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Residents' awareness and support of tourism In Mahikeng, South Africa

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Abstract

Tourism is recognised as a means of boosting the national and regional economy and increasingly destinations, and specifically cities, are turning to tourism as an important element in their economic portfolio. The Provincial Government of the North West province in South Africa considers tourism as an important sector that can contribute towards economic growth, and for achieving broader social goals. The main purpose of this study was to establishing residents' awareness and their propensity to support tourism in Mahikeng. The reason for this is that a resident of a particular region or city forms a key factor contributing towards the development of a lucrative and prosperous tourism industry. This has enabled the researcher to gather insights and reasonable findings with regard to the level of residents' awareness and their likeliness to support tourism in Mahikeng. Consumer information, such as residents' awareness and support for tourism, is indispensable for strategic management purposes and contributes towards sustainable tourism development in Mahikeng. The development of sustainable tourism would be difficult without the support and participation of local residents. Thus, the support of residents is a critical factor for ongoing development and sustainability.

Keywords: Strategic management, Domestic tourism, Residents, Provincial government, Destination Marketing Organisation

Introduction

Tourism as an amalgamation of activities, services and industries provides a memorable experience by combining transportation, accommodation, attractions, retailing, and destination marketing. These activities require goods and services which in exchange do and can provide economic benefits for not only businesses involved therein but also for destinations such as South Africa, the North West, and Mahikeng in particular.

Tourism as an economic sector directly and indirectly contributes to the performance of almost all industries and to the development and prosperity of destinations. Visitors' expenditure flows through a wide range of businesses providing services to visitors and this stimulates the economy. Tourism attracts investment and this leads to the provision of infrastructure, services and facilities that cater to both visitors and also residents. Tourism is greatly reliant on public utilities and infrastructural support, and tourism planning and development would not be possible without for example airports, hotels, shopping malls, nature reserves and national parks, roads, electricity, and also water and sewerage.

Tourism is recognized as a means of boosting the national and regional economy and increasingly destinations, and specifically cities, are turning to tourism as an important element in their economic portfolio. The Provincial Government of the North West considers tourism as an important sector that can contribute towards the economic growth and for achieving broader social goals. However, some destinations appear to be more successful with tourism and should be regarded as benchmarks of best practices (Zhou, 2005:2). 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 valuable contribution towards local development. The internal attributes of a destination are a necessary but not sufficient condition for tourism development. What a local destination has to offer must be known to local residents in order for them to support local tourism facilities and attractions. The tourism agency in the North West of South Africa is the North West Parks and Tourism Board (NWP&TB), which is making an enduring commitment to improve and market the North West, and in particular Mahikeng (Garin-Munoz, 2009:6).

Tourism academia and practitioners suggest that effective tourism planning requires residents' awareness of the components of tourism, involvement to mitigate the negative impacts, and to clarify the benefits associated with tourism. In return for mitigating impacts and clarifying benefits, tourism planners can earn residents' support for tourism initiatives and create a favourable attitude (Wang & Pfister, 2008:84).

A destination has to be known to its local residents to make certain that they support tourism attractions and facilities that will build a sustainable tourism environment. The focus of this article is on obtaining an understanding of residents' awareness of and their propensity to support tourism in Mahikeng and the specific objectives as such, are:

- To obtain the demographic description of the research population.
- To establish the tourism attraction visitation practices of residents in Mahikeng.
- To investigate residents' awareness and support of tourism in Mahikeng.
- To investigate the importance of tourism to the residents of Mahikeng.
- To obtain an impression of the preferences and needs of residents in terms of tourism attractions in Mahikeng.

This article presents the results of a study based on residents' level of awareness and support of tourism for strategic management purpose in Mahikeng and commenced with introducing the research topic and objectives. The article then continues with a presentation of a theoretical review of strategic management, provincial governance, destination marketing organisation, and domestic tourism in South Africa before commencing with an explanation of the research method followed. This is followed by a presentation of the research results and the article terminates with a discussion of the managerial implications and recommendations emanating from the findings.

Literature review

There is increasing competition in tourism between destinations worldwide, between established markets (such as the United States of America (USA)) and emerging markets (such as Brazil), between destinations on a domestic scale (such as Cape Town and Johannesburg) and between tourism related organisations within a destination (such as lodges and guest houses in the Mahikeng area). Dwyer *et al.* (2009:63) emphatically stated that the greater the knowledge

of trends underpinning tourism development the greater would be the capacity of destination managers and tourism stakeholders to formulate strategies to achieve competitive advantage.

However, when considering the competitive nature of tourism, no destination can succeed without taking action. Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), Provincial and Local Government, the private sector and all other role players must formulate policies and strategies which are aligned to develop tourism to its fullest potential. Now only is it possible to achieve the tourism-related long-term goals of a destination, as well as gaining a competitive advantage through adding value and this includes tourists.

As stated by Zamari- Farahani and Musa (2008:1234), the Destination Marketing Organisation in general is the most important authority in establishing tourism development policies. However, the types and the extent of its involvement vary from country to country, from province to province being influenced, among others, by prevailing political, economic, and constitutional systems. Government involvement in tourism is largely determined by the level of socioeconomic development and the attractiveness of the investment in getting financial return. Destination marketing should act as tools and facilitators to achieve a complex range of strategic objectives, which will ultimately need to satisfy the needs and wants of stakeholders. Hence, DMOs should not only be regarded as a tool for attracting more visitors to a region or cities, as it has been the case for most destinations. Instead, tourism marketing should operate as a mechanism to facilitate regional development objectives and to rationalise the provision of tourism in order to ensure that the strategic objectives of destinations are achieved, according to Buhalis (2000:4).

There are many ways in which tourism may influence an individual's Quality of Life (QoL). An improvement of QoL can be experienced through the development of tourism products that can also be enjoyed by residents, such as festivals, restaurants, natural and cultural attractions, and outdoor recreation opportunities. An improved QoL can also be realized through for example a higher personal standard of living, and also through the creation of employment opportunities and increased tax revenues (Andereck&Nyaupane, 2010:249). For a tourism-related economy to sustain itself, residents must be willing partners in the process. This is because of the frequency of interaction between residents and tourists – residents' willingness to serve as hosts is critical to the success of tourism. Therefore, residents should ideally be involved in the planning of tourism and their attitudes toward tourism and their perceptions of the importance of tourism and its impact on the community should be continually assessed. Ko and Stewart (2002:522) said at the turn of the century that local residents' involvement could lead to residents developing a positive attitude towards tourism and this would then lead to them supporting additional tourism development, accepting restrictions on tourism development, and supporting special tourism taxes (if needed), and this is still applicable today.

The tourism market today is significantly more competitive than ever before, and those responsible for the numerous destinations around the world are formulating strategies and action plans to establish a competitive advantage over rival destinations.

Strategic management

Strategic management is concerned with the overall effectiveness and choice of direction within a dynamic, complex and ambiguous environment. Strategic decisions have long-term implications and concern an entire organisation. Strategic management is not concerned with

strategic planning only, but has to ensure that strategy is also implemented, according to Louw and Venter (2008:20).

Tourism today is the product of radical change and the factors, product features and competencies that made a destination successful in the past do not necessarily guarantee success today. On the contrary, those factors might even lead to a destination's downfall in today's intense tourism environment. The new competitive landscape, characterised by significant and discontinuous change that emerged in the 1990s drastically altered the rules and engagement of a successful destination. The impact and spread of access to the World Wide Web (www) and the Internet, as well as continual change in the global economy, the ever-changing needs and wants of consumers, as well as government policy amendments are just some of the new dimensions of the competitive landscape that "altered the rules of strategic management in creating a successful destination" (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:1).

Strategic management is a short- and a long-term process, involving both plans and actions reflecting the immediate realities of the business environment whilst providing stimulus for innovation, adaptation, and change. The strategic management process consists of five steps and these steps are:

- Step 1:** *External Analysis* of opportunities and threats (or constraints) that exist in the organisation's external environment, including industry and forces in the external environment.
- Step 2:** *Internal Analysis* of the organisation's strengths and weaknesses, considering the context of managerial ethics and corporate social responsibility.
- Step 3:** *Strategy Formulation* is building and sustaining competitive advantage by matching the organisation's strengths and weaknesses with the environment's opportunities and threats.
- Step 4:** *Strategy Implementation* involves implementing the strategies that have been developed.
- Step 5:** *Strategy Control* is measuring success and making corrections when the strategies are not producing desired outcomes.

The strategic management process is a rational approach organisations use to achieve strategic competitiveness and earn above-average returns. Organisations analyse their external environment for opportunities and threats and then decide how to utilise resources, capabilities, and core competencies in the organisation to pursue opportunities and overcome threats.

Provincial Governance

Tourism has been earmarked as a growth industry in South Africa, and in particular the North West. The Provincial Government of the North West refers to tourism as an ideal economic sector that can contribute positively to the Gross Domestic Product of the province, and tourism is ideally suited to adding value to the many natural, cultural and other resources of the province (SAinfo report, 2012). The development of tourism as an economic sector in the North West is attainable if there is collaboration between Provincial and Local Governance. The provincial legislature has between 30 and 80 members elected for a five-year term, based on the province's portion of the national voters' roll. The legislature is empowered to pass legislation within its functional areas, and the premier is elected by the legislature and, as with the President at National level, is limited to two five-year terms in office. The premier appoints the other members of the executive council (MECs), which functions as a cabinet at provincial level.

The ultimate success of a province depends on the collective efforts of all economic sectors – all the MECs, and each one has to strategically plan and manage the portfolio.

Tourism cannot develop on its own and cannot on its own develop the province. Tourism is regarded as a modern-day engine of growth and is one of the largest industries globally. One of the advantages of tourism as an export earner is that it is less volatile than the commodity sector. What especially makes tourism a valuable export product is that, if cared for properly, it is a sustainable and renewable resource. Tourism can be used as a vehicle to contribute towards the development and economy of the North West as a province, in particular the area in and around Mahikeng, the capital city of the province.

Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO)

Strategic management of tourism destinations is taking on ever-greater importance in today's global competitive environment. Destination organisations perceive how critical this level is in implementing effective competitive strategies. By the same token, the economic policies of many countries treat tourism destinations as 'business units' in the competitive environment through which a country positions itself in the tourism market.

DMOs tend to be part of the local, regional or national government and have political and legislative power, as well as the financial means to manage resources rationally and to ensure that all stakeholders benefit over the long-term. Destination management and marketing should act as tools and facilitators to achieve a complex range of strategic objectives, which will ultimately need to satisfy the needs and wants of stakeholders. Hence, DMOs should not only be regarded as a tool for attracting more visitors to a region or cities, as it has been the case for most destinations. Instead, tourism marketing should operate as a mechanism to facilitate regional development objectives and to rationalise the provision of tourism in order to ensure that the strategic objectives of destinations are achieved, according to Buhalis (2000:4).

A DMO's marketing initiatives depend upon the efforts of many other organisations and individuals within and outside the organisation. The DMO is usually the leader in tourism marketing and an innovator that other stakeholders follow. It is, according to Morrison (2013:9), a main source of tourism marketing ideas and programmes. The NWP&TB and other role players ought to formulate strategies that will enable the North West and the cities/towns/villages within the province to attract consumers and remain relevant in the minds of consumers in the ever changing tourism environment. Destinations are some of the most difficult entities to manage and market, due to the complexity of the relationships between local stakeholders. Managing and marketing destinations is also challenging because of the variety of stakeholders involved in the development and production of tourism products. Tourism Destination Management is a widely recognised essential component in the management of destinations. The NWP&TB as a DMO needs to adopt strategies that will develop and promote tourism in order to attract visitors to the numerous urban and rural attractions of the province.

Domestic tourism in South Africa

Tourism has become a global industry with increasing impact on the economy and tourism facilities of most countries on national, provincial and local level. . Many regions and countries in sub-Saharan Africa increasingly perceive tourism as a strategy by which to attract foreign direct investment and create employment. Similarly, tourism as a development tool has received

significant prominence in South African policy discourse recently, perhaps even more forcefully than in the past 15 years.

As noted by Rogerson and Lisa (2005:88) Domestic tourism has largely been an under-researched aspect of tourism economies in the developing world. This neglect of domestic tourism is partly a result of the emphasis accorded by national governments and policy makers to foreign exchange earnings derived from international tourism flows. In addition, the lack of research is linked also to the fact that domestic tourism is more difficult to track than international tourism as it occurs within the country of residence and thus does not involve the crossing of international borders at entry points into a country where visitors are counted. The weakness of knowledge concerning domestic tourism explains why “existing policies in developing countries tend to concentrate overwhelmingly on expanding international tourists arrivals” and to ignore the potential benefits from the emergence of domestic tourism.

Domestic tourism, as stated by Patuelli *et al.* (2007:2), was the first form of tourism and continues today to account by far for most of tourism as an activity in its totality. It is estimated that worldwide, out of the 4.8 billion tourist arrivals per year, 4 billion (83 per cent) corresponds to domestic tourism. UNWTO (2015) scholars estimate that, globally, domestic tourism represents:

- 73 per cent of total overnight stays;
- 74 per cent of arrivals and 69 per cent of overnight stays at hotels; and
- 89 per cent of arrivals and 75 per cent of overnight stays at other (non-hotel) establishment.

In Italy, domestic tourism represents the greatest share of the entire tourism sector and produces a remarkable macroeconomic impact in terms of value added and labour force. In 2007, domestic tourism provided, on a regional scale up, to 88 and 90 percent of arrivals and overnight stays, respectively, in Italy alone.

The focus of this study is on domestic tourism in South Africa. Encouraging domestic tourism has two positive effects for a country. On the one hand, it helps retaining the benefits within the country and on the other hand, it also contributes towards the growth of less developed regions by transferring consumption from richer to poorer regions. Nevertheless, not all countries and regions are equally able to retain or attract domestic tourists from other regions of a country (Eugenio-Martin & Campos-Soria, 2010:2) and strategic planning, development, and management then becomes a requirement for success.

Rogerson (2010:317) reports that the National Government of South Africa has declared tourism as one of the six pillars for economic growth, in line with the New Growth Path. The National Department of Tourism is committed to create 225 million jobs and increase tourism’s economic contribution to the GDP by 499 billion by the year 2020, amongst other imperatives. The commitment provided for in the National Tourism Sector Strategy called for the development of a Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy for South Africa. This was in recognition that domestic tourism is an essential contributor to the growth of tourism.

Kruger & Douglas (2015:304) assert that South Africa represents one of the few examples of a developing country where national government has made domestic tourism an explicit priority. The National Department of Tourism envisages an increasing contribution of domestic tourism towards the GDP of South Africa, from 54.8% in 2009 to 60% by 2020, according to SAT

(2011). Strategies to achieve this include increasing domestic tourism expenditure, tourist volumes, and enhancing a travel culture among South Africans.

The emerging black domestic market for leisure tourism presents a distinct opportunity to achieve these objectives, given the significant growth potential in terms of size and spending power displayed by this market segment. Despite promotional efforts that started some 20 years ago, domestic trips have shown a decline and a call has been made to the industry to respond with product offerings that appeal to members across all market segments, as indicated by SAT (2011). Such initiatives will arguably fail without sufficient market knowledge, as is the case in most developing markets.

Since the political changes in South Africa, as mentioned by Rogerson and Lisa (2005:89), a progressive trend has been for national government policy initiatives in South Africa to incorporate the formerly excluded black communities as part of wider strategies for promoting domestic tourism. At the heart of current marketing for domestic tourism is the 'Sho't Left' campaign. This term derives from everyday taxi language and refers to a situation when a passenger wants to jump off the taxi immediately or just around the corner, i.e., 'Sho't Left drive'. The 'Sho't Left' campaign is the current flagship of new marketing initiatives that were launched by South African Tourism in conjunction with the National Department of Tourism and provincial tourism authorities to expand domestic tourism, and in particular to address the untapped potential of domestic tourism. Given the economic and development situation of the North West, the promotion of domestic tourism can bring substantial relief on more than one level through influence on a variety of industries.

Domestic tourism in the North West Province

Changes to South Africa's Immigration Regulations as of 26 May 2014 have been indicated as a contributor to the sudden and drastic drop in the numbers of tourists from especially the world's fastest-growing tourism markets, China and India. The new regulations with its six major changes, among other things, require every child to have an own passport and unabridged birth certificates for minors must be provided. However, these changes in legislation affecting international tourism should have no direct impact on domestic tourism. Tourism South Africa's statistics indicate that in the last quarter of 2014, there was a 14% decline in the number of local trips taken by South Africans, compared with the same period the previous year, up to 8.2 million (Sunday Times, 2015). It was further reported by Sunday Times (2015) that domestic tourism has been downplayed, and even ignored, in favour of potential international arrivals. One of the reasons for this is that the marketing of South Africa internationally is properly funded and organised by South African Tourism (SAT), whilst the marketing of domestic tourism is undertaken by the nine provincial authorities. In most cases, these authorities are not well funded, and hence there is a gap in marketing and exploring the domestic market.

Statistics South Africa (2014:10) explained the comparison of the average of the real economic growth rates from 2003 to 2013 by the provincial economies. The South African economy recorded an average growth rate of 3.7%. Western Cape and Gauteng were above the national average with rates of 4.2% each, as was KwaZulu-Natal with a rate of 4,0%. All other provincial economies recorded growth rates lower than the national average, and North West posted an average economic growth rate of 2,3% over the same period. However, the province offers a wide variety of tourism attractions, ranging from conservation, culture, geology, history, and also the world-renowned Sun City theme park. The economy of North West is dependent on mining,

which contributed 42% to the province's gross geographical product (GDP), followed by agriculture at 13 percent (Saayman *et al.*, 2001:444-445).

By the turn of the century, as recorded by Saayman *et al.* (2001:452), initiatives such as the successfully re-launching of the Pilanesberg and Mahikeng routes on the aviation map will assist to grow domestic tourism in the province because the North West is also ideally situated close to Gauteng with its high concentration of high-income earners, and to the most important gateway to South Africa, the OR Tambo International Airport. The excellent situation is that domestic tourists can now fly directly to Pilanesberg and Mahikeng from areas such as Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban. A well-established domestic tourism industry usually creates an environment and conditions that are favourable for the development of international tourism. Thus, the importance of developing domestic tourism as precursor to entice international tourism. This is critical because the local community is a pivotal stakeholder in the sustainable tourism development process, it is locals who must be receptive of intruding outsiders, and domestic tourism is regarded as the backbone of a country's economy.

Residents as domestic tourists

Edward *et al.* (2008:1032) maintains that today's tourism consumes substantial amounts of space within urban destinations: tourist-historic urban cores, special museums of many kinds, theme parks and specialized precincts all contribute to this consumption. Significant numbers of tourists in urban areas are visiting for a primary purpose other than leisure, including business, conferences, shopping, and visiting friends and relatives. Local residents are also significant users of attractions (often the majority) and of infrastructure which has generally been developed for non-tourism purposes.

Tourists are sometimes seen by locals as free-riders on the facilities someone else is paying for, although domestic tourists as citizens and tax payers do contribute towards such facilities. The opposite situation is also possible, namely residents may reap the benefits from the presence of tourists and tourism services. These may also 'free-ride' upon tourism facilities, enjoy an urban atmosphere of animation or just gain psychic profits of pride and self-esteem. Ooi and Laing (2010:193) state that backpacking can also be promoted amongst residents. Backpacker tourism is one of the subtypes of tourism and has the potential to make valuable contributions toward local economic development for communities and lead to reductions in seasonality, as this tourism niche allows for year-round flows of visitors. The backpacker tourism may include wilderness adventures, local travel, and travel to nearby regions such as Taung, the VredefortDome, and the Pilanesberg National Park.

Visser and Hoogendoorn (2011:10) assert that backpack tourism encourages local residents to visit nearby tourism facilities and learn more about their surroundings. This may be less costly for residents as they are able to use public transport, inexpensive lodging such as youth hostels and camping, and visiting remote areas of the region. Backpacking is perceived as being more than a holiday, but a means of education. Currently, South African tourism research suggests that backpacker accommodation is also provided in rural and remote regions, which allows great opportunities for the transformation of the tourism industry by enhancing the involvement of communities in domestic tourism, especially those who are price sensitive.

A destination such as Mahikeng that plans to use tourism as an alternative means of strengthening its economic development should develop sustainable tourism to meet the needs and demands of its residents. The development of sustainable tourism is difficult without the

support and participation of residents in its immediate community. Thus, the support of residents is a critical factor for ongoing community development (Lee, 2012:1). Factors such as attitudes, perceived effects, community attachment, and perceived benefits may affect residents' support for sustainable tourism development.

Tourism development may change residents' relationships with one another and towards their communities. It is generally felt that the perception and attitudes of residents toward the impacts of tourism are likely to be an important planning and policy consideration for successful development, marketing, and operation of existing and future tourism programs, as explained by Ko and Stewart (2002:521). Residents in many areas are encountering tourism's impacts and benefits for the first time. To gain support for tourism projects and initiatives, planners should understand how the public perceives the tourism industry, as recommended by Harrill (2004:1).

The participation of local people is important in sustainable tourism planning because tourism, if strategically planned and managed, could have a positive impact on residents' quality of life.

Tourists as excursionists

Excursionists is a distinct group of tourists tourism authorities can identify as a key market that can increase domestic tourism in many regions of South Africa. An excursionist, also known as a day-tripper, is generally a domestic tourist and is the core market for most visitor attractions, resorts, and also for some rural areas. This, however, does not exclude international tourists as many of these are also excursionists. In general, an excursionist does not wish to travel too far, given that they only have one day or less available for leisure activities. This often results in the day-trip market for tourism attractions dependent on those who live within one and a half hours' driving time. Although, in larger countries such as the USA, excursionists may be willing to travel further than this for a day trip. While the duration of a day-trip is generally regarded as the entire day, it can also be for a few hours. Some day-trips require preplanning and booking but the majority do not. Day-tripping can also be a spontaneous decision. Day-trippers have a day spare and could decide in the morning what to do and where to go to. Their decision may well be influenced by the weather. If it is sunny, a theme park trip might be selected, while rainy weather could well result in the selection of an indoor attraction such as a museum (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2007:133).

An excursionist is described by Morrison (2013:122) as a tourist who does not stay overnight in/at a destination. This can be especially important to places that receive a large proportion of day-trippers, for example the area surrounding Hartbeespoort Dam in the North West, where day-trippers visit the Harties Aerial Cableway for leisure purposes. Excursionists can serve as a catalyst in combating one of the disadvantages tourism is facing, that of seasonality. The cultivation of the excursion market is an ideal tool for supporting local tourism facilities which will ultimately inject revenue into regional and local economies.

Excursions and additional options can be used effectively to increase the attractiveness of a destination and its tourism facilities to non-residents with the aim of enticing tourists in the first place and then to induce them to stay longer and spend more. Excursions can also be the main appeal of a vacation where accommodation itself (the lodge or the hotel) plays a secondary role, the key examples of this being the great variety of niche and special interest tours being sold, many of which often take place along specific routes. New routes can lead to the development of local enterprises, increasing the demand for goods and services of the poor. This could also provide employment opportunities, which can increase both individual income as well as the

collective income of the whole community. This in turn can also lead to capacity building and the development of local infrastructure (Business Implementation of Pro Poor Tourism).

Thus, encouraging local residents to become excursionists and venture into the peripheries of a destination can stimulate the economy in those areas and provide income and employment. For the goal of encouraging and promoting local residents to be excursionists, tourism authorities and role players need to understand local residents' behaviour when coming to visit the different tourism facilities in and around Mahikeng.

Consumer behaviour

The subject of consumer behaviour is key to the underpinning of all marketing activities which are carried out to develop, promote and sell tourism products. To optimise the effectiveness and efficiency of marketing activities, it must be understood how consumers make their decisions to purchase and/or use tourism products. The DMO and other role players ought to have an understanding of the level of awareness amongst residents concerning the tourism facilities, and also marketing knowledge on the specific needs, wants and preferences of residents for supporting tourism.

Consumer behaviour, according to Swarbrooke and Horner (2007:3), is a fascinating but difficult subject to research. This statement is particularly relevant to tourism where the decision to purchase is of emotional significance. Purchasing a holiday will probably provide the consumer with the major highlight of the year – a chance to escape from work and routine to revitalise body and soul after an arduous year of work. Consumers are influenced in their decision-making process by many internal and external motivators and determinants when choosing products. The DMO and other role players should seek to understand what influences the decision-making process of residents in Mahikeng when choosing tourism products and then provide the most appropriate stimuli.

Martinez (2012:13) specifically warned that many tourism organisations have an imperfect picture of their consumers. Many organisations consider that they are sufficiently close to their visitors and therefore do not need to commit resources to more formal consumer studies. Others are constrained by limited marketing budgets and by the fact that researching the consumer motivation and buying process can be a time-consuming and difficult procedure. This, however, could spell danger for the strategic development and management of destinations.

Methodology

The most suitable research design for researching residents' awareness of and their propensity to support tourism in Mahikeng was the descriptive research design. According to Tustin *et al.* (2005) and Babbie (2007:89), descriptive research involves quantitative surveys with a questionnaire, and this type of research design enables the accurate description of the facts and characteristics of a research population. A number of respondents (residents) were involved. The questionnaire designed involved both close-ended and open-ended questions, with a measuring four point Likert scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'. A four point Likert scale was used to prevent respondents from just reflecting the median (a neutral middle category) and thus 'forcing' respondents to select a certain tendency.

The study was conducted in Mahikeng, the capital city of the North West. The research population is thus the total number of residents in Mahikeng, of which 75% of the area is rural.

The sample size (n) decided upon was 350 residents of Mahikeng who reside within the municipal areas. A total number of 365 questionnaires were distributed among residents of which 303 were completed and used. To be able to facilitate the grouping of data for comparison purposes, and sample members ideally ranged from all age and income groups. Residents were the study subjects and tourists from other regions, provinces, and also international tourist who were in Mahikeng during the course of this survey were excluded.

Research findings

Majority of respondents were male by (58%) and females (42%). The (47%) of respondents are married, while (45%) still single. This might instigate the significance of channelling relevant marketing communication messages to different gender segments in raising awareness about tourism in Mahikeng. With regard to educational background, 77% of the respondents have tertiary education training, while 20% have obtained a Grade 12 qualification. A greater percentage of respondents (69%) are economically active and earn income from an organisation by whom they are employed and 9% of the respondents are unemployed, and this suggest that that the superior percentage of respondents are in their economical active phase and in all probability earning an income that might enable these residents to be more inclined to support tourism in Mahikeng, if only they are aware of it. The majority of respondents (75%) have been residing in Mahikeng for 10 years and more, followed by 25% that have been residing in Mahikeng for less than 10 years.

Regarding the number of times residents visited the existing tourism attractions in Mahikeng during the previous 2 years, many of the respondents (30%) indicated that they had visited tourism attractions in Mahikeng at least once during the previous 2 years. This is followed by 26% whom visited three or more times. There was a high percentage of respondents who had visited tourist attractions only once but they did not necessarily revisit the same attractions. This might probably be a result of deteriorating infrastructure which is a direct result of neglect on the part of local authorities and role players on the tourism circuit, a lack of public amenities, or concerning levels of service rendered at the tourism attractions in Mahikeng.

The results obtained for the tourism attractions visited by the respondents during the previous 2 years were mostly for the Mmabatho Palms Resort as the most visited attraction during the previous 2 years and this resort provides gambling activities (casino), a health spa, and other activities. This is followed by protected areas of importance for wildlife, camping, fishing and other special interests.

The respondents were requested to state their reasons for not visiting the tourism attractions and a large percentage of respondents (40%) stated that the fact that they were not aware of tourism attractions was the reason they had never visited any tourism attractions in Mahikeng during the previous 2 years. Furthermore, there is the interesting observation that a significant percentage of respondents stated that the reason why they had never visited any local tourist attraction during the previous 2 years was that there were no family or children activities such as well-kept gardens, adventure courses, safe play areas, sporting facilities, restaurants, and even festivals and events focused on families and children.

Regarding the level of knowledge and awareness of the tourism facilities in Mahikeng, most of the respondents (43%) stated their level of knowledge and awareness of the tourism facilities in Mahikeng was not good and only 28% of the respondents agreed, as indicated in Table 1.

Furthermore respondents were asked to indicate whether residents' support for tourism was a vital element for successful tourism development and a significant group (74%) strongly agreed and only 5% disagreed. Respondents were asked to indicate whether residents' positive attitude and perception toward tourism would encourage future local tourism development and once again, almost 80% strongly agreed.

TABLE 1: Level of knowledge, awareness and support of tourism facilities in Mahikeng

| Please indicate your level of knowledge, awareness and support of tourism facilities in Mahikeng | Strongly agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly disagree | Mean | STD |
|---|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|------|------|
| My knowledge and awareness of tourism facilities in Mahikeng is good. | 14% | 28% | 43% | 15% | 2.6 | 0.9 |
| Residents play a vital role in developing a healthy and prosperous tourism industry. | 64% | 28% | 6% | 2% | 1.45 | 0.69 |
| Residents' support for tourism is vital element for successful tourism development. | 74% | 21% | 5% | 0% | 1.32 | 0.58 |
| Tourism is an important component in the economic development of Mahikeng (e.g. job creation and infrastructure development). | 80% | 18% | 1% | 1% | 1.23 | 0.51 |
| Residents' positive attitude and perception toward tourism will encourage future local tourism development. | 79% | 19% | 2% | 0% | 1.23 | 0.48 |
| There is need to educate the residents of Mahikeng about tourism facilities. | 81% | 16% | 2% | 1% | 1.24 | 0.56 |
| Awareness of tourism facilities will lead to more support by residents | 84% | 16% | 0% | 1% | 1.18 | 0.44 |
| There is adequate marketing or marketing strategy for tourism in Mahikeng. | 3% | 16% | 50% | 31% | 3.09 | 0.77 |
| Tourism information is easily accessible. | 3% | 16% | 49% | 33% | 3.11 | 0.76 |
| Sufficient information about tourism provided through social networks etc. to create awareness amongst residents. | 6% | 37% | 34% | 24% | 2.76 | 0.88 |
| There are various tourism activities in Mahikeng (safaris, casinos, picnic sites, clubbing, packaged tours). | 18% | 39% | 26% | 17% | 2.41 | 0.97 |
| Infrastructure, facilities, transport, entertainment centres, and level of service require major attention to enhance tourism satisfaction. | 83% | 14% | 2% | 1% | 1.21 | 0.52 |
| Mahikeng has a positive image as a tourism destination amongst residents. | 3% | 17% | 58% | 22% | 2.98 | 0.72 |
| The tourism products and services in Mahikeng provide value for money. | 20% | 54% | 23% | 3% | 2.09 | 0.74 |
| The development and support of tourism in Mahikeng needs support and involvement of the local residents. | 59% | 39% | 1% | 1% | 1.43 | 0.56 |
| The tourism industry is dependent on resident involvement (through the role as employees, local entrepreneurs, and on resident goodwill towards tourists). | 63% | 35% | 2% | 1% | 1.40 | 0.56 |
| Tourism is a tool to support the development of formal and informal sectors (agriculture and crafts). | 69% | 30% | 1% | 1% | 1.34 | 0.53 |
| Partnership and collaboration between all role players is critical in the development of sustainable tourism (public and private entities, tourism authorities, and local residents). | 70% | 29% | 1% | 1% | 1.33 | 0.53 |

80% of the respondents of the survey indicated that Mahikeng has a negative image as a tourism destination, as shown on the above table. This might be because of the poor state of the infrastructure, tourism facilities, and service in Mahikeng that could be blamed for this negative image amongst residents. Respondents were also asked to indicate if they considered tourism as a tool that could be used to support the development of formal and informal businesses, and an overwhelming 99.9% of the respondents responded positively (30.0%+69.9%). Tourism is an economic sector that can directly and indirectly contribute to the

performance of almost all formal and informal industries and to the well-being of Mahikeng as a destination.

Discussion

Residents are regarded as an important asset in tourism development as it is within their environment that these activities take place. When local residents are unaware of tourism facilities and activities in and around Mahikeng, then there is the likelihood that there will be a modest or even no support for tourism activities. One of the core elements of strategic tourism development and management is to encourage local residents' participation, as it is central to the sustainability of tourism as an economic sector.

The primary objective of this study was to obtain an understanding of residents' awareness of and their propensity to support tourism for strategic management purposes. The most crucial inferences made from this study are that a significant percentage of respondents from the survey stated that their level of knowledge and awareness of tourism facilities in Mahikeng was not good. It is important to note that the majority of respondents who stated that their level of knowledge and awareness of tourism facilities in Mahikeng was not good were between the ages of 21 and 60 years. This can be attributed mainly to the absence of a marketing and promotions budget for the tourism information office, as well as to the underdeveloped tourism industry, infrastructure, and networks in Mahikeng. This emphasises the importance of establishing a vibrant tourism and destination management and marketing organisation for Mahikeng..

A considerable percentage of respondents from the survey indicated that residents' support for tourism was of significant importance for the development of tourism in Mahikeng. The findings revealed that 80% of the respondents indicated that tourism is an important instrument that could be used to stimulate economic development by increasing employment opportunities and improving the standard of living for residents. It is important to note that 99% of the respondents is of the opinion that tourism is an important economic sector that can support the development of formal and informal businesses. For example, agriculture and tourism are interdependent on one another. Farmers supply hotels, restaurants and retail shops with processed and semi-processed food such as fresh vegetables and bread on a daily basis, whereupon the food items are consumed by tourists.

A further discovery from the study was the revelation that a high number of respondents who were married had never visited tourism attractions in Mahikeng during the previous 2 years and this was due mainly to attractions not catering in the needs of families with children.. To supplement this finding, 15% of the respondents stated that there are no family or children attractions catering for families, such as picnic areas and theme parks. Furthermore, the findings revealed that 89 of the respondents who are self-employed or employed had only once or not at all visited tourism attractions in Mahikeng during the previous 2 years. This might suggest that not enough marketing and awareness is created amongst the residents of Mahikeng. Tourism would be supported more by residents if they are aware of the tourism facilities in and around Mahikeng. The problem statement: 'tourism planners would be in a better position to plan the strategic development and management of tourism in Mahikeng should they be knowledgeable about residents' awareness of and their propensity to support tourism' formed the foundation for this study and following are recommendations addressing this problem.

Marketing should be enhanced to improve awareness and access to information. The existing tourism attractions also do not specifically meet the needs and requirements of particular segments (for example, married residents in Mahikeng), and will require the development of new and customised products (for example, theme parks). Understanding how Mahikeng's residents acquire information is imperative for future marketing management decisions, and it was shown by this study that their level of awareness is very low and a reason for concern.

The strategic management process serves as engine for future tourism development in Mahikeng. Strategic management is a process through which the DMO and other role players within the tourism industry can adapt, and this will involve analysing the internal strengths and weaknesses of Mahikeng as a tourism destination and scan for opportunities and threats in the external environment. The DMO then could formulate strategies to take advantage of strengths and environmental opportunities, and neutralise the weaknesses and the environmental threats. Residents of Mahikeng should be included in the tourism development strategy as they are a key factor in contributing towards the development of a lucrative and prosperous tourism industry. Tourism in the future should increasingly develop the domestic and local tourism market. It is hard to otherwise imagine balanced growth of international tourism in many destinations without the development of domestic tourism. The potential of domestic tourism should not be ignored as doing so would be to ignore the 1980 Manila Declaration on World Tourism where it was decided that "the development of tourism from abroad should be accompanied by a similar effort to expand domestic tourism." (The World Tourism Conference, 1980).

Conclusion

The deficiency in destination marketing, absence in governmental support for tourism, the unethical practices in the business sector, the low standards of service, the deficiency of infrastructure, and inadequate facilities create a negative image of Mahikeng as a tourism destination amongst residents, which is usually accompanied by a low level of support by residents. The findings of this study revealed that a greater percentage of respondents stated that Mahikeng have a negative image as a tourism destination. The goodwill and cooperation of local residents are essential for the success and sustainability of tourism development, as residents are the cornerstone whereby a prosperous and growing tourism industry is built and for the reason that they can recommend the tourism attractions to other tourists in South Africa or elsewhere in the world. The sustainable development of tourism in Mahikeng is vastly dependent on the development of a coherent strategy management and on understanding how Mahikeng's residents acquire information for future marketing management decisions.

There were a number of limitations to this study. Finding the most recent information from secondary data sources on the subject was a challenge because there are limited secondary data sources. A total sample of 303 was obtained and ideally a larger number should have been included in this study. However, due to lack of cooperation from many of the residents and an unwillingness to participate in the survey, as well as time and monetary constraints, a larger sample remains idealistic at this stage. This study investigated the level of awareness and propensity to support tourism in Mahikeng. There are however also more research prospects that could be considered:

- There should be continued research conducted on the level of awareness and support for tourism facilities by academia and professionals in practice alike for the development and sustainable management and marketing of tourism as tourism continuously change and evolve.
- Researching and re-researching the satisfaction levels and exceeding the experiences of tourists at existing tourism attractions such as Sun City, Hartbeespoort Dam, and specifically the tourism facilities in Mahikeng, such as Wondergat (a notorious diving site), the Manyeand Botsalano Game Reserves, the Modimolla and Montshioa Dams, and the almost forgotten Motlamoeng Cultural Village.

Residents of Mahikeng should be included in the tourism development strategy as they are a key factor in contributing towards the development of a lucrative and prosperous and sustainable tourism industry. The Provincial Government of the North West can invest its resources to the development of tourism as it is an important economic sector that can contribute towards the growth of the province, and for achieving broader and sustainable social goals in line with governmental initiatives.

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