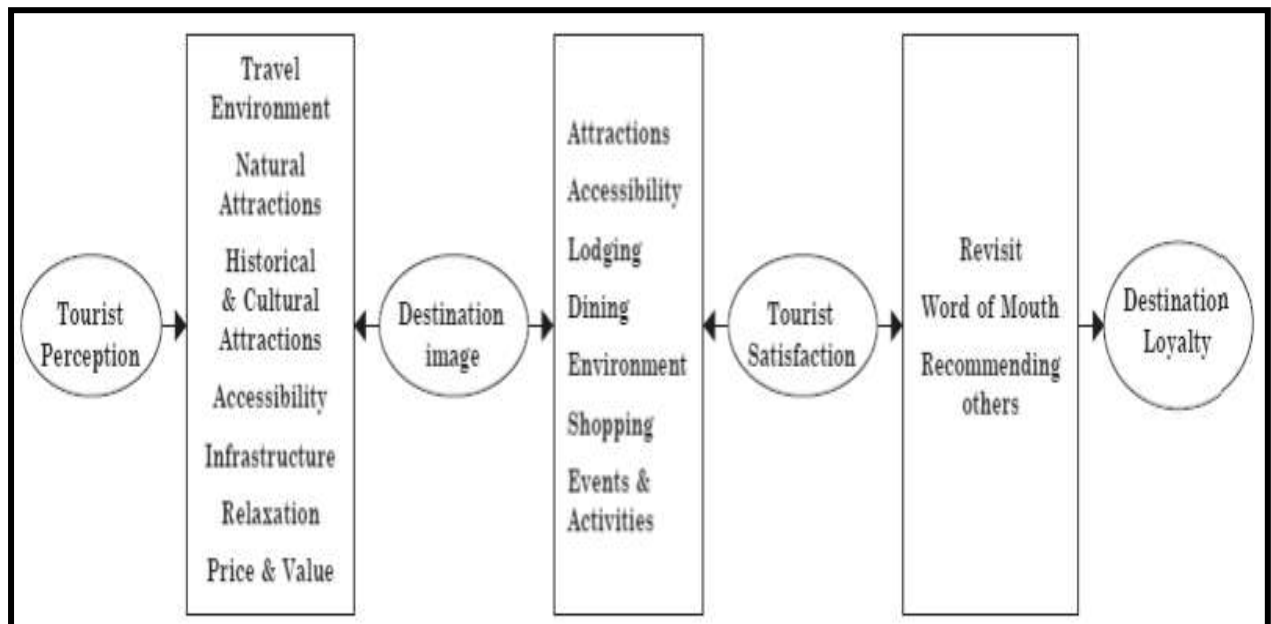


Figure 3: Impacts of Tourist Perception, Destination Image and Tourist Satisfaction on Destination Loyalty
 Source: Prayag 2012

Figure 3 (above) clearly indicates the impact that a positive tourist perception has for a tourist resort. A good perception leads to a positive destination image, leads tourist satisfaction – which in turn results in destination loyalty. Destination loyalty is when a tourist has a deeply-held commitment to re-buy or re-patronise a preferred product/service (destination) consistently in the future – thereby causing repetitive same-brand or same brand-set purchasing, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour (Oliver, 1997:434).



Over the last decade, one of the most thought-provoking, newly developed indicators has been the Net Promoter Score (NPS) metric proposed by Reichheld (2003). The NPS puts forward the idea that visitor loyalty is a tractable and measurable dimension that reflects the potential of a brand to retain and attract a visitor based on the likelihood of existing visitors recommending the consumption of the brand's product and service offerings to others (Keiningham, Aksoy, Coolil & Andreassen, 2008). This is conducted based on a single question: "How likely is it that you would recommend our destination to a friend or colleague?"

Kristensen and Eskildsen (2014), on the other hand, argue that NPS over-simplifies visitor decisions based on utilising scale measurement points that "do not compensate for undesirable response styles". The root of their argument is that visitor decisions, which together architect the tourist experience and ultimately inform brand-loyalty levels, cannot be evaluated in isolation of a context of other variables that affect the emotive and cognitive processes involved in a purchase decision – as outlined by Klaus and Maklan (2013). Attributes like comfort facilities, safety and infrastructure, cultural attractions and shopping, tourist attractions and ambience, and variety and accessibility, affect tourist loyalty (Prayag, 2012). Tourist loyalty depends on the satisfaction of tourists (i.e. attractions, accommodation, accessibility, amenities and activities) and met expectations (Chi & Qu *et al.*, 2008).

Background to the problem

The Northern Cape is a unique part of South Africa, and, according to the White Paper on Development and Promotion of Tourism in this area (NCPG, 2005), given the range and depth of assets on offer – it has substantial tourism potential. The Tourism Master Plan for the Northern Cape Province identifies the province, and, in particular, Kimberley, as being a region which could be developed into a successful and competitive tourism destination in South Africa and in the international market space (NCDT, 2004). The Sol Plaatje Municipality in Kimberley, Northern Cape, manages four resorts termed "Kimberley Resorts" (Harmse, 2012), and, according to Prideaux (2009:1), resorts are the key building blocks in the development of the global (and domestic) tourism system. Despite its tourism potential, the Northern Cape is the least visited province in South Africa (STATSSA, 2012).

According to the Sol Plaatje municipal manager, Ackharwary (2012), Kimberley Resorts have reported consecutive years of low visitation level and this has resulted in the resorts not making a profit or being able to reap the benefits that tourism offers. The objectives of this research were to determine whether the image of the resorts affects the visitation levels to the resort. Another objective was to determine the profile of visitors to the resorts– as according to Harmse (2012), the resorts do not have a profile of visitors or in fact any kind of data.

Methodology

The population of the research included overnight visitors to Riverton and Langleg resorts. The convenience sampling method was used to select the sample at the respective resorts. Convenience sampling involves selecting haphazardly those cases which are easiest to obtain for the sample (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:69). Only visitors over the age of 18 years were included in the study, and respondents were briefed about the purpose of the research before-hand by trained field workers. The sample-selection process was continued until the required sample size of 400 was reached in December 2015. As no data of the visitor numbers are available, the population was estimated to be 8 000. Only visitors over the age of 18 years were included in this research, and respondents were briefed about the purpose of the research before-hand by trained field workers. The total number of questionnaires is 400, which is split into 200 at each resort.

Therefore, stratified sampling was used to divide the population into two strata. Israel (2013) suggests that 201 respondents (n) may be regarded as representative (7% sample error) of a population of 15 000 (N). The 400 (n) is therefore considered far greater than the number



required taking into consideration the population size of 8000 which is used for this research. The instrument used to gather quantitative data was a newly developed questionnaire.

The questionnaire was divided into two sections: socio-demographic information and visitor perception. The socio-demographic section contained questions to extract demographic and social information of respondents. It was important to create a profile of visitors to the resorts to provide useful data to resort management. The visitor perception section contained questions to determine visitors' opinions, beliefs, expectations, feelings and perception of the resort – based on the experience and stay at there. This was used to encourage a full meaningful answer about the tourist's knowledge and feelings about the resort, which would assist in achieving the objectives of the research. The questions were based on the literature review of this research.

Results

The questionnaire sourced data to help draw conclusions and make recommendations concerning the perception of visitors to selected Kimberley resorts. It also helped to develop a better understanding of how the image of the resorts affects their visitation levels.

Socio-demographic profile of respondents

Findings related to the socio-demographic profile (Table 1) indicate that most respondents (81.20%) were from Kimberley followed by Bloemfontein (5.26%). The demographic profile consists of females, with an average age of 40 years. The home language of most respondents is Setswana (39.75%) and Afrikaans (36%), while race is African descent (60.25%) and coloured (36.75%). Respondents' highest educational level is high school (60.75%) and most are full-time employed (60.75%).

Table 1. Tourist profile of Visitors to Selected Kimberley Resorts

Characteristic	Best Option	Majority %
City of residence	Kimberley	81.20
Gender	Female/Male	50/49.75
Language	Setswana	39.75
Race	African	60.25
Marital status	Single	54.75
Educational level	High school	60.75
Employment	Full-time	60.75
Age	40	Average
Number in travelling party	5	90.75
Fellow travellers	Friends/Family	79.44
Reason for travel	Holiday	70.03
Mode of transport	Own vehicle	53.25
Accommodation type	Self-catering chalet	89.20
Length of stay	2 nights	41

Source: Author's own compilation

Furthermore, it is notable that the most respondents (90.75%) travelled with five or more people and travel with friends and family (79.44 %).

The most popular market communication method was word-of-mouth (85.75%) and only 14.25% of respondents heard about the resort through the internet, radio, an advertisement or brochure. Respondents travelled to the resort for holiday purposes (70.03%) and the mode of transport used by most was their own transport (53.25%) followed by taxi (35.75%). The most popular form of accommodation was self-catering chalets (89.20%), while the average length of stay was relatively short: three nights or less (93%).

Experience of Staying at the Resort

Respondents were asked to sum up the experience of staying at the resort by giving it a score out of 10, from 1 (very poor) to 10 (very good). Figure 4 (below) depicts the results. Interestingly, two respondents gave resort scores of zero (less than asked for in the scale). These scores could be attributed to very, very unhappy respondents – purposefully choosing to give a score of zero to indicate their displeasure with the resort.

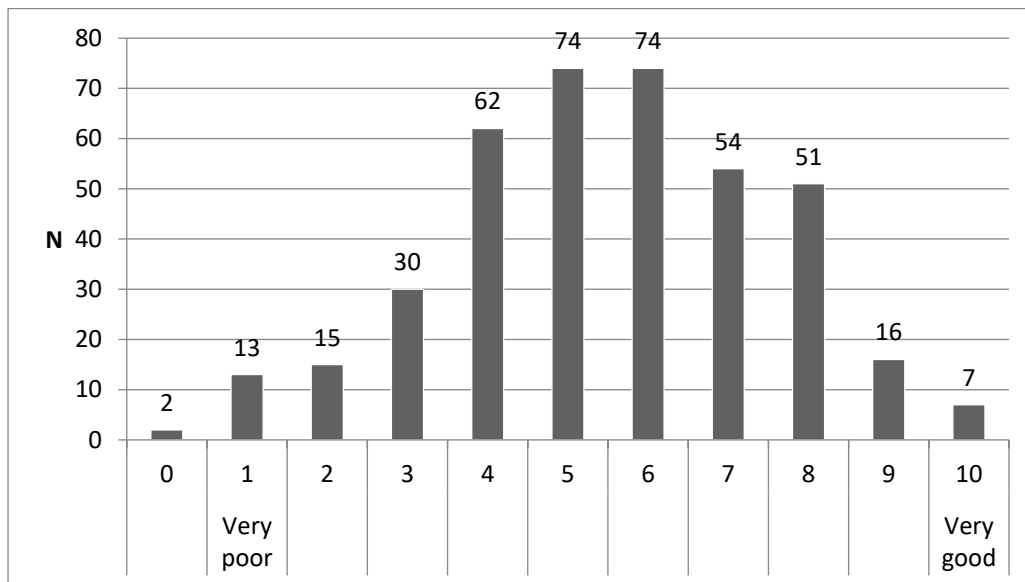


Figure 4: Experience of Staying at the Resort
 Source: Author's own compilation

Reason for Score Ratings

Respondents were asked to give a reason or make a comment related to the score given – and 78 respondents listed one or more reasons for their score. The researcher then categorised the reasons for score ratings as either positive or negative. Most respondents (94.9%) gave negative reasons and 5.1% gave positive responses. The responses are displayed in the various tables below. These responses are displayed, as received from respondents.

Positive Responses

The positive reasons received from respondents only accounted for 5.1% of responses. These responses are listed in table 2 (below):

Table 2. Positive Reason for Score Rating



Positive Comments from Respondents
“Excellent place to chill with friends”
“Happy with everything”
“The service we received from [staff member] was outstanding”
“Very good”

Source: Author’s own compilation

Negative Responses

The negative responses were then further categorised according to the general topic to which it was related (as some respondents noted more than one reason, the total exceeds the number of negative respondents = 74).

Table 3. Negative Response for Score Rating

General	Fauna	Cost	Service
“Need upgrading”	“Unhygienic goats all over the place”	“Baby paid adult fee”	“Control of booking, unfair customer service”
“Unless conditions change find no interest in visiting”	“Spiders in the chalets”	“Café is very expensive [and] items need to be sold at a reasonable price”	“Glasses all over the place, pool opening late”
“Very poor”	“Spider in the bungalows”	“Paid extra R200 to get the key and we already booked in October”	“Rubbish bags not removed and bottles are all over the place”
“We are not satisfied with this place”			“We clean our chalets ourselves and we are not going to get refunded”
			“Need lifeguards at the pool”
			“Security needs to patrol all the time and a life-guard needed by the pool”
			“Too much money to be paid for poor services”
			“Staff should be friendly”
			“Staff giving problems”

Source: Author’s own compilation



Table 3 (above) summarises the negative responses from respondents. These responses were given as the reason for an overall score rating of the resort(s). Four respondents noted general problems with the resort(s), while three respondents noted problems with the fauna: two noted problems with spiders, and one wrote “unhygienic goats all over place”. Three respondents noted issues with cost and nine respondents noted issues of general service (some of these were also included under the relevant facilities below).

First-time vs Repeat Visitors’ Score

Chi-square tests were done to determine the difference in perception of first-time visitors compared to repeat visitors. The results of the chi-square tests regarding the reasons for score rating are depicted in table 4 (below). Statistically significant results are in bold.

Table 4: First-time vs Repeat Visitors

Reason	Chi-square	d f	P
Scenery	1.2487	4	0.8700
Geography	8.5280	4	0.0740
Accessibility N12	3.885	4	0.4217
Accessibility local road	0.7851	4	0.9404
Cafe	12.3012	4	0.0152
Infrastructure water	4.5862	4	0.3324
Infrastructure electricity	3.1270	4	0.5368
Infrastructure roads	4.0402	4	0.4006
Infrastructure ablutions	5.3153	4	0.2565
Safety	4.9246	4	0.2951
Tennis	3.6087	4	0.4615
Swimming pools	1.0197	4	0.9068
Super tube	7.9111	4	0.0949
Fishing	5.8440	4	0.2111
Mini golf	8.2734	4	0.0821
Child playground	2.2919	4	0.6822
Staff service	6.9092	4	0.1408
Staff friendliness	3.8719	4	0.4236
Price accommodation	2.0176	4	0.7325
Price Super tube	2.4582	4	0.6521
Price mini golf	13.8452	4	0.0078
Price cafe	10.4838	4	0.0330
Accommodation quality	8.5136	4	0.0745
Accommodation cleanliness	10.2114	4	0.0370
Overall satisfaction	9.3984	4	0.0519
Score	10.0899	10	0.4326
Revisit	3.1193	1	0.077

Source: Author’s own compilation

Looking at overall satisfaction, it seems that the first-time visitors gave a significantly lower score than repeat visitors (means of 2.94 and 3.32 respectively, $t=-2.67$, $df=398$, $p=0.0079$). However, this does not mean that the repeat visitors came back because they were more satisfied (that would be a wrong causal inference). Looking at the score they gave, there is no statistically significant difference (means of 5.34 and 5.54 respectively).

Respondents’ Suggestions and Recommendations

Respondents were asked whether the resort would be recommended to others and 80.7% ($n=322$) indicated that it would be. Furthermore, 83.5% ($n=333$) indicated that the experience inspired them to visit the resort again. When asked whether a restaurant and bar should be

added to the resort, 91.5% (n=365) indicated a positive response. Further research is necessary to determine why, if dissatisfied, visitors would still return to the resorts and recommend the resorts to others.

Overall satisfaction of the resort (Source: Author's own compilation)

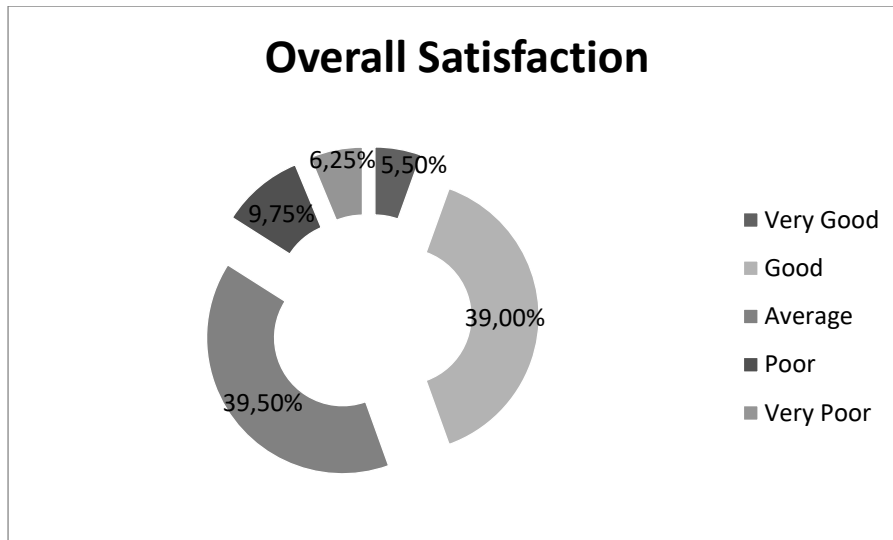


Figure 5. Overall satisfaction of respondents to selected Kimberly resorts
 Source: Author's own compilation

Overall satisfaction with the resort was rated as very good by 5.50% of respondents, good by 39%, average by 39.50% and poor or very poor by 9.75% and 6.25% respectively. In this section the researcher assesses whether the overall satisfaction of tourists when visiting the two resorts is influenced by gender, employment, marital status, and educational level. The Chi-Square independence test was used to determine whether an association exists between two variables.

Overall Satisfaction by Gender

The Chi-Square independence test results between overall satisfaction and gender are as follows:

The null and the alternate hypotheses are given as:

H_0 : There is no association between gender and overall satisfaction.

H_a : There is an association between gender and overall satisfaction.

The Chi-Square observed value is found to be: $\chi^2_{obs} = 0.3883$. Also, the critical value (where degrees of freedom = 4) is found to be: $\chi^2_{crit} = 9.488$ at the 5% level of significance. Since the observed value (0.3883) is less than the critical value (9.488), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, it is concluded that there is no association between gender and overall satisfaction.

Overall Satisfaction by Employment Status

The Chi-Square independence test results between overall satisfaction and employment status are as follows:

The null and alternate hypotheses are given as:



H_0 : There is no association between employment and overall satisfaction.

H_a : There is an association between employment and overall satisfaction.

Using the Chi-Square test, it is found that $\chi_{obs}^2 = 5.20$, and χ_{crit}^2 (df = 4) = 9.488 at the 5% level of significance. Since the observed value (5.20) is less than the critical value (9.488), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, it is concluded there is no association between employment and overall satisfaction.

Overall Satisfaction by Marital Status

The Chi-Square independence test results between overall satisfaction and marital status are as follows:

. The null and alternate hypotheses are given as:

H_0 : There is no association between marital status and overall satisfaction.

H_a : There is an association between marital status and overall satisfaction.

Using the Chi-Square test, it is found that $\chi_{obs}^2 = 6.165$, and χ_{crit}^2 (df = 4) = 9.488 at the 5% level of significance. Since the observed value (6.165) is less than the critical value (9.488), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, it is concluded that there is no association between marital status and overall satisfaction.

Overall Satisfaction by educational level

The Chi-Square independence test results between overall satisfaction and educational level are as follows:

The null and alternate hypotheses are given as:

H_0 : There is no association between level of education and overall satisfaction.

H_a : There is an association between level of education and overall satisfaction.

Using the Chi-Square test, it is found that $\chi_{obs}^2 = 5.31$, and χ_{crit}^2 (df = 4) = 9.488 at the 5% level of significance. Since the observed value (5.31) is less than the critical value (9.488), the null hypothesis is not rejected. Thus, it is concluded that there is no association between level of education and overall satisfaction.

Recommendations

The tourist profile as indicated by results is: female (50%) or male (49.75%), aged 40 years, residing in Kimberley, home language Setswana and of African race, highest educational level high school, employed full-time, travels in a party size of 5 people who are friends, visits the resort for holiday purposes, uses own transport, and the average duration of stay is 2 nights. The resorts were given a score of six on a scale of 1 to 10 by. This score indicates that selected Kimberley resorts are rated as being average by their visitors. The reason for the average rating (95%) which was mostly negative – is where respondents predominantly complained about the facilities at the various resorts. Two respondents gave the resorts a score of zero – indicating that those respondents were very unhappy with the resorts and perceived the resorts as being 0 out of 10. Chi-square test results indicate that first-time visitors gave a lower overall score than repeat visitors. It would be a wrong causal inference to assume that repeat visitors perceived the resorts as being more attractive than first-time visitors. It could, however, mean that repeat visitors are more loyal to the resorts than first-time visitors.



Most respondents were from Kimberley, suggesting that there is an opportunity in the market to attract visitors from immediate towns and other provinces in the country.

The resorts could venture into other age groups as well, such as midweek packages for senior citizens. Schools and upcoming professionals can be attracted by creating camps.

In order to increase the duration of stay, resort management could consider creating different promotional packages.

Holidaying was the main reason why respondents visited the resorts. This indicates a gap in the market for the resorts to attract business travellers, host conferences, and plan team building – in order to boost income during off-peak seasons.

About three quarters of respondents (71.75%) had visited the resorts more than three times. This indicates that the resorts have loyal visitors and a loyalty programme could be established to retain and attract more loyal visitors to the resorts.

It is recommended that part-time cleaning staff be hired during peak seasons, specifically to make sure that all the resort facilities (e.g. toilets, bathrooms, swimming pools, accommodation) are kept clean and fresh at all times.

The resort should have at least one disabled-friendly bathroom in public areas, as well as one chalet which is wheelchair-friendly for visitors to use.

The electricity and water supply should be upgraded so that there are minimum power outages and plumbing problems in accommodation and public areas.

Safety was one of the apprehensions of respondents. It is advised that life guards be recruited at all swimming pools during peak seasons – to ensure that visitors feel more safe

In general, the resorts need to upgrade their facilities – with a focus on the braai stands and lawns in the public areas, public bathrooms, the super-tube at Riverton, and the television sets inside the various chalets.

Concerning new facilities at the resort, resort management should consider opening a café and kiosks during peak seasons at Langleg resort – in order to spare Langleg visitors the inconvenience of travelling to Riverton to use the café. It is also strongly recommended that an ATM be installed at one of the resorts. This will add to the amenities at the resort, boost spending, and make it more convenient for visitors – thus affecting their perception of the resorts. The building of a restaurant at the resorts will significantly improve the quality of the tourist experience, and enhance first impressions of the selected Kimberley resorts.

Conclusion

In light of the above ratings, it is interesting and unexpected to conclude that most respondents (80.7%) would recommend the resorts to others and even more thought-provoking that 83.5% of respondents would revisit the resorts. The reason for this could be the lack of similar destinations in the area – thereby compelling visitors to holiday at the selected Kimberley resorts. Another possible reason could be the resorts' close proximity to Kimberley – explaining why most visitors are from Kimberley and the reasonably short duration of stay at the resorts.

Destination loyalty could also be one of the possible reasons why visitors return to the resorts. The NPS suggests that destination loyalty and the ability of a destination to attract visitors, is based on one question in a survey to visitors. The question asked whether respondents would recommend the product/service to others and the selected Kimberley resorts received a positive response (81%) from respondents – suggesting that visitors to the resorts are loyal to them, despite dissatisfaction with the resorts.



A study is needed to determine why visitors to selected Kimberley resorts still return to them and recommend the resorts to others – despite being dissatisfied and unhappy with the resorts.

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