

A conceptual framework towards conference tourism competitiveness

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DECLARATION

I, ***Lisa Charmaine Welthagen***, declare that the thesis titled “***A conceptual framework towards conference tourism competitiveness***” submitted for the degree Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Tourism Management, is my own work; complies with relevant policies, procedures, rules and regulations of the North West University; and has not been submitted before to any institution by myself or any other person in fulfilment (or partial fulfilment) of the requirements for the attainment of any qualification.

.....

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Date: November 2018

ABSTRACT

The conference industry is showing significant growth and has become an integral part of global tourism. The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) has ranked South Africa as one of the top 15 long-haul meetings destinations globally. South Africa aims to host approximately 53 international association conferences over the next four years, which will attract approximately 97000 association professionals and generate R1.4 billion in economic impact for the country. Yet the conference industry is a young, dynamic and growing industry which has untapped research potential/needs, specifically from a competitiveness and sustainability perspective. Notably, the South African government has recognised this need and identified the valuable contribution of conference tourism towards economic growth and sustainability. The National Tourism Sector Strategy (South African Tourism, 2016) recognises events as a strategic gateway to competitiveness. South Africa has successfully hosted a diverse portfolio of successful events and conferences. However, the concern remains that these events and conferences need to be sustainable in a competitive environment. There are many studies and models on the importance of branding and competitiveness of destinations and venues, but few of these include the aspects of conference tourism. Currently, there is no framework indicating the competitive factors, the attributes of the conference industry and how the framework should be utilised. It is the purpose of this study to develop a conceptual framework for conference tourism competitiveness, thus addressing a knowledge gap in the conference tourism domain.

The literature review provided a body of knowledge drawing from the fields of tourism, conferencing and competitiveness, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the research topic. An important contribution to this study was the proposed definition of conference competitiveness. Furthermore it was established that destination competitiveness differs from that of conference competitiveness and that conference tourism has a unique set of competitive attributes. The aim of this study was therefore to develop a conceptual framework for conference tourism competitiveness that could be a useful tool for government planners, strategists and policy makers and to encourage proactive participation with all relevant stakeholders. Furthermore, the framework can assist stakeholders in developing marketing strategies to sell South Africa as a conference destination and make conferencing in South Africa a more competitive and sustainable industry.

The data for the study was obtained through qualitative data (interviews) and quantitative data (questionnaire). Through semi-structured interviews with industry stakeholders, conference themes (attributes) that affect conference competitiveness were identified, which were then used to develop the questionnaire that was administered to international and domestic delegates attending conferences in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. The conferences were a mix of association,

academic and industry conferences. A total of 300 questionnaires were analysed using a reputable analysis process.

Section A provided the results of the qualitative findings of the industry stakeholders. The findings yielded that location, accessibility, price, food and technology were the five top ranked conference competitiveness attributes. Section B provided the results of the quantitative data supplied by the delegates. The main factors and the sub-factor attributes were reported using descriptive analysis. The data was then subjected to the AHP online calculator to determine the main factor priorities and the sub-factor priorities of the attributes. The delegates ranked general conference attributes first, conference venue facilities second, conference services third and destination elements fourth. Amongst the conference attributes, general conference attributes were ranked as the top priority and destination elements the last. In relation to destination elements, safety and security; value and cost; and attractions and activities were deemed top priorities, with accessibility and weather as the lowest priorities. Conference services yielded that value and cost, program and accommodation were top priorities, with size of conference and entertainment as the lowest priorities. Regarding conference venue facilities, service quality and facilities/services were rated as top priority, with advanced technology and venue design as the lowest priorities. General conference attributes saw environmental practices as the top priority, with political and economic stability and promotional business tourism as equal priorities. The results were subjected to a one sample *t*-test to determine the effect size of the variables and practical significance.

Keywords: conference tourism, competitiveness, sustainability, analytic hierarchy process (AHP), competitive advantage, business tourism.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my mother and my sister who were both diagnosed with lung cancer during the last stages of this study.

“Rise above the storm and you will find the sunshine.” (Mario Fernadez)

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is gratefully acknowledged for their financial assistance. Statements and suggestions made in this study are those of the author and should not be regarded as those of the NRF.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AHP	Analytic Hierarchy Process
AOE	Association of Event Organisers
CEPA	Council of Events Professionals Africa
CIBTM	China Incentive Business Travel and Meetings
CIC	Convention Industry Council
COP17	Climate Change and Global Sustainable Resources
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CVB	Convention Bureaux
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
EGF	Event Greening Forum
EIBTM	Exhibitions for the Incentive Business Travel and Meeting
ESSA	Event Supplier and Service Association
EU	European Union
EVVC	The European Association of Event Centres
EXSA	Exhibition and Event Association of Southern Africa
FRIDGE	Fund for Research into Industrial Development Growth and Equity
GCB	German Convention Bureau
GDP	Gross Domestic Profit
IAEE	International Association for Exhibition and Events
IAO	Fraunhofer Institute of Industrial Engineering
ICCA	International Congress and Convention Association
IFEA	International Festivals and Events Association
IMEX	Worldwide Exhibition for Incentive Travel, Meetings and Events
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
NCB	National Convention Bureau
NDP	National Development Plan
NDT	National Department of Tourism
PCO	Professional Conference Organiser
RFP	Request for Proposal
SAACI	Southern African Association for Conference Industry
SANCB	South African National Convention Bureau
SAT	South African Tourism
SPSS	Statistical Package of Social Science
TBCSA	Tourism Business Council of South Africa
TTCI	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index
TTCR	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report

UIA	Union of International Associations
UFI	University for Industry
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WEF	World Economic Forum
WTO	World Tourism Organisation
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Events are considered an important driving force in tourism and in recent years the conference and meetings industry, a sector of the events industry, has experienced global growth. Today this sector is one of the most lucrative and competitive market segments, making an enormous contribution to the economies of many countries (Mair, Binney, & Whitelaw, 2018:60; Rogers, 2013:12; Cibinskiene, 2012:1333; Mair & Jago, 2010:79). Rogers (2013:3) posits that the conference industry is a young, dynamic and growing industry with a global significance in the political, social and economic realm, affecting a range of environments (Page & Connell, 2006:4; Rogers, 2013:12). Getz (2008:403) points out that business events and conferences are subject to continual research to determine the contribution and range of individual factors of competitiveness. Competitiveness in this context is a fundamentally accepted and researched concept, which relates to the marketing and management fields of study with practical research and understanding of competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1994, 2005; Kozak, 2001; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; De Keyser & Vanhove, 1994; Hassan, 2000; Enright & Newton, 2004). In a conference context, business events have become more prevalent and it is important for conference managers to recognise, conceptualise and manage diverse factors to claim a competitive edge in the market place, both nationally and internationally.

According to Kruger and Heath (2013:575), owing to the dynamic nature of events and to globalisation, the ability of a conference to be sustainable and distinguish itself is no longer considered an advantage but a mere requisite. This is forcing the industry to apply a more integrated approach to competitiveness. What is therefore needed is the identification of the determinant attributes of conference competitiveness and the development of a framework to sustain the conference tourism industry (Evans, 2015:550).

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The conference industry is a growing industry and has become an integral part of global tourism. Hosting a meeting or conference in a particular city has emerged as a crucial strategic decision for stakeholders, since this will have a positive economic impact on the destination (Huo, 2014:78). The following section discusses the interrelatedness of conference tourism and competitiveness.

1.2.1 Conference tourism in South Africa

Over the past number of years, the conference industry has developed rapidly, with an increase in the number of conferences organised since 1997 (Rogers, 2013:28). Conferences, according to Fenich (2008:11) are events designed for discussion, fact finding, problem solving and the opportunity to deliberate and exchange ideas in a networking environment; thus conferences are essential for research and publication in various fields of study. According to Fenich (2008:11), Getz and Page (2014:251) and Rogers (2013:28), the benefits of conference tourism include greater profitability, future inward investment, year-round seasonality and professional development. However, they warn that the challenge is to sustain business tourism growth (Saayman & Saayman, 2008:81).

South Africa is considered a popular destination for business travellers due to its “world class” infrastructure, ideal climate and breath-taking scenery, which constitute the ideal location for international conferences and conventions. According to Statistics SA, South Africa received a total of 4 423 165 tourists between January and May 2018 (Stats SA, 2018). Regarding business tourism, South Africa boasts over 1000 world class conference and exhibition venues (SACB, 2013). Mr Derek Hanekom, Minister of Tourism of South Africa, stated at the official opening of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI) 2018 conference that the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) had submitted 37 bids for events between 2019 and 2024 which are envisaged to attract more than 25 800 business event delegates to South Africa with an economic impact of R818 million. Furthermore, 84 bids have been secured for the period 2018 to 2022, hosting approximately 93 000 delegates with an envisaged impact of R3 billion. It is noteworthy that 13 of these bids, according to Hanekom (2018), involve Stellenbosch, Pilanesberg, Kimberley and Mpumalanga, spreading business tourism evenly over the country, which is in line with the objectives of the South African Convention Bureau (SACB, 2013).

1.2.2 Conference tourism as part of a competitive strategy for South Africa

Conference tourism, “a young, fast growing industry, is of considerable importance to the economies of many destinations worldwide. Whilst this is a complex and diverse sector, many destinations have made substantial investments to provide the meeting and conference facilities needed for business events” (Mair & Jago, 2010:78). Crouch and Ritchie (1998:52) and Rogers (2013:2) contend that despite global expansion there is still untapped research, specifically from a competitiveness and sustainability perspective. Notably, the South African government has recognised this need and identified the valuable contribution of conference tourism towards economic growth and sustainability. The National Tourism Sector Strategy (South African Tourism, 2016) defines conference tourism as a key catalyst to ensure continued growth of the events sector and bring valuable economic benefits to the country. The strategy focuses on creating an environment conducive to sustainable growth and a renewed focus on marketing and brand management (South Africa, 2016). The strategic objectives include the establishment of a convention bureau (NCB) to facilitate business events (conferences), bid coordination and support and the development of a business tourism and events strategy, and also to investigate and implement a bidding fund that may be used to support national bids and strengthen the collaboration between professional conference organisers (PCOs) and the industry.

Furthermore, the national strategy recognises that events are a strategic key to competitiveness and that South Africa has successfully hosted a diverse portfolio of successful events and conferences. However, the concern remains that these events and conferences need to be sustainable in a competitive environment. A number of destination competitiveness models (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993; Hassan, 2000; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Heath, 2002) have been developed to include factors and indicators that measure destination competitiveness. However, no such model or framework has been developed to measure competitiveness in the conference industry, although there are mutual attributes (Tsai, Haiyan & Wong, 2009:527) and a need for such a framework.

1.2.3 Global competitiveness

According to Global Reports on the Meeting Industry (WTO:2014:4), the meetings industry is a key driver of sector development and generator of employment, investment and income which makes hosting meetings and conferences extremely competitive. The competitiveness pioneers, Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000:12); Porter (1985, 1999); and Ritchie and Crouch (2003) define competitiveness as a concept encompassing price disparities in search of a

favourable competitive position, aiming to increase profit and to create a sustainable position within the competitive environment. However, Crouch and Ritchie (1999:140) warn that defining competitiveness is also perceived as problematic in that it is multi-dimensional and it is difficult to analyse the measurement (Mazanec & Ring, 2011:728). Furthermore, in tourism literature, the concept of competitiveness has been applied to various disciplines integrating marketing plans, promotional growth or sustainability strategies (Mohammadi & Mohamed, 2010). Evans (2015:550) describes a competitive strategy as a favourable competitive positioning within a fragmented industry which aims at establishing a sustainable and profitable position against the forces determining industry competition. Furthermore, Ritchie and Crouch (1993) contend that competitive positioning is imperative when planning and developing sustainability strategies in order to provide for market longevity within the industry.

Global competitiveness is clearly a very broad and comprehensive term, with much of the research based on the findings of the pioneers, Porter (1990) and Ritchie and Crouch (1993). Porter's model "diamond of national competitiveness" (Porter, 1990) focuses on the functionality of the fundamental determinants of competitive advantage as a system. The model is based on six broad factors which have become a key tool for the analysis of competition. These include: factor conditions (human, capital, knowledge and physical resources); demand conditions (determined by customers' needs, scope and growth rate); related or supported industries (local supporting industries are competitive); and firm, strategy, rivalry and structure (local conditions affect firm strategy). According to Porter's five forces model, low rivalry makes an industry attractive. Porter (1990) summarises the findings into four strategic opinions, namely offering a superior or unique product/service; cost control; competing for good prices; and product/service development. Following Porter (1990), the most comprehensive research into tourism and destination competitiveness was conducted by Crouch and Ritchie (1994, 1995, 1999) with the development of the Crouch and Ritchie model in 1999. This model was further refined by Ritchie and Crouch in 2003 with a broader focus on the dimension of service quality. Notably, in recent literature, a competitiveness model was developed by Heath (2002) for South Africa, primarily focusing on an integrated approach, combining all the elements of competitiveness and connecting the various stakeholders and components. Within this destination competitiveness model, the events sector is mentioned as a key tourism offering (Heath, 2002:339), but the aspects contributing to conference competitiveness have not yet been defined or determined.

According to Dwyer and Kim (2003:369), perspectives from various disciplines indicate that competitiveness is a multi-dimensional facet that can be associated with three dimensions, namely comparative advantage or price competitiveness perspective (Porter, 1990;

Fagerberg, 1988; Bellak, 1993; Cruz, 1993); historical and socio-cultural perspective (Kennedy, 1987; Aaker, 1989) and strategy and management perspective (Parson, 1983; Porter, 1985, 1990, 1999; Day & Wensley, 1988). In this context, comparative advantage places emphasis on price and economic factors of competitiveness and the management perspectives focus on the industry and firm characteristics of competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:369). Ritchie and Crouch (2003) conclude that a competitive advantage can be achieved when attendees consider the overall appeal of an event (such as a conference) to be superior to that of another event.

Evidently, to date, little research has been conducted on competitiveness within the context of conferencing; Table 1.1 below summarises previous research conducted on competitiveness in the tourism and destination context.

Table 1.1: Previous tourism and destination competitiveness research studies

Author/ Researcher	Year	Title	Competitiveness topics	Key focus of competitiveness
Dwyer, Forsyth & Rao	2001	International price competitiveness of Australia's MICE	Price competitiveness relating to Australia	Destination
Du Plessis	2002 2015	Competitiveness of South Africa as a tourist destination What makes South African tourism competitive?	-Factors determining South Africa as a competitive destination -Identification of factors contributing to competitiveness -Internal and external influences of competitiveness	Destination
Hudson, Ritchie & Timur	2004	Measuring destination competitiveness: an empirical study of Canadian ski resorts.	-Measuring destination competitiveness in the context of a ski resort	Destination
Crouch	2007	Measuring destination competitiveness: an analysis of determinant attributes	-Measuring direct competitive positions of a country - Competitiveness research in hospitality and tourism	Market Hospitality/tourism
Lee & King	2010	International competitiveness	-Evaluation of hot springs tourism	Tourism

Author/ Researcher	Year	Title	Competitiveness topics	Key focus of competitiveness
		in tourism: an application of the analytic hierarchy process approach	-Proposing a model of competitiveness using the analytic hierarchy process	
Andrades-Caldito, Sánchez-Rivero,& Pulido-Fernández	2013	Differentiating competitiveness through tourism image assessment.	An examination of the four major competitiveness components proposed by the Calgary Model to determine the quality of destination images.	Tourism
Cvelbar, Dwyer, Koman, Mihalic	2016	Drivers of destination competitiveness in tourism: a global investigation.	-Productivity measurement and tourism contribution to GDP in examining destination competitiveness.	Tourism Destination
Zehrer, Smeral & Hallmann	2017	Destination competitiveness – a comparison of subjective and objective indicators for winter sports areas.	- Integration of subjective and objective indicators (supply and demand) of destination competitiveness.	Destination
Armenski, Dwyer & Pavlukovic	2018	Destination competitiveness: public and private sector tourism management in Serbia.	-Explores the dimensions of destination competitiveness - Analysing the contributions of government and industry stakeholders.	Destination
Novais, Ruhanen & Arcodia	2018	Destination competitiveness: a phenomenographic study.	- An overview of destination competitiveness with hierarchically related concepts. -Previously overlooked elements of destination competitiveness are discussed. -Employment of phenomenography.	Destination

Source: Author's compilation

It is from this literature that it was established that there are key attributes that pertain to the tourism and destination competitiveness environment, which might also exist in the conference tourism domain. However, there is a need for an in-depth research study to determine the attributes and develop a framework for conference tourism competitiveness, especially with the current focus on this sector in South Africa.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Various researchers have argued that the constant expansion in global tourism and increased competition require the development and implementation of strategic and actions in order to maintain a competitive edge and foster tourism growth (Du Plessis, 2015:1). Tsai *et al.* (2009:523) contend that competitiveness is related to growth in productivity and encompasses quality differences, price relativity, production and distribution costings and the ability to design, produce and promote products. From a tourism perspective, Dwyer *et al.* (2000:11) define competitiveness as “a general concept that encompasses price differentials coupled with exchange rate movements, productivity levels of various components of the tourist industry and qualitative factors affecting the attractiveness or otherwise of a destination”. From an events and conference perspective, this would relate to increasing revenue through conferences and events, attracting attendees and offering them a memorable and satisfactory experience at the conference, as well as enhancing the wellbeing of the host community (Du Plessis, 2015:3). There is currently no definition for conference competitiveness; however, it could be considered as “the ability of a conference to deliver quality and innovative products and services to delegates whilst supporting business tourism in a sustainable way”.

According to South African Tourism (2014), there is a strong correlation between the national economy of countries and conference tourism. The South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) understands this correlation and therefore “seeks to increase the size of South Africa's business events industry which contributes to employment, skills development, innovation, building the knowledge economy and gross domestic product”. South African Tourism acknowledges that growth of the business segment is slow and that due to the changes in the business events environment competitors such as China, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan are now entering the market; this constitutes a threat to South African business tourism (South Africa, 2016). To counter-act this, the South African Tourism Strategic Plan (2015 – 2020) aims to position and profile South Africa as a business events destination and to attract international delegates from the MICE business area (SAT, 2015). Yet stakeholders highlight a relevant and critical issue, namely the lack of a coordinated effort

at national level to attract international events (leisure and business); instead, provinces compete to secure the events business, which is ultimately counter-productive. South Africa only acquired 118 business events in 2015 - a challenge needing to be addressed (SAT, 2015).

In terms of competitiveness, Crouch (2007:27) argues that the multidimensional factors which influence the tourism industry should be carefully balanced in order to remain competitive. There are many studies and models on the importance of branding and competitiveness at destinations and venues; however, not all of these studies include the aspects or attributes of conference tourism. Currently, no framework indicating the competitive factors and/or attributes of the conference industry exists. A conference tourism competitiveness framework will add great value to the conference industry, assisting the industry to be competitive and reach the goals and objectives of the South African Tourism business events strategy. According to South African Tourism 2015 (SAT, 2015), the conference industry in South Africa is growing, hence its drive to increase the marketing of South Africa as a “meetings destination”, boost the number of business travellers and provide support for bids to increase the number of business events from 118 in 2013/14 to 134 by 2020.

In summary, the slow growth of business tourism in South Africa, the scarcity of literature related to conference tourism competitiveness and the lack of a framework or model necessitate this research to assist the conference industry to remain globally competitive in an ever-changing environment.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following section identifies this study’s primary and secondary research objectives.

1.4.1 Primary research objectives

The primary objective of this study is to develop a framework for competitiveness within the conference tourism industry.

1.4.2 Secondary research objectives

The secondary objectives of this study are:

- ❖ To explore, through literature analysis the concept and typology of business and conference tourism.
- ❖ To conduct an in-depth literature analysis of the concept and approaches of global competitiveness in the conference industry and to conduct and critique current frameworks used for destination competitiveness to determine the links to business and conference tourism.
- ❖ To apply selected statistical methods to obtain the optimal framework for competitiveness in the conference industry.
- ❖ To reach conclusions, set out managerial implications and make recommendations on the implementation of the proposed framework.

1.5 METHOD OF RESEARCH

Research is a “studious inquiry or examination, especially critical and exhaustive investigation or experimentation having for its aim the discovery of new facts and their correct interpretation, the revision of accepted conclusions, theories or laws in the light of newly discovered facts, or the practical applications of such new or revised conclusions, theories or laws” (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:45). Scientific research, on the other hand, is defined as systematic, controlled, critical and empirical investigations of natural phenomena which are guided by the theory or hypotheses of the presumed connection with a phenomenon (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:8).

To be able to fulfil the objectives of this study and to find a potential solution to the research problem, this study’s core research function or purpose was applied research. A mixed method approach (quantitative and qualitative) was used. Furthermore, the study explored both demand and supply side perspectives.

1.5.1 Literature study

The literature study includes monographs, journal articles, conference papers, theses and dissertations, tourism strategies, World Tourism Organisation (WTO) research and other tourism and business-related literature, as well as sources dealing with events, conferences and competitiveness. Information searches were conducted mainly on library catalogues and indexes, as well as on the Internet. The databases used included, amongst others, Science Direct, Emerald, Sage and Research Gate. Various combinations of the following keywords were used during the information search: business tourism, conference tourism,

competitiveness, analytic hierarchy process (AHP), frameworks, globalisation and competitive strategy.

1.5.2 Research design

Research design, according to Rahi (2017:2) is a strategy of how to conduct the research, focusing on the final product with the formulation resulting in the identification of a research problem. Jennings (2010:17), on the other hand, posits that there are seven types of research designs, namely descriptive, exploratory, causal, explanatory, comparative, correlation, evaluative and predictive. This study used exploratory and explanatory research to gain knowledge on conference competitiveness through a literature study, as well as empirical research. Exploratory research is a methodological approach that is focused on discovery and generating a theory (Henson & Roberts, 2006:394; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:522). Exploratory research was applied during the qualitative phase of the study to explore the absence of conference competitiveness attributes. Explanatory research, on the other hand, is typically quantitative in nature, is tested by prior hypothesis and is used to explain behaviour in a market and measure relationships between the variables, rather than simply describe the phenomena studied (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:523; Creswell, 2009:72). Explanatory research was applied at the quantitative phase of the study.

1.5.3 Research method

In order to meet the information needs of a study, an appropriate methodology or strategy has to be implemented (Lapan, Quartaroli & Riemer, 2012:71). A combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (mixed methodology) was selected for this particular study. Rahi (2017:3) states that, in practice, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are frequently used within a single study to make provision for a clear understanding of the research topic, and to make provision for collecting, analysing and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data which allows for integration of the findings to draw inferences. Based on the approach of the qualitative and quantitative analyses, the exploratory sequential design was employed.

1.5.3.1 *Exploratory sequential design*

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:12) and Berman (2017:6), in an exploratory design qualitative data is collected and analysed for a specific purpose. Themes are generated from the qualitative data to develop the quantitative instrument, which assists in answering the research problem. This is done when very little information exists in a specific

context. Furthermore, the integration process of the exploratory sequential design is employed using the “building” method: the qualitative data is used to “build” the quantitative data, as in the case of this study. The term “sequential”, according to Cameron (2009:144), refers to one type of data that provides a basis for collection of another type of data. In summary, in this study the qualitative data (interviews) was collected and analysed and the findings thereof were used for the development of the instrument (questionnaire), thus providing quantitative information for the study. The employment of the exploratory sequential mixed methods research design as indicated in Figure 4.4.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods, as discussed below, would make it possible to gather the required data to address the research problem and develop the conference competitiveness framework (Flick, 2014:6).

1.5.4 Qualitative approach

According to Babbie (2013:328) and Flick (2014:5), a qualitative approach is “grounded in the interpretive social sciences paradigm, based on recognition of the importance of the subjective. This can often lead to the discovery and description of deeper meanings. Rahi (2017:5) denotes that the process of research involves emerging questions and procedures. Jennings (2010:21) “suggest that the qualitative approach gathers information based on text units which represent social reality and attributes of the phenomenon which is inductive in nature”.

In tourism research, Flick (2014:5) explains that qualitative research is based on data collection methods which include participant observation, in-depth interviews and/or focus groups. Moreover, Jennings (2010:22) states that qualitative research adopts a more descriptive, narrative style of research. The limitation to this research is the time required for data collection, analysis and interpretation, which restricts the number of respondents.

1.5.4.1 Sampling

The main purpose of sampling is to achieve representativeness. The sample should be assembled so as to be a representative segment of the target population which is carefully selected and relevant (Coolican, 2014: 125). Rahi (2017:3) defines population as “as all people or items that one wishes to understand while sampling is the process of selecting segment of the population for investigation” The population for this part of the study embraces all key industry stakeholders of the conference industry, namely conference organisers and

managers, community, speakers, government, sponsors, organisations/associations, media and marketing managers for international and national conferences. Hence, the requirement of purposeful sampling for specific people with specific knowledge was met. It is not possible to include all of the above respondents and therefore sampling is applied.

Twenty-two industry stakeholders were interviewed before saturation. Each of the industry stakeholders had a key interest in conferencing/business tourism (Table 4.4). The task required participants to identify conference attributes and make judgments regarding the relative importance of these conference attributes.

According to Rahi (2017:3) when selecting the sampling technique in mixed methodology one should consider whether the same participants were used or whether one sample is a subset of the other or whether they should be completely independent of the two samples.

1.5.4.2 Method of data collection

Personal structured interviews were used to collect the qualitative data. Qualitative research includes unstructured interviews where no questions are pre-determined by the researcher; the interviews resemble informal, ordinary conversation. Semi-structured interviews consist of a set of open-ended questions, sometimes followed by probes to guide the discussion and allow for full exploration of the topic (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:63; Jennings, 2010:170).

The personal interviews were semi-structured in nature and were conducted on a one to one basis with experienced stakeholders/experts. Once the “experts” had been selected (this was done from a list of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry, SAACI), they received an e-mail stating the intent and objectives of the study. This was done approximately three weeks prior to the interview. A follow up confirmation e-mail was also sent prior to the meeting. The researcher is in possession of a document detailing the following: name of the participant, designation, date and duration of interview. On the day of the interview, a consent form (see Appendix 1) was completed for each participant for record purposes. Each interview took approximately 45 to 60 minutes to complete. The interview was conducted at the participant’s venue of choice and at a time convenient to him or her. The participants were asked to identify the main factors and sub-factors affecting conference and business tourism competitiveness or the “important” attributes and the “determinant” attributes (see Appendix 2). This followed a discussion on what they believed the conference industry of South Africa should focus on for competitiveness and sustainability. The participants were free to expand on the topic. To assist the researcher, notes were taken during the in-depth interview, or,

when permission was provided, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The conditions were discussed with the participants and they were assured of confidentiality.

1.5.4.3 *Data analysis*

According to Sargeant (2012:1) and Creswell (2009:219), the purpose of a qualitative analysis is to interpret the data and facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon of the study. The interpretation of the qualitative data can lead to a deeper understanding of the results and new theories or ideas and inform the quantitative phase of the research. The data analysis is conducted in three stages, namely deconstruction (data transformation), interpretation and reconstruction. Deconstruction/data transformation refers to the breaking down of the data into component parts and creating codes and themes qualitatively. Interpretation involves the understanding of the coded data and the categorisation of similar themes and exploring theories. Finally, the reconstruction process refers to recreating the prominent codes and themes in order to show the relationships and insights derived in the interpretation phase. The reconstruction contextualises the findings and puts them into perspective with the theory, practice and evidence.

The purpose of the interviews was thus to elicit interpretations from the respondents (Jennings, 2010:171) and the data gathered was analysed using Excel to determine the key themes identified.

1.5.5 Quantitative approach

A quantitative research approach as applied in this study is grounded in the positivist social sciences paradigm “which adopts a deductive approach to research in the tourism context, commencing with theories, hypotheses or research questions relating to a particular phenomenon” (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:222).

1.5.5.1 *Sampling*

The population for the quantitative section of the study included all the delegates that attended a domestic or international conference. At this stage, no evidence or records exist of the exact number of people in the conference industry. A total sample size of 1000 (international and domestic) conference delegates in all three cities (Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town) was selected for the quantitative part of the study. The conferences were a mix of associate, industry and academic conferences, two of which were international conferences in Durban,

three were international conferences in Cape Town and four were conferences in Johannesburg between 30 May 2018 and 31 July 2018 (Table 4.8). This adequately represents the population (Saunders, Sim, Kingstone, Baker, Waterfield, Bartlam, Burroughs & Jinks, 2018:1893). These cities boast conference venues of international standard (Rogerson, 2005:185). According to Rogerson (2005:185), Cape Town is the prime focus for international conferences and Johannesburg for domestic conferences. The sampling approach applied involved a two-step clustering, firstly stratified in that three cities were selected (Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg) and secondly there was convenience sampling at each conference venue.

1.5.5.2 Method of data collection

According to Remler and Van Ryzin (2011:214), developing a good questionnaire is essential for successful quantitative research. De Vos and Strydom (2011:172) define a questionnaire as “a set of questions on a form which is completed by the respondent in respect of a research project”. The questions can be closed (response is either yes or no) or not closed (response allows for a comment). Alternatively, De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:172) state that the questionnaire can contain statements which the respondents must act upon. The objective of a questionnaire, is to obtain facts and opinions which relate to the phenomenon of the study (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:172).

The development of the questionnaire - a contribution to this study - was a result of the qualitative findings combined with literature from the study and various prominent models and frameworks accredited in the competitiveness domain. As to date, there are no conference competitiveness models or frameworks, thus the work of Crouch and Ritchie (1999), Dwyer and Kim (2003) and Heath (2002) were used as a foundation. The first section of the questionnaire (Section A) contained the demographic information and profile of the conference participants. The questions of Sections B to F were based on the data analysis of the qualitative research (see Appendix 4) and aimed at identifying and ranking the preferred conference “attributes”. The sections are set out below in no specific order.

- ❖ Section B – Conference attributes (main factors) entailed: destination elements, conference services, conference venue facilities, general conference attributes.
- ❖ Section C - Destination elements entailed: accessibility, infrastructure, location, safety/security, value/cost, weather, attractions/activities
- ❖ Section D - Conference services entailed: entertainment, program, quality of food, conference image, value/cost, accommodation, size of conference.

- ❖ Section E – Conference venue facilities entailed: venue design, advanced technology, free Wi-Fi, service quality, air conditioning/heating, facilities/services, ambience.
- ❖ Section F – General conference attributes entailed: political stability, economic stability, community engagement, promotion of business tourism, environmental practices.

The format of the questionnaire was based on the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) scaling, a 9-point scale of relative importance used to derive ratio scales from discrete and continuous paired comparisons (Figure 1.1). Conference participants/delegates were required to firstly identify the preferred attribute and then rate the importance of the selected attribute (1 = Equal importance; 2 = Equal to moderate; 3 = Moderate importance; 4 = Moderate to strong; 5 = Strong importance; 6 = Strong to very strong; 7 = Very strong importance; 8 = Very strong to extreme; 9 = Extreme importance). To assist with the structure of the questionnaire, the online AHP calculator (<https://bpmsg.com/ahp-online-calculator/>) was used, enabling the researcher to adequately group the criteria for pairwise comparison coding.

The screenshot displays the instructions and an example of the 9-point intensity scaling process. The instructions state: '1. → In each numbered row, compare the two CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES and decide on the most important one. 2. → Then indicate this importance on the most important one's side.' The example shows a comparison between 'Venue design' and 'Advanced technology'. A scale from 1 to 9 is shown, with a black dot indicating a rating of 3 for 'Venue design'. Below the scale, a legend defines the ratings: 1=Equal importance, 2=Equal to moderate, 3=Moderate importance, 4=Moderate to strong, 5=Strong importance, 6=Strong to very strong, 7=Very strong importance, 8=Very strong to extreme, 9=Extreme importance.

Figure 1.1: 9-point intensity scaling

Furthermore, a pilot study was conducted to ensure clarity of the questions and the relevance and appropriateness of the attributes. The pilot study respondents were also able to identify and discuss any limitations encountered during the process and provide valuable feedback concerning the questionnaire. Once the attributes had been finalised, the questionnaire was revised with assistance from the statistical department (Table 4.10). Alignment of the questionnaire was performed to meet the objectives of the analytic hierarchy process (AHP).

1.5.5.3 Data analysis

A number of statistical analyses were done on the data in order to determine the attributes that are important for the conference competitiveness framework. The incomplete questionnaires were removed and the remainder coded using Excel. For practical purposes

the above scaling was recoded to reflect 1 – 17 instead of 9 – 1 and 1 - 9 respectively. It is important to mention that some of the respondents indicated their preferences on both sides of the questionnaire (9 – 1 and 1 – 9); these were rectified by using the higher ranking of the two attributes. In the case where both sides indicated the same rating, this was considered “equal”.

In this section, each of the statistical analyses will be discussed, namely descriptive statistics, *t*-tests and the analytic hierarchy process (AHP).

1.5.5.3.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are those methods and techniques used to describe data which usually consists of groupings (Clark, Riley & Wood, 2006:150). Descriptive statistics are used to describe the characteristics of a sample population or the profile of the population. SPSS (version 25) was used to analyse the data captured in sections A to F. The results were illustrated by means of tables and discussed in detail in chapter 5. To obtain a graphic representation, a boxplot was performed on the main factors (conference attributes). The box plot displays the minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile and maximum. The median is the centre line in the middle of the box and the crossbars at the far end of each are referred to as “whiskers”; these extend in each direction which is the furthest point within the interquartile range (Weissgerber, Milic, Winham & Garvic, 2015:3).

1.5.5.3.2 One sample *t*-test

The purpose of the one sample *t*-test as defined by Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:234) is that the sample *t*-test determines if the null hypothesis should be rejected. However, the one sample *t*-test specifically applied to this study is the Cohens *d* test. The Cohens *d* test is a standardised measure of effect size and measures the difference between two means divided by the standard deviation ($d = M_1 - M_2 / S_{pooled}$). According to Olenjik and Algina (2000:245), Cohen specifies that the standardised effect size indicates: $d \sim 0.2$ small effect, $d \sim 0.5$ medium effect, and $d \sim 0.8$ large effect. This implies that if the two groups' means do not differ by 0.2 standard deviations or more, the difference is trivial, even if there is statistical significance.

1.5.5.3.3 Analytic hierarchy process (AHP)

Analytic hierarchy process (AHP) is a technique developed by Saaty (1980) and used for the integration of multiple judgments for studying the decision-making process. According to Saaty and Kulakowski (2016:1), this process consists of hierarchy construction, consistency verification and priority analysis and involves a general theory of measurement used to reflect ratio scales from discrete and continuous paired comparisons which reflect the strength of preference of the participants or respondents. Furthermore, AHP builds a ranking of decision items using comparisons between each pair of items. These paired comparisons then provide weighted scores which measure the importance of items relative to one another.

Saaty's (1980) 9-point relative importance scale was used to assess the pairwise comparisons. In the case of this study, the quantitative findings were processed using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) steps which included developing the hierarchy problem, constructing pairwise comparison, synthetisation, consistency testing, checking consistency and developing an overall ranking.

1.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability refers to the dependability or consistency of measurement. Validity, on the other hand, suggests truthfulness referring to matching a construct, or conceptual definition relating to a specific measurement (Neuman, 2014:141). According to Neuman (2014:141), both quantitative and qualitative researchers aim for reliable and valid research, but see reliability and validity differently. Reliability in quantitative research indicates that numerical measurements do not vary due to the characteristics of the process, whereas qualitative researchers use a number of techniques, are focused on consistency rather than accuracy and are aware that different researchers will get varied results. It can be added that qualitative researchers focus on authenticity rather than validity.

Cronbach's alpha tested the internal consistency reliability of the quantitative data.

1.6.1 Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha is a measurement for assessing the reliability or internal consistency of a set of scale or test items and can be used to measure the strength of the consistency. Computed by correlating the score of each item of scale with the total score, then comparing

the variance for each individual item score, thus resulting in α coefficient of reliability ranges. The range from 0 to 1 is providing this overall assessment of a measure's reliability. It is considered that what makes for a "good" α is based on the theoretical knowledge of the scale in question; however, if the Cronbach alpha is between 0.8 and 0.95 the reliability is considered very good, if the Cronbach alpha is between 0.7 and 0.79 it is regarded as good and a fair loading is between 0.6 and 0.69, whilst a Cronbach alpha loading lower than 0.59 is considered poor (Field, 2009:66).

Cronbach's alpha showed that the questionnaire had acceptable reliability, $\alpha = 0.794$. The items were considered worthy of retention, thereby indicating that the convergent consistency of the construct had been met. The average inter-item correlation was also computed for further reliability and to draw a conclusion.

The qualitative data was considered reliable since the same themes emerged repeatedly; furthermore, the participants were industry experts with at least 10 - 15 years' experience in the conference industry.

1.7 DEFINING THE CONCEPTS

A number of key terms were identified as central to the research question. For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

1.7.1 Competitiveness

Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000:9), Porter (1985) and Ritchie and Crouch (2003) define competitiveness as a concept that encompasses differentials of price in search of a favourable competitive position, aiming to establish profit and a sustainable position in the competitive environment.

1.7.2 Conference tourism

Conference tourism, traditionally a sector of the tourism industry and main component of business tourism, includes exhibitions and trade shows, incentive travel, corporate events and business travel (Rogers, 2013:12; Allen, Bowdin, O'Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2010:100; Getz, 2008:16). It is interchangeably referred to as business tourism.

1.7.3 Framework

A framework is considered a basic structure that underlies a concept, system or text (Allen *et al.*, 2010:102).

1.7.4 Stakeholders

These are key role players in an organisation who perform various duties and interact effectively to fulfil policies, objectives and visions of the company (Allen *et al.*, 2010; Tassiopoulos, 2010:138; Getz, 2008:16; Bladen, Kennell, Abson & Wilden, 2012:148). They are interchangeably referred to as experts.

1.7.5 Sustainability

Sustainability refers to achieving a balance between social and economic components of society and in relation to events. This entails ensuring that the event maximises positive economic, social and environmental impacts and is one of the driving forces for organisational achievement (Alenezim, Kamil & Basri, 2010:1; Ritchie & Crouch, 1993:1050; Tassiopoulos, 2010:209).

1.7.6 Conference competitiveness

In the absence of a definition for conference competitiveness, it could be considered as “the ability of a conference to deliver quality and innovative products and services to delegates whilst supporting business tourism in a sustainable way”

1.8 CHAPTER CLASSIFICATION

The chapters of this study consist of an introduction and an in-depth investigation of competitiveness and the conference industry. This is followed by a description of the research methodology and findings and lastly conclusions and recommendations. The chapter content is outlined below.

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

This chapter provides a short introduction to the study, a description of the problem statement, goals and objectives of the study, research design, definitions of key terms and chapter classification. It thus provides an overview of what can be expected in the study and can be seen as a roadmap to conference competitiveness.

Chapter 2 ANALYSING THE CONFERENCE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on and elucidate contextual international key findings on conference tourism (referred to as business tourism interchangeably) and develop a distinct understanding of the typological, theoretical, critical, conceptual and empirical contributions of the conference industry, globally and more specifically in South Africa. It is the purpose of this chapter to fulfil the secondary objectives, which entail the exploration of the concept and typology of the business and conference sector by means of a comprehensive literature review.

Chapter 3 AN ANALYSIS OF COMPETITIVENESS WITHIN THE CONFERENCE CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on and elucidate systematic approaches to competitiveness and develop a clear understanding of the theoretical, critical, conceptual and empirical contributions of competitiveness within the conference context, both internationally and nationally. Furthermore, the competitive frameworks and models are critiqued. The main purpose is therefore to provide an extensive literature review on tourism and destination competitiveness and demonstrate how it relates to conference competitiveness.

Chapter 4 A SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research approach, the research planning process and the research population. The motivation for the use of quantitative and qualitative methods, as well as the data collection process, is set out. In addition, the results thereof are discussed. The reliability and validity of the study are addressed and the findings are presented and interpreted.

Chapter 5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the detailed empirical results of the study and discuss the research methodology approach used to focus on the philosophical assumptions, research methodologies, design strategies, instruments, data collection and analysis underpinning this research. The research was conducted in two phases which consisted of qualitative findings and quantitative findings. From the qualitative findings (interviews) conference attribute themes emerged and were ranked. The measurement instrument (questionnaire) was developed based on these findings. The data from the questionnaire was analysed to provide descriptive statistics and analytic hierarchy process rankings.

Chapter 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter draws conclusions based on the findings and provides guidelines for the implementation of the proposed conference competitiveness framework. It also summarises the implications for, and contributions of, the relevant body of knowledge. Recommendations for future research are discussed.

CHAPTER 2

ANALYSING THE CONFERENCE TOURISM INDUSTRY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

During the past few decades, travel and tourism have been considered a key facilitator for sustained global economic development; it is currently considered one of the leading economic sectors in the world, encouraging business, investment and trade. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017), travel and tourism contributed to a GDP growth of 3.1%, generating US\$7.6 trillion and approximately 292 million employment opportunities for the global economy in 2016. New destinations and investment opportunities are constantly emerging and travel and tourism are becoming globally embraced (Page & Connell, 2009:4; WTTC, 2015). Page and Connell (2014:3) state that although there is continuous global tourism development, there are various sectors facing challenges due to the volatility of currencies, recession and stagnant trade in many countries. In terms of South Africa, tourism contributes 3% of the gross domestic product (GDP), creating employment for more than 1.5 million people (NDP, 2017). Furthermore, South Africa had more than 10 million international tourists in 2016 representing a 12.8% growth on previous years, indicating that South African tourism is reflecting substantial growth (SAT, 2017). The National Tourism Sector Strategy 2016-2026 sets the intention to increase GDP from R118 billion to R302 billion by 2026 (SAT, 2016). However, there are still major economic challenges for the country that can affect tourism competitiveness (WEF, 2018).

More positively, Rogers (2013:12), Bladen *et al.* (2012:148) and Allen *et al.* (2010:102) posit that governments are adopting a collaborative approach by engaging markets and promoting tourism as part of their strategy for economic development and destination marketing. Rogers (2012:3) contends that governments have also made a concerted effort to focus on business tourism as an area with substantial growth. Currently, the business tourism industry is a young, dynamic and lucrative industry with global significance, accounting for approximately 9% of all international travel. Similarly, an interview with Leibetrau (former CEO of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry), indicated that “when reviewing the benefits and impacts of conference tourism, it is evident that there are great opportunities to the global market as well as the South African market and South Africa still remains an

increasingly popular destination for the hosting of international conferences". Reynolds (2008:9) warns that a balance between the demand and supply sides of the industry is essential to realise the goals and maintain significant growth of the industry.

In this respect, many studies have sought to investigate generic tourism of an applied and practical nature, and based research on various factors that conference organisers use to assess the suitability and attractiveness of conference sites and venues. Crouch (2007), however, suggests that there have been few systematic, empirical or paradigmatic discussions addressing important attributes from a buyer's perspective and identifying the supplier's understanding of the buyer's needs (Miller & Kerr, 2009:6; Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001:11; Rogerson, 2005:14). This is relevant to this study in that many researchers have stressed the importance of competitiveness; however, little has been done to determine the competitiveness attributes in the conference industry.

Rogers (2013:21) maintains that one of the reasons for limited research and statistics is the lack of accepted and clearly defined terminology in the industry in that the term "business tourism" describes conferences, exhibitions and incentive travel and the link with tourism can be ambiguous, with negative perceptions. Moreover, Mair and Thompson (2009:401) advance that existing research of the meeting, incentives, conferences and exhibitions sector has focused mainly on the supply side, specifically convention destination competitiveness, with very little focus on the individual needs of the delegates. One of the secondary objectives of this research will accommodate this limitation.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on and elucidate contextual international key findings on conference tourism (referred to as business tourism interchangeably) and develop a distinct understanding of the typological, theoretical, critical, conceptual and empirical contributions of the conference industry, globally and more specifically in South Africa. This chapter will highlight the contributing economic factors which may develop tourism and conference tourism both globally and in South Africa as a destination. A typology of business tourism is used to place business tourism/conference tourism into perspective. A review of literature will address the issues relating to business tourism and conference tourism in general terms - their characteristics, potential and trends - and from there discuss the specifics of the conference tourism niches and evaluate the interrelatedness and classifications in this diverse industry. This chapter will continue with a critical review of the South African conference market and will conclude with conference tourism as a tourism strategy in South Africa before exploring the competitiveness of the industry in more detail. A chapter structure is presented below (Figure 2.1).

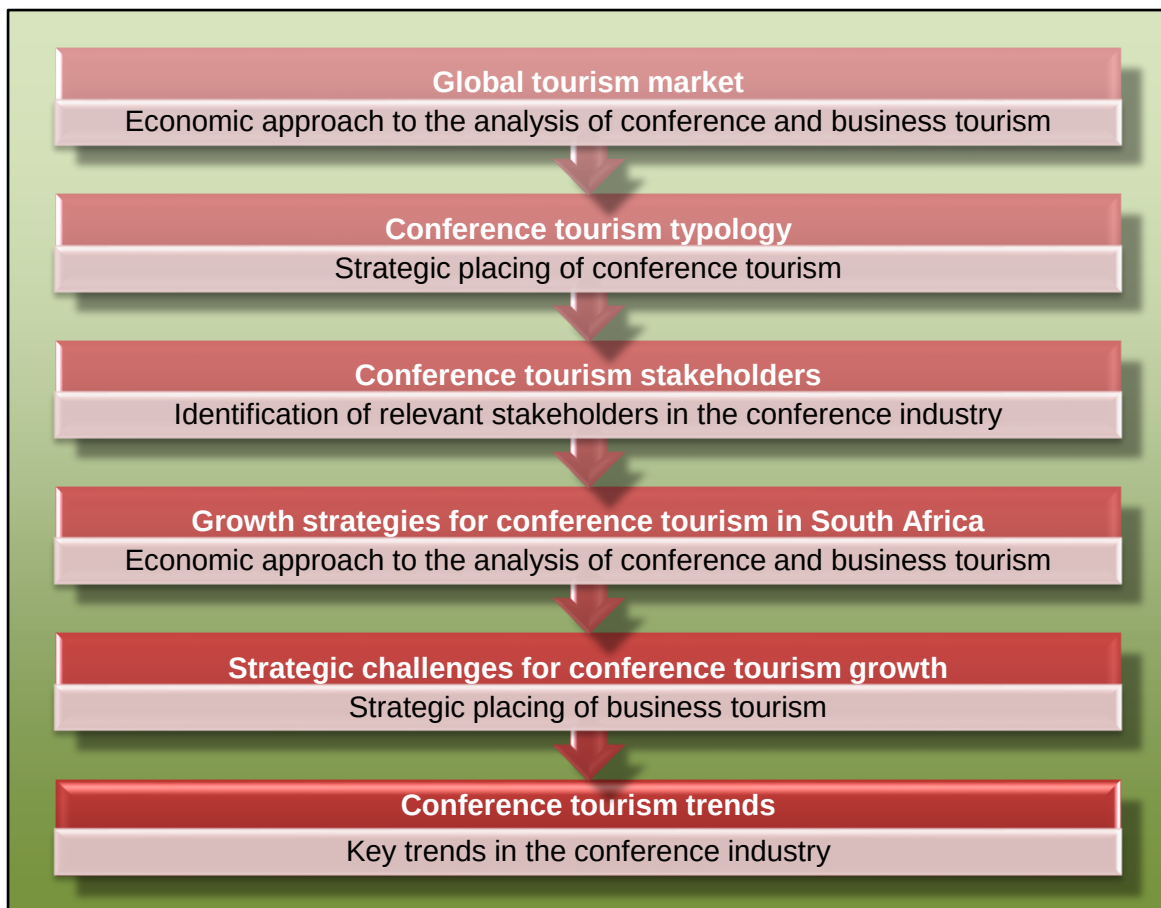


Figure 2.1: Conference tourism chapter structure

2.2 THE TOURISM INDUSTRY: A GLOBAL ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

Earlier research into the economics of tourism attempted to focus on both the economic paradigm and the effects of global travel and tourism as they feature today. In a broader sense, tourism refers to the “movement of people from one geographical area to another for the purpose of engaging in leisure and/or business acts, and the economic transactions that accompany this” (George, 2015:13). Furthermore, tourism is interchangeable within the published tourism literature, and in this respect, authors postulate similarities between the definitions in that they involve the sector of the economy, movement of people, and a broad base of interacting relationships (Page & Connell, 2014:9). Tourism is described as multi-faceted, guiding many sectors of the economy. Nonetheless, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) confirms that it is particularly relevant to draw a clear distinction between the “travel and tourism industry”, which encompasses transport, accommodation, catering, entertainment and related activities, and a more widely defined “travel and tourism economy” which focuses on all activities linked to the travel and tourism

industry or supplied products and services (Rogerson, 2007:363; George, 2015:13). With travel and tourism depicted as an “engine of economic development and as a vehicle for sharing cultures, creating peace and building mutual understanding”, the future long-term growth of the travel and tourism sector is envisaged to be one of sustainable investment and development (WTTC, 2017).

The World Travel and Tourism Council is a “global authority contributing to global and economic issues of travel and tourism, fostering sustainable growth for the industry and collaborating with governments and international institutions to create employment, promote exports and increase prosperity”. Furthermore, the sector advances investment and global economic growth with travel and tourism generating 9.8% of global GDP, worth \$7.6 trillion, and supporting 277 million employment opportunities globally (WTTC, 2017). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017) confirmed that for six consecutive years, the direct travel and tourism GDP growth outperformed the economy-wide growth recorded in 116 of the 185 countries covered by the annual economic impact research conducted by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017). This trend of growth is predicted to continue with an expected growth of 3.9% annually, despite evidence of a US slowdown, weak US Dollar currency, volatility of the stock market and higher fuel costs (WTTC, 2017). In terms of defining the economic contribution of travel and tourism, the World Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017) conducted an economic impact study stating that the industry has significant indirect and induced impacts as presented in Figure 2.2.



Figure 2.2: The economic contribution of travel and tourism

Source: Travel and Tourism Economic Impact 2017 World (WTTC, 2017)

The direct contribution of travel and tourism involves commodities, industries and sources of spending, with the contribution to GDP indicating the “internal” spending on travel and tourism. This equates to the total amount spent by a particular country on travel and tourism for leisure and business tourists, as well as direct services linked to visitors, including cultural and recreational tourism (WTTC, 2017). As such, the direct contribution of travel and tourism is consistent with the output and the indirect contribution of travel and tourism refers to the GDP and employment opportunities supported by travel and tourism investment spending (investment activity such as development of new hotel establishments), government collective spending and direct domestic purchases of services and goods by the tourists. The induced contribution measures the GDP and employment; this contribution entails the spending of

contributors who are directly and indirectly employed by the travel and tourism industry in terms of food and beverages, recreation, clothing, housing and household goods. Travel and tourism therefore contributes to GDP and employment. According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2017, the tourism industry contributed USD7.6 trillion to the global economy, which equates to 10.2% of the global gross domestic product (GDP) (WEF, 2017).

2.2.1 Economic contribution to leisure and business tourism in South Africa

According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2017), the global financial stability report indicated that seven of the world's fastest growing economies are African, with South Africa being a large emerging economy market amongst Colombia, Mexico and Turkey. The World Travel and Tourism Economic Impact South Africa 2017 Report (WTTC, 2017) indicates that the direct contribution of travel and tourism to GDP was ZAR127 billion in 2016, with a 3.6% increase in total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP and a 4.5% per annum increase by 2027. The significance of tourism in South Africa is recognised in the 1996 Development and Promotion of Tourism in South Africa White Paper. The key objectives of this paper are to promote competitive global practices in social, environmental and cultural tourism; to generate economic growth through promotion of tourism; to create sustainable employment opportunities, encouraging entrepreneurship; and to develop rural communities to facilitate tourism development and investment. In line with these objectives, South African Tourism (SAT) has developed a strategy to promote and grow both the leisure and business sector.

Furthermore, in specifying goals and objectives for each market segment it is important to note that there are inherent differences between leisure and business travel, although they are related. Page and Connell (2014:7) contend that leisure visitors are motivated to travel to explore other cultures; to experience different scenery; to grow personally; and to visit family and friends. Rogers (2013:25) adds that a leisure tourist is characterised by price sensitivity and more time spent deciding on suitable accommodation with the aim of looking for the best value for money in order to maximise the travel experience; the leisure tourist also requires additional on-site facilities at the accommodation establishment. There are a number of "overlaps" between leisure and business tourism, in that business tourists can become leisure tourists as leisure activities are included in the conference program and often partners accompany delegates to conferences (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001:10). Business tourism, on the other hand, involves attending a business event or activity for business purposes (Rogers, 2013:25). This will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017) indicated that the leisure spend in South Africa from 2016 to 2017 was 3.9%, and business travel 4.0%, thus concluding that the total contribution of travel and tourism to GDP is three times larger than its direct contribution (WTTC, 2017). More specifically relating to events, a study commissioned by the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) and conducted by Ground Control Research from 2014 – 2016, found that there was a total income for all events of R58 468 69; 30% of the delegates were from Europe, 25% from Africa, 20% from Asia and 15% from North America; and 80% of the delegates stayed in hotels, 67% in guest houses and 6% with friends and family. To place this into perspective, South Africa hosts approximately one million business delegates each year and approximately a third of the business travellers will stay in South Africa before or after their conference or meeting. Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo from the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) confirmed that according to statistics gathered by the Bureau, 43% of visiting international business delegates stay longer than their conference for leisure visits.

To conclude the discussion of global economic tourism impacts: both the leisure and business markets have gained future growth despite the challenges within the industry (WTO, 2014). This confirms the importance of this study for the development of the conference sector. In order to place the business and conference industry into perspective, it is relevant to conceptualise business tourism in its complexity.

2.3 CONCEPTUALISING BUSINESS TOURISM AS A SECTOR OF EVENTS

Following the articulation of event studies (Getz, 1997, 2007, 2010) and the philosophical and conceptual broadening of this emerging sector, many authors postulate that events have different objectives, vary in size and differ in terms of impact on host communities and stakeholders (Ozdemir & Culha, 2009:360). Tassiopoulos (2010:10), on the other hand, suggests that it is important to acknowledge that the spectrum of events covers planned political, cultural, sporting, and business activities. Getz (2010:6) provides the characteristics of planned events: planning is usually conducted by event coordinators; goals are identified by producers of the event and often modified by stakeholders; the programme is usually planned and scheduled to maximise the experience for participants and spectators and stakeholders, producers and managers are held accountable. Getz (2010:34) and Getz and Page (2015:2) identify four categories of planned events, namely; festivals and culture; entertainment; sports; and business. These categories are depicted in detail in Figure 2.3.

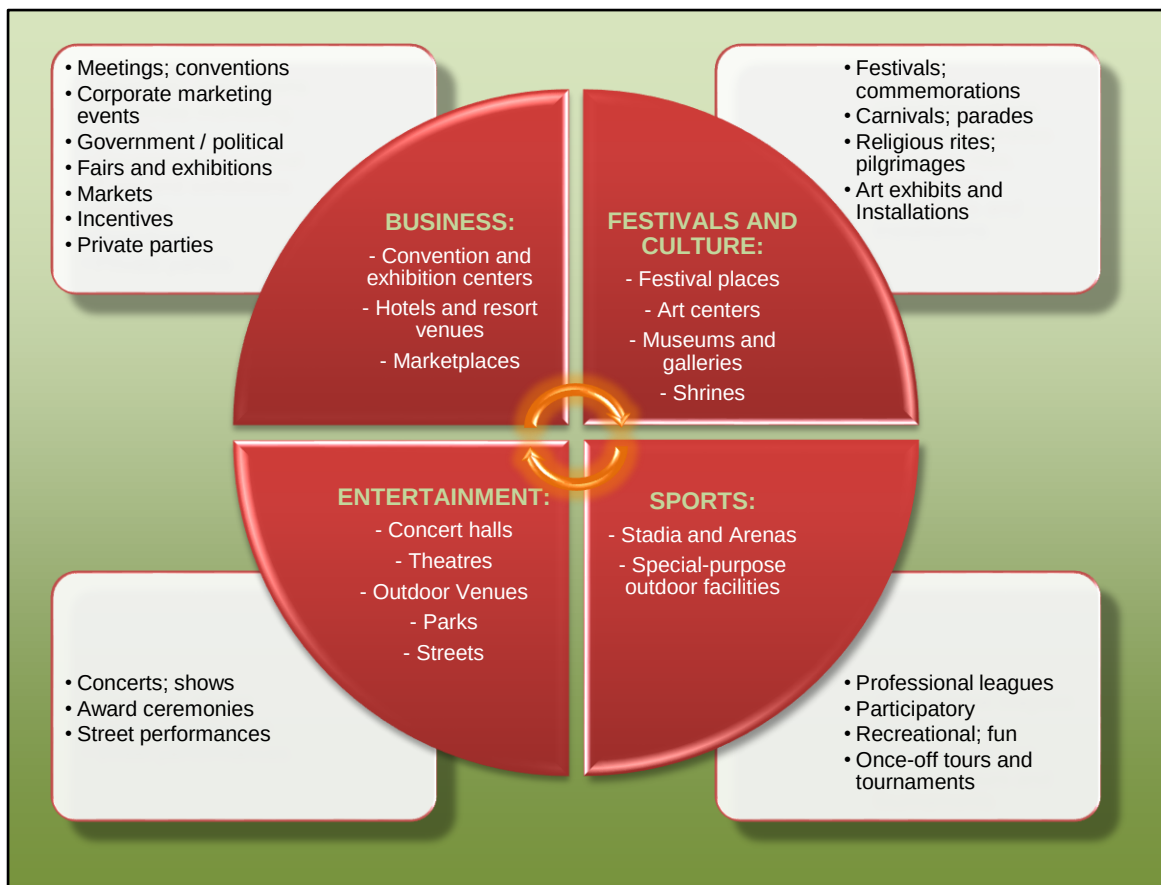


Figure 2.3: Typology of planned events

Source: Getz (2014:34)

Getz (2012:35) and Getz, Andersson and Carlsen (2010: 32) state that all planned events have a beginning and an end; a specific place or venue or site is identified; a set of circumstances or experiences are available; and the events are unique and social in form. Furthermore, these are categorised into four main areas, namely festivals and culture; entertainment; sports; and the business segment which is the key focus of this study. Each of these segments as mentioned in Figure 2.3 will be briefly discussed below.

2.3.1 Festivals and culture

Bowdin's (2006:5) classification of a festival and states that it is a "social occasion of periodic recurrence in a multiplicity of forms and a series of co-ordinated events". Furthermore, Getz (2010:29) places festivals in the classical cultural-anthropological context as "a sacred or profane time of celebration, marked by special observances". In this context, Van Zyl (2008:129) and Yolal, Woo, Centinel and Uysal (2012:67) consider festivals as unique tourist attractions which have experienced growth globally with paramount recognition. Ozdemir

(2009:362) and Okech (2011:194) add that festivals can be considered as “modern-day” business services which relate to attracting visitors and promoting the destination (Van Zyl, 2011:182; Bowdin, Allen, O’Toole, Harris & McDonnell, 2011:10). According to Georlene Wolmarans, Knysna Executive Mayor, the international exhibition and event centres of the large cities in South Africa not only take advantage of Knysna for pre and post event tours, but also accommodate the smaller (200+), unique and innovative business requirements. These are often organised to coincide with the festivals in Knysna, such as the Knysna Oyster Festival and Knysna Wine Festival.

2.3.2 Entertainment events segment

Entertainment features in many forms that include an activity, sports meeting, artistic display or event taking place in concert halls, theatres, outdoor venues, parks and streets (Ozdemir & Culha, 2009:360). Smit (2015:25) contends that entertainment is considered a major enhancement for an event and can be included in conference programs. The demographic profile of the delegates, the goals and objectives, theme and program of the event should be a consideration when selecting the appropriate entertainment for the conference. Furthermore, well known entertainers can be used to attract delegates and offer them an unforgettable experience (Ramsborg, 2006:504).

2.3.3 Sports events segment

Although not directly connected to conference and business tourism, sports tourism has contributed to the vast growth in the industry (Davies & Williment, 2008:223). Chalip (2006:113) indicates that sporting events have significant economic impacts and can be summed up as a “social, economic and cultural phenomenon, which has unique interactions among activities, people and places” (Henderson, Foo, Lim & Ingerson, 2010:66).

The last segment of the typology of planned events is the business tourism sector, which will be discussed in detail.

2.4 BUSINESS/CONFERENCE TOURISM SECTOR

To further explore the conference tourism domain, Rogers (2013:25) asserts that the conference industry forms a sector within “business tourism” and constitutes a sub-sector of the overall tourism industry, with a further sub-sector being leisure and business tourism. To clarify, business tourists focus on location and proximity to meetings, technological facilities at the establishment - for example Wi-Fi availability - and amenities in the hotel room offering a “home away from home” experience; this sets them apart from a leisure tourist. The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) defines business tourism or business travel as a “more limited and focused subset of regular tourism”. At a micro level, the terms “conference”, “congress”, “convention” and “meeting” are used interchangeably and words such as “symposium”, “colloquium”, “assembly” and “summit” have a slightly deeper meaning (Rogers, 2013:22). Furthermore, to clearly define these terms on a micro level, a conference is considered a “participatory meeting designed for discussion, fact finding, problem solving and consultation”, a congress is a regular meeting of large groups to discuss a particular topic, a convention is a grouping of delegates that meet for a common purpose and lastly a meeting is an event which is attended primarily for educational or social purposes.

Nicula and Elena (2014:704) classify business tourism as a form of commercial, governmental or educational tourism with a major segment of the international tourism market linked to global economic benefits (Mair & Thompson, 2009:400; Mohammadi & Mohamed, 2010:54). Furthermore, business tourism has a number of significant benefits for destinations (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001:14; Rogerson, 2005:179) and is considered economically attractive, with more and more destinations looking to gain a share of the market. Rogers (2013:28) states that although leisure and business tourism require similar infrastructure, business tourism has a number of added benefits which make a destination attractive to delegates. These benefits include providing solutions for “addressing seasonality challenges; job creation to meet higher standards of demand for business travellers; justification for development and funding of infrastructure that can benefit the host community; spin-off for local suppliers and related industries such as photographers or florists; and higher average daily spend per business traveller compared to leisure travellers” (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2001:14). Furthermore, according to the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage (2016), direct economic impacts of business tourism include residence, transportation and tourism expenses paid by international visitors of exhibitions and conferences; growth of investments in business tourism; revenues of owners and organising authorities of exhibitions and conferences and tourism suppliers; trade exchanges that take place during exhibitions and conferences; marketing of products for sponsors; and rise of promotional activities. On

the other hand, indirect economic impacts include expenses paid by visitors for general services; expenses of gifts purchased by business tourism visitors; contribution of business tourism to urban development of infrastructure; and highlighting and promoting investment opportunities in the destination where the exhibition or conference is held. The economic impacts of business tourism at local level are depicted by Swarbrooke and Horner (2001:76) in Figure 2.4 below.

In 2014, the Economic Significance of Meetings to the US commissioned by the Convention Industry Council researched the indirect and direct effects of business tourism and meetings activity to the US economy and concluded that the direct contribution was worth \$115,615 billion, the indirect contribution \$156,889 billion and the induced effect \$121,280 billion - a total economic contribution of \$393,784 billion (CIC, 2014). As mentioned previously, direct spending is based on spending within the U.S. economy from buying of goods and services that are attributed to the business tourism activity; however, 54% of this involves meeting planning and production costs, other non-travel related costs and venue hire. Indirect spending is linked to the suppliers of the business/meetings industry, and the induced spending is deduced from the spending of the staff of these industries and their suppliers. Together, direct, indirect and induced spending constitute the total contribution of business travel to the U.S. Economy (WTTC, 2017).

In the United Kingdom (UK) business tourism is worth over £20 billion in terms of its wider economic impact. In South Africa, according to the World Tourism Council (WTTC, 2017), the business spending for 2016 amounted to US\$6.4 billion. From these statistics, it can be established that business tourism remains the most lucrative sector of the tourism industry. According to the NEDLAC FRIDGE (Fund for Research into Industrial Development Growth and Equity) conducted by Grant Thornton and Prodigy Business Services in 2006, Europe, North America and Asia take the lead in business tourism with Europe having the largest market share followed by Asia (Thornton, 2006).

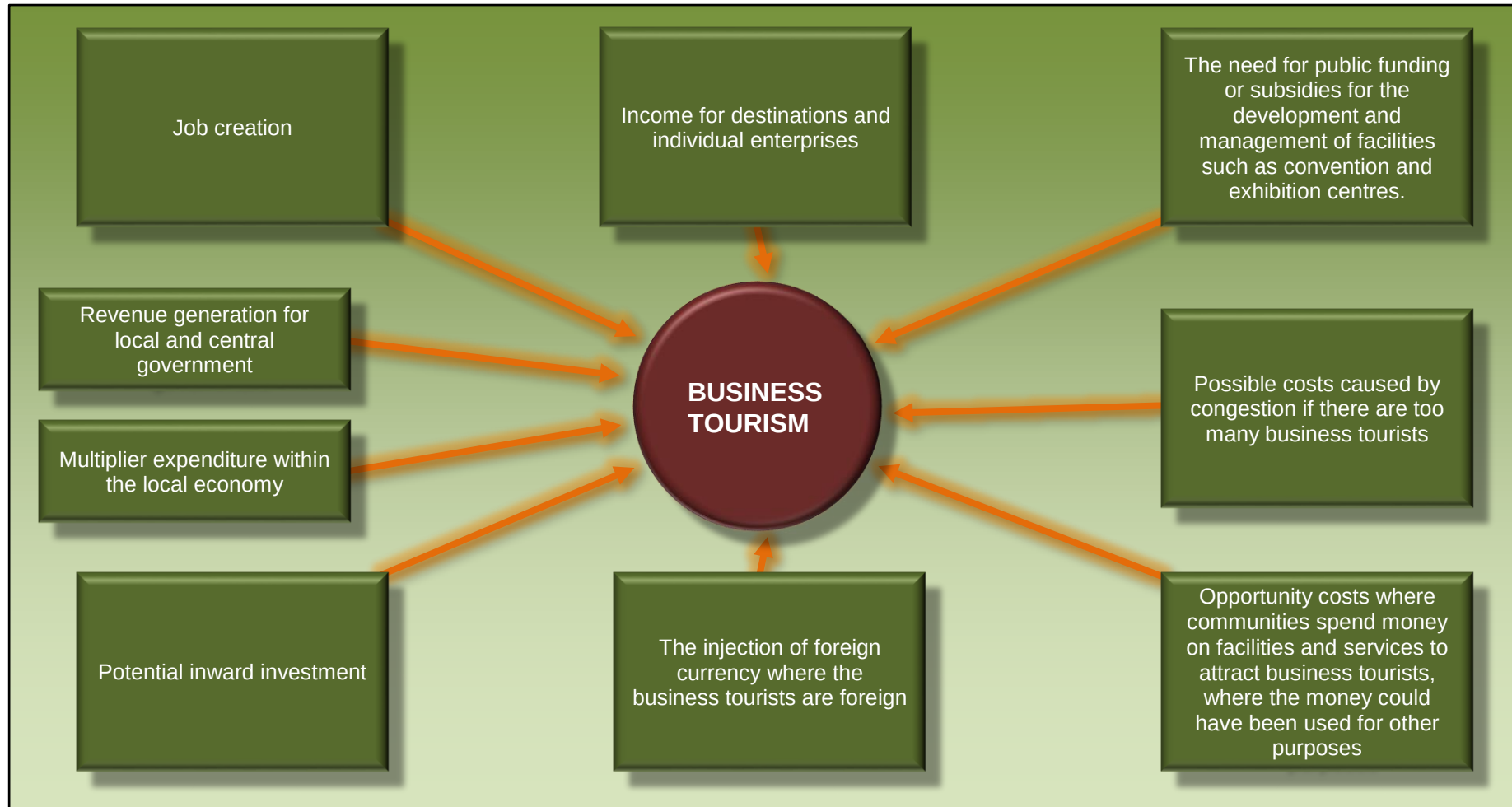


Figure 2.4: The economic impacts of business tourism at local level

Source: Swarbrooke and Horner (2001:76)

Leibetrau, (former CEO of the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI)) indicated in an interview that international conferences in South Africa clearly have had an impact on infrastructure development, job creation, and promoting South Africa as a premier destination. He added that some of the conferences recently held in South Africa which have generated great economic benefits include the 21st International Aids Conference held in Durban in July 2016 and COP17 from the 24th of September 2016. These conferences attract large numbers of international delegates, with COP17 attracting in the region of 18 000 international delegates. Each delegate spends in the region of R3000 – R3500 per day and 60% of these delegates choose to return within five years on a leisure trip.

2.4.1 Typology of business tourism

Reviewing the sector indicates that business and conference tourism is not a new phenomenon and stems from the early days of trade between communities dating back to Egyptian, Persian, Greek and Roman Empire times. People often travelled long distances to sell their produce. During the medieval period, business travel for trade was well established (Getz, 2014:34). Business tourism was pioneered in the United States of America during the twentieth century with the establishment of convention bureaus, resulting in the rapid growth of the industry. Business and conference tourism have evolved since the twentieth century and new sectors of business tourism have been developed (Getz, 2014:34).

Furthermore, conference tourism is vital to the economies of many global destinations. Whilst this is a complex and diverse sector, many destinations have made significant investments to provide the meeting and conference facilities required for business events (Mair & Jago, 2010:78; Gustafson, 2014:63; Cecil, Fenich, Krugman & Hashimoto, 2013:66). In further exploration of the sector, the Business Tourism Partnership Publication (2006) characterises business and conference tourism as a high quality, high yield end and year- round tourism product, leading to regeneration of urban and inner city development; it is less susceptible to economic downturns and stimulates future inward investment. Fenich (2008:11) added that conferences as an event are designed for discussion, fact finding, problem solving and presenting an opportunity to learn and exchange ideas in a networking environment, therefore conferences are essential for research and publication in various fields of study. Although some research has been conducted on conference tourism, existing research indicates that there are still opportunities to be explored relating to competitiveness within the industry. Table 2.1 indicates research conducted to date in the conference tourism industry.

Table 2.1: Previous researches done by authors on conference/business tourism

Author/ Researcher	Application	Year
Saayman & Slabbert	An introduction to conference tourism	2002
Rogers	Conferences and conventions: a global industry	2003; 2008; 2013
Crouch & Louviere	Convention site selection	2004
Rogerson	Conference and exhibition tourism in the developing world: the South African experience	2005
Robinson & Callan	UK conference delegates' cognizance of the importance of venue selection attributes. The UK conference meetings industry: development of an inventor for attributional analysis	2001;2005
Davidson & Rogers	Marketing destinations and venues for conferences conventions and business events	2006
Swart	Service quality: A survey amongst convention consumers at the CSIR International Convention Centre	2006
Zhang & Leung	Refined model of factors affecting convention participation decision-making	2007
Reynolds	The significance of business tourism – report	2008
Fawzy & Samra	A conceptual model for understanding associations' site selection process	2008
Pearlman & Mollere	Meetings, incentive, convention and exhibition evaluation practices	2009
Miller & Kerr	Conventions held by associations: a case study of buyers and suppliers in emerging conference destination	2009
Burger & Saayman	Key success factors in managing a conference centre in South Africa	2009
McCallaghan	Service quality management in conference tourism	2009
Mohammadi & Mohamed	Convention decision making model	2010
Kim, Yoon & Kim	Competitive positioning among international convention cities in the east Asian region	2011
Thomas	The value of business tourism in the performance of an organisation	2012
Donnelly & White	Assessing the quality of a local authority conference and hospitality venue using the SERVQUAL model	2012
Donaldson	Conference tourism: what do we know about the business tourist in SA?	2013
Cecil, Fenich, Krugman & Hashimoto	Review and analysis of the new international meeting and business event competitive standards	2013
Huo	Meeting planners' perceptions of conference destination attributes	2014

Author/ Researcher	Application	Year
Nicula & Elena	Business tourism markets	2014
Kozak, Aksoz & Ozel	An Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) model for understanding convention planners' prior factors of convention hotel selection	2015
Unger, Uriely & Fuchs	The business travel experience	2016
Mair, Binney & Whitelaw	The motives and barriers of association conference attendance	2018

Source: Author's compilation

Various authors concur that conferences are generally limited in time and of a short span, with a set of outlined objectives. The conference industry includes exhibitions and trade fairs, corporate events, incentive travel, individual business and corporate travel and non-corporate events. These business tourism segments are the main focus of marketing activities by venues and destinations. Authors such as Getz and Page (2014:77) and Haven-Tang, Jones and Webb (2007:109) assert that the conference market and events sector (MICE - incentive meetings, congresses, trade shows, consumer shows, board meetings, training and workshops) has during the past ten years developed rapidly, with continued growth indicated by an increase in the number of conferences organised since 1997 (Robinson & Callan, 2005: 79). Gustafson (2014:63), Pearlman and Mollere (2009:147) and McCartney (2008:295) concur that over the past few decades there has been an expanded increase in business and conference travel amongst managers and professionals and state that employers are becoming aware of the importance of business and conference tourism. However, Pearlman and Gates (2010:249) warn that with the weakening economy, many organisations have trimmed their budgets and in turn cut their business travel, forcing the organisations to be innovative in meeting business needs to create a balance.

The "typology of business travel and tourism" (Figure 2.5) as developed by Swarbrooke and Horner (2001:4) identifies various subdivisions, namely daily transport to work; local, regional and national and international conferences, conventions and meetings; exhibitions and trade fairs; training and product launches; incentive travel; short term migration; student and teacher exchanges; delivering goods to markets and customers; military service; aid charities working on projects; government employee travel; and individual general business travel. This research will focus on the subdivision applicable to business and conference tourism, namely major international congresses and conventions, exhibitions and trade fairs, individual business trips and local, regional and national conferences and meetings, both associate and corporate.



Figure 2.5: The typology of business tourism

Source: Adapted from Swarbrooke and Horner (2001:4)

From a broader perspective, business and conference events are usually oriented with the fundamental objective of a business, trade and educational event proposed to promote and engage in commerce to meet corporate objectives (Getz & Page 2015:77; Van der Wagen & White, 2010:10). According to Fenich (2008:10), this segment encapsulates the principle of what these “gatherings” represent, which includes meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. This segment was previously known as MICE (Table 2.2) and continues to be labelled as such globally. Fenich (2008:10) and Bowden *et al.* (2006:20) agree that numerous types of educational and business events exist, namely: meeting - an event where the focus for attendance is participation in discussions, educational enrichment, or attending dedicated organised events; and exhibition – an event where the main purpose is for attendees to visit exhibitions, which are business related, or to network. Furthermore, industry predictions

indicate that the MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) sector is poised for major growth, as there is an increasing demand for meetings across all sectors such as telecommunications, education, insurance, healthcare and energy, amongst others. In addition, meeting space is adapting, and being replaced with a more innovative and intimate approach. Technology is becoming more advanced with apps downloaded on smart phones and iPads. Facebook and other social media simplify the registration process at conferences and conventions.

2.4.2 Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) matrix

The meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) industry now faces “cut-throat” competition as planners and organisers look for value for money, a destination that can offer all round great value and a relaxed atmosphere. With the economy improving, there is once again a renewed demand for exhibitions, meetings and events to showcase the latest products or for brainstorming sessions, or simply for attracting clients. The future of the industry will be influenced by the following major factors: economic uncertainty; better, cheaper technological options for live events; faster, shorter business cycles; offering good value for money; and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders, suppliers, and planners (World Luxury Tourism, 2013). At the opening of our very own “Meetings Africa”, a premier business event trade show hosted by the National Convention Bureau (NCB), CEO of South African Tourism (SAT), Mr Sisa Ntshona, stated that the trade show aimed at positioning South Africa as a leading MICE destination and showcasing a diverse offering of services and products. Furthermore, Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo, Chief Convention Bureau Officer at South African Tourism, stated that “the purpose of Meetings Africa is not a one-sided experience, but rather the advancement of the continent through collaboration”. The “MICE” matrix in Table 2.2 illustrates the segments which make up the business tourism sector. These sectors will be discussed briefly in the context of the conference industry.

Table 2.2: 'MICE' matrix

Segment	Corporate organisation	National Association	International Association	Public sector/ Government
Meetings and conventions	An out of office meeting of at least 4 hours duration involving a minimum of 10 people. Includes sales meetings, training, board meetings and retreats.	Board meetings, regional meetings, training events, information events.	Limited number of board-level meetings, typically lasting 1 – 2 days maximum.	Many organising non-residential meetings of up to 1 day's duration. Also training courses which may last for several days and information events.
Incentive travel	A business tourism trip to motivate.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.	Not applicable.
Conferences		Usually an annual conference/congress/convention for members lasting 2 – 3 days.	An annual (or less frequent).	Mostly 1 day conferences (occasionally 2 days) attracting delegates from the local area or region.
Exhibitions		May include the organisation of an exhibition to run alongside its own conference; also participation in other industry trade shows as an exhibitor. Trade associations are primary organisers.	May include the organisation of an exhibition to run alongside its own conference; occasional participation in other industry trade shows as an exhibitor.	

Source: Rogers (2013:26)

2.4.2.1 *Incentive travel*

Incentive travel is defined as an individual or group travelling to a destination as a reward for good work performance. It can also be used as a motivation tool for reaching higher targets and for increased levels of performance in support of organisational goals and objectives (Tassiopoulos, 2010:83; Fenich, 2008:515; Bladen *et al.*, 2012:308). According to Bladen *et al.* (2012:308), the incentive industry is seen as a lucrative one and continues to survive in the challenging global environment. A more comprehensive view of the sector indicates that whilst incentive travel is still a large component of the sector, it has grown to encompass a wider range of activities. Other incentive events are event-based activities which focus on staff development and performance and include training events, team building exercises and motivating staff to achieve a specific or broad organisational goal to raise performance levels; they can often take on a more creative aspect and include treasure hunts and quizzes. Furthermore, incentives are an effective means of recognising and rewarding staff, replacing cash bonuses, promotions, gifts and profit-related pay outs which often put financial pressure on the organisation concerned (Bladen *et al.*, 2012:308; Fenich, 2008:212; Bowdin *et al.*, 2011:18; Rogers, 2013:69).

The Tourism Partnership Briefing, 2006, indicates that many consider incentive tourism as not being part of business travel due to its main purpose of rewarding through entertainment and not business activities; however, there is a trend for the incentive trips to be combined with an educational component which may include workshops, teambuilding and business meetings. This is due to the economic crisis which forces many organisations to reduce travel budgets.

2.4.2.2 *Meetings and conventions*

Meetings are usually defined as a smaller group of people gathered together for a common purpose; they include sales meetings (a meeting aiming at encouraging staff to perform); promotional meetings (to promote or launch a new product to sales staff or the target market); and educational and trade seminars (for educational purposes) (Rogers, 2013:22). Furthermore, a meeting can be classified as an event where the focus is for participants to attend educational sessions, social functions, debates, discussions or other organised events (Rogers, 2013:22; Tassiopoulos, 2010:504). Fenich (2008:9) adds that internationally, the term has been adopted by many to cover a variety of sectors. Tassiopoulos (2010:503) concurs that meetings have become a medium for communication and are regarded as a form of training and education, with the focus on the program content as a motivation for attending the meeting, while business meetings are grouped into corporations, associations and non-

profit organisations. International meetings have taken on a holistic approach in that the focus is often on the aspects of logistics, dynamics, simultaneous interpretation, protocol and cross-cultural sensitivity. Managing meetings is a skill based on the ability to identify and negotiate for compatible venues and develop programmes to include the best suited keynote speakers. Meeting and convention organisers often highlight the importance of the location and the venue attributes (Tassiopolous, 2010:503; Fenich, 2008:10; Rogers, 2013:24). Tassiopolous (2010:505) further classifies meetings into the following: (Conferences, exhibitions and conventions, being more relevant to the study, will be discussed in greater detail.)

- ❖ clinic (usually used for training activities in small groups)
- ❖ forum (back and forth discussions involving a panel of experts and presenters)
- ❖ retreat (small meeting held at a remote destination)
- ❖ symposium (a formal type of forum)
- ❖ seminar (sharing of knowledge in small groups)
- ❖ colloquium (academic meeting or presentation)
- ❖ web conferencing (live meetings or presentations on the internet)
- ❖ workshop (group sessions)
- ❖ congress (gathering for exchange of views and information)

2.4.2.3 *Conferences*

The conference sector will be dealt with in greater detail in the following section.

2.4.2.4 *Exhibitions*

According to Bladen *et al.* (2012:313) and Rogers (2013:77), exhibitions are growing in number as well as importance, as they provide a unique platform for marketing; this adds the benefit of delivering measurable objectives and providing sellers and buyers with feedback. Tassiopoulos (2010:429) defines an exhibition as “the bringing together in one place for a set period of time, buyers and sellers enabling products to be viewed, handled, demonstrated and discussed and purchased”. In the context of business tourism, exhibitions are two-fold and can be seen as a contributor towards business tourism and as a way of promoting the industry as a whole. Exhibitions consist of two categories, namely trade and consumer exhibitions; however, Tassiopoulos (2010:429) identifies a further category known as the ‘confex’, which is a conference with a small number of exhibition stands relating to the topic of the conference. Although the conference is the main focus, the exhibition offers an opportunity for related businesses and suppliers to showcase their products and services to the directed target

market. This trend is favourable to many of the conference and convention centres located at destinations around the world, including South Africa. Exhibitions are considered a growing part of business and conference tourism and events, and often regarded as three-dimensional advertising where the product and service can be seen, touched, and even smelt and tasted. Internationally, the terms exposition, expo, trade and consumer show or trade fair are used interchangeably. Many exhibitions take place in large, purpose-built halls and venues (Bladen *et al.*, 2012:321; Fenich, 2008:151; Bowdin *et al.*, 2011:20; Rogers, 2013:7).

EXSA (Exhibition and Event Association of Southern Africa) was founded in 1980 with the purpose of supporting and growing the exhibition industry through connecting and engaging. The association's core strategy is to develop and grow the exhibitions and events industry within Southern Africa. Furthermore, the association aims to promote benefits offered by the industry and protect the interests of its members, as well as to set standards and ethics within the industry (Smit, 2015:412). The association proudly affiliates itself to the international body UFI (University For Industry), as well as the EGF (Event Greening Forum); IAEE (USA) International Association of Exhibitions and Events; AOE (UK) Association of Event Organisers and ESSA (UK) Events Supplier and Service Association, therefore collaborating with international accredited organisations.

2.4.2.5 Conventions

According to Tassiopolous (2005:505), a convention generally comprises informative sessions, which are bound by a theme or topic. Kozak, Aksoz and Ozel (2015:256) further classify conventions as an invitation for a meeting consisting of domestic or international people that congregate to exchange ideas. Convention tourism is a consistent year-round form of tourism, offering a focus on economic benefits (Mair & Thompson, 2009:400). It is important to note that the term "convention" is used interchangeably with "conference" and "congress". In terms of conventions held in South Africa, Table 2.3 depicts some of the larger convention centres used for exhibitions and conferences. These exhibition centres are world renowned and boast top class facilities and services. It should be noted that although Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town are considered the "premier global business tourism hubs" for international business conferences, the strategic plan of South African Tourism (SAT) aims to extend the demand to other areas of South Africa.

Table 2.3: Convention and exhibition centres in South Africa

Name of venue	Region
CSIR International Convention Centre	Pretoria, Gauteng
Sandton Convention Centre	Sandton, Gauteng
Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre	Durban, Gauteng
Johannesburg Expo Centre	Johannesburg, Gauteng
Boardwalk International Conference Centre	Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape
Cape Town International Convention Centre	Cape Town, Western Cape
Ticketpro Dome	Randburg, Gauteng
East London International Convention Centre	East London, Eastern Cape

Source: Author's compilation

The Johannesburg Expo Centre, with a variety of multipurpose facilities, is recognised as one of the top exhibition and events venues in Southern Africa, accommodating approximately 20 000 people. The Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre, located in the city centre of Durban, is a world-renowned facility which has been awarded the leading conference centre in Africa, accommodating 20 000 delegates (Durban International Convention Centre, 2017; South African Tourism, 2014). The Cape Town International Convention Centre, currently ranked 60th in the world by the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA, 2016), boasting five- star status and accommodating up to 10 000 delegates at one time. It should however be noted that Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town as mentioned above, are considered the “hub” of conferences and conventions. The location of these cities are easily accessible to international delegates and have venues and facilities conducive to international requirements on a larger scale (ICCA, 2016).

2.5 SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF CONFERENCE TOURISM

According to Rogers (2013:42), the conference industry is a highly complex industry comprising buyers (participants/ delegates) and suppliers (industry), illustrating the motion of “supply” and “demand” (Figure 2.6). Suppliers include conference venues, professional conference organisers, media, sponsors, providers of accommodation, transport, audio visual equipment, telecommunications, interpreters/translators, entertainers, catering and software programmes. Both buyers and suppliers are supported by national bodies and associations and contribute to the overall fast developing conference industry.

Based on the literature review, the buyers and suppliers are clearly defined; however, the literature distinctly identifies that much of the research carried out to date in the field of competitiveness is focused on the broader context of tourism, destinations and specific areas of conferencing (i.e. venues) (Crouch, 2007; Kozak *et al.*, 2015; Chen, 2006; Boz, 2010). There is therefore a need to develop scholarly content to reflect on and elucidate contextual understanding of attributes that can contribute to the fundamental concept of conference competitiveness, which constitutes the objective of this study.

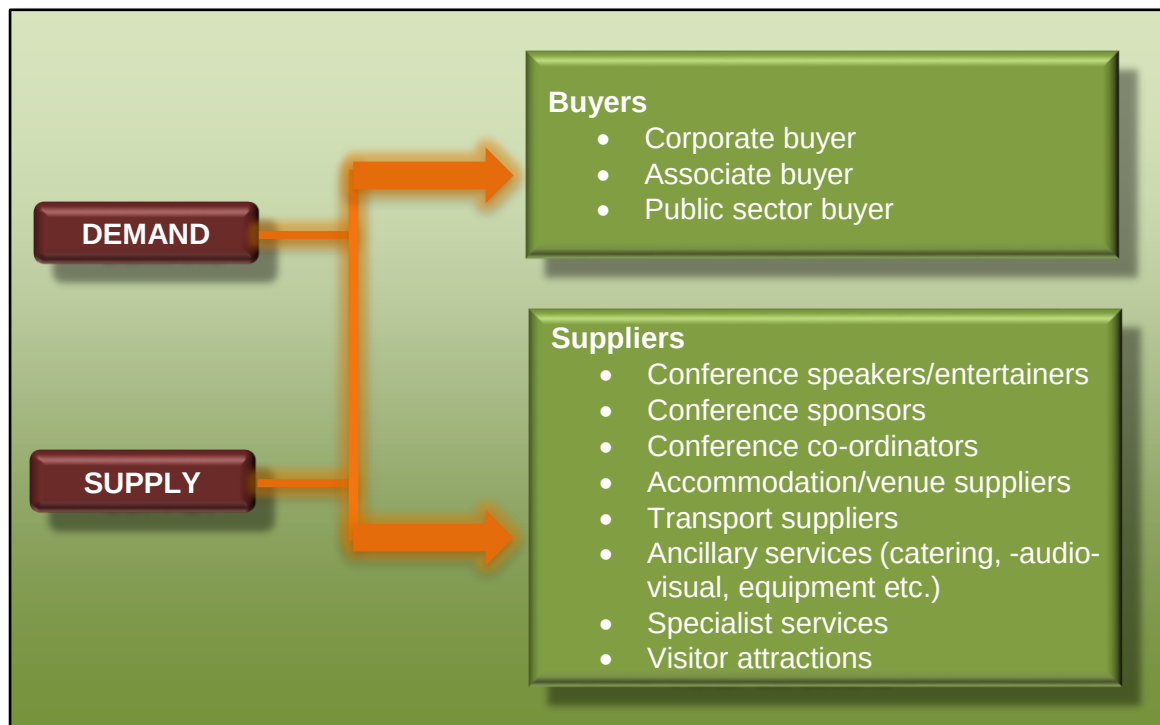


Figure 2.6: Supply and demand of conference tourism

Source: Author's compilation

Crouch and Ritchie (1998), the pioneers of destination competitiveness, provided an in-depth analysis and comprehensive framework of destination competitiveness based on the view that competitiveness builds the economy of a country and supports the ability to increase tourism expenditure, thereby attracting visitors and offering memorable experiences. Various researchers such as Hong (2008); Chen (2006); Kozak *et al.* (2015); and Enright and Newton (2004) added to this research by identifying other attractors and determinants. Ultimately, it can be argued that the various empirical investigations are not consistent, although not necessarily contradictory; they demonstrate that competitiveness is in fact a complex construct. It is, however, deemed relevant to note that understanding the attributing attractors and determinants is of fundamental contributor to competitiveness in all spheres, therefore it can be concluded from the foregoing literature that to determine competitiveness in

conference tourism it is essential to determine the attributes and determinants the key objective of this study. In order to achieve this, it is relevant to understand the prominent stakeholders of the conference industry, the buyers and suppliers, who are discussed below.

2.5.1 The buyer

The convention buying segment - referred to as participants and delegates interchangeably - can be divided into two, commonly known as the corporate and association segments. Corporate conferences focus on the business domain and are attended by corporates for training and sales purposes and the costs of the convention are absorbed by the organisation. Associations, on the other hand, are organisations that represent a number of sectors such as professional, social, religious, recreational and special interest (Rogers, 2013:415; Miller & Kerr, 2009:4). Much of the research conducted to date focuses on the decision-making processes of participants in the venue environment with little to no emphasis on participant needs in the general conferencing environment (Chon, 1990; Opperman & Chon, 1997; Getz, 2008; Kozak *et al.*, 2015; Chen, 2006; Baloglu & Love, 2001). The role of the corporate, associate and public sector buyers is delineated below.

2.5.1.1 The corporate buyer

According to Rogers (2013:53) and Miller and Kerr (2009:2), corporate organisations are companies focused on generating a profit. They can be service or manufacturing oriented organisations with the main types of corporate meetings and events including the following: annual general meeting (AGM); board meeting; corporate hospitality/entertainment; exhibition; incentive travel; product launch; sales conference; training course; seminar; technical conference; symposium and team-building event.

The choice of venue, key-note speakers and program content is the responsibility of the corporate conference organiser, with the decision-making process usually conducted by senior or top management. The venue preference of corporate conferences is usually hotels, or conference centres with specialised conference equipment. It should also be noted that corporate events have a short planning time, usually a few weeks to months, with no specific season. The budget for corporate conferences is usually expressed in cost per delegate, covered by the company and off-set to the business or skills levy account. The typical profile of a corporate delegate is male and senior or middle management (Rogers, 2013:48).

2.5.1.2 *The associate buyer*

The associate buyer refers to those representing a wide range of organisations, including the following: professional or trade organisations/institutions; voluntary associations and societies; political parties; trade unions; charities and religious organisations. Furthermore, lead times for association events are usually longer than those of corporate events, as the decisions are made by a committee and not senior management. National associations tend to follow a series of rotations for hosting of their conferences; their venue preferences are usually conference or convention centres to accommodate the large number of delegates (Rogers, 2013:48). Table 2.4 contains a comparative summary of the corporate and associate buyers.

Table 2.4: Comparisons between corporate and association conferences

Corporate Conferences	Association Conferences
• Corporate buyers are employed by firms “for profit” • Corporate organisations are found in both the manufacturing and service sectors • Immediate decision-making process • Short lead in time • Corporate buyers organise a wide range of events • Delegate numbers are usually less than 200 • Mainly held in hotels, purpose-built conference/convention centres and unusual venues and areas • A higher budget per delegate, with the firm paying • All year round events • Events typically last between 0.5 and 1.5 days • Accommodation usually in hotels (3 stars and up) • Delegates’ partners do not normally attend	• Association buyers are employed by firms for “non- profit” • Associations are to be found in the manufacturing and service • Lengthy event decision-making process, usually involving a committee • Major conferences have a relatively long lead time • Association buyers organise a more limited range of events • Delegate numbers are usually several hundred • Mainly use purpose-built conference or convention centres, conference hotels and civic and academic venues • Lower budget per delegate, with the individual delegate sometimes paying • Events usually held in the spring and autumn • Major conference typically lasts 2-3 days • Wide range of accommodation and delegates’ partners may attend

Source: Adapted from Rogers (2013:53)

The public sector buyer, according to Rogers (2013:59), is sometimes referred to as “government” and covers organisations such as local municipalities and government

organisations/sectors. Delegates from the public sector usually participate in conferences on a “low expense” budget and the organisations are “non-profit” organisations making use of public funding.

Based on the review of the literature, much of the research pertaining to conference buyers focuses on buyer characteristics (Rogers, 2013:60) and little work has been done to identify buyer preferences in conferencing and conference attributes, hence the need for an enhanced understanding of conference buyers to assist with the purpose of this study. It is therefore noted that associate and corporate delegates (buyers) formed part of the quantitative phase (phase 1) of the study, and the stakeholders (suppliers) the qualitative phase (phase 2) of the study.

2.5.2 The supplier

According to Getz (2008:6), stakeholders encompass the production of the event, community involvement, the beneficiaries of the event and business tourism; each plays an independent role and achieves its own aims and objectives. Similarly, many authors (Rogers, 2013:12; Bladen *et al.*, 2012:148; Allen *et al.*, 2010:102) suggest that fostering an amicable relationship with one another promotes a successful event. Getz (2008:5) further states that stakeholders contribute to exercising power in negotiations and can assist with event tourism related policies and strategies. There are several key stakeholders that contribute to the success of a business event. Each of these stakeholders depicted in Figure 2.7 contributed to the value of the study through quantitative and qualitative analysis to fill the gaps in literature and meet the objectives of the study.

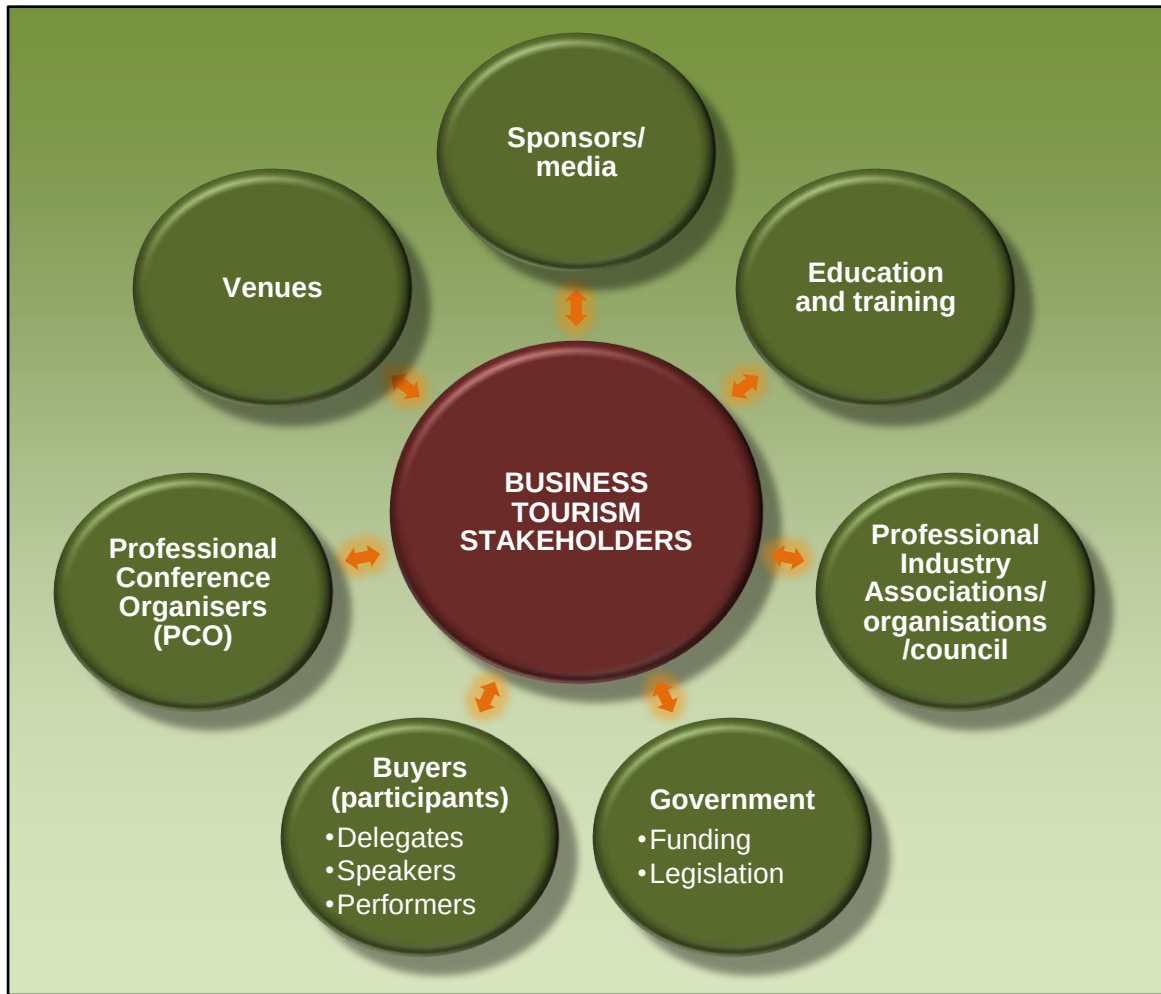


Figure 2.7: Business tourism stakeholders

Source: Adapted from Allen et al. (2010)

Key objectives for stakeholder coordination during planning of events are to develop performance goals and objectives for the success of the event, to collaborate with stakeholders and to achieve consensus on team work. The main stakeholders relevant to this study are discussed below.

2.5.2.1 Education and training sector

The education and training sector is a fundamental role-player in business tourism, as many colleges and universities offer accredited qualifications in event and tourism management, which are essential for the growth and development of the industry (Tassiopolous, 2010:84). However, it is important to note that education in event management in South Africa is a new and growing field and much of the industry is still founded on experience. This presents a challenge in that it has an adverse effect on the sustainability and competitiveness of the

industry. Associations and organisations such as the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI) and the Council of Events Professionals Africa (CEPA) aim to change this by developing certifications and designations for event coordinators and event managers and creating recognised standards of competence and experience to improve professionalism within the industry (SAACI, 2017). This ultimately will raise awareness of conference competitiveness.

2.5.2.2 *Professional industry organisations*

The business and conference industry relies for facilitation on professional industry organisations, councils and associations as fundamental stakeholders. The main organisations and associations affiliated to the conference industry in South Africa are the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI), the Council of Events Professionals Africa (SEPA), the Exhibition and Event Association of Southern Africa (EXSA) and the International Festivals and Events Association (IFEA) Africa which is now affiliated with SEPA.

The Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI), a voice for the conference, meeting and events industry in Southern Africa, collaborates closely with the industry with a strong focus on learning. SAACI also represents South Africa on the recently established BRICS MICE Forum. SAACI has the following strategic goals (SAACI, 2010):

- ❖ To pro-actively respond to issues relating to the conference, meeting and events industry and where possible engage and lobby private and public and sector issues of interest and concern to the membership base.
- ❖ To provide guidance to education and research that can be conveniently accessed by SAACI members to assist them with marketing, planning and decision making.
- ❖ To professionalise the industry through the appropriate education and accreditation initiatives.
- ❖ To develop and maintain specific interest forums with individual goals and operational strategies that are achieved within the SAACI structures.
- ❖ To maintain and further penetrate traditional membership target markets for SAACI.

The mission of SAACI is to “create a platform for sustainable learning, provide strategic direction and to grow the business events industry through strategic partnerships, networking and lobbying government”. SAACI partners with the following industry leaders and role-players: Avis car rental, British Airways, Price Forbes, SANCB and South African Airways.

SAACI is a member of the Convention Industry Council (CIC), Event Greening Forum and Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA), all of which have a vested interest in the growth of the conference industry.

The SAACI 2018 conference invited delegates from all parts of South Africa and from other countries to join in networking, collaboration and learning. The key speakers of the conference focused on topics relevant to the growth and challenges of the conference industry, including technology, food sustainability and leadership. Many of these areas of discussion at the SAACI conference are deemed important for growth in the conference industry and a key interest for this study.

2.5.2.3 Government

The events industry, which includes business events, is supported through national, provincial and local tourism organisations which promote both leisure and business tourism internationally. Government departments have a number of roles in business events in that they organise, and participate in, various events, provide funding and develop policies for the industry (Tassiopolous, 2010:131). South African Tourism (SAT) is a government body that aims to achieve sustainable growth and transformation of the sector through a variety of targeted interventions, and to develop and grow both leisure and business tourism (SAT, 2015). Furthermore, the South African Tourism (SAT) National Sector Strategy 2016 -2026 (SAT, 2016) highlighted that a strategic objective is to focus on destination marketing and business events. SAT's main marketing approach is to make use of South Africa's overall global approach, using a three element strategy. "The first element is to inspire people to consider travelling to South Africa by displaying its unique product. The second is to collaborate with a variety of consumers through showcasing the experiences on offer in South Africa, both in leisure and business spheres. The third is to convince people to travel to South Africa by engaging with key traders and media partners to promote travel to South Africa" (SAT, 2016).

The National Tourism Strategy of 2016 (SAT, 2016) documents that South Africa has benefited from a number of large events over the years, and due to the 2010 World Cup has been placed in a favourable position to attract future events. However, it should be noted that the document highlights a relevant and critical issue in that currently there is no coordinated effort at national level to attract international events (leisure and business), but rather a competitive drive between the provinces to dominate the events business, which ultimately results in South Africa as a destination not being able to secure future events. Moreover, as

it has been emphasised throughout the literature, events are used to attract visitors to a destination that otherwise would not have been considered. This also assists in making provision for geographical and seasonal spread in tourism (SAT, 2015; SAT, 2016).

To assist South African Tourism (SAT), the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB), formed in 2012, supports the conference industry and destinations in bids to host major business tourism events. The SANCB directly targets sectors that make decisions on the location of events and attempts to engage with associations that align the strengths of South Africa and develop South Africa as a destination. According to the Annual Performance Plan (APP) of South African Tourism, the department is targeting 153 business events with approximately 85 000 international delegates in 2018 (SAT, 2018).

The National Convention Bureau (NCB), with the assistance of South African Tourism (SAT), aims to not only focus on bringing tourists into South Africa but also bring knowledgeable specialists into the country for corporate events. These events involve corporate meetings, incentive meetings, international conventions, trade and public exhibitions. According to NCB, for corporate meetings, SADC, Europe, USA and Asia are earmarked to attract African product launches of multi-national company products. The incentive meetings market targets the UK, Europe, US, BRIC countries and Asia via incentive companies, corporate agencies and in-house planners. SANCB sees strong potential in the incentive sector. Conventions are marketed in Europe, USA and elsewhere in Africa, as this is where the headquarters of SA's international associations are located. Furthermore, the CEO for NCB states that target industries and sectors have been identified for each of the provinces in South Africa, with the strengths of each area considered in the bid-making process. Advertising and bidding efforts will be more streamlined and will lead to a more cost-effective strategy overall. The SANCB has secured 177 bids for the period 2015-2020, with an estimated economic impact of R3.5 billion. In the 2015 financial year, 45 bids with an impact of R1.5 billion were secured (SAT, 2015).

The SANCB offers support services to potential meeting hosts, including bidding support, site inspection support, convention planning, delegate boosting support and on-site event services, as seen in Figure 2.8. In order to achieve this, both SAT and SANCB must collaborate with all conference industry stakeholders, as stipulated in Figure 2.8.



Figure 2.8: Convention Bureau collaborative stakeholders

Source: Gauteng Tourism Authority (2017)

Much of the literature on government involvement in the conference industry relates to the strategies and policies developed by governmental organisations; however, very little research supporting the implementation and involvement of stakeholders, both buyers and suppliers, is available. This again points to the need for this study.

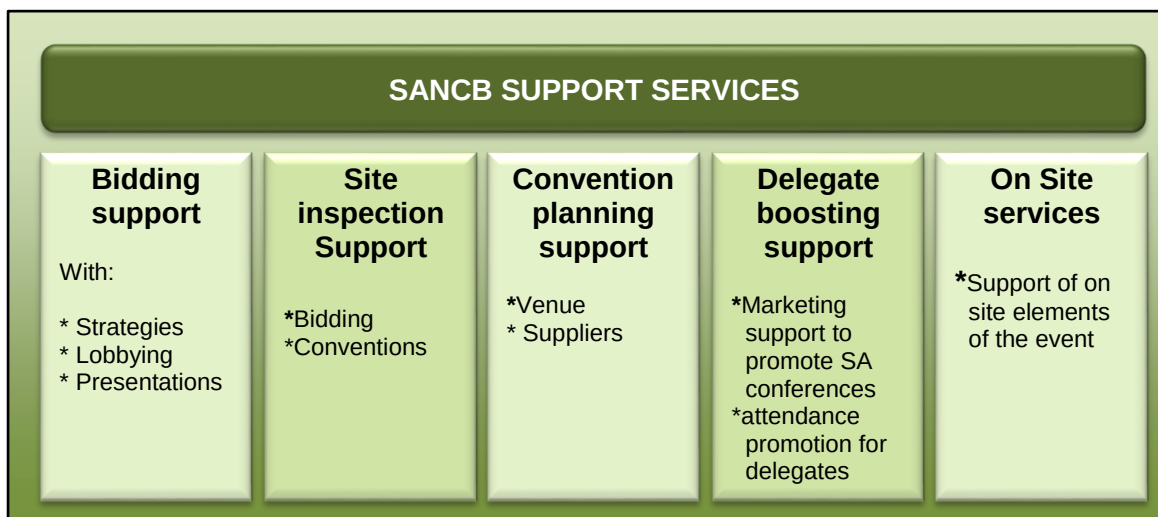


Figure 2.9: SANCB support services

Source: Adapted from the South African Tourism document: "Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy 2015 – 2020" (2015)

According to the South African Tourism Annual Report 2016/17 (South Africa, 2016), many international visitors have experienced South Africa's top class and first rated business events with first world event facilities, accommodation, infrastructure and technology that compete with the best in the world. In addition to the above, SANCB offers the following services:

- ❖ Pre and post bid promotion and handling of requests for proposals;
- ❖ Independent advice when selecting a destination;
- ❖ Government letters of support;
- ❖ Bid materials;
- ❖ Meeting planner support including signage, collateral materials and assistance with locating the relevant suppliers;
- ❖ Advice on local issues;
- ❖ Coordination of airport meet and greet services;
- ❖ Expertise on local products and services;
- ❖ Convention planning support – site inspections;
- ❖ Information pertaining to centres of scientific expertise or innovation;
- ❖ Support for welcome ceremonies at events;
- ❖ Media and PR support;
- ❖ Sponsorship development;
- ❖ Exhibition sales; and
- ❖ Support for educational trips, site inspections, familiarisation trips.

2.5.2.4 *Professional conference organisers (PCOs)*

The professional conference organiser, often referred to in the industry as a PCO, is employed to assist in the co-ordination of a conference. The role of the PCO is to research and recommend a suitable venue that is conducive to the type of meeting. The PCO is responsible for planning the conference program, social program, delegate registrations, booking of accommodation and services for delegates and their partners, and handling of the budget (Rogers, 2013:65). PCOs that are members of organisations such as PCO Alliance and SACCI are bound by ethical standards in the industry. Much of the literature relating to PCOs is limited to the roles and functions of a PCO with little to no literature addressing the important role a PCO plays in the sustainability and competitiveness of the industry. As many of the PCOs in the industry have no formal event management qualifications, the value of competitiveness and sustainability may be perceived as underrated, hence the need for this study. This resulted in a larger sample size of PCOs being included in the qualitative sample to obtain their input on the challenges for growth and development in the conference domain, as well as the attributes deemed important in conferencing. The findings of this study will better equip PCOs to meet the needs of the delegates.

2.5.2.5 *Venues*

A conference venue provides a platform for successful planning of a business event. What usually attracts a delegate to a conference is the destination or place where the conference will be held. Conference venues are built to provide world class facilities which are imperative for the success of the conference and should possess certain characteristics and attributes (Wu & Weber, 2005:400; Crouch & Louviere, 2004:120). This is a consideration for South Africa to remain competitive, as many other destinations are building state-of-the-art convention centres with cutting-edge technology. The venue supplier/conference venue is one of the few suppliers that has received attention in research; however, much of this research (Table 2.5) is related to attributes for site selection with no bearing on the conference industry as a sector.

Table 2.5: Important attributes in site selection for conventions

Crouch and Ritchie (1998)	Baloglu and Love (2001)	Choi and Boger (2002)	Opperman (1996)	Kozak, Aksoz & Ozel (2015)
❖ Proximity of site to convention participants ❖ Percentage of convention attendees able to be accommodate ❖ Accommodation conference rates ❖ Cost of the venue ❖ Perceived food quality ❖ Opportunities for shopping, entertainment, sightseeing ❖ Uniqueness of venue seeing	❖ Capacity of meeting and hotel rooms ❖ Facilities ❖ Room rates ❖ Hotels within walking distance ❖ Safety and security ❖ City reputation ❖ Accessibility	❖ Proximity of hotel to meeting facility ❖ Capacity of rooms ❖ Hotel cleanliness ❖ Quality of food and beverage ❖ Friendliness of hotel personnel ❖ Problem solving skills of hotel personnel	❖ Meeting facilities ❖ Hotel service quality ❖ Location ❖ Safety ❖ Accessibility ❖ Food and lodging costs ❖ Overall affordability ❖ City image ❖ Transportation costs	❖ Facilities at venue ❖ Local site environment ❖ Pricing ❖ Accessibility ❖ Safety ❖ Transportation ❖ Friendliness

Source: Adapted from Miller and Kerr (2009:4)

Conference and convention centres are among the key stakeholders in the convention/business tourism industry, making an economic contribution to the destination and therefore an important consideration in organisers' site selection process. Given the increased competition among convention centres for business, an understanding of pivotal facilities, attributes and services is imperative (Wu & Weber, 2005:4010). Characteristics of a good venue entail the accommodation, capacity of the venue, layout of the venue and architecture of the venue (attractiveness and decor). Moreover, facilities such as heating, cooling and furniture add to the comfort of the venue. Accessibility of the venue is a critical factor – can the delegates get to the venue with ease? Another important characteristic is the quality and type of facilities offered at the venue to make the conference more enjoyable. Facilities at the venue can include Wi-Fi and AV equipment such as overhead projectors and smart boards. (Chacko & Fenich, 2000:217; Wu & Weber, 2005:400; Crouch & Louviere, 2004:120; Kim *et al.*, 2011:92). Furthermore, Swarbrooke and Horner (2001:49) maintain that venues can be classified in a number of ways, including purpose-built venues, multi-purpose venues, academic venues and hotels, as discussed below.

❖ Purpose-built conference centres

According to Whitfield (2007:47) and Fenich (2008:97), purpose-built venues, usually large in size, were constructed to counter economic, social and environmental decline during the post war time. These venues have been modernised and refurbished by improving room design and decor, allowing for smaller breakout sessions along with modern technology to accommodate delegates' changing needs and remain competitive (e.g. Sandton Convention Centre, Gauteng).

❖ Multi-purpose venues

These venues usually provide a variety of services and facilities other than conference facilities which include leisure centres, sports centres, town halls and civic facilities (Rogers, 2013:62; Fenich, 2008:97).

❖ Academic venues

Academic venues include colleges and higher educational institutions such as universities. According to Rogers (2013:62), an increasing number of academic venues provide adequate meeting space, as well as overnight accommodation.

❖ Hotels

According to Rogers (2013:62) and Fenich (2008:90), hotels are the second most common place for meetings. Hotels provide a variety of meeting spaces and vary in size and quality. Furthermore, hotels usually have facilities to support networking functions (i.e. patios, pools, gardens and atriums).

2.5.2.5.1 Site/venue selection factors

The process through which meeting organisers choose destinations for their business events is an important consideration to destinations as the meeting organisers' decisions are usually based on the destination's attributes - which is critical for the purpose of this study. Through research, many attempts have been made to identify specific important attributes for meeting both organisers' and delegates' needs. A study conducted by Miller and Kerr (2009:4) acknowledges and confirms that venue selection can be a complex task; however, many authors argue that although the characteristics of meeting facilities and venues are an

important consideration, an attractive host site needs a broad range of other supporting attributes as well in order for the site to be successful in a competitive environment (Crouch & Ritchie, 1998; Baloglu & Love, 2001; Choi & Boger, 2002; Opperman, 1996; McCartney, 2008). In the study conducted by Miller and Kerr (2009:9), it was highlighted that “venue” was specified by both buyers and suppliers as one of the important attributes in the site selection process.

Due to the growing competition between meeting destinations, understanding characteristics and attributes identified as important by stakeholders is more important now than ever before (Huo, 2014:71; Lau & Wong, 2010:230; Lee, 2009:176; Crouch & Louviere, 2004:120). Crouch and Ritchie (1998:52) argue that regardless of the type of convention, meeting or conference, site selection is a critical factor in the failure or success of an event. A review of literature by Crouch and Ritchie (1998:53) yielded that many articles and publications addressed the issue of factors that influence site selection decisions. From these articles, the following research issues emerged:

- ❖ Factors that influence the convention site selection
- ❖ Relevance of each site selection
- ❖ The decision makers in site selection
- ❖ The dynamics of site selection based on time and across destinations, associations and stakeholders
- ❖ Destination competitiveness enhancement
- ❖ Site selection process associated with certain characteristics

According to Crouch and Louviere (2004:125), site selection factors include accessibility, local support, extra conference opportunities, accommodation facilities, meeting facilities, information and site environment. A further study conducted by Crouch and Louviere (2004:126) entitled “convention site selection – determinants of destination choice in the Australian domestic conventions sector”, ranked the following in sequence of importance:

- ❖ Cost of the convention venue;
- ❖ Food quality;
- ❖ Suitability of the plenary room;
- ❖ Mix of on-site versus off-site accommodation;
- ❖ Proximity of the site to convention participants;
- ❖ Suitability of exhibition space;
- ❖ Suitability of break-out rooms;

- ❖ Accommodation room rates;
- ❖ Attractiveness of the physical setting;
- ❖ Extent of available entertainment, shopping, sightseeing, recreation, and organised tours;
- ❖ Availability of unrestricted economy airfares to the site;
- ❖ Attractiveness of the social/cultural setting; and
- ❖ Availability of audio-visual systems and facilities.

These factors, and the dimensions of these factors, are discussed in chapter 3 from a competitiveness perspective. Furthermore, based on the research of Crouch and Ritchie (1998), a conceptual model of the convention site was developed (Figure 2.10) which illustrates the influence of these site-selection factors. This model consists of five principal steps as outlined below:

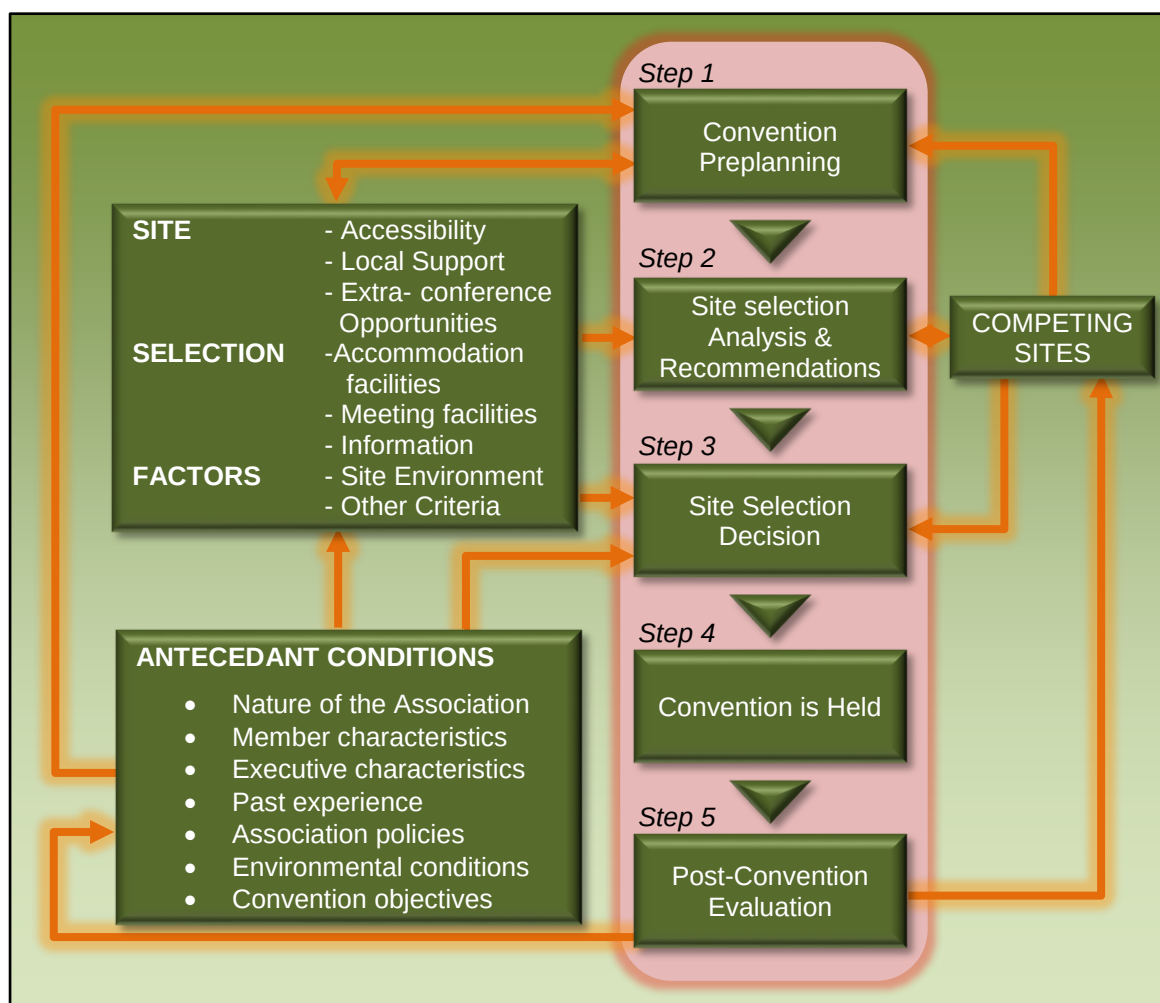


Figure 2.10: General conceptual model of the site selection process

Source: Crouch and Ritchie (1998:61)

Step 1 involves the preplanning before host sites are identified and sourced. This process includes setting convention objectives, formulating a budget, identifying possible dates for the conference/ convention and identifying alternative sites.

Step 2 involves the site inspection, bidding of competing host sites, liaising with stakeholders and collecting information relating to each site (meeting facilities, accessibility, accommodation, etc.).

Step 3 involves the site selection decision.

Step 4 involves the convention being held. After the convention has been held, the convention and site are evaluated.

Step 5 is to provide feedback on how to improve future convention planning (Crouch & Ritchie, 1998:61).

Fawzy and Samra (2008:121), relying on Crouch and Ritchie (1998) and other researchers, added a few more steps to the decision-making process. Step one is deciding whether a meeting/conference is necessary. The following three steps involve convention preplanning activities: step two - establishing a procurement centre (policy decisions and development), step three – compiling a general needs analysis (number of rooms, meeting space capacity, etc.), and step four - product specification. Step five - whether the destination and site are the same or a new one. Step six - the proposed sites are analysed and recommendations noted. This leads to site selection and contracts in step seven. In step eight, the convention/conference is held and step nine is an evaluation of the convention.

To conclude the discussion of venues: the findings of the study will assist venue suppliers to upgrade and improve their facilities and services to meet the needs of their delegate target market according to a ranking process which will identify the importance of attributes to stakeholders.

2.5.2.6 *Service contract suppliers*

The conference industry relies on products and services of many different suppliers in the conference industry (Rogers, 2013:49). These services include conference speakers/entertainers, sponsors, accommodation/venue suppliers, transport operators, catering, audio visual contractors, electrical contractors, security contractors,

telecommunication services, software (registration) contractors, special effects contractors, décor and design contractors and equipment providers. A number of researchers have made reference to a variety of suppliers in the conference industry; however, there is a gap in the literature relating to the importance of these services to conference delegates (the buyer). The purpose of this study will bridge this gap.

2.5.2.7 Sponsors/media

Sponsoring business events is aimed at creating brand awareness, driving sales and providing opportunities for relationship building. These benefits should accrue to both the business event host and the sponsor. In-kind sponsorship is also encouraged and sponsors receive benefits equal to market value for their contribution. These include donations such as beverages, food, conference bags, notebooks, printing of banners and programs (Tassiopolous, 2010:273).

Based on the review of the literature, it is clear that in order to meet the objectives of the study, the attributes that have an association with conferencing and competitiveness need to be addressed. These attributes are outlined below.

2.6 CONFERENCING ATTRIBUTES

Africa, and more specifically South Africa, has made huge strides in becoming a strong player in the conference industry with continually improving infrastructure and service delivery according to Keith Burton, head of African Agenda (Burton, 2013). Furthermore, the convention industry has become a very important part of global tourism and has grown in numbers, size and frequency (Crouch & Louviere, 2014:2; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998:50). Crouch (2007:10) contends that understanding the needs of the participants and delegates in the conference environment is paramount, as each delegate's experience is unique. With this said, the conferencing attributes often influence a business tourist's decision to attend or not attend a conference in a specific destination.

2.6.1 Technology

Technological advances are evident in the conference tourism industry and changing at a rapid pace. According to Krugman and Wright (2007:185), technology enables more efficient planning of a seminar or conference, more reliable implementation, greater mobility, and the

benefit of global communication. Furthermore, for the delegate, technology offers an opportunity to network and conduct business whilst attending a meeting or conference, as well as to participate without leaving his or her destination. Burton (2013) adds that technological advancements in South Africa will change the future of the way conferences are hosted in South Africa, as there is a continued growth in smartphone technology and “hybrid events”. This topic was emphasised and much debated at the recent SAACI 2018 conference attended by the researcher. Renowned speakers such as Paul Martin (EventsAIR), Mark John Cartmell (Bright Giants Ltd), Michelle Prinsloo (Omni Hospitality) and Kyle Smith (Conference Consultancy SA) educated the industry on the influence and future of technology and hybrid events in the conference industry. Lebetrau, the former CEO of SAACI, in an interview stated that trends in South Africa are adapting in line with a new focus on imparting knowledge, implying that conferences are becoming smaller, shorter and more interactive. Furthermore, conferences are adopting the use of live social feeds, video conferencing, audience polling, event specific apps, event hashtags, twitter and facebook to facilitate a greater level of interaction, prompting attendees of a conference to no longer to be referred to as “delegates”, but rather as “participants” (Rogers, 2013:360). Lebetrau (2016:6) states that technology should be embraced and further advancements in areas of sound and production should be encouraged, as this affects the delegates’ overall conference experience.

In terms of global technology, Germany is highly ranked as an international meetings destination and is at the forefront of scientific research relating to megatrends that have an impact on the meeting and congress sector. The European Association of Event Centres (EVVC) and the Fraunhofer Institute of Industrial Engineering (IAO) have revealed a “new look” for future meetings with six conference formats that could become popular in the years to come.

2.6.2 Sustainability

Bladen *et al.* (2012:374) and Jones (2014:4) argue that event sustainability has moved away from the days of recycling and now event managers have an ethical responsibility to produce events that are “socially, culturally and environmentally responsible”. Furthermore, sustainable events are focused on maximising benefits without harming resources, to the extent that many corporate organisations have opted to engage in what is known as corporate social responsibility (CSR), which involves achieving societal policies and practices but at the same time maintaining profitability (Tassiopolous, 2005:23; Rogers, 2013:371; Jones, 2018:4).

Many of the policies and practices relating to sustainable issues include resource use; waste products; water consumed; and gases emission (Allen *et al.*, 2010:102). These practices include catering (when serving food and beverages, locally grown food will be used, in addition to environmentally friendly practices (Rogers, 2013:371; Allen *et al.*, 2010:102; Hall & Sharples, 2008); waste disposal (the minimisation of waste to be encouraged by only using recyclable and compostable materials that are easily disposed of (Rogers, 2013:371; Allen *et al.*, 2010:102) and conference materials (the utilisation of paperless procedures at a conference is encouraged, as with online registration and conference co-operation). Conferences bags and badges are to be made from recycled materials (Rogers, 2013:371; Allen *et al.*, 2010:102). The Event Greening Forum (EGF) presented workshops at Meetings Africa 2018 to educate the industry on the current greening trends in conference tourism. The key objectives of EGF are to raise awareness of and promote greening principles, set standards for greening in the events industry, encourage initiatives and involvement with all stakeholders of the industry and raise funds to ensure long-term sustainability. Greening principles were first implemented on a large scale at the 2010 FIFA World Cup and COP17 held in Durban in 2011. Since then, EGF has received a “buy in” from the industry to support this initiative.

2.6.3 Location

Location of a conference venue is closely linked to site environment. These attributes, according to Crouch and Louviere (2014:2), include the setting of the area and attractiveness of the surroundings, the hospitality of the host community and the infrastructure of the venue. In research conducted by Baloglu and Love (2001); Chen (2006); Kozak *et al.* (2015); and Kim *et al.* (2011), location is deemed an important attribute for venue selection.

2.6.4 Equipment and facilities

For many conference organisers, the facilities and service at a venue are an important consideration: Does the venue have the required facilities conducive to the type of meeting or conference to be held? A site inspection checklist will assist to ensure that the facility meets the necessary requirements (Van der Wagen & White, 2010:43; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998:59). As indicated in Table 2.4, the importance of equipment and facilities as an attribute has been documented by various authors.

2.6.5 Food quality

Almost all meetings or conferences include some form of food and beverage services which range from snacks to full course meals. The quality of the food and the way in which it is presented contribute to making the meeting more memorable and more productive. Consideration should be given to special meals such as kosher, vegan, vegetarian, diabetic, etc. (Ramsborg, 2006:399). A recent British Meetings and Event Industry Survey released in 2017 indicated that the quality of food and level of service were rated amongst the top ten attributes for delegates selecting a venue. Furthermore, according to Business Conference Africa (2017), delegates are becoming more insistent on food that is organically grown or “green” and meets their specific dietary requirements (vegan, vegetarian, banting, etc.) This was confirmed by Lorraine Jenks of Hotelstuff, a speaker at the SAACI 2108 conference.

2.6.6 Conference program

According to Fenich (2015:143), most meetings and conferences require the use of speakers, entertainers or performers to motivate, educate or entertain the delegates. Speakers or entertainers should be selected to attract interest to the conference and drive attendance, as the contents of the program, conference topic, size and degree of specialisation can influence the decision to participate in a conference (Smiljanic, Chatterjee, Kauppinen & Dankulov, 2016:8).

As much as trending attributes are important to make conferencing sustainable and competitive, it is also relevant to look at the future growth of the industry in South Africa from a strategic perspective.

2.7 STRATEGIC GROWTH OF CONFERENCE TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Historically, in the apartheid era, conference tourism concentrated on the domestic market. Post democratic transition there was more focus on international conferences in South Africa, such as the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002. Events such as these prompted the development and upgrading of conference and convention centres in South Africa and led to the increased level of competition (international and domestic) in the conference and convention market in South Africa, hence the need for further research and studies based on conference tourism in South Africa (Rogerson, 2005:176). Conference tourism is considered a lucrative market in South Africa. Carol Weaving,

Managing Director of Thebe Exhibitions & Events (one of the world's largest leading events co-ordinators hosting over 500 events in 30 countries including South Africa), comments that: "International conference delegates spend on average 4.2 days at the conference event and an extra 1.8 days at the conference destination. In addition, 39% visit another part of SA, spending a further 3.3 days in the country. Crucially, within five years of their first visit, 37% of business tourists return to SA on holiday with family or friends" (Reynolds, 2008:33). South African Tourism (SAT, 2014) contends that there is a strong correlation between the national economy of countries and conference tourism. For example, a study published in 2011 by the International Convention Centre (ICC) in Durban, found that in a five-year period from 2006, the convention centre generated R11.4 billion for the region, from 1,432, 866 delegate and visitor days in Durban (Rogers, 2013:262).

Following research into the potential of business tourism and the need to increase the market share of other areas of South Africa (besides Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town), the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) was established, commencing operations in March 2012. The Bureau seeks to grow the size of South Africa's business events industry, which contributes to employment, innovation, skills development, knowledge building of the economy and gross domestic product. SANCB, in collaboration with Grant Thornton, embarked on a study which found that the total direct spend for business events in South Africa was R38.5 billion in 2014 and R42.4 billion in 2015. The report further indicated that in 2015 South Africa hosted 140 international association meetings and conferences attracting approximately 80 000 delegates, generating 542 conference days and over R1 billion in economic impact for South Africa (Thornton, 2006).

Furthermore, Donaldson (2013:26) states that the business sector in South Africa has been identified as an important growth market stimulating inward investment. In the Western Cape 47 bids (with an economic impact of R590 million between 2011 and 2016), translated into 224 conference days and 173 550 bed nights. It can also be noted that South Africa has secured 66 international association conferences for the five years commencing in 2017, which represents an approximate R1,4 billion in economic impact and attracting almost 110 000 delegates over a period of 216 days (Cape Business News, 2016). According to Rogers (2013:170), as of 2011, South Africa ranked 28th of the top conference destinations with the USA, Singapore, Japan, France and Belgium competing for the top 5 positions. South African Tourism (SAT, 2016) acknowledges that growth of the business segment is slow and due to the changes in the business event environment, competitors such as China, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan are now entering the market. Furthermore, the South African Tourism Strategic Plan of 2016 (SAT, 2016) has a mandate to position and profile South Africa

as a business events destination and to attract international delegates from the MICE business area. Table 2.6 reflects the statistics and market share rankings (determined by the Union of International Associations (UIA)) of international meetings that take place worldwide. The statistics are based on information collected and selected according to strict criteria. These statistics include meetings comprising the “sittings” of congresses, conventions, symposia, and regional sessions. The meeting criteria include that there should be a minimum of 50 participants, at least 40 percent of whom must be from destinations other than the host destination; represent at least 5 nationalities, and that the meeting should last for a minimum of 3 days in duration and have at least 300 participants or a concurrent exhibition. As can be seen in Table 2.6, South Africa featured 34th in the ranking.

Table 2.6: UIA rankings: top 40 international meeting countries in 2017

No	Country	Number of meetings
1	USA	941
2	German	682
3	United Kingdom	592
4	Spain	564
5	Italy	515
6	France	506
7	Japan	414
8	China	376
9	Canada	360
10	Netherlands	307
11	Portugal	298
12	Austria	281
13	Repubic of Korea	279
14	Australia	258
15	Sweden	255
16	Brazil	237
17	Switzerland	230
18	Poland	216
19	Belgium	208
20	Denmark	203
21	Argentina	199
22	Mexico	198
23	Czech Republic	187
24	India	175
25	Thailand	163
26	Singapore	160
27	Hungary	159
28	Ireland	158

No	Country	Number of meetings
29	Finland	156
30	Norway	156
31	Greece	144
32	Colombia	142
33	Chine Taipei	141
34	SOUTH AFRICA	122
35	Chile	119
36	Hong Kong	112
37	Malaysia	102
38	Croatia	96
39	Peru	89
40	Indonesia	87

Source: UIA (2018:16)

The Union of International Associations (UIA) reported in a press release that in 2017, 10 786 international association meetings took place in 166 countries with the top three host countries being South Korea, Belgium and Singapore (UIA, 2018).

The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) on the other hand base its rankings purely on the number of meetings that meet the ICCA criteria and not the economic value. According to the ICCA report of 2017, South Africa is ranked international 34th with 122 meetings hosted in 2017 (ICCA, 2017). It should however be noted that the criteria for ICCA includes that the meetings be organised on a regular basis, rotate between at least three different countries and be attended by at least 50 participants/delegates (Rogers, 2013:14). Mr Mntambo (Chairman of SAT) contended that the rankings had improved and that this was owing to South Africa's participation in targeted trade shows namely EIBTM (Exhibitions for the Incentive Business Travel and Meetings) in Barcelona, CIBTM (China Incentive Business Travel and Meetings) in Beijing, and IMEX (Worldwide Exhibition for Incentive Travel, Meetings and Events) in Frankfurt and Las Vegas. The growth and success of Meetings Africa held in Johannesburg, Sandton is considered a large contribution to growth. As such, according to the Strategic Plan of South African Tourism 2015-2020 (SAT, 2015), the real value of business and conference tourism lies in the leveraging of resources to attract a large number of delegates at a low cost, thus becoming more competitive in the conference sector. This can be achieved by retaining uses by existing consumers, stimulating current uses with existing consumers and generating new uses by existing consumers. Furthermore, "new-to-you" consumers need to be attracted as well as "new to category" consumers need to be attracted (Figure 2.11).

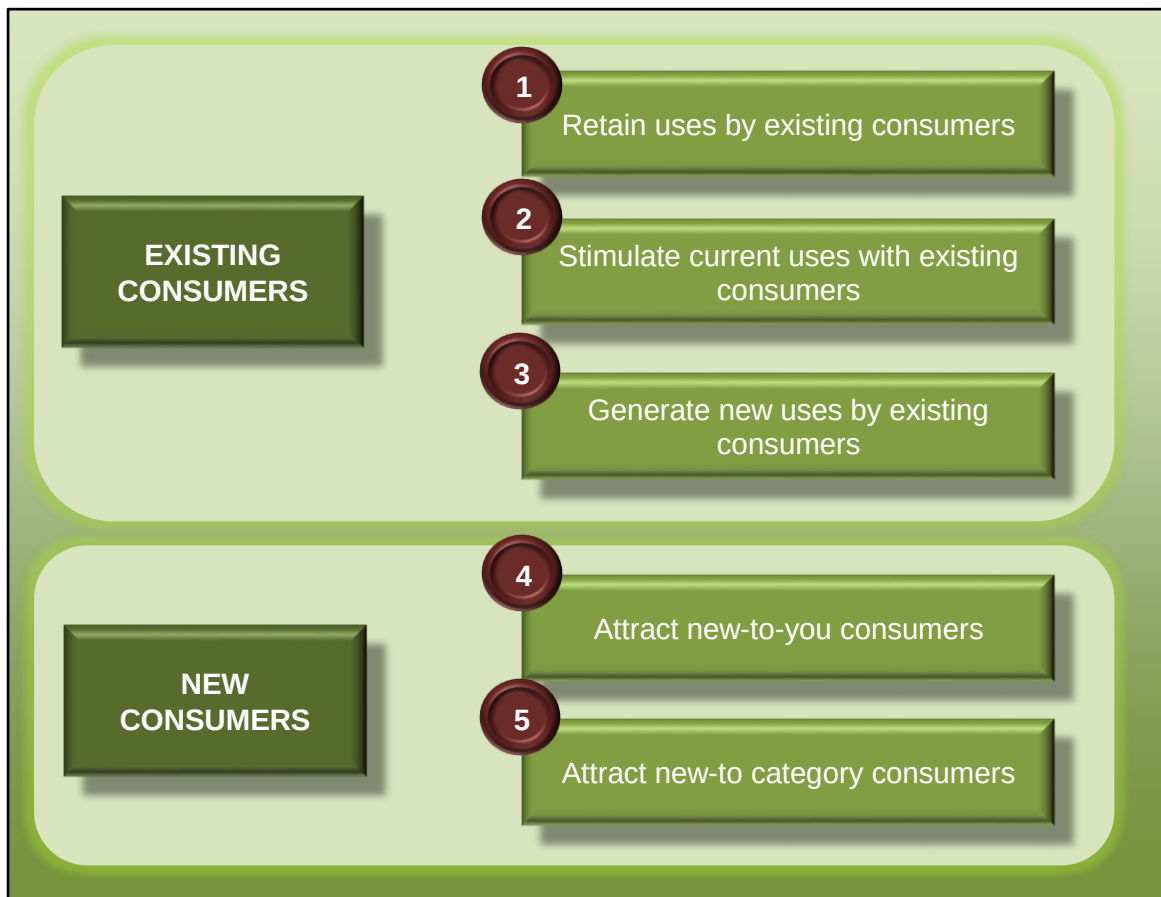


Figure 2.11: Growth of business tourism

Source: SA Tourism Growth Strategy 2008-2010 (SAT,2008)

2.7.1 South African Tourism strategic plan objectives

According to the South African Tourism Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020 (SAT, 2015), the strategic objective is to “increase the number of business events hosted in South Africa” and the objective is to “Market South Africa as a destination for meetings and provide support to bids to increase the number of business events from 118 in 2013/14 to 134 by 2020”. The prioritised markets for business events include the three organisational types outlined below.

2.7.1.1 Intergovernmental meetings

These meetings are representative of government and government institutions, usually within multi-lateral or regional organisations/institutions which are formed to focus on setting regional policies on key issues or investments. The inter-governmental meetings can be segmented into regional, international and large international meetings.

2.7.1.2 Corporate meetings

These are business related meetings of private companies which include customers, suppliers and external stakeholders.

2.7.1.3 Association/NGO and academic meetings

These are meetings of professional associations, industry associations, non-governmental organisations and academic groups.

According to South African Tourism (SAT, 2005), unlike leisure tourism the prioritised markets for business and conference tourism are in major decision centres where the headquarters of major associations are located. Table 2.7 depicts the target market for business and conference tourism in terms of:

- ❖ geographic locations or decision centres for business and conference tourism
- ❖ priority targets within those markets
- ❖ South Africa's potential to attract delegates

Table 2.7: Business and conference priority markets and segments

	MEETINGS	INCENTIVES	CONVENTIONS	EXHIBITION
TARGETED GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS	SADC, Europe, USA and Asia	UK, Europe, USA, BRICS and Asia	Europe, USA and Africa	South Africa, Europe and USA
TARGET AUDIENCE	African product launches and user groups, as well as African regional meetings of multinational corporations	Incentive companies, corporate agencies, and in-house planners	Associations with South African key contacts or areas of specialisation	Internationalising national shows and African versions of existing titles
SOUTH AFRICA'S POTENTIAL	Limited	Strong	Strong	Limited

Source: Adapted from SA Tourism Review: Report of the Expert Panel (SAT, 2015:30)

2.7.2 Growth strategy for business/conference tourism in South Africa

According to Dragicevic, Jovicic, Blesic, Stankov and Boskovic (2012:312), business travellers and conference delegates represent a growing segment of the international tourism market, therefore constituting one of the most featured forms of tourism development worldwide. The main reason for the rapid development is the high return business and image enhancement of the business tourism destination. For this reason, destinations are investing in building conference and convention centres to attract the overseas market for corporate meetings, conferences and exhibitions. Weber and Ladkin (2004:48) state that although the conference industry and meeting market is cyclical in nature and susceptible to changes in the business environment (such as the slowdown after the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001 and the global recession) the industry is still viewed as an investment and competition amongst destinations is likely to continue and intensify.

According to Du Plessis (2015:1), due to the constant rise in global tourism and increased competition, various researchers have identified that, in order to be competitive within a market and foster tourism growth, strategies and actions must be developed. This demands a more profound understanding of this important segment of the tourism and events industry. South African Tourism 2015 (SAT, 2015), the premier tourism body for South Africa, has a business tourism strategy which focuses on attracting a share of the international business tourism market. The South African government supports this strategy and recognises the need for attracting international business tourism, having identified the valuable contribution of this sector to economic growth. The focus is on marketing South Africa as a “meetings destination”, increasing the number of business travellers and providing support for bids to contribute to the number of business events from 118 in 2013/14 to 134 by 2020.

In addition, the National Tourism Sector Strategy of 2016 (SAT, 2016) has recognised conference tourism as a key catalyst to ensure continued growth of the events sector and bring valuable economic benefits to the country. The strategy is aimed at creating an environment conducive to sustainable growth and a renewed focus on marketing and brand management (NDT, 2010:10). It is evident that the national strategy recognises events as a strategic priority for competitiveness and there is continued support to host a diverse portfolio of successful events and conferences. However, the concern remains that these events and conferences need to be sustainable in a competitive environment; hence it is clear that conference tourism continues to be neglected in the wider literature despite its unquestionable relevance and contribution to the economy.

Furthermore, although a number of competitiveness models (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Hassan, 2000; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Heath, 2002) have been developed to include factors and indicators that measure competitiveness, it beats repeating that these models are destination oriented and that such a model or framework has not been developed to measure competitiveness in the conference tourism industry. While the conference industry may have similar attributes, such as resources and attractors, event planning and management, event policies and development, these may vary in relativity, depending on the product mix and target markets, and require investigation (Tsai *et al.*, 2009:527).

According to Robinson and Callan (2005:80), prior to 1997 the average number of delegates attending conferences was fewer than 100 delegates, with the average duration of the conference being fewer than three days, and no longer than five days. Since then there has been a growth in the number of delegates attending conferences. According to the SA Tourism 2014 annual report on business, tourism increased from 5.9% in 2013 to 8.3% in 2014 (SAT, 2014) and conference tourism from 7.8% in 2013 to 12.4% in 2014 (SAT, 2014). According to South Africa info (SAT, 2012; SAT, 2015), South Africa is a popular destination for business travellers due to its world class infrastructure, almost perfect climate and breath-taking scenery, an ideal location for international conferences and conventions. However, Happ (2015:115) cautions that it is imperative to continually improve the size, quality and standard of venue infrastructure to remain competitive. South Africa currently boasts over 1000 world class conference and exhibition venues. According to Rogerson (2005:184), post the democratic transition in 1994 there was increased potential for the expansion of conference tourism in South Africa and much of the development of the conference tourism industry was based on driving the rise of international MICE tourism. In 2008, it was estimated that approximately 110 000 foreign MICE participants visited South Africa annually, ranking South Africa as 22nd in a global listing of world conference destinations. In addition, South Africa has hosted many successful, high profile international conferences which include the World AIDS Congress in Durban, July 2016, and the World Summit for Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in August 2002 (Rogerson, 2005:185). South African Tourism describes the market as “highly competitive” (Figure 2.12) and the financial investment is seen to be rewarding.



Figure 2.12: Business tourism in South Africa

Source: Adapted from the South African Tourism document: "Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy 2011 – 2013" (SAT, 2010:11)

The South African Tourism Strategic Plan (SAT, 2015) ensures that South Africa defends its share in areas of strength whilst, at the same time, aggressively pursuing growth in value, volume and reduction in seasonality (Figure 2.13).

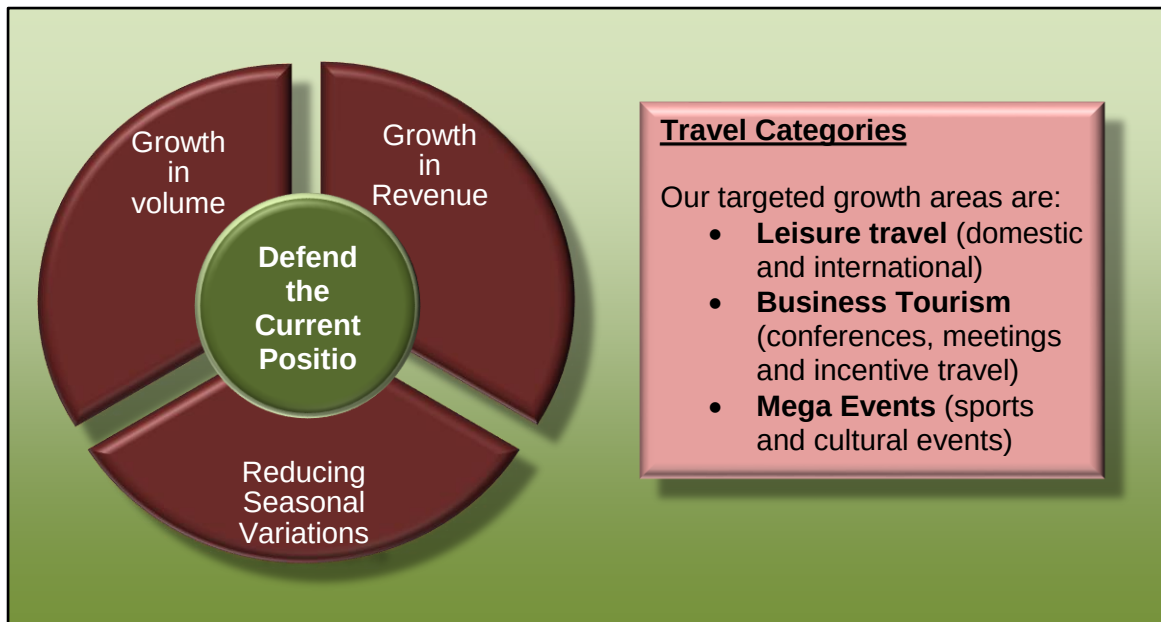


Figure 2.13: Defending share while pursuing new growth opportunities

Source: Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy 2011 – 2013 (SAT, 2010:6)

According to the South African Tourism Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy, 2011-2013 and the South African Tourism Sector Strategy 2016 (SAT, 2010; SAT, 2016), the travel categories for pursuing new growth opportunities include: leisure travel (domestic and international), business tourism (conferences, meetings and incentive travel) and mega events (sports and cultural events). Furthermore, the strategic outcome-oriented goals of SA Tourism identify areas of organisational performance that are critical to the achievement of its mission (Table 2.8).

Table 2.8: Strategic outcome-orientated goals of SA Tourism

STRATEGIC OUTCOME-ORIENTATED GOAL: Increased contribution of the tourism sector to inclusive and sustainable economic growth.			
GOAL STATEMENT: Implement marketing strategies that build brand awareness of South Africa as a tourist destination – to ensure that all types of tourists are attracted, including international, domestic and business events’ delegates, that will increase tourism revenue contribution to the economy from R107.4 billion in 2015 to R134.3 billion by 2020.			
Strategic objective	Objective statement	Baseline 2013/14	Justification
Increase the number of business events hosted in South Africa	Market South Africa as a business events destination and provide support for bids to increase the number of business events hosted in South Africa from 118 in 2013/14 to 134 by 2020	118	This objective is to create a strong focus on the marketing and selling of South Africa as a meetings’ destination

Source: South African Tourism Strategic Plan 2015-2020 (SAT, 2015)

Furthermore, it was noted in the Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy 2012-2020 (SAT, 2012) that a key objective of the business tourism strategy was to develop a pre and post tour framework to encourage business tourism. The key role-players involved in this would be NDT, SAT, SAACI and Convention Bureaus – national and provincial.

2.8 STRATEGIC CHALLENGES IN CONFERENCE TOURISM GROWTH

For South Africa to achieve sustained growth, it needs to differentiate itself from its competitors. According to the Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy for South Africa 2011 – 2013 (SAT, 2010) and the Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy 2012 - 2020 (SAT, 2012), in a dynamic global market, differentiation demands constant innovation and meeting the needs of the ever-changing consumer. The economic crisis has had the most profound effect on the tourism and conference industry with consumers constantly seeking value for money and becoming more conscious of their “carbon footprint”. Currently the South African tourism and events industry remains fragmented, leaving the space open for stronger players that have an influence over pricing and packaging. Tourism chains are still under developed. The global context continues to be a challenge and the following considerations should be taken into account (Figure 2.14).

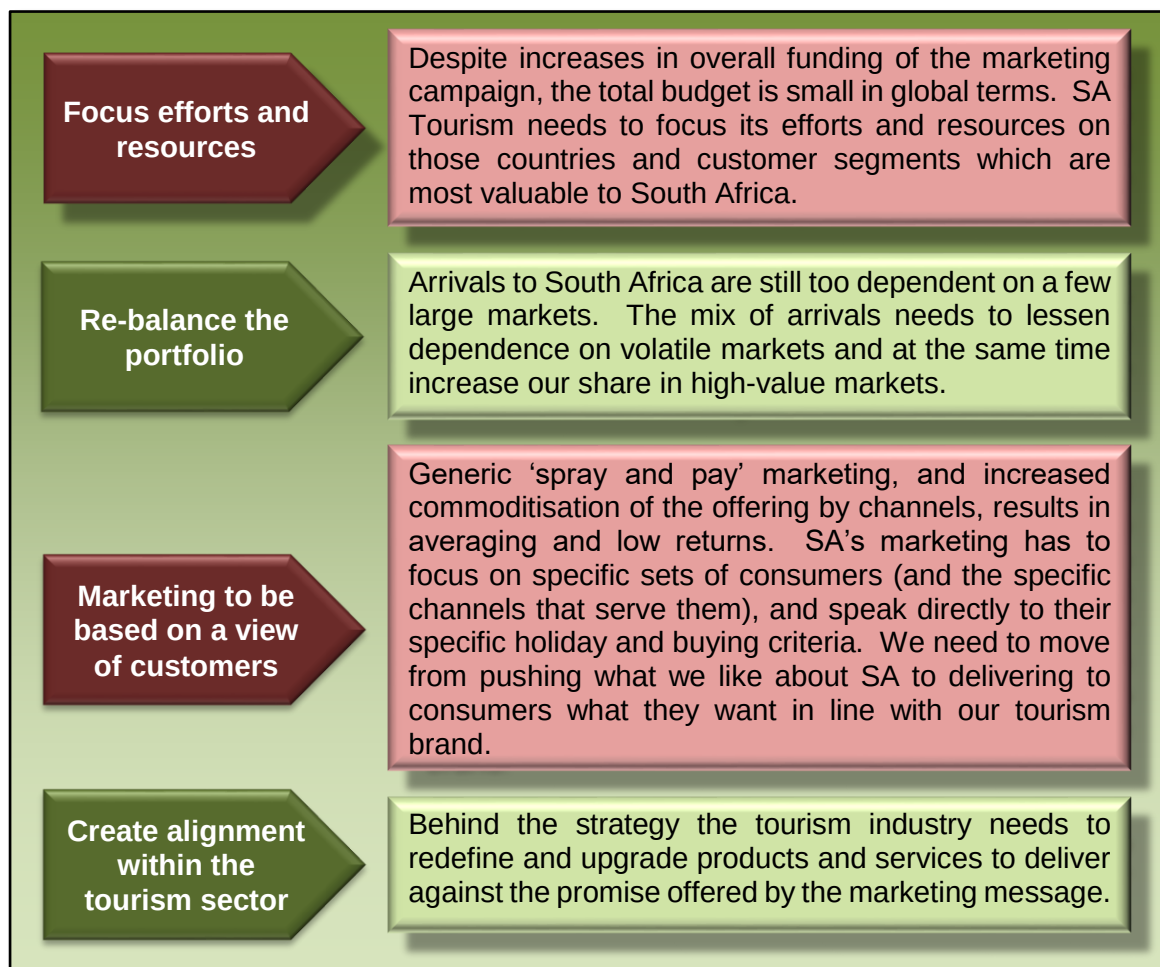


Figure 2.14: Challenges of the global market

Source: Adapted from the South African Tourism document: "Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy 2011 – 2013" (SAT, 2010)

According to the Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy for South Africa 2012 – 2020 (SAT, 2012) SA Tourism needs to understand the global context where it operates and invest in resources to gain returns (Figure 2.15).

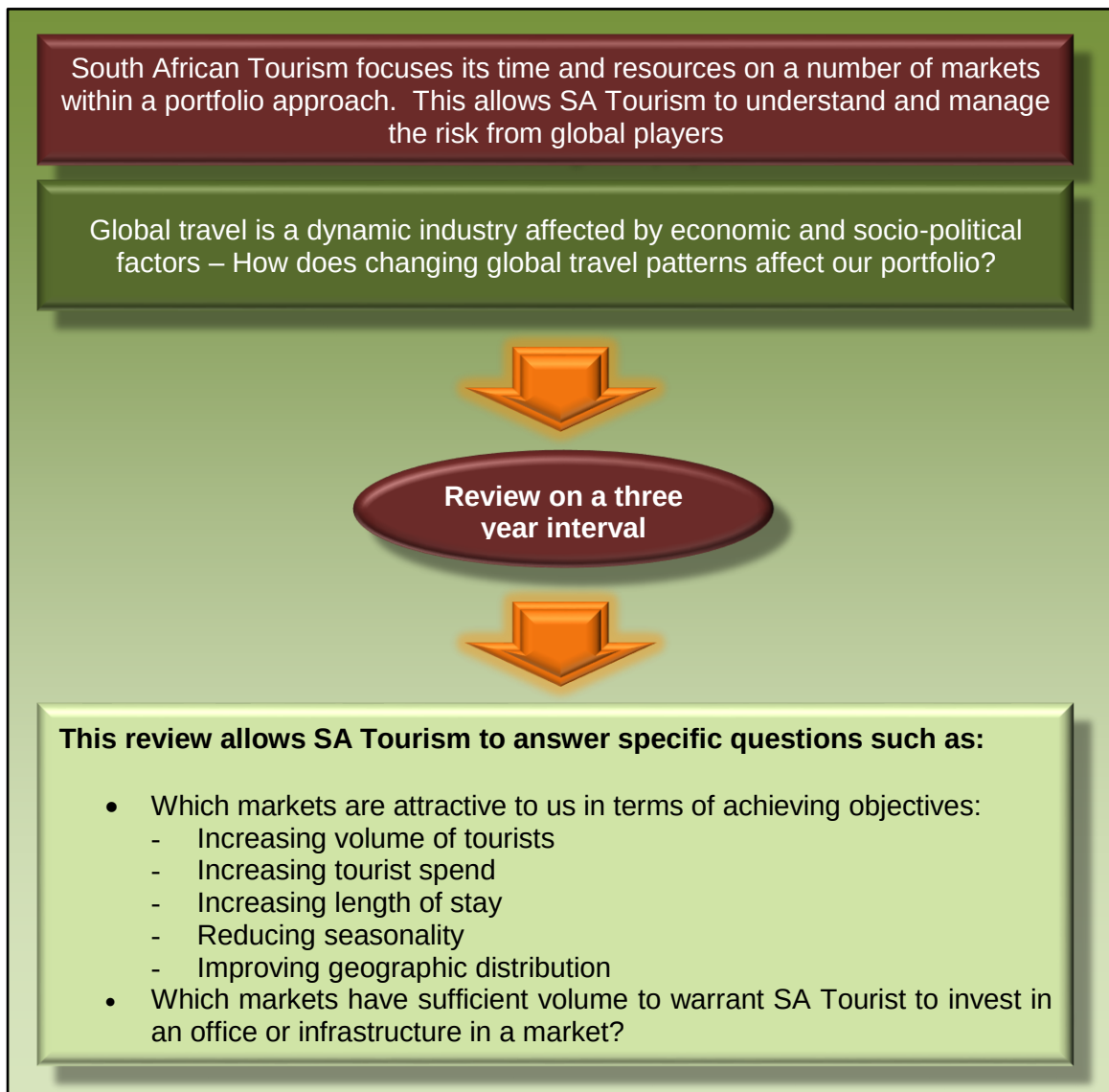


Figure 2.15: Improving tourism and conference competitiveness

Source: Adapted from the South African Tourism document: “Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy 2011 – 2013” (SAT, 2010)

According to Crouch and Louviere (2004:118), conferences can be hosted anywhere in the world due to the era of globalisation, which makes meetings and conferences extremely competitive. Dwyer, Forsyth and Rao (2000:9), Porter (1985) and Ritchie and Crouch (2003) define competitiveness as a concept that encompasses price differentials in search of a favourable competitive position aiming to establish profit and a sustainable position in the competitive environment. Furthermore, in tourism literature, the concept of competitiveness has been applied to various disciplines integrating marketing plans and promotional or growth or sustainability strategies (Mohammadi, Rast & Khalifah, 2010). Evans (2015:550) describes a competitive strategy as a favourable competitive positioning within an industry which aims at establishing a sustainable and profitable position against the forces determining industry

competition. Ritchie and Crouch (1993) contend that competitive positioning is imperative when planning and developing sustainability strategies in order to provide for market longevity within the conference industry. Competitiveness in the events context will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.9 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to achieve the secondary objectives, which entailed the exploration of the concept and typology of the business and conference sector by means of a comprehensive literature review. This objective was fulfilled by firstly laying a foundation through an investigation to reflect on and elucidate contextual international key findings on business and conference tourism and develop a distinct understanding of the typological, theoretical, critical, conceptual and empirical contributions of the conference industry, globally and more specifically in South Africa. This chapter highlighted the contributing economic factors which have developed tourism and conference tourism. The typology of business tourism was used to place business tourism/conference tourism in context, which assisted in addressing the key issues relating to business tourism and conference tourism in general terms: its characteristics, potential, attributes and trends. From there, discussions centred around the specifics of the conference tourism niches and their interrelatedness and classifications (including the stakeholders, as it is evident that the stakeholders are key role-players in the supply and demand sides of the conference industry). The goals and objectives for conference tourism of the various associations and organisations have stressed that there is scope for South Africa to prosper as a top business tourism destination; in order to achieve these objectives, research in conference tourism is a necessity. The chapter focused on the South African conference market, as well as the tourism strategy for South Africa that highlights the need for marketing conference tourism and ensuring its sustainability in a competitive environment (South Africa, 2016). Ritchie and Crouch (2003:11) state that competitiveness is a well-known and widely accepted concept which relates to the marketing field of study and has captured the interest of numerous authors who have provided inputs into the understanding, as well as practical research (Vanhove, 1994; Hassan, 2000; Enright & Newton, 2004).

Critical aspects addressed and utilised in the empirical phase of the study include the important conference tourism determinants that affect competitiveness.

The following chapter will investigate the multi-dimensional concept of tourism competitiveness from a global perspective and the relation to business and conference tourism.

CHAPTER 3

AN ANALYSIS OF COMPETITIVENESS WITHIN THE CONFERENCE CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Owing to tourism literature, the concept of competitiveness has been extended to various tourism profiles with much of the research emphasising destination competitiveness. Notably, in the tourism context, competitiveness has been defined as a “destination’s ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors” (Hassan, 2000:240); it is thus affected by a number of short term attributes such as the economic conditions, tourist motivations and competitive conditions. Ritchie and Crouch (2000:5) explicate that competitiveness in a destination context is “the ability of a country to create added value and thus increase national wealth by managing assets and processes, attractiveness, and aggressiveness, and proximity, and by integrating these relationships into an economic and social model”. South Africa as a destination has recently faced economic and political challenges which affected its overall global competitiveness ranking. In order for South Africa to improve its most recent ranking of 47th in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report 2016-2017 (WEF, 2016), stakeholders need to understand the factors which contribute to South Africa’s competitiveness.

Competitiveness encompasses price differentials in search of a favourable competitive position, aiming to identify profit and a sustainable position in the competitive environment (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Dwyer *et al.*, 2000; Porter, 1985; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2004). In tourism literature, the concept of competitiveness has been applied to various disciplines integrating marketing plans and promotional growth or sustainability strategies (Mohammadi, Rast & Khalifah, 2010. Evans (2015:550) describes a competitive strategy as a favourable competitive position within an industry which aims at establishing a sustainable and profitable position against the forces determining industry competition. Ritchie and Crouch (1993) contend that competitive positioning is imperative when planning and developing sustainability strategies in order to provide for market longevity within the industry.

The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on and elucidate systematic approaches to competitiveness and develop a clear understanding of the theoretical, critical, conceptual and empirical contributions of competitiveness within the conference context, both internationally and nationally. The conceptual and methodological limitations related to measurement of competitiveness and specifically conference competitiveness have been much debated. Subjective measurements dominate research, either from the demand or supply side; approaches integrating both sides are rare.

This chapter further aims to discuss the models and frameworks based on destination competitiveness; these have drawn much criticism, as most of the research done on destinations is based on existing models (one size fits all approach) and does not make provision for individual factors of the destination or other tourism related services and products, specifically conference tourism. This study has considered this limitation and will contribute to existing tourism research in that it is the first of its kind to consider conference tourism. The figure below (Figure 3.1) indicates the layout of the chapter aimed at elucidating the phenomenon of competitiveness in the conference tourism sphere.

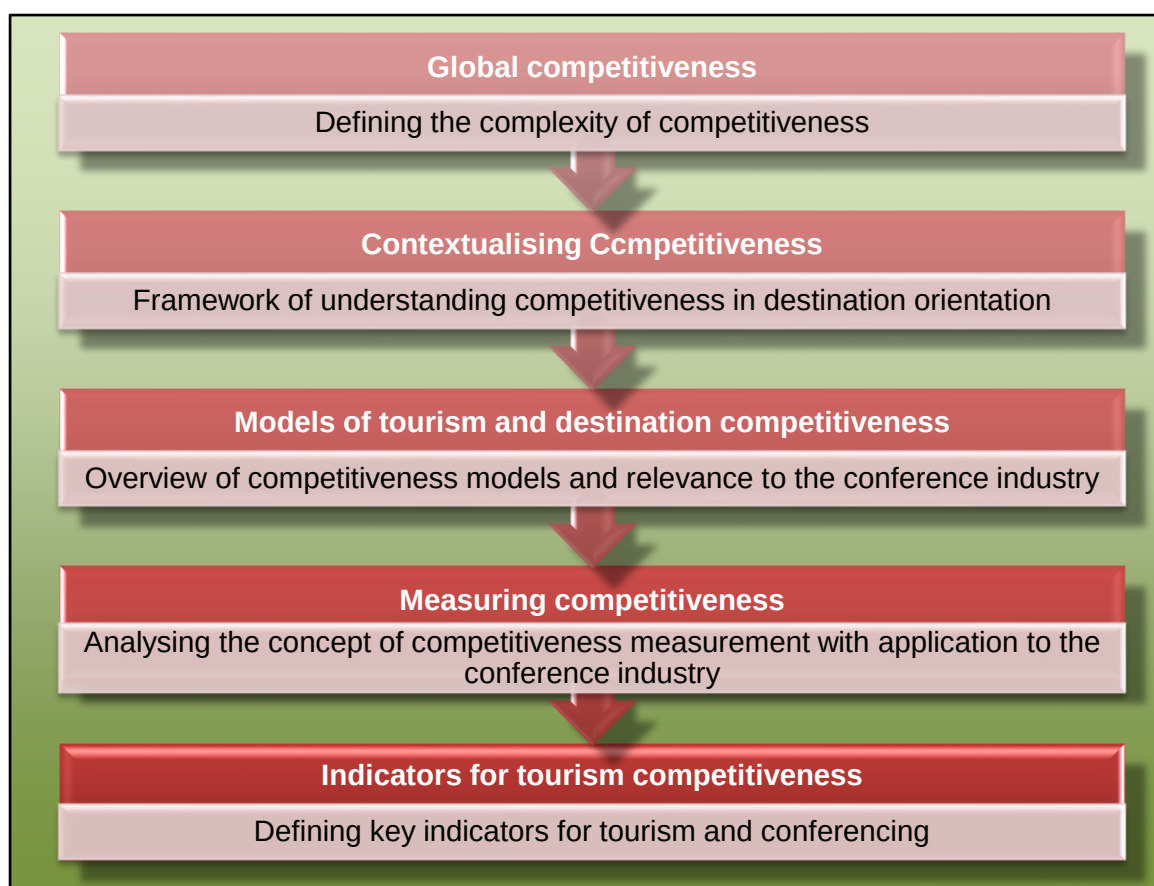


Figure 3.1: Competitiveness chapter structure

3.2 CONTEXTUALISING GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

In order to fully understand global competitiveness, it is imperative to analyse various definitions.

3.2.1 Defining and understanding the concept of competitiveness

In tourism literature, numerous definitions have been proposed; however, Novais, Ruhanan and Arcodia (2018:325) argue that despite extensive literature competitiveness is still a broad and comprehensive term with various inconsistencies. Several researchers have attempted to clarify competitiveness in a tourism and destination context, basing their findings on the pioneers in global competitiveness research, Porter (1990) and Ritchie and Crouch (1993). According to Crouch and Ritchie (1999:140), the Oxford Dictionary defines competitiveness as to “compete” and to strive for superiority in quality. However, Crouch and Ritchie (1999:140) posit that defining competitiveness is problematic in that both of these are mostly multi-dimensional, with a further complication being the unit and perspective of analysis and

measurement (Mazanec & Ring, 2011:725). Similarly, the World Competitiveness Report (WEF, 1994:17) defines competitiveness as “the ability of a country or company to proportionally generate more wealth than its competitors in world markets”. Recently, the World Competitiveness Report (2016) expanded on this definition as “a set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of an economy, which in turn sets the level of prosperity that the country can achieve”. Furthermore, the IMD World Competitiveness Ranking Report (IMD, 2017) defines competitiveness as the “extent to which a country is able to foster an environment in which enterprises can generate sustainable value”. Despite the holistic definition, there seems to be no generally accepted definition of competitiveness due to its complexity; it challenges attempts to encapsulate it in application and relevance. With this said, it is not possible to address all definitions in this study; it is nonetheless crucial to explore the generally accepted definitions of competitiveness in the context of tourism, as mentioned in Table 3.1. These definitions embrace the concept or practice in tourism literature, expanding it with a destinations sustainability approach.

Table 3.1: Definitions of competitiveness in a tourism context

Author(s)	Definition	Key issues	Year
World Economic Forum (WEF)	“The set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country.”	Policies Productivity	1994
Hassan	“The destination’s ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resource while maintaining market position relative to competitors.”	Value added products Environmental	2000
Buhalis	“The effort and achievement of long-term profitability, above the average of the particular industry within which they operate as well as above alternative investment opportunities in other industries.”	Profitability	2000
Heath	“...include objectively measured variables such as visitor numbers, market share, tourist expenditure, employment, value added by the tourism industry, as well as subjectively measured variables such as ‘richness of culture and heritage’, ‘quality of the tourism experience’, etc.”.	Tourism development Sustainability	2002
Ritchie and Crouch	“The ability to increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination	Satisfying experiences Profitability Comparative advantage	2003

Author(s)	Definition	Key issues	Year
	residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations.”		
Dwyer & Kim	“The ability of a destination to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered being important to tourists.”	Tourism experience	2003
Enright & Newton	“A destination is competitive if it can attract and satisfy potential tourists. This is determined by both tourism-specific factors and by a much wider range of factors that influence the tourism service providers”	Tourist experience	2004
IMD’s World Competitiveness Yearbook	“Economy manages the totality of its resources and competencies to increase the prosperity of its population.”	Resource management	2012 /2017
Dupeyras, & MacCallum (OECD Tourism Papers)	“Is about the ability of a place to optimise its attractiveness for residents and non-residents, to deliver quality, innovative, and attractive tourism services to consumers and to gain market shares on the domestic and global market places, while ensuring that the availability of resources supporting tourism is best used efficiently and in a sustainable way.”	Attractiveness Resources Market shares Sustainability	2013

Source: Author’s compilation

Table 3.1 depicts the wide array of definitions of competitiveness focusing on destination and tourism, clearly indicating that there is a lack of consensus on defining competitiveness amongst researchers. The definitions do, however, reflect a distinct relationship between policy development, destination marketing, attitudes and resources. Ring (2016:42) posits that besides the vagueness of the competitiveness definition, there is also a lack of mutual understanding amongst researchers on the measurement and monitoring of competitiveness. Ring (2016:42) maintains that emphasis should be placed on an integrated approach to understanding the complexity of competitiveness of tourism and/or tourism destinations with the attempt to extend theoretical and empirical studies. But while definitions are neither true nor false, they nonetheless seem to be more or less useful to contributing and formulating hypotheses (Manzanec, Wober & Zins, 2007:86; Dragičević, Jovičić, Blešić, Stankov & Bošković, 2012:314).

In order to contextualise competitiveness, it is imperative to provide a clear perspective of the tourism and destination sectors within the competitiveness environment, from there placing it in the context of this study. It should further be noted that the tourism and destination competitiveness definitions reflect a distinct relationship between policy development, destination marketing, attitudes and resources. This study explores the extent of the relatedness to conference competitiveness, as no such literature currently exists.

3.2.2 Tourism and destination competitiveness

Tourism is considered a crucial factor for the success of tourist destinations, requiring a competitive supply of tourism services and stimulating the development of a region for the benefit of the community (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009:39; Anastassopoulos & Patsouratis, 2004:64). Hong (2008:6) defines tourism competitiveness as “the ability of a destination to create, integrate and deliver tourism experiences, including value-added goods and services....”. Navickas and Malakauskaite (2009:37) acknowledge that the competitiveness of the tourism sector encompasses many factors, which include the natural environment (geographical location, scenery, climate, etc.), artificial environment (tourism infrastructure, transportation, leisure activities, etc.), and globalisation of markets. According to many researchers, the tourism sector can only be seen as competitive when tourist destinations are competitive in quality products and services (Poon, 1993; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2003:41; Vanhove, 2002:34; Ritchie & Crouch, 1995, 2003; Murphy, Pritchard & Smith, 2000:44) and when key determinants and attributes of global market competitiveness are in order to ensure sustainability and growth (Hudson, Ritchie & Timur, 2004:83).

There are various factors that can influence a destination’s competitiveness; these include a destination’s core resources and attractions which enable a destination to be perceived as appealing (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Kiralova and Pavlicecka (2015:360) define destinations as “territories, geographical areas, such as a country or town with political and legislative framework for tourism marketing and planning”, which are perceived by visitors as an exceptional offering of services and facilities that meet their needs. Armenski, Gomezeljb, Djurdjeva, Deria and Aleksandraa (2011:30) elaborate that destination competitiveness is the ability of a destination to manage its assets by constructing additional values within a social and economic environment, proving that with globalisation and the ever-changing needs and attitudes of clients, destinations are finding it difficult to remain competitive.

Destination competitiveness research has progressed since the 1990s, much of it based on the pioneer destination competitiveness model of Ritchie and Crouch which depicts the

relevance of comparative advantage in the tourism industry (Crouch and Ritchie, 1999; Ritchie and Crouch, 1993, 2000, 2003). From here, Porter's (1990) national "diamond" model, Dwyer and Kim's model (Dwyer & Kim, 2003), Enright and Newton's model (2004, 2005) and the Hong model (2008) delved into comparative advantage with specific niches in the tourism industry and offered a ranking based on the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) to include the most important factors for destination competitiveness, whilst Dwyer and Kim (2003) focused on destination management for competitiveness. Enright and Newton (2004, 2005) include business-related factors for destination competitiveness and Hassan (2000) and Mihalic (2000) address environmental issues of destination competitiveness (Mazanec & Ring, 2011:725). Furthermore, besides the elucidation of competitiveness models, there have been a number of studies with the objective of diagnosing competitive positions for specific destinations and contributing to the understanding of destination competitiveness (Tsai *et al.*, 2009; Hudson, Ritchie & Timur, 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Kozak & Rimmington, 1998; Mair & Jago, 2010; Heath, 2002). Other research includes destination marketing and price competitiveness (Buhalis, 2000; Dwyer *et al.*, 2000, Hassan, 2000).

Regarding sustained competitiveness, Armenski *et al.* (2018:385) posit that the ongoing development and expansion of tourist destinations call for well-equipped and responsible destination management research based on the fact that tourism competitiveness is "an ability of a destination to meet visitor needs on various aspects of the tourism experience" (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). A shared perspective amongst researchers is that the competitiveness of tourist destinations is not separate from added-value products, but that these should be encouraged to maintain a larger competitive market share, considering that the development of tourist destinations should not only be economically sustainable but also take into account social and political sustainability (Hassan, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 1993; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Enright & Newton, 2004, 2005; Faulkner & Fredline, 1999; Cracolici & Nijkamp, 2008). Dwyer and Kim (2003) posit that tourism destination competitiveness is a general concept that "encompasses price differentials coupled with exchange rate movements, productivity levels of various components of the tourist industry and qualitative factors affecting the attractiveness or otherwise of a destination" and can be defined as the ability of a destination to hold its market share. As previously stated, the most detailed work undertaken by tourism researchers on overall tourism competitiveness is that of Crouch and Ritchie (1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2005) which will be discussed in detail at a later stage. The model of Dwyer and Kim (2003:378) brings together the main elements as proposed in the wider literature of destination competitiveness. The integrated model of Dwyer and Kim (2003) is based on similar variables to that of Crouch and Ritchie (1999).

It is clear that very little research has been conducted on competitiveness within the business and conference tourism environment; research mostly encapsulates studies relating to tourism and destination competitiveness. In order to place this study in context, it is important to acknowledge the existing studies based on tourism and destination competitiveness. Table 3.2 and Table 3.3 summarise general tourism competitiveness research conducted to date.

Table 3.2: Pioneer contributions to competitiveness and model development

Author/ Researcher	Title	Competitiveness topics	Focus of competitiveness	Year
Poon	Technology and competitive Strategies.	• Technology and competitive strategies	Competitive strategies	1993
Mazanec	Competition among European tourist cities: a comparative multidimensional scaling and self organising maps	• Destination competitiveness using measurements of multidimensional scaling and mapping	Destination Scaling	1995
Crouch & Ritchie	Modelling destination competitiveness	• Core resources and attractions • Supporting factors and resources • Destination policy, planning & development • Destination management • Qualifying and amplifying determinants	Destination	1999
Hassan	Determinants in market competitiveness in an environmentally sustainable tourism industry	• Environmentally sustainable competitiveness factors associated with the tourism industry • Examination of stakeholders in the competitive tourism industry • Market orientated sustainable competitiveness • Importance of environmentally sustainable demand	Environmental Market	2000

Author/ Researcher	Title	Competitiveness topics	Focus of competitiveness	Year
Ritchie & Crouch	The competitive destination: a sustainable perspective	• Destination competitiveness with a key focus on sustainability and environmental practices	Destination Environmental	2000
Mihalic	Environmental management of a tourist destination. A factor of tourism competitiveness	• Environmental management at a destination with a focus on competitiveness	Environmental Tourism Destination	2000
Heath	Towards a model to enhance South Africa's sustainable tourism competitiveness	• Competitive tourism market • Proposal of a competitiveness model for destination development of marketing strategies • Longer term benefits of tourism development • Destination strategic planning	Market Destination development	2002
Dwyer & Kim	Integrated model of destination competitiveness: determinants and indicators	• Main elements of competitiveness • Indicators used to measure competitiveness • Development of a model for destination competitiveness	Destination	2003
Enright & Newton	Tourism destination competitiveness: a quantitative approach	• Approach toward tourism destination competitiveness • Towards a comprehensive model of tourism destination competitiveness • Generic business factors of competitiveness	Tourism Destination	2004

Source: Author's compilation

Table 3.3: Recent supplementary competitiveness research

Author/ Researcher	Title	Competitiveness topics	Key focus of competitiveness	Year
Dwyer, Mistilis, Forsyth & Rao	International price competitiveness of Australia's MICE	Price competitiveness relating to Australia	Destination	2001
Du Plessis	Competitiveness of South Africa as a tourist destination What makes South African tourism competitive?	• Factors determining South Africa as a competitive destination • Identification of factors contributing to competitiveness • Internal and external influences of competitiveness	Destination (SA)	2002 2015
Crouch	Measuring destination competitiveness: an analysis of determinant attributes	• Measuring direct competitive positions of a country • Competitiveness research in hospitality and tourism	Market Hospitality/tourism	2002
Lee & King	International competitiveness in tourism: an application of the analytical hierarchy process approach	• Evaluation of hot springs tourism • Proposing a model of competitiveness using the analytic hierarchy process	Tourism	2004
Jonker, Heath & Du Toit	The identification of management process critical success factors that will achieve competitiveness and sustainable growth for South Africa as a tourism destination.	Success factors to achieve competitiveness and sustainable growth		2004
Andrades-Caldito, Sánchez-Rivero & Pulido-Fernández	Differentiating competitiveness through tourism image assessment	An examination of the four major competitiveness components proposed by the Calgary model to determine the quality of destination images.	Tourism	2007

Author/ Researcher	Title	Competitiveness topics	Key focus of competitiveness	Year
Cvelbar, Dwyer, Koman, Mihalic	Drivers of destination competitiveness in tourism: a global investigation	• productivity measurement and tourism contribution to GDP in examining destination competitiveness	Tourism Destination	2010
Zehrer, Smeral & Hallmann	Destination competitiveness – a comparison of subjective and objective indicators for winter sports areas	• Integration of subjective and objective indicators (supply and demand) of destination competitiveness	Destination	2013
Armenski, Dwyer & Pavlukovic	Destination competitiveness: public and private sector tourism management in Serbia	• Explores the dimensions of destination competitiveness • Analysing the contributions of government and industry stakeholders	Destination	2016
Novais, Ruhane, & Arcodia	Destination competitiveness: a phenomenographic study.	• An overview of destination competitiveness with hierarchically related concepts. • Previously overlooked elements of destination competitiveness are discussed. • Employment of phenomenography	Destination	2017
Du Plessis, Saayman & Van der Merwe	Explore changes in the aspects fundamental to the competitiveness of South Africa as a preferred tourist destination	• Explores the changes in the aspects fundamental to the competitiveness of South Africa	Destination	2017

Source: Author's compilation

As depicted in Tables 3.2 and 3.3, destination competitiveness can be summarised as the ability of a country or destination to induce additional value by increasing its national assets,

processes, attractiveness and proximity. This can be achieved by integrating an economic and social model, taking into consideration the destination's natural capital (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Many researchers (Enright & Newton, 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Cracolici & Nijcamp, 2008; Crouch & Ritchie, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2005, 2008; Meng, 2006; Gomezelj & Mihalic, 2008; Hassan, 2000; Heath, 2002; Lubbe, 2015; Mihalic, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Vengesai, 2003) have focused on concepts, relevant models and approaches relating to tourism destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Hassan, 2000; Kozak & Remington, 1998) with an emphasis on the integration of value-added destination products and services to enhance tourism attractiveness at destinations (Yoon, 2002). However, it should be noted that there is much debate regarding the methodology and use of the destination concept in that the Crouch and Ritchie and Dwyer and Kim models appear to be "systems of definition" rather than cause-effect relationships, lacking an assessment of the competitive position of business units. Furthermore, economic theories have had limited integration in the modelling approach of destination competitiveness, indicating that many of the articles employ a country focused interpretation of the destination and that competitiveness in destinations is antecedent to economic conditions. This is cause for concern (Manzanec *et al.*, 2007:86). Similarly, some researchers argue that there is no single paradigm or set of indicators for measuring destination competitiveness, as each destination has different geographical features and therefore a model applied to one destination may not necessarily be applicable to another destination (Khin, Daengbuppa & Nonsiri, 2014:53). In conclusion, the literature suggests that much of the research is focused within the general tourism and destination domain, hence the need for research within the conference domain.

3.3 COMPETITIVENESS VERSUS COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Crouch and Ritchie (1999:142) explicate that in order to understand the competitiveness of tourist destinations, it is imperative to consider both factors of comparative advantage and factors of competitive advantage; however, competitive advantage and comparative advantage must not be confused. In order to sustain an advantage, it is crucial that capabilities and resources are considered and the strategies well developed. Creating a competitive advantage involves servicing a target market with the same or similar products and services as the competitor, but at a lower cost. A competitive advantage is defined by Jackman, Lorde, Lowe & Alleyne (2011:353) as profits which an organisation is able to generate from its operations when compared to its competition. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) conclude that a competitive advantage can be achieved when attendees consider the overall appeal of an

event (such as a conference) to be superior to that of another event. According to Matthews (2016:136), competitive context is vital to strategy development, as well as important for the basis of competition in the productivity context. Comparative advantage relates to the resources available, whereas competitive advantage relates to the ability to use the resources effectively and sustainability (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999:143; Buhalis, 2000:97; Jackman *et al.*, 2011:352; Zhang & Jensen, 2006:223; Khin *et al.*, 2014:51; Gomezelj & Milhalic, 2008:295). Mazurek (2014:78) confirms that comparative advantage is a “measurement of endowments”, which is the available resources used for tourism development. Smit (2015:109) posits that comparative advantage entails that a country should specialise in the products and services that it is able to produce more efficiently than other countries. Tsai *et al.* (2009:525) add that in order to achieve this, strategic planning should be a priority and should form part of a destinations tourism policy.

Crouch and Ritchie (1999:143) reiterate that it is not about the number of resources a destination has, but its effectiveness in using the resources that makes a destination competitive. According to Dwyer and Kim (2003:369), insights from various disciplines indicate that competitiveness is multi-dimensional with a three perspective approach, namely comparative perspective (Porter, 1990; Fagerberg, 1988; Bellak, 1993; Cruz, 1993); historical and socio-cultural perspective (Kennedy, 1987; Aaker, 1989); and strategy/management perspective (Parsons, 1983; Porter, 1985, 1990, 1999; Day & Wensley, 1988). Comparative advantage emphasises price and economic factors of competitiveness and the management perspectives emphasise the industry and firm characteristics of competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:369; Gomezelj & Mihalic, 2008:295). Du Plessis (2015:2) asserts that it is imperative for a destination to remain competitive due to the globalisation of markets.

To clarify the plethora of perspectives on competitiveness in the productivity context, a framework is provided in Table 3.4. This table summarises and contrasts the levels of competition. Many of the elements included in the framework apply to the tourism industry and are used in the development of the model of destination competitiveness by Ritchie and Crouch (2003).

Table 3.4: Elements and levels of competition

Level of competition			
Element of competition	Companies	National industries	National economies
The structure	Industry competitors Substitutes Potential entrants Suppliers Buyers	Factor conditions Demand conditions Related and supporting industries Firm strategy, structure and rivalry Chance Government	Science and technology People Government Management Infrastructure Finance internationalization Domestic economic strength
The territory	Target markets	Resources Global markets	Jobs Foreign investment Trade
The stakes	Market share Profitability Survival	Favourable public policies Respect Industrial strength, growth and prosperity International dominance	Economic prosperity Quality of life
The tools	Goods and services Corporate strategy Market research Competitor analysis	Political lobbyists Industry associations Strategic alliances Marketing authorities Cartels Joint promotions	International trade policies and free trade agreements Innovation and entrepreneurship Education and training Productivity improvement Investment Economic policy National culture

Source: Crouch and Ritchie (1999:141)

Table 3.4 summarises the levels of competition, namely companies, national industries and national economies, in terms of the principle elements of competition, which are the structure, the territory, the stakes and the tools. According to Crouch and Ritchie (1999:140), Porter's (1980) "five forces of competition" model addresses the key sources of competition at an organisational and product level. The "five forces", namely industry competitors, substitutes, potential entrants, suppliers and buyers, lie within the domain of the micro environment. The Porter (1990) "diamond" model addresses competition relating to the determinants of national advantage and suggests the fundamental structure of competition among national tourism industries; the comparative advantage of countries is therefore based on factor conditions, related and supporting industries, demand conditions and industry strategy, structure and

rivalry. The factors listed in Table 3.4 have been used repeatedly to measure the competitiveness of national economies in the World Competitiveness Report, 2013:340 (WEF, 2013). Yet, owing to the complexity of the term “competitiveness”, it becomes relevant only when competitiveness is defined and measured.

The literature of chapter 2 implied that it is crucial to understand key determinants and attributes of competitiveness. It was further established that some of the attributes identified in the tourism and destination models were relevant attributes in the conference industry. It is therefore necessary to discuss the prominent tourism and destination models to place this study in context.

3.4 REVIEW OF TOURISM AND DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS MODELS

It can be argued that a study of conference tourism should be considered within established models of destination competitiveness, since conference tourism and general tourism are interrelated. To determine the connection between destination competitiveness and conference tourism, five prominent researchers with frequently cited models of competitiveness will be discussed. However, it bears repeating that models differ according to the defined factors that determine competitiveness and their attributes (Armenski *et al.*, 2011:19; Khin, Daengbuppha & Nonsiri, 2014:51).

The first model, Michael Porter's “five forces” model of competitive positioning, provides a basic perspective for analysing the competitive strength and position within an organisation. The Crouch and Ritchie model (1994, 1995, 1999), considered the pioneering and comprehensive representation of overall tourism competitiveness, distinguishes competitive and comparative advantages on various levels. The Crouch and Ritchie model was developed in 1999 and refined by Ritchie and Crouch in 2003. To put it succinctly: in order to be competitive, a destination's tourism development must be sustainable (Crouch and Ritchie, 2000). The integrated model developed by Dwyer and Kim (2003) retains much of Crouch and Ritchie's model, except that the model is linear, indicating dependence between the different factors and elements. In contrast, the Hassan model (2000) is unique in that it expands on environmental practices within the tourism environment. In particular, a more recent destination competitiveness model was developed by Heath (2002), with the primary focus on an integrated approach, combining all the elements of competitiveness and connecting the various stakeholders and components. This model is unique in that it

embraces a South African perspective. Furthermore, this model highlights the events sector as a key tourism offering (Heath, 2002:339).

3.4.1 Porter's five forces model

The four competitive contexts (Figure 3.2) consist of interrelated elements of the business environment, focusing on factor conditions, productivity, demand conditions, strategy and rivalry, and supporting industries (Porter, 1990:8). Moreover, Porter (1990) identifies four attributes of the home environment which include factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and firm strategy, structure and rivalry. Two clear distinctions are made by Porter (1990), who grouped together two basic and advanced factors and 'specificity'. With regard to demand conditions, home demand has a great influence on competitive advantage. Furthermore, Porter remarks that to create competitive advantage sustainability, it is important to support industries. The fourth broad determinant focuses on the strategies and structures of firms, as well as domestic rivalry. Finally, Porter deems the role of government important for competitive advantage. The complete framework, which Porter (1990) refers to as the "diamond" (Figure 3.3), is a "dynamic system in which all elements interact and reinforce each other. It is this systemic nature that makes it difficult to replicate the exact structure of the industry in another country".

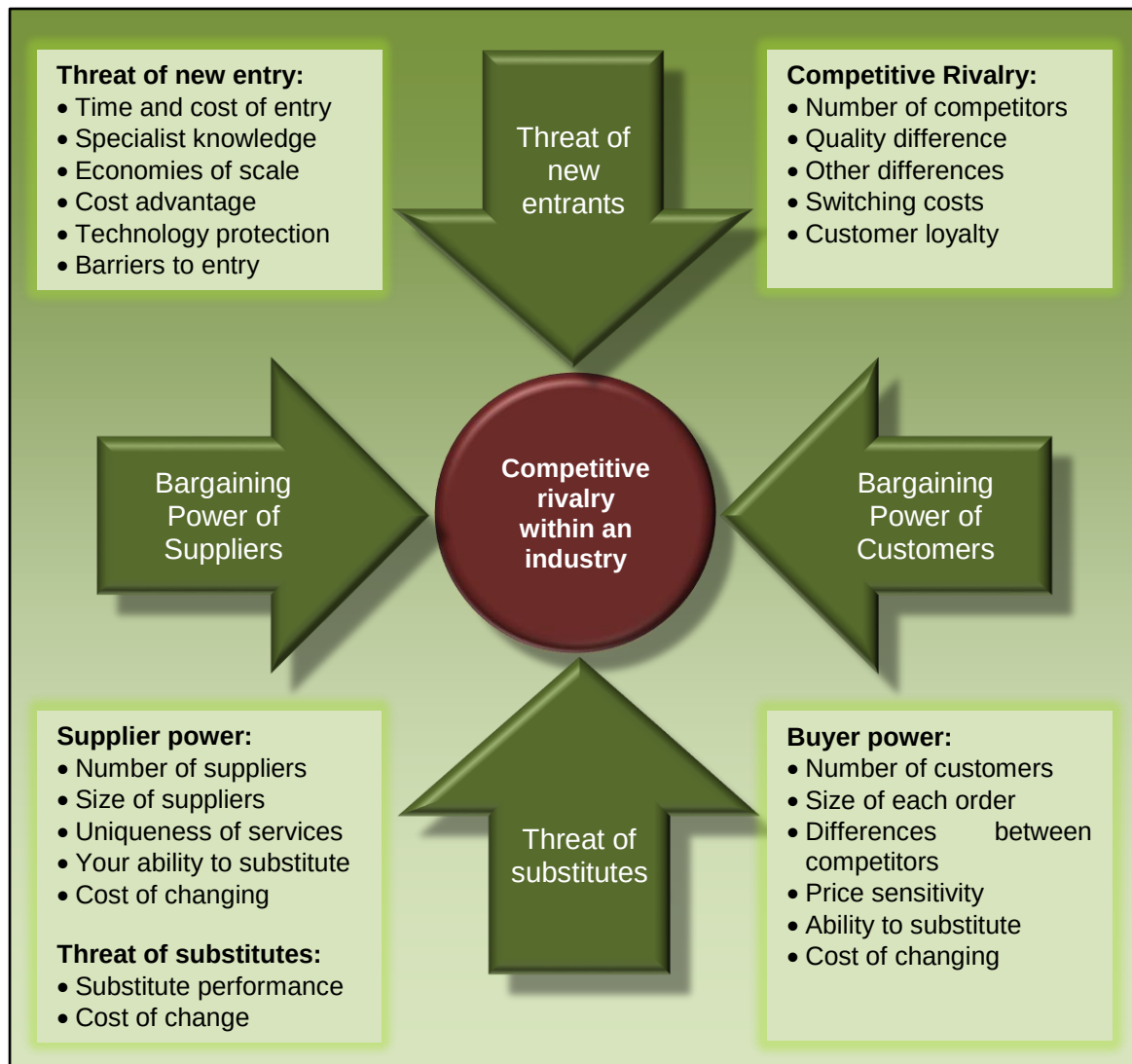


Figure 3.2: The four elements of competitive context

Source: Porter and Kramer (2002:8)

Despite Porter's approach focusing on economic competitiveness rather than competitive tourism, the elements described are applicable to a destination and business tourism scenario. With this said, Porter (1990) states that a competitive strategy aims at positioning a profitable and sustainable force in industry with competitiveness linked to economics, marketing, management, service quality and pricing. In the context of destination competitiveness, a destination is deemed competitive if there is an increase in the market share (with an increase in visitor numbers and destination income), therefore generating substantial financial returns. Buhalis (2000:98), on the other hand, indicates that destination competitiveness is often associated with the offering of an experience to the client that is more satisfying than that offered by other destinations. A phenomenographic study of destination competitiveness conducted by Novais *et al.* (2018:325) suggests that destinations should strive to appeal to visitors and offer a satisfactory tourism experience that is superior to that of competing

destinations. Hassan (2000:239) posits that destination competitiveness is a tool and method used to analyse the attributes of destination planning.

Porter's (1990) familiar "five forces of competition" model (Figure 3.2) identifies the basic sources of competition at company and production level. The five forces – industry competitors, substitutes, potential entrants, suppliers and buyers - lie within the company's competitive micro environment domain (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999:140). Porter's "diamond of national competitiveness" model (Porter, 1990), depicted in Figure 3.3, focuses on the functionality of the fundamental determinants of competitive advantage as a system. The model is based on six broad factors which have become a key focus for the analysis of competition and include factor conditions (human, capital, knowledge and physical resources), demand conditions (determined by customers' needs, scope and growth rate), related or supported industries (local supporting industries are competitive), firm, strategy, structure and rivalry (local conditions affect firm strategy). According to Porter's five forces model, low rivalry makes an industry attractive.

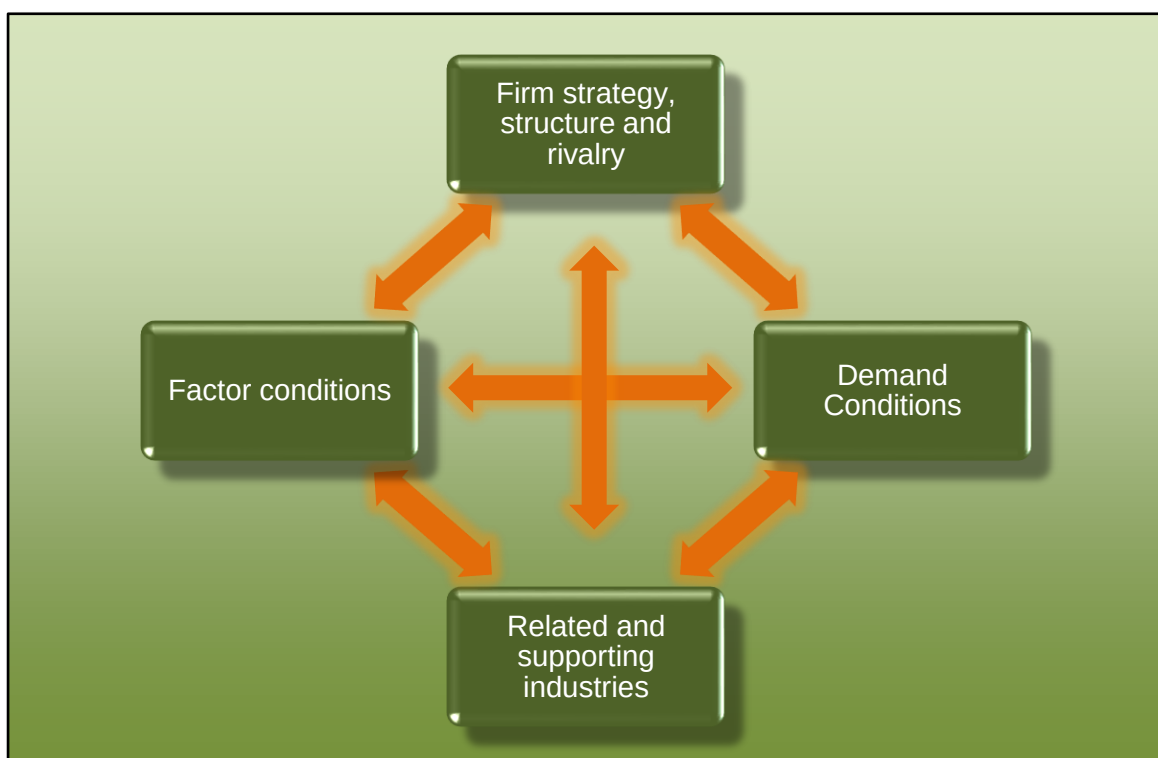


Figure 3.3: The Porter diamond framework

Source: Porter (1990:127)

Porter (1990) summarises the findings into four strategic options, namely offering a superior or unique product/service; cost control; competing for good prices; and product/service

development. It should, however, be noted that according to Gray (1991) and Oz (2002), some researchers challenge the originality of the framework, the lack of clear determinants and the methodology employed by Porter.

3.4.2 Ritchie and Crouch's conceptual model of destination competitiveness

The Crouch and Ritchie model (Figure 3.4) is regarded as the most comprehensive model with distinct characteristics of destination competitiveness (Mazanec *et al.*, 2007:87). The model establishes that destination competitiveness is based upon a destination's resource endowments (comparative advantage), as well as the capacity to deploy resources (competitive advantage). However, Armenski, Dwyer and Pavlukovic (2018:386) argue that destination competitiveness literature in recent years has shifted from a comparative advantage focusing on endowed resources (natural and sociocultural) to a greater emphasis on private and public sector management which enhances competitive advantage. The model coalesces the influence of the external environment and global forces. It specifically identifies 36 destination attributes classified into 5 main groups, namely core resources and attractors; supporting factors; destination policy; planning and development; and qualifying and amplifying determinants, as discussed previously. Notably, the rating of these factors in a later study was determined using the analytical hierarchy process (AHP), as in the case of this study. The results of the study further indicated core resources and attractors to be the dominant group of destination competitiveness factors. The work of Crouch and Ritchie (1999) is seen by many researchers as one of the most comprehensive models and admired for the attempts to conceptualise an approach that includes all the elements of tourism competitiveness, despite criticism of the "one size fits all" approach (Novais *et al.*, 2018:325)..

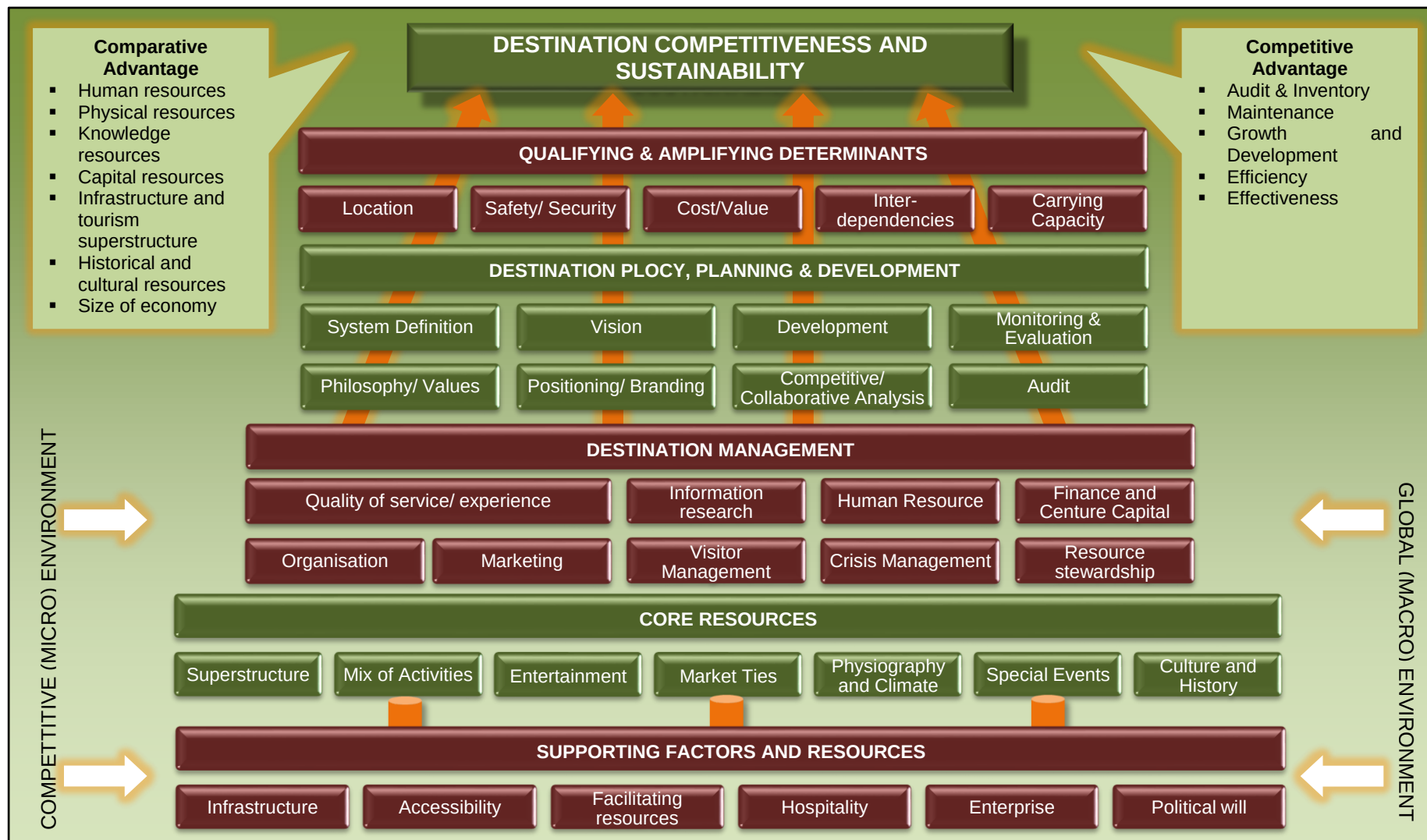


Figure 3.4: Conceptual model of destination competitiveness

Source: Crouch and Ritchie (1999)

Figure 3.4 depicts the conceptual destination competitiveness model developed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) which consists of a competitive (micro) environment and a global (macro) environment with five hierarchical levels as discussed below.

3.4.2.1 Supporting factors and resources

Both Ritchie and Crouch (2003:30) and Dwyer and Kim (2003:400) stipulate that it is imperative to enhance the appeal of core resources and attractors in order to strengthen the quality and effectiveness of these factors which support the managing of destination competitiveness. The supporting factors provide a platform on which tourism can be based. Infrastructure is a key supporting factor with a strong impact on destination competitiveness; for example, a shortage of quality transportation services and facilities preclude successful tourism. In particular, infrastructure elements such as sanitation, communication, facilities and services are the foundation of efficient tourism supply, and the lack thereof could severely cripple the competitiveness of the tourism industry at a destination. The accessibility of a destination (airline and airport accessibility; visa entry and permits; route connections, etc.), as well as the accessibility of tourism resources, are essential to tourism and destination competitiveness growth. Facilitative resources and hospitality (accommodation) at a destination are often a required experience of tourists. Furthermore, the support of political will and community leaders' attitudes to tourism are a competitiveness consideration (Kim, 2003:400).

3.4.2.2 Core resources and attractors

This component of the model indicates the key motivators for visiting a destination. Although other components are necessary for tourism success and profitability, core resources and attractors are the main reasons that tourists prefer one destination over another. These factors include history and culture, special events, mix of activities, entertainment, market ties, physiography and climate and tourism superstructure. Climate is often a core attractor which forms the foundation of other factors. Furthermore, culture and history can be used as powerful pull factors, provided that they do not get distorted and remain authentic. Market ties, although not in the control of destination managers, is the basis of building tourism at a destination. The mix of activities at a destination is also a high priority consideration and should be creative in order to provide a positive experience for the tourist. The attractors - special events catering for the interests and involvement of the tourists and residents - play an important role in motivating a tourist to visit a specific destination, similarly, as does the entertainment provided at the destination (Crouch, 2003: 30; Kim, 2011:620).

3.4.2.3 *Destination management*

The destination management component is based on the policy and planning framework which is developed by the destination in order to promote the appeal of the core resources which attract potential visitors and tourists. These factors include structures, policies and systems that are implemented by associations and organisations with a primary focus on destination marketing. Marketing and promoting a destination are paramount for a destination to remain competitive. In addition, service quality and buying experiences for tourists should be enhanced to promote visitor satisfaction, hence visitor management is a crucial component of destination management (Kim, 2011:620; Evans, 2015:119). The information and research component pertains to the use of information systems available to visitors and tourists. In terms of human resource development, this is encouraged through education specific to the needs of the tourism industry. Crisis management, on the other hand, pertains to crises that may potentially affect visitors whilst visiting the destination. Lastly sustainable development and environmental practices should be embraced (Gunasekaran, Nachiappan & Yusuf, 2018:490).

3.4.2.4 *Destination policy, planning and development*

Destination policy, planning and development entail a strategic framework for developing the destination, focusing on economic, cultural and social objectives with the consensus and involvement of strategic stakeholders, of which the community is one. A vision is based on what the destination wants to achieve. At the same time a policy must be realistic and strengths and weaknesses, as well as opportunities and threats, should be deliberated prior to its development. Competitive analysis and market positioning of other destinations should also be a consideration. Finally, destination policy, planning and development, once implemented, need to be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis (Crouch, 2003:30; Kim, 2011:620).

3.4.2.5 *Qualifying and amplifying determinants*

Finally, qualifying and amplifying determinants are often referred to as situational elements and reflect tourism demand and potential. For example, a destination's location influences a tourist's decision on whether to visit the destination; in other words, how remote is the destination? This leads to the specific issue of the safety and security at a destination, which sometimes has an impact on whether the visitor or tourist will visit the destination. It is highly unlikely that a tourist will visit a destination that is unsafe. The travelling costs, as well as the

cost at the destination, are often a consideration for visitors and tourists. This can be linked to the exchange rate of the particular destination. Furthermore, the image of a destination can also affect whether tourists will visit the destination or not. Finally, the carrying capacity of a destination is related to the further growth and competitiveness of a destination which can influence the increasing or declining appeal of a destination (Lubbe, 2015:11; Kim, 2011:620).

3.4.3 Hassan's model of tourism competitiveness

Although the model of Hassan (2000) embraces the comparative advantage component of Crouch and Ritchie (1998), Hassan's model (Figure 3.5) reflects an environmental and sustainable competitiveness approach incorporating ecological, social and cultural factors. The model clearly demonstrates a relationship between stakeholders, namely comparative advantage, demand conditions, industry structure and environmental commitment indicators.

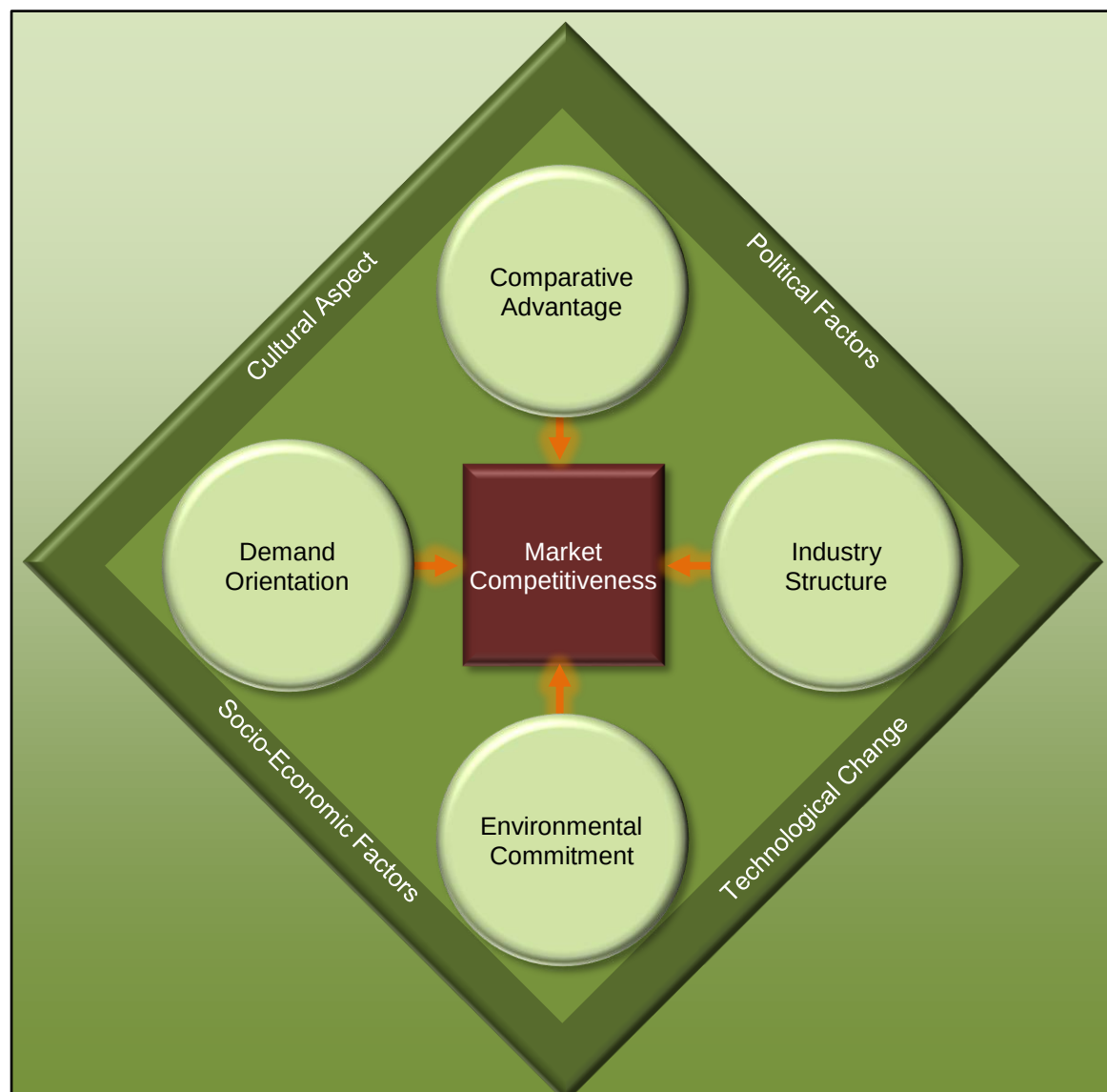


Figure 3.5: Model of tourism competitiveness

Source: Hassan (2000)

Hassan (2000:242) defines the four determinants of the model as follows:

- ❖ Comparative advantage: the destination's comparative advantage focuses on factors that are important for market competitiveness and associated with the external environment.
- ❖ Demand orientation: the destination's ability to respond to changes that influence competitiveness market.
- ❖ Industry structure: the structure of the tourism industry associated with destination competition.
- ❖ Environmental commitment: the destination's commitment to sustain the environment and remain competitive.

Hassan (2000:242) cautions that market competitiveness requires a balance of growth and environmental commitment to all stakeholders that market the destination (Gunasekaran *et al.*, 2018:490). Furthermore, Hassan (2000:242) indicates that trends in tourism will affect future demand and therefore planning and developmental strategies are essential. A further study conducted by Mihalic (2000:75) explores the environmental competitiveness aspect, with a study by Gomezelja and Milhalic (2008:294) using Slovenia as case study.

3.4.4 Dwyer and Kim's integrated model of destination competitiveness

The model of Dwyer and Kim (2003) is based on the much supported model of Crouch and Ritchie (1999); however, it incorporates a more integrated outlook of the connections between different parts of the model (Armenski *et al.*, 2011:19). It brings together a holistic approach with the main elements of national and firm competitiveness and a key focus on "demand" and "socio-economic prosperity". The proposed integrative model has many of the variables and category headings identified by Crouch and Ritchie, but differs in some respects (Figure 3.6).

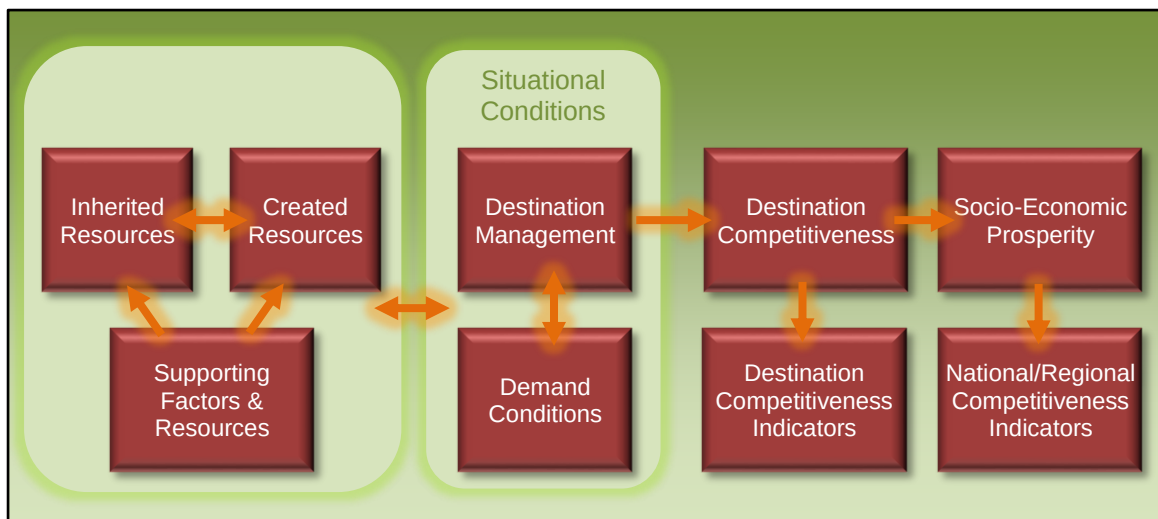


Figure 3.6: Integrated model of destination competitiveness

Source: Dwyer and Kim (2003:378)

In this model the three boxes are grouped within a larger box, the factors of which provide the characteristics of a destination that form the basis for destination competitiveness. The destination management factors enhance the appeal of the core resources and attractors, which in turn enhance the quality and effectiveness of the supporting factors and resources. The demand conditions include three elements of tourism demand, namely awareness, perception and preferences. Finally, the situational conditions include the forces in the wider environment that influence destination competitiveness. The factor “destination competitiveness” is linked to the determinants of competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:378).

According to Dwyer and Kim (2003), resources are divided into two types, namely; endowed/inherited and created. Endowed/inherited resources include natural and heritage or cultural.

3.4.4.1 *Inherited resources*

According to Hassan (2000:239), several comparative advantage attributes are paramount for sustainable tourism development. These attributes identified by Crouch and Ritchie (1999:146) and Dwyer and Kim (2003:400) include climate for tourism, cleanliness, scenery (flora and fauna), unspoilt nature and national parks/nature reserves. Inherited resources include the heritage sites and museums, traditional arts, cuisine and cultural villages with architectural features (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:400; Crouch, 2007:27).

3.4.4.2 *Created resources*

Created resources include tourism infrastructure, activities, shopping and entertainment and events (Dwyer and Kim, 2003:400; Crouch, 2007:27).

❖ Infrastructure

Infrastructure includes features such as accommodation facilities, food and beverage services, activities, tourism information, transportation, visitor accessibility and conference and exhibition facilities (Crouch, 2007:27; Page & Connell, 2014:76; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; 400; Lubbe, 2015:3).

❖ Activities

Activities include the activities available at a destination, both recreational and sports. South Africa provides for both winter and summer activities.

❖ Shopping

For many visitors - both leisure and corporate - shopping is an important “pull factor”. Shopping includes the variety of items, quality of items, value for money and diversity of shopping experiences (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:400).

❖ Entertainment and events

Entertainment and events include amusement/theme parks, entertainment and special events and festivals (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:400). As in the case of shopping, entertainment and events are a “pull factor” for inbound travellers. According to Crouch (2007:27), many destinations have used special events to remain competitive.

3.4.4.3 *Supporting factors and resources*

Supporting factors and resources include service quality, accessibility, general infrastructure, market ties and hospitality (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Crouch & Ritchie, 1998). As can be seen from Table 3.5 and Table 3.6, Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Dwyer and Kim (2003) have similar views on supporting factors and resources, with the exception of marketing ties, which Crouch and Ritchie (1998) have included under core resources and attractions.

❖ General infrastructure

Destination infrastructure includes road and transport networks, airports, communication, health facilities, financial facilities, safety and security, waste management and electrical supplies (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:400; Crouch & Ritchie, 2003:30; Du Plessis, Saayman & Van der Merwe, 2017:3).

❖ Service quality

Competitiveness matches the characteristics of the service environment in that the needs and level of satisfaction of guests are considered (Du Plessis, 2015:6). Both Dwyer and Kim (2003) and Crouch and Ritchie (1998) identified the importance of ensuring service excellence in order for the customer/tourist to experience high levels of satisfaction when using a tourism product or service. It is important to note that Crouch and Ritchie (1998, 1999) classified service quality under the domain of destination management.

❖ Accessibility of destination

Accessibility as mentioned by Crouch & Ritchie (1998) refers to the distance/flying time to a destination, the ease of visa requirements, and transportation in and around the destination (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:401). According to Crouch (2007:28), within the destination the accessibility of resources is affected by environmental factors such as social, political and physical.

❖ Hospitality

The host community's friendliness to, communication with and concern for tourists are an important supporting factor and determinant for destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:401).

❖ Market ties

According to Dwyer and Kim (2003:385), market ties involve several dimensions in which a destination builds linkage with people in origin markets. This includes trade links between foreign markets, as well as foreign investment in the country (Crouch, 2007:3; Dwyer & Kim, 2003:401; Enright & Newton, 2004:779). The model of Dwyer and Kim (2003:401) categorises

market ties as a supporting factor, whilst Crouch (2007:3) sees this as a core resource attractor.

3.4.4.4 *Situational conditions*

The qualifying and amplifying determinants of situational conditions that are often beyond the control of the tourism sector include location of the destination, image, value for money and positioning in the market place (Hudson *et al.*, 2004:83). The model of Dwyer and Kim (2003:404) focuses on the micro and macro environment, as well as price competitiveness, as an essential factor of consideration for destination competitiveness.

❖ Competitive micro environment

According to Dwyer and Kim (2003:404), the competitive micro environment focuses on managing capabilities of tourism firms and organisations and the extent of rivalry between firms in domestic tourism.

❖ Destination location

Destination location refers to the perceived uniqueness of a destination, as well as the proximity to other destinations in terms of accessibility and travel time (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:404).

❖ Global macro environment

The global macro environment focuses on the political stability of a destination (which is necessary to attract visitors to a destination), the legal environment, economic conditions, socio-cultural environment and technological environment (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:404).

❖ Price competitiveness

Price competitiveness, according to Dwyer and Kim (2003:404), is considered value for money. This can relate either to the exchange rate being favorable or to the accommodation and package prices of the product offering value for money. Price competitiveness of tourism is an important determinant for inbound visitor statistics. Price competitiveness indices are influenced by exchange rate and price changes (Du Plessis, 2015:9; Hudson *et al.*, 2004:83; Dwyer, Mistilis, Forsyth & Rao, 2001:123).

3.4.4.5 *Destination management*

Hassan (2000:240) maintains that global sustainable tourism development has become an increasingly important strategic goal for world-class destinations. The activities that influence tourism development and destination management include:

❖ Destination marketing management

Destination marketing is essential for the future growth and sustainability of tourism (Pike & Page, 2014:20). George (2015:400) contends that destinations are multifunctional and complex. Mair, Ritchie and Walters (2014: 13) agrees that destinations, due to their complexity and the variation of stakeholders involved in developing the tourism product, are difficult entities to manage and market and thus constitute a challenge further adding that destination management and marketing should act as tools to facilitate the complex range of strategic objectives, as well as influence the decision process for future visitors as well as continuous communication with relevant stakeholders.

❖ Destination policy planning and development

Tourism policies conform to a destination's vision and are responsive to visitor needs, as well as the residents' and tourism industry stakeholders' values (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:4). George (2015:147) notes that public policy in tourism is a function of three interrelated issues, namely "the intentions of political and other key sectors, the way in which decisions and non-decisions are made and the implications of these decisions".

❖ Human resource development

The national tourism strategy of countries usually identifies urgent skills development, resulting in the crafting of a human resources development strategy to build and improve the skills base in the tourism industry. The strategy also makes provision for the development of a guide for implementing incentives for people development within the tourism industry (Matthews, 2016:150; Dwyer & Kim, 2003:4).

❖ Environmental management

Many destinations seek to preserve resources for future generations and want to explore sustainable strategies Gunasekaran *et al.*, 2018:490). This is crucial to the conservation and

preservation of nature and culture at a destination. Many destinations are dependent on natural and cultural resources and therefore are diversifying to attract environmentally oriented tourist segments (Hassan, 2000:239). Furthermore, Hassan (2000:240) notes that sustainable management practices are imperative for the preservation of nature and indigenous culture.

3.4.4.6 *Demand conditions*

Demand conditions are similar to those of Ritchie and Crouch (1998) and include tourist preferences, awareness of the destination and the image of the destination.

❖ Image of the destination

According to Kumar (2013:645), brand positioning refers to the image and value of a brand and constitutes a link between the buyer and seller. Furthermore, it is important to differentiate the destination from those of competitors, increase the awareness of the destination and create a positive image of the destination in order to provide the destination with a strong brand identity (Lubbe, 2015:3).

❖ Tourist preferences

According to Dwyer and Kim (2003:369), visitation depends on the match between preferences and perceptions of a destination's offerings.

❖ Awareness of destination

Awareness of a destination can be generated using various marketing and promotional activities to encourage tourists (both business and leisure) to visit a destination (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:369).

The abovementioned demonstrates that the model of Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and the integrated model of Dwyer and Kim (2003) have dominant mutual attributes within their structures and domains. Table 3.5 compares the two models as discussed above.

Table 3.5: Comparison of Dwyer and Kim's integrated model and Crouch and Ritchie's model

Integrated Model	Crouch-Ritchie Model
Endowed Resources Natural resources Cultural/Heritage resources Created Resources • Tourism infrastructure • Special events • Range of available activities • Entertainment • Shopping	Core Resources & Attractions Physiography and Climate Culture and History Market Ties Mix of Activities Special Events Entertainment Superstructure
Supporting Factors and resources • General infrastructure • Quality of Service • Accessibility of Destination • Hospitality • Market Ties	Supporting Factors & Resources Infrastructure Accessibility Facilitating Resources Hospitality Enterprise
Destination Management Destination Management Organisation • Coordination • Provision of information • Monitoring and evaluation Destination Marketing Management Destination Policy Planning, Development Human Resource Development Environmental Management	Destination Management Marketing Finance and Venture Capital Organisation Human Resource Development Information/Research Quality of Service Visitor Management Resource Stewardship
Situational Conditions Destination location Competitive (micro) Environment • Capabilities of Firms • Strategies of Firms • Industry Structure and Firm Rivalry Global (macro) Environment • Political/legal/regulatory • Economic • Sociocultural • Technological Security / safety Price competitiveness	Destination Policy, Planning, Development System definition Philosophy Vision Audit Positioning Development Competitive/collaborative analysis Monitoring & Evaluation
	Competitive (micro) Environment
	Global (macro) Environment
Demand Conditions	Qualifying & Amplifying Determinants

Integrated Model	Crouch-Ritchie Model
Tourist preferences Awareness of destination	Location Interdependencies Safety/security Awareness/image/brand Cost/value

Source: Dwyer and Kim (2003)

3.4.5 Heath's model of competitiveness

Heath (2003), on the other hand, established a destination competitive model (Figure 3.7) that focused on key success drivers (people) and the vital linkages (communication and information) that should be taken into consideration when considering sustainable destination competitiveness.

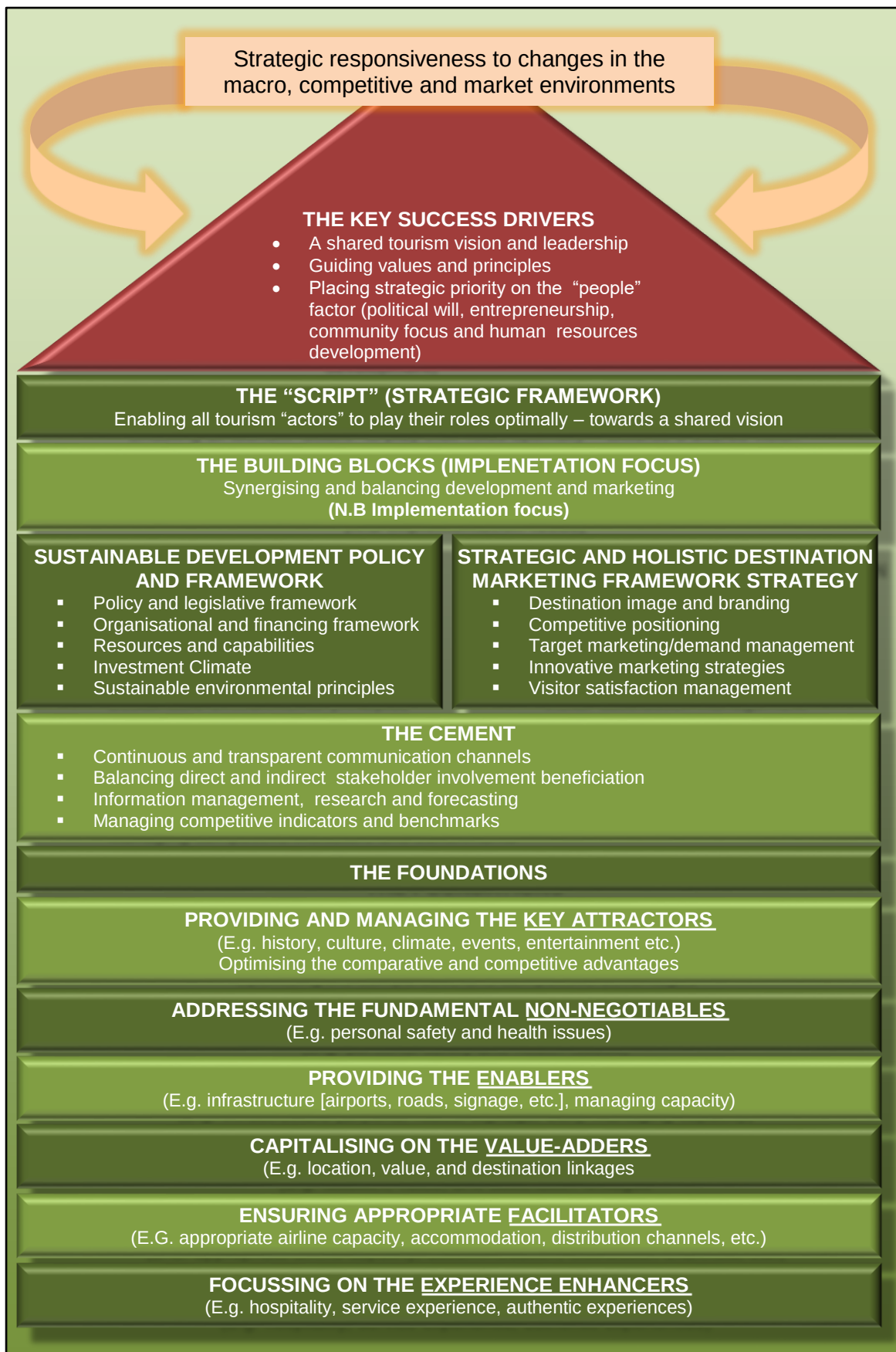


Figure 3.7: Sustainable tourism competitiveness model

Source: Heath (2002)

Heath proposed a destination/tourism competitiveness model based on destination strategic planning in conjunction with the models of Ritchie and Crouch (2000) and Dwyer and Kim (2003). The model, which is discussed below, consists of four components forming a house: the foundation is the essential building base for competitiveness; the cement links the features of competitiveness; the building blocks involve the strategic framework of destination marketing and the roof represents the “people”.

3.4.5.1 The foundations

According to Heath (2002:337), the foundations comprise key attractors, non-negotiables, enablers, value-adders, facilitators and experience enhancers, each of which consists of various facets. They are: providing and managing key attractors (history, culture, climate, events, business tourism, entertainment, etc.), addressing the fundamental non-negotiables (personal safety and health), providing the enablers (infrastructure), capitalising on the value adders (location and value for money), ensuring appropriate facilitators (capacity, accommodation, intermediaries) and focusing on the experience enhancers (hospitality, service excellence, experience).

3.4.5.2 The competitiveness cement

According to Heath (2002:338), it is evident that the most “sound foundations and appropriate building blocks will not optimally contribute to destination competitiveness if the appropriate ‘cement’ is not in place”. These include continuous and transparent communication channels; balancing direct and indirect stakeholder involvement and beneficiation; forming appropriate and mutually beneficial partnerships and alliances; information management; research and forecasting; and managing competitive indicators and benchmarks.

3.4.5.3 Sustainable development policy and framework

Destination development involves product development strategies that offer high quality experiences promising to meet visitors’ expectations. According to Heath (2002), the following considerations should be taken into account: development of a conducive tourism policy and legislative framework, responsible resource management, positive investment opportunities, sustainable environmental practices and ensuring an effective institutional funding framework (Heath, 2002:345).

3.4.5.4 Strategic and holistic destination marketing framework and strategy

Heath (2002:346) argues that there has been a fragmented approach to destination marketing and reiterates that in order to maintain destination competitiveness, “destination management should focus on a systematic examination of unique comparative advantages that provide a special long-term appeal to the target travel customer segments”. The following considerations should be taken into account: competitive positioning and branding, positive destination image development, effective target marketing, innovative marketing strategies to ensure visitor satisfaction (Heath, 2002:346).

3.4.5.5 *The building blocks*

The building blocks are the basis of synergising and balancing development and marketing (Heath, 2002:345).

3.4.5.6 *The tourism script*

The tourism script is the involvement of all stakeholders to share a common vision.

3.4.5.7 *The key success drivers*

According to Heath (2002:342), key success motivators in a destination's competitiveness focus on a shared vision and leadership, clear guiding values and principles and the importance of the "people" factor (e.g. entrepreneurship, political will, community empowerment and human resources development).

3.4.5.8 *Strategic responsiveness to changes in the macro, competitive and market environments*

A continuous audit should be undertaken of key developments and trends in the macro, competitive and market environments (Heath, 2002:342).

In conclusion, Heath (2002) contends that from a Southern African perspective, the current models proposed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Dwyer and Kim (2003) are not relevant, as they do not provide sufficient integration of the concept of “competitiveness” and fail to involve people.

To summarise: Crouch and Ritchie (1998, 1999) developed the most comprehensive destination competitiveness model with distinct characteristics, followed by Dwyer and Kim (2003) who developed a model incorporating a more integrated outlook of the connections between different domains of the Crouch and Ritchie (1998, 1999) model and finally Heath (2002) expanded on both Crouch and Ritchie (1998) and Dwyer and Kim (2003) to establish a destination competitive model that focused on key success drivers (people) and their vital linkages (communication and information). The table below depicts the similarities and common tourism and destination attributes amongst the above mentioned authors.

Table 3.6: Key comparative review of tourism and destination competitiveness factors

Competiveness Sub-factors	Main factors	Main factors	Main factors
ATTRIBUTES	DWYER & KIM MODEL	CROUCH & RITCHIE MODEL	HEATH MODEL
Infrastructure	Created resources	Supporting factors	Enablers
Events	Created resources	Core resources	Key attractors
Entertainment	Created resources	Core resources	Key attractors
Market ties	Supporting factors	Core resources	
Hospitality	Supporting factors	Supporting factors	Enhancers
Accessibility	Supporting factors	Supporting factors	Enhancers
Destination marketing	Destination management	Destination management	Marketing framework
Safety & security	Situational conditions	Qualifying & amplifying determinants	Non-negotiables
Value for money /price competitiveness	Situational conditions	Qualifying & amplifying determinants	Value adders
Image and branding	Demand conditions	Qualifying & amplifying determinants	Marketing framework
Environmental management	Destination management		Sustainable development framework
Tourism policies (DMO, HR)	Destination management	Destination management	Sustainable development framework
Global macro environment	Situational Conditions	Global macro environment	
Service quality	Supporting factors	Destination management	Experience enhancers

Source: Author's compilation

3.5 CRITICAL REVIEW OF TOURISM AND DESTINATION MODELS

Khin *et al.* (2014) offer an interesting view; they are concerned that some of the above models measuring destination competitiveness have shortcomings in that the models are used directly to measure the destination while the independent “mainstream” factors are not taken into account. Khin *et al.* (2014) reviewed the models of Crouch and Ritchie (2003); Hassan (2000); Heath (2002); Dwyer and Kim (2003) and the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (WEF, 2007) and set out to derive six main indicators to be used as a set of measurements based on a case study analysis of Bagan conducted by Khin *et al.* (2014:54) as indicate in Figure 3.8.

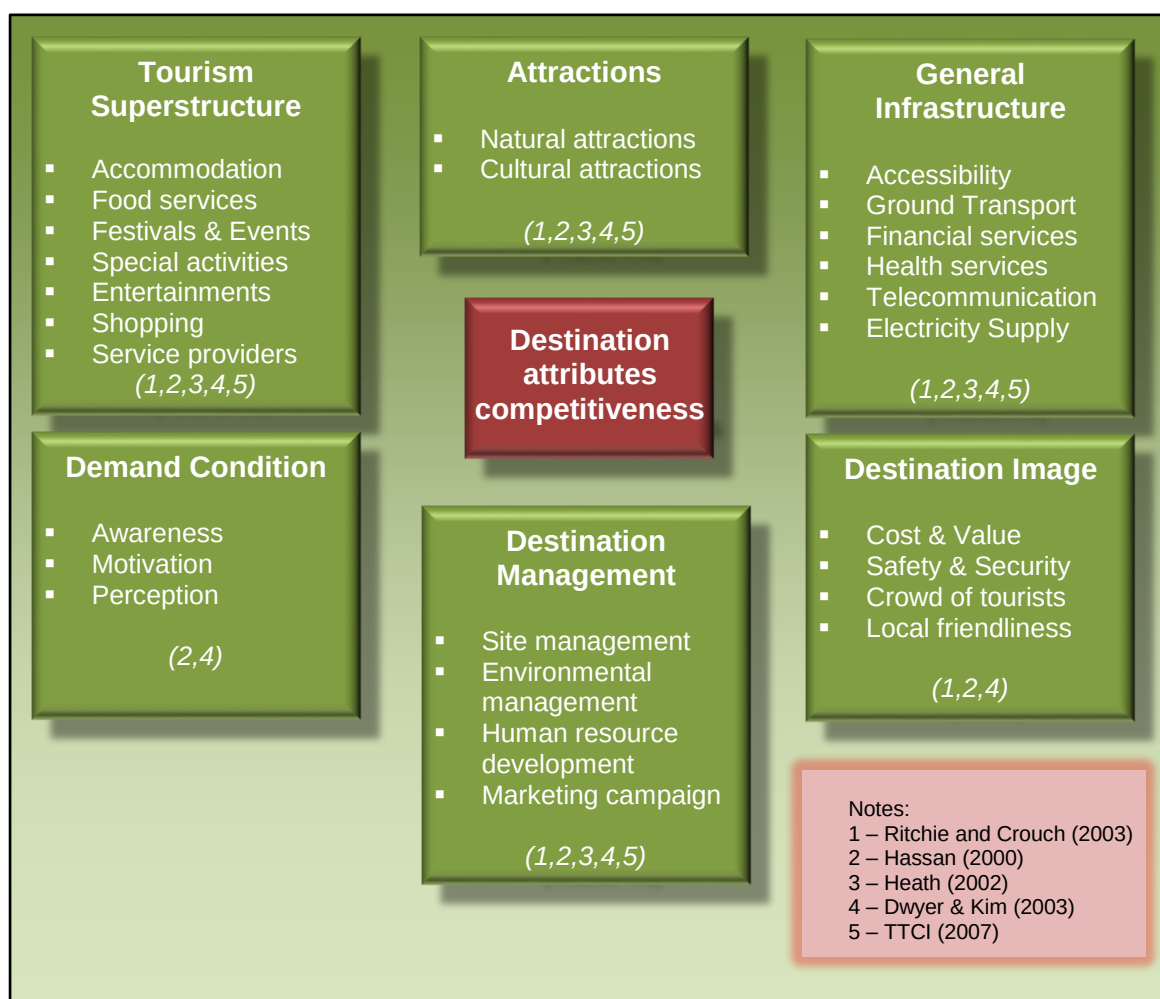


Figure 3.8: Attributes competitiveness model

Source: Khin *et al.* (2014:54)

Khin *et al.* (2014:54) propose that destination attraction refers to the appeal of the destination and what makes it attractive, based on the natural and cultural attractions offered. In contrast, tourism superstructures are based on attributes that can enhance the destination and make it

more attractive, like food services, accommodation, activities, attractions, entertainment and general infrastructure which includes transportation, accessibility, ground transportation (shuttles), as well as health services. On the other hand, destination management involves strategic planning that is bound by human resource development, marketing, site management and strategy formulation by various sectors. Evidently, destination image is relatively dependent on tourists' motivation and attitude towards a destination. It is based on tourists' perceptions of a destination (Zehrer *et al.*, 2017:57).

In summary, based on the model of Khin *et al.* (2014:54), it can be concluded that the models of Ritchie and Crouch (2003); Hassan (2000); Heath (2002); Dwyer and Kim (2003); and the Travel and Tourism Competitive Index (WEF, 2007) have common attributes which include tourism superstructure, attractions, general infrastructure and destination management. However, only the models of Hassan (2000) and Dwyer and Kim (2003) include demand conditions; the models of Hassan (2000); Dwyer and Kim (2003); and Ritchie and Crouch (2003) include destination image and the model of Heath (2002) includes the human resource factor (people).

3.6 APPLICATION OF COMPETITIVENESS MODELS AND CONFERENCE TOURISM

Over the past decade, research based on tourism and destination competitiveness has grown exponentially. Models of destination competitiveness have been developed with an extensive list of attributes and determinants that influence the selection of a destination hosting business events (Dragicevic *et al.*, 2012:312; Gomezelj & Mihalic, 2008:295; Enright & Newton, 2004:779; Hudson, Ritchie & Timur, 2004:83; Dwyer & Kim, 2003:380; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999; Crouch, 2007; Kozak & Remington, 1998:184). In the context of the conference industry, Crouch and Louviere (2004) undertook a further review of literature to evaluate factors that influence the choice of conference and convention sites by associations. They analysed the importance of a number of factors which are believed to influence the process and assist destinations to secure a bigger share of the convention and conference market and increase their competitiveness. These attributes include accessibility, local support, extra conference opportunities, meeting facilities, information and site environment. The study also makes provision for identifying where resources are required and where they need to be focused in order to improve a destination's attractiveness.

From the researcher's extensive review of the conference industry in chapter 2 and Table 3.7 below, it is evident that some of the attributes found in tourism and destination studies can be

applied to the conference industry and therefore these attributes can be used in the measuring instrument to help develop a framework for the conference industry, the objective of this study. However, there is an element of uniqueness to the conference tourism attributes, hence the purpose of this study. The following conference attributes relevant to the studies of Dwyer and Kim (2003), Crouch and Ritchie (1998) and Heath (2002) will be discussed from a competitiveness perspective (attributes mentioned in the literature of the previous chapter were discussed from a conferencing perspective and not a competitiveness perspective).

Table 3.7: Conference tourism attributes linked to competitiveness models

Conference tourism attributes	DWYER & KIM	CROUCH & RITCHIE	HEATH
Climate	✓	✓	✓
Price	✓	✓	✓
Accessibility	✓	✓	✓
Infrastructure	✓	✓	✓
Location	✓	✓	✓
Entertainment – program	✓	✓	✓
Image	✓	✓	
Safety	✓	✓	✓
Technology	✓		✓
Service quality	✓	✓	
Environmental practices	✓	X	✓
Marketing	✓	✓	✓
Facilities/activities/services	✓	✓	✓
Accommodation/hospitality	✓	✓	✓

Source: Author's compilation

The above table is cognisant of the fact that tourism and destination competitiveness attributes are similar to those identified in conference tourism literature, while incomplete and not entirely applicable to the conference tourism industry.

In a study on convention site selection in Australia conducted by Crouch and Louviere (2004), it was found that many of the above attributes are essential; however, it was argued that it is vital for a destination to provide additional attributes in order to succeed in a competitive environment. The attributes are discussed below.

3.6.1 Weather/climate

The weather and climate are considered a general feature of the destination; however, it can influence the activities at the destination, which in turn affects the time of year or season in which the traveller visits a destination (Kozak & Remington, 1998:184). George (2015:38) highlights that destinations with favourable climates and weather tend to build their competitive positioning around this natural advantage; often the business tourism sector can use this to their benefit as conferences can take place throughout the year. It is interesting to note that the study of Crouch (2007:25) indicates that climate is ranked as number 1 amongst the 36 destination competitiveness attributes. Although most tourism demand studies place emphasis on economic variables, climate has been considered an important destination attribute and can be used to attract visitors to a destination (Kozak, Uysal & Birkan, 2008:85). A convention positioning study conducted by Kim *et al.* (2011: 89) acknowledged that although climate was not highly prioritised, an attractive climate was a consideration for delegates and could affect their level of satisfaction with a convention. In terms of tourism in South Africa, the favourable climate is a drawcard for both leisure and business tourists, although business tourists may relate to the importance of weather differently.

3.6.2 Price

According to Kim *et al.* (2011:92), price in the tourism and conference context is referred to as rates and covers a variety of factors which include conference venue hire charges, delegate rates, accommodation rates, food and beverage rates and transportation rates. These factors all have an impact on the overall cost of the conference. For those delegates arriving before the conference and extending their stay after the conference, the pricing and costs at the destination are a consideration (Crouch & Louviere, 2004:3; Lau & Wong, 2010:238). Saayman and Saayman (2008) contend that price competitiveness is an important indicator and consideration for inbound tourism to South Africa.

3.6.3 Accessibility

The accessibility of a destination is influenced by a number of factors, many of which are dependent on much broader economic, social and political issues. Visa and permit requirements and costs are one of these factors which affect the accessibility of a destination (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999:138). The Minister of Tourism of South Africa, Mr Derek Hanekom (2016), mentioned at a symposium held in Pretoria that two factors were paramount when

discussing accessibility, namely air connectivity and visa requirements. Kim *et al.* (2011:92) maintain that the degree of accessibility varies according to the geographical origin of the delegate, which would obviously influence the ease of access to a destination for a conference. Furthermore, Donaldson (2013:24) argues that when a large number of conference delegates are required to travel far, the destination's competitiveness declines significantly.

3.6.4 Infrastructure

South Africa's growth in infrastructure makes provision for the development of tourism and for providing essential services to both leisure and business tourists, with infrastructure being an essential site element (NDT, 2010, 2015). In a study conducted by Huo (2014:75), conference attendees rank infrastructure as a top attribute for considering a conference destination, together with city accessibility and destination image, and therefore an essential attribute of conference competitiveness. The concept of infrastructure has been discussed extensively in chapter 2.

3.6.5 Entertainment

A conference site that offers attractive activities such as sightseeing, shopping, recreational activities and tours, has a significant advantage, according to Crouch and Louviere (2004:128). Furthermore, Kim *et al.* (2011:92) contend that an attractive cultural and social setting is important, as is the theme and content of entertainment at the conference itself. This includes the entertainment part of the conference program, which may provide delegates with an unforgettable experience (Ramsborg, 2006:504).

3.6.6 Image

According to Dragicevic *et al.* (2015:311), rapid development at a destination constitutes image enhancement of the business tourism destination. For this reason, destinations are investing in building conference and convention centres to attract international delegates. The convention site studies conducted by Baloglu and Love (2005:744), Kim *et al.* (2011:89), Crouch and Ritchie (1999:139) and Kozak *et al.* (2015:259) clearly suggest that the image of a destination can play a role in delegate attendance. The question to be asked is whether the image of the conference would be a further consideration. To date, no study has determined whether conference image plays a role in conference attendance, hence the purpose of this study.

3.6.7 Safety

The pursuit of major sporting events worldwide, such as the Olympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Rugby World Cup and FIFA Football World Cup, form part of government strategy to promote tourism, destinations and events (Bowdin *et al.*, 2011). However, a number of event tragedies necessitated the development of legislation to ensure safety at destinations and events, hence the development of legislation in the events health and safety sector (Matthews, 2016:152). Ramsborg (2008:678) emphasises that planning for security for an event or conference should begin at the site inspection stage, so that security resources for the venue can be determined. Crouch (2007:32) agrees that safety, security and health concerns can affect the choice of a destination. In the study of Crouch (2007:32), safety and security ranked 5th out of 36 attributes. It is important to highlight that the Global Competitiveness Report of 2018 indicated that South Africa was considered a country with “notable problems related to violence, crime or terrorism, and where the police are considered unreliable” (WEF, 2018). This raises concerns as it affects the competitiveness of the country and intervention strategies should be considered by the relevant policy holders.

3.6.8 Technology

Changes in technology have affected the operation of the tourism industry. The Internet has become an important source of guidance for travellers, supplying them with information regarding the destination. The internet also provides the opportunity for travellers to share their experiences of a destination via social networking (NDT, 2015). Rogers (2013:361) agrees that the rate of technology change is on the increase with meetings and conference technology continuing to advance and becoming a competitive factor in the conference industry. A number of identified trends include: more free or low costs apps for conferences and events; mobile technology used for meetings and conferences; cheaper conference recordings and distributions; streamlined connectivity and services for events; YouTube and other social publishing tools to promote and manage meetings; iPads and tablets to provide a medium to access data at events; free Wi-Fi at conferences; and navigation and program downloads for a meeting or conference (Ramsborg, 2006:129).

3.6.9 Service quality

Ritchie and Crouch (1993) identified key focus areas for determining global destination competitiveness. These can be adapted to conference tourism and include:

- ❖ Value for money - the relationship between price and quality ensures value for money. In the conference tourism context, value for money is a consideration when a delegate chooses a particular conference in terms of destination, venue and conference packages (Rogers, 2013:49).
- ❖ Value for appropriateness – the integrity of service is described as a service of high quality when delivered. Services include accommodation, food, entertainment and infrastructure (Du Plessis, 2002:2). When selecting a conference package, delegates often take into consideration the services provided in the conference program (Rogers, 2013:49).
- ❖ Quality of service – service can be intangible and tangible. According to Deery and Jago (2010:9), in order to gain competitive advantage, service excellence must be a consideration. Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim (2010:279) state that service excellence is focused on gaining higher customer satisfaction and retention.
- ❖ Authenticity of the experience – tourists increasingly desire an authentic and real experience (Du Plessis, 2002:11).
- ❖ Quality experience – increased customer satisfaction improves the quality of services and facilities, which ultimately enhances the quality experience of the conference (Saravanan & Rao, 2007:436; Caro & Garcia, 2007:110; Smith & Brown, 2008:43).
- ❖ Impact of context - interpreting the context factors that distinguish tourists from one another (Du Plessis, 2002:11).
- ❖ The impact of physical settings – the physical setting of the product can influence the customers'/tourists' experience (Du Plessis, 2002:11). In this case, the physical setting is the destination of the conference.

Unfortunately, to date little research has been done on the interrelatedness of competitiveness and service experience; however, it has been acknowledged by various authors that service experience needs to be prioritised as a means of gaining competitive advantage, as many sectors are facing increased competition in the market place (Deery & Jago, 2010:9; Landrum, Prybutok, Zhang & Peak, 2009:14). Furthermore, conference organisers need to place considerable emphasis on service quality in order to gain competitive advantage as the service aspect of tourism, according to Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim (2010:274), “is the gateway to higher customer satisfaction and retention; this will enhance profitability and the ability to meet the competitive challenges within the sector” (Deery & Jago, 2010:9). Sanchez-Garcia & Curras-Perez (2011:1399) confirm that poor service quality affects both the customer and the organisation. Prakash and Mohanty (2012:3) maintain that service quality is the customer’s impression of the service quality offered and related to the needs and expectations of the

consumer. A reasonable price and compliance with underlying determinants such as safety and security, hygiene, accessibility, transparency and authenticity, make up the package. The models of Crouch and Richie (2000) and Dwyer and Kim (2003), indicate service quality as a supporting factor for destination management.

3.6.10 Environmental practices

Bladen *et al.* (2012:374) and Jones (2014:4) assert that event sustainability is important not only from a destination perspective, but also from an event and conference perspective. Furthermore, conference and event managers have an ethical responsibility to produce events that are “socially, culturally and environmentally responsible”. In this regard, the travel and tourism industry, as well as South Africa as a destination, has begun to establish its place on the “green growth agenda”, with the South African Tourism National Tourism Strategy 2015 - 2020 (SAT, 2015) indicating that an increasing number of leisure travellers are researching the local social and environmental issues before booking a holiday. Roger (2013:267) and Ramsborg (2006:468) share the view that environmental impacts and sustainability issues have become mainstream concerns and challenges within the conference and convention industry. Moreover, the model of Heath (2002) makes provision for sustainable environmental practices on the “sustainable development policy and framework” level. Environmental practices in the tourism and conference industry have been discussed in detail in chapter 2 (2.6.2) from a trend perspective.

3.6.11 Conference marketing and promotion

According to Du Plessis (2015:1), the continuous increase in competition and constant change in the macro environment require marketing strategies to foster growth. Destination management organisations (DMOs) provide sustainable tourism through their promotional strategies. Conference organisers, on the other hand, make use of web-based promotions to market and promote conferences (Dwyer & Kim, 2003:370). Furthermore, the importance of marketing strategies is highlighted in the literature of Crouch and Ritchie (1999), Dwyer and Kim (2003) and Heath (2002). Crouch and Louviere (2004:3) contend that the reputation or image of the site is a fundamental consideration for the effectiveness of the destination’s marketing activities. It has been documented in conference and convention literature that the promotional appeal of a destination is an important contributor to overall conference destination attractiveness and that to achieve this, marketers and conference organisers need to understand business tourists’ core values and preferences (Crouch and Louviere, 2004:3;

Hassan, 2000:240). The business tourism strategies specific to South Africa have been documented extensively in the literature of chapter 2.

3.6.12 Facilities, activities and services

Conferences and conventions are growing in size, number and frequency, with the range of sites expanding significantly. Due to this, conference and convention centres need to add and maintain facilities and services in order to remain competitive (Crouch & Louviere, 2004:3). Dwyer and Kim (2003:382) posit that the mix of activities offered at a destination are important attractors, but caution that higher facility costs can affect site competitiveness. There is evidence to suggest that inexpensive sites may be considered unattractive to delegates (Crouch & Louviere, 2004:3).

Meeting facilities in a conference context include the capacity (size), layout (conducive room design), cost, ambience (appropriate atmosphere and environment), service (standard of service quality), and availability of the meeting facilities, all of which are taken into account by delegates when selecting a conference (Crouch & Louviere, 2004:3). According to the study of Huo (2014:75), these had a high ranking amongst conference delegates, especially for delegates that travelled with their partners and spouses.

Another service considered by delegates is catering. Although catering is not mentioned as a determinant in the model of Crouch and Ritchie (2000) or Dwyer and Kim (2003), it is a relevant consideration to business tourists. Most business meetings include food and beverages, which contribute to making the meeting more memorable and productive, according to Ramsborg (2006:416). Catering is considered a main component of staging an event, with theme orientation to fit into the program of the conference. Catering can also be seen as a trend, with more and more delegates requiring special meals such as organic, vegan, etc. Conferences that have embraced an environmental “greening” approach are also required to incorporate the “greening” theme into the catering aspect of the conference (Allen *et al.*, 2011:435; Ramsborg, 2006:416).

3.6.13 Accommodation/hospitality

Accommodation facilities refer to the capacity of the accommodation establishment, the costs, services offered, security and availability of the accommodation (Crouch & Louviere, 2004:3). When considering accommodation facilities at a conference destination, one needs to consider the capacity and number of rooms available (are delegates able to stay at the

conference venue or nearby), the cost of the accommodation, the facilities and services offered by the establishment and the safety and security of the establishment (Rogers, 2013:62; Fenich, 2008:90). Accommodation has been identified by various convention studies as an important attribute for conferencing (Kim *et al.*, 2011:92).

In conclusion, numerous studies have investigated tourism and destination variables and attributes that influence the selection of conference destinations and their competitiveness (Baloglu & Love, 2001; Kim *et al.*, 2011; Crouch & Louviere, 2004); however, this study supports the need to understand the conference attributes that affect competitiveness.

3.6.14 Location

It has been observed that most delegates who attend conferences travel to locations close to their daily environment (Hoyer & Noess, 2001:453). Moreover, according to Rogers (2013:22), location is often an important consideration when deciding on whether to attend a conference or not.

3.7 TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS MEASUREMENT

There are many models that have been created by researchers in an attempt to measure competitiveness; however, these are still debated as the nature of competitiveness makes it difficult to measure, evaluate and compare the concept. The debate confirms that models may vary according to the defined factors and criteria that determine the complexity of competitiveness (Armenski *et al.*, 2011:19). It can therefore be acknowledged that the tourism and events industry needs to develop objective measures and indicators of performance for competitiveness to focus on attributes. The OECD Tourism Paper (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013), based on extensive survey evidence, developed a set of key elements used to measure competitiveness, as outlined below in Table 3.8:

Table 3.8: Key elements for defining competitiveness in tourism

Key elements identified	Application to competitiveness
Governance in tourism	Government support and tourism as a priority, regulations, a whole of government approach, a tourism strategy, safety and security, public/private partnerships, vertical cooperation, statistics and data, multilateral cooperation, institutions, budget allocated to support tourism
Product development	Product differentiation, innovation, investments, market share, provide unique experiences, increase the added value of tourism, develop high value segments, marketplace perspective
Quality of tourism services	Improve quality, welcome of visitors, quality of life, social equity and cohesion, services to consumers
Price competitiveness	Prices, exchange rates, ratio price/quality and value for money
Accessibility/connectivity	Infrastructure development, geostrategic positions of the destination, proximity
Natural and cultural resources	Sustainability, gastronomy, climate, biodiversity
Branding of the destination	Promotion and marketing, identity, image, awareness of destination, breadth of appeal, market diversification
Human resource development	Skills, education and training, labour productivity, tourism training centres

Source: Adapted from OECD survey on measuring competitiveness in tourism (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013)

The above table (Table 3.8) depicts the defining elements of tourism. These elements, as well as the set of indicators described below, are applicable to conference tourism and have been considered in the measurement tool developed for this study.

3.7.1 Tourism indicators

Dupeyras and MacCallum (2013:15) maintain that in terms of the core indicators, measurement is based on tourism contribution, tourism accommodation flow, contribution to economic activity, price sensitivity, natural assets, attraction, activities and events at a destination, and improving competitiveness through legislation. The supplementary indicators focus on growth of a market, retaining professionalism within the industry and providing accessibility to a destination. The future development indicators measure governmental expenditure, innovation and supply chains within the industry. The four categories of indicators of tourism as identified by OECD (2013) are:

- ❖ **Indicators measuring the tourism performance and impacts:** increasing the economic value of tourism to remain competitive globally.
- ❖ **Indicators monitoring the ability of a destination to deliver quality and competitive tourism services:** focusing on the supply side of tourism.
- ❖ **Indicators monitoring the attractiveness of a destination:** to be globally competitive, the destination must provide a quality tourism experience and develop the attractiveness and distinctiveness of the destination.
- ❖ **Indicators describing policy responses and economic opportunities:** well-designed policies and procedures to support the sustainable tourism economy.

The indicators can be further refined into core, supplementary and future indicators as per Table 3.9 below.

Table 3.9: List of core, supplementary and future development indicators

CORE INDICATORS	
Tourism performance and impacts	▪ Tourism direct gross domestic product ▪ Inbound tourism revenues per visitor by source market ▪ Overnight in all types of accommodation ▪ Exports of tourism services
Ability of a destination to deliver quality and competitive tourism services	▪ Labour productivity in tourism services ▪ Purchasing power and tourism prices ▪ Natural resources and biodiversity ▪ Cultural and creative resources ▪ Visitor satisfaction ▪ National tourism action plan
Attractiveness of a destination	▪ Natural resources and biodiversity ▪ Cultural and creative resources ▪ Visitor satisfaction ▪ National tourism action plan
SUPPLEMENTARY INDICATORS	
Tourism performance and impacts	▪ Market diversification and growth markets
Ability of a destination to deliver quality and competitive tourism services	▪ Employment in tourism by age, education and contract types ▪ Air connectivity and inter-modality ▪ Consumer price index for tourism

Attractiveness of a destination	▪ OECD better life index
FUTURE DEVELOPMENT INDICATORS	
Ability of a destination to deliver quality and competitive tourism	▪ Government budget appropriations for tourism ▪ Company mortality rate
Policy responses and economic opportunities	▪ Use of e-tourism and other innovative services ▪ Structure of tourism supply chains

Source: Adapted from OECD survey on measuring competitiveness in tourism (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013)

3.7.2 Tourism indexes

Tourism is a market affected by constant change in direct response to changes in both supply and demand factors such as disposable income, prices, inflation and exchange rates (Hanafiah, Hemdi & Ahmad, 2016:254). Notably, these changes affect positions in the world markets. According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), the European Union (EU) numbered 6 member states among the top 10 countries in the world, welcoming the largest number of international tourist arrivals (WTO, 2014). Furthermore, engagement with a number of key internationally accredited stakeholders and associations/organisations has made provision for reports to outline the global rankings of competitiveness and strategies. This will assist countries to manage their growth and sustainability of competitiveness. An overview is provided of some of the indexes and monitoring bodies that assist with providing global reporting on competitiveness.

3.7.2.1 *The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (WEF)*

The World Economic Forum has, for the past nine years, engaged with key industry leaders to carry out an in-depth study of the travel and tourism competitiveness of economies around the world, resulting in the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report. This report covers a record 141 economies and aims at providing a comprehensive strategic measurement tool, “the set of factors and policies that enable the sustainable development of the Travel and Tourism sector, which in turn, contributes to the development and competitiveness of a country”.

According to the Travel and Tourism Global Competitiveness Report (WTTC, 2015, 2017), competitiveness is defined as “the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the

level of productivity of a country”. The concept of competitiveness thus involves understanding the factors of the static and dynamic components which have been around for hundreds of years, encompassing theories ranging from Adam Smith’s focus on investment in physical capital and infrastructure to, more recently, interest in education and training, technology, macroeconomic stability and market efficiency, amongst others.

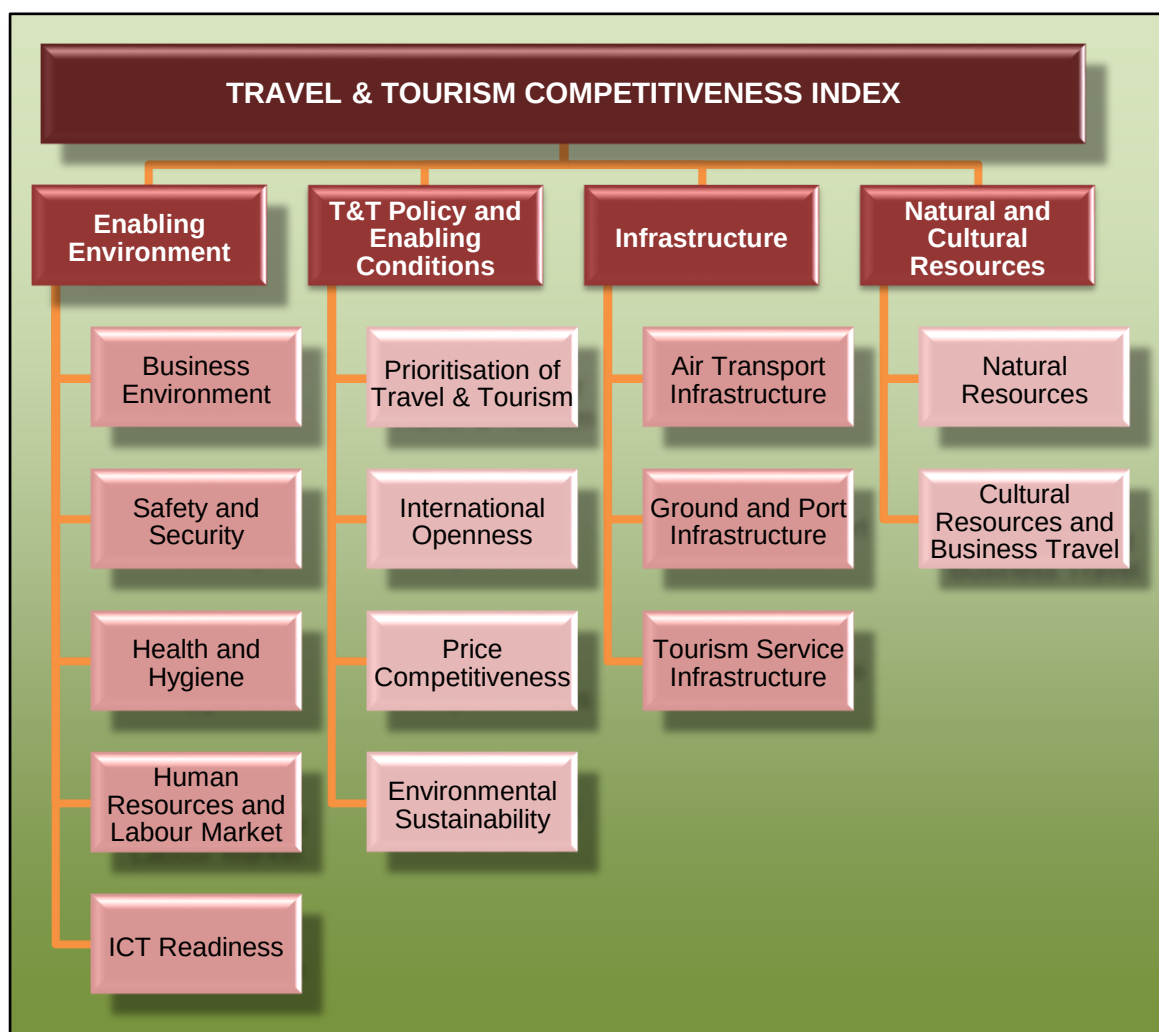


Figure 3.9: Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index Framework

Source: World Competitiveness Yearbook (WTTC, 2015)

As depicted in Figure 3.9, the index is based on 14 pillars, organised into four sub-indexes. The enabling environment sub-index focuses on the general settings necessary for operating in a country, including: business environment, safety and security, health and hygiene, human resources and labour market, and ICT readiness. The T&T policy and enabling conditions sub-index captures specific policies or strategic aspects that affect the T&T industry more directly and includes prioritisation of travel and tourism, international openness, price competitiveness and environmental sustainability. The infrastructure sub-index captures the

availability and quality of physical infrastructure of each economy, including air transport infrastructure, ground and port infrastructure and tourist service infrastructure. The natural and cultural resources sub-index captures the principal “reasons to travel” and includes natural resources and cultural resources, as well as business travel which is the focus of this study.

3.7.2.2 *The Global Competitiveness Index*

The Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (TTCR), published annually since 1979, presents the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI) which provides a comprehensive framework that measures the factors that develop tourism in various countries. The TTCI evaluates the effect of global competitiveness, policy regulations and the business environment and resources (Hanafiah *et al.*, 2016:251). The report aims to include both microeconomic and macroeconomic factors to assist business leaders and national policymakers. According to the WEF Global Competitiveness Report 2015 - 2016 (WEF, 2015), 2016 - 2017 (WEF, 2016) and 2018 (WEF, 2018), the global competitiveness index is grouped into 12 pillars: institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, higher education and training, goods market efficiency, labour market efficiency, financial market development, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication, and innovation, which are then subdivided into basic requirements, efficiency enhancers, and innovation and sophistication factors. The 12 pillars of competitiveness are indicated in Figure 3.10.

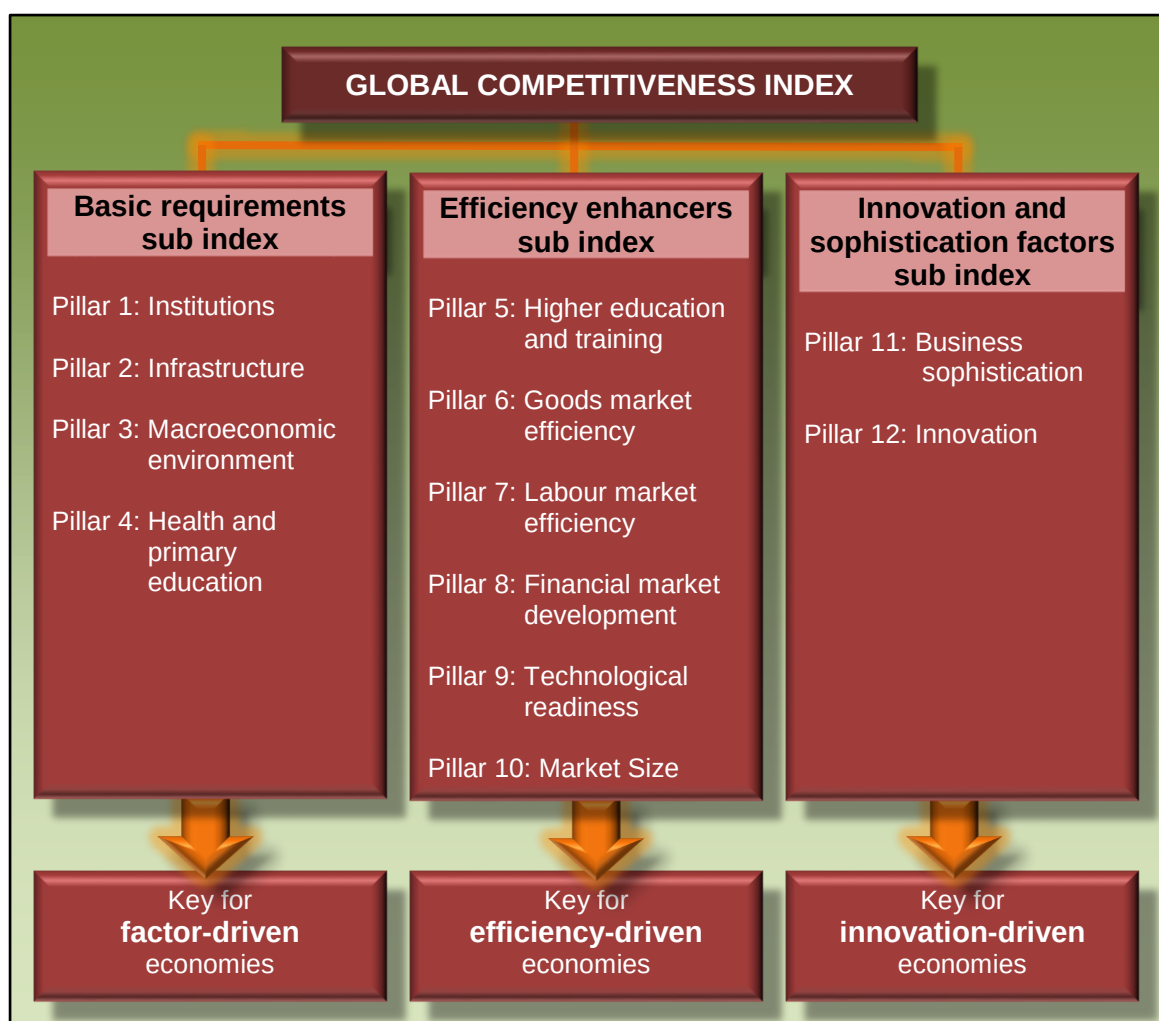


Figure 3.10: Global Competitiveness Index – 12 pillars

Source: World Competitiveness Yearbook (WEF, 2015)

According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2018 (WEF, 2018), South Africa has a ranking of 67th globally, with a ranked score of 60.8, keeping the position of second in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, the Global Competitiveness Index grouped into 12 pillars (Figure 3.10) indicate the rankings as discussed as follows:

❖ **First pillar: Institutions (public and private)**

The first pillar is determined by the legal and administrative framework. This pillar involves government attitudes towards markets, the efficiency of its operations, bureaucracy, overregulation, corruption, dishonesty in public tender and lack of transparency and trustworthiness. According to The Global Competitiveness Report 2014 - 2015 (WEF, 2015), South Africa's ranking is listed as 36 out of 144 for this pillar and 40 out of 138 in the report 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2016).

❖ Second pillar: Infrastructure

An essential motivator of competitiveness is extensive and efficient infrastructure, which is key to running an efficient economy. According to Jovanovi and Ilic (2016:289), tourism infrastructure is considered the basis of tourism development and contributes to increasing the distribution of tourism services. In order for tourists to reach destinations there should be transport infrastructure. Furthermore, the quality and extensiveness of well-developed infrastructure has an impact on economic growth, as countries are increasingly looking for ways to enhance their attractiveness as a conference and business tourism destination (Jovanovi & Ilic, 2016:288). South Africa is listed as 60 out of 144 for this pillar in the Global Competitiveness Report (WEF, 2014) and 64 out of 138 for 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2015). The Global Competitiveness Report 2018 (WEF, 2018) indicates that South Africa still offers good infrastructure.

❖ Third pillar: Macroeconomic stability

The environment's (macro) sustainability is imperative for the overall competitiveness of a country. This refers to the government budget balance, national savings, inflation and government debt and country rating. In April 2017, South Africa was downgraded to "junk status". This ultimately has an effect on inflation, interest rates and fuel cost. South Africa is listed 67 out of 140 in the 2018 Global Competitiveness Report (WEF, 2018).

❖ Fourth pillar: Health and primary education

A healthy workforce is important for a country's competitiveness and productivity. Poor health leads to major costs in business. Investment in the health care sector and education is needed for a healthy economy. The Global Competitiveness Report 2014 - 2015 lists South Africa's ranking of 2013 as 132 out of 144 for this pillar and 123 out of 138 for 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2016). The Global Competitiveness Report of 2018 (WEF, 2018) indicates that the ranking for 2018 is 125th out of 140, one of the worst in the world.

❖ Fifth pillar: Higher education and training

Higher education is crucial in developing economies. This pillar measures the quality of education. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 - 2015, South Africa's ranking is listed as 86 out of 144 for this pillar and 77 out of 138 for 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2016).

❖ Sixth pillar: Goods market efficiency

In order to drive a healthy market, market productivity and competitive advantage are a necessity. According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 - 2015, South Africa is listed as 32 out of 144 for this pillar and 28 out of 138 for 2016 - 2017 (WEF, 2016). The ranking for 2018 remains the same (WEF, 2018).

❖ Seventh pillar: Labour market efficiency

The Tourism 2025 framework has identified ways to increase productivity; these include spreading visitors to other regions and encouraging visitors to visit South Africa outside of peak season, specifically the business tourism sector. This will make provision for better use of existing facilities. South Africa in 2013 was listed as 113 out of 144 for this pillar in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 – 2015 (WEF, 2014) and 97 out of 138 for 2016 - 2017 (WEF, 2016).

❖ Eighth pillar: Financial market sophistication

The financial sector allocates resources to entrepreneurs with high expected rates of return. Business investment is critical to economic productivity. Furthermore, this entails the affordability of financial services, ease of access to loans and soundness of banks. This sector is also affected by the recent downgrading of South Africa to “junk status”. South Africa in 2013 was listed as 7 out of 144 for this pillar in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 – 2015 (WEF, 2014) and 11 out of 138 for 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2016). The ranking for 2018 remains the same (WEF, 2018).

❖ Ninth pillar: Technological readiness

This pillar measures the technological environment and the extent to which it enhances the productivity of industries. Roger (2013:361) asserts that technological readiness is expanding in the meetings and conference industry and fast becoming a competitive factor. South Africa in 2013 was listed as 66 out of 144 for this pillar in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 – 2015 (WEF, 2014) and 49 out of 138 for 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2016). Lebetrau, the former CEO of SAACI, confirms that the South African conference industry is engaging the use of live social feeds, video conferencing, audience polling, event specific apps, event hashtags, twitter and Facebook to ensure a greater level of interaction in business tourism (Rogers, 2013:360).

❖ Tenth pillar: Market size

This pillar looks at the size of the market that affects productivity. Trade has a positive effect on growth. South Africa in 2013 was listed as 25 out of 144 for this pillar in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 – 2015 (WEF, 2014) and 30 out of 138 for 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2016).

❖ Eleventh pillar: Business sophistication

Business sophistication focuses on the overall business quality of a country's networks. According to a report conducted by Grant Thornton (2015), the total direct spend for business events in South Africa was R42.4 billion in 2015 with 140 international association meetings and conferences hosted, attracting approximately 80 000 delegates, generating 542 conference days and over R1 billion in economic impact for South Africa. Donaldson (2013:28) asserts that South Africa has been identified as an important growth market, stimulating inward investment. South Africa in 2013 was listed as 31 out of 144 for this pillar in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 – 2015 (WEF, 2014) and 30 out of 138 for 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2016).

❖ Twelfth pillar: Innovation

Innovation is particularly important for economies, as this can improve the productivity of a country. This also applies to adequate investment in research and development (R&D) and quality scientific research by academics and scholars. South Africa in 2013 was listed as 37 out of 144 for this pillar in the Global Competitiveness Report 2014 – 2015 (WEF, 2014) and 39 out of 138 for 2016 – 2017 (WEF, 2016). The Global Competitiveness Report 2018 indicates that South Africa is still advanced in the area of innovation and ranks 46th (WEF, 2018).

Table 3.10: The Global Competitiveness Index 2018 rankings

COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY	RANK
United States	1	Montenegro	71
Singapore	2	Brazil	72
Germany	3	Jordan	73
Switzerland	4	Seychelles	74
Japan	5	Morocco	75

COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY	RANK
Netherlands	6	Albania	76
Hong Kong	7	Vietnam	77
United Kingdom	8	Trinidad and Tobago	78
Sweden	9	Jamaica	79
Denmark	10	Lebanon	80
Finland	11	Argentina	81
Canada	12	Dominican Republic	82
Taiwan, China	13	Ukraine	83
Australia	14	Macedonia	84
Korea	15	Sri Lanka	85
Norway	16	Ecuador	86
France	17	Tunisia	87
New Zealand	18	Moldova	88
Luxembourg	19	Iran	89
Israel	20	Botswana	90
Belgium	21	Bosnia	91
Austria	22	Algeria	92
Ireland	23	Kenya	93
Iceland	24	Egypt	94
Malaysia	25	Paraguay	95
Spain	26	Guatemala	96
Malta	27	Kyrgyz Republic	97
China	28	El Salvador	98
Czech Republic	29	Mongolia	99
Qatar	30	Namibia	100
Italy	31	Honduras	101
Estonia	32	Tajikistan	102
Chile	33	Bangladesh	103
Portugal	34	Nicaragua	104
Slovenia	35	Bolivia	105
Malta	36	Ghana	106
Poland	37	Pakistan	107

COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY	RANK
Thailand	38	Rwanda	108
Saudi Arabia	39	Nepal	109
Lithuania	40	Cambodia	110
Slovak Republic	41	Cape Verde	111
Latvia	42	Lao	112
Russia	43	Senegal	113
Cyprus	44	Cote d'Ivoire	114
Indonesia	45	Nigeria	115
Mexico	46	Tanzania	116
Oman	47	Uganda	117
Hungary	48	Zambia	118
Mauritius	49	Gambia	119
Bahrain	50	Eswatini	120
Bulgaria	51	Cameroon	121
Romania	52	Ethiopia	122
Uruguay	53	Benin	123
Kuwait	54	Burkina Faso	124
Costa Rica	55	Mali	125
Philippines	56	Guinea	126
Greece	57	Venezuela	127
India	58	Zimbabwe	128
Kazakhstan	59	Malawi	129
Colombia	60	Lesotho	130
Turkey	61	Mauritania	131
Brunei Darussalam	62	Liberia	132
Peru	63	Mozambique	133
Panama	64	Sierra Leone	134
Serbia	65	Congo	135
Georgia	66	Burundi	136
SOUTH AFRICA	67	Angola	137
Croatia	68	Haiti	138
Azerbaijan	69	Yemen	139

COUNTRY	RANK	COUNTRY	RANK
Armenia	70	Chadi	140

Source: *The WEF Global Competitiveness Report 2018 (WEF, 2018)*

With South Africa ranking 67th globally in 2018 from 47th in 2017, South Africa among its strengths boasts a large market size and good infrastructure with a well-developed financial system. In addition, South Africa has advanced innovation capabilities. Its weaknesses include health and security; these put restraints on South Africa's competitiveness and remain a challenge for the economic development of the country. These factors influence the competitiveness of conferencing in South Africa. Their extent will be discussed in the findings of the study.

3.7.2.3 *The Competitiveness Monitor (WATT)*

The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) is a global business forum for leaders comprising presidents, chairs and CEOs of 100 of the world's top companies. This is the only body/association which represents the private sector worldwide in all parts of the travel and tourism industry. The mission of the WATT is to raise awareness of the full economic impact of the travel and tourism industry. The purpose of the World Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Monitor is to track information indicating the competitive environment of travel and tourism development in a country and allowing users to compare countries and the state of the travel and tourism industry. This monitor is primarily based on a set of social and economic data which is useful for governments, policy makers, travel and tourism companies, investors, academics and other sectors of the industry that could benefit from the data (WATT, 2015). The Competitiveness Monitor is based on the following indexes: the price competitiveness index, the international human tourism index, the infrastructure index, the human resources index, the environmental factors, the openness factors, the technology index and the social development index.

Both the TPCI and WATT reports are based on the economic performance of the travel and tourism industry sector. Currently no index exists for the business tourism industry specifically; however, the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) publishes a report based on global meeting and convention performance.

3.7.2.4 *International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA)*

The International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) was founded in 1963 with the aim of exchanging information on international congresses and conventions. It is based in Amsterdam and is a non-profit organisation with over 1,000 members in over 90 countries. The ICCA is a member of the Convention Industry Council (CIC), Joint Meetings Industry Council (JMIC), World Tourism Organisation (WTO) and the Union of International Associations (UIA). The report published by the the International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA) compares destinations' performance of meetings based on a global scale, which take place regularly, have a minimum of 50 participants and rotate amongst at least 3 countries (ICCA, 2016). According to the ICCA report of 2016 (ICCA, 2016), 125 meetings were held in South Africa with 73 738 participants. The global ranking of South Africa for 2016 was 34 out of 115 and 1 out of 18 in Africa (ICCA, 2016). The global ranking for South Africa for 2017 was 34 out of 82 with 122 meetings and 64 010 participants (ICCA, 2018).

In conclusion, the research implied that the indicators and attributes applicable to tourism and destination competitiveness which are key determinants of global sustainable competitiveness can be used as a foundation to develop a framework for conference competitiveness.

3.8 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an extensive literature review on tourism and destination competitiveness and how it relates to conference competitiveness. From the literature discussed in chapters 2 and 3 one may conclude that destination tourism and conferencing are composed of different and varying dynamics. Thus, although there are overlaps, conferencing has its own set of attributes applicable to the conferencing sector. In the first part of this chapter the definitions and concept of competitiveness were contextualised and a very complex and comprehensive picture was compiled. This constituted evidence that there is a clear lack of agreement on terminology and definitions due to the complexity of the issue, with key issues varying from environmental practices to productivity, price and tourism experiences.

The second part of the chapter investigated the pioneers in global tourism and destination competitiveness, Porter (1990) and Ritchie and Crouch and other model developers (Mair & Jago, 2010; Crouch and Ritchie, 1994, 1995, 1999, 2000; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Hassan, 2000; Heath, 2002). Thereafter other contributors to competitiveness literature were discussed with

specific approaches including destination, price and environment (Tsai *et al.*, 2009; Dwyer, Livaic & Mellor, 2003; Hudson, Ritchie & Timur, 2004; Kim & Dwyer, 2003; Kozak & Rimmington, 1998; Buhalis, 2000; Dwyer *et al.*, 2000, 2001; Hassan, 2000). Finally, the models were compared in order to determine areas of similarity and differences, noting that much criticism is based on the fact that there are different perspectives and relationships in the models and indicators used for measuring tourism competitiveness. Furthermore, it was reaffirmed that the models have a one size fits all approach and do not make provision for individual factors of the destination or other tourism related services and products.

The third part investigated the application of attributes identified in tourism and destination competitiveness to the conference industry. The measurement of competitiveness was discussed, with the literature confirming that there are many models that have been developed by researchers in an attempt to measure competitiveness; however, the issue is still debated, as the differences in the nature of competitiveness make it difficult to measure, evaluate and compare the concept. This debate highlights that models may vary according to the defined factors and groupings that determine the complexity of competitiveness (Armenski *et al.*, 2011:19). It was further concluded that subjective measurements dominate research from either the demand or supply side and seldom integrate approaches from both sides. This emphasises the need to include both approaches in the methodical approach of this study.

Lastly, the indicators and attributes of tourism competitiveness were analysed. Leading researchers in the field of competitiveness such as Dwyer and Kim (2003:380); Crouch and Ritchie (2000); Hudson, Ritchie and Timur (2004:83); and Kozak and Remington (1998:184) are of the mutual view that competitiveness refers to indicators and factors that contribute to a tourism product's uniqueness and attractiveness. Many of these indicators have been highlighted in the literature of business and conferencing. Furthermore, these indicators were used as a guideline to develop the measurement tool for this study.

This chapter clearly revealed that there is an abundance of literature based on tourism and destination competitiveness; however, no attention has been given to conference tourism competitiveness. It also showed that much of the concept and generic application of tourism competitiveness is relevant to conference tourism. Chapter 4 will focus on the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 4

A SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Research is deemed a “studious enquiry or examination, especially critical and exhaustive investigation or experimentation having for its aim the discovery of new facts and their correct interpretation, the revision of accepted conclusions, theories or laws in the light of newly discovered facts, or the practical applications of such new or revised conclusions, theories or laws” (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:45). As such, researchers provide impetus and validate the discussion of research as a philosophical assumption pertaining to applicable research methodology appropriate for a specific study. On the other hand, scientific research is regarded as methodical, controlled, critical and empirical investigations of natural phenomena guided by the theory or hypotheses of the presumed connection with a phenomenon (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:8).

Chapters 2 and 3 presented a comprehensive literature review based on the theoretical focus of this study. The purpose of this chapter is to present the detailed empirical results of the study and discuss the research methodology approach used to focus on the philosophical assumptions, research methodologies, design strategies, instruments, data collection and analysis underpinning this research. The exposition and defence of the methodological approach are presented in chapter 5. This chapter further describes the methodologies used and the reasoning applied in order to find a possible solution to the research problem. This chapter is structured to include the following sections: research paradigm, research design, data collection methods and data analysis. The study’s core research function or purpose is applied research with a mixed method approach focusing on exploratory sequential design which entails a qualitative result to a quantitative component (e.g. instrument/questionnaire) using a “building” approach within an exploratory sequential design (Guetterman, Fetters & Creswell, 2015:557). The figure below (Figure 4.1) presents the researcher’s chapter structure.

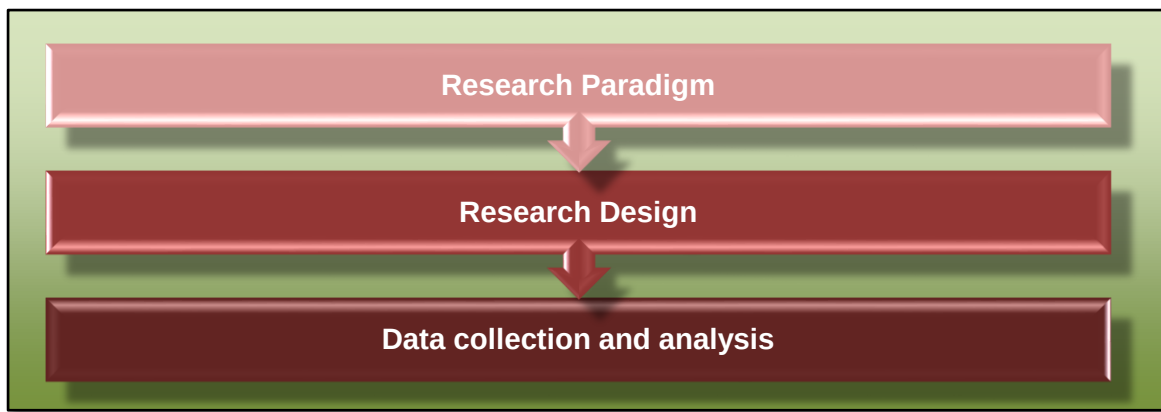


Figure 4.1: Synopsis of the research methodology

4.2 RESEARCH PROCESS

A vital part of the research process is identifying the problem and using appropriate methods which are “systematic, controlled, valid, rigorous and a description of what is not known...that permit an accurate prediction of outcomes under a given set of conditions, identifying gaps in knowledge, verification of what is already known and identification of past errors and limitations” (Flick, 2014:39). The research process is depicted in Figure 4.2.

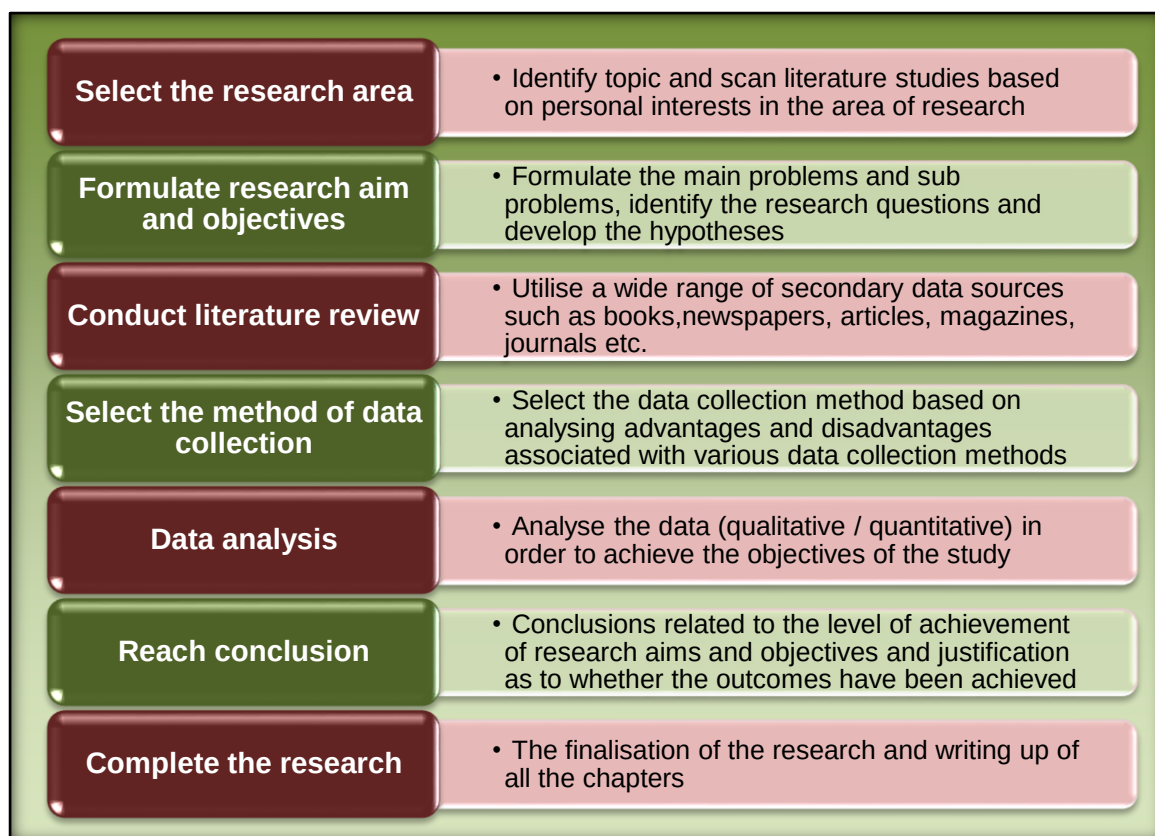


Figure 4.2: Research process

Source: Author's compilation

The research philosophy that underpins this study is displayed in various dimensions as outlined by different principles and the research paradigms as presented below.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGMS

The term paradigm encompasses the display of a conceptual framework that provides researchers with a convenient model to examine problems and detect solutions. As such, a research paradigm is based on a set of agreed principles and practices that lead researchers to understand and address a qualified problem (Fazliogullari, 2012:42; Morgan, 2007:49). Antwi and Hamza (2015:222) agree that “research paradigms can be characterised through their ontology (what is reality?), epistemology (how do you know something?) and the methodology (how do you go about finding out?)”. In summary, the ontology is the fundamental nature of the study’s reality and the epistemology creates a holistic view of how the knowledge is perceived (Morgan, 2007:49). Rahi (2017:1) adds that disciplines have their own methods and regulations that constitute methodologies when conducting research and gaining knowledge. The two areas of paradigms that are often applied in contemporary social,

organisational and management research are positivism/deductive research and interpretivism/constructivism which focuses on the assumptions and nature of the world and the nature of knowledge which is produced within each paradigm (Antwi & Hamza, 2015:217; Rahi, 2017:1).

4.3.1 Positivism/deductive approach

The positivist paradigm is based on an exploration of social reality that manifests a philosophical effect or outcome (Rahi, 2017:2; Neuman, 2014:61). Rahi, 2017:2 posits that positivism may be applied to the social world based on the assumption that "the social world can be studied in the same way as the natural world, that there is a method for studying the social world that is value free, and that explanations of a causal nature can be provided". Moreover, this theory or described experience is tested through observation and measurement and thus systematises the knowledge generation process through quantification, essentially enhancing the description of parameters and the relationship amongst them. Evans (2015:8) argues that "science" has been the dominant research methodology in event and tourism studies. However, Babbie (2010:41) concedes that this methodology has been criticised due to its lack of regard for subjective states of individuals; the objectivity needs should therefore be replaced with subjectivity. This gave rise to the anti-positivism/interpretivism paradigm. It should, however, be noted that positivism is not universally supported, since it has reflected some questionable assumptions (Babbie, 2010:41). In summary, the limitations of positivism have resulted in a different approach, interpretivism. The examples of a positivist paradigm and quantitative approach are provided in Table 4.1.

4.3.2 Interpretivism approach

Interpretivism, usually a qualitative approach, arises from the understanding that the study of humans is different to that of natural sciences and seeks understanding yet focuses on knowledge and views of the situation being studied (Goldkhul, 2012:137;). Concurring with Neuman (2014:62), the interpretivism paradigm maintains that the subject matter examined by the natural sciences is different to that of the social sciences. Moreover, all participants have their own distinctive interpretations of reality and the research can develop and enquire about their attitudes, beliefs and values and focus on bringing about meaning and knowledge (Rahi, 2017:2). These principles are notably important in ethnographic methodology and lean towards a social constructivist approach generating meaning and knowledge (Neuman, 2014:62). Interpretivist research methods include focus groups, interviews and research

which makes provision for variables to be documented. One of the remaining criticisms of interpretivism is that it does not make provision for generalisations and maintains that it could provide a more realistic reflection of social phenomena than that which is obtained from scientific data. Furthermore, interpretivism is also noted and criticised for lack of reliability due to the focus on subjectivity (Nudzor, 2009:116). Examples of the interpretivism paradigm approach are presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Summary of research paradigms

Orientation	Positivism paradigm (Quantitative approach)	Interpretive paradigm (Qualitative approach)
Ontology (nature of reality)	• Naïve positivism and realism • External, objective and independent social actors	• Relativism • No single reality or truth • Socially constructed, subjective, may change
Epistemology (theory of knowledge)	• Dualist • Objectivist • Reality can be measured • Provide reliable data	• Reality needs to be interpreted • Subjectivist • Researcher linked to study
Methodology	• Experimental/survey • Manipulative	• Dialectical • Hermeneutical • Ethnography grounded theory
Research method	• Empirical examination • Measurement • Hypothesis testing • Randomisation • Questionnaires	• Ethnographies • Case studies • Narrative research • Interview • Focus groups
Scientific method	• Deductive approach	• Inductive approach
Nature of instruments	• Variables • Structured and validated	• Words • Images • In depth interviews • Observations/field notes
Data analysis	• Statistical relationship amongst variables	• Using descriptive data, identify patterns, themes

Source: Author's compilation based on Antwi and Hamza (2015:222); Fazliogullari (2012:43)

In the case of this study, both the positivism and interpretive paradigm approaches have been applied. The research method employed for quantitative research involved a deductive approach of the survey measurement which enabled data analysis to show the statistical relationship amongst variables. The qualitative research involved an inductive approach: interviews were conducted to develop and identify patterns and themes.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Coolican (2014:125), „research design is bases of conducting research which focuses on formulating a research problem. Gorard (2013:3) supports this statement and refers to research design as the overall strategy selected to address the research problem in a coherent and logical manner. For this specific study mixed methods (exploratory sequential design) was employed. Figure 4.3 provides an overview of quantitative and qualitative research characteristics to enable the reader to differentiate between the two types of approaches relevant to this study.

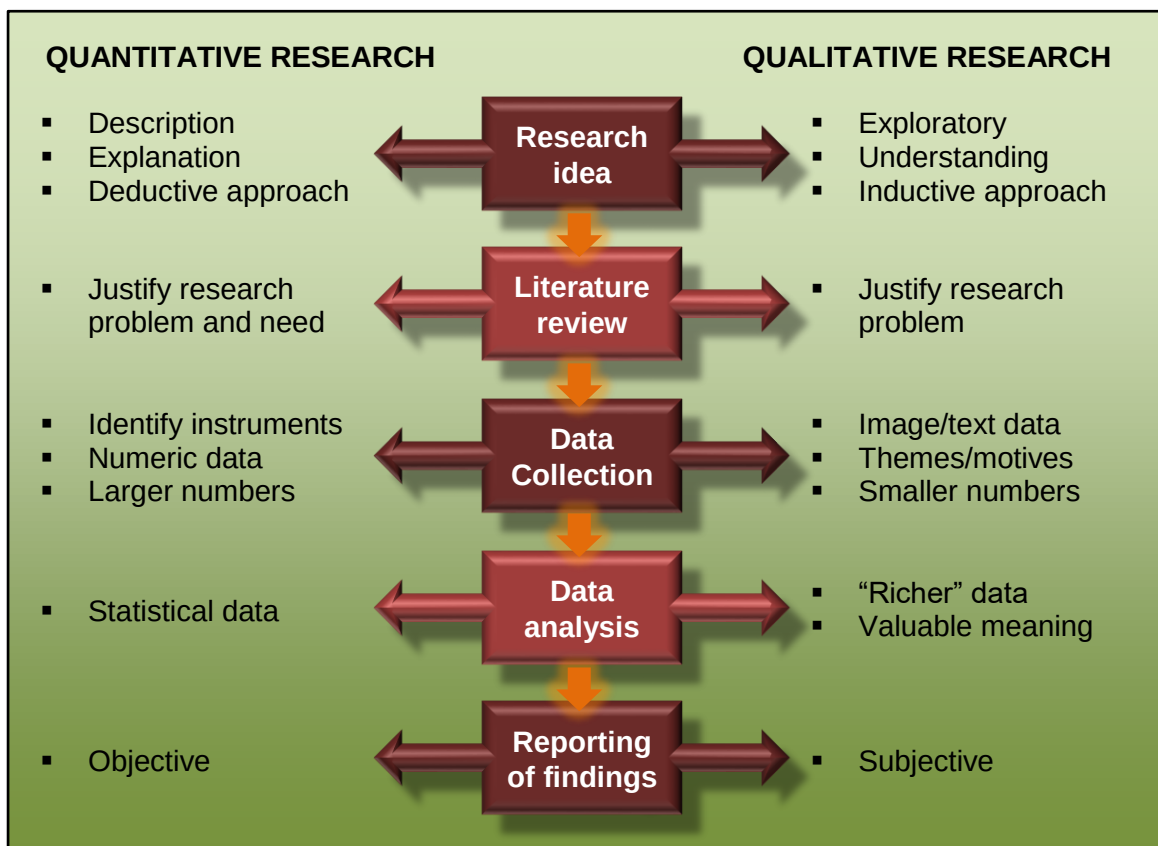


Figure 4.3: Synopsis of the Research Design

Source: Author’s compilation based on Gorard (2013:3)

It is important to note that using qualitative and quantitative methods does not necessarily constitute mixed methodology. Mixed methodology, according to Jennings (2010:17), involves collecting, analysing and integration of both methods in a single or longitudinal study. Mixed methodology was used for this particular study as a combination of the approaches (quantitative and qualitative) was adopted to address the lack of knowledge of conference competitiveness and obtain a better understanding of the research problem.

4.4.1 Mixed methodology

Mixed methodology research, based on philosophical assumptions, comprises the collecting, analysing and integrating of both qualitative and quantitative research in the same study with the purpose of providing a better understanding of the research problem and integrating the findings to draw inferences that are best suited for the study. Rittichainuwat and Rattanaphinanchai (2015:137) add that mixed methods involve a strategy for bringing various data components together, but ultimately may vary depending on the purpose of the study, the timing of the collection and the sequence of the methodology employed. In contrast, Venkatesh, Brown and Bala (2013:22) highlight seven purposes of mixed methodology which include: complementarity (gathering of similar experiences and ideas), completeness (acquiring representation of experiences), developmental (building one method to another), expansion (to extend the knowledge gained from a prior method) and confirmation (evaluation and trustworthiness gained from one method).

Rahi (2017:2) adds that an important process of mixed methods is the technique used to combine quantitative and qualitative data. This is referred to as “integration” and takes place at various level of the study. The integration processes focus on connecting, building, merging or embedding. The integration for this specific study took place at the “building” stage, which will be discussed later in the chapter (Cameron, 2009:143; Berman, 2017:7; Bazeley, 2012:817; Cameron & Price, 2009:413). Table 4.2 reflects the levels of integration of mixed methodology.

Table 4.2: Levels of integration in mixed methodology approaches

Integration level	Approaches
Design	3 core designs • Exploratory sequential • Explanatory sequential • Convergent • Advanced frameworks • Multistage • Intervention • Case study • Participatory • Transformative • Instrument development
Methods	• Connecting • Building • Merging • Embedding

Integration level	Approaches
Interpretation/reporting	• Narrative – weaving • Data transformation • Joint Display

Source: Adapted from Fetters, Curry and Creswell (2013:2134)

The levels of integration applicable to this study are an exploratory sequential design with a building method approach for which the qualitative data is transformed into quantitative data through instrumental design of the questionnaire using a joint display approach.

4.4.1.1 *Exploratory research*

Henson and Roberts (2006:394) concur with Marshall and Rossman (2011:69) that exploratory research is a methodological approach focused on the discovery and generating of a theory and that exploratory research is the first stage of the study providing large quantities of unstructured information that is collected in order to explore a new area of study or problems. Engel and Schutt (2013:17) suggest that exploratory research lies at a low level of knowledge that can often not provide conclusive answers to the research problem and therefore lacks representation. Furthermore, in an attempt to determine whether a phenomenon exists, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches can be used. Qualitative techniques often apply when gathering data for exploratory studies, focus groups, in-depth interviews and case analysis as used data-collection methods. Quantitative data in the exploratory paradigm usually focuses on large scale surveys (Engel & Schutt, 2013:17; Marshall & Rossman, 2011:69; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:522).

4.4.1.2 *Exploratory sequential design*

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011:12) and Berman (2017:6), in an exploratory design qualitative data is collected and analysed. From here, the themes are identified and used to develop the quantitative instrument that assists to answer the research problem. Furthermore, the integration process of the exploratory sequential design is employed using the “building” method. This is the term used when the qualitative data is taken to “build” the quantitative data, as in the case of this study. The term “sequential” as defined by Cameron (2009:144) refers to one type of data that provides a basis for collection of another type of data. In summary, the qualitative data (interviews) was collected and analysed, to assist with the development of the instrument (questionnaire) to provide quantitative data for the study,

therefore employing an exploratory sequential mixed methods research design as depicted in Figure 4.4.

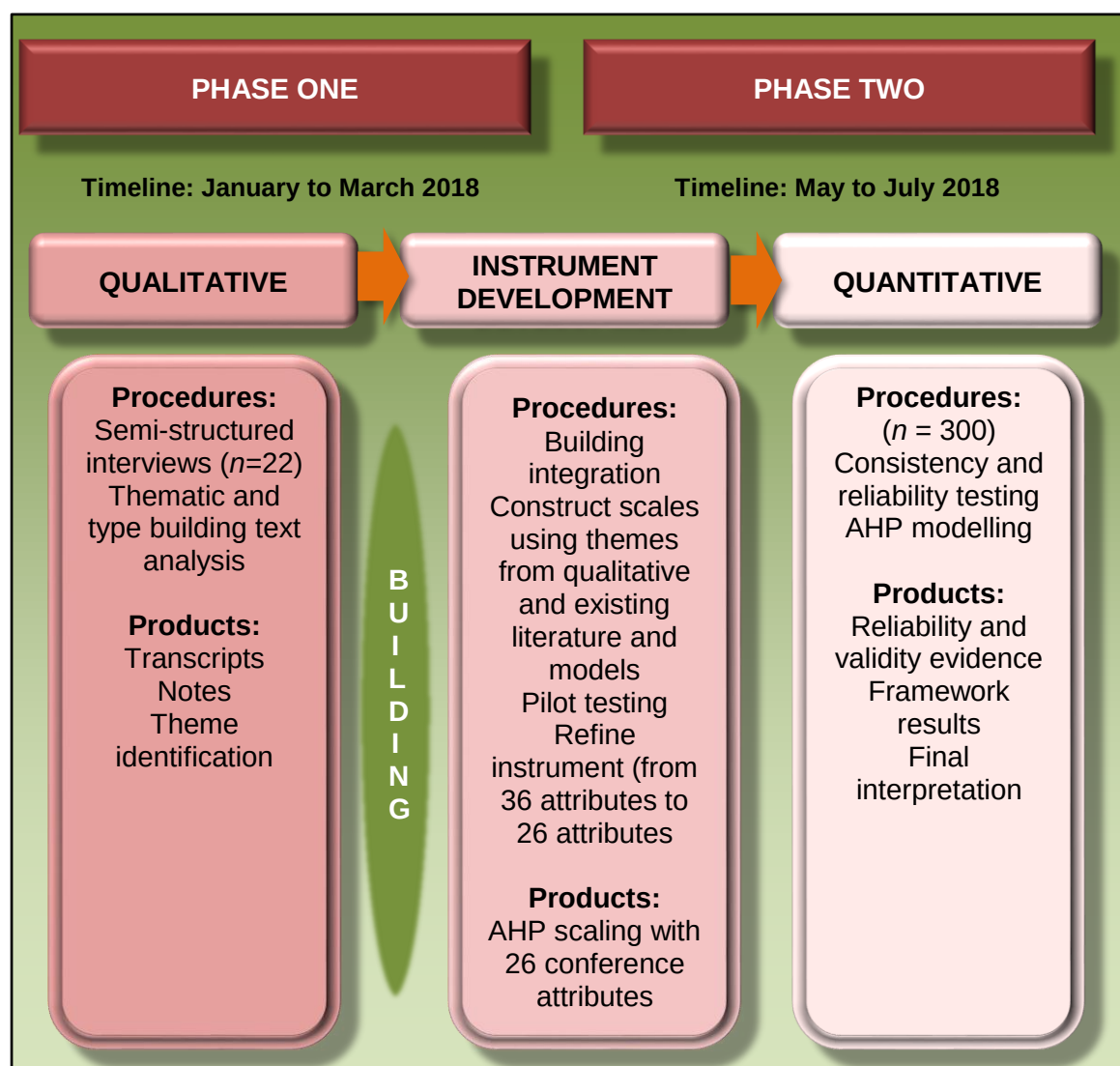


Figure 4.4: Exploratory sequential mixed methods research design applied for this study

Source: Author's compilation based on Fetters, Curry and Creswell (2013:2134)

4.4.1.3 Explanatory research

Explanatory research is typically quantitative in nature and tested by prior hypothesis by measuring relationships with variables; furthermore, it is used to explain behaviour in a market environment and measure relationships between the variables, rather than simply describe the phenomena studied (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:523; Marshall & Rossman, 2011:69; Creswell, 2009:72; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2012:2). Despite this, explanatory research seeks to identify causes and explore how one variable affects another. The terms “dependent” and

“independent” are used to explain the individual variables and their relationship (Bolner & Poirier, 2004:39). As such, the appropriate research design or approach has been determined based on the research needs; a suitable methodology and data instruments are to be selected.

4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Rahi (2017:3) notes that, in practice, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are often employed within a single investigation, which will allow a clear understanding of the research topic to emerge. Both qualitative and quantitative methods, as discussed below, may make it possible to gather the required data to address the research problem and ensure that the objectives of the study are met. (Table 4.3 provides a comparison of the differences between qualitative and quantitative methodology.

Table 4.3: Differences between qualitative and quantitative methodologies

QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY	QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY
Research approach is deductive	Research approach is inductive
Epistemological view is objective	Epistemological view is subjective
Statistical based	Text based
Fixed response options	Unstructured or semi-structured response options
Primary purpose to determine cause-and-effect relationship	Primary purpose is to describe on-going processes
More generalizable	Less generalizable
Independent variable is controlled and manipulated	No specific independent variable
Use of inferential statistical procedures for validity	Use of similar cases to determine findings
Describes/ more definitive	Interprets/exploratory in nature
Level of occurrence	Depth of understanding

Source: Adapted from Fetters, Curry and Creswell (2013:2134)

To determine the most suitable research design and methodology, the research problem should be elucidated. The research problem for this study was:

- ❖ To explore the concept and typology of the business and conference sector.
- ❖ To conduct an in-depth literature analysis of the concept and approaches of global competitiveness in the conference industry and to conduct and critique current

frameworks used for destination competitiveness to determine the links to business and conference tourism.

- ❖ To apply selected statistical methods to obtain the optimal framework for competitiveness in the conference industry.
- ❖ To reach conclusions, set out managerial implications and make recommendations on the implementation of the proposed framework.

A literature review was conducted to address the first and second objectives of this study, which contributed to the development of the questionnaire. The third objective required exploration of the relationship between conference tourism and competitiveness, using an exploratory and explanatory research approach. The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data and its subsequent interpretation combined with the literature study, addressed the fourth objective. As previously mentioned, for the purpose of this study, it was decided to follow a mixed methodology approach based on an exploratory sequential design to provide solutions to the above mentioned objectives. Figure 4.5 depicts the method used to address the research problem.

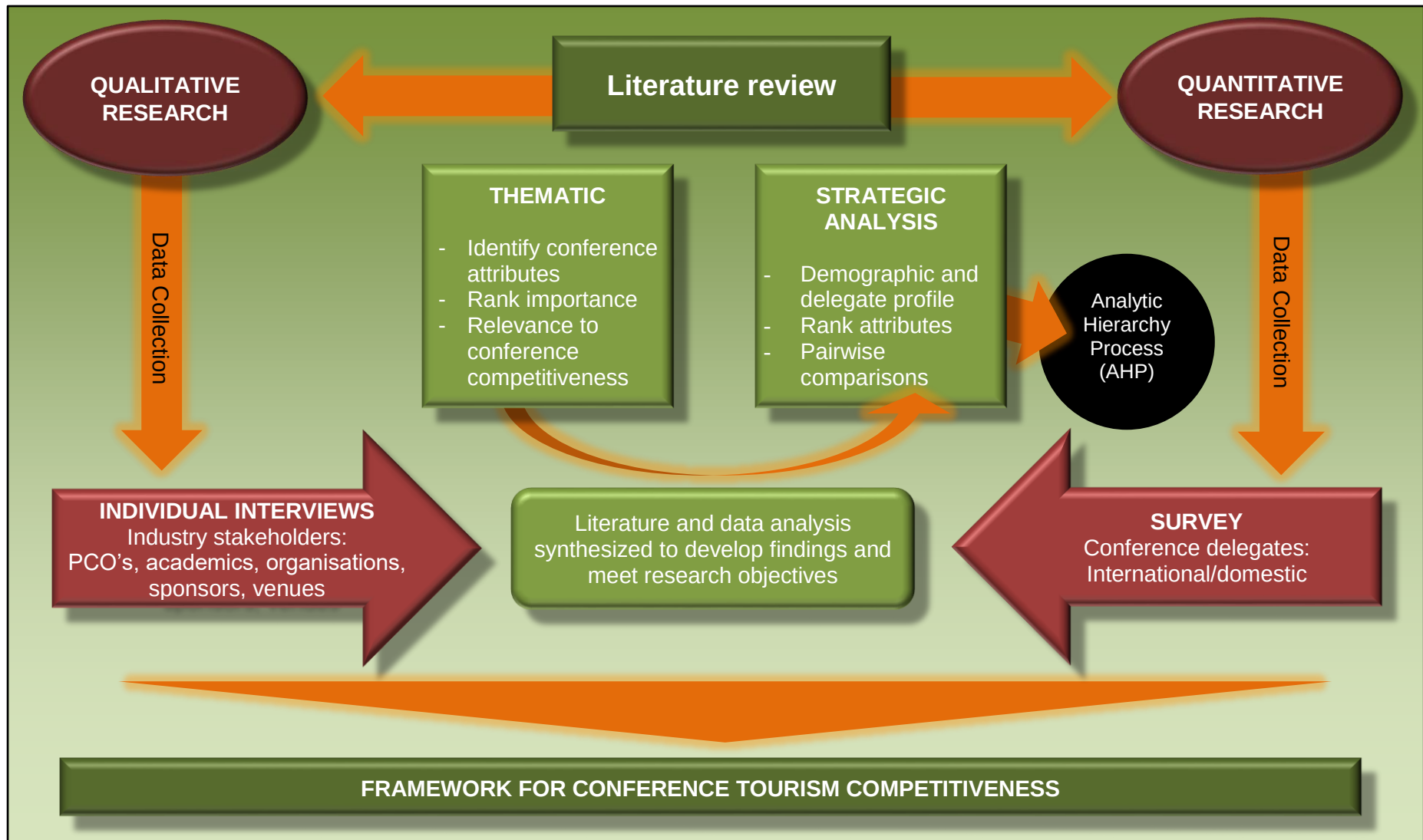


Figure 4.5: Workflow diagram illustrating the method used to address the research problem

4.5.1 Qualitative approach

According to Babbie (2013:328) and Flick (2014:5), a qualitative approach is supported in the interpretive paradigm of social science and is subjective. This debate subscribes to the discovery and description of deeper meanings and the exploration of why or how a phenomenon occurs in order to develop a theory or describe an experience (Berman, 2017:5). Rahi (2017:2) posits that the process of research involves emerging questions and procedures. Jennings (2010:21) concludes that the qualitative approach represents social reality and attributes of the phenomenon which is inductive in nature. In tourism research, Flick (2014:5) explains that qualitative research is based on data collection methods, which include participant observation, in-depth interviews and/or focus groups. Moreover, stating that qualitative research adopts a more descriptive, narrative style of research. The limitation to qualitative research is often the time required for data collection, analysis and interpretation.

4.5.1.1 Sampling

A sample unit is a single unit or subject selected from an overall target population. The main purpose of sampling is to achieve representativeness, and therefore the sample should be assembled so that it is carefully representative of the overall target population (Coolican, 2014:65).

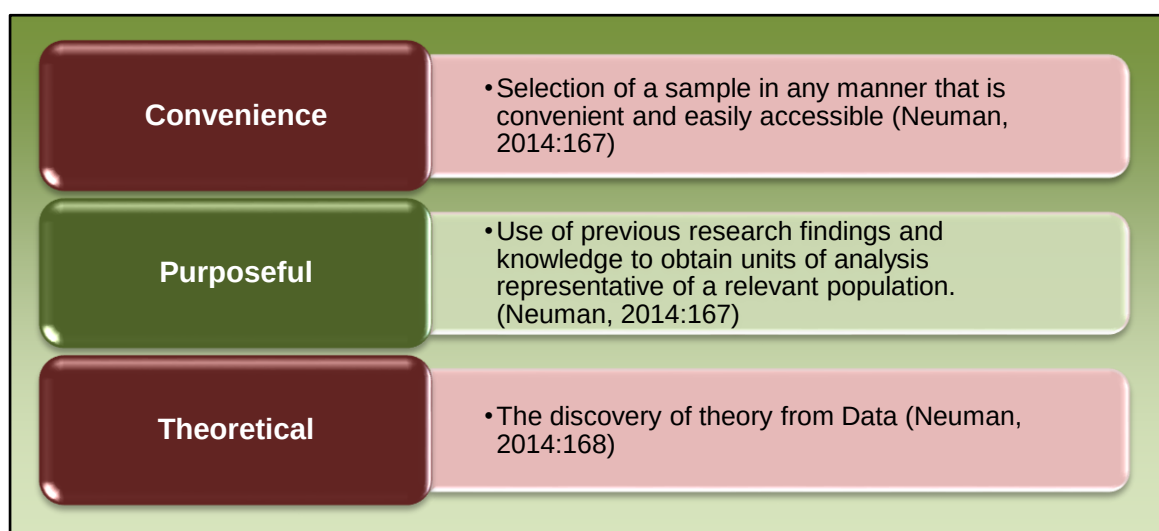


Figure 4.6: Convenience, purposeful and theoretical sampling

Source: Author's compilation based on Neuman (2014:167)

The sampling approach applied to the qualitative part of the study was purposeful in that specific people with specific knowledge was selected.

4.5.1.2 *Sampling size*

For the purpose of this study a sample size of twenty six (N=26) participants consisting of conference industry stakeholders/experts (used interchangeably) was employed. The criteria for the selected participants were for the participants to be in a management or senior position with more than 10 – 15 years of experience in the conference or marketing/competitiveness industry and considered “experts” in the industry. Only eligible respondents were permitted to participate. The purpose was to achieve a convergence of relative opinions and correlated judgements regarding attributes of the conference industry derived from literature reviews and models of Dwyer and Kim (2003); Heath (2002); Hassan (2000); and Crouch and Ritchie (1994, 2003). The participants who were experts in their fields were encouraged to provide input regarding important conferencing attributes and conference competitiveness. The questions assisted in guiding and prompting the experts. Table 4.4 indicates the categories and profiles of the participants. The participants were selected from a list of members of the South African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI). No additional participants were sought, as firstly, the participants were willing to be part of the study and interested to know the findings thereof, and secondly, the overall value of the years of experience surpassed the initial expectations. An impressive selection of prominent role players in the industry providing valuable insight was attained. Saturation was reached after 22 interviews.

According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006:65), the size of a sample is dependent on the differences within the population, the type of analysis and the strength of the conclusion required. Sample size in qualitative research is dependent on various complex factors and can involve case studies of a single person, observations of various people and sampling over time to observe roles as well as interactions of the participants. Furthermore, Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006:65) state that data saturation is most commonly used to determine the sample size. This is considered the point at which the data collection and analysis produce little to no further change. In the case of this study, the themes and attributes were analysed after each interview and a progression of themes was documented. It then transpired that after twenty-two interviews no further thematic expressions emerged, indicating that data saturation had been reached. In addition, to further validate the sample size, other studies of destination competitiveness using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) were consulted (literature on conference competitiveness does not exist, hence this study). The study of Kozak *et al.* (2015:259) yielded a sample size of 13 travel agents; Boz (2010) a sample size of 44 officials and Chen (2006:168) a sample size of 35 academics.

Table 4.4 indicates the categories and profiles of the participants interviewed. As the participants' identity was protected, the names of the participants, as well as their affiliated organisations, have not been revealed - only their designation.

Table 4.4: Sample sizes and participant profiles of the study

CATEGORY	PARTICIPANT PROFILE	TOTAL
Associations/organisations represented in the conference industry	1. Chief Executive Officer 2. Regional Director 3. Chief Convention Bureau Officer 4. General Manager	N=4
Conference venues	1. Director 2. Manager 3. General Manager	N=3
Academics involved in conference attendance	1. Senior Lecturer (PhD) 2. Senior Lecturer (PhD) 3. Associate Professor 4. Lecturer	N=4
Sponsors for conferences	1. Director 2. General Manager	N=2
Professional Conference Organisers (PCO)	1. Director/owner 2. Director 3. Member 4. Marketing Manager 5. Team Leader 6. Manager 7. Senior Program Manager 8. Manager	N=8
TOTAL		N= 22

Rahi (2017:3) contend that when selecting the sampling technique in mixed methodology, it is important to consider whether the same participants will be used or whether one sample is a sub-set of the other or whether they should be completely different for the two samples. A “supply” and “demand” approach is used in this study, therefore the respondents/participants are not indicative of the same sample frame.

4.5.1.3 *Method of data collection*

According to Kumar (2014:191), data collection is the practice of gathering and measuring variable information required to establish a systematic approach that makes provision for research questions to be answered, hypotheses to be tested and outcomes to be assessed. The main methods of collecting qualitative data include interviews, focus groups, observations

and action research. For this study, the chosen method of collecting data was personal interviews (semi-structured).

4.5.1.3.1 Personal interviews

The collection of data by means of personal interviews entails “face to face” interaction, with the respondents visited at a place of residence or work. The interviewer reads questions to which the participant will respond (Kumar, 2014:176; Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005:163; Neuman, 2014:194). Moreover, interviewing is applied in qualitative research, which includes unstructured interviews and structured interviews. Unstructured interviews have no pre-determined questions and have a more informal approach. On the other hand, structured or semi-structured interviews are bound by a set of open-ended questions, often initiated by probes to provide guidance (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:63; Jennings, 2010:170). The collection of data employed for this study was by means of a semi-structured interview.

4.5.1.3.2 Semi-structured interview administration

Semi-structured interviews allow for a list of themes and questions that may vary from one interview to the next. Furthermore, the order of the questions can vary depending on the direction the interview takes and the themes that develop (Welman *et al.*, 2006:163; Neuman, 2014:194). Additional questions may be explored to gain more insight into the theme or topic of discussion. Preparing for an interview entails analysing the research problem, understanding what information is required from the participant and selecting the participants that can supply the necessary information. Firstly, the questions should be drafted in line with the research objectives. Secondly, the questionnaire should be subjected to a pilot study to ensure that the instructions, questions and wording are clearly formatted and lastly, an agreement between the parties as to the venue for the interview should be confirmed (Coolican, 2014:72). Once the interview commences, it is important to highlight the purpose and relevance of the study. Furthermore, the interview language should be understandable and terminology and concepts should be clarified. The interview should be well managed in terms of time, with interruptions kept to a minimum. Irrelevant topics and sensitive issues should be avoided (Coolican, 2014:52). Notably, the above was adhered to during the interview process of this study. To ensure credibility throughout the interview process of this study, the strategies set out in Table 4.5 were implemented.

Table 4.5: Strategies of credibility applied throughout the interview process applicable to this study

Credibility	▪ Interviewer well versed in the topic of discussion ▪ Interviewer well prepared for the interviews ▪ Questions sent out to the interviewees (stakeholders) prior to the interview ▪ Interviewer familiarised herself with the company profile prior to the interview to direct the questions more appropriately
Reliability	▪ Documented notes and recordings were kept by the researcher ▪ Researcher transcribed recordings after each interview and compared these with the notes taken during the interview. Where necessary additional notes were made. This process was revised prior to “writing up” of the qualitative data. ▪ E-mail correspondence between interviewer and interviewee documented
Confidentiality	▪ Interviewees were guaranteed confidentiality and interviewed in a comfortable and conducive environment chosen by them
Validity	▪ Notes were taken together with recordings of important issues discussed. Attentive listening skills were applied.

Source: Author's compilation based on Leung (2015:324)

In particular, the selection of the interviewees involved personally contacting the selected participants by e-mail requesting participation. The e-mail highlighted the purpose of the study and the focus of the questions pertaining to their specific sector of the conference industry. In the event of no response after a week, a follow up telephone call was made to the participant. Once the appointment had been confirmed, the semi-structured interviews were conducted on a one to one basis by the researcher at a venue and time of preference to the participant. Prior to commencement of the interview, the participant was requested to sign a standardised consent form stating anonymity and confidentiality (see Appendix 1). Consent was also obtained from the participants to voice record the interview for documentation purposes. Thereafter, the participants were asked to discuss their interest and background in conference tourism and competitiveness, so that their values, opinions, interests and attitudes could be used to assist in guiding the interview. The first interview was conducted on the 31st of January 2018 and the last interview on the 3rd of March 2018. The average duration of each interview was 45 to 60 minutes. A list of attributes - as documented in Table 4.6 - was used to guide and assist the participants. These attributes were based on various conceptual studies of destination and tourism competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Hassan, 2000; Heath, 2002) and various empirical studies based on general competitiveness (Kozak & Remington, 1998; Enright & Newton, 2004). Furthermore, participants were encouraged to identify conference attributes and discuss them in detail. These attributes later

determined the main and sub-factors outlined in the questionnaire. The participants also shared their understanding of what the conference industry of South Africa should do to keep the industry sustainable. One of the participants was not able to attend the face-to-face meeting due to distance and opted for a “skype” meeting. Two of the participants e-mailed their responses. (The consent forms were e-mailed to the researcher for record purposes).

Table 4.6: Summary of tourism and destination attributes used to guide the interviews

KEY RESOURCES	TOURISM DEVELOPMENT
Natural resources and biodiversity	Destination marketing management*
Cultural resources	Destination policy planning
Infrastructure *	HR development
Activities *	Environmental management (greening)*
Shopping	
Entertainment*	
SUPPORT FACTORS	SITUATIONAL CONDITIONS
General infrastructure	Competitive micro environment
Service quality*	Destination location*
Accessibility*	Global environment
Attractiveness	Price competitiveness
Hospitality/accommodation*	Positioning in the market
Technology*	Innovative products and services
Health and Safety requirements*	
Visa requirements	
Climate/weather*	MARKET PERFORMANCE CONDITIONS
Value for money*	Political stability*
Catering – food quality*	Price competitiveness*
Facilities*	Economic stability*

Source: Adapted from the work of Crouch and Ritchie (2003); Hassan (2000); Heath (2002); Dwyer and Kim (2003)

Destination and tourism attributes identified through the literature in chapter 2 and the participants of the interviews constitute overlap attributes for conferencing.

All stakeholders in Table 4.4 were subjected to generic questions pertaining to conference competitiveness; thereafter the questions were specific to the sector of the industry which the

participants were from (see Appendix 2). The generic questions for all stakeholders/participants were as follows:

- ❖ What do you think are important attributes for conferencing? (Rank in order of importance.)
- ❖ What do you consider to be the main challenges for growth and development in the conference industry?
- ❖ What is your opinion as to what should be done to grow the sector, and bring more conferences to South Africa?
- ❖ How important is destination management?
- ❖ How important is destination policy planning and development when considering conference tourism?
- ❖ How competitive is South Africa in business tourism?
- ❖ What are the gaps?

ASSOCIATIONS

- ❖ What makes you successful when bidding for an international conference?
- ❖ What attributes are important when considering conference location? ***provide examples of attributes**
- ❖ What advice would you give to those trying to gain/win a conference bid?
- ❖ How do you go about sourcing venues – do you have set criteria? *** explain the criteria**
- ❖ Provide 3 pointers as to how South Africa could be more competitive.
- ❖ How well do you collaborate with other stakeholders? *** mention relevant stakeholders**

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANISERS (PCO)

- ❖ What attributes do you think are important for delegates? *** provide examples**
- ❖ Prioritise these attributes. *** from co-ordinators perspective**
- ❖ How do you go about sourcing venues – do you have set criteria? **(PCO's)** are you flexible to using new suppliers?
- ❖ How well do you collaborate with other stakeholders? *** mention relevant stakeholders**

ACADEMICS

- ❖ When attending an international conference, what attributes are important when selecting a conference?
- ❖ Prioritise these attributes.
- ❖ How could the conference organiser better meet the needs of the delegates?
- ❖ What adds value to a conference for you?
- ❖ What are your objectives/criteria for selecting a conference?
- ❖ What proportion of your curriculum involves Business Tourism? Do you think B.T is important and why so?

SPONSOR

- ❖ How do you go about selecting a conference to sponsor and what procedures do you follow? *** target market, investment, exposure, networking, launch**
- ❖ What are the benefits to sponsoring a conference?
- ❖ Would you sponsor the same conference more than once and why/why not?
- ❖ What is your view on international versus domestic conferences and sponsorship?
- ❖ How competitive do you see South Africa as a conference destination?

VENUES

- ❖ What attributes do you think are important to delegates when using a venue?
- ❖ What do you think the strong attributes/attractors are of your venue?
- ❖ Do you think your venue is competitive? If not, how can you make it more competitive/ how would you increase your chances of a venue being more competitive?
- ❖ How well do you collaborate with other stakeholders/suppliers?
- ❖ Are you aware of our competitor? What do you do to keep abreast of your completion?

Figure 4.7: Interview questions per stakeholder

It should be noted that once the interviews were under way, some of the questions were adapted and merged; for example, at a certain point the researcher became convinced that the venue stakeholders required their own set of questions; these were then developed and

applied to the venue stakeholders. The exact questions that were merged are stipulated in chapter 5.

4.5.1.4 *Data analysis*

According to Sargeant (2012:1) and Creswell (2009:219), the purpose of a qualitative analysis is to demonstrate interpretation of the data and facilitate an opinion of the phenomenon of the study. The interpretation of the qualitative data can lead to a more in-depth understanding of the results and new theories or ideas. The data analysis for this study was conducted in three stages, namely deconstruction (data transformation), interpretation and reconstruction. Deconstruction/data transformation formally refers to the breaking down of the data into component parts and creating codes and themes qualitatively. Interpretation encompasses the understanding of the coded data and the categorisation of similar themes and exploring theories. Finally, the reconstruction process refers to recreating the prominent codes and themes in order to show the relationships and insights derived from the interpretation phase. The reconstruction contextualises the findings and places them into perspective with the theory, practice and evidence in context.

In this study, interpretation from the participants was used together with the literature to formulate a measurable quantitative instrument (questionnaire). After each interview the recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriber and the notes coded by the researcher to identify themes and attributes. These were then entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (see Appendix 3). After the transcriptions had been completed, the researcher compared the transcriptions to the notes taken during the interviews, reviewed these notes and made additional comments where necessary. Before the writing up of the qualitative data, the researcher replayed the recordings to refresh herself and thus an analysis of attributes and themes was concluded.

Once the qualitative data process had been completed, the quantitative approach was applied as set out below.

4.5.2 Quantitative approach

A quantitative research approach is reinforced by the positivist social sciences paradigm and adopts a deductive approach in tourism research (De Vos & Strydom, 2011:222). A limitation of quantitative research is that it fails to take into consideration people's unique ability to interpret their experiences, hence the qualitative approach combination of this study.

4.5.2.1 Sampling

The main purpose of sampling is to achieve representativeness. The sample should be gathered to show a representative segment of the target population that is carefully selected and relevant (Coolican, 2014:65). Probability and non-probability sampling methods are conducive to quantitative sampling. Neuman (2014:165), however, points out that probability sampling is also prominent in qualitative research methods.

4.5.2.1.1 Probability and non-probability sampling

In order to place probability and non-probability sampling into perspective, Table 4.7 indicates the differences between each of the sampling methods.

Table 4.7: Comparison between probability and non-probability sampling

PROBABILITY	NON-PROBABILITY
Random sampling	Non-random sampling
Conclusive research	Exploratory research
Unbiased results	Biased results
Inferences are statistical	Inferences are analytical
Hypothesis tested	Hypothesis generated
Sampling frame	No sampling frame
Results generalised	Results with insight
Usually large samples	Usually small samples

Source: Author's compilation

4.5.2.1.2 Non-probability sampling

According to Spiegel, Schiller and Srinivasan (2013:155), non-probability sampling displays that a population does not have equal chances of being selected. The selection is based on assumptions regarding the population of interest forming a selection criterion. Moreover, Neuman (2014:167) adds that the sample size is rarely determined in advance and there is limited knowledge available regarding the larger population, as outlined in Figure 4.8.

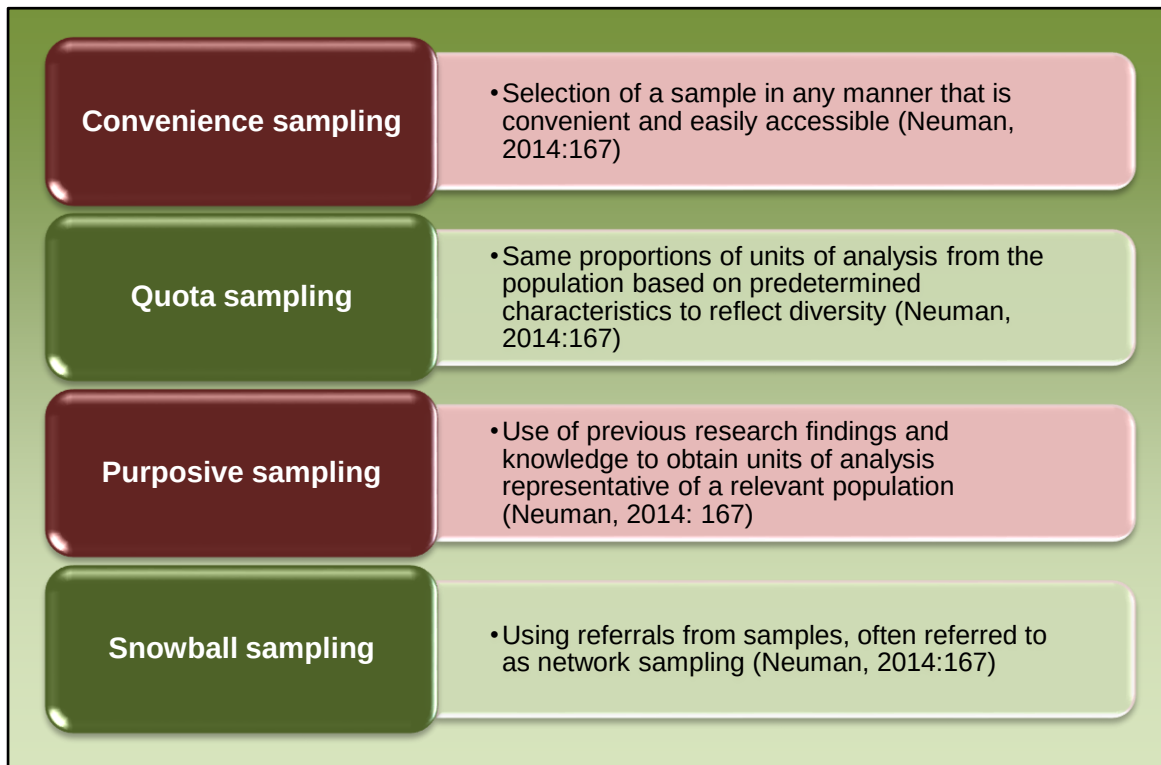


Figure 4.8: Convenience, quota, purposive and snowball sampling

Source: Author's compilation based on Neuman (2014:167)

4.5.2.1.3 Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling is used where subjects are selected based on their convenience and accessibility to the researcher.

4.5.2.1.4 Probability sampling

According to Jennings Spiegel *et al.* (2013:155), there are several variations of probability sampling. Probability sampling methods are often used when a sample frame does exist. Probability sampling types are outlined in Figure 4.9. Stratified sampling is specific to this study.

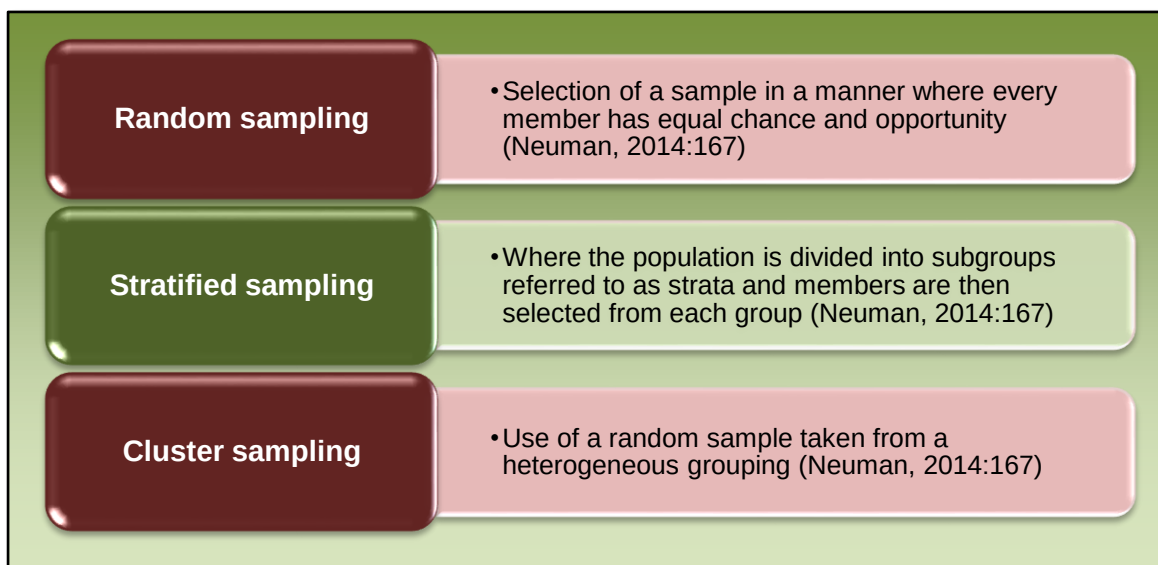


Figure 4.9: Random, stratified and cluster sampling

Source: Author's own compilation adapted from Neuman, (2014:167)

4.5.2.1.5 Stratified sampling

Stratified sampling, probability sampling that divides the entire population into different subgroups whilst randomly selecting the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. The delegates were of subgroups from Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town and attended academic, industry and associate conferences.

The sampling approach applied to the quantitative part of this study involved stratified sampling as three cities were selected (Durban, Cape Town, Johannesburg) and convenience sampling at each conference venue.

4.5.2.2 Sampling size

According to Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006:65), sample size is dependent on the variation within the population, the analysis and the conclusion required. Similar studies which focus on competitiveness using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) were used as a guideline for sample size (Crouch, 2007; Lubbe, 2015; Chen, 2006; Boz, 2010), with a sample size varying from 12 to 98 respondents. The population for the quantitative section of the study included all delegates, both international and domestic (international defined as any delegate residing outside the borders of South Africa) attending or having attended an association, academic, corporate or government conference. At this stage, no evidence or records exist of the exact number of people in the conference industry, especially not the delegates.

The questionnaire was finally distributed at two international conferences in Durban, three international conferences in Cape Town and four conferences in Johannesburg between 30 May 2018 and 31 July 2018. These cities were identified due to their being considered as “conference hubs” in the conferencing industry. Furthermore, the conferences included academic, industry and associate conferences. Additional conferences were sought in Johannesburg to increase the poor response rate. Rogerson (2005:185) maintains that these cities boast conference venues of international standard. In order to further increase the response rate, distributions were conducted in Johannesburg. Table 4.8 indicates the breakdown of the conferences used for distribution. Owing to confidentiality the names of the conferences and venue names have not been mentioned in the table below.

Table 4.8: Conference participants

DATE 2018	CITY	TYPE OF CONFERENCE	EXPECTED NUMBER OF DELEGATES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	METHOD OF DISTRIBUTION
30 May	Durban	International– Association, Government, Academic	250	42	Delegates bags
15 Jun	Johannesburg	International – Industry	100	32	Delegates desks
26 Jun	Durban	International – Association, Academic	120	33	Delegates desks
04 Jul	Cape Town	International – Association, Government	250	28	Delegates desks
05Jul	Cape Town	International – Association, Academic	120	44	Registration
18 Jul	Johannesburg	International – Academic	80	59	Delegates bags
19 Jul	Johannesburg	International – Industry, Academia	80	26	Registration
30 Jul	Johannesburg	International – Industry	300	36	Registration

Each of the above conferences was personally facilitated by the researcher on the first day of each conference with the exception of the conferences on the 30th of May and 18th of July 2018) a decision was taken by the conference committee for the organiser to facilitate the questionnaires. It should however be noted that the researcher discussed the process in detail

with the organiser and was on stand-by telephonically. The purpose of the study was explained to the delegates and a reminder to complete the questionnaire was given by the MC of the conference throughout the day. The criterion for completion of the questionnaire was to have attended at least one conference. It was noted on the questionnaire that the questionnaire was not specific to the conference the delegate was attending, but was applicable to conferences in general. A total of 1300 questionnaires were distributed with a total usable number of 300 questionnaires collected, providing a response rate of 23 %.

4.5.2.3 Method of data collection

According to Remler and Van Ryzin (2011:214), quantitative methods emphasise objective measurements through polls, questionnaires and surveys. For the purpose of this study, a 9-point scale of relative importance was used to derive ratio scales from discrete and continuous paired comparisons. To ensure credibility throughout the questionnaire distribution process, the following strategies were implemented as per Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Strategies for credibility throughout the survey/questionnaire process

Credibility	- Conferences were carefully scrutinised to ensure they met the required criteria before being selected. - The researcher facilitated at all conferences in Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg with the exception of two. - The researcher was available to answer any queries relating to the questionnaire. - The questionnaire stipulated the ethical clearance number.
Reliability	- Documented notes of the conference details are in possession of the researcher. - E-mail correspondence between conference organisers and managers has been documented.
Confidentiality	Delegates, venues and conference organisers were guaranteed confidentiality – this was stipulated on the questionnaire.
Validity	- Notes were taken after each conference. - Questionnaires were checked, numbered and recorded against each conference.

Source: Author's compilation based on Leung (2015:324)

Collectively, more than 70 conference organisers, conference venues and organisations were contacted to participate in the survey. However, the invitation was resisted by many conference committees and organisers. The following limitations were noted:

- ❖ Due to budget constraints many of the conferences had been shortened, thus a full program made no provision to allow for the delegates to complete the questionnaire.

- ❖ The committees of the conference decided not to allow for questionnaires to be completed during the conference, specifically for research purposes, as they had been inundated with similar requests.
- ❖ The conference Chair considered the questionnaire too long and too time consuming.
- ❖ The venues and conference committees had their own questionnaires to complete and a third questionnaire would be too many.
- ❖ The questionnaire completion was too long or distracting to delegates.

4.5.2.3.1 Questionnaire development

The objective of a questionnaire, according to Jennings (2001:171), is to acquire facts and opinions relating to the phenomenon of the study. The information sought, method of administration, content of individual questions, relation of questions to the objectives of the study, response of the questions and wording of the questions should be considered. De Vos and Strydom (2011:172) define a questionnaire as “a set of questions on a form which is completed by the respondent in respect of a research project”. The questions can be closed (response is either yes or no) or not closed (response allows for a comment). Alternatively, De Vos and Strydom (2011:172) state that the questionnaire can contain statements which require the respondents to act upon them. Questionnaires can be administered by mail, telephonically, personally, by hand or group administered. The medium used to administer the questionnaires is based on the accessibility of the population (Jennings, 2001:171; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:522).

The questionnaire used in this study was developed from, and motivated by, the key findings of the qualitative study. In addition, related literature and similar studies conducted on other sectors of the tourism industry were used to assist with development of the questionnaire (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Heath, 2002; Hassan, 2000; Crouch & Ritchie, 2003; Crouch, 2007; Remler & Van Ryzin, 2011:522; Saayman & Saayman, 2008). Furthermore, the indicators as cited in the OECD Tourism Paper of 2013/2 (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013) that were relevant to conference tourism were adapted and incorporated in the questionnaire. These indicator categories included:

- ❖ marketplace – awareness and branding
- ❖ industry performance – economic and political impacts
- ❖ 99 competitiveness – value for money
- ❖ accessibility – destination and conference
- ❖ cultural and natural resources

The responses from the expert stakeholders (qualitative data) (see Appendix 3), together with themes supported from the literature, further served as a basis from which a final list of attributes was formulated, structured and included in the final questionnaire for the delegates at the selected conferences noted in Table 4.8. Table 4.10 indicates the original four (4) main factors and thirty-six (36) attributes which were either reduced, removed (dropped) and/or modified. The criteria remained. The questionnaire was then reformatted to meet the requirements of the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) method (pairwise comparisons).

Table 4.10: Joint display of exploratory sequential instrument development of mixed methods study

QUALITATIVE THEMES/ ATTRIBUTES	QUESTION NO	EXPERT / LITERATURE THEMES	QUANTITATIVE INSTRUMENT ATTRIBUTES	QUESTION NO	NOTES
DESTINATION ATTRIBUTES					
Accessibility	Q19	Expert	Retained	Q20-25	Accessibility and location were 'merged' by experts; however, it was deemed important to separate these as per literature.
Image	Q20	Literature	Removed		
Infrastructure	Q21	Expert	Retained	Q26-30	Parking was a common theme identified by experts
Location	Q22	Expert	Retained	Q31-34	
Safety	Q23	Expert	Renamed	Q35-37	Safety/security
Value for money	Q24	Expert	Renamed	Q38-39	Value/cost – experts referred to this as a cost factor
Service quality	Q25	Expert	Removed	Q77-79	
Weather/ climate	Q26	Expert	Retained	Q40	
Entertainment	Q27	Literature	Removed		
Attractions	Q28	Expert	Combined	Q24,29,34, 37, 39,40	Attractions/activities
Activities	Q29	Expert	Combined		
Hospitality	Q30	Expert	Removed		Hospitality and service quality were combined by experts
Accommodation cost	Q31	Expert	Moved	Q61	Moved to conference attributes –

QUALITATIVE THEMES/ ATTRIBUTES	QUESTION NO	EXPERT / LITERATURE THEMES	QUANTITATIVE INSTRUMENT ATTRIBUTES	QUESTION NO	NOTES
					accommodation in general
Accommodation reputation	Q32	Literature	Moved		Moved to conference attributes
CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES					
Entertainment	Q33	Literature	Retained	Q41-46	
Program	Q34	Expert	Retained	Q47-51	
Partner program	Q35	Literature	Removed		
Networking	Q36	Expert	Removed		Covered in demographic
Quality of food	Q37	Expert	Retained	Q52-55	
Conference package	Q38	Literature	Removed		
Image of the conference	Q39	Literature	Renamed	Q56-58	Conference image
Service quality	Q40	Expert	Retained	Q77-79	
Value for money	Q41	Expert	Renamed	Q38-Q39	Value/cost
Facilities and services	Q42	Expert	Moved	Q82	Moved to venue attributes
Authentic experience	Q43	Literature	Removed		
VENUE ATTRIBUTES					
Design	Q44	Expert	Renamed	Q62-67	Venue design
Up to date technology	Q45	Expert	Renamed	Q68-72	Advanced technology
Free Wi-Fi	Q45	Expert	Retained	Q73-76	
Air conditioning/ Heating	Q47	Literature	Retained	Q81	
Ambience	Q48	Literature	Retained	Q67,72,76, 79,81,82	
GENERAL CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES					
Visa requirements	Q49	Literature	Removed		
Low taxes	Q50	Literature	Removed		
Political stability	Q51	Expert	Retained	Q83-86	
Economic stability	Q52	Expert	Retained	Q87-89	
Community engagement	Q53	Expert	Retained	Q90-91	
Promotion of business tourism	Q54	Literature	Retained	Q92	
Greening	Q55	Expert	Renamed		Environmental practices

QUALITATIVE THEMES/ ATTRIBUTES	QUESTION NO	EXPERT / LITERATURE THEMES	QUANTITATIVE INSTRUMENT ATTRIBUTES	QUESTION NO	NOTES
Size of conference	Q56	Expert	Retained	Q46,51,55, 58,60,61	

Source: Author's compilation

4.5.2.3.2 Pilot study

According to De Vos and Strydom (2011:210), a pilot study involves the process where the research design is tested to ensure that the methodology, sampling, instruments and analysis are appropriate for the study. The study was piloted by academics at two universities who had frequented international conferences. The aim of the pilot study was to ensure clarity of the questions and the relevance and appropriateness of the attributes. Furthermore, the pilot study respondents were able to identify and discuss any limitations encountered during the process, as well as provide valuable feedback concerning the questionnaire. Once the attributes had been finalised, the questionnaire was revised with assistance from the statistical department.

Alignment of the questionnaire was performed to meet the objectives of the analytic hierarchy process (AHP). According to Improta, Russo, Triassi, Converso, Murino and Santillo (2018:20) no more than 9 criteria should be used when using the AHP process. (Although the AHP online calculator makes provision for 15 criteria, the criteria for this study were reduced to meet the recommended requirements of AHP modelling). Furthermore, the process involved structuring the questionnaire to reflect pairwise comparisons for each attribute. In order to achieve this, it was necessary to reduce the number of attributes identified above. This was done by excluding attributes that were deemed less important – particularly to conferencing (as per qualitative data) - or attributes that were not fully understood. This process also initiated the reduction of destination attributes as it was deemed this was not the core focus of the study. This process resulted in the main factors being reduced to four (4) and a total of twenty-six (26) conference related attributes (sub-factors).

4.5.2.3.3 Final questionnaire

The final questionnaire was formatted and executed to make provision for analysis using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) method. There were six (6) sections as set out below.

Section A: Demographic and conference profile

This section included characteristics such as age, home language, gender, marital status, average number of days spent at a conference, average number of days spent before and after a conference at the destination, permanent country of residence, occupation, level of education, who is paying for the conference, how many conferences have been attended in total and the main reason for attending the conference. This section sought to determine the profile of the business/conference tourist. Similar studies included that of Mair *et al.*(2018).

Section B to section F

This part of the questionnaire focused on aspects related to the delegates' preferences. These preferences can be used by conference planners to attract more business tourists through establishing competitive advantage. The questions of sections B to F were based on the research. The questionnaire (see Appendix 4) focused on identifying and ranking the preferred conference "attributes". In summary the sections were as follows (in no specific order):

Section B – Conference attributes (main factors) entailed: destination elements, conference services, conference venue facilities, general conference attributes.

Section C - Destination elements entailed: accessibility, infrastructure, location, safety/security, value/cost, weather, attractions/activities.

Section D - Conference services entailed: entertainment, program, quality of food, conference image, value/cost, accommodation, size of conference.

Section E – Conference venue facilities entailed: venue design, advanced technology, free Wi-Fi, service quality, air conditioning/heating, facilities/services, ambience.

Section F – General conference attributes entailed: political stability, economic stability, community engagement, promotion of business tourism, environmental practices.

The format of the questionnaire was based on the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) scaling, a 9-point intensity of relative importance scale used to derive ratio scales from discrete and continuous paired comparisons (Figure 4.10). Delegates were required to firstly select the preferred attribute and then rate the importance of the selected attribute (1 = Equal importance; 2 = Equal to moderate; 3 = Moderate importance; 4 = Moderate to strong; 5 = Strong importance; 6 = Strong to very strong; 7 = Very strong importance; 8 = Very strong to extreme; 9 = Extreme importance). To assist with the structure of the questionnaire, the online AHP calculator (<https://bpmsg.com/ahp-online-calculator/>) was used. This enabled the researcher to group the factors correctly for pairwise comparison coding. The questionnaire was reduced to a two-page double sided print out. An attempt was made to use electronic copies employing google forms; however, this proved to be challenging due to the AHP layout requirements and was abandoned. The statistician also advised that since the AHP calculator would be used, it would be best to use either an electronic or printed format. The researcher concluded that the printed option was best suited for this questionnaire after consulting with the conference organisers of the selected conferences. A further option of using an “app” was also investigated by one of the conference organisers; however, this was also abandoned due to the complexity of the questionnaire.

Instructions:

- 1.→ In each numbered row, compare the two CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES and decide on the most important one.
- 2.→ Then indicate this importance on the most important one's side.

EXAMPLE:

4	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Advanced technology

In the above example, venue design is selected as being more important than advanced technology AND is rated as moderately important (3). (NB: the selection must be indicated on the side of the attribute of most importance)

1=Equal importance 2=Equal to moderate 3=Moderate importance 4=Moderate to strong
5=Strong importance 6=Strong to very strong 7=Very strong importance
8=Very strong to extreme 9=Extreme importance

Figure 4.10: Questionnaire extraction

Section B – indicates the conference attributes (main factors) as follows:

SECTION B: CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES

DESTINATION ELEMENTS - accessibility, infrastructure, location, safety, value, weather, attractions and activities

CONFERENCE SERVICES - entertainment, program, quality of food, image, cost, accommodation and size of conference

CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES -design, technology, service quality, air conditioning/heating, facilities and ambience

GENERAL CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES political stability, economic stability, community engagement, promotion of business tourism and environmental practices

Table 4.11: Section B: Conference attributes

Instructions:

1. In each numbered row, compare the two CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES and decide on the most important one.
2. Then indicate this importance on the most important one's side.

EXAMPLE:

1	Destination elements	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference services

In the above example, conference services is selected as being more important than destination elements AND is rated as strongly important (5) **(NB: the selection must be indicated on the side of the attribute of most importance)**

1= Equal importance 2= Equal to moderate 3 = Moderate importance 4= Moderate to strong 5= Strong importance 6= Strong to very strong 7= Very strong importance 8= Very strong to extreme **9 = Extreme importance**

14	Destination elements	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference services
15	Destination elements	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference venue facilities
16	Destination elements	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	General conference attributes
17	Conference services	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference venue facilities
18	Conference services	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	General conference attributes
19	Conference venue facilities	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	General conference attributes

Section C indicates the sub-factors of destination elements (accessibility, infrastructure, location, safety, value, weather, attractions and activities).

SECTION C: DESTINATION ELEMENTS

Table 4.12: Section C: Destination elements

Instructions:

1. In each numbered row, compare the two DESTINATION ELEMENTS and decide on the most important one.
2. Then indicate this importance on the most important one's side.

EXAMPLE:

20	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Infrastructure

In the above example, accessibility and infrastructure are of equal importance (1) (NB: the selection must be indicated on the side of the attribute of most importance)

1= Equal importance 2= Equal to moderate 3 = Moderate importance 4= Moderate to strong 5= Strong importance 6= Strong to very strong 7= Very strong importance 8= Very strong to extreme **9 = Extreme importance**

20	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Infrastructure
21	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Location
22	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Safety/security
23	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
24	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
25	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/activities
26	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Location
27	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Safety/security
28	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
29	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
30	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/activities
31	Location	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Safety/security
32	Location	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
33	Location	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
34	Location	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/activities
35	Safety	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
36	Safety	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
37	Safety	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/activities
38	Value/cost	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
39	Value/cost	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/activities
40	Weather	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/activities

Section D indicates the sub-factors of conferences services (entertainment, program, quality of food, image, cost, accommodation and size of conference).

SECTION D: CONFERENCE SERVICES

Table 4.13: Section D: Conference services

Instructions

1. In each numbered row, compare the two CONFERENCE SERVICES and decide on the most important one.
2. Then indicate this importance on the most important one's side.

EXAMPLE:

41	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Program

In the above example, program is selected as being more important than entertainment AND is rated as extremely important (9) **(NB: the selection must be indicated on the side of the attribute of most importance)**

1= Equal importance 2= Equal to moderate 3 = Moderate importance 4= Moderate to strong 5= Strong importance 6= Strong to very strong 7= Very strong importance 8= Very strong to extreme **9 = Extreme importance**

41	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Program
42	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Quality of food
43	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference image
44	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
45	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
46	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
47	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Quality of food
48	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference image
49	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
50	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
51	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
52	Quality of food	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference image
53	Quality of food	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost

54	Quality of food	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
55	Quality of food	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
56	Conference image	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
57	Conference image	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
58	Conference image	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
59	Value/cost	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
60	Value/cost	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
61	Accommodation	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference

Section E indicates the sub-factors of conference venue facilities (design, technology, service quality, air conditioning/heating, facilities and ambience).

SECTION E: CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES

Table 4.14: Section E: Conference venue facilities

Instructions:

1. In each numbered row, compare the two CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES and decide on the most important one.
2. Then indicate this importance on the most important one's side.

EXAMPLE:

41	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Advanced technology

In the above example, venue design is selected as being more important than advanced technology AND is rated as moderately important (3)
(NB: the selection must be indicated on the side of the attribute of most importance)

1= Equal importance 2= Equal to moderate 3 = Moderate importance 4= Moderate to strong 5= Strong importance 6= Strong to very strong 7= Very strong importance 8= Very strong to extreme **9 = Extreme importance**

62	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Advanced technology
63	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Free Wi-Fi
64	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Service quality
65	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Aircon/heating
66	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
67	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
68	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Free Wi-Fi
69	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Service quality
70	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Aircon/heating
71	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
72	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
73	Free Wi-Fi	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Service quality
74	Free Wi-Fi	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Aircon/heating
75	Free Wi-Fi	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
76	Free Wi-Fi	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
77	Service quality	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Aircon/heating
78	Service quality	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
79	Service quality	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
80	Aircon/heating	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
81	Aircon/heating	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
82	Facilities/services	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience

Section F indicates the sub-factors of general conference attributes (political stability, economic stability, community engagement, promotion of business tourism and environmental practices)

SECTION F: GENERAL CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES

Table 4.15: Section F: General conference attributes

Instructions:

1. In each numbered row, compare the two CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES and decide on the most important one.
2. Then indicate this importance on the most important one's side.

EXAMPLE:

41	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Economic stability

In the above example, political stability is selected as being more important than economic stability AND is rated as equal to moderately important (2) **(NB: the selection must be indicated on the side of the attribute of most importance)**

1= Equal importance 2= Equal to moderate 3 = Moderate importance 4= Moderate to strong 5= Strong importance 6= Strong to very strong 7= Very strong importance 8= Very strong to extreme **9 = Extreme importance**

83	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Economic stability
84	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Community engagement
85	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Promotion of business tourism
86	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Environmental practices
87	Economic stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Community engagement
88	Economic stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Promotion of business tourism
89	Economic stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Environmental practices
90	Community engagement	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Promotion of business tourism
91	Community engagement	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Environmental practices
92	Promotion of business tourism	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Environmental practices

4.6 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

A number of statistical analyses were used to process the data in order to determine the attributes that are important for a conference tourism competitiveness framework. Firstly, the incomplete questionnaires were removed and the remainder of usable questionnaires were coded using Excel. The scaling of the questionnaire was then recoded to 1 – 17 for practical purposes. It is, however, important to mention that some of the respondents indicated their preferences on both sides of the questionnaire (9 – 1 and 1 – 9); these were rectified by taking the highest of the two scores and in the case where both sides indicated the same rating, this was considered an “equal” score.

In this section, each of the statistical analyses will be discussed, namely descriptive statistics, box plots, *t*-tests and the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) analysis.

4.6.1 Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are those methods and techniques used to describe data which usually consists of groupings (Clark *et al.*, 2006:150). Descriptive statistics are used to describe the characteristics of a sample population or the profile of the population. In this section SPSS was used to analyse the data captured in sections A to F. The results will be illustrated and discussed in detail in Chapter 5, reflecting the demographic and conference profile information of the delegates by means of tables and figures.

4.6.1.1 *Boxplot*

According to Weissgerber *et al.* (2015:1), in descriptive statistics box plots are used to graphically depict groups of numerical data representing the minimum and maximum sample sizes of any group represented in a figure indicating the median and interquartile range. The box plot displays the minimum, first quartile, median, third quartile and maximum. The median is thus the centre line in the middle of the box and the crossbar at the far end of each is referred to as “whiskers”; these extend in each direction which is the furthest point within the interquartile range. A boxplot was used to give a graphical depiction of the main factors of the conference attributes.

4.6.1.2 *One sample t-test*

The one sample *t*-test, a statistical procedure, determines whether a sample of observations could have been generated by a process with a specific mean. The main factors and sub-factors of the conference attributes were subjected to a one sample *t*-test (Cohens *d* test). The Cohens *d* test measures the effect size and difference between two means divided by the standard deviation ($d = (M_1 - M_2) / S_{pooled}$). According to Olenjnik & Algina (2000:245), Cohen states the standardised effect size indicates: $d \sim 0.2$ small effect, $d \sim 0.5$ medium effect, and $d \sim 0.8$ large effect. The skewness and kurtosis for this study are indicated in (see Appendix 6) for further clarity. Skewness is the measurement of the degree and direction of asymmetry. This is a symmetric distribution such as a normal distribution which has a skewness of 0. A distribution that is skewed to the left (when the mean is less than the median), will have a negative skewness. Kurtosis, on the other hand, is a measurement of tail extremity which reflects either the presence of outliers in a distribution or a distribution's propensity for producing outliers (Welman *et al.*, 2005:234).

4.6.1.3 *Analytic hierarchy process (AHP)*

Analytic hierarchy process (AHP), a technique developed by Saaty (1980), is used for the integration of multiple judgments for studying the decision-making process. According to Saaty and Kulakowski (2016:1), this process consists of hierarchy construction, consistency verification and priority analysis and involves a general theory of measurement which is used to reflect ratio scales from discrete and continuous paired comparisons that reflect the strength of preference of the participants or respondents. Furthermore, AHP builds a ranking of decision items using comparisons between each pair of items. These paired comparisons will then provide weighted scores which measure the relative importance of items to one another.

The AHP process was used to assist in multi-criteria decision making based on the attributes of conference tourism, the form of a hierarchy or framework, where the main branches represent the main factors and the smaller branches, the sub-factors (Crouch, 2007:5). This procedure captures relative judgments in a consistent form (Kozak *et al.*, 2015:256; Saaty & Kulakowski, 2016:1; Ho, Xu & Dey, 2010:20), using qualitative and quantitative data. In the case of this study, the quantitative data was analysed using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP). According to Filipovic (2012:65), the three analytic hierarchy process (AHP) functions include complexity, measurement and synthesis. Complexity involves hierarchical order comprising units and sub-units. Measurement involves using ratio scales to measure the factors contained in the hierarchy. These levels range from nominal to ordinal, interval and

ratio. The last function is synthesis, which involves putting it all together and combining the elements.

4.6.1.3.1 Pairwise comparative scale (Saaty, 1980)

Saaty (1980) proposes a 9-point intensity of relative importance scale to assess the pairwise comparisons (Table 4.16). In the case of this study, the quantitative findings were processed using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP). Prior to this, the data was subjected to a consistency ratio test. Thereafter, the procedure involved the determination of the importance of the elements for each level. Furthermore, the analysis involved three tasks, namely developing a comparison matrix for each level, computing relative weights for each element and evaluating the consistency ratio for judgment (Filipovic, 2012:65; Saaty, 2008:83; Saaty & Kulakowski, 2016:1).

Table 4.16: 9-Point intensity of relative importance scale

Intensity of relative importance	Definition	Explanation	Reciprocal (decimal)
1	Equal importance	Two activities contribute equally to objective	1 (1.000)
2	Equal to moderate		1/2 (0.500)
3	Moderate importance	Experience and judgement slightly favour one activity over another	1/3 (0.333)
4	Moderate to strong	Experience and judgement slightly favour one activity over another	1/4 (0.250)
5	Strong importance		1/5 (0.200)
6	Strong to very strong	An activity strongly favoured, dominance	1/6 (0.167)
7	Very strong importance		1/7 (0.143)
8	Very strong to extreme	The evidence favouring one activity over the other is of the highest possible order of affirmation	1/8 (0.125)
9	Extreme importance		1/9 (0.111)

Source: Saaty (2008:86)

According to Saaty (2008:86), ratio is referred to as the relative value with a ratio scale referring to a set of number invariant under a similarity transformation which is deemed multiplication by a positive constant. The relative scale derived from a pairwise comparison reciprocal (decimal) matrix of judgments is derived solving:

$$\sum_{j=1}^n a_{ij} w_j = \lambda_{\max} w_i \quad (1)$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^n w_i = 1 \quad (2)$$

with $a_{ji}=1/a_{ij}$ or $a_{ij} a_{ji}=1$ (being the reciprocal property), $a_{ij} > 0$ (thus A is referred to as a positive matrix) whose solution, known as the principal right eigenvector, is normalised as in (2).

Furthermore, the general eigenvalue formulation given in (1) is used in the following formulation:

$$A_W = \begin{matrix} & A_1 & \dots & A_n \\ \begin{matrix} A_1 \\ \vdots \\ A_n \end{matrix} & \begin{bmatrix} \frac{w_1}{w_1} & \dots & \frac{w_1}{w_n} \\ \frac{w_1}{w_1} & & \frac{w_1}{w_n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ \frac{w_n}{w_1} & \dots & \frac{w_n}{w_n} \\ \frac{w_1}{w_1} & & \frac{w_n}{w_n} \end{bmatrix} & \begin{bmatrix} w_1 \\ \vdots \\ w_n \end{bmatrix} \end{matrix} = n \begin{bmatrix} w_1 \\ \vdots \\ w_n \end{bmatrix} = nW.$$

In terms of paired scaling, instead of assigning two numbers w_i and w_j and forming the ratio w_i/w_j , a single number is allocated from the 1 - 9 scale mentioned above. This will then reveal the ratio w_i/w_j . This highlights the importance of a rating scale.

4.6.1.3.2 Analytic hierarchy process (AHP) steps

As the AHP is a process, it is important to follow the required steps. For the quantitative section of this study the following AHP steps were implemented (note that the recoding of the questionnaire as mentioned previously was done to accommodate the APH steps in the online calculator (<https://bpmsg.com/ahp-online-calculator/>)).

❖ Step 1

Judgement trade-offs were obtained from delegates - both international and domestic - in the cities of Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. The pairwise comparison matrix for this is based on the judgments of the respondents; the matrix shows numerical values (based on the nine-point importance scales developed by Saaty (1980)). The cell values in the matrix indicated as a_{ij} represent the respondents' judgments.

❖ Step 2

After the respondents' judgements had been obtained, it was necessary to check the consistency of each respondent's trade off judgement. Eigenvalues are a set of scalars linked with a linear system of equations. These are the square roots of judgment values which is a consistency index developed by Saaty (1980) to check for any inconsistent judgments.

❖ Step 3

Weights were computed based on the attributes of conference tourism. Here the rows in the pairwise comparison matrix were added together and the weights normalised by computing the sum of each row and then dividing each row by the corresponding sum.

❖ Step 4

The mean overall weights and scores of the attributes were computed. The results obtained in step 3 were then synthesised. The mean overall score was used to rank the attributes according to importance and relevance.

❖ Step 5

The levels of importance (hierarchy) were computed.

In conclusion, the AHP structure and process employed in the quantitative section of the study assisted with the development of the framework for this study. Figure 4.11 indicates the flowchart of the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) that was applied for this study.

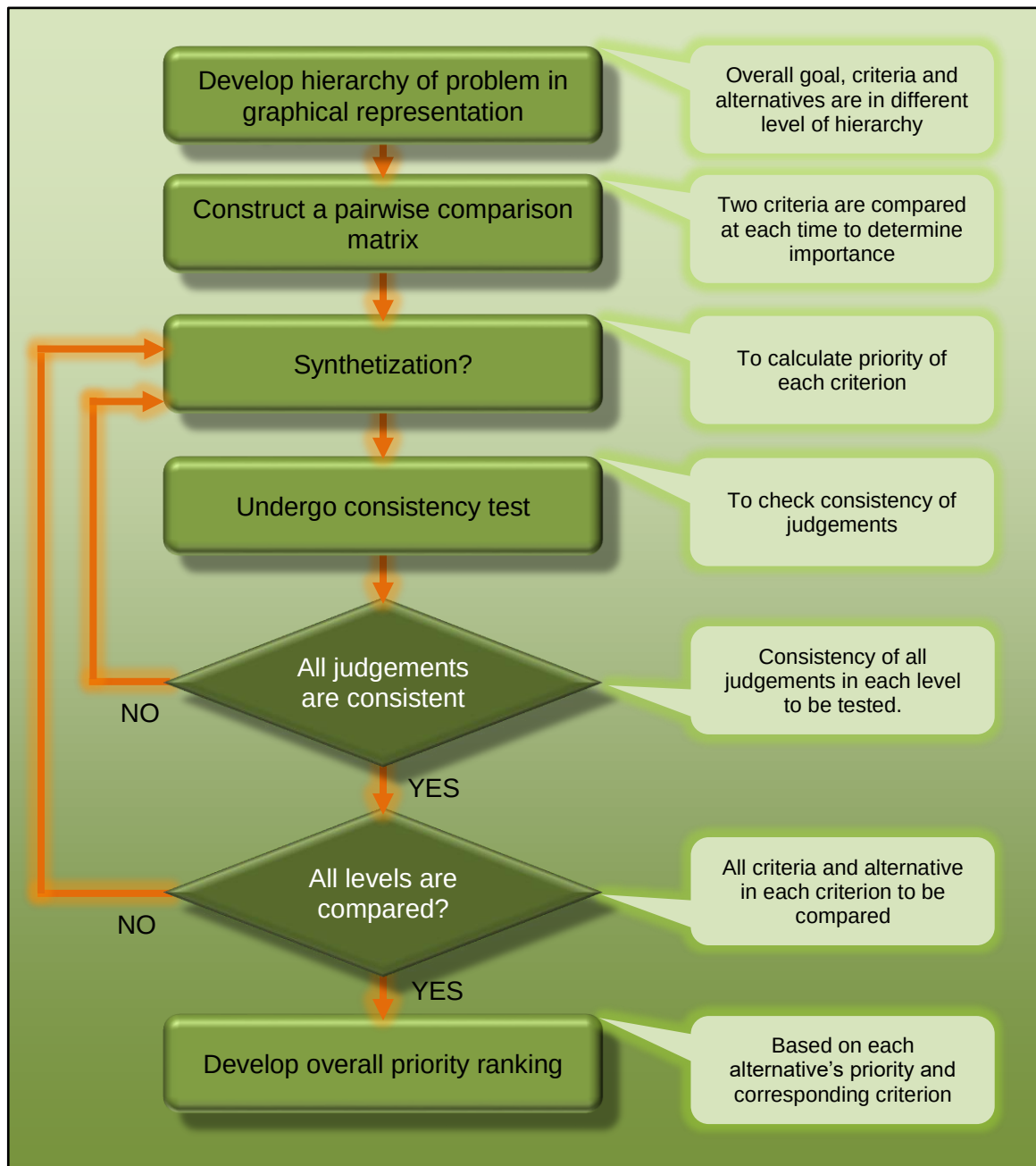


Figure 4.11: The flowchart of the analytic hierarchy process (AHP)

Source: Ho (2006:212)

4.6.1.3.3 Inconsistency in the AHP method

Interpretation and consistency of the AHP results should make provision for a 10% allowance. Capping of the Saaty scale can lead to inconsistencies, hence the literature suggesting no more than 9 items or criteria when compared. This consistency was considered in the case of this study. In order to test the level of inconsistency (consistency ratio) the formula $CR = \frac{CI}{RI}$ is applied, where CI is the consistency index and the Random Index (RI) is the random

consistency index. An example of the values of the Random Index (RI) is given in Table 4.17 below (Saaty, 1980:171). Note: RI depends on the number of elements being compared.

Table 4.17: Values of the Random Index (RI)

N	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
RI	0	0.58	0.90	1.12	1.24	1.31	1.41	1.45	1.49	1.51	1.48	1.56	1.57	1.59

Source: Adapted from Saaty (2008:86)

In order to calculate the CI, the following formula was used $CI = \frac{\lambda_{max} - n}{n - 1}$ CI = where:

λ_{max} is the largest of the principal eigen values of the pairwise comparison matrix with the n representing the number of the criteria that are being compared. An inconsistency of 10% or less indicates that the adjustment is small in comparison to the actual values of the eigenvector weights (Saaty, 1980:171).

4.6.1.3.4 Limitations of the analytic hierarchy process (AHP)

Despite wide application of the AHP process there has been much criticism, such as the problem of rank reversal as the rankings may change if a new alternative is added. Other problems identified include the generation of inconsistencies of calculations that do not reflect consistent judgement. A further limitation is the ratio scale of inaccuracy (Alonso & Lamata, 2006:445).

4.6.1.3.5 Hierarchy structure of this study

Figure 4.12 indicates the hierarchy structure adapted to this specific study. It has two levels, the first the main factors (MF) of attributes and the second the sub -actors (SF) of attributes.

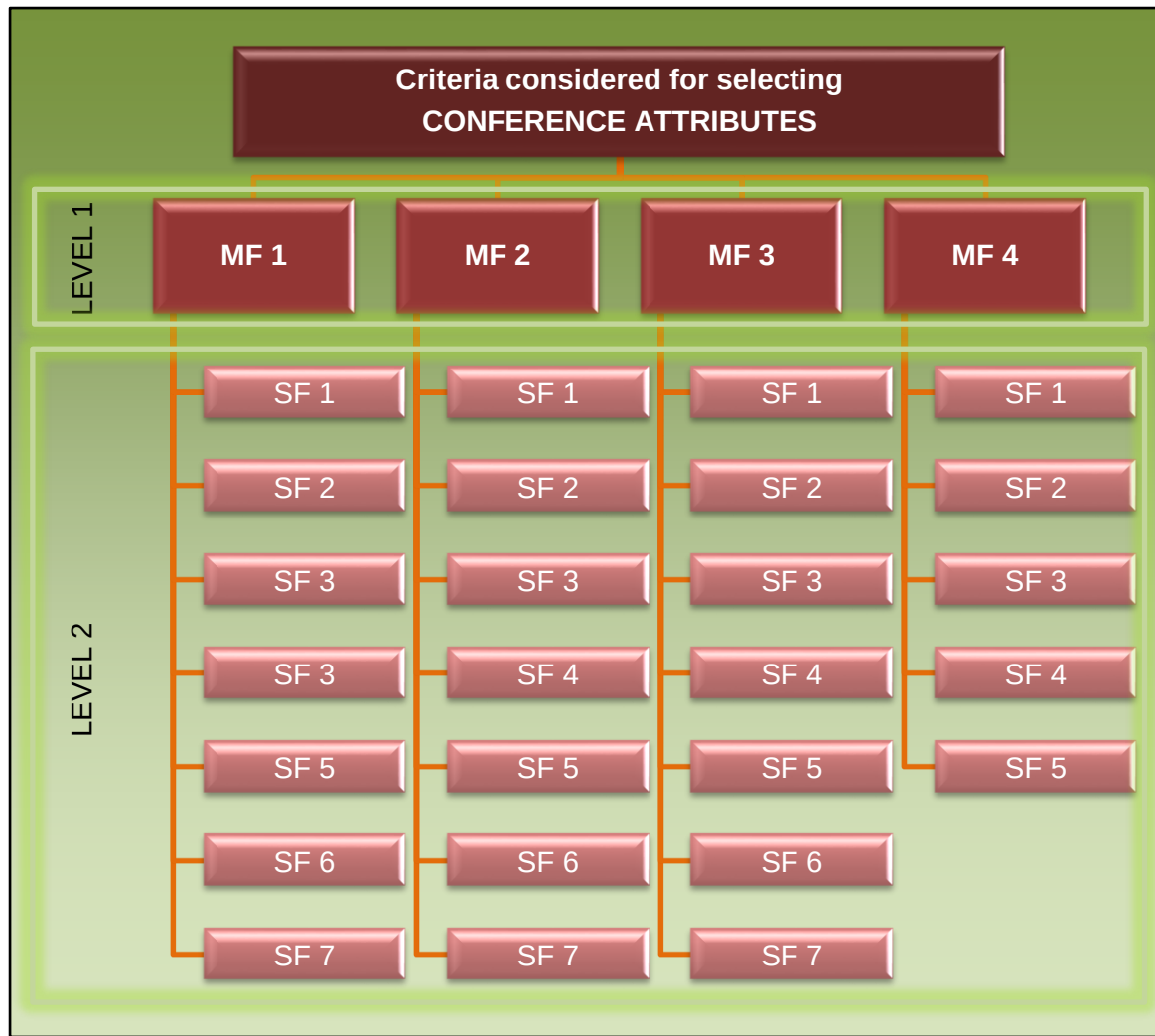


Figure 4.12: Envisaged AHP hierarchy for this study

Source: Author's compilation

4.7 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability refers to the dependability or consistency of measurement. Validity, on the other hand, suggests truthfulness referring to matching a construct or conceptual definition relating to a specific measurement (Neuman, 2014:141). According to Neuman (2014:141), both quantitative and qualitative researchers aim for reliable and valid research; however, they see reliability and validity differently. Reliability in quantitative research indicates that numerical measurements do not vary due to the characteristics of the process, whereas qualitative researchers use a number of techniques, are focused on consistency rather than accuracy and are aware that different researchers will get varied results. It may be added that qualitative researchers focus on authenticity rather than validity.

There are different methods of determining the reliability of an instrument in quantitative research. External validity is experimental research enabling the research to compare findings from two independent processes of data collection with each other. This can be done by the test/retest method or parallel forms of the same testing procedure where one construct uses two instruments to measure the same phenomenon in the same or similar populations (Kumar, 2014:218). Internal validity indicates that items that are measuring the same phenomenon with reliable indicators should produce the same results. High internal validity therefore indicates that there are few errors. Lastly, statistical validity indicates that a researcher has followed the correct procedures and that different statistical procedures are required for different conditions (Neuman, 2014:147). In terms of exploratory sequential design, Guetterman (2017:13) notes potential challenges to the design which include the systematic building of qualitative phase to quantitative phase and the intervention development procedures.

Internal consistency reliability for this study was measured as follows: Cronbach alpha for each measure, Cronbach alpha for a measure if a single item was removed and correlation between items (inter-item correlation matrix) as discussed below.

4.7.1 Cronbach alpha

Cronbach's alpha is a measurement for assessing the reliability or internal consistency of a scale or test items and can be used to measure the strength of the consistency. Furthermore, each scale item is correlated with the total score for each observation and compared with the variance for each individual item score, thus resulting in α coefficient of reliability ranges. The range is from 0 to 1 in this overall assessment of a measure's reliability. It is considered that what makes for a "good" α is based on the theoretical knowledge of the scale in question; however, if the cronbach alpha is between 0.8 and 0.95 the reliability is considered very good, if the Cronbach alpha is between 0.7 and 0.79 it is regarded as good, between 0.6 and 0.69 is fair and a Cronbach alpha lower than 0.59 is considered poor (Field, 2009:66).

A reliability analysis was carried out on the six different task values scales. The Cronbach alpha values were acceptable reliability, *minimum $\alpha = 0.794$* .

4.7.2 Inter item correlation matrix

The average inter-item correlation was computed for further reliability and to draw a conclusion. The inter-item analyses of the internal consistency reliability were used to provide consistent estimates of the same phenomenon (Cohen & Swerdlik, 2005).

4.8 ETHICS

The researcher assured the participants in the study that they would not be harmed, violated, stressed or embarrassed during the research project (Neuman, 2014:132). To protect the participants during the study, they were requested to sign a consent form (see Appendix 1) prior to the interview for the qualitative part of the study. The request form stipulated that participation was voluntary, anonymous and confidential and they were offered the right to withdraw from participation at any given time without any negative consequences. It also informed the participants that the interviews would be recorded and saved for moderation purposes and that the results of the study would be used for academic purposes only. For the quantitative part of the study the questionnaire stated that the survey was optional and that delegates were required to sign consent. Only questionnaires with signatures were used in the analysis. This study was reviewed by the ethics committee of North West University (ethics number EMS14/10/16-02/04). See Appendix 7.

4.9 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to present the detailed empirical results of the study and discuss the research methodology approach used to focus on the philosophical assumptions, research methodologies, design strategies, instruments, data collection and analysis underpinning this research. In this approach the results from one method was used to assist the other method to create different levels or units of analysis (Creswell, 2009:17). The qualitative findings, specifically the attributes identified and themes thereof, were used to develop the instrument for the quantitative part of the study. These findings were analysed using the AHP process in order to provide a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the research problem (mixed methodology procedures). Finally, the data collected using the varied approaches discussed in this chapter, initiated the development of a competitiveness

framework for the conference tourism industry in South Africa. The following chapter discusses the empirical findings of the study.

CHAPTER 5

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of this study was to develop a conceptual framework for competitiveness within the conference industry and to conduct an in-depth literature analysis of the concept and approaches of global competitiveness linked to conference tourism. The approach adopted to attain this goal has been summarised schematically in Figure 5.1 below. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to present the detailed empirical results of the study.

The research was conducted in two phases consisting of quantitative and qualitative research methods. The first phase (Section A) of the empirical study explored the supply-side of conference tourism, which entailed interviews with relevant stakeholders that are “experts” in the conference industry with a minimum of 10 - 15 years’ experience. The outcome and findings of the qualitative data supplied the material for the design of a questionnaire - a contribution to this study - for the delegates (demand side) attending both international and national conferences in South Africa, specifically Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, the “hub” areas of South African conferencing (Section B). These conferences comprised associate, industry and academic conferences. It is important to note that all delegates who answered the questionnaire had had the experience of attending a conference previously and therefore provided valuable contributions to this study.

The outcomes of both the qualitative (section A) and quantitative (section B) research are presented in detail later in the chapter.

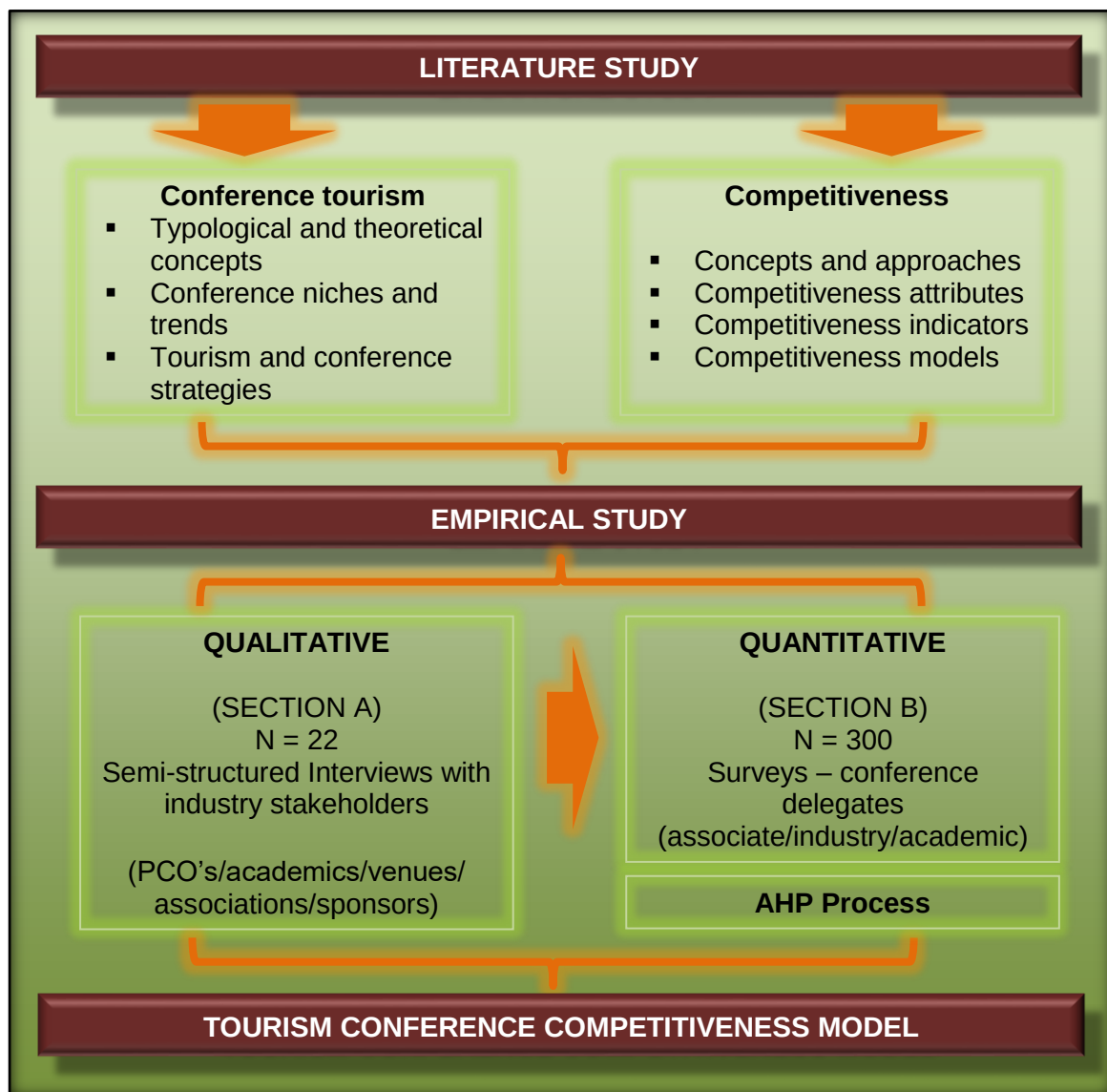


Figure 5.1: Research strategy

5.2 SECTION A: THE RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The qualitative analysis revealed several emerging themes based on the answers provided by the conference industry stakeholders (see Table 4.4 for stakeholder profile). Each stakeholder was required to answer questions (see Appendix 2) relating to their specific industry and role in conference tourism. It was not always possible to follow the sequence of the questions initially set out, as the questions were semi-structured in nature and were often dictated by the direction of the discussion. The interviews took place at the offices of each stakeholder. During the interview, hand written notes were compiled; each of the interviews was also recorded on a voice recorder after written permission had been obtained from each of the interviewees (see Appendix 1). Where confidential information was recorded, this was

excluded from the transcriptions. The quotes selected are from individuals that best represent all participants' perspectives.

The functions of stakeholders vary, as the dynamics of their organisations are different. For that reason the stakeholders were first asked generic questions that applied to all the stakeholders and then specific questions relating to their core functions as stakeholders. All stakeholders (referred to as respondents interchangeably) were subjected to the following general questions that related to conference competitiveness, followed by specific questions that related to the stakeholder.

5.2.1 Results of general questions: applicable to all stakeholders

The semi-structured interview questions yielded the following responses.

❖ Importance of conference attributes and the ranking of importance

The stakeholders (associations/organisations (O), professional conference organisers (PCOs) (P), academics (A), and venues (V) (see Appendix 2) were asked what they deemed important attributes for conferencing; they were then asked to rank them in order of importance (it should be noted that the sponsors interviewed were conference organisers who contributed specifically to the sponsor related questions).

Overall location and accessibility were ranked as the top priority by most of the respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, A1, A2, V1, V2, V3, O1, O2, and O3). These findings are consistent with similar studies conducted on convention attendee related studies (Mair & Thompson, 2009:401; Zhang, Leung & Qu, 2007:1124; Mohammadi & Mohamed, 2010:55) which found that there were three variables influencing the level of conference attendance, of which accessibility is the first. Respondents A1 and A2 mentioned that they would not attend a conference that was not accessible or located in a favourable destination; this would be their first consideration. Respondent A3 indicated that conferences hosted in unique locations were appealing to her. Respondent O2 elucidated that in terms of accessibility, *“if a destination wants to attract international association conferences delegates from all over the world, they must be able to fly in either directly into the specific city, or maybe just have one connecting flight and also ideally enough international airlines must be able to fly into the destination.”* Respondent O3 added that accessibility refers not only to the site, but also to visa accessibility, transportation and accommodation accessibility.

The respondents (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, V3, O3) indicated that price and value for money were ranked as the next important attributes for conference tourism. The Zhang *et al.* (2007) model indicates that total cost factors are one of the four main dimensions of conference factors. The respondents said that delegates look for “reasonably priced” and “affordable” conferences with a component of value for money. Respondent P4 highlighted that due to the global recession, many companies were cutting down on conferences and therefore looking for value for money and more affordably priced conferences. According to respondent A3, many delegates weigh up what “adds value” to the conference package; in other words, is there a component of authenticity and is the exchange rate favourable for international delegates? In relation to price, respondents O3 and V3 mentioned that political and economic stability play a role, as delegates would be reluctant to visit a conference destination subjected to political or economic unrest. Respondent V3 made it clear that venues in South Africa are very expensive, adding to the overall expense of the conference. Respondents P4 and P5 mentioned that South Africa is still a “long haul” destination and in their experience had lost business to either Asia or the Middle East due to the high cost of airfares to South Africa. Respondent P1 indicated that there were many variations in the concept of “value”, as delegates not only considered the “package” and what they were receiving for their money, but also the cost, and who would be covering the cost.

Should the company cover the cost of the conference, it will usually require a motivation justifying the expense in terms of the benefits and rewards that would be gained by the delegate and the company. Respondents A1, A3 and P3 agreed that personal development should be a consideration when choosing to attend a conference. Respondent P1 clarified that “value” of a conference can point to what the delegate gains from the conference. Respondent P1 sees this as the “value proposition” – *“What will I take away personally? Will it contribute to my skills set? Will it put me in touch with like-minded people? Will it advance my knowledge, and potentially my career?”* Respondent A3 agreed wholeheartedly, stating research outputs were a compelling consideration when selecting a conference. Respondent A3 affirmed that she would not attend a conference if she was not going to gain any knowledge; this prompted her to note that the program content and the speakers were also a consideration. Respondent A1 agreed, stating that if the *“key note speakers ... are not well known authors or not well published authors or authors that are not really my scope, I will also not consider going to the conference”*.

Surprisingly, after price, food/cuisine was highlighted as a consideration. Respondents P4, P6, P7, A4, V2 and V3 indicated that international delegates were becoming more conscious of food trends and healthy eating and felt that South Africa should make more of an effort to

meet these requirements and give menus a more “South African” flavour to offer an “authentic” appeal. Respondent P1 indicated that *“food is really, really important for the individuals that are attending the event, not only quantity but quality. From an organising perspective I think too many mistakes are being made that thinking that if you feed somebody they will be content with what you give them. Food can make or break an event”*.

Respondents P1 and P3 agreed that the attractiveness of the program and the different interests were also a consideration. Furthermore, respondents P4, P5, P6, O2, O3, V3 and A2 pointed out that technology, infrastructure and facilities were of equal importance for conference tourism and making a conference competitive. However, many of the respondents held different views on whether South Africa was a leading destination as far as technology is concerned. Respondent P4, for example, indicated that technology was an important attribute; but that in South Africa we were “lagging” behind and *“still have a long way to go”* to meet international standards. Respondent O1 argued that we do meet international standards. There was, however, consensus amongst most respondents that there should be a drive to offer “free” Wi-Fi, as many conferences focus on new technology in the form of “apps”. Respondent P1 elaborated that these “apps” are not only used during the conference but also as an important form of communication between the conference organisers and the delegates prior to the conference and after the conference. Respondent V3 raised concerns as a venue supplier that technical infrastructure/technology was amongst the most expensive in the world and felt that we do not quite meet international standards. In terms of infrastructure, respondent P6 corroborated that the infrastructure must be conducive to the type of meeting or conference and therefore the venue selected would play an important role. Respondents P7 and O2 agreed that the venue and the facilities of the venue were an important consideration; however, respondent P5 expressed her dissatisfaction with our technological offerings and stated:

“We are not -- there are so many conference venues that are not up to speed with the way things are overseas. We have little pieces of paper flipcharts, we have little white boards on a stand; it’s not high-end, it’s not what’s happening in Europe where they have maybe white boards around a wall... There is not enough technology in the conference venue so everything has to be outsourced... If you take a conference venue you should automatically offer free Wi-Fi, you should automatically give benefits.”

In terms of infrastructure respondents A1, P6 and O1 indicated that infrastructure must be conducive to the type of meeting, but at the same time must be comfortable. Respondent A1 mentioned that *“I once attended a conference where we had to stay at University residences*

and I hated that", implying that accommodation facilities were also a consideration when choosing a location for a conference. Respondents V1 and V3 indicated that site selection was critical when identifying the facilities and infrastructure of the venue, as was logistical planning to make the most of the infrastructure. They cautioned that even when a venue had the best facilities and infrastructure, lacking the service oriented element would affect the competitiveness of a country or destination and therefore training of staff is paramount.

- ❖ The main challenges and gaps for growth and development in the conference industry and strategies to grow the sector

All stakeholders were asked what the main challenges and gaps were for growth and development in the industry (see Appendix 2).

Respondent A1 said that many of the academic conferences were becoming low quality conferences and placed too much emphasis on profit. According to this respondent, it *"often becomes expensive for a conference to attract high end key note speakers"*. Respondent 02 expressed concern that new convention centres were being built in new destinations competing with convention centres of 18 – 19 years old, as in the case of the Cape Town Convention Centre, adding that *"When we started in those years to bid for conferences South Africa was the flavour of the month; most of these association events had never been to Africa before so it was easy to bring them to South Africa – but now there are new destinations with large modern venues"*. Respondent P6 felt that South Africa did not incorporate what it had to offer with conferences: *"We need to incorporate a lot of South African experiences in our conferencing and I'm not talking Marimba bands and traditional dancers, but something different. I think they could marry the two a little bit more"*. A further challenge indicated by respondents P3, P7 and V3 was the lack of skilled or experienced people in the conference industry, stating *"we sit with a problem that on average within 5 or 7 years people leave the industry, we are depleting our sources, and we are not filling in quick enough... because it is a growing industry"*. Respondent P7 added that there was a lack of loyalty, transparency, responsibility and dedication in the industry, which could lead to a downfall.

A further observation indicated that service quality should become a focus for improving the sector. Respondent P6 agreed strongly that the business events sector needs to invest in training all areas of staff that deal with delegates, even the waiters. Respondent 03 said that as tourism is such a long term industry, political and economic stability was crucial. In terms of growing the sector, respondent V3 stated that smaller venues outside the busy central hubs should be considered; however, these venues were *"not very up to date of what is actually*

happening and they are doing the typical dark room no natural light type of conferences”. Respondent O3, on the other hand, argued that Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town were considered the “hub” cities and mostly used due to their accessibility and world class facilities, especially for large conferences and conventions. Respondents P1, P3, O2, O3, V3 stated that growing the sector further and getting more business events entailed building better relationships, finding more leads and improving the ability to bid and participate in global communities, whether through marketing campaigns, positioning or profiling. Respondent P1 said a further challenge was that professional conference organisers (PCOs) cannot attract a global conference to a country without the support of the industry and the profession at that conference. P1 and O2 further stated that *“we have a fairly well-established system ... for ... business development, in that regard, a lot of money is being spent through the National Convention Bureau, through the provincial structures and there is good co-operation”.* Respondent O3 contended that in order to grow the sector PCOs need to re-invent themselves, stating that clients don’t have to book through a PCO because they can go onto the website. *“PCOs need to be part of the solution for a conference way beyond the organisation of the conference, way beyond just organising flights, accommodation etc. – clients can do that themselves.”*

Respondent P3 added that another challenge in the business events industry is the corruption when it comes to tenders. Often these tenders are awarded to someone that was not part of the tender or not qualified to plan the event, jeopardising the quality and caliber of the conferences.

Respondent V3 indicated that funding for the industry is not only a challenge but a gap, stating that...” the Department of Tourism and National Treasury have given the National Convention Bureau an extra 90 million rand over the next three years to assist with delegate boosting and bidding; however, the challenge comes in our National Convention Bureau knows what they’re doing but our provincial and city bureaus don’t”. Respondent O2 added that South Africa has always lagged behind as a country for not having this subvention fund: “If you look at places like Melbourne and a lot of the Middle Eastern destinations they will just put X amount of dollars or euros on the table and say to an association... ‘We realise the economic impact of 2,000 people to our city; we will host the welcome reception or we will fly in some of your international speakers’, which in the past we’ve not had in South Africa”

A further gap identified by respondents O1, O3 and V3 comprised skills, professionalism and service delivery in the industry. Respondent O3 noted that they were offering various certifications, internships, on the job trainings and *“mentorship programs in order to promote*

ethics and professionalism within the industry". This was in line with their core vision. Respondent V3 contended that miscommunication between stakeholders can often present a problem in the industry, highlighting the importance of collaboration between stakeholders. Respondent P6 stated that another gap is not incorporating the true *"South African' experience in conferencing, especially in the food sector. A lot more could be done to show authenticity"*. Respondent P6 added that *"people come to South Africa and they leave without memorable food experiences of our cuisine....in all other countries... I've worked in Kenya, and they are very proud of their own cuisine"*.

Respondent O3 identified a clear gap: "the understanding beyond tourism". There is still a strong focus on leisure tourism as opposed to business tourism and attracting meetings and conventions, which could be related to education and learning and understanding that certain features are needed to attract this kind of tourism - the value chain of the meetings industry. Respondent O3 contended that we need to look at Australia as a perfect example. Their policies are based on research.

- ❖ The importance of destination management, policy planning and development in conference tourism and identifying the gaps

All stakeholders were asked about the importance of destination management and policy planning in conference tourism (questions 3, 4 and 6 were merged in some instances). According to Crouch and Louviere (2004:1), many destination management organisations (DMOs) and convention bureaus (CVBs) target the meetings and conventions segment; their main role is to encourage associations and organisations to motivate the destination they represent as the best to host a conference or convention.

All stakeholders agreed on the critical role of destination management and planning in conference tourism. but many pointed out that the organisations' objectives must be considered when managing destinations and implementing policies. Some of the stakeholders felt that the departments pledged support, but did not follow through. Respondent P3, on the other hand, praised the organisations and associations for their commitment to the industry. The stakeholders agreed that the National Convention Bureau was a prominent role player in destination management. Some stakeholders maintained that many of the strategies and policies documented had not been followed through or implemented. In a study conducted by Heath (2002:327), it was found that very few of the planning reports had been implemented; neither had the strategic tourism planning framework. Much of this, according to Heath (2002:327), was owing to the fact that consultation with

stakeholders was minimal and many of the strategies developed were unrealistic, therefore inhibiting destinations to reach their full potential. According to respondent O3, government needs to be involved in destination management, specifically as it concerns safety and security, taxation, customs, visas and documents and business management practices. Respondent O3 and P3 raised concerns that there were no standardised services for event management, stating that *"anyone that can host a party for their 50th birthday is an events manager and gets a tender because all that you need to prove is that you have a tax certificate... there needs to be more structure relating to contracts, bids, etc"*. Respondent P2 and P3 further contended that the market was currently flooded with unqualified organisers and "fly by nights" in the industry, hence the reason for intervention and the need to focus on professionalising the industry and ensuring that all members are bound by a code of ethics. Respondent P3 applauded this, saying *"what PCOs do, who they are, are they able to offer you the service that you think they can? Not everyone should be able to just say they're a PCO, which at the moment anyone can. There are no grading criteria, there's no process you have to follow, there's no certificate that you get to qualify you"*. P1 added that there was a reluctance to comply with health and safety legislation which was of great concern (South Africa, 2010).

❖ South Africa as a competitive conference destination

All stakeholders were asked whether South Africa could be seen as a competitive conference destination. According to the Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report (2015, 2017), competitiveness is defined as "the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country". Heath (2002:327) contributes to the definition from a destination perspective, describing it as the "ability of a destination to maintain its market share".

All stakeholders agreed that South Africa as a destination was exceptionally competitive; a few elaborated on this. According to respondent V3, *"we have for many years hosted well over 100 international events a year so we're very competitive"*. Respondent V3 commented that *"we do not give ourselves nearly enough credit, our venues are world class. I mean a three-star venue in South Africa would be a four star in the US"*. According to respondents O3 and P3, *"Our pricing is really good, the rand isn't great, it's cheap for international people to come here, we have world class talent, entertainment, décor, we compete with the best of them – our ICCA rankings speak for themselves"*.

Respondents O1, O2 and O3 agreed that in order for South Africa to be competitive it is imperative to consider pre and post tours for delegates as well as shopping, entertainment and attractions. Respondent O1 pointed out that an orientation of the city for the delegates before they arrive is something that *“stands out”* to delegates. Respondent O2 mentioned that the industry needs to be an attractive and professional one and focus on recruiting the best for the job and get *“more of the cream to our industry”*. Respondent O3 stated that the structuring of a bid support program is also important: *“we compete against Canada and Australia and I also think that a better convention bureau infrastructure will make us more competitive but not just for South Africa, for Africa. They first look at a continent and then at a country and then a city and then a venue.”* It is therefore important that destination marketing and strategies are in place for South Africa to remain competitive. Respondent P5 indicated that South Africa had a long way to go and had not been marketed effectively.

❖ The importance of collaboration with other stakeholders

This question was put to venues, associations and professional conference organisers (PCOs), since events are influenced by their stakeholders. Stakeholders include anyone with a vested interest in the event including the client, event manager, attendees, host community, municipality, emergency services and media (Nolan, 2018:28). The South African Tourism (SAT) Annual Report (SAT, 2015), commits to creating a business tourism environment conducive to innovation, strategic partnerships and collaboration amongst stakeholders, emphasising the fact that conference and business tourism planning requires the cooperation of all relevant stakeholders.

Respondent O1 stated that having agreements and working together were vitally important for stakeholders. Respondent O1 indicated that they were very well received internationally and *“known as the association in Africa effectively not even just in South Africa so our brand is out there, we’ve got that reputation which is good, and we’re getting a lot of support currently from the National Department of Tourism”*. Respondent O2 asserted that associations and organisations cannot function without collaboration with stakeholders, as each one has a fundamental role to play to complete the project: *“I need a PCO, a professional conference organiser, a venue ... All the departments, the government department that is maybe linked in the health sector ...the tourism infrastructure ...”*. From the perspective of the professional conference organisers (PCOs), relationships with suppliers need to be fostered. Respondent P1 highlighted the importance in the business events industry of delivering what was promised. Respondent P2 added that it was also important to keep abreast with changes and developments in the industry. This can be achieved through attending workshops (i.e. SAACI)

or international or national tradeshows. From a venue perspective, it should be noted that often the venue cannot provide all the requirements needed by the client, and the venue will need to appoint suppliers. For this purpose, venues should build relationships with reliable suppliers that they can use on a regular basis. Respondent V2 indicated that it was important for venues to attend networking workshops hosted by associations in order to maintain contact with existing suppliers and meet new suppliers that could perhaps offer competitive rates.

5.2.2 Stakeholder: organisations/associations

The following questions were put to organisations and associations:

❖ Factors influencing successful bidding for an international conference

While this question was posed to the organisations, not all of them were directly involved in bidding for conferences. Respondent O1, although not directly involved, maintained that when bidding for a conference or convention, safety and security should be highlighted. As mentioned previously, respondent O1 emphasised the importance of ensuring that the correct messages are portrayed in the media, specifically when it comes to safety and security. Promoting the accessibility of the destination and venue will enhance your chances of a successful bid, as will adding an innovative and attractive touch to it. Respondent O3 agreed with this statement and continued, *“hard infrastructure but also soft infrastructure (fields of expertise). In South Africa we look at the six sectors that is aligned with the National Development Plan (NDP), so if you don’t have that academic strength in those sectors it is much more difficult to attract the conferences these days. It’s about the content; what content can you as a country and as a continent offer? What research opportunities, what development opportunities can you offer?”* Infrastructure, according to respondent O3, is for example the Gautrain and involves innovation and connectivity. Surprisingly, *“these days we all thought that the internet is going to take us all over and it actually is not; it’s just the opposite that is happening because people still feel they need the authenticity. For an African destination I definitely think that if they see it they buy it”*. In terms of the bidding documentation, respondent O2 clarified that the bid manual will go to all the local members, who are very specific about the type of information that must be in the bid manual, particularly if there is more than one country competing; it is important that all manuals for all countries are the same so that “apples can be compared with apples”. Respondent P2 stated that for a successful bid the process should be correct and the documents prepared properly.

The bidding fund increase implemented in 2017 was noted by all respondents, who pointed out that the increase in funds would enable the convention bureaus to bid aggressively for international association conferences and conventions. Furthermore, this fund would focus on attracting business events that were aligned with the government's priority economic sectors for development. In a meeting report, it was noted that SANCB had secured 177 bids for the period 2015 – 2020, with an estimated economic impact of R3.5 billion (SACB,2013).

❖ Strategies implemented to gain/win a conference bid

This question was posed to organisations. According to respondent O1 there were few organisers that put in the time and effort needed to meet the objectives at the planning stage, thus jeopardizing the bid. The objectives assist in measuring the effect at the end of the event. Respondent O2 stated that many more conferences could be won if there were a bigger budget to assist with delegate boosting, promoting the destination and broadening international trade shows. Respondent O3 stressed the importance of reading the RFP and making sure that the format was presentable and appealing. Furthermore, having an ambassador to drive the project is a necessity, someone that is a key leader in the industry. Respondent O3 also pointed to the need for a proper project plan around the itinerary and ensuring that the event was relevant, practical and operational.

5.2.3 Stakeholder: professional conference organiser (PCO)

The following questions were put to the professional conference organisers (PCOs):

❖ Criteria used for selecting and sourcing venues

According to Nolan (2018:57), prior to selecting a venue an event organiser needs to estimate the time of year (season) when the event will take place, number of attendees, event program considerations, and the budget. These details will help the organiser to select the venue that is most conducive to the event.

This question was asked to professional conference organisers (PCOs). All professional conference organisers interviewed somewhat agreed with this statement. Respondent P1 indicated that the venue was planned last; it came down to understanding the event and from there the venue was selected to support the event and not the other way around: *"you don't try to dress a venue to suit your event, the reason for that is that it comes down to size,*

functionality, accessibility, level of service and support". Respondents P4 and P5 noted that their priority was to strictly go with what the client wanted. Respondents P2, P3, P6, P7 and P8 disagreed with the criteria and would select a venue based on the most suitable venue for the type of conference taking into consideration accessibility, availability, pricing and facilities that supported what the client wanted to achieve and possibly an *"added extra"*. Respondent P3 said: *"I'm very, very flexible. I'm always looking for something completely new, completely different, especially with returning clients, as you don't want to take the same client to the same venue all the time; you want them to diversify and have different experience"*. Respondent P3 indicated that the focus when selecting a venue was the size of the venue – in her experience conference sizes varied from the time of the booking to the time of the event and if this had not been carefully considered it could jeopardize the successfulness of the event. Respondent P5 agreed that service orientation and facilities should be considered, such as: *"Do they have the technology that I want? Will they offer me free Wi-Fi rather than to charge me? Will they offer me hypothetically free parking where at another conference venue I might have to pay for parking? All of these make a difference to the end cost that the client will pay"*. Respondent P8 indicated that checklists to guide the organiser were very useful in selecting the best venue. Furthermore, the respondent indicated that knowing the purpose, the objectives, and the significance of the event was the most important in determining the most suitable venue, *"because different events have different purposes and you need to understand why you're doing it. Is it in-house within the university or is it externally or is it an international event because each one of those have different objectives, different purposes, different methods that you will follow. So, you can never have a blueprint when you organise these events because each and every one is different"*. Respondent P3 indicated that they had preferred suppliers as they tended to be more flexible and give preferential rates. Respondent P3 confirmed that they were able to be more competitive when tendering, *"for example for a conference so we like to use our preferred suppliers because we can guarantee certain things to the client, whereas if it's a new supplier or a new property that we haven't worked with obviously we take risk on that"*. Respondent P3 added that negotiating rates is a very important aspect when considering competitiveness.

All respondents indicated that it was in their interest to keep abreast with the venue offerings and to do site inspections on a regular basis, highlighting flexibility when choosing a venue that was conducive to the event. It was, however, brought to the researcher's attention that there were PCOs who selected venues based on commission offered and added on a management fee to the client. The respondents interviewed assured the researcher that this was not their way of operation and that they were not influenced by the *"horrible practice"* currently happening in the industry. It should be further noted that SAACI is engaging with

National Treasury on looking at a more formalised policy for the business events sector pertaining to government departments and bookings.

5.2.4 Stakeholder: academics

The following questions were put to academics:

- ❖ The importance of meeting the needs of the delegates, adding value to a conference and the criteria used for selecting a conference to attend

This question was put to all academic respondents. Questions 3, 4 and 5 were merged. According to Mair *et al.* (2018:54), an important component of the association conference sector is academic conferences which are constantly aiming to keep up with the trends which conference organisers should take heed of. A current challenge is that conference attendance has been reduced by many universities due to budget constraints. Many delegates, according to Mair and Thompson (2009:401), attend conferences for networking; personal/professional development and education; location; time and convenience; and health and well-being. These reasons for attendance were confirmed by respondents P1, A1, A2, A3, A4 and V2. Furthermore, respondent A1 stated that organisers need to take into consideration that many delegates go far afield, often taking time off, and therefore have high expectations of a conference and *"want attention to detail"*. Respondents A2 and A3 added that research output goals were important, as well as: *"Is the conference of international standing? Is the conference accredited? What is my destination preference?"* Respondent A2 maintained that the location and destination of the conference were a consideration – *"Is the destination attractive and appealing? Are there activities and attractions? Is the registration process simple? Who are the speakers at the conference? Is the destination affordable?"* While in most cases the university pays for the conference, the pre and post tours are at the cost of the delegate. Respondents A1 and A3 indicated that they tried to attend the same conference annually at different venues around the world, as the content of the conference was based on their specialist areas; authors they quoted in their research were usually keynote speakers at these particular conferences.

- ❖ Importance of business tourism and business tourism in the academic curriculum

According to Swart (2015:491), the business tourism industry is one of the fastest growing segments in the tourism industry, with South Africa ranking as the premier destination in Africa. The Business Tourism Strategy of South African Tourism (SAT, 2015) focuses on attracting a

share of the international business tourism market. Many of the stakeholders subscribe to the views of South African Tourism that business tourism should be prioritised and professionalised. In particular, respondents O1 and A2 noted that “there is huge focus for the industry to not only to look at formal education and in terms of tertiary education but even certifications, internships, on the job trainings, mentorship program so that all falling under the umbrella of properly professionalising the industry”. In terms of business management to be incorporated in a curriculum, all academic stakeholders agreed on the importance of including business tourism as a module, whether it is in an event related qualification or a tourism qualification. Respondent A3 expressed concerns over the future of education: “if we look at currently what the universities are going through with free education it will be very difficult to justify the offering of a specialist qualification such as event/business management. First of all, you must be very careful that you don’t train too many people for the industry, and I think we’re sometimes guilty of training too many in a specific discipline. Secondly, I think that it’s also very difficult to keep it financially viable. It’s perhaps something that should rather be developed more on post-graduate level”.

5.2.5 Stakeholder: sponsors

According to Tassiopolous (2010:273), sponsorship provides financial or in-kind support to an event to achieve specific goals and objectives. Many events today would not exist without sponsorships. The following questions were asked to sponsors.

- ❖ Criteria for selecting a conference to sponsor and the benefits of sponsoring a conference

Both respondents indicated that before accepting the sponsorship, benefits to either party were considered. Respondent S2 indicated that they would re-evaluate the sponsorship on an annual basis to ensure it was still worth their while. Respondent S1 stated that as an international convention centre they would look at sponsoring a venue based on the fact that the event used their accommodation suppliers and provided exposure in return.

Respondent S1 highlighted that whilst benefits were a consideration for sponsorships, sponsorships had dried up due to the economic situation. Talking from experience, respondent S1 elaborated that “at my previous place of employment, people used to throw sponsorships at us and then the last three years you’ve had to beg, borrow and almost contemplate to steal whatever you need and people are really driving that they want to have their brand known”. Sponsors were also becoming demanding and a banner with their logo was no longer good

enough; the sponsors were insisting on expanded exposure in the form of social media. Both respondents indicated that sponsorship was taking a different approach in that long term relationships were being built. Respondent S1 provided an example: *“One of the sponsorship agreements that we’ve agreed to at our venue for an event that took place in December, was to give them a discount of venue hire for the next 12 months, in return we get media exposure from them which includes ‘click-throughs’ on their website, banner adverts of what we do so it becomes a long partnership so instead of just creating a hype around two or three days”.*

The respondents noted that criteria were not necessarily used for selecting a sponsor, but it was important to consider that perhaps for every R1 given, exposure of R2 or R3 would be generated. Each case had its own considerations and merits. Another consideration, according to respondent S2, was demographic: both parties must have similar target markets and there must be mutuality of interests. Respondent S1 confirmed that before accepting a sponsor, “homework” must be done – what is their reputation; what have they done before; what is their history; what is their profile in the media? Respondent S1 cautioned that many sponsors played you up against each other.

❖ Sponsoring the same conference more than once

Both respondents mentioned that once again it would have to depend on whether it suited their objectives and whether the benefits made it worth their while. Each sponsorship had to be looked at separately and would depend on where the company was at that point in time: *“...: times are tough now, so we may have sponsored an event previously but may not be in a situation to do so in the future”* (respondent S1). Many of the sponsorships involve a long term partnership, but important considerations are return on investment and whether it is mutually beneficial. Respondent S2 acknowledged that often they were approached by international events for sponsorships; however, these have to have careful consideration as there is no return on investment. *“For us it doesn’t make sense to partner with them because they’re going to fly in and fly out and what are we going to get from them there?”*

❖ International versus domestic sponsorship

Contrary to the above, respondent S1 commented that the best business tourism sponsorship opportunities were if you could get international to sponsor a local event. *“If you just look at the industry from that perspective...Radisson is building many hotels in South Africa; Hilton is expanding more, Starwood getting bought out by Marriott. Marriott is buying Protea Hotels - this tells you there’s a lot of focus on Africa as a continent. So, there’s a lot of focus from an*

international perspective to get into the continent so if you're a local conferencing and you get that in, great. For us as a local to go international is very expensive. It is just not worth it... We've tried it, I know the National Convention Bureau does it for some of the international conferences and we'll piggyback off that because we literally just do not have that type of money."

5.2.6 Stakeholder: venues

The following questions were put to venue suppliers:

- ❖ The competitiveness of venues and making a venue more competitive

A number of new entrants in the conference market in the Middle East and South East Asia are at the forefront of the expansion and creation of modernised venues, thus intensifying global competition. In addition to this, "pop-up" venues have increased in the conference market; these are temporary structures ranging from tents to portable rooms as venue options (Nolan, 2018:16).

This question was asked to the venue stakeholders. Respondent V2 indicated that they were very competitive in their rates and deemed it essential to know what their competitors were doing. *"We are not the cheapest, but also not the most expensive; however, we are also very conscious of that the fact that we have a brand standard to uphold and a quality.... As such, when it comes to competitiveness, you can cut your rates but you must still be able to provide quality in order to protect your brand and reputation."* Respondent V2 clarified that venues could provide the same tangible facilities as those of their competitor, but what stood out was the service that was offered.

It is noteworthy that although service was not listed high on the attribute ranking, many respondents (P7, S2, P6, P5, P4, O1, V1, V2, V3) felt that service quality was important in terms of conference competitiveness. In particular, respondent V2 stated that venues were linked to hospitality and therefore "service" was a given and it was about the experience – *"it can be cheap, it can be expensive but if it's an amazing experience people will buy it"*. Respondent O1 added that there has recently been a drive to create more professionalism and service orientation in the business events industry as those who are "not up to scratch" can bring down service levels and standards, which in turn affects the reputation of the industry as a whole. Respondent V3 said that locally they were not competitive, as they were expensive from a venue hire perspective. From an international perspective, due to the

exchange rates, they are competitive. *“The value for money that the international delegates get from South Africa is astronomical... I’ve attended conferences in all continents, with the exception of North America, and what we give our delegates versus what you get internationally is chalk and cheese... here we put in a lot of effort into detail, for example here we will put sweets, water and coffee on the table, freely available to delegates; at an international conference it will only be provided during a coffee break.”* Respondent O2 disagreed, stating that *“South Africa used to be a fairly cheap destination to come to but now the hotels, transport and restaurants are not as cheap as they used to be”*.

Respondent V3 provided an example of an international conference that mainly rotates in Europe but came to South Africa; the association had been concerned that there would not be enough delegates due to the safety and security issues of the country. Surprisingly, there were more delegates than in Europe due to the competitive costs and the value for money offerings. Respondents O1 and P2 asserted with regard to the safety issue that international media tend to run with inaccurate views and our associations/industry are not pro-active and then have to do “crisis” management. Another example, although not security related, is the water crisis in Cape Town: delegates want to cancel conferences in Cape Town. Respondent P3 felt that not enough was being done to guarantee delegates safety in South Africa and that the perception internationally was that we are still an unsafe country with a lot of safety and security issues.

Respondents (A2, A2, P1, P4, P5, O3) noted that technology had moved at such a rapid pace that no hotel could keep up; for venues to remain competitive state-of-the-art Wi-Fi connectivity and having plug points for delegates to charge various devices are crucial. This is where meeting design is a very important consideration. Many of the respondents indicated that although South Africa does offer Wi-Fi, it is not free. *“If we want to compete globally, we need to do something about free Wi-Fi... especially with technology advancing, allowing delegates to live stream during a conference.”* For clarity, it is important to note that respondents used different terms for “technology”, such as connectivity, communication, venue facilities and infrastructure.

In terms of competitiveness, respondent V3 stated that it was important for venues to consider “food/cuisine” (this ranked highly on the list of attributes), as this is now trending and becoming of global importance. *“Delegates have become a lot choosier as delegates have access to TV and the master chef phenomenon has changed everyone’s view on food – there are a lot of external factors that have impacted on the industry. Besides that people are becoming more demanding of their needs and want flexibility – they want to be able to “float” from one*

session to the next in their own leisure and if they find a session boring they want to be able to leave and not be herded like sheep.”

With reference to the literature, global trends include “greening” and sustainability which are incorporated in the business event planning; however, it was clear that the respondents did not see the importance of the concept despite workshops offered by The Event Greening Forum. The respondents either did not mention greening or stated that they felt it was an expensive concept to implement in business events. Respondent O1, however, disagreed, stating: *“Not if it’s done right. Sustainability and greening can actually reduce the cost but it’s because we’re all trying just for the sake of doing it and window dressing or what we call green washing rather than this being part of your objectives and I mean 90% of companies these days have -- one of their values is sustainability and are you truly living that value then? – greening is not a concept but a culture”*.

❖ Awareness of direct competitors

From the answers to this question it was clear that venues used their rates to remain competitive. To do this they need to be aware of who their direct and indirect competitors are.

5.2.7 Summative conclusions of the qualitative findings

The following conclusions can be drawn regarding competitiveness:

- ❖ That location and accessibility are considered the most important conference attributes and ranked as the top priority by most respondents. These findings are consistent with convention attendee related studies (Mair & Thompson, 2009:401; Zhang *et al.*, 2007:1124; Mohammadi & Mohamed, 2010:55) which note that there are three variables which influence the level of conference attendance, of which accessibility is the first.
- ❖ That price and value for money were ranked as the next important attributes for conference tourism, indicating that destinations and conferences should be “reasonably priced” and “affordable” with a component of value for money. It was further indicated that there were many versions of the concept of “value”, as delegates considered not only the “package” and what they were receiving for their money, but also what the costs were, and who would be covering the costs.

- ❖ That international delegates are becoming more conscious of food trends and healthy eating and feel that South Africa should make more of an effort to meet these requirements and give menus a more “South African” flavour to offer an “authentic” appeal.
- ❖ That technology, infrastructure and facilities are of equal importance for conference tourism and making a conference competitive. However, respondents had different views on whether South Africa was a leading destination as far as technology was concerned; some felt that South Africa was ahead with technology and others felt that South Africa did not meet international standards. Many of the stakeholders agreed that South Africa should move towards offering free Wi-Fi, as many other destinations do.
- ❖ That destination management and planning are imperative in conference tourism. Many of the respondents emphasised that the objectives of the organisations must be considered when managing destinations and implementing policies. Some stakeholders indicated that while departments pledged support, they did not follow through and policies and strategies were not implemented. The stakeholders agreed that the National Convention Bureau was a prominent role player in destination management and that collaboration was important.
- ❖ That the additional funding for bidding of business events would enable the convention bureaus to bid aggressively for international association conferences and conventions. Furthermore, this fund would focus on attracting business events aligned with the government’s priority economic sectors for development. Organisations and associations were in agreement that there should be effective collaboration with government.
- ❖ That there should be continued support for professionalism and skilled people; this can be achieved through certifications, internships, on the job trainings and mentorship programs offered by business event associations, as well as educational institutions. Currently there are no standardised services for event and conference management and it is felt that more structure and adequate accredited qualifications are needed. Professionalising the industry and binding it by a code of ethics were highlighted as critical for the future of the conference industry by the organisations (it should be noted that the newly established CEPA – Council of Events Professionals Africa - aims to achieve this objective).

- ❖ That venues are planned last and that it comes down to understanding the event. Accessibility of the venue is an important consideration; however, there is a tendency for organisers to remain loyal to certain venues. Some organisers stated that it was important not to take repeat clients to the same venues but to expand on choices, hence the importance of venue inspections. The PCOs and organisations highlighted the unfortunate practice of “double dipping” with commissions, in other words claiming commission from the venue and charging the client an administration fee.
- ❖ That programming was important to academics focusing on the content of the program, as well as the guest and keynote speakers of the conference. The image of the conference and appeal of the destination were also deemed important. Many academics consider presenting papers at a reputable conference important. Furthermore, academics often attend a conference for networking purposes and a specific conference can be selected to use as a platform to meet high profile academics in the same field of study.
- ❖ That sponsors’ interest in conferences is about building relationships and that due to the economic climate, sponsors are becoming more selective of the events that they sponsor, ensuring that there are benefits and that they meet their key objectives. Events, on the other hand, are just as critical of the sponsors they choose, taking into account whether they have shared objectives and whether the sponsors have a good image, are financially stable, have a good record and are reliable.
- ❖ That there should be continued investment in service quality in the industry, as this is what sets a conference apart from its competitors and that authenticity of the South African product is important, specifically when it comes to local cuisine. This attribute could be used to grow the conference industry and make it stand out.
- ❖ That venues were aware that new modernised venues with top of the range technology were a threat to them. Venue suppliers also indicated that greening practices were not really seen as important by the industry and that something would only be done once a strategy or legislation was implemented to enforce this practice.

5.3 SECTION B: THE RESULTS OF THE QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The main objective of the questionnaire, a contribution to this study, was to explore and rank the delegates' priorities in terms of conferencing attributes. The motivation for this approach was that research relating to tourism and destination competitiveness is available; however, literature that supports conference tourism competitiveness is very limited. There is also currently no model or framework for conference tourism competitiveness which could be utilised by policy makers and industry stakeholders. The following sections present the empirical results from the questionnaire, as well as the demographics and profiling of the delegates.

5.3.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The research sample for the quantitative section of this study consisted of 300 respondents (delegates), both international and national. The demographic information obtained included the respondents' gender, age, home language, marital status, permanent country of residence, occupation and level of education, as indicated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Demographic characteristics of delegates

Demographic characteristics	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage
Gender	Male	137	46%
	Female	163	54%
Age	<25	41	14%
	26-35	82	29%
	36-45	66	23%
	46-55	59	20%
	56+	41	14%
Home language	English	162	54%
	Afrikaans	42	14%
	Sotho	12	4%
	Zulu	11	4%
	Other	73	24%
Marital status	Married	137	46%
	Not married	125	42%
	Divorced	19	6%
	Widowed	0	0%
	Living together	16	6%
Permanent residence	South Africa	215	72%
	Africa	26	9%
	Europe	6	2%
	United States of America (USA)	26	9%

Demographic characteristics	Category	Frequency (N)	Percentage
	United Kingdom (UK)	3	1%
	Other	24	7%
Occupation	Academic	100	33%
	Civil services	14	5%
	Business owner	15	4%
	Researcher	17	6%
	Student	38	13%
	Management	41	14%
	Other	75	25%
Level of Education	Up to grade 12	12	4%
	Diploma	39	13%
	Degree	75	25%
	Post Graduate degree	174	58%

**percentages rounded to the nearest whole number*

The demographic statistics reflect that both genders were well represented, with 54% of the delegates who took part in the survey female and 46% male. Furthermore, 29% of the delegates were between the ages of 26 and 35, with English as the dominant home language (54%). Although all the conferences with the exception of one were international, the majority of the delegates originated from South Africa, followed by Africa (26%) and the United States of America (26%). Most of the delegates (33%) were academics and had a post graduate degree (58%). To a certain extent the statistics were influenced by the demographics of the conferences selected as a sample.

Further data was obtained using descriptive statistics relating to the delegates' profiles. This included information such as number of days spent at a conference, number of days prior to and after a conference, payment of conference, total number of conferences attended and the main reason for attending conferences. The data is summarised below.

5.3.2 Conference profile of respondents

Section A of the questionnaire that was distributed at international and national conferences in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg probed the behaviour of respondents related to conferences:

5.3.2.1 Average number of days spent at a conference

The purpose of this question was to determine the average number of days spent at a conference. This question was not specific to the conference the delegates were attending at

the time, but conferences in general. Table 5.2 reflects a summary of the average number of days spent at a conference.

Table 5.2: Summary of average number of conference days

N	294
Minimum	1
Maximum	10
Mean	3.12
Standard deviation	1.178

The delegates indicated that the minimum number of days spent at a conference is 1 day, with a maximum of 10 days. The average is 3.12 days. This is consistent with the findings from the Business Tourism Partnership Briefing, 2016 and South African Tourism, (SAT, 2016), of between 2 and 4 days.

5.3.2.2 *Number of days spent at a destination prior to the conference*

Table 5.3: Summary of average days spent prior to a conference

N	297
Minimum	0
Maximum	9
Mean	1.36
Standard deviation	1.229

The delegates indicated that the minimum number of days spent at a destination prior to a conference were zero and maximum number of days 9, with zero reflecting that the delegates would arrive on the day of the conference (day of registration). The average number of days spent prior to a conference is 1.36. This low indication could be owing to the fact that 72% of the delegates were South African and would at most arrive a day earlier or on the first day of conference. A study conducted by South African Tourism found that in 2014 an average of 5.4 days were spent prior to a conference and 2.4 days in 2015 (SAT, 2016), indicating a reduction of three days between 2014 and 2015.

5.3.2.3 *Number of days spent at a destination after the conference*

Table 5.4: Summary of average days spent after a conference

N	281
Minimum	0
Maximum	14
Mean	1.28
Standard deviation	1.698

The delegates indicated that the minimum number of days spent at a destination after a conference were zero and maximum number of days 14, with zero reflecting that the delegates would leave on the last day of the conference. The average number of days spent after a conference is 1.28. Once again, the low indication could be owing to the fact that 72% of the delegates were South African and would at most stay on one day after the conference, as South Africa is their country of residence.

In contrast to this, research conducted by Mair and Thompson (2009:405) indicated in a profile study of delegate characteristics that 89.1% of delegates did extend their stay before or after the conference. Moreover, the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) confirmed that according to statistics gathered by the Bureau in recent years, 43% of visiting international business delegates extend their stay for leisure purposes

5.3.2.4 *Payment for the conference*

The purpose of this question was to determine what percentage of the delegates paid for their own conferences and what percentage of the conferences were paid for by their employers.

Table 5.5: Summary of who pays for the conference

Payment of conference	N	Percentage
Employer	232	77
Self	65	23

Regarding the payment for the conference, Table 5.5 indicates that 77% of the delegates' conferences were paid for by the employer and 23% were paid for by the delegates themselves. This could be owing to the fact that the conferences selected were attended by academics and students – these conferences are usually paid for by the institution which the

delegates are affiliated with. According to Mair and Thompson (2009:402), cost is noted as a very important motivator as to whether to attend a conference or not.

5.3.2.5 *Total number of conferences attended during delegate's career*

The purpose of this question was to determine how many conferences had been attended to date by the delegate during his or her career.

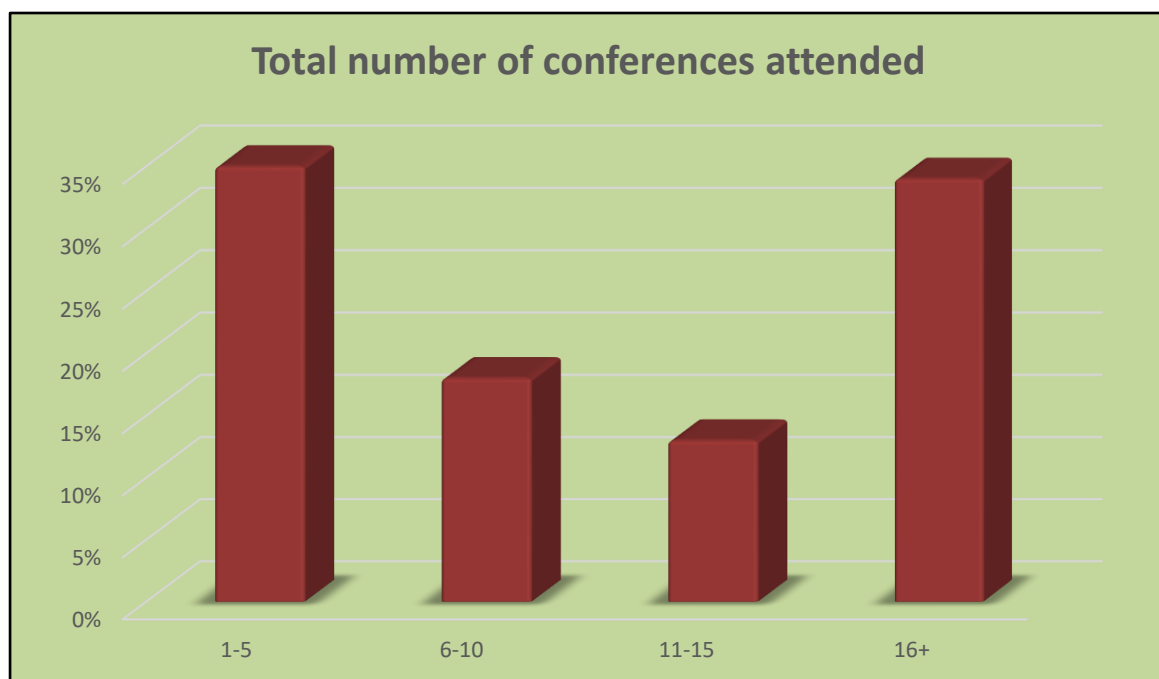


Figure 5.2: Total number of conferences attended by delegates

A breakdown of the total number of conferences attended by the delegates during their career indicates that 35% of the delegates had attended between 1 and 5 and 34% had attended more than 16. The large gap and variation could be owing to the fact that the population of the attendees included a large number of students who had by this time been exposed to many conferences. The delegate population also consisted of a large group of academic delegates who attend conferences on a regular basis to present academic papers.

5.3.2.6 *The main reason for attending a conference*

The purpose of this question was to determine the main reason why delegates attend a conference.

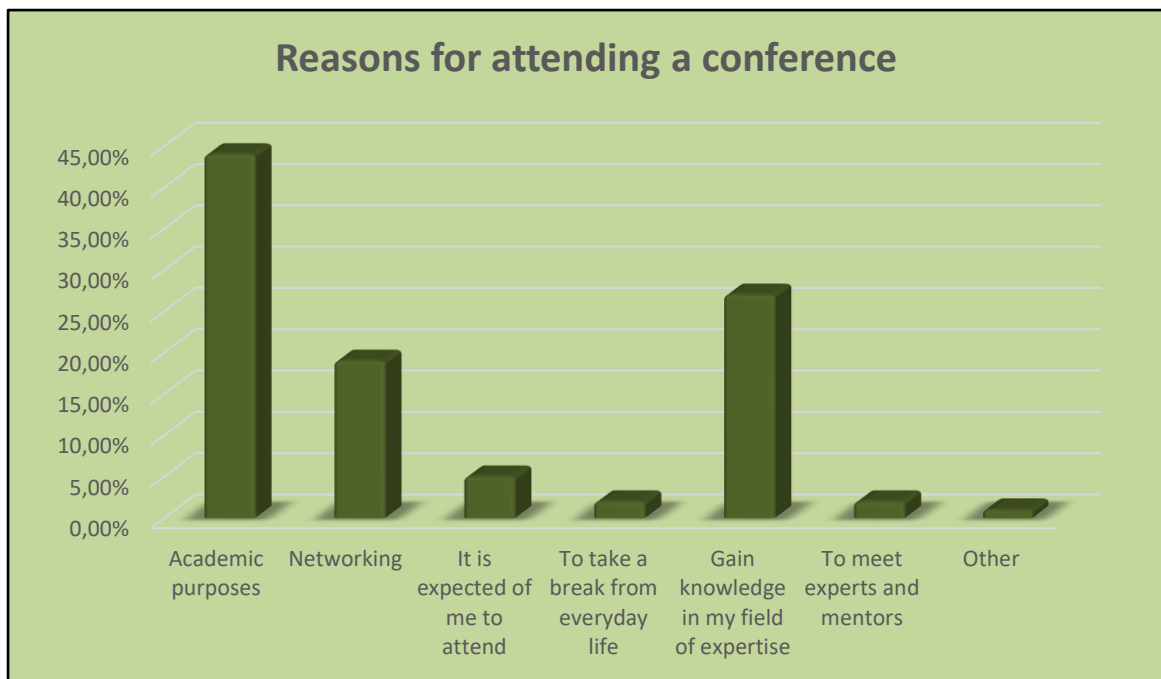


Figure 5.3: Main reason for attending a conference

The above figure reflects that 44% of the delegates attend conferences for academic purposes, which can be considered for professional development (Mair *et al.*, 2018:1447). Of these delegates, 27% indicated that they attended conferences to gain knowledge in their field of expertise and 19% of the delegates indicated networking purposes. A recent study conducted by Mair *et al.* (2018:1447) confirms that the top motivators for conference attendance include networking, professional development and improving knowledge, which is consistent with the above findings. Furthermore, the findings relating to total number of conferences attended and level of education are also consistent with this study.

The next section of the results provides an overview of the conference attributes (Sections B - F of the questionnaire). However, before reporting on the results it is important to determine the internal validity of the questionnaire.

5.4 RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

5.4.1 Internal validity of the questionnaire and the data

Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was calculated to determine the reliability of each subsection of the measuring instrument. The subsections included conference attributes,

destination elements, conference services, conference venue facilities and general conference attributes. The reliability analysis of the different task values scales indicated acceptable reliability, *minimum* $\alpha = 0.794$ with an acceptable inter item correlation.

Based on the results depicted in Table 5.6, the items in each construct are internally consistent.

Table 5.6: Measurement of reliability for conference attributes

Factor		Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Destination elements – Conference services	B14	0,512	0,771
Destination elements – Conference venue facilities	B15	0,611	0,747
Destination elements – General conference attributes	B16	0,698	0,726
Conference services – Conference venue facilities	B17	0,501	0,773
Conference services – General conference attributes	B18	0,502	0,773
Conference venue facilities – General conference attributes	B19	0,463	0,781
Alpha 0.794			

The conference attributes depicted in Table 5.6 reflect an alpha of more than 0.7 and higher, thus indicating an acceptable reliability. All factors have a corrected item total correlation of above 0.4, which is deemed acceptable.

Table 5.7: Measurement of reliability for destination elements

Factor		Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Accessibility – Infrastructure	C20	0,460	0,875
Accessibility – Location	C21	0,499	0,874
Accessibility – Safety/security	C22	0,350	0,879
Accessibility – Value/cost	C23	0,447	0,876
Accessibility – Weather	C24	0,520	0,873
Accessibility – Attractions/activities	C25	0,570	0,872
Infrastructure – Location	C26	0,487	0,875
Infrastructure – Safety/security	C27	0,413	0,877
Infrastructure – Value/cost	C28	0,423	0,876
Infrastructure – Weather	C29	0,539	0,873
Infrastructure – Attractions/activities	C30	0,599	0,871

Factor		Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Location – Safety/security	C31	0,309	0,880
Location – Value/cost	C32	0,307	0,880
Location – Weather	C33	0,515	0,874
Location – Attractions/activities	C34	0,521	0,874
Safety – Value/costs	C35	0,495	0,874
Safety – Weather	C36	0,533	0,873
Safety – Attractions/activities	C37	0,558	0,872
Value/cost – Weather	C38	0,553	0,873
Value/cost – Attractions/activities	C39	0,533	0,873
Weather – Attractions/activities	C40	0,386	0,878
Alpha 0.880			

The destination elements depicted in Table 5.7 reflect an alpha of more than 0.7 and higher, thus indicating an acceptable reliability. All factors have a construct with a corrected item total correlation of above 0.3.

Table 5.8: Measurement of reliability for conference services

Factor		Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Entertainment – Program	D41	0,291	0,866
Entertainment – Quality of food	D42	0,376	0,863
Entertainment – Conference image	D43	0,481	0,860
Entertainment – Value/cost	D44	0,416	0,862
Entertainment – Accommodation	D45	0,460	0,861
Entertainment – Size of conference	D46	0,553	0,857
Program – Quality of food	D47	0,445	0,861
Program – Conference image	D48	0,559	0,857
Program – Value/cost	D49	0,436	0,862
Program – Accommodation	D50	0,482	0,860
Program – Size of conference	D51	0,569	0,857
Quality of food – Conference image	D52	0,475	0,860
Quality of food – Value/cost	D53	0,402	0,863
Quality of food – Accommodation	D54	0,429	0,862
Quality of food – Size of conference	D55	0,446	0,861
Conference image – Value/cost	D56	0,364	0,864
Conference image – Accommodation	D57	0,368	0,864
Conference image – Size of conference	D58	0,540	0,858

Value/cost – Accommodation	D59	0,413	0,862
Value/cost – Size of conference	D60	0,506	0,859
Accommodation – Size of conference	D61	0,473	0,860
Alpha 0.867			

The conference services depicted in Table 5.8 reflect an alpha of more than 0.7 and higher, thus indicating an acceptable reliability. All factors have a construct with a total correlation of above 0.3.

Table 5.9: Measurement of reliability for conference venue facilities

Factor		Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Venue design – Advanced technology	E62	0,330	0,907
Venue design – Free Wi-Fi	E63	0,368	0,906
Venue design – Service quality	E64	0,469	0,904
Venue design – Aircon/heating	E65	0,623	0,900
Venue design – Facilities/services	E66	0,567	0,902
Venue design – Ambience	E67	0,632	0,900
Advance technology – Free Wi-Fi	E68	0,527	0,903
Advanced technology – Service quality	E69	0,573	0,901
Advanced technology – Aircon/heating	E70	0,600	0,901
Advanced technology – Facilities/services	E71	0,659	0,899
Advanced technology – Ambience	E72	0,698	0,898
Free Wi-Fi – Service quality	E73	0,515	0,903
Free Wi-Fi – Aircon/heating	E74	0,557	0,902
Free Wi-Fi – Facilities/services	E75	0,534	0,902
Free Wi-Fi – Ambience	E76	0,543	0,902
Service quality – Aircon/heating	E77	0,589	0,901
Service quality – Facilities/services	E78	0,549	0,902
Service quality – Ambience	E79	0,611	0,901
Aircon/heating – Facilities/services	E80	0,406	0,905
Aircon/heating – Ambience	E81	0,352	0,907
Facilities/services – Ambience	E82	0,521	0,903
Alpha 0.907			

The conference venue facilities depicted in Table 5.9 reflect an alpha of more than 0.7 and higher, thus indicating an acceptable reliability. All factors have a construct with a total correlation of above 0.3.

Table 5.10: Measurement of reliability for general conference attributes

Factor		Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha
Political stability – Economic stability	F83	0,646	0,859
Political stability – Community engagement	F84	0,656	0,858
Political stability – Promotion of business tourism	F85	0,738	0,851
Political stability – Environmental practices	F86	0,725	0,853
Economic stability – Community engagement	F87	0,624	0,861
Economic stability – Promotion of business tourism	F88	0,718	0,853
Economic stability – Environmental practices	F89	0,652	0,859
Community engagement – Promotion of business tourism	F90	0,507	0,870
Community engagement – Environmental practices	F91	0,431	0,875
Promotion of business tourism – Environmental practices	F92	0,273	0,886
Alpha 0.875			

The general conference attributes depicted in Table 5.10 reflect an alpha of more than 0.7 and higher, thus indicating an acceptable reliability. All factors have a construct with a total correlation of above 0.4 with the exception of promotion of business tourism - environmental practices, suggesting a possible further analysis.

Table 5.11 contains a summary of sections B - F with the inter-item correlation scores indicated below.

Table 5.11: Summary of Cronbach alpha for reliability per section

Question Section	Main Factors	Number of items	Cronbach alpha	Inter-item correlation
B	Conference attributes	6	0.794	0.391
C	Destination elements	21	0.880	0.259
D	Conference services	21	0.867	0.237
E	Conference venue facilities	21	0.907	0.316
F	General conference attributes	10	0.875	0.408

Table 5.11 depicts a summary of the Cronbach alpha values for each section (B – F), indicating an acceptable reliability, *minimum* $\alpha = 0.794$ with an acceptable inter item correlation. A Cronbach alpha between 0.8 and 0.95 considers the reliability very good, and a Cronbach

alpha between 0.7 and 0.79 is regarded as good. All inter-item correlation scores are between 0.20 and 0.40, indicating reliability of internal consistency and appropriateness (items that are below 0.15 indicate poor inter-item correlation that suggests they are not well related to each other). It can therefore be said that each of the sections provides for an acceptable reliability.

5.4.2 Practical significance of the results

The one sample *t*-test used for this study is the Cohens *d* test. The Cohens *d* test is a standardized measure of effect size and measures the difference between two means divided by the standard deviation ($d = (M_1 - M_2) / S_{pooled}$). According to Olenjnik and Algina (2000:245), Cohen states that the standardised effect size indicates: *d* ~ 0.2 small effect, *d* ~ 0.5 medium effect, and *d* ~ 0.8 large effect. This implies that if the two groups' means do not differ by 0.2 standard deviations or more, the difference is trivial, even if there is statistical significance. Tables 5.12 – 5.16 depict the one sample *t*-test (Cohen's) applied to the main factors and sub-factors. For data analysis purposes, the questionnaire scaling (9 to 1 and 1 to 9) was recoded from 1 -17 during analysis.

Table 5.12: Conference attributes

CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES	Mean	Std. Deviation	Effect size	P value	Mean diff
Destination elements – Conference services	9,85	4,768	0.02	0,737	-0,095
Destination elements – Conference venue facilities	10,32	4,558	0.08	0,162	0,375
Destination elements – General conference attributes	10,33	4,517	0.09	0,144	0,393
Conference services – Conference venue facilities	9,65	4,577	0.06	0,284	-0,290
Conference services – General conference attributes	9,64	4,537	0.07	0,254	-0,305
Conference venue facilities – General conference attributes	9,68	4,437	0.06	0,321	-0,261
Test Value = 9.9418					

According to Table 5.12 there are no practical significances, thus the one is not more important than the other.

Table 5.13 indicates the one sample *t*-test (Cohen *d*) for the destination elements (sub-factors)

Table 5.13: Destination elements

DESTINATION ELEMENTS	Mean	Std. Error Mean	Effect size	P value	Mean diff
Accessibility – Infrastructure	9,47	0,267	0,05	0,435	-0,209
Accessibility – Location	10,92	0,251	0,29	0,001	1,236
Accessibility – Safety/security	12,75	0,255	0,71	0,001	3,064
Accessibility – Value/cost	12,08	0,243	0,59	0,001	2,401
Accessibility – Weather	8,73	0,275	0,20	0,001	-0,952
Accessibility – Attractions/activities	10,15	0,270	0,10	0,086	0,464
Infrastructure – Location	10,50	0,251	0,19	0,001	0,821
Infrastructure – Safety/security	12,25	0,248	0,61	0,001	2,567
Infrastructure – Value/cost	11,46	0,246	0,43	0,001	1,775
Infrastructure – Weather	8,18	0,259	0,34	0,001	-1,504
Infrastructure – Attractions/activities	9,76	0,260	0,02	0,780	0,073
Location – Safety/security	11,66	0,273	0,43	0,001	1,974
Location – Value/cost	10,67	0,264	0,22	0,001	0,986
Location – Weather	7,77	0,252	0,45	0,001	-1,914
Location – Attractions/activities	9,52	0,255	0,04	0,515	-0,167
Safety – Value/costs	7,86	0,299	0,37	0,001	-1,824
Safety – Weather	6,01	0,271	0,81	0,001	-3,672
Safety – Attractions/activities	6,96	0,290	0,56	0,001	-2,718
Value cost– Weather	6,85	0,258	0,65	0,001	-2,835
Value/cost – Attractions/activities	7,84	0,272	0,41	0,001	-1,843
Weather – Attractions/activities	10,72	0,246	0,25	0,001	1,035
Test Value = 9.6826					

Table 5.13 indicates a large effect (practical significant difference) for accessibility vs. safety / security ($d = 0.71$) and safety / security vs. weather ($d=0.81$). In both cases the means indicate that respondents consider safety / security as the more important. More specifically, when comparing accessibility to safety / security ($m = 12.75$) it is considered as strongly important and when considering safety / security vs. weather it is considered as strongly to very strongly important, with safety/security as important.

Medium effects (practically visible differences) are indicated for infrastructure vs. safety / security ($d=0.61$) and value / cost vs. weather ($d=0.65$). This again indicates that safety / security is considered as the more important attribute ($m = 12.25$) at moderate to strong. In the case of value / cost vs. weather it is evident that value / cost is considered as more important than weather ($m = 6.01$) at strong to very strong importance.

Thus when considering all the different comparisons against the test value, i.e. the grand mean of the whole section, it is clear that safety / security played the bigger role as three of the four large or medium effects are involved.

Table 5.14 depicts the one sample t-test (Cohen *d*) for the conference services (sub- factors).

Table 5.14: Conference services

CONFERENCE SERVICES	Mean	Std. Error Mean	Effect size	P value	Mean diff
Entertainment – Program	12,91	0,227	0,78	0,001	2,955
Entertainment – Quality of food	12,04	0,225	0,55	0,001	2,084
Entertainment – Conference image	11,40	0,258	0,34	0,001	1,440
Entertainment – Value/cost	12,72	0,221	0,75	0,001	2,761
Entertainment – Accommodation	12,43	0,218	0,68	0,001	2,466
Entertainment – Size of conference	10,35	0,273	0,09	0,153	0,390
Program – Quality of food	8,26	0,308	0,33	0,001	-1,702
Program – Conference image	7,99	0,300	0,39	0,001	-1,966
Program – Value/cost	9,37	0,296	0,12	0,049	-0,585
Program – Accommodation	8,99	0,294	0,20	0,001	-0,973
Program – Size of conference	7,48	0,282	0,53	0,001	-2,477
Quality of food – Conference image	9,39	0,282	0,12	0,043	-0,573
Quality of food – Value/cost	11,06	0,264	0,25	0,001	1,103
Quality of food – Accommodation	10,70	0,251	0,18	0,003	0,745
Quality of food – Size of conference	9,32	0,285	0,13	0,027	-0,636
Conference image – Value/cost	10,76	0,281	0,17	0,005	0,802
Conference image – Accommodation	10,32	0,279	0,08	0,192	0,365
Conference image – Size of conference	8,58	0,260	0,32	0,001	-1,380
Value/cost – Accommodation	8,12	0,286	0,39	0,001	-1,843
Value/cost – Size of conference	7,62	0,288	0,49	0,001	-2,339
Accommodation – Size of conference	8,13	0,283	0,39	0,001	-1,829
Test Value = 9.9588					

Table 5.14 indicates a large effect (practical significant difference) for entertainment vs program ($d=78$) as well as entertainment vs value / cost ($d=75$) with program ($m=12.91$) and value / cost ($m=12.72$) indicating moderate to strong importance.

Medium effects (practically visible differences) are indicated for entertainment and accommodation ($d=0.68$) with accommodation as the more important attribute ($m=12.43$) at moderate to strong level of importance.

Thus when considering all the different comparisons against the test value, i.e. the grand mean of the whole section, it is clear that value / cost, program and accommodation are the most important. Table 5.15 depicts the one sample t-test (Cohen d) for the conference venue facilities (sub-factors).

Table 5.15: Conference venue facilities

CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES	Mean	Std. Error Mean	Effect size	P value	Mean diff
Venue design – Advanced technology	11,41	4,433	0,32	0,001	1,410
Venue design – Free Wi-Fi	12,78	4,157	0,67	0,001	2,787
Venue design – Service quality	12,76	3,835	0,72	0,001	2,761
Venue design – Aircon/heating	11,38	4,361	0,32	0,001	1,385
Venue design – Facilities/services	11,93	4,078	0,47	0,001	1,932
Venue design – Ambience	10,84	4,086	0,20	0,001	0,837
Advance technology – Free Wi-Fi	10,59	4,949	0,12	0,046	0,596
Advanced technology – Service quality	10,93	4,779	0,20	0,001	0,936
Advanced technology – Aircon/heating	9,58	5,027	0,08	0,172	-0,417
Advanced technology – Facilities/services	10,07	4,797	0,01	0,815	0,068
Advanced technology – Ambience	8,80	4,739	0,25	0,001	-1,199
Free Wi-Fi – Service quality	9,81	4,977	0,04	0,541	-0,184
Free Wi-Fi – Aircon/heating	8,71	4,954	0,26	0,001	-1,289
Free Wi-Fi – Facilities/services	9,30	4,951	0,14	0,020	-0,699
Free Wi-Fi – Ambience	8,09	5,059	0,38	0,001	-1,907
Service quality – Aircon/heating	7,76	4,745	0,47	0,001	-2,234
Service quality – Facilities/services	8,69	4,724	0,28	0,001	-1,311
Service quality – Ambience	7,72	4,616	0,49	0,001	-2,279
Aircon/heating – Facilities/services	10,58	4,397	0,13	0,030	0,581

CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES	Mean	Std. Error Mean	Effect size	P value	Mean diff
Aircon/heating – Ambience	9,53	4,481	0,11	0,083	-0,471
Facilities/services – Ambience	8,13	4,533	0,41	0,001	-1,863
Test Value = 9.9980					

Table 5.15 indicates a large effect (practical significant difference) for venue design vs service quality ($d = 0.72$) with the mean value significantly higher than the grand mean of 9.9980.

Medium effects (practically visible differences) are indicated for venue design vs free Wi-Fi ($d=0.67$) with service quality ($m=12.78$) a moderate to strong importance.

Thus when considering all the different comparisons against the test value, i.e. the grand mean of the whole section, it is clear that service quality played the bigger role.

Table 5.16 depicts the one sample t-test (Cohen d) for the general conference attributes (sub-factors).

Table 5.16: General conference attributes

GENERAL CONF ATTRIBUTES	Mean	Std. Error Mean	Effect size	P value	Mean diff
Political stability – Economic stability	8,82	4,641	0,09	0,154	-0,401
Political stability – Community engagement	9,08	4,881	0,03	0,651	-0,134
Political stability – Promotion of business tourism	8,71	5,073	0,10	0,099	-0,507
Political stability – Environmental practices	9,61	4,739	0,08	0,175	0,393
Economic stability – Community engagement	8,92	4,620	0,06	0,291	-0,296
Economic stability – Promotion of business tourism	8,74	4,810	0,10	0,099	-0,481
Economic stability – Environmental practices	9,87	4,548	0,14	0,019	0,650
Community engagement – Promotion of business tourism	8,82	4,619	0,09	0,160	-0,396
Community engagement – Environmental practices	9,42	4,453	0,04	0,461	0,199
Promotion of business tourism – Environmental practices	10,16	4,499	0,21	0,001	0,943
Test Value = 9.2186					

According to Table 5.16 there are no practical significances, thus the one is not more important than the other.

5.5 IN-DEPTH DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES

Section B of the questionnaire focused on the important attributes in conferencing identified through the qualitative data and the work of Crouch and Ritchie (2003), Hassan (2000), Dwyer and Kim (2010) and Heath (2000). A 9-point intensity of relative importance scale was used to rate the conference attributes. The scaling was indicated as follows: (1 = Equal importance; 2 = Equal to moderate; 3 = Moderate importance; 4 = Moderate to strong; 5 = Strong importance; 6 = Strong to very strong; 7 = Very strong importance; 8 = Very strong to extreme; 9 = Extreme importance).

5.5.1 Descriptive results for conference attributes (main factors and sub-factors)

The descriptive findings in the tables represent the conference attributes as follows: (a) Conference attributes (b) Destination elements (c) Conference services (d) Conference venue facilities (e) General conference attributes. The findings of the descriptive results correlate with the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) results discussed in detail later in the chapter.

Table 5.17: Conference attributes (Main Factors)

B	ATTRIBUTE	Extreme importance	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Equal	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Extreme importance	ATTRIBUTE	MEAN	STD DEV
		11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17			
14	Destination elements	3.59	3.5	7.3	7.6	4.2	3.5	3.1	1.0	14.6	1.0	3.5	5.6	10.8	11.5	11.5	4.5	3.5	Conference services	9.85	4,768
15	Destination elements	1.4	2.8	5.9	6.9	4.5	2.8	4.1	1.0	16.2	2.4	4.8	6.6	10.0	7.2	12.1	4.1	7.2	Conference venue facilities	10.32	4,558
16	Destination elements	1.8	2.5	4.9	6.7	5.6	2.8	2.5	0.4	19.0	2.5	5.6	5.6	8.1	10.9	7.7	7.0	6.3	General conference attributes	10.33	4,517
17	Conference services	2.1	3.5	8.4	5.2	4.5	3.1	4.2	4.2	19.9	4.2	1.7	2.4	7.7	10.5	9.1	4.9	4.5	Conference venue facilities	9.65	4,577
18	Conference services	2.1	3.8	5.2	5.5	8.3	3.8	3.8	4.5	17.6	2.8	3.1	4.5	7.3	9.7	8.3	4.8	4.8	General conference attributes	9.64	4,537
19	Conference venue facilities	2.5	4.6	4.9	4.6	5.6	4.6	1.8	2.8	23.5	3.5	3.2	6.3	6.7	8.4	8.1	4.6	4.6	General conference attributes	9.68	4,437

*missing data average of 5% for B14-B19.

The following clarifies the main attributes: **Destination elements include** accessibility, infrastructure, location, safety, value, weather, attractions and activities; **Conference services include** entertainment, program, quality of food, image, cost, accommodation and size of conference; **Conference venue facilities include** design, technology, service quality, air conditioning/heating, facilities and ambience; **General conference attributes include** political stability, economic stability, community engagement, promotion of business tourism and environmental practices. From Table 5.17 it can be seen that although the majority of the delegates rated the importance of destination elements and conference services as equal, the higher percentage of importance falls within the conference venue facilities domain and the conference services domain.

To represent the above graphically, Figure 5.4 indicates the boxplot for Conference attributes (main factors).

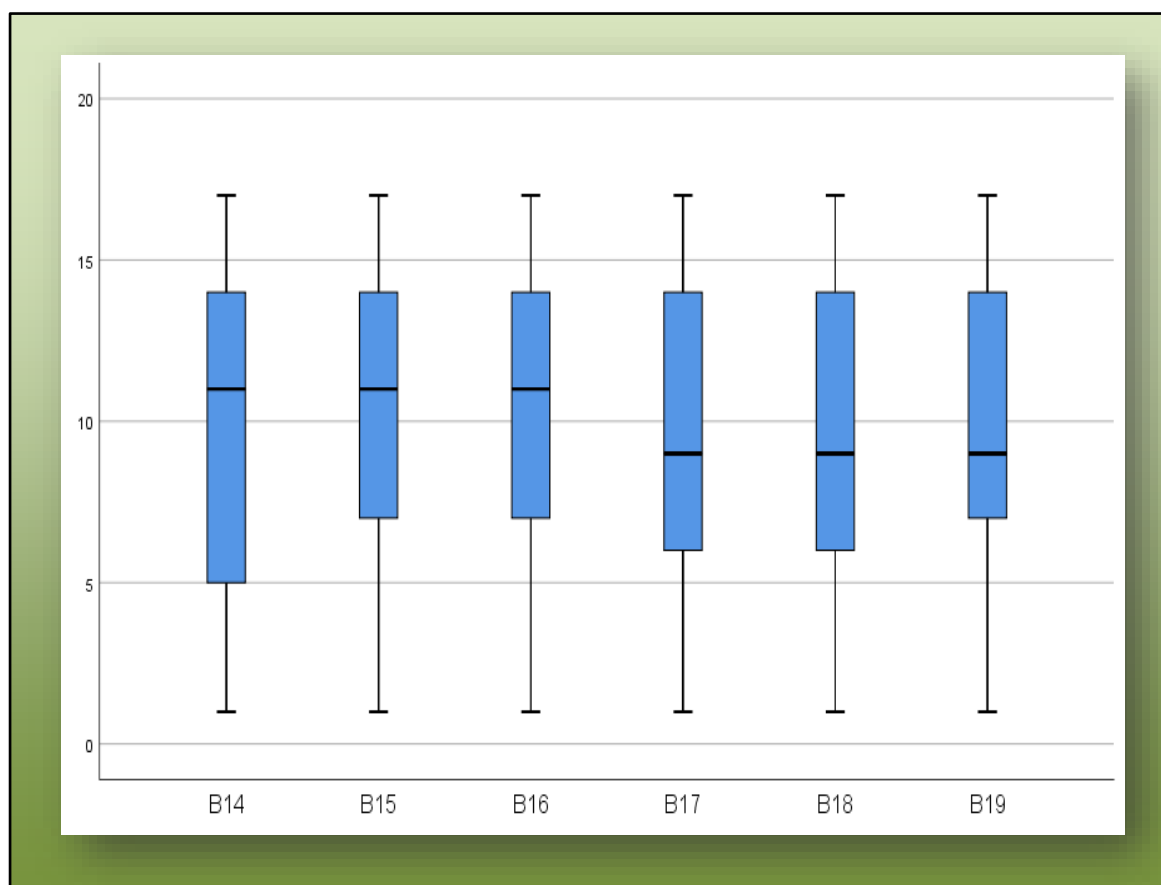


Figure 5.4: Boxplot for conference attributes (main factors)

In its simplest form, the boxplot represents five sample statistics that include the minimum, the lower quartile, the median, the upper quartile and the maximum. The length of the box is therefore the interquartile range of the sample. The box height indicates the variation or

spread, the solid line drawn through the box represents the median and the whiskers on the ends are the maximum (top) and minimum (bottom) of the data. The 0 – 20 represents the scale. B14 – B16 had more or less the same median and B17 – B18 also had similar medians, but lower than the other three. (See Appendix 5 for boxplots for each of the sub-factors (C - F) and a summary boxplot of all sub-factors.) These boxplots provide a graphic summary of the following results and interpretations:

Table 5.18(a) Destination elements

C	ATTRIBUTE	Extreme importance	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Equal	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Extreme importance	ATTRIBUTE	MEAN	STD DEV
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17			
20	Access- sibility	4.9	3.5	2.8	5.6	7.0	5.6	2.4	2.1	23.3	4.5	4.2	3.8	8.0	6.3	5.9	6.6	4.5	Infra- structure	9,47	4,526
21	Access- sibility	2.8	1.4	2.8	2.8	1.1	3.9	2.5	3.5	23.0	5.0	4.6	2.8	9.6	9.6	7.4	9.6	7.4	Location	10,92	4,223
22	Access- sibility	3.9	0.4	1.8	2.1	1.1	1.1	0.7	0.7	11.3	2.5	4.6	5.6	11.3	8.5	13.0	8.8	22.9	Safety/ security	12,75	4,292
23	Access- sibility	2.1	1.4	1.4	1.7	2.4	1.4	3.1	1.7	12.9	3.8	5.2	7.7	10.5	7.3	12.2	14.0	10.8	Value/cost	12,08	4,102
24	Access- sibility	4.2	2.8	6.6	8.0	10.8	7.7	3.1	4.9	14.3	3.1	1.4	5.2	5.9	6.3	5.6	4.9	4.9	Weather	8,73	4,657
25	Access- sibility	3.2	3.6	4.3	3.2	4.6	5.4	1.4	4.6	17.1	2.5	6.1	8.6	7.9	6.8	8.6	5.0	7.1	Attractions / activities	10,15	4,510
26	Infra- structure	2.1	1.4	4.5	2.8	4.5	3.5	2.1	3.5	23.4	2.8	4.9	7.0	9.4	5.9	7.3	8.0	6.6	Location	10,50	4,244
27	Infra- structure	2.1	1.8	1.4	2.8	1.4	1.1	1.1	1.4	15.5	2.1	4.6	7.7	10.6	9.9	9.9	10.2	16.5	Safety/ security	12,25	4,184
28	Infra- structure	2.1	1.1	3.5	2.5	1.8	2.1	3.2	2.8	15.1	3.2	5.3	7.4	13.4	8.8	9.5	10.9	7.4	Value/ cost	11,46	4,142
29	Infra- structure	4.2	3.2	7.4	11.6	7.7	6.7	6.3	4.2	17.5	3.2	1.8	3.5	7.4	4.2	5.6	2.8	2.8	Weather	8,18	4,377
30	Infra- structure	2.5	2.1	3.9	6.0	5.3	7.1	2.8	4.6	19.9	5.0	3.5	5.3	5.3	8.2	7.4	6.0	5.0	Attractions / activities	9,76	4,366

C	ATTRIBUTE	Extreme importance	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Equal	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Extreme importance	ATTRIBUTE	MEAN	STD DEV
31	Location	3,2	2,5	2,1	3,9	3,2	1,8	1,4	0,7	15,1	1,4	6,0	6,0	9,8	8,1	10,2	9,8	15,1	Safety/ security	11,66	4,605
32	Location	2,5	3,2	.2	4,9	3,2	4,2	2,1	1,4	16,2	3,2	6,0	7,7	11,3	7,0	9,5	7,7	6,7	Value/cost	10,67	4,450
33	Location	3,5	4,2	7,7	11,6	11,6	8,1	4,9	3,5	18,6	2,5	2,1	3,2	4,9	2,8	5,6	3,2	2,1	Weather	7,77	4,259
34	Location	3,2	2,8	3,9	5,3	7,1	3,6	3,2	4,6	22,8	4,3	3,9	4,6	6,8	8,2	9,3	3,2	3,2	Attractions / activities	9,52	4,280
35	Safety	11,2	7,2	6,9	6,9	7,6	4,7	2,9	3,3	18,8	2,5	1,8	1,8	4,0	5,4	6,2	5,4	3,3	Value/cost	7,86	4,974
36	Safety	16,3	12,8	7,1	10,3	10,6	5,3	6,4	3,2	10,3	1,1	1,8	1,4	2,1	3,5	2,8	2,5	2,5	Weather	6,01	4,548
37	Safety	14,0	10,4	6,8	8,2	6,8	3,9	7,9	3,6	13,6	3,6	1,4	1,1	1,8	5,4	4,7	4,7	2,2	Attractions / activities	6,96	4,842
38	Value/ cost	7,4	9,2	9,2	11,0	10,6	7,4	5,3	4,6	14,1	2,5	1,4	1,8	4,2	3,2	3,9	2,5	1,8	Weather	6,85	4,337
39	Value/ cost	3,9	10,0	8,9	6,4	7,1	5,7	6,8	4,6	18,2	2,9	1,8	4,3	2,9	4,6	4,3	4,6	2,9	Attractions / activities	7,84	4,548
40	Weather	2,8	2,8	2,1	2,8	2,1	3,5	1,8	4,9	19,1	4,6	3,2	9,2	10,6	10,2	9,2	6,4	4,6	Attractions / activities	10,72	4,144

*missing data average of 6% for C20-C40

When reviewing the complete table (Table 5.18(a)), it is evident that when compared to the other elements, safety and security ranked as of extreme importance for conferences. A destination competitiveness study conducted by Lubbe (2015), found that safety and security appear to be an important factor relating to South Africa's competitiveness, hence the need for policy makers to address the issue. This bears relevance in that when delegates consider a conference, the safety at the destination will be a top priority.

The least important attribute considered by delegates attending a conference is the weather. It could be assumed that leisure tourists would be more prone to considering the weather and climate than the business traveller. This opens up new opportunities to deal with seasonality in South Africa.

Accessibility of the destination ranked 6th overall, with weather the last ranking of the destination element attributes. This is interesting in that a destination competitiveness study conducted by Crouch (2007:10) found weather and accessibility to be amongst the main sub-factors with high importance, thus indicating that although destination competitiveness and conference competitiveness display similar attributes, they are not necessarily ranked or prioritised the same.

Location was ranked in the middle of the destination element attributes, indicating that it was a consideration, but not a main priority. Du Plessis (2015:9) found that location, although affecting destination competitiveness, cannot be changed or influenced. The value/cost of the destination was the second ranked priority to safety, indicating that delegates will consider the value / cost and price factors associated with the destination; in other words, is the destination affordable and reasonably priced? This is consistent with the destination competitiveness study conducted by Crouch (2007:32). Crouch (2007:32) contends that the cost is associated with global forces and encompasses the cost of transportation to and from the destination and at the destination, the exchange rate and the cost of goods and services at the destination. In South African studies conducted by Saayman and Saayman (2008:91), it was found that the cost value and price competitiveness were major indicators for inbound tourism to South Africa.

Table 5.18 (b): Destination elements

ATTRIBUTE		INTERPRETATION	MEAN	ATTRIBUTE	
Accessibility	←	Equal	9,47	→	Infrastructure
Accessibility		Equal to moderate	10,92	→	Location
Accessibility		Moderate to strong	12,75	→	Safety/security
Accessibility		Moderate to strong	12,08	→	Value/cost
Accessibility	←	Very strong to extreme	8,73		Weather
Accessibility		Equal to moderate	10,15	→	Attractions/activities
Infrastructure		Equal to moderate	10,50	→	Location
Infrastructure		Moderate to strong	12,25	→	Safety/security
Infrastructure		Moderate importance	11,46	→	Value/cost
Infrastructure	←	Very strong to extreme	8,18		Weather
Infrastructure	←	Equal	9,76	→	Attractions/activities
Location		Moderate importance	11,66	→	Safety/security
Location		Equal to moderate	10,67	→	Value/cost
Location	←	Very strong importance	7,77		Weather
Location	←	Equal importance	9,52	→	Attractions/activities
Safety	←	Very strong importance	7,86		Value/cost
Safety	←	Strong to very strong	6,01		Weather
Safety	←	Strong to very strong	6,96		Attractions/activities
Value/cost	←	Strong to very strong	6,85		Weather
Value/cost	←	Very strong importance	7,84		Attractions/activities
Weather		Equal to moderate	10,72	→	Attractions/activities

Table 5.18(b) indicates that when assessing pairwise comparisons, *accessibility*, *location*, *safety and security*, *value / cost* and *attractions / activities* were considered more important. On the other hand, against *infrastructure* *accessibility* was of equal importance and against *weather* it was considered more important. In the assessment of *infrastructure* it was clear that *location*, *safety*, *value / cost* and *attractions / activities* were considered more important but against *weather* and *infrastructure*, it was more important. When assessing *location*,

safety and security, value / cost and attractions were more important; however, in terms of weather it was less important than location. Clearly, safety stands out as more important when paired with the other attributes. Value and cost are more important than weather and attractions / activities with attractions are also more important than weather. It shows once again that safety is of paramount importance.

Table 5.19(a): Conference services

D	ATTRIBUTE	Extreme importance	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Equal	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Extreme importance	ATTRIBUTE	MEAN	STD DEV
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17			
41	Enter-tainment	0,7	1,1	0,7	1,8	1,8	1,1	1,4	0,7	13,2	2,5	7,1	5,7	8,9	10,4	8,2	16,1	18,6	Program	12,21	3,798
42	Enter-tainment	0,4	1,4	2,1	0,7	1,4	1,4	2,5	1,8	21,3	3,9	5,0	4,6	10,3	11,3	9,2	12,4	10,3	Quality of food	12,04	3,775
43	Enter-tainment	1,8	1,4	2,2	2,2	6,5	2,9	2,2	1,8	14,0	4,7	5,8	5,4	9,0	10,8	11,2	7,2	11,2	Conference image	11,40	4,296
44	Enter-tainment	0,7	1,1	1,4	1,1	2,2	1,4	1,4	0,7	11,9	1,8	6,1	6,8	10,8	13,7	13,7	13,7	11,5	Value/cost	12,72	3,679
45	Enter-tainment	0,0	2,1	1,8	0,7	1,8	1,1	1,8	0,4	14,6	2,5	7,5	8,6	10,4	11,1	12,9	13,9	8,9	Accommodation	12,43	3,652
46	Enter-tainment	2,5	1,8	3,2	5,8	7,9	4,7	1,8	2,5	15,5	3,2	5,8	5,4	8,3	7,2	9,7	8,6	6,1	Size of conference	10,35	4,544
47	Program	7,5	8,2	8,9	5,7	7,5	7,1	4,6	2,1	13,2	1,4	2,5	2,5	5,7	4,6	5,7	6,1	6,4	Quality of food	8,26	5,160
48	Program	5,0	4,3	4,3	7,6	6,8	4,0	6,1	2,9	16,5	3,2	2,5	2,2	5,0	6,5	8,6	8,3	6,1	Conference image	7,99	5,003
49	Program	5,1	5,1	5,8	5,8	8,3	4,0	6,9	4,0	19,1	1,4	2,5	1,4	5,1	4,7	7,2	6,9	6,9	Value/cost	9,37	4,927
50	Program	6,5	8,3	9,0	11,9	7,9	5,8	4,3	4,0	16,5	1,8	1,1	2,9	4,0	3,6	5,4	3,6	3,6	Accommodation	8,99	4,889
51	Program	2,9	4,7	5,8	6,2	8,0	4,7	2,5	4,0	14,2	5,1	5,1	5,5	5,5	9,1	6,2	4,4	6,2	Size of conference	7,48	4,694
52	Quality of food	3,3	1,8	2,6	2,9	2,2	3,6	2,2	4,4	16,8	4,7	4,4	4,7	7,7	9,9	13,5	7,7	7,7	Conference image	9,39	4,670

D	ATTRIBUTE	Extreme importance	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Equal	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Extreme importance	ATTRIBUTE	MEAN	STD DEV
53	Quality of food	1,8	2,9	3,2	3,2	2,2	2,2	2,5	1,8	26,0	4,0	4,7	6,5	6,1	11,9	7,6	6,5	6,9	Value/cost	11,06	4,374
54	Quality of food	2,9	5,1	7,2	7,6	5,1	4,3	3,6	3,6	14,9	3,3	5,4	4,7	6,2	8,3	6,9	6,2	4,7	Accommodation	10,70	4,177
55	Quality of food	3,6	2,2	4,3	3,3	4,0	2,9	3,6	1,4	18,1	4,0	4,3	3,3	8,7	6,2	12,0	8,7	9,4	Size of conference	9,32	4,740
56	Conference image	2,2	2,5	6,8	4,0	4,3	5,0	4,0	3,6	12,6	5,4	4,0	5,4	5,4	9,7	9,4	10,4	5,4	Value/cost	10,76	4,673
57	Conference image	1,8	4,3	8,2	6,1	10,4	6,1	4,6	3,9	22,5	2,9	2,5	3,9	4,6	3,9	**6,4	4,6	3,2	Accommodation	10,32	4,653
58	Conference image	6,1	6,9	10,5	6,1	6,5	3,6	5,1	7,2	15,9	1,8	4,7	4,0	3,2	3,6	5,4	5,4	4,0	Size of conference	8,58	4,346
59	Value/cost	7,5	6,5	14,0	6,8	6,8	5,4	3,6	5,0	16,8	1,4	2,9	2,5	3,9	3,6	4,7	4,3	4,3	Accommodation	8,12	4,760
60	Value/cost	6,5	7,2	7,6	5,8	7,9	5,4	5,4	4,0	18,8	3,6	2,9	2,5	2,9	6,5	4,0	4,3	4,7	Size of conference	7,62	4,804
61	Accommodation	3,2	2,2	1,4	5,4	0,7	1,8	2,2	1,8	18,4	2,5	5,1	4,3	8,7	9,0	15,9	7,2	10,1	Size of conference	8,13	4,715

*missing data average of 8% for D41-D61

Table 5.19(a) shows that value / cost and program are of strong importance to delegates. This is consistent with the findings depicted in Table 5.18(a), and further indicates that delegates not only consider value for money at the destination but are also price sensitive to the conference costs. Furthermore, according to Crouch (2007:25), value and cost were ranked as the 6th most important attribute from a total of 36 attributes. The lowest ranked attribute was entertainment. Interestingly, in Crouch's (2007) study of destination competitiveness, entertainment was ranked 7th out of 36 attributes, highlighting that visitors consider the entertainment at a destination as a high priority. It could be assumed that in the case of a business tourist or delegate more emphasis is placed on the need for networking, engaging and acquiring knowledge (purpose of attending a conference) rather than the entertainment. Another important observation is that conference tourism literature suggests that entertainment is considered part of the program. The ranking for entertainment was the lowest, yet program featured the 2nd highest on the ranking of the conference service attributes. Program and accommodation were ranked second and third respectively. This shows that delegates will look at the program content before deciding to attend the conference. The program content reflects the proceedings of the conference (i.e. keynote speakers, workshops, conference content, etc.). The delegates will often use the program to judge whether attending that specific conference would meet their objectives. In this study, many of the delegates said that their main purpose for attending a conference was for academic purposes and to gain knowledge. Many academics would therefore look at the program lineup and guest speakers/ keynote speakers to decide whether they will gain knowledge from the conference or be able to use it as an opportunity to network with leading specialists in their field of study. Quality of food was ranked fourth; although it was not one of the highest rankings, it was definitely a consideration for delegates. Delegates today are becoming more demanding in terms of special food requirements and focus on a healthy approach. Conference image and size of conference were of lower ranking, indicating that the delegates were not too concerned about the size of the conference. It could be assumed that the delegates in this study would consider the image of the conference, as many attended for academic purposes. Many of the academics indicated in the qualitative part of this study that they preferred to attend conferences that had received high recognition and offered a top class program to gain maximum benefit from the conference.

Table 5.19(b): Conference services

ATTRIBUTE			MEAN		ATTRIBUTE
Entertainment		Moderate to strong	12,21	➡	Program
Entertainment		Moderate to strong	12,04	➡	Quality of food
Entertainment		Moderate importance	11,40	➡	Conference image
Entertainment		Moderate to strong	12,72	➡	Value/cost
Entertainment		Moderate to strong	12,43	➡	Accommodation
Entertainment		Equal to moderate	10,35	➡	Size of conference
Program	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,26		Quality of food
Program	⬅	Very strong importance	7,99		Conference image
Program	⬅	Equal	9,37	➡	Value/cost
Program	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,99		Accommodation
Program	⬅	Very strong importance	7,48		Size of conference
Quality of food	⬅	Equal	9,39	➡	Conference image
Quality of food		Moderate importance	11,06	➡	Value/cost
Quality of food		Equal to moderate	10,70	➡	Accommodation
Quality of food	⬅	Equal	9,32	➡	Size of conference
Conference image		Equal to moderate	10,76	➡	Value/cost
Conference image		Equal to moderate	10,32	➡	Accommodation
Conference image	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,58		Size of conference
Value/cost	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,12		Accommodation
Value/cost	⬅	Very strong importance	7,62		Size of conference
Accommodation	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,13		Size of conference

Table 5.19(b) indicates that when assessing the pairwise comparison for conference services, *entertainment* does not feature against any of the attributes when paired and is therefore not considered important by the delegates. When assessing *program* it is considered more important than all other attributes with the exception of value / cost. *Quality of food*, on the other hand, is considered of equal importance to size of conference and conference image.

Conference image is deemed more important than size of conference with *value / cost* indicating importance in all attributes, thus concluding that *value / cost* is of priority to delegates, as can also be seen in Table 5.18(b).

Table 5.20 (a): Conference venue facilities

E	ATTRIBUTE	Extreme importance	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Equal	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Extreme importance	ATTRIBUTE	MEAN	STD DEV
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17			
62	Venue design	3,2	2,2	1,4	5,4	0,7	1,8	2,2	1,8	18,4	2,5	5,1	4,3	8,7	9,0	15,9	7,2	10,1	Advanced tech	11,41	4,433
63	Venue design	1,8	0,7	1,8	2,6	1,5	0,7	1,1	0,7	14,6	2,9	4,4	4,7	7,7	7,3	14,6	10,6	22,3	Free Wi-Fi	12,78	4,157
64	Venue design	2,2	1,5	1,5	0,7	0	0,4	0,4	0,7	16,4	3,3	4,0	5,1	10,9	10,2	14,6	15,3	12,8	Service quality	12,76	3,835
65	Venue design	1,8	1,5	4,0	2,6	4,0	2,2	1,8	1,8	17,2	2,9	5,5	6,2	8,0	9,5	11,7	8,8	10,6	Aircon/heating	11,38	4,361
66	Venue design	1,1	2,2	2,6	1,5	2,2	1,8	0,4	2,2	18,4	2,9	3,7	9,2	5,5	10,7	16,2	8,8	10,7	Facilities/services	11,93	4,078
67	Venue design	1,5	2,6	1,8	1,5	5,1	3,3	1,5	2,9	24,9	5,1	3,7	8,1	4,8	9,2	9,9	7,3	7,0	Ambience	10,84	4,086
68	Advanced tech	5,1	2,9	5,1	3,3	2,9	1,4	2,2	2,2	24,3	2,5	3,3	4,3	4,0	6,5	6,9	8,0	15,2	Free Wi-Fi	10,59	4,949
69	Advanced tech	5,5	2,6	2,9	4,4	2,6	0,7	1,1	1,5	19,5	2,6	6,3	5,1	5,9	9,2	9,9	9,9	10,3	Service quality	10,93	4,779
70	Advanced tech	6,3	6,3	3,3	6,3	5,1	2,6	1,8	2,9	19,1	2,9	4,0	6,6	5,5	3,3	8,5	5,9	9,6	Aircon/heating	9,58	5,027
71	Advanced tech	4,7	5,1	3,6	2,9	4,7	2,6	4,4	1,8	20,1	3,6	4,0	6,6	5,5	5,1	9,1	8,0	8,0	Facilities/services	10,07	4,797
72	Advanced tech	6,2	6,6	4,8	5,5	6,2	2,9	5,1	3,7	22,3	2,9	4,0	3,7	5,5	4,0	6,2	4,0	6,2	Ambience	8,80	4,739

E	ATTRIBUTE	Extreme importance	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Equal	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Extreme importance	ATTRIBUTE	MEAN	STD DEV
73	Free Wi-Fi	8,4	4,0	3,6	2,9	3,6	2,2	3,3	5,1	19,3	2,9	5,1	4,0	5,5	4,0	10,6	7,3	8,0	Service quality	9,81	4,977
74	Free Wi-Fi	7,6	7,6	8,0	3,6	3,6	2,5	5,1	4,4	19,6	2,5	2,9	3,3	8,0	5,1	6,2	2,9	6,9	Aircon/heating	8,71	4,954
75	Free Wi-Fi	8,4	5,1	5,5	3,3	3,3	2,9	3,3	5,5	19,3	4,4	3,3	3,3	7,3	4,4	8,0	6,2	6,6	Facilities/services	9,30	4,951
76	Free Wi-Fi	12,0	7,7	5,8	5,8	5,1	3,3	4,4	6,2	15,7	2,2	3,6	3,3	5,5	3,3	6,9	3,6	5,5	Ambience	8,09	5,059
77	Service quality	7,0	9,6	8,5	5,9	7,4	3,3	7,4	4,4	18,5	2,2	3,7	2,6	4,1	3,7	2,6	2,6	6,6	Aircon/heating	7,76	4,745
78	Service quality	6,6	7,7	6,3	2,9	4,8	2,9	4,4	5,1	25,7	2,2	2,9	2,9	3,7	6,3	5,5	5,5	4,4	Facilities/services	8,69	4,724
79	Service quality	6,6	9,1	9,1	5,5	5,8	5,8	7,3	3,3	21,9	1,8	2,2	2,9	3,3	3,3	4,4	2,9	4,7	Ambience	7,72	4,616
80	Aircon/heating	3,7	3,0	2,2	2,2	4,4	2,2	2,6	4,8	21,0	4,1	3,7	6,3	7,7	8,5	9,2	7,4	7,0	Facilities/services	10,58	4,397
81	Aircon/heating	4,0	4,4	4,7	3,3	4,0	5,1	4,7	4,7	22,2	4,4	2,9	4,0	6,5	8,7	6,5	4,4	5,5	Ambience	9,53	4,481
82	Facilities/services	4,4	6,9	6,9	7,6	9,1	4,7	4,4	4,0	25,1	2,5	1,5	1,8	4,0	4,0	4,4	3,3	5,5	Ambience	8,13	4,533

*missing data average of 9% for E62 –E82

It is evident from Table 5.20(a) that service quality, facilities and services and free Wi-Fi are the top three attributes of strong importance to delegates attending a conference. These highlight the need for venues to provide good quality venue facilities and services, as well as free Wi-Fi, to remain competitive. Crouch (2007:25) ranks service quality as 15th of the 36 attributes. Good venue facilities and services contribute to a conference environment and experience that fulfil delegates' expectations. The least important attribute for conference delegates was the venue design. Perhaps this could be because delegates are unaware of the intricate details involved when planning a conference and take venue design for granted. In terms of planning, venue design can either make or break a conference. The design relates to making the environment more conducive to a successful conference and to meeting the objectives of the conference. The venue design often sets the atmosphere and ambience of the conference and involves lighting, theme, colour, sound, etc. Delegates often do not understand the "behind the scenes" that takes place to make the perfect conference happen. Ambience and heating/air conditioning were not highly ranked, indicating that it was not a top priority. It could be said that should the heating or air conditioning not work, this could affect the service quality at the venue, which is considered a high priority for the delegates. Perhaps it could be assumed that the delegates expect the heating and air conditioning to be in working order at a venue, as a conference in an extremely cold or hot environment would not be conducive to the conference experience. Advanced technology is ranked last by the delegates. This is surprising, since free Wi-Fi is a top priority. Advanced technology is considered by industry stakeholders as a necessity to remain competitive in the conference industry.

Table 5.20(b): Conference venue facilities

ATTRIBUTE			MEAN		ATTRIBUTE
Venue design		Moderate importance	11,41	➡	Advanced technology
Venue design		Moderate to strong	12,78	➡	Free Wi-Fi
Venue design		Moderate to strong	12,76	➡	Service quality
Venue design		Moderate importance	11,38	➡	Aircon/heating
Venue design		Moderate importance	11,93	➡	Facilities/services
Venue design		Equal to moderate	10,84	➡	Ambience
Advanced technology		Equal to moderate	10,59	➡	Free Wi-Fi
Advanced technology		Equal to moderate	10,93	➡	Service quality
Advanced technology	⬅	Equal	9,58	➡	Aircon/heating
Advanced technology		Equal to moderate	10,07	➡	Facilities/services
Advanced technology	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,80		Ambience
Free Wi-Fi	⬅	Equal	9,81	➡	Service quality
Free Wi-Fi	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,71		Aircon/heating
Free Wi-Fi	⬅	Equal	9,30	➡	Facilities/services
Free Wi-Fi	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,09		Ambience
Service quality	⬅	Very strong importance	7,76		Aircon/heating
Service quality	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,69		Facilities/services
Service quality	⬅	Very strong importance	7,72		Ambience
Aircon/heating		Equal to moderate	10,58	➡	Facilities/services
Aircon/heating	⬅	Equal	9,53	➡	Ambience
Facilities/services	⬅	Very strong to extreme	8,13		Ambience

Table 5.20(b) depicts that when assessing the pair-wise comparison for conference venue facilities, *venue design* is not recognised as of great importance by the delegates and is of low importance compared to all other attributes. *Advanced technology* is also considered not important paired with all other attributes with the exception of ambience, which is equal to air conditioning and heating and more important than venue design. *Free Wi-Fi* was considered

important over all attributes with the exception of service quality and facilities / services where it was paired as equal. *Service quality* was deemed of high importance over all attributes. It can be concluded that service quality is of extreme importance to delegates.

Table 5.21 (a): General conference attributes

F	ATTRIBUTE	Extreme importance	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong importance	Very strong to extreme	Equal	Equal to moderate	Moderate importance	Moderate to strong	Strong importance	Strong importance	Strong to very strong	Very strong to extreme	Extreme importance	ATTRIBUTE	MEAN	STD DEV
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17			
83	Political stability	6,9	5,8	5,8	4,0	5,1	2,9	2,6	2,2	31,0	0,7	1,8	7,3	4,7	4,0	5,5	4,4	5,1	Economic stability	8,82	4,641
84	Political stability	6,3	7,0	4,4	5,9	5,9	3,3	3,7	1,5	21,3	1,1	3,7	5,1	7,0	4,8	8,5	6,3	4,4	Community Engagement	9,08	4,881
85	Political stability	8,8	5,8	6,2	7,3	5,8	2,9	3,3	3,6	17,2	2,6	4,7	2,2	4,7	5,1	8,4	5,8	5,5	Promotion of business tourism	8,71	5,073
86	Political stability	6,7	3,7	3,7	3,3	5,2	3,0	4,1	4,1	23,3	2,6	3,7	3,0	5,2	8,5	8,1	4,8	7,0	Environmental practices	9,61	4,739
87	Economic stability	4,4	4,0	5,5	9,2	6,2	5,1	2,6	4,0	20,9	1,8	4,8	5,9	5,1	4,4	5,9	4,8	5,5	Community Engagement	8,92	4,620
88	Economic stability	5,5	4,0	8,8	8,4	5,1	3,6	3,3	4,7	20,4	2,2	5,1	2,9	3,6	4,7	5,8	5,1	6,6	Promotion of business tourism	8,74	4,810
89	Economic stability	3,3	3,7	4,8	4,0	5,9	2,6	2,6	2,2	26,7	2,9	2,9	4,0	6,6	8,8	6,2	5,1	7,7	Environmental practices	9,87	4,548
90	Community engagement	5,2	3,7	5,9	7,7	6,6	5,2	2,6	4,1	25,1	2,2	3,0	3,0	2,6	5,5	8,5	4,8	4,4	Promotion of business tourism	8,82	4,619
91	Community engagement	4,4	3,7	5,5	4,4	4,0	3,3	2,6	3,7	30,4	2,2	2,6	2,9	6,2	8,1	7,0	4,0	5,1	Environmental practices	9,42	4,453

STD DEV	4,499
MEAN	10,16
ATTRIBUTE	Environmental practices
Extreme importance	5,9
Very strong to extreme	7,3
Strong to very strong	6,6
Strong importance	8,1
Strong importance	9,2
Moderate to strong	5,1
Moderate importance	3,7
Equal to moderate	3,7
Equal	26,0
Very strong to extreme	3,3
Very strong importance	1,8
Strong to very strong	1,1
Strong importance	1,5
Moderate to strong	4,4
Moderate importance	4,4
Equal to moderate	4,0
Extreme importance	4,0
ATTRIBUTE	Promotion of business tourism
F	92

*missing data average of 8% for F83 – F92

Table 5.21(a) reflects that environmental practices are of strong importance to delegates, indicating that delegates want to keep up with conference trends and would prefer attending a conference that conforms to the best environmental practices. These practices involve reducing negative environmental effects and conserving the environment by recycling, reducing energy usage and avoiding pollution. The second ranked general conference attribute was community engagement, indicating that delegates would like to see collaborative engagement with the community. The National Tourism Sector Strategy (SAT, 2011) addresses the need to embrace community engagement to achieve success within a tourism destination. All industry stakeholders should encourage responsible tourism and community participation. This can be achieved in a conference environment by including the local community, whether for entertainment at the conference, employment or making them part of the conference environment. Political and economic stability and the promotion of business tourism - although an external factor that cannot be controlled by the conference organisers - should be taken into consideration. Collaboration with government stakeholders is important for political and economical stability, as this will affect the attendance of delegates.

Table 5.21(b): General conference attributes

ATTRIBUTE			MEAN	ATTRIBUTE	
Political stability		Very strong to extreme	8,82		Economic stability
Political stability		Equal	9,08		Community engagement
Political stability		Very strong to extreme	8,71		Prom of business tourism
Political stability		Equal	9,61		Environmental practice
Economic stability		Very strong to extreme	8,92		Community engagement
Economic stability		Very strong to extreme	8,74		Prom of business tourism
Economic stability		Equal	9,87		Environmental practice
Community engagement		Very strong to extreme	8,82		Prom of bus tourism
Community engagement		Equal	9,42		Environmental practice
Promotion of business tourism		Equal to moderate	10,16		Environmental practice

Table 5.21(b) indicates that when assessing the pairwise comparison for general conference attributes, it can be concluded that *political stability* featured strongly and was equal to

environmental practices and community engagement. *Economic stability* was important and equal to environmental practices. However, *environmental practices* stand out the most and are deemed very important for conference delegates.

5.6 ANALYTIC HIERARCHY PROCESS (AHP)

Analytic hierarchy process (AHP), a technique developed by Saaty (1980), is used for the integration of multiple judgments for studying the decision-making process (Ho, 2006:211). According to Tsaur *et al.* (1997:976), this process consists of hierarchy construction, consistency verification and priority analysis involving a broad theory of measurement to reflect ratio scales from paired comparisons, thus reflecting the strength of preference of the participants or respondents. Furthermore, AHP is an example of a “heuristic algorithm”, a process used to solve mathematical challenges using a number of steps (as mentioned in chapter 4), building a ranking of decision items using comparisons between each pair of items. These paired comparisons will then provide weighted scores which measure the relative importance of items to one another.

The AHP process was used to assist in multi-criteria decision making based on the attributes of conference tourism. It recognises that all decisions can be structured in the form of a hierarchy or framework, where the main branches represent the main factors and the smaller branches, the sub-factors (Crouch, 2007:5). This procedure captures relative judgments in a consistent form (Kozak *et al.*, 2015:256; Chow & Luk, 2005:283). The quantitative data for this study was analysed using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP).

The scaling proposed for this study is that of Saaty (1980): a 9-point intensity of relative importance scale used to derive ratio scales from paired comparisons. Delegates were required to rate the importance of their preferred attribute (1 = Equal importance; 2 = Equal to moderate; 3 = Moderate importance; 4 = Moderate to strong; 5 = Strong importance; 6 = Strong to very strong; 7 = Very strong importance; 8 = Very strong to extreme; 9 = Extreme importance). For this study, the questionnaire was then recoded from 9 to 1 and 1 to 9 to 1 to 17 to assist the statistician with the formation of the pairwise comparisons. The coded results were entered into the AHP calculator (<https://bpmsg.com/ahp-online-calculator/>) which calculates the consistency ratio and weighting of the criteria (priorities and decision matrix). For the purpose of this study only the priority matrix has been indicated in the results. The following steps were applied:

5.6.1 AHP model ranking process

Step 1: The criteria are ranked, which is achieved by developing a prioritising matrix for the preferences amongst the criteria.

Step 2: The second step involves synthesis (as described in chapter 4). Here the attributes are judged based on the criteria. The priority matrix set for the main criteria for each attribute is developed using the same procedure as in the first step.

Step 3: The final step is developing an overall decision matrix for prioritisation of the attributes and the finalised score of the AHP ranking is determined.

In summary, once the alternatives have been compared with each other in terms of each one of the decision criteria and the individual priority vectors are determined, the synthesis step is taken (as described in chapter 4). The priority vectors become the columns of the decision matrix. The weights of the importance of the criteria are then determined using pairwise comparisons. Finally, given a decision matrix, the final priorities, denoted by A_i AHP, of the alternatives in terms of all the criteria combined, are determined according to the following formula:

$$A_i = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{a_{ij}}{w_j}, \text{ for } i = 1, 2, 3, \dots, M.$$

To develop the model, the AHP method requires a hierarchy structure to present the problem. The envisaged hierarchy for this study is reflected in chapter 4, Figure 4.12. Level one includes the overarching criteria (4 main factors), namely destination elements, conference services, conference venue facilities and general conference attributes. Level two comprises the 26 sub-factors. Factors represent attributes.

5.6.2 Analytic hierarchy priority results

The results for the weights of the criteria based on the pairwise comparison are indicated below. The pairwise comparison determines the relationship and therefore importance of criteria within the structure. The priorities refer to the resulting weights for the criteria based on the pairwise comparisons. Table 5.18 indicates the priorities for conference attributes, the main factors prioritised (B14 – B19). Note: Consistency ratio is an important characteristic of the AHP method and inconsistencies should not exceed 10% (cf.4.6.4.13). All categories are within this limit.

Table 5.22: Priorities for conference attributes (main factors)

Category		Priority	Rank
4	General conference attributes	39.1%	1
3	Conference venue facilities	27.6%	2
2	Conference services	19.5%	3
1	Destination elements	13.8%	4
Consistency ratio CR 4.4%			
Number of comparisons 6			

The above information reveals that general conference attributes are ranked as the most important factor with a 39.1% priority. General conference attributes include (in no specific order of preference) political stability, economic stability, community engagement, promotion of business tourism and environmental practices. Interestingly, this proves that business tourists will consider the political and economic stability of a destination when selecting a conference. Furthermore, community engagement, promotion of business tourism and environmental practices such as “greening” are sought. The second ranking was conference venue facilities (27.6% priority) which include (in no specific order of preference) design, technology, service quality, air conditioning / heating, facilities and ambience. For a delegate it is important to attend a conference that provides a comfortable environment. The third ranking was conference services (19.5% priority) which relates to entertainment, program, quality of food, image, cost, accommodation and size of conference (in no particular order of preference) and the fourth ranking (in no specific order of preference) relates to destination elements (13.8% priority) which include accessibility, infrastructure, location, value and cost, safety and security, weather and attractions and activities. Each of these attributes will be discussed in more detail in the sub-factor rankings.

The sub-factors for the priorities listed above are discussed below. Table 5.23 indicates the priorities for general conference attributes, as this was prioritised as the top main factor.

Table 5.23: Priorities for general conference attributes (sub-factors)

Category		Priority	Rank
5	Environmental practices	29.7%	1
3	Community engagement	19.8%	2
1	Political stability	16.8%	3
2	Economic stability	16.8%	3
4	Promotion of business tourism	16.8%	3
Consistency ratio CR 1.3%			
Number of comparisons 10			

The first priority of the main factors is the general conference attributes. The above information reveals that the top priority amongst delegates is environmental practices (29.7% priority), indicating that delegates are aware of the value of nature and the willingness to preserve and protect. This is, however, surprising since many of the industry stakeholders did not rate environmental practices as high priority and said that “green” conferences were expensive to organise. The second priority (19.8%) is community engagement. Delegates deem it important for conference stakeholders to involve the community. The following three categories (political stability, economic stability and the promotion of business tourism) are equal (16.8%) and share the third place. It is of concern that delegates do consider the political and economic stability of a destination and will think twice about visiting a country that has instability in either or both spheres. These findings are consistent with those from the study of Du Plessis (2015), which stated that economic and political stability was a strong factor contributing to competitiveness in South Africa. However, it should be noted that Webster and Ivanov (2014:137) caution that attracting more tourists to a stable economic environment does not necessarily increase the economic growth of a destination.

Table 5.24 indicates the priorities for conference venue facilities.

Table 5.24: Priorities for conference venue facilities (sub-factors)

Category		Priority	Rank
4	Service quality	24.1%	1
6	Facilities / services	21.4%	2
3	Free Wi-Fi	18.3%	3
7	Ambience	12.0%	4
5	Aircon / heating	11.6%	5
2	Advanced technology	8.7%	6
1	Venue Design	3.9%	7
Consistency ratio CR 3.4%			
Number of comparisons 21			

The second ranked important factor was the conference venue facilities. The first priority of these attributes included service quality as the most important with a priority of 24.1%. Crouch and Ritchie (2010:1062) state that the importance of service experience in destination management has been well recognised, as tourists are buying experiences. The same applies to the conference industry; when attending a conference, the delegates are “buying” an experience of the conference and expect service quality in all spheres. The second priority was the facilities and services at the conference with 21.4%. This indicates that the delegates have high expectations of the facilities and services offered at the conference venue. The study of Crouch and Louviere (2004:6) found that venue facilities and services were “highly significant factors” in convention site selection. Free Wi-Fi was considered the 3rd priority (18.3%), indicating that free Wi-Fi is an important factor in conferencing. This is an important consideration for South African venues and conference organisers, as many of the venues in South Africa charge a fee for Wi-Fi. The ambience and air conditioning / heating provided by the venue were rated as 4th and 5th (12% and 11.6%) respectively. The last priorities, surprisingly, were advanced technology with 8.7% and venue design with 3.9%. One would expect that the delegates would embrace new technology in the conferencing environment as it enhances efficiency and speed. Technology, very much like “greening” which was rated as a very high priority, is a current trend.

Table 5.25 indicates the priorities for conference services.

Table 5.25: Priorities for conference services (sub -factors)

Category		Priority	Rank
5	Value / cost	25.8%	1
2	Program	21.6%	2
6	Accommodation	19.4%	3
3	Quality of food	10.0%	4
4	Conference image	9.8%	5
7	Size of conference	9.4%	6
1	Entertainment	4.0%	7
Consistency ratio CR 1.8%			
Number of comparisons 21			

The third priority of the main factors is conference services, within which value and cost of a conference are top priorities for delegates (25.8%). This is consistent with the study of Crouch (2007) listing cost and value as the 6th most importantly ranked attribute. Furthermore, the relevance would be that the delegates expect value for their money regardless of the fact that 77% of the delegates indicated that their conferences were paid for by their employers. The delegates also indicated that value / cost was important for them at the destination. The model of Zhang and Leung (2007), confirms that a major consideration for delegates attending a conference is the monetary and time cost perspective. The second priority for conference venue facilities was program (21.6%), indicating that the delegates would attend a conference based on the contents of the program. This could be owing to the fact that most of the delegates indicated that their main reason for attending conferences was for academic purposes. It could imply that the delegates would select a conference based on the keynote speakers and content of the program. The third priority (19.4%) was the accommodation, indicating that delegates would look at the accommodation provided when selecting a conference. A study conducted by Lee and King (2010:541), found that it was important for accommodation to remain competitive in the realms of availability, high quality, authenticity and comfort. The fourth priority (10.0%) was the quality of food, indicating that delegates do consider the type of food and the quality. In the study of Crouch and Louviere (2004:4), food quality scored the highest rating in terms of convention site selection attributes, with accommodation the second highest, indicating that these priorities are consistent. In a similar competitiveness study conducted by Du Plessis (2015:9), it was established that quality and variety of food were considered one of the top components contributing to tourism competitiveness in South Africa. Interestingly, this was not a priority in a similar destination

competitiveness study conducted by Du Plessis (2002). It seems that food is becoming a favourable consideration with the delegates of today. Conference image and size of conference had 9.8% and 9.4% respectively; this could be because many academics use conferences to deliver papers and therefore would select a conference that has a good image, is well represented and is of a fair scale. The last and lowest ranking, surprisingly, was entertainment (4%). In the competitiveness study of Du Plessis (2015:10) the entertainment attribute had a low value. Contrary to this, Heath (2002) and Lee and King (2010) in their destination competitiveness studies found that activities, events, shopping and entertainment were important attributes for destination competitiveness. From a conferencing perspective, there would, however, be less emphasis on the entertainment as the primary reason for attending the conference, as it is for business purposes and not leisure. These results could also be due to the large number of academic delegates in this study.

Table 5.26 indicates the destination elements.

Table 5.26: Priorities for destination elements (sub-factors)

Category		Priority	Rank
4	Safety / security	33.8%	1
5	Value / cost	22.4%	2
7	Attractions / activities	14.0%	3
3	Location	11.5%	4
2	Infrastructure	7.0%	5
1	Accessibility	5.7%	6
6	Weather	5%	7
Consistency ratio CR 3.4%			
Number of comparisons 21			

The fourth priority of main factors is destination elements. These rankings pertain to conference destination attributes. Importantly, many of these attributes are consistent with high ratings scored in the destination competitiveness studies of Crouch (2007); Ritchie and Crouch (2010); Lee and King (2010); Dwyer and Kim (2010); and Du Plessis (2015). Safety and security were listed as the top priority attribute within this factor (33.8%). Moreover, Crouch and Ritchie (1999:150) state that “nothing can influence the choices of travelers more powerfully and patently as concerns over safety and security”. A further study of Crouch (2007) rated safety and security as fifth in overall importance in destination competitiveness,

stating that safety and security is an important attribute in both conferencing and destination competitiveness. The second priority, value / cost (22.4%), is once again a high priority in conferencing as well as destination competitiveness. Crouch (2007) ranked cost and value as 6th overall in destination competitiveness. The third priority of conference venue facilities was attractions and activities (14%), indicating that delegates do consider the attractions and activities on offer at the conference destination. Note that in destination competitiveness (Crouch, 2007) it was rated as first in importance overall. The delegates rated location (11.5%) and infrastructure (7%) of the conference as 4th and 5th. In the study of Crouch (2007), location and infrastructure were both rated simultaneously, with location 10th and infrastructure 11th overall in destination competitiveness ranking. Although the delegates may not have given high priority to infrastructure, from an organising perspective it is essential to improve and expand infrastructure, otherwise other destinations could be selected for larger and newer conference venues (Happ, 2015:115). The second last ranking was accessibility with 5.7%, indicating that this was not necessarily an issue with delegates - perhaps because most conference destinations are fairly accessible. The study of Crouch (2007) found accessibility in their destination competitiveness report to be much more important. The last ranking was weather, the least important with a priority of 5%, indicating that weather at the destination was not a big concern for delegates when selecting a conference.

5.7 SUMMATIVE OVERVIEW OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

Although it is not the intention of this study to draw comparative conclusions between the qualitative and quantitative findings, it is interesting to note the differences and similarities between the industry stakeholders and the conference delegates (supply and demand). Firstly, Figure 5.5 summarises the emerged themes (attributes) identified by the industry stakeholders (the sponsors interviewed were PCOs and therefore included in the PCO section) and Table 5.27 contains the rankings of the attributes identified by the industry stakeholders through the interview process (see Appendix 3). This ranking was calculated by the number of industry stakeholders that identified the particular attribute. The emerged themes identified in Figure 5.5, together with attributes identified in prominent destination competitiveness models - Dwyer and Kim (2003); Heath (2002); Hassan (2000) and Crouch and Ritchie (2003) - were used to develop the measuring instrument (questionnaire) for the quantitative section of the study, therefore employing the exploratory sequential design of the study.

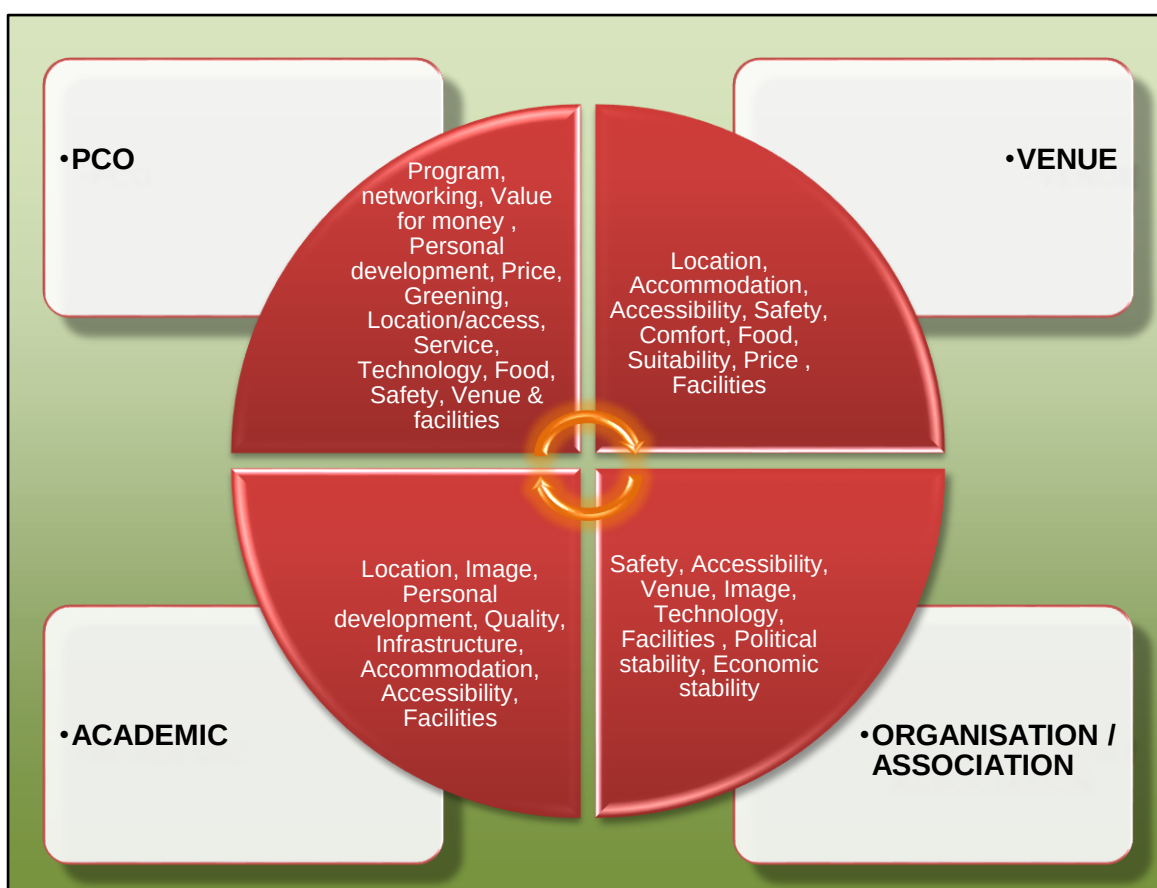


Figure 5.5: Stakeholders' mutual themes identified through interviews

Source: Author's composition

The rankings of the themes (attributes) are depicted in Table 5.27 below:

Table 5.27: Summary of ranked themes (attributes) identified by industry stakeholders

ATTRIBUTE	N	RANKING
Location	7	1
Accessibility	5	2
Price/value for money	6	3
Food	5	4
Technology	3	5
Personal development	3	6
Facilities	3	7
Accommodation	3	8
Program	2	9
Greening/environmental practices	1	10
Service quality	2	11
Infrastructure	2	12
Safety	2	13

Reviewing the above shows that safety and security were not identified as a top priority by the industry stakeholders, in contrast to what the delegates deemed important. The pairwise comparison (Table 5.18(b)) indicates that delegates saw safety and security as a priority of importance over most other attributes. It may be that the industry feels that it is an external factor that cannot be controlled by the conference industry. It is, however, imperative for the industry to collaborate with government to improve perceptions of safety and political stability to encourage inbound tourism to South Africa (both leisure and business). Economic stability was regarded as important by both the delegates and industry. As indicated by Du Plessis (2015:10), political and economic stability is paramount for destination competitiveness. Location and accessibility were found to be the most prominent attributes by industry stakeholders, yet delegates ranked this as a low priority. One industry stakeholder stated that *“if a destination wants to attract international conferences from all over the world, they must be able to fly in either directly into the specific city, or maybe just have one connecting flight”*, with easy accessibility in terms of visas, transportation and accommodation at the destination. Food was ranked 4th out of 7 by the delegates; however, many of the stakeholders in the industry indicated that international delegates are becoming more conscious of food trends and healthy eating and are seeking authentic cuisine. Price (value for money) was depicted as mutual priority by both delegates and industry stakeholders. This was highlighted in the pairwise comparison of destination elements, as indicated in Table 5.18(b) and Table 5.19(b) respectively. Technology, on the other hand, had a high priority with industry stakeholders, as the industry believes that paying attention to this attribute will contribute to the industry remaining competitive. Surprisingly, delegates did not deem this a high priority, although they felt that free Wi-Fi was a necessity when attending a conference. Both delegates and industry stakeholders agree on this. Industry stakeholders indicated that conferencing in South Africa is following the international lead of making use of “apps” as an important platform for communication between the conference organisers and the delegates prior to the conference and after the conference. Although service quality was noted and concerns were raised, it was not given high priority by the industry stakeholders: many of the industry stakeholders felt that due to the high turnover of staff in the hospitality industry, training was essential to maintain good service quality. This was also identified as a way of standing out amongst competitors. The delegates, however, insisted that service quality was extremely important at a conference and rated it as more important than venue design, advanced technology, free Wi-Fi, air conditioning/heating and services and facilities (Table 20(b)). Venue design - although not mentioned as an important attribute by the industry – is regarded by conference organisers as essential to creating a successful conference. The delegates, however, did not see its importance, perhaps because they are unaware of the planning strategies that go into organising a conference. Another attribute worth mentioning is greening/environmental

practices. The delegates deemed this extremely important at a conference (Table 5.21(b)); however, there was resistance from the industry which regards this as expensive to implement. Perhaps a collaborative effort to develop a sustainable policy will encourage a “buy in” from industry stakeholders.

5.8 CONCLUSION

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with industry stakeholders and experts to establish a convergence of relative opinions and correlated judgements regarding attributes of the conference industry derived from literature reviews and the models of Dwyer and Kim (2003); Heath (2002); Hassan (2000); and Crouch and Ritchie (2003). From this, a questionnaire was compiled using the exploratory sequential design. In this chapter, the qualitative and quantitative data was presented, analysed and interpreted in order to achieve the objectives of the study and to make a significant contribution to the study.

Section A presented the qualitative research results of the industry stakeholders which were obtained through semi-structured interviews. The findings yielded that location, accessibility, price, food and technology were the top five ranked conference competitiveness attributes. Section B provided the results of the quantitative findings. Three hundred questionnaires were analysed and the demographic profile of the delegates and the main and sub-factors of the conference attributes were reported. It was concluded by the delegates that the main factors were ranked as follows: general conference attributes were ranked first, conference venue facilities second, conference services third and destination elements fourth. Relating to conference attributes, general conference attributes were ranked as the top priority and destination elements the last. In relation to destination elements, safety and security, value and cost and attractions and activities were judged as the top priorities, with accessibility and weather as the lowest priorities. Conference services yielded that value and cost, program and accommodation were top priorities, with size of conference and entertainment as the lowest priorities. Regarding conference venue facilities, service quality and facilities/services were rated as top priorities, with advanced technology and venue design as the lowest priority ranking. General conference attributes highlighted environmental practices as the top priority with political and economic stability and promotional business tourism as equal priorities.

It is, therefore, clear that there is a gap between the industry stakeholders (supply) and the delegates (demand). Furthermore, it was established that although destination and conference competitiveness have similar attributes, conference competitiveness attributes are

unique; this led to the development of a definition for conference competitiveness as “the ability of a conference to deliver quality and innovative products and services to delegates whilst supporting business tourism in a sustainable way”. From these findings it is possible to develop a conceptual framework for the conference tourism industry that can be used by policy developers, as well as relevant stakeholders (venue suppliers, PCOs, organisations, associations, etc.)

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to draw conclusions based on the findings, set guidelines for the implementation of the proposed conference competitiveness conceptual framework and offer recommendations based on the findings of the study. This chapter, firstly, reviews the objectives of the study; secondly, summarises the methodology and analyses employed for the study; thirdly, outlines the contribution of conference competitiveness literature to the study; fourthly, encapsulates the research conclusions with acknowledgement of the conference competitiveness framework; and lastly, discusses the recommendations, limitations and conclusions of the study.

6.2 REVIEW OF THE RESEACH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study was to develop a conceptual framework for competitiveness within the conference industry. The secondary objectives of this study were:

Objective 1: To explore the concept and typology of business and conference tourism. This objective was fulfilled in **chapter 2** by developing a clear understanding of the theoretical, critical, conceptual and empirical contributions of conference context, both internationally and nationally. Furthermore, the typological, theoretical, critical, conceptual and empirical contributions of the conference industry, globally and more specifically in South Africa, were covered.

Objective 2: To conduct an in-depth analysis of the concept and approaches of global competitiveness in the conference industry and to conduct and critique current frameworks used for destination competitiveness to determine the links to business and conference tourism. This objective was achieved in **chapter 3** through various discussions reflecting on and elucidating contextual judgements relating to destination competitiveness in the tourism

domain. The existing models and frameworks based on destination competitiveness were critically debated to provide a foundation for the gaps pertaining to this study.

Objective 3: To apply selected statistical methods to obtain the optimal framework for competitiveness in the conference industry. This objective was attained in **chapter 4** by identifying the most suitable methodology. Firstly, the exploratory sequential design was employed and the analysed qualitative data was used to develop the quantitative instrument. From here, the quantitative data was analysed using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP), a technique used for the integration of multiple judgments to build a hierarchical model.

Objective 4: To make conclusions and provide managerial implications and implementation guidelines for the proposed framework which will be achieved in **chapter 6**. This objective of the study was fulfilled in **chapter 5** through the exposition of the findings of the study which assisted in developing the conceptual framework for conference tourism competitiveness.

6.3 REVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

In order to meet the objectives of the study, an exploratory sequential design was employed to construct the conference tourism competitiveness framework. The process is outlined in Figure 6.1 below.

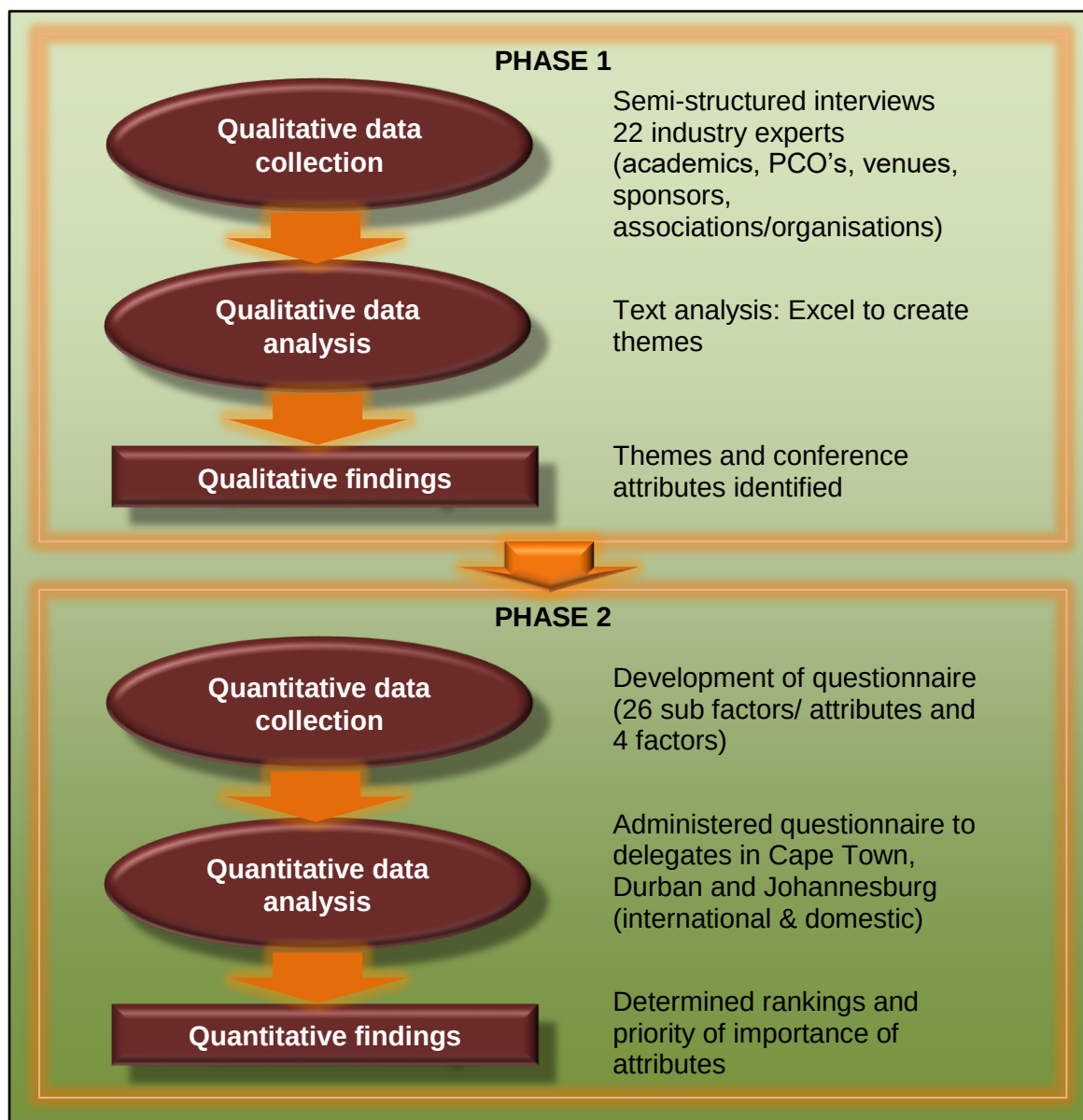


Figure 6.1: Exploratory sequential design used to develop conference tourism competitiveness framework

6.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO THE CONFERENCE TOURISM INDUSTRY

The contribution of the study to the conference tourism industry is invaluable in that it offers practical contributions, as well as literature contributions.

6.4.1 Practical contributions

The following practical contributions were made by the study to the conference tourism industry:

- ❖ This study is distinctive in that it develops a conceptual framework in which the conference tourism industry and stakeholders can benchmark their competitiveness globally within their specific environment. These stakeholders include conference venue suppliers, conference sponsors, associations and organisations affiliated to the conference industry, conference co-ordinators/organisers. Although all stakeholders are unique in their operational dynamics, the attributes identified are common.
- ❖ The framework provides a useful tool for government planners, strategists and policy makers involved in conference tourism to develop marketing strategies and sell South Africa as a sustainable conference destination.
- ❖ The study assists industry stakeholders to provide a more competitive and sustainable environment globally.
- ❖ The research will serve as a guide for the development and promotion of business tourism in South Africa, to attract more business visitors to South Africa and grow the conference industry.

6.4.2 Literature contribution

- ❖ The study provided two sets of perspectives: firstly those of the industry stakeholders - which entailed intense discussions in the form of semi-structured interviews - and secondly those of international and domestic delegates obtained through a survey, a contribution to the study. It highlighted attributes identified by the industry stakeholders that had not been researched previously.
- ❖ This study established conference attributes important for competitiveness that were previously unknown and hence the unique aspects of the framework which can be further researched.

- ❖ Lastly, this study provided a body of knowledge drawing from the fields of tourism, conferencing and competitiveness, demonstrating the interconnectedness of the research topic. An important contribution to this study was the proposed definition of conference competitiveness.

6.5 RESEARCH CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are discussed based on the literature reviews, as well as the qualitative and quantitative findings reported in chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5.

6.5.1 Conclusions from the literature reviews on conference tourism (chapter 2)

- ❖ The sector promotes investment and global economic growth, with travel and tourism generating 9.8% of global GDP, worth \$7.6 trillion and supporting 277 million employment opportunities globally (cf.2.2).
- ❖ The World Tourism Organisation (WTO) defines business tourism or business travel as a “more limited and focused subset of regular tourism” (cf.2.4).
- ❖ Conference tourism (referred to interchangeably as business tourism), is vital to the global economies of many destinations worldwide. Whilst this is a complex and diverse sector, many destinations have made substantial investments to provide the meeting and conference facilities required for business events (cf.2.4.1).
- ❖ Limited research and statistics are due to the lack of accepted and clearly defined terminology in the industry in that the term “business tourism” describes conferences, exhibitions and incentive travel and the link with tourism can be ambiguous, with negative perceptions (cf.2.1).
- ❖ It is evident that there are great opportunities in the global market as well as the South African market and South Africa still remains an increasingly popular destination for the hosting of international conferences (cf.2.1).
- ❖ South African Tourism has developed a strategy to promote and grow both the leisure and business sectors (cf.2.2.1).

- ❖ Each delegate spends in the region of R3000 – R3500 per day and 60% of these delegates choose to return within five years on a leisure trip (cf.2.4).
- ❖ The conference industry is a highly complex industry comprising buyers (participants/delegates) and suppliers (industry stakeholders), representing the motion of “supply” and “demand” (cf.2.5).
- ❖ The convention buying segment - referred to as participants and delegates interchangeably - can be divided into two segments, commonly known as the corporate and association segments (cf.2.5.1).
- ❖ South Africa hosts approximately one million business delegates each year and approximately a third of the business travellers will stay in South Africa before or after their conference or meeting (cf.2.2.1).
- ❖ There are several key stakeholders that contribute to the success of a business event. Each of these stakeholders contributed to the value of the study through quantitative and qualitative analysis to fill the gaps in literature and meet the objectives of the study (cf.2.5.2).
- ❖ The Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI), a voice for the conference, meeting and events industry in Southern Africa, collaborates closely with the industry, with a strong focus on learning (cf. 2.5.2.2).
- ❖ The South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) seeks to increase the size of South Africa’s business events industry which contributes to employment, skills development, innovation, building the knowledge economy and gross domestic product (cf.2.7).
- ❖ The South African Tourism Strategic Plan (2015–2020) sets the strategic objective as: to “increase the number of business events hosted in South Africa” and the objective statement as: to “Market South Africa as a destination for meetings and provide support to bids to increase the number of business events from 118 in 2013/14 to 134 by 2020” (cf.2.7.1).
- ❖ South African Tourism’s main marketing approach is to coordinate South Africa’s overall global approach through three elements. The first element is to inspire people

to consider travelling to South Africa by showcasing its uniqueness. The second is to engage with different consumers through promoting the experiences on offer in South Africa, both in terms of leisure and business. The third is to convince people to travel to South Africa by engaging with key trade and media partners to activate travel to South Africa (cf.2.5.2.3).

- ❖ Conference and convention centers are among the key stakeholders in the convention/business tourism industry, making an economic contribution to the destination and therefore an important consideration in organisers' site selection process (cf.2.5.2.5).
- ❖ Understanding the needs of the participants and delegates in the conference environment is paramount, as each delegate's experience is unique. With this said, the conferencing attributes are often able to influence a business tourist's decision to attend or not attend a conference in a specific destination (cf.2.6).
- ❖ Conferences are engaging with technology and the social media by using live social feeds, video conferencing, audience polling, event specific apps, event hashtags, twitter and Facebook to generate a greater level of interaction, prompting attendees of a conference no longer to be referred to as "delegates", but rather as "participants" (cf.2.5.6.1).
- ❖ Delegates are becoming more demanding of food that is organically grown, "green" and meets their specific dietary requirements (vegan, vegetarian, banting, etc.) (cf.2.6.6).
- ❖ As much as trending attributes are important to make conferencing sustainable and competitive, it is also relevant to look at the future growth of the industry from a strategic perspective (cf.2.6.7).
- ❖ The business sector in South Africa has been identified as an important growth market stimulating inward investment. In the Western Cape 47 bids (with an economic impact of R590 million between 2011 and 2016), translated into 224 conference days and 173550 bed nights. It can also be noted that South Africa secured 66 international association conferences for the five years commencing in 2017, representing an approximate R1,4 billion in economic impact and attracting almost 110 000 delegates over a period of 216 days (cf.2.7).

- ❖ South Africa needs to differentiate itself from its competitors to achieve sustained growth. According to the Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy for South Africa 2011 – 2013 and the Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy (2012 - 2020), in a dynamic world market differentiation requires constant innovation and renewal to meet the needs of the ever-changing consumer (cf.2.8).

6.5.2 Conclusions from the literature reviews on competitiveness (chapter 3)

- ❖ In tourism literature, the concept of competitiveness has been applied and expanded to various tourism profiles with much of the research focusing on destination competitiveness (cf.3.1).
- ❖ Competitiveness in a destination context is “the ability of a country to create added value and thus increase national wealth by managing assets and processes, attractiveness, and aggressiveness, and proximity, and by integrating these relationships into an economic and social model” (cf.3.1).
- ❖ Placing competitiveness into perspective encompasses price differentials in search of a favourable competitive position aiming to establish profit and sustainability in the competitive environment (cf.3.1).
- ❖ Several researchers have attempted to clarify competitiveness in a tourism and destination context, basing their findings on the work of the pioneers in global competitiveness studies, Porter (1990) and Ritchie and Crouch (1993) (cf.3.2.1).
- ❖ According to many researchers, the tourism sector can only be seen as competitive when tourist destinations are competitive in quality products and services (cf.3.2.2).
- ❖ There are various factors that can influence a destination’s competitiveness; these include a destination’s core resources and attractions, which enable a destination to be perceived as appealing (cf.3.2.2).
- ❖ Many researchers (Enright & Newton, 2004; Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Balaglu & McCleary, 1999; Cracolici & Nijcamp, 2008; Crouch, 1995, 1999, 2010; Meng, 2006; Gomezelj & Mihalic, 2008; Hassan, 2000; Heath, 2002; Lubbe, 2015; Mihalic, 2000; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Vengesai, 2003) have focused on concepts, relevant models and approaches relating to tourism destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999;

Hassan, 2000; Kozak & Remington, 1998) with an emphasis on the integration of value-added destination products and services to enhance tourism attractiveness at destinations (cf.3.2.2).

- ❖ In order to understand the competitiveness of tourist destinations, it is imperative to consider both factors of comparative advantage and factors of competitive advantage; however, these must not be confused (cf.3.3).
- ❖ It is crucial to understand key determinants and attributes of competitiveness. It was further established that many of the attributes identified in the tourism and destination models were relevant to the conference industry (cf.3.3).
- ❖ The Crouch and Ritchie model (1999) is regarded as the most comprehensive model with distinct characteristics of destination competitiveness. The model identifies that destination competitiveness is based upon a destination's resource endowments (comparative advantage), as well as the capacity to deploy resources (competitive advantage) (cf.3.4.2).
- ❖ Hassan's model (2000) reflects an environmental and sustainable competitiveness approach incorporating ecological, social and cultural factors. The model sets out stakeholder relationships, including comparative advantage, demand conditions, industry structure, and environmental commitment indicators (cf.3.4.3).
- ❖ The integrated model of Dwyer and Kim (2003) is based on the much supported model of Crouch and Ritchie (1999); however, it incorporates a more integrated outlook of the connections between different parts of the model (cf.3.4.4).
- ❖ Heath (2003), on the other hand, constructed a competitive model that focused on key success drivers (people) and the vital linkages (communication and information) that should be taken into consideration in sustainable destination competitiveness (cf.3.4.5).
- ❖ Khin *et al.* (2014) offer an interesting view, raising their concerns about the shortcomings of many of the above models which were used to directly measure the destination competitiveness, while the independent "mainstream" factors were not taken into account (cf.3.5).

- ❖ Models of destination competitiveness have been developed with an extensive list of attributes and determinants that influence the selection of a destination hosting business events (cf.3.6.12).
- ❖ Core indicators measurement is based on tourism contribution, tourism accommodation flow, contribution to economic activity, price sensitivity, natural assets, attraction, activities and events at a destination, and improving competitiveness through legislation (cf.3.7.1).
- ❖ Subjective measurements dominate research - mostly from either demand or supply side - and seldom integrate approaches from both sides. This emphasises the need to include both approaches in the methodical approach of this study (cf.3.8).
- ❖ Engagement with a number of key industry role players and internationally recognised associations and organisations produced reports and documents outlining the ranking of countries in terms of global competitiveness and strategies in order to assist countries with managing their growth and sustaining their competitiveness (cf.3.7.2).
- ❖ In conclusion, the research implied that the indicators and attributes applicable to tourism and destination competitiveness - which are key determinants of global sustainable competitiveness - can be used as a foundation to develop a framework for conference tourism competitiveness (cf.3.7.2.3).

6.5.3 Conclusions pertaining to the empirical study (chapters 4 and 5)

Chapter 5 analysed the research results obtained from the qualitative and quantitative findings. Various statistical analyses were applied.

6.5.3.1 *Conclusions pertaining to industry stakeholders*

Figure 6.2 below summarises the emerged themes (attributes) derived from the interviews with the stakeholders (in no specific order). These emerged themes, together with attributes identified in prominent destination competitiveness models - Dwyer and Kim (2003); Heath (2002); Hassan (2000) and Crouch and Ritchie (2003) - were used to develop the measuring instrument (questionnaire) for the quantitative section of the study, therefore employing the exploratory sequential design of the study.



Figure 6.2: Stakeholders' mutual themes identified through interviews

Source: Author's composition

The following were pertinent issues derived from the interviews (note: the sponsors interviewed were also PCOs and therefore included under PCOs).

- ❖ That location and accessibility were considered the most important conference attributes and ranked as the top priority by most respondents (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That price and value for money were ranked as the next important attributes for conference tourism, indicating that destinations and conferences should be “reasonably priced” and “affordable”, with a component of value for money (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That safety, according to venues, PCOs and organisations/associations, was important, as tourists will not visit a destination if it is not considered safe (cf.5.2.1).

- ❖ That international delegates were becoming more conscious of food trends and healthy eating and felt that South Africa should make more of an effort to meet these requirements and give their menus a more “South African” flavour to offer an “authentic” appeal (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That technology, infrastructure and facilities were of equal importance for conference tourism and making a conference competitive (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That destination management and planning were imperative in conference tourism; however, many of the respondents highlighted that the objectives of the organisations should be considered when managing destinations and implementing policies (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That the additional funding for bidding for business events would enable the convention bureaus to bid aggressively for international association conferences and conventions (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That support for professionalism and skilled people should be maintained; this can be achieved through certifications, internships, on the job trainings and mentorship programmes offered by business event associations, as well as educational institutions (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That venues, according to PCOs, are planned last and that this comes down to understanding the event. Accessibility of the venue was also an important consideration; however, while there was a tendency for organisers to remain loyal to certain venues, other organisers stated that it was important not to take repeat clients to the same venues but to expand their choices, hence the importance of venue inspections. The PCOs and organisations highlighted the unfortunate practice of “double dipping” with commissions, in other words claiming commission from the venue and charging the client an admin fee (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That the program and the guest and keynote speakers of the conference were important to academics. The image of the conference and appeal of the destination were also considered important (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That sponsors’ relationships with conferences were about building relationships and that due to the economic climate, sponsors were becoming more selective of the

events that they sponsored, ensuring that there were benefits and that they met their key objectives. Events, on the other hand, were just as critical of the sponsors they chose, ensuring that they had shared objectives and that the sponsors had a good image, financial stability and a good record and were reliable (cf.5.2.1).

- ❖ That, according to the stakeholders, there should be sustained investment in service quality in the industry, as this is what sets a conference aside from its competitors. The authenticity of the South African product is also important, specifically local cuisine (cf.5.2.1).
- ❖ That venues were aware that new modernised venues with top of the range technology were a threat to them. Venue suppliers did not see greening practices in the industry as of paramount importance and it was the consensus that something would only be done once a strategy or legislation was implemented to enforce this practice (cf.5.2.1)
- ❖ That there was no agreement on technology: some stakeholders believed that South Africa was ahead with technology in the industry while others felt that South Africa did not compete internationally and a concern was raised that many destinations outside South Africa were building “world class” convention centres with “world class” technology. Many of the stakeholders argued that South Africa should move towards offering free Wi-Fi, as a number of other destinations do. The conference delegates agreed that this was a priority (cf.5.2.1).

6.5.3.2 *Conclusions pertaining to delegates*

The following sections present the empirical results from the questionnaire, as well as the demographics and profiling of the delegates.

6.5.3.2.1 Demographic details and profile of the delegates

Table 6.1: Summary of the delegates' demographic and profile details

Category	Details'
Gender	Male 46% and Female 54%
Age	26 – 35 years 29%
Home language	English 54%
Marital status	Married 46%
Permanent residence	South Africa 72%
Occupation	Academic 33%
Level of education	Post graduate degree 58%
Average days spent at a conference	3.12 days
Average days spent prior to a conference	1.36 days
Average days spent after a conference	1.28 days
Payment of conference	Employer 77%
Number of conferences attended	1-5 conferences 35% 16+ conferences 34%
Main reason for attending conferences	Academic 44%

In summary, the delegates that attended the conferences in Durban, Johannesburg and Cape Town were 46% male and 54% female and on average between the ages of 26 and 35 years. The majority were English speaking, South African and from the academic sector, with post-graduate degrees. The delegates indicated that they spent an average of 3.12 days at conferences, with an average of 1.36 days before the conference and 1.28 days after the conference. The majority of the delegates had attended between 1 and 5 conferences in total.

6.5.3.2.2 Conclusions pertaining to conferencing attributes' ranked priorities

The analysis of the conferencing attributes (main and sub-factors) concluded that:

- ❖ Conference attributes was the highest ranked priority within general conference attributes. These attributes relate to political stability, economic stability, community engagement, promotion of business tourism and environmental practices (cf.5.6.2).
- ❖ Amongst destination elements, delegates highlighted safety and security as important in choosing a destination. When delegates select a conference, they want to ensure that the destination will provide a safe and secure environment. Furthermore, the industry experts indicated that they did not feel that South Africa was doing enough to guarantee the safety and security of leisure and business tourists and that the safety and security legislation needed attention, with a focus on implementation and

monitoring of policies and legislation. A destination competitiveness study conducted by Lubbe (2015) found that safety and security appeared to be an important factor relating to South Africa's competitiveness and should not be overlooked. Furthermore, the model of Heath (2002) includes health and safety as a fundamental non-negotiable attractor. Value and cost were also identified as important by the delegates (cf.5.4.2; 5.6.2).

- ❖ Value and cost were the most important attributes within conference services. According to the study of Crouch (2007:25), value/cost is one of the top ten destination competitiveness attributes and influenced by the macro and micro environment which is governed by economic structures within the destination. The industry stakeholders indicated that South Africa offered value for money. Furthermore, value/cost featured second in destination elements, confirming that overall value/cost was a consideration when selecting a conference and a destination (cf.5.4.2; 5.6.2).
- ❖ Within conference venue facilities service quality was the most important attribute, proving that delegates have a high expectation of service delivery at the conference venue. Robinson and Callan (2005:90) concede that customers are expecting higher standards from conference venues with regards to technical equipment and support. The industry stakeholders indicated that service quality set a conference apart from its competitors and made the industry sustainable and competitive (cf.5.4.2; 5.6.2).
- ❖ Amongst conference attributes, environmental practices were regarded as the top priority by the delegates. This is interesting, since the industry stakeholders, although aware of the importance of environmental practices in conference tourism, were reluctant to enforce them due to the cost factor and the lack of enforceable legislation directed at the conference industry (cf.5.4.2; 5.6.2).

In summary, a destination competitiveness study conducted by Du Plessis *et al.* (2015:1) noted that in a previous study carried out in 2002, the important factors that made South Africa a competitive destination included safety and security, quality service, value for money, geographical features and tourists' attitudes. It can be argued that three of these attributes (safety and security, value for money and quality service) have also been identified as top priority attributes in conference tourism competitiveness. Moreover, in view of this, it is important to point out that two relevant issues of this study are unique to many other competitiveness studies conducted to date - food quality and environmental practices. These two attributes are pertinent in today's conferencing environment and partly considered a

“trend” in the conference industry. Lorraine Jenks, a South African award winning speaker on sustainability and an ethical food activist, indicated at the SAACI Conference 2018 that globally, the demand for sustainable and ethical food is on the increase, adding that delegates were choosing more ethical and sustainable products during their conference experience. According to Jenks, healthy diets only focus on health and nutrition, but sustainable diets consider protecting the ecosystems and biodiversity, are more culturally acceptable and affordable, optimise natural and human resources where possible and improve energy usage, waste management and water consumption, thus making the patrons interrogate the origin of their food. This will ultimately force conference organisers to rethink the way they organise and plan a conference and to focus on a more environmentally friendly experience which includes the conference itself and the food. It should further be noted that environmental practices were deemed the most important attribute in the general conference attributes domain, which involves policies and practices. In contrast, the delegates did not regard promotion of business tourism as high priority. This could be because policies and stakeholder collaboration are seen as a part of the planning process of a conference and relate to the supply side rather than the demand side of conferencing.

A further consideration in the domain of conference services and facilities that stands out and has very little literature exposure, is the ‘program’. These findings indicate that a conference organiser needs to attract potential delegates by offering an attractive conference program with scheduled talks, activities and keynote speakers. The content of these programs should be in line with the objectives and theme of the conference (Mohammadi & Mohamed, 2010:55; Mair & Thompson 2009:401). Furthermore, Zhang and Leung (2007:1127) posit that the conference program needs to provide an opportunity for the delegates to keep up with the changes in their professional field and to interact with respected experts in their field who can provide them with new knowledge and skills. In the qualitative section of this study many academic experts indicated that the attractiveness and keynote speakers of a conference program are a definite consideration, as this is often an indication of the quality and reputation of the conference. Therefore, in order for South Africa to remain globally competitive, it is imperative to offer top quality conferences with a good reputation which can be achieved through program content. Moreover, surprisingly, entertainment received a low ranking. In many instances conference organisers include entertainment as part of the program. Delegates, however, indicated that this was of low importance and perhaps not a motivation for selecting a conference. Conference organisers, on the other hand, have a different view and believe that the entertainment in a program promotes the networking and socialising component of the conference, which in many instances is one of the main reasons for

attending a conference. In the case of this study, 19% of the delegates attended for networking purposes.

A surprising finding in the domain of conference venue facilities was that free Wi-Fi was highly ranked as an important attribute and advanced technology received a low ranking from the delegates. This, however, contradicts what the experts in the qualitative section of the study indicated. The experts emphasised the value of advanced technology, indicating that meeting design focusing on state of the art technology and keeping up with the current technological trends was extremely important and something to consider if South Africa was to remain globally competitive in the conference industry. Further low rankings include venue design and weather. This could be because the delegates' primary reason for attending a conference is for business purposes – they have different motivations to those of leisure tourists. Leisure tourists often choose a destination based on the season and weather (Kozak, Uysal & Birkan, 2008:85). While the destination competitiveness impact study of Crouch (2007:25) indicated that climate is ranked as number 1 amongst the 36 destination competitiveness attributes, it should be noted that the respondents were destination experts and not business travellers.

In a summary of the above findings, Table 6.2 draws a comparative view of destination competitiveness versus conference competitiveness. Note: Due to the instrument layout, the results of the conference attributes are only ranked according to criteria and do not reflect overall rankings.

Table 6.2: Summary of the destination competitiveness rankings of Crouch (2007) vs conference attributes

Destination attribute rankings (Crouch 2007:25)		Conference attributes (based on this study)	
Main factors:		Main factors:	
Core resources and attractors	1	General conference attributes	1
Destination management	2	Conference venue facilities	2
Qualifying and amplifying determinants	3	Conference services	3
Destination policy, planning & development	4	Destination elements	4
Support factors and resources	5		
Sub-factors		Sub-factors	
Physiography and climate	1	CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES	

Destination attribute rankings (Crouch 2007:25)		Conference attributes (based on this study)	
Mix of activities	2	General conference attributes	1
Culture and History	3	Conference venue facilities	2
Tourism superstructure	3	Conference services	3
Safety/security	3	Destination elements	4
Cost/values	4		
Accessibility	5	DESTINATION ELEMENTS	
Special events	6	Safety/security	1
Awareness/image	7	Value/cost	2
Location	8	Attractions/activities	3
Infrastructure	9	Location	4
Hospitality	10	Infrastructure	5
Market ties	11	Accessibility	6
Entertainment	12	Weather	7
Quality of service/experience	13		
Political will	14	CONFERENCE SERVICES	
Positioning/branding	15	Value/cost	1
Enterprise	16	Program	2
Facilitating resources	17	Accommodation	3
Carrying capacity	18	Quality of food	4
Marketing	19	Conference image	5
Interdependencies	20	Size of conference	6
Development	21	Entertainment	7
Information/research	22		
Resource stewardship	23	CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES	
Vision	24	Service quality	1
Monitoring and evaluation	25	Facilities/services	2
Audit	26	Free Wi-Fi	3
Organisation	27	Ambience	4
Philosophy/values	28	Air conditioning/heating	5
Competitive/collaborative analysis	29	Advanced technology	6
Human resource development	30	Venue design	7
Visitor management	31		
Finance and venture capital	32	GENERAL CONFERENCE	
System definition	33	ATTRIBUTES	
Crisis management	34	Environmental practices	1
:	35	Community engagement	2

Destination attribute rankings (Crouch 2007:25)		Conference attributes (based on this study)	
	36	Political stability	3
		Economic stability	3
		Promotion of business tourism	3

Source: Author's own composition based on Crouch (2007:25)

The Crouch and Ritchie conceptual model of destination competitiveness was developed in 1999 and refined by Ritchie and Crouch in 2003, with the model identifying 36 destination attributes (sub-factors) and 5 main factors. Table 6.2 reflects a summary of rankings based on the destination attribute impact study of Crouch (2007:25). The attributes for this study comprised 26 conference attributes with 4 main factors. This summary indicates that although some attributes overlap - which can be seen from the findings in chapter 5 - conference tourism attributes are different, hence the need for the development of this conference tourism competitiveness framework. The methodology employed for both of these studies was based on the analytic hierarchy process (AHP), a rigorous technique used to integrate multiple judgements and rankings.

In conclusion, the attributes that stand out in both studies are safety and security, value/cost and service quality. It should, however, be noted that due to the instrument developed for this specific study, the sub-factors were not compared with each other but only within the domains of each section (B – D) and therefore an overall ranking has not been provided. Furthermore, the results of this study yielded insights into conference competitiveness attributes, giving an estimate of which have the strongest impact in the sector. As such, this will provide a useful framework for the industry to manage competitiveness.

6.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK TOWARDS CONFERENCE TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS

Based on the conclusions discussed above and the empirical findings, the proposed conference tourism competitiveness model can be implemented in the conference and business tourism industry (Figure 6.3).



Figure 6.3: Conference tourism competitiveness framework

The competitiveness models of Dwyer and Kim (2003); Heath (2002); Hassan (2000); and Crouch and Ritchie (1994, 2003) proved useful to this study, however, this research demonstrated that conference tourism has its own set of attributes specific to the conference sector. The framework in Figure 6.3 is representative of AHP modelling based on two levels; the first level is the main factors in ranking order from left to right. The main factors (conference attributes) which represent section B of the questionnaire were ranked overall as follows: 1st – general conference attributes, 2nd – conference venue facilities, 3rd – conference services and 4th – destination elements. Level 2 of the framework illustrates the sub-factors (attributes) ranked in order of importance (from top to bottom).

6.6.1 Summative clarity of sub-factor attributes

The following clarifies the attribute terms with application to this study and with reference to the literature of this study.

6.6.1.1 General conference attributes

- ❖ *Environmental practices* relate to the “greening” of a conference and include recycling, waste management, energy saving and an eco-friendly environment (cf.2.4.2.4). This is seen as an important aspect by delegates, hence the necessity for policy makers to consider a strategy or policy to assist the industry.
- ❖ *Community engagement* entails involvement of the community in the conference, from decision making to employment. The community is an important stakeholder and should be engaged from the planning of an event (cf.2.4). It should be encouraged to be part of the conference, either through employment or through selling its products to the delegates.
- ❖ *Economic stability* refers to an economy with constant output and growth (cf.3.1; 3.2). *Political stability* indicates the stability of a government, offering durability and integrity (cf.3.2). Importantly, political and economic stability play a role, as delegates would be reluctant to visit a conference destination that has political or economic unrest.
- ❖ *Promotion of business tourism* entails the encouragement of business travellers to increase visits to, and expenditure in, a country (cf.2.5.3; 2.7.2). To remain competitive, South Africa’s conference destination and marketing strategies need to be in place and implemented. The industry needs to remain professional and collaborate with all stakeholders, especially the National Convention Bureau that is responsible for assisting

with the bidding process, both internationally and nationally. The South African Tourism strategy makes provision for encouraging growth in the business events sector. The vision of SAT is to showcase South Africa as one of the most preferred destinations (SAT, 2015). Furthermore, it was noted by Derek Hanekom at the SAACI conference 2018 that 84 bids had been secured for the period 2018 to 2022, providing an economic benefit of around R818 million.

6.6.1.2 *Conference venue facilities*

- ❖ *Service quality* refers to the quality of service provided by the venue and the conference organisers (cf.3.4.4.3; 3.6.9). There should be ongoing investment in service quality in the industry, as this is what sets a conference apart from its competitors.
- ❖ *Facilities* at the venue include all services and facilities provided by the venue and the conference organiser, for example equipment, toilets and technical equipment (cf.2.5.2.5; 2.6.4). Facilities and infrastructure of the venue are essential elements of a conference and contribute to the conduciveness and successfulness of the conference.
- ❖ *Free Wi-Fi* provided by the venue refers to conferences that allow delegates to connect to Wi-Fi without limitations and charges (cf.2.4; 2.5.2.5). Many international destinations offer free Wi-Fi as part of the conference package. In South Africa this is usually an added cost passed on to the delegate, which can be substantial.
- ❖ *Ambience* relates to the atmosphere within the conference environment (cf.2.4.2) and should be conducive to the conference setting.
- ❖ *Air conditioning/heating* refers to the air conditioning or heating provided in the venue to ensure a comfortable setting (cf.2.4.2; 2.5.2 and 5. 2.6.4). This would also relate to service quality: if the air conditioning and heating do not function, this would be perceived to be a poor service offering.
- ❖ *Advanced technology* refers to up-to-date technology featuring the latest developments (cf.3.6.8). Technology is a rapidly growing trend. In order for South Africa to remain competitive, venues and organisers should consider cutting-edge technology.
- ❖ *Venue design* relates to the design of the venue that focuses on the layout (cf.2.4; 2.6.4). This is part of the planning of the conference and can make the conference stand out and be a “wow” factor.

6.6.1.3 *Conference services*

- ❖ *Value/cost* relates to the perceived value of the conference cost (cf. 2.7; 3.6.9). Pricing of the conference package, as well as the costs at the conference venue and destination, are a crucial consideration.
- ❖ *Program* involves the activities and sessions constituting the conference proceedings (cf.2.2.1; 3.6.9 and 3.6.12). Many academics are concerned that the contents of the program should provide a balance to meet their objectives.
- ❖ *Accommodation* refers to the accommodation provided to the delegates during the conference (cf.2.5; 3.6.13). Many delegates require comfortable accommodation during their stay. The longer they stay, the more this holds true.
- ❖ *Quality of food* encompasses the quality of the catering provided by the conference venue (cf.3.4.2; 3.6.12). The authenticity of the South African product is important, specifically authenticity of local cuisine. Many delegates are demanding healthier and special meals (e.g. kosher, vegan and vegetarian). This attribute could be used to grow the conference industry and make it stand out.
- ❖ *Conference image* refers to the conference reputation (cf.3.6; 3.7). Academics are specifically concerned with the conference reputation and image so as to gain the most out of their experience.
- ❖ *Conference size* refers to how small or large the conference is in terms of delegate numbers and will affect the size of the venue selected (cf.2.5.2.5).
- ❖ *Entertainment* refers to the amusement and enjoyment included in the program for the delegates and partners (cf.2.5.2.5.1; 3.4.2.2).

6.6.1.4 *Destination elements*

- ❖ *Safety/security* at the destination refers to how safe the delegates feel whilst attending a conference (cf.2.5.2.5; 3.4.2.5 and 3.6.7). This is a top priority for delegates, as they will be reluctant to visit a destination that cannot provide safety and security.

- ❖ *Value/cost* refers to the cost of services and facilities at the destination (cf.2.7; 3.6.9). Delegates consider not only the cost of the conference, but also the cost of tours, accommodation, transport, etc. whilst at the destination.
- ❖ *Attractions/activities* relate to the things to do and see at the destination prior to the conference or after the conference (cf.2.3.1; 3.2.2 and 3.5). Many delegates include pre and post tours as part of the conference and therefore the attractions and activities on offer at the destination are a consideration.
- ❖ *Location* refers to where the conference is located at the destination (cf.2.4; 3.6.14). Delegates consider the location of the conference, i.e. is it remote, accessible, etc.
- ❖ *Infrastructure* entails the essential services provided at a destination, for example, roads, airports and shops (cf. 3.6.4). Delegates would be reluctant to visit a conference with poor infrastructure.
- ❖ *Accessibility* refers to how accessible the destination is by road, air or sea from the permanent location of the tourist or delegate (cf.3.6). The accessibility of a conference was considered high priority by the industry.
- ❖ *Weather* refers to the climate at the destination (cf. 3.6.1). For delegates and business travellers this is not of real concern; however, it would be for the leisure tourist whose decision to visit a destination may hinge on the weather and climate conditions.

** It should be noted that although some industry experts interviewed referred to location and accessibility simultaneously, the literature supports that these are two separate attributes (cf.2.4; 3.6 and 3.6.14).

6.7 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- ❖ It is suggested that the framework be standardised and used for the conference industry in order for the industry to remain sustainable and competitive.
- ❖ A competitiveness framework can be developed that specifically focuses on other areas that affect conference tourism, for example venue suppliers.

- ❖ A strategy for implementation of the conceptual framework for conference tourism competitiveness could be researched. This could entail looking at the different suppliers, as the dynamics of suppliers vary from supplier to supplier.
- ❖ As environmental practices were highlighted as a top priority in general conference attributes, perhaps an environmental strategy for conferencing could be developed.
- ❖ Comparative research can be conducted to determine the difference between international and domestic delegates' conferencing attribute preferences.
- ❖ The "gaps" between supply and demand relating to conference competitiveness could be further expanded and researched.
- ❖ A comparative profile of the delegates in each of the cities (Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town) could establish whether the preference or ranking of attributes varies from city to city.
- ❖ A comparative profile of the delegates (international versus domestic) could be compiled to determine whether the preference or ranking of attributes varies between the international and domestic delegates.
- ❖ A study relating to the difference between cities and delegate preferences could be conducted to determine whether the cities' offerings have an impact on the delegates' choice of destination.

6.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Conducting research on the framework of attributes for the conference tourism industry was a useful approach to developing a competitiveness framework for the industry. The following limitations, however, were encountered during the course of the study, specifically during the data collection phase.

- ❖ The literature relating specifically to conference competitiveness was limited.
- ❖ The conference organisers approached were very reluctant to participate, as the delegates already had a questionnaire to complete for the venue as well as the conference organiser.

- ❖ Many conference organisers stated that due to time constraints the program did not make provision for the completion of the questionnaire.
- ❖ A conference organiser suggested that the questionnaire be placed in the conference bags at registration. This proved unsuccessful, as the delegates did not complete it.
- ❖ Some of the conferences required the researcher to attend the conference and pay the registration fees applicable; this was not possible due to financial constraints.
- ❖ The conference delegates were reluctant to complete the questionnaire, as they found it too long and time consuming. This was unavoidable due to the nature of the AHP methodology.

6.9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to draw conclusions from the findings of the study and to suggest recommendations for the further research. The objectives of this study as outlined in chapter one were fulfilled and conclusions were presented based on the findings. The steps outlined for developing the framework using the analytic hierarchy process (AHP) model were achieved and descriptive analysis was done to verify the AHP findings and ensure consistency.

To conclude, this chapter argues that there is a significant difference in destination competitiveness and conference competitiveness attributes, therefore the conference tourism competitiveness attributes can be seen as unique. Furthermore, a “gap” between the supply (industry) and demand (delegates) was evident. These findings gave rise to the development of the conceptual framework that could be used by conference industry stakeholders and policy makers to make the industry more sustainable and ensure global competitiveness - a key objective of South African Tourism. It should be noted that the findings of the qualitative study indicated that the industry experts interviewed regarded location, accessibility, food, price and technology as the top priorities in conference tourism competitiveness, in this specific order - which were not the same attributes identified by the delegates. Yet it was not the intention of this study to compare the two sets of findings from the industry stakeholders/experts and the delegates, but merely to use these as a basis for identifying attributes, hence the exploratory sequential design employed. This can be deemed a challenge, as what the industry experts currently think delegates want from a conferencing experience is not necessarily what they want. In order to implement the conceptual framework it calls for the conference industry stakeholders (sponsors, professional conference organisers, media, venues) to acknowledge the important

attributes relevant to their specific industry and use these not only to build a memorable conference experience for the delegate but also to keep the conference industry competitive and sustainable.

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APPENDIX 1



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
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15 January 2018

Dear Ms,

You have been requested to participate in an academic research study conducted by L Welthagen, a Doctoral student from the School of Tourism Management at North West University. The purpose of the study is to develop a framework of competitiveness within the conference industry. You have been chosen to participate in the study based on your experience of working in the tourism industry. I therefore trust that you will provide relevant information.

Please note the following:

1. This study will provide an anonymous survey. Your name will not appear on the questionnaire and the answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
2. Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
3. The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.
4. Please contact my supervisor, Prof Elmarie Slabbert, elmarie.slabbert@nwu.ac.za if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign this letter to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Respondent's signature

Date

APPENDIX 2

There has been numerous studies pertaining to destination competitiveness (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Dwyer & Kim, 2003), however no studies have been conducted on the competitiveness of conference/business tourism in South Africa. Many of the attributes that are important for destinations include the following (amongst others):

- Image
- Price
- Location
- Food
- Infrastructure
- Entertainment
- Health and safety
- Facilities
- Services
- technology

The interviews will include various stakeholders within the conference industry:

ASSOCIATIONS:

1. What makes you successful when bidding for an international conference?
2. What attributes are important when considering conference location? *provide examples of attributes
3. What advice would you give to those trying to gain/win a conference bid?
4. How do you go about sourcing venues – do you have set criteria? * explain the criteria
5. Provide 3 pointers as to how South Africa could be more competitive.
6. How well do you collaborate with other stakeholders? * mention relevant stakeholders

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANISERS (PCO)

1. What attributes do you think are important for delegates? * provide examples
2. Prioritise these attributes. * from co-ordinators perspective
3. How do you go about sourcing venues – do you have set criteria? (PCO's) are you flexible to using new suppliers?
4. How well do you collaborate with other stakeholders? * mention relevant stakeholders

ACADEMICS

1. When attending an international conference, what attributes are important when selecting a conference?
2. Prioritise these attributes.
3. How could the conference organiser better meet the needs of the delegates?
4. What adds value to a conference for you?
5. What are your objectives/criteria for selecting a conference?

6. What proportion of your curriculum involves Business Tourism. Do you think B.T is important and why so?

SPONSOR

1. How do you go about selecting a conference to sponsor and what procedures do you follow? * target market, investment, exposure, networking, launch
2. What are the benefits to sponsoring a conference?
3. Would you sponsor the same conference more than once and why/why not?
4. What is your view on international versus domestic conferences and sponsorship?
5. How competitive do you see South Africa as a conference destination?

VENUES

1. What attributes do you think are important to delegates when using a venue?
2. What do you think the strong attributes/attractors are of your venue?
3. Do you think your venue is competitive? If not, how can you make it more competitive/ how would you increase your chances of a venue being more competitive?
4. How well do you collaborate with other stakeholders/suppliers?
5. Are you aware of our competitors. What do you do to keep abreast of your competitors.

GENERAL: - TO BE DISCUSSED WITH EACH STAKEHOLDER

1. What do you consider to be the main challenges for growth and development in the conference industry? – (marketing, development resources, skills, government commitment, private/public sector contribution, infrastructure, attributes, other).
2. What is your opinion as to what should be done to grow the sector, and bring more conferences to South Africa?
3. How important is destination management (marketing, HR development etc.)
4. How important is destination policy planning and development when considering conference tourism?
5. How competitive is South Africa in business Tourism?
6. What are the gaps?

STUDY FOCUS:

- Core attributes
- Destination management – marketing, HR etc.
- Destination policy planning and development

*indicates notes for the researcher

APPENDIX 3

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE ORGANISERS (PCO)

P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7
Program	Accessibility	Price	Service	Price	Venue	Accessibility
Networking	Price	Location	Value for money	Technology	Location	Service
Accessibility	Greening	Program	Technology	Safety	Facilities	Venue
Value for money			Location		Food	Food
Personal development			Food			Parking
Price						

ACADEMICS

A1	A2	A3	A4
Location	Location	Personal Development	Destination
Image	Facilities		Quality
Personal development			Food
Quality			
Infrastructure			
Accommodation			

VENUE PROVIDERS

V1	V2	V3
Location	Safety	Suitability
Accommodation	Comfort	Accessibility
Accessibility	Accessibility	Price
	Location	Facilities
	Food	
	Accommodation	

ORGANISERS/ASSOCIATIONS

O1	O2	O3
Safety	Accessibility	Accessibility
Accessibility	Venue	Political stability
	Technology	Economic stability
	Image	Infrastructure
		Facilities

OVERALL RANKINGS

ATTRIBUTE	N	RANKING
Location	7	1
Accessibility	5	2
Price/value for money	6	3
Food	5	4
Technology	3	5
Personal development	3	6
Facilities	3	7
Accommodation	3	8
Program	2	9
Greening/environmental practices	1	10
Service quality	2	11
Infrastructure	2	12
Safety	2	13

APPENDIX 4

Dear Participant,

You are requested to participate in an academic research study conducted by Lisa Welthagen (082 465 8925), a Phd student from the Department of Tourism Management, North West University. The study relates to developing a framework for conference competitiveness. Please note that your answers given will be strictly confidential and participation is optional. The results will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. The supervisor for the study is Prof Slabbert. The study has received ethical clearance (certificate number EMS28/04/16-02/04). Please sign below to indicate that you have understood the above and provide consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.

Participants signature

Date

The questions relate to assessing your opinion of conferences in general, and not specifically to the conference you are attending today.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

Male	Female
1	2

2. Age (in years) _____

3. Home language (specify) _____

4. What is your marital status?

Married	Not married	Divorced	Widowed	Living together
1	2	3	4	5

5. AVERAGE number of days spent at a conference _____

6. AVERAGE number of days spent PRIOR to a conference _____

7. AVERAGE number of days spent AFTER a conference _____

8. Permanent country of residence (specify) _____

9. What is your Occupation? (specify) _____

10. What is your highest level of Education?

No formal education	Up to Grade 12/ O level	Diploma/Certificate	Degree	Post Graduate Degree
1	2	3	4	5

11. Who is paying for the conference?

Employer	Self
1	2

12. How many conferences in total have you attended during your career?

1-5	6-10	11-15	16+
1	2	3	4

13. Select the MAIN reason for attending the conference

1	Academic purposes	
2	Networking	
3	It is expected from me to attend (as part of my task agreement)	
4	To take a break from everyday life	
5	Gain knowledge in my field of expertise	
6	To meet experts and mentors	
7	Other (specify).....	

Instructions: section B – F

1. In each numbered row, compare the two ATTRIBUTES and decide on the most important one.
2. Then indicate this importance on the most important one's side.

EXAMPLE:

1	Destination elements	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference services

In the above example, conference services is selected as being more important than destination elements AND is rated as strongly important (5) **(NB: the selection must be indicated on the side of the attribute of most importance)**

1= Equal importance 2= Equal to moderate 3 = Moderate importance 4= Moderate to strong
 5= Strong importance 6= Strong to very strong 7= Very strong importance
 8= Very strong to extreme **9 = Extreme importance**

SECTION B: CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES

14	Destination elements	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference services
15	Destination elements	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference venue facilities
16	Destination elements	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	General conference attributes
17	Conference services	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference venue facilities
18	Conference services	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	General conference attributes
19	Conference venue facilities	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	General conference attributes

DESTINATION ELEMENTS - accessibility, infrastructure, location, safety, value, weather, attractions and activities

CONFERENCE SERVICES - entertainment, program, quality of food, image, cost, accommodation and size of conference

CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES -design, technology, service quality, air conditioning/heating, facilities and ambience

GENERAL CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES political stability, economic stability, community engagement, promotion of business tourism and environmental practices

SECTION C: DESTINATION ELEMENTS

20	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Infrastructure
21	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Location
22	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Safety/security
23	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
24	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
25	Accessibility	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/ activities
26	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Location
27	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Safety/security
28	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
29	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
30	Infrastructure	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/ activities
31	Location	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Safety/security
32	Location	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
33	Location	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
34	Location	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/ activities
35	Safety	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
36	Safety	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
37	Safety	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/ activities
38	Value/cost	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Weather
39	Value/cost	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/ activities
40	Weather	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Attractions/ activities

SECTION D: CONFERENCE SERVICES

41	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Program
42	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Quality of food
43	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference image
44	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
45	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
46	Entertainment	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
47	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Quality of food
48	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference image
49	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
50	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
51	Program	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
52	Quality of food	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Conference image
53	Quality of food	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
54	Quality of food	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
55	Quality of food	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
56	Conference image	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Value/cost
57	Conference image	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation
58	Conference image	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
59	Value/cost	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Accommodation

60	Value/cost	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference
61	Accommodation	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Size of conference

SECTION E: CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES

62	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Advanced technology
63	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Free Wi-Fi
64	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Service quality
65	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Aircon/heating
66	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
67	Venue design	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
68	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Free Wi-Fi
69	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Service quality
70	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Aircon/heating
71	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
72	Advanced technology	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
73	Free Wi-Fi	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Service quality
74	Free Wi-Fi	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Aircon/heating
75	Free Wi-Fi	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
76	Free Wi-Fi	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
77	Service quality	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Aircon/heating
78	Service quality	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
79	Service quality	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
80	Aircon/heating	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Facilities/services
81	Aircon/heating	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience
82	Facilities/services	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Ambience

SECTION F: GENERAL CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES

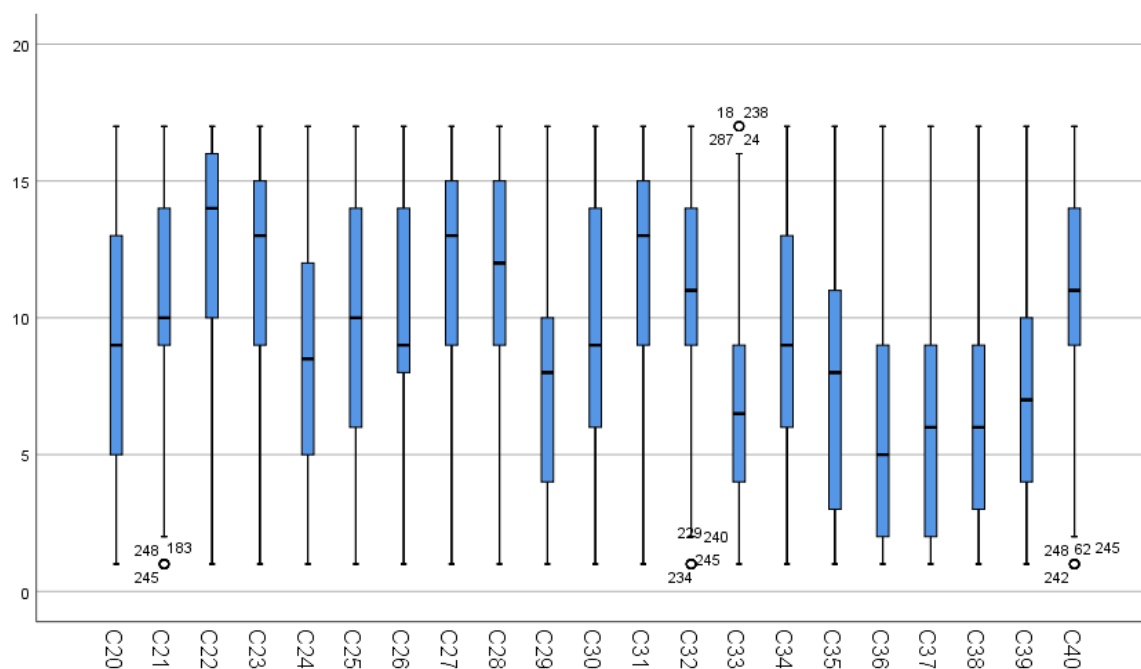
83	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Economic stability
84	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Community Engagement
85	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Promotion of business tourism
86	Political stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Environmental practices
87	Economic stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Community Engagement
88	Economic stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Promotion of business tourism
89	Economic stability	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Environmental practices

90	Community engagement	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Promotion of business tourism
91	Community engagement	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Environmental practices
92	Promotion of business tourism	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Environmental practices

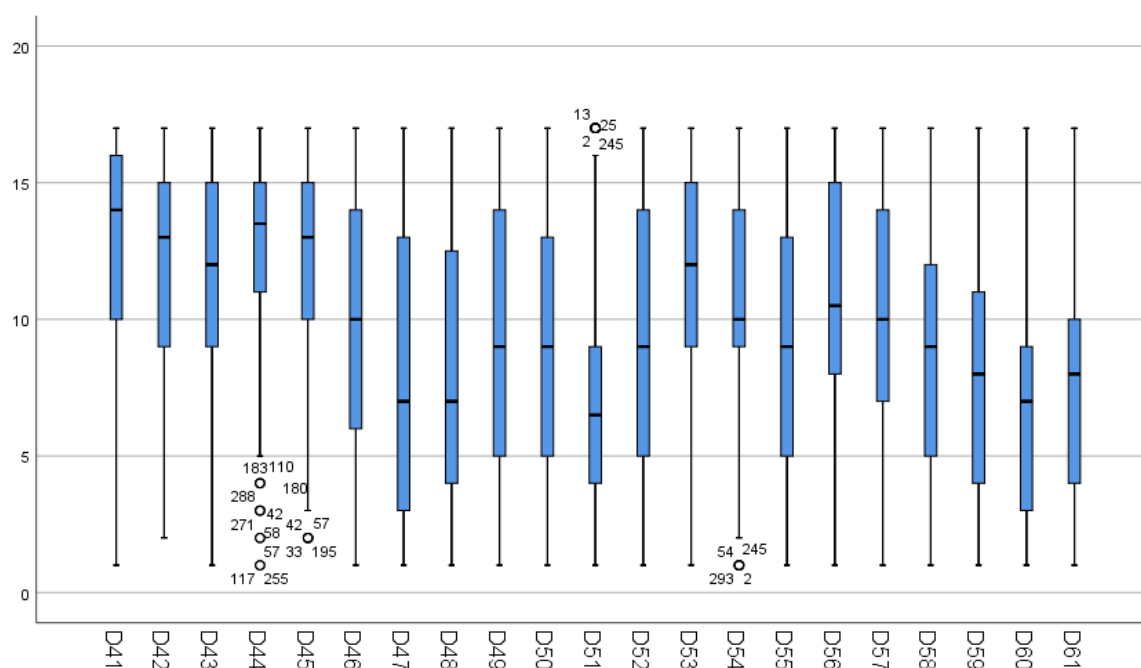
THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

APPENDIX 5

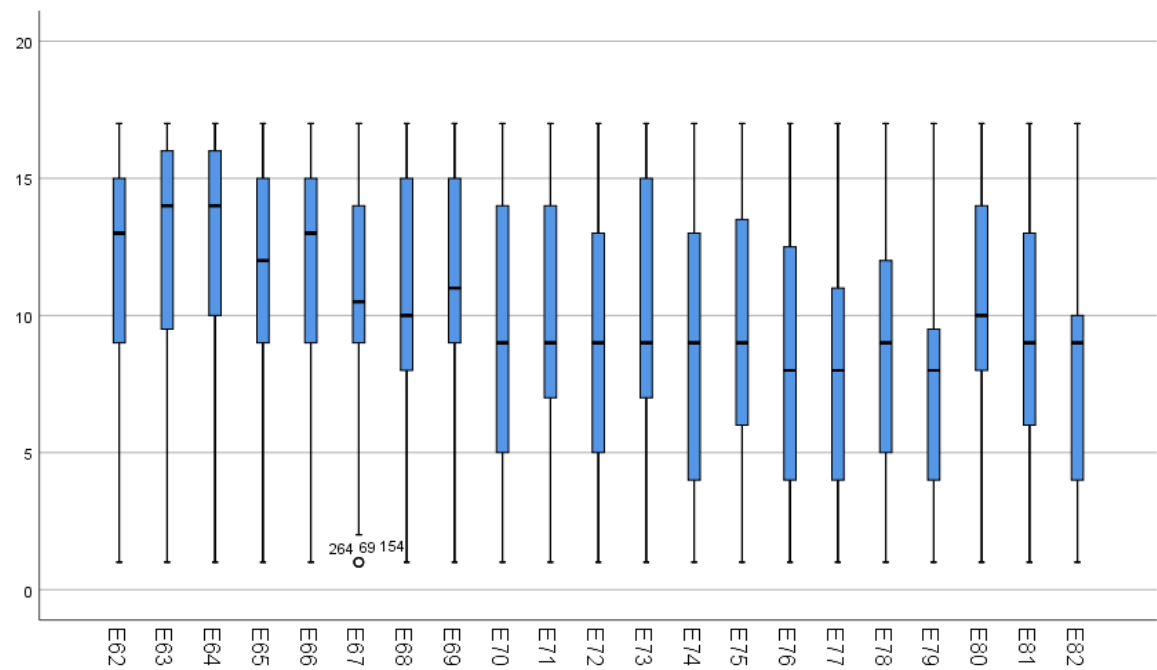
SECTION C – DESTINATION ELEMENTS



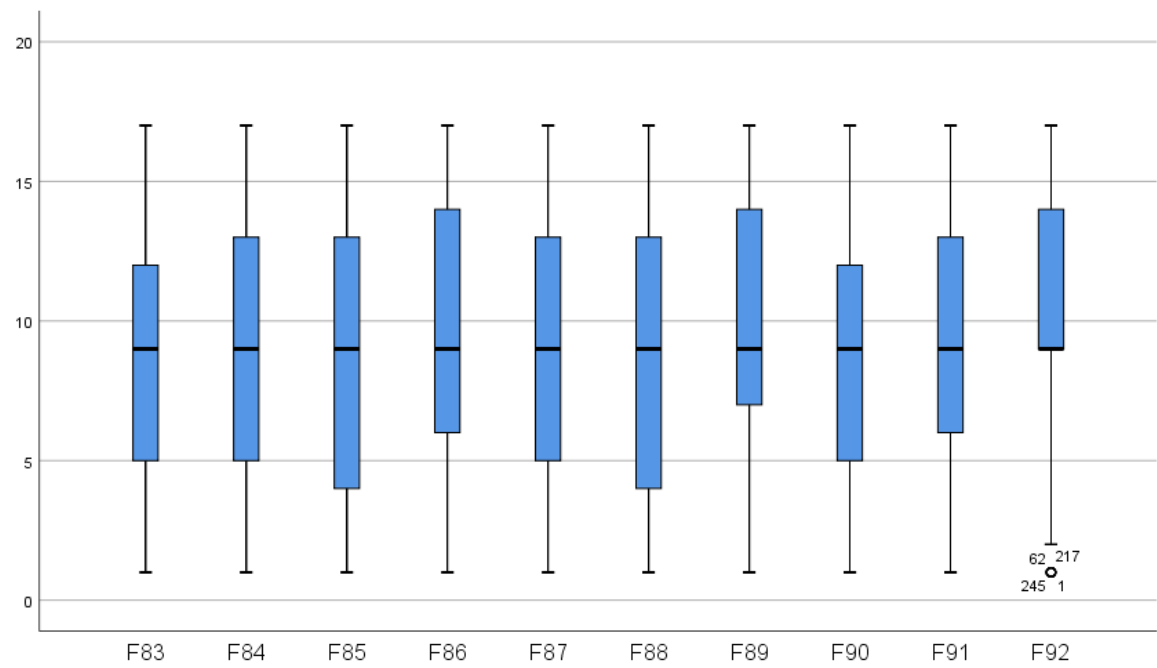
SECTION D – CONFERENCE SERVICES



SECTION E – CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES



SECTION F – GENERAL CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES



APPENDIX 6

CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES							
		B14	B15	B16	B17	B18	B19
N	Valid	288	290	284	287	289	285
	Missing	12	10	16	13	11	15
Std. Error of Mean		0,281	0,268	0,268	0,270	0,267	0,263
Std. Deviation		4,768	4,558	4,517	4,577	4,537	4,437
Variance		22,729	20,771	20,407	20,948	20,586	19,690
Skewness		-0,336	-0,330	-0,336	-0,149	-0,112	-0,193
Std. Error of Skewness		0,144	0,143	0,145	0,144	0,143	0,144
Kurtosis		-1,228	-1,061	-1,012	-1,126	-1,133	-0,950
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0,286	0,285	0,288	0,287	0,286	0,288
Range		16	16	16	16	16	16
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		17	17	17	17	17	17

DESTINATION ELEMENTS																							
N		C20	C21	C22	C23	C24	C25	C26	C27	C28	C29	C30	C31	C32	C33	C34	C35	C36	C37	C38	C39	C40	
	valid	287	282	284	286	286	280	286	284	284	285	282	285	284	285	281	276	282	279	283	280	283	
missing		13	18	16	14	14	20	14	16	16	15	18	15	16	15	19	24	18	21	17	20	17	
Std. Error of Mean		0,267	0,251	0,255	0,243	0,275	0,270	0,251	0,248	0,246	0,259	0,260	0,273	0,264	0,252	0,255	0,299	0,271	0,290	0,258	0,272	0,246	
Std. Deviation		4,526	4,223	4,292	4,102	4,657	4,510	4,244	4,184	4,142	4,377	4,366	4,605	4,450	4,259	4,280	4,974	4,548	4,842	4,337	4,548	4,144	
Variance		20,481	17,833	18,423	16,828	21,692	20,340	18,012	17,503	17,154	19,154	19,061	21,205	19,805	18,136	18,315	24,740	20,687	23,445	18,810	20,687	17,175	
Skewness		-0,132	-0,457	-1,179	-0,865	0,199	-0,322	-0,318	-0,917	-0,713	0,298	-0,091	-0,748	-0,497	0,478	-0,154	0,265	0,870	0,518	0,643	0,362	-0,575	
Std. Error of Skewness		0,144	0,145	0,145	0,144	0,144	0,146	0,144	0,145	0,145	0,144	0,145	0,144	0,145	0,144	0,145	0,147	0,145	0,146	0,145	0,146	0,145	
Kurtosis		-0,937	-0,501	0,744	0,068	-1,134	-0,861	-0,711	0,190	-0,242	-0,939	-0,966	-0,432	-0,743	-0,741	-0,888	-1,134	-0,220	-0,870	-0,526	-0,893	-0,381	
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0,287	0,289	0,288	0,287	0,287	0,290	0,287	0,288	0,288	0,288	0,289	0,288	0,288	0,288	0,290	0,292	0,289	0,291	0,289	0,290	0,289	
Range		16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Maximum		17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	

CONFERENCE SERVICES																						
N		D41	D42	D43	D44	D45	D46	D47	D48	D49	D50	D51	D52	D53	D54	D55	D56	D57	D58	D59	D60	D61
	valid	280	282	278	278	280	278	280	278	278	277	278	275	274	277	276	276	278	280	277	279	277
missing		20	18	22	22	20	22	20	22	22	23	22	25	26	23	24	24	22	20	23	21	23
Std. Error of Mean		0,227	0,225	0,258	0,221	0,218	0,273	0,308	0,300	0,296	0,294	0,282	0,282	0,264	0,251	0,285	0,281	0,279	0,260	0,286	0,288	0,283
Std. Deviation		3,798	3,775	4,296	3,679	3,652	4,544	5,160	5,003	4,927	4,889	4,694	4,670	4,374	4,177	4,740	4,673	4,653	4,346	4,760	4,804	4,715
Variance		14,423	14,247	18,457	13,538	13,335	20,647	26,622	25,025	24,278	23,898	22,034	21,807	19,135	17,448	22,467	21,834	21,649	18,890	22,661	23,078	22,229
Skewness		-0,971	-0,636	-0,583	-1,096	-0,949	-0,294	0,264	0,427	-0,017	0,131	0,498	-0,064	-0,579	-0,436	-0,072	-0,447	-0,309	0,264	0,266	0,429	0,272
Std. Error of Skewness		0,146	0,145	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,147	0,147	0,146	0,147	0,147	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,146	0,146
Kurtosis		0,397	-0,184	-0,596	0,754	0,479	-1,052	-1,254	-1,090	-1,234	-1,149	-0,878	-1,143	-0,544	-0,513	-1,209	-0,865	-1,099	-0,920	-1,031	-0,958	-0,968
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0,290	0,289	0,291	0,291	0,290	0,291	0,290	0,291	0,291	0,292	0,291	0,293	0,293	0,292	0,292	0,292	0,291	0,290	0,292	0,291	0,292
Range		16	16	16	16	15	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Minimum		1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17

CONFERENCE VENUE FACILITIES																							
N		E62	E63	E64	E65	E66	E67	E68	E69	E70	E71	E72	E73	E74	E75	E76	E77	E78	E79	E80	E81	E82	
	valid	277	274	274	274	272	273	276	272	272	274	273	274	275	274	274	271	272	274	271	275	275	
missing		23	26	26	26	28	27	24	28	28	26	27	26	25	26	26	29	28	26	29	25	25	
Std. Error of Mean		0,266	0,251	0,232	0,263	0,247	0,247	0,298	0,290	0,305	0,290	0,287	0,301	0,299	0,299	0,306	0,288	0,286	0,279	0,267	0,270	0,273	
Std. Deviation		4,433	4,157	3,835	4,361	4,078	4,086	4,949	4,779	5,027	4,797	4,739	4,977	4,954	4,951	5,059	4,745	4,724	4,616	4,397	4,481	4,533	
Variance		19,655	17,283	14,704	19,021	16,633	16,697	24,497	22,837	25,270	23,014	22,456	24,775	24,543	24,511	25,592	22,514	22,312	21,309	19,333	20,082	20,548	
Skewness		-0,711	-1,019	-1,215	-0,609	-0,804	-0,371	-0,349	-0,600	-0,155	-0,289	0,054	-0,273	0,018	-0,150	0,173	0,388	0,036	0,383	-0,437	-0,140	0,354	
Std. Error of Skewness		0,146	0,147	0,147	0,147	0,148	0,147	0,147	0,148	0,148	0,147	0,147	0,147	0,147	0,147	0,147	0,148	0,148	0,147	0,148	0,147	0,147	
Kurtosis		-0,397	0,308	1,249	-0,568	-0,067	-0,558	-0,948	-0,666	-1,136	-0,967	-0,992	-1,008	-1,137	-1,071	-1,155	-0,836	-0,975	-0,789	-0,623	-0,880	-0,784	
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0,292	0,293	0,293	0,293	0,294	0,294	0,292	0,294	0,294	0,293	0,294	0,293	0,293	0,293	0,293	0,295	0,294	0,293	0,295	0,293	0,293	
Range		16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
Maximum		17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	

GENERAL CONFERENCE ATTRIBUTES											
N		F83	F84	F85	F86	F87	F88	F89	F90	F91	F92
	valid	274	272	274	270	273	274	273	271	273	273
Missing		26	28	26	30	27	26	27	29	27	27
Std. Error of Mean		0,280	0,296	0,306	0,288	0,280	0,291	0,275	0,281	0,269	0,272
Std. Deviation		4,641	4,881	5,073	4,739	4,620	4,810	4,548	4,619	4,453	4,499
Variance		21,542	23,827	25,737	22,454	21,343	23,132	20,681	21,339	19,825	20,239
Skewness		-0,025	-0,082	0,051	-0,185	0,077	0,142	-0,180	0,112	-0,123	-0,396
Std. Error of Skewness		0,147	0,148	0,147	0,148	0,147	0,147	0,147	0,148	0,147	0,147
Kurtosis		-0,903	-1,170	-1,240	-0,950	-1,031	-1,078	-0,907	-1,003	-0,831	-0,699
Std. Error of Kurtosis		0,293	0,294	0,293	0,295	0,294	0,293	0,294	0,295	0,294	0,294
Range		16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16	16
Minimum		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Maximum		17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17

- ❖ Minimum – This is the minimum, or smallest, value of the variable.
- ❖ Maximum – This is the maximum, or largest, value of the variable.
- ❖ Mean – This is the arithmetic mean across the observations. It is the most widely used measure of central tendency. It is commonly called the average. The mean is sensitive to extremely large or small values.
- ❖ Std. – Standard deviation is the square root of the variance. It measures the spread of a set of observations. The larger the standard deviation is, the more spread out the observations are.
- ❖ Variance – The variance is a measure of variability. It is the sum of the squared distances of data value from the mean divided by the variance divisor..
- ❖ Skewness – Skewness measures the degree and direction of asymmetry. A symmetric distribution such as a normal distribution has a skewness of 0, and a distribution that is skewed to the left, e.g. when the mean is less than the median, has a negative skewness.
- ❖ Kurtosis – Kurtosis is a measure of tail extremity reflecting either the presence of outliers in a distribution or a distribution's propensity for producing outliers

APPENDIX 7



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ETHICAL CLEARANCE –

Me.L Welthagen

This letter serves to confirm that the research project of, Lisa Welthagen with the title "*A conceptual framework towards conference tourism competitiveness* " has undergone ethical review. The proposal was presented at a Faculty Research Meeting and accepted. The Faculty Research Meeting assigned the project number EMS14/10/16-02/04 This acceptance deems the proposed research as being of minimal risk, granted that all requirements of anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent are met. This letter should form part of your dissertation manuscript submitted for examination purposes.

Yours sincerely

Prof M Saayman Director: TREES

APPENDIX 8

19 November 2018

Ms Lisa Welthagen
Subject Head and lecturer
Faculty of Management Sciences
Tshwane University of Technology

Certifying editing

I, Magrietha Maria Engelbrecht, herewith certify that I edited the thesis submitted by Ms LC Welthagen in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Tourism Management at the North-West University.

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