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**Tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal brand image and brand loyalty**

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## DECLARATION

I, Pamela, Sinenhlanhla Mhlongo, the undersigned, hereby declare that this dissertation titled '*Tourists' Perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal Brand Image and Brand Loyalty*', submitted for a Master's degree in Recreation and tourism Studies, at the University of Zululand, is my own work and has not been formally submitted to any other university for a degree. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the University of Zululand.



06-2019

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**Signature**

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**Date**

## DEDICATION

I hereby dedicate this study to my siblings (Noxolo Nxumalo and Andile Buthelezi) who I pray will have the strength, determination and courage from this endeavor to aspire for greater things in life. I hope they remember that there's nothing you cannot achieve if you put your mind to it. I also wish to dedicate this project to my family as a whole. Without your patience and continued support, there's no doubt I wouldn't be where I am today. This reminds me of an old Zulu saying '***Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu***'.



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## **ABSTRACT**

This research explored tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) destination brand image and brand loyalty. The researcher consulted literature (secondary data) in order to understand tourists' brand perception issues in a tourism destination. From the literature findings, the study aim and objectives were formulated. The researcher made use of quantitative research method (questionnaire survey) to collect usable primary data from 411 domestic and international tourists in KwaZulu-Natal. The target population for this study were tourists visiting major tourist attractions in KwaZulu-Natal (King Shaka International Airport, Richards Bay Airport, Pietermaritzburg Airport, Hluhluwe Game Reserve, uShaka Marine World, Durban and Richards Bay beach). Data analyses were done using IBM's SPSS Statistics, employing descriptive analysis (Frequency, Mean, Standard Deviation), bivariate analysis (Spearman's Correlation test, Mann Whitney U test), and Multivariate analysis (Reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha). The results show that most tourists were satisfied with their visit to KwaZulu-Natal, attached to the destination, and will likely to return to the destination. They are willing to recommend KwaZulu-Natal as a preferred tourism destination to their family and friends. Tourists have a very positive image of the KwaZulu-Natal brand as a tourism destination. They perceive KwaZulu-Natal as having a strong destination brand position. This study made key recommendations for KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination. KwaZulu-Natal tourism destination marketers should capitalise on the province' brand attributes that make the destination a strong brand to strengthen the destination's role in South Africa and globally as a culture and nature destination. Destination managers in KwaZulu-Natal should continue to market the destination based on its cultural and natural attributes, but also maintain and create opportunities for tourists who are more interested in meetings, events, sand-sea-sun, and visiting friends and relatives. These attributes give the destination its strong potential. KwaZulu-Natal should find ways of managing tourists' numbers (visitor steering) in different attractions within the destination, especially during their peak season, to avoid overcrowding.

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## ACRONYMS

### Acronyms

### Explanation

GDP Gross

Domestic Product

KZN

KwaZulu-Natal

SAT

South African Tourism

SPSS

Statistical Package for Social Sciences

UNWTO

United Nations World Tourism Organisation

UNIZULU

University of Zululand

TKZN

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Milne and Ateljevic (2001) state that the tourism industry has become an important sector that exerts great effects on the economic development of nations. In South Africa, the tourism industry has contributed more than 9% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) over the past three years via its direct and indirect impacts, and has also provided over 1.4 million employment opportunities (South African Tourism, 2015). The tourism industry needs to be quite competitive in relation to the continuously changing trends and increasing tourists' expectations (Okumuş & Yasin, 2008). When destinations market themselves, they need to take into consideration the tourists' perceptions towards the image of the destinations as this is one of the most influential factors that impact on tourists' decision making process of choosing a destination. A destination with a positively stronger brand image is more likely to be selected over others with weaker images (Lopes, 2011).

According to Rajesh (2013), the tourists' overall destination loyalty towards a destination is influenced by many factors: firstly, the perceptions that tourists have before travelling to a particular destination; secondly, the perceptions that tourists have towards the destination image; and thirdly, the overall satisfaction of experiences tourists received while at the destination. Therefore, Artuğer, Çetinsöz and Kiliç (2013) conclude that loyalty is largely influenced by the perceived level of satisfaction that tourists have towards their overall destination experience. They argue that the positive experience tourists have enriches the intent to return as well as ensures that a positive word-of mouth is spread about the destination.

Many of the previous studies on destination brand image were conducted outside the

African continent. Therefore, this study focused on a popular tourist destination region in Africa; namely, KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa. This research study evaluated tourists' perceptions of the brand image and tourists' destination brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal. Research results obtained from this dissertation will benefit the tourism destinations in KwaZulu-Natal, and help them understand the driving factors that make tourists want to visit a particular destination, and return to it. This research will also benefit destinations in KwaZulu-Natal as they will know how to better market their destinations, since they would have the tourists' insight from this study as to where KwaZulu-Natal lacks in terms of destination branding. In South Africa, the province of KwaZulu-Natal is popular for its strong heritage and cultural experiences, its mountains, rolling hills and pristine beaches, world heritage sites, warm climate and diverse local communities who take pride in their different cultures and languages. These are all factors that might influence a tourist to choose KwaZulu-Natal as their preferred destination. However, tourists may have other expectations coming to South Africa. This study has indeed endeavored to unearth these, and provide a conceptual model of preferred tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal brand image.

This dissertation's structure is outlined as follows; chapter one presents the study's preliminary literature review, research problem statement, research questions, objectives, as well as a short methodological approach of how the primary data was collected and analysed. Additionally, this chapter discusses the significance of the study and its delineation and shows the structure of the dissertation.

## **1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

According to Morgan and Pritchard (1998:140), in a tourism context, a destination brand "represents a unique combination of product characteristics and added values, both functional and non-functional, which have taken on a relevant meaning, which is inextricably linked to that brand, awareness of which might be conscious or intuitive". Baloglu and Brinberg (1997) and Baloglu and McCleary (1999) emphasise the concept of destination image as the consumer's emotional interpretation resulting from both his/her own knowledge and beliefs about the destination, and his/her emotional evaluation of it. In these terms,

image is strongly related to customer satisfaction. Rajesh (2013) suggests that the tourists' overall destination loyalty is influenced by the perceptions that they have before travelling to the destination, the perceptions that tourists have towards the destination image as well as the overall satisfaction of experience received while at the destination. It is clear, therefore, that tourists' perceptions of a destination such as its brand image is considered to have a major influence on destination choice and brand loyalty (Gao & Zhang, 2009) as potential tourists are able to compare the attributes of different destinations during their decision making process of whether they are going to visit that destination or not.

### **1.2.1 Destination Brand Image**

According to Blain, Levy and Richie (2005) destination branding is a variety of marketing activities that support the creation of name of the destination, symbol, word, logo, mark or other graphic that readily identifies and separates a destination. This may consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination, serving to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination. Keller (2003) defines brand image as the perceptions about the brand as reflected by brand associations held in customer memory. Therefore, a brand image culminates from the total sum of impressions that consumers receive from many sources, all of which combine to form a brand personality.

Destination brand image has been studied and defined by various authors such as (Lopes, 2011; Gao & Zhang, 2009; Hosany, Ekinici & Uysal, 2007; Morrison & Anderson, 2002). Keller (2003) defined brand image as the sum of brand perceptions as reflected by the brand association retained in customer memory. Brand image is driven by the way in which a group of people or an individual perceives a product or service, a brand, an organisation or a destination. Lopes (2011) conducted a study on 'destination image' and summarized that the overall image of a destination constitutes of cognitive and effective components and destination image can influence the visitors' decision to visit a particular destination. Hence Lopes (2011) reported on the importance of the destination image of a country and how it affects the market and plays a vital role in the tourists' choice of destination or repeat visit. The image of destinations can also range from those based on more unique features, from events to feelings (Bigne, Sanchez & Sanchez, 2001).

Destination brand image can be acknowledged as one of the most significant elements of a destination (Lopes, 2011) as it plays a role in creating the satisfaction of the customers and characteristics of the product or services are influenced by the consumers' perception of the brand. Destination brand image is also important as it has a strong influence on a tourist's motivation, preferences and behaviour towards tourism products or services that contribute to the pull factor for an individual to visit a destination (Ezeuduji, November & Haupt, 2016).

KwaZulu-Natal as a regional tourism destination should therefore, position itself in a way that attracts tourists to the destination, because of the impact it should have on tourists' motivation, preferences and behaviour towards it. The attitude and image that tourists have about destinations in KwaZulu-Natal can influence their decision making process to visit the province. If tourists have positive symbolic representations for KwaZulu-Natal, this will work in the province's favour. Tourists may perceive a destination to be 'natural', 'fun', relaxed, 'vibrant', 'sleepy'.

### **1.2.2 Destination Brand loyalty**

According to Lee, Lawrence and Cunningham (2001), customer loyalty is a tendency of customers, based on previous experiences and their expectations for the future, to be customers of the existing suppliers again. In other words, it is a display of attitudes of customers towards of product categories, brands, stores and services (Uncles, Dowling, & Hammond, 2003). The overall destination is influenced by the perceptions that tourists have about that particular destination image as well as the overall satisfaction that tourists received during their stay at a destination (Rajesh, 2013). The tourists perception of a destination, the destination image and tourists satisfaction, can lead to destination loyalty.

It can be said that brand loyalty is built overtime through a collection of positive experiences that require consistent effort and attention to detail (Manternach, 2010), hence loyal customers are usually repeat tourists who visit a destination without considering other options available to them. Tourists who are loyal to a destination brand frequently recommend the brand to others, buy more, and buy more regularly (Manternach, 2010).

### **1.2.3 Brand Attachment**

Shestakov (2012) states that brand attachment references a brand and involve assessments of the bond or attitude. He adds that high levels of the respective constructs are based on sub substantial processing regarding the brand. A relevant indicator of commitment is the extent to which the individual remains loyal to the brand. This can come through emotional attachment of a place, event or product. Loyalty may therefore indicate the level of emotional attachment that customers have to a brand. The strength of emotional attachment to an object may also be associated with an investment in the object, that is, the willingness to forego immediate self-interest to promote relationship (Thomson, MacInnis & Park, 2005).

Tourists tend to project their own personality on a brand that they are using and thus creating an emotional bond with them. The bond that tourists create affects their visiting behaviour enabling a brand to establish loyalty features and thus resulting in the tourists' repeat visit to a destination. Brand attachment also possesses marketing value as it assists tourists choose a brand from a set of available brands in a certain market since it is based on emotional bond between the tourists' self and the tourists' perceived representations of a brand's personality (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegger, 2011).

### **1.2.4 Destination Brand Position**

Destination brand positioning has been defined as a process of establishing and maintaining a distinctive place for a destination in the minds of travellers in the target markets (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 2002). According to Keller, Aperia and Goergson (2008) brand positioning is the act of designing a company's offer and image so it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target consumers mind and this act is the heart of marketing strategy. Brand positioning is also not what you do to the product itself; it is how you position the product in the prospects' mind (Keller, Aperia & Goergson, 2008). The brand positioning of a destination can help guide the marketing strategy for that destination. A good brand positioning clarifies what the brand is all about, how similar it is to competitive brands, how unique it is and why consumers should purchase and use the brand (Keller, Aperia & Goergson, 2008). Theoretically, 'positioning' holds the key to differentiation and competitive advantage (Lovelock, 1991).

### **1.3 THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS**

This research study was guided by a combination of ideas (theoretical framework) on the destination brand image (Lopes, 2011; Gao & Zhang, 2009; Morrison & Anderson, 2002) and destination brand positioning (Ezeuduji, 2015; Kotler, Haider & Rein, 2002). Research undertaken by the above mentioned authors assisted this study in examining the relationship between the two concepts. He also validated that there is a strong relationship between destination brand image and brand positioning.

The conceptual framework was used to analyse the tourists' perceptions of brand image and brand positioning on the one hand, and how these perceptions relate to their KwaZulu-Natal destination brand loyalty. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study provided focus for the design, implementation and analysis of data for the evaluation of tourists' perceptions on destination brand image and brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal province. The knowledge of the customers' brand image for the products and services offered are very important for the marketers to optimise the businesses' offerings to establish brand loyalty.

### **1.4 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

When tourists travel to a destination or decide on which destination they want to visit, there are many factors that influence their decision making process such as the destination brand awareness, destination brand image, destination brand quality, and destination competitive factors. This study has therefore, focused on the tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal brand image and brand loyalty, because brand image reflects how tourists think of the destination brand, its brand quality and competitiveness. A positive brand image in tourists' mind is likely to draw tourists to be loyal to the destination. In South Africa, the Zulu Kingdom in the province of KwaZulu-Natal is popular to tourists who visit the province for its known heritage and cultural experience offerings, although how tourists perceive this destination and its drawing power to tourists is clearly undocumented and unknown. This region is quite distinct for its local communities' pride in local heritage, most especially the isiZulu language, culture and the prevalence of the spirit of '*Ubuntu*' – humanity (Ezeuduji & Nkosi, 2017).

KwaZulu-Natal, a coastal South African province, is also known for its warm weather, clean beaches, and friendly communities with different languages. KwaZulu-Natal is also known for its mountains and savannah, populated by big game. There are major cities in KwaZulu-Natal Province. Durban for example has plenty of tourism offerings as tourists can visit the South Coast Circuit and catch a shuttle to Margate, play golf, enjoy fishing and visit a crocodile farm. Tourists can also visit the city of Pietermaritzburg that has a wide range of shops, beautiful hotels and restaurants, country inns, recreational resorts and game reserves of the Natal Midlands and the Drakensberg. Destination brand loyalty can be regarded as an attitudinal construct and it can be clearly argued that their loyalty towards a destination is affected by the experience they get from that destination which in turn is affected by different factors (Aaker & Erich, 2000). Destination loyalty has been getting more attention for its greater significance in destination marketing and management for a long time as competition and loyal visitors' importance grow faster (Han & Back, 2008; Hsu & Cai, 2009).

Destination image is one of the motivators in the travel and tourism industry. The attitudes and perceptions customers have towards a particular tourism product or destination influences the buying need of an individual (Nel & Strydom, 2004). Other researchers have done studies similar to this research topic, such as Ezeuduji, Lete, Correia and Taylor (2014) who studied the destination brand positioning of Sun City in South Africa; Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2017) who explored destination competitiveness and brand essence in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal; and Anastassova (2011) who studied tourist loyalty and destination brand image perception in Bulgaria, amongst others. Therefore, this study intended to explore the perceptions that tourists' have of destination brand image and brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal, as the above authors have not done a study on this topic in KwaZulu-Natal before. This study also provided insight as to how tourism destinations in the province of KwaZulu-Natal can position themselves in this very competitive industry so that tourists favour KwaZulu-Natal as their destination of choice.

## 1.5 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Image will have an impact on the destination selection process of tourists, the postselection assessment of the destination and whether they will prefer the destination in the future (Chi & Qu, 2008). The effect of destination brand image and brand loyalty on the selection of a destination though has been studied by various authors, but as pointed out earlier, has not been conducted in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa (such as Ezeuduji & Nkosi, 2017; Ezeuduji, Lete, Correia & Taylor, 2014; Artuğer, Cetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013; Shestakov, 2012; Anastassova, 2011).

Brand loyalty is an important factor as when tourists are loyal to a brand or destination it means return visit to a destination and they also recommend a destination to friends and family. Destination image also affects the behavioural intention of tourists (Chi & Qu, 2008). They also found that destination image is a vital factor that motivates tourists to visit a particular destination as the way they perceive the destination can hinder their willingness to visit a destination or even recommend it to other people. With this being said, it means that tourism destinations need to always be on their toes as to providing excellent service to tourists, marketing their destination in a way that attract tourists to destinations and pay attention to the factors or tourists experiences that end up making tourists loyal to the destination brand.

The researcher argued that it is important that the province of KwaZulu-Natal identifies the driving factors that make tourists want to visit it as a destination and identify the tourists' brand image perceptions towards this province so that they can also improve their marketing strategies. The research problem revolves around the need to improve growth in the number of return visits by tourist to KwaZulu-Natal. This will enable the province of KwaZulu-Natal to have a competitive advantage over other tourism destinations both domestically and internationally. The researcher assessed how loyal tourists are towards the KwaZulu-Natal brand image as a tourism destination. The researcher looked at how tourists perceive the brand image and brand loyalty attributes, such as KwaZulu-Natal symbolic representations as a tourism destination, tourists' perception of KwaZulu-Natal

destination brand position, and if tourists are willing to recommend KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination and return to the province.

## **1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **Main Research Question:**

This study therefore poses this research questions:

How loyal are tourists to the KwaZulu-Natal brand image as a tourism destination?

### **Subsidiary Research Questions:**

The following subsidiary questions will help the researcher answer the main question.

- a. How do tourists perceive the KwaZulu-Natal symbolic representations (image) as a tourism destination?
- b. How do tourists perceive the KwaZulu-Natal destination position?
- c. What is the level of tourists' willingness to return to KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination?
- d. How willing are tourists to recommend KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination?
- e. How attached are tourists to brand image of KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination?

## **1.7 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

This study's research aim is as follows:

To assess how loyal tourists are towards the KwaZulu-Natal brand image as a tourism destination.

In an attempt to direct the research study, it is important to set clear objectives. The research study objectives will facilitate establishing the tourists' perceptions of destination brand image and brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal. The objectives of the research study are as follows:

- a. To evaluate how tourists perceive the KwaZulu-Natal symbolic representations (image) as a tourism destination.
- b. To analyse the tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal tourism destination position.

- c. To assess the level of tourists' willingness to return to KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination.
- d. To find out the tourists' willingness to recommend KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination.
- e. To analyse tourists' attachment to KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination.

### **1.8 SIGNIFICANCE AND INTENDED CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

Destination brand image and brand loyalty have been explored in a domestic and international academic arena. Nevertheless, there is no research data that has been conducted in brand loyalty and brand image of KwaZulu-Natal as a destination. This study is therefore, significant as the tourists' perceptions were assessed in terms of destination brand image and destination loyalty, for the province of KwaZulu-Natal. This will boost the province in their marketing efforts to attract and retain valuable tourists and in turn increase tourists' spending in the local economy.

Crouch (2010) conducted a study on destination competitiveness and found out that a destination's awareness and image is formed and created by many and varied forms of information that shape the perceptions of tourism consumers. It is important that destinations undertake marketing activities to brand and position a destination. This is why it is vital that a destination is able to brand and position itself to influence the tourist's decision in visiting that particular destination.

The research findings of this study are expected to help the province of KwaZulu-Natal when considering how tourists perceive destination brand image and brand loyalty, as these two factors influence their decision-making process when choosing a destination. It also helps them understand the contributing reasons that make tourists perceive a tourism destination in a certain way. Thus this study will be of benefit to KwaZulu-Natal as through it the destination managers will understand how tourists perceive KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination, and then make direct marketing efforts to strengthen positive perceptions and improve their offerings regarding negative perceptions. KwaZulu-Natal Tourism thrives on tourism volumes and the quality of the tourists' experiences.

## **1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research is a systematic process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting information (data) in order to increase our understanding of a phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013).

### **1.9.1 Research paradigm**

Quantitative research method, which is commonly used in tourism research, was used in this study (Veal, 2011). The nature of this study required numbers to generate information necessary to reach research conclusions.

### **1.9.2 Research design**

This study focused on the tourists' perceptions of the KwaZulu-Natal destination brand image and brand loyalty. The target population were tourists visiting major tourist attractions in KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Airport, King Shaka International Airport, Richards Bay Airport, Durban South and North beach, uShaka Marine World, Richards Bay Alkantstrand beach and Hluhluwe Game Reserve). The target population age group for this research study was 18 years old (adult age) and above. The researcher surveyed domestic and international tourists to find out if there are differences in opinions on KwaZulu-Natal tourism destinations.

The investigation of tourists' loyalty to the KwaZulu-Natal brand image as a tourism destination will be of great benefit to the province. Quantitative research method is a more viable approach for this paper, as most responses required from tourists will be better presented in numbers (Veal, 2011). It will also be better to use interview methods on individual tourists who will not have time to respond in a qualitative way. In the collection of data, a questionnaire survey method was used. Isaac and Michael (1997) posit that survey research can be used to answer questions raised, solve problems that have been posed, assess set goals, determine whether specific objectives have been met, establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, analyse trends across time, and generally, to measure what exists, in what amount, and in what context. Questionnaires are also suitable for this study as they can be easily distributed to respondents who might not have the time to sit down for an interview as they are on holiday to relax.

The questionnaire method was found suitable for this quantitative research as it involves numbers and lends itself to statistical analysis (Veal, 2011). This made it easier for the researcher to analyse data that was collected from the respondents. Explorable (2009) states that the quantitative research technique allows the researchers to generate numerical data, which will be represented by two-way frequency tables in order to explain what has been observed. Research data was collected through questionnaires which comprised mainly of close-ended questions as data obtained from the administration of closed questions are easier to analyse than data obtained from open questions. Closed-ended questions allowed the researcher to gather statistical data, which was represented in the form of numerical graphs.

### **1.9.3 Target population**

In research the word 'population' does not refer only to a group of individuals found in a specific environment, but a complete set of cases from which a sample can be drawn (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). Studying the entire parent population may be challenging, therefore it is important that, a sample of the population is drawn. In order to draw a reliable, valid and accurate sample, it is vital for the researcher to name the target population that is suitable for the research survey. O'Leary (2017) states that naming a population assists the researcher to know and characterise the population appropriately. The target population for the study consisted of both domestic and international tourists visiting KwaZulu-Natal. People who live in KwaZulu-Natal were excluded from this study. A screening approach had a particular delimitation as it did not include the participation of domestic tourists who are from KwaZulu-Natal. However, it ensured that day visitors are not referred to as tourists do not participate in this study.

For that reason, this study has used the non-probability sampling method. According to Kumar (2005), non-probability sampling is mostly used when the population under study cannot be easily identified or specified, or is unknown. Convenience sampling (nonprobability method) is used when the researcher selects a sample from a population based on what the researcher intends to achieve, or the researcher's judgement of the participants' likelihood to give the desired information. Hence, this is why the researcher has employed this method to conduct a study.

KwaZulu-Natal received about 900,000 foreign tourists in 2016 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2016), but the number of domestic tourists could not be estimated. Assuming the numbers of domestic tourists exceeds 1million, it is then safe to say that the overall tourists' arrivals can be estimated at 2million. Statistically speaking, if a probability sampling is to be used for this research, the researcher will require a sample size of 384 respondents to measure perceptions at 95% level of accuracy or confidence interval (The Research Advisors, 2006). This study used non-probability sampling (convenience sampling) as probability sampling was not feasible (data collection period is limited to the tourism high season in South Africa). This study, using non-probability method of data collection, had to envisage a sample size of 500. The researcher distributed a number of 500 questionnaires to respondents. A total number of 445 questionnaires were returned by respondents and 411 were valid questionnaires and used for analysis. Veal (2011:361-362) posits that in "non-probability sampling, the absolute size of the sample and the level is more important than the sample size relative to the population". Veal (2011) argues that the criteria for sample size determination are threefold: the required level of results' precision, the proposed details in analysis, and the budget available.

#### **1.9.3.1 Research sample**

A sample group can be described as a segment of the target population, which the research is based on (George, 2011). The information collected from the chosen sample group is then used as a representation of the entire population (George, 2011). The nonprobability sampling technique, which is the convenience sampling, was used. The sample size of this research study was 500 tourists (domestic and foreign) from KwaZulu-Natal, as argued above.

#### **1.9.4. Data collection tools**

The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from respondents (tourists).The questionnaires consisted of close-ended questions. The questionnaires were randomly handed out to the respondents to fill-in. The respondents who participated were tourists visiting the major tourist attractions in KwaZulu-Natal. The targeted population for this research study were tourists visiting major tourist attractions in KwaZulu-Natal (King Shaka International Airport, Richards Bay Airport, Pietermaritzburg Airport, Hluhluwe Game Reserve, uShaka Marine World, Durban and Richards Bay beaches).

The questionnaire consisted of three sections: Section A: General questions; Section B: Travellers' Profile; and Section C: The tourists' perceptions on destination brand image and brand loyalty. Section A and B questions are mostly nominal or categorical questions or variables, and section C includes 5 point Likert scale questions – ordinal variables (strongly agree to strongly disagree).

Questionnaire variables emanated from previous studies (such as Ezeuduji & Nkosi, 2017; Ezeuduji, 2015; Ezeuduji, Lete, Correia & Taylor, 2014; Artuğer, Cetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013; Shestakov, 2012; Anastassova, 2011; Lopes, 2011; Gao & Zhang, 2009; Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2007; Morrison & Anderson, 2002), to increase the validity and reliability of findings.

As this study is focussed on domestic and international tourists visiting KwaZulu-Natal, the researcher ensured that local residents of the particular province in which the data is collected were not included in the study. Thus, a screening question: Do you live in KwaZulu-Natal? was asked by the researcher in order to identify the desired respondents: Tourists living in this province will be excluded from the study. This screening method has a limitation, as it excluded the participation of domestic tourists who are from KwaZuluNatal. Nonetheless, it ensured that day visitors who are not referred to as tourists and do not participate in this study.

### **1.9.5 Data analyses**

Analysis of the collected research data was done using IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences, version 24 (IBM Corporation, 2016). The first stage of data analysis was conducted using descriptive analyses (frequencies, mean and standard deviation). The second stage of data analyses relied on bivariate analysis (comparing two variables) employing Correlation and Chi-Square tests. In the third and final stage of data analysis, the researcher conducted reliability tests for the Likert-scale sub-sections using Cronbach's Alpha. The results were presented using tables and graphs.

### **1.9.6 Validity and reliability of research**

Kumar (2014) defined reliability as a research procedure that assures the ability for another researcher to repeat the same process and obtain similar results. More so, Bernard (2013) states that validity refers to the accurate trustworthiness of research instruments, data and

findings. Kumar (2014) further articulates that validity is about making sure that correct procedures have been applied in any given research. 'External validity' of this research, regarded as the extent to which the researcher can generalise the obtained results from the sample size studied to a wider population, was increased with the relative large size of the sample to be surveyed (500). However, It is not possible in social sciences, as absolute validity cannot be guaranteed, based on the social dynamic nature of humans (Veal, 2011). 'Internal validity', the extent to which this study identifies and measures all relevant variables, is enhanced through the usage of variables identified already in literature, and other variables that come from the researcher's personal knowledge (Ezeuduji, 2013; Veal, 2011). It is also not possible in social sciences to obtain results that are completely reliable (achieving same results, if the research is repeated at a later stage using different respondents). Tourists, the subject of this study, do live in ever changing socio-economic situations, and therefore further studies are often needed to track their ever-changing conditions and needs (Ezeuduji, 2013).

When using a reliability and validity test it is also important for the researcher conduct a pilot study. According to Clement (2012), a pilot study can be described as the small scale investigation conducted prior to the data collection process of a larger study. The pilot study is conducted on a small amount of participants and allows the researcher to become aware of any problems in the data collection methods which may be corrected in preparation for the larger study (Clement, 2012). In this study, the researcher conducted a pilot survey on about 15 tourists in Richards Bay. This allowed the researcher to determine whether the questions being asked could be clearly understood, were relevant to the topic at hand and were able to produce the relevant answers of the study (Bernhardt & Geise, 2014).

### **1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION**

The principle underlying the research ethics are universally concerned with issues such as honesty and respect for the rights of research participants (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). The researcher sought to assess the tourists' perceptions of destination brand image and brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal and in doing so, the study was designed in a way that

attempts to focus on the expected ethical standards and principles related to research. Ethics is defined as a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or a group is subsequently widely accepted, and which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005).

Before collecting data to the field, the researcher had to receive ethical approval from the research committee. The study was given an approval and the ethical clearance number for this study is UZREC171110-03 PGM 2017/455 (see Appendix B). The researcher used the questionnaire survey method to get the participants' responses and in doing so, the researcher had to ensure that all participants of this research study were not forced to participate in the research. Their responses remained confidential and all respondents were above the age of 18 years old (adult age) and above. Research and academic plagiarism such as, failing to acknowledge all secondary sources used in the study and material cited, were precluded in this study.

### **1.11 RESOURCES**

The researcher made use of the University of Zululand's website for academics, known as UZ Space, to search for related and past academic papers written by other academics in the institution. The researcher also used books for definition purposes and to clarify terms that will be used within the context of the study. The University of Zululand's electronic database was used to access journal articles for this study.

### **1.12 INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY**

This research study and academic papers that will emanate from it will be the intellectual property of the researcher, the supervisor, and the University of Zululand.

### **1.13 KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION**

The researcher will present the research study findings to the University of Zululand's Faculty of Arts conference and in international conferences yet to be identified. Two or three

accredited journal articles are expected to be published out of this dissertation. Research results will also be presented to Tourism KwaZulu-Natal to support their planning process. If more and the 'right' tourists visit KwaZulu-Natal, this will benefit the destination and the KwaZulu-Natal local community, in terms of job creation.

## **1.14 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

This research study is divided into five chapters which will make it easier for the reader to understand. This was done to comply with organisational procedure which necessitates the researcher to fully describe the way the research has been planned, structured and executed in order to comply with scientific criteria (Magi, 2005). The five chapters are outlined below:

### **1.14.1 Chapter 1: Orientation of the study**

The first chapter serves as an introduction to other chapters and describes the overall character of the study. In this chapter the following aspects are to be covered: the research problem, the preliminary literature reviewed, followed by the research questions and objectives, the methodological approach of the data collection, the research significance and how the study was delineated. Lastly, this chapter showed how the subsequent chapters were structured.

### **1.14.2 Chapter 2: Literature review**

Chapter two discusses the literature reviewed. The chapter provides an overview of the tourists' perceptions in terms of destination brand loyalty and brand image. It focuses on some of the literature that relate to this research study. It also provides a conceptual framework for purposes of generating objectives and outcomes for the study.

### **1.14.3 Chapter 3: Methodology**

In this chapter, in-depth research design and methods of data collection and analyses will be provided.

### **1.14.4 Chapter 4: Results and discussions**

In this chapter, results that were generated from analyses will be presented and discussed in light of previous findings from authors who have worked on similar topics.

### **1.14.5 Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations**

Chapter five will outline conclusions and recommendations for this study. This chapter will give a summary of the findings and make recommendations pertaining to tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal destination brand image and brand loyalty.

### **1.15 CONCLUSION**

This research proposal has introduced the research problem statement and summarised all the important information regarding the research question of the study. The basic aim of the study was to assess how loyal tourists are towards the KwaZulu-Natal brand image as a tourism destination. This research focused on how tourists perceive the KwaZulu-Natal symbolic representations as a tourism destination. It will also analyse the tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal tourism destination position, assess the level of tourists' willingness to return to the province, and find out if they are also willing to recommend it as a tourism destination. Lastly, it will analyse the tourists' attachment to the province as a tourism destination. The next chapter (chapter two) will provide a detailed review of the literature.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

According to Adinolfi and Ivanovic (2015) since the South African first democratic elections in 1994, the tourism industry has grown and been identified as a priority sector because of the substantial economic benefits it brings to the country's economy. In 2016 South Africa was named the number one global adventure destination (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The positive word-of-mouth recommendation that South Africa receives puts it in the world map and increases the number of people who visit the country.

The tourism industry is among the biggest sources of financial action in the world. Travel and tourism create economic activity to more than 12% of worldwide aggregate Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2005). The tourism industry has also played an important role in developing the nations as jobs are created. Tourism has also remained a key driver of South Africa's national economy and contributes to job creation (Wijethung & Warnakulasooriya, 2014). Phiri (2016) concurred, that the tourism industry is key to the economic growth of South Africa. The province of KwaZulu-Natal in particular has benefited tremendously from the tourism industry since the 2010 Federation International de Football Association World Cup, which resulted in developed sports facilities (for example, Moses Mabhida stadium), a better and developed transport system (for example, King Shaka International Airport, that was opened in 2010 and better roads and telecommunications in infrastructure. All of these developments have helped put South Africa and the KwaZulu-Natal province on the map.

According to Statistics South Africa (2017) South Africa welcomed 10, 29 million foreign tourists in 2017, a 2.4% increase compared to 2016. In 2016 the tourism industry contributed over 9% to the country's Gross Domestic product (GDP) through its direct and indirect impacts as well as providing over 1.5 million job opportunities, a 9.8% of total employment (Statistics South Africa, 2017). African countries do however, still struggle with the daunting image challenge (perceptions over diseases, poverty and underdevelopment) which has resulted to the continent's adverse share of the global traveller numbers (Ezeuduji & Nkosi,

2017). Matiza and Oni (2014) posited that African destination management organisations should take control and learn how to manage their identities that make them unique so as to positively influence the images that their country has as tourist destinations. A nation needs to utilize its unique visual pictures, images and in addition, its conventional culture, and other bona fide components that will fill in as solid hotspots for their country image (Teodorović & Popesku, 2016). The province of KwaZulu-Natal takes pride and initiative in showcasing South Africa and its diverse people to the world through their annual event (Tourism Indaba) as it is one of the largest tourism marketing events in Africa. The tourism industry has become quite competitive with its continuously changing trends and increasing tourist expectations when they travel to a destination (Okumuş & Yaşin, 2008).

KwaZulu-Natal province has also put itself on the map by constantly hosting annual events such as the popular Comrades Marathon between Durban and Pietermaritzburg, the Duzi canoe marathon, an international surfing competition, the July Handicap horse-race, the Midmar Mile and the Dolphin Mile open-water swimming events, and the Amashova-shova cycle tour. These events help to attract tourists to the province in this very competitive industry. The importance of tourism and the entry of new destinations into the tourism market have forced all destinations to compete at a global level (Riege, Perry & Go, 2001) to reach many tourist markets (Ruzzier, Antoncic & Ruzzier, 2014). This strong global competition in the tourism industry forces destinations to develop unique, strong and competitive destination brands. Therefore, it is vital that the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa also has a strong destination brand so that it can compete with other destination brands. The perceptions that potential tourists have of KwaZulu-Natal can also have an enormous influence on the viability and long-term survival of KwaZulu-Natal as a favoured tourist destination (Prayag, Hosany & Odeh, 2013). Hence, the perceived destination image that tourists have is an essential part of their behaviour as it could potentially influence their satisfaction, intention to return and as well as the positive word of mouth (Wijethunga & Warnakulasooriya, 2014).

Rajesh (2013) also suggests that the tourists' overall destination loyalty is greatly influenced by the perceptions that they have before deciding to travel to the destination, the perceptions

that tourists have towards the destination image as well as their overall satisfaction of experience received while at the destination. Therefore, it is clear that tourists' perceptions of a destination considered to have a high influence on destination choice and brand loyalty (Gao & Zhang, 2009) as potential tourists are able to compare the attributes of different destinations during their decision making process of whether they are going to visit that particular destination or not. Taking the above statement into consideration, it can therefore be maintained that destinations are compete based on their general perceived image (Wijethunga & Warnakulasooriya, 2014).

Much of the previous studies on destination brand image were conducted outside the African continent. This study focused on a popular tourist destination region in Africa, namely; KwaZulu-Natal Province in South Africa. This study at the beginning evaluated literature from previous authors based on tourism destination brand image and brand loyalty. This served as a base upon which the empirical part of the study was conducted.

This chapter, therefore, focuses on the review of literature on the tourists' perceptions on the brand image and tourists' destination brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal. The review of this literature contributed in identifying the factors that may influence the perception of tourists as they form an overall image of a destination. Surely, tourists will have certain expectations coming to South Africa. The focus of this chapter is to endeavor to unearth these, and provide a conceptual model of how tourists may perceive a destination such as that of KwaZulu-Natal.

## **2.2 TOURIST PERCEPTION OF DESTINATIONS**

According to Dimmock (2012), perception is an emotional process by which the physical inputs of an individual are processed, organised and interpreted. While Okumuş and Yaşın, (2008) propose that the perceptions that tourists are likely to have about a particular destination represent their level of knowledge about the destination's attributes (expected quality of experience provided and offerings).

The manner by which tourists perceive a destination is also thought to have a strong influence on destination choice (Gao & Zhang, 2009) as potential tourists are able to compare the attributes of various destinations at some stage of their decision making process. Hence, Prayag, Hosany and Odeh (2013)) argue that destinations that are perceived to meet and exceed travel expectations are more likely to be chosen over rival destinations.

### **2.2.1. Factors that influence tourist Perception of a destination**

According to Hosany and Martin (2012) tourists' overall perception of a destination is strongly influenced by three key factors. Firstly, perception is influenced by the knowledge that tourists received before deciding to travel to a particular destination (Hosany & Martin, 2012). Secondly, perception is formed by the attitudes that a tourist has towards the quality, attractiveness and value of the experience received while at a destination (Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). Hence, Quintal and Polczynski (2010) add that the tourists' attitude towards the overall experience that they receive at a destination could influence whether or not they choose to return to that destination. A negative experience could result in the tourists deciding not to return, not recommending the destination as well as discouraging others to visit, through negative word-of-mouth. Lastly, the information that tourists received before visiting a destination as well as the experience received while at the destination are combined to form an overall inference of the destination (Hosany & Martin, 2012).

This knowledge can be gathered through different sources such as the media, word-of-mouth, news as well as the marketing campaigns of the travel destination. Since the tourism products are produced and experienced concurrently, a tourist is for that reason not able to test the experience before travelling to a destination.

International tourists might perceive KwaZulu-Natal as an undeveloped province that lacks tourism facilities or adequate infrastructure due to negative media coverage or word-of-mouth. However as much as it is still a developing province, KwaZulu-Natal has beautiful museums (including the Msunduzi Museum that depicts the heritage of different cultural groups of KwaZulu-Natal), attractions (uShaka Marine World in Durban), heritage Park (such as eMakhosini Valley, birthplace of King Shaka), warm beaches and history-filled

townships. The tourists' negative perceptions of a destination may lead to them being hesitant to visit this destination due to negative media coverage, reviews, and word-of-mouth. These play a vital role on tourist decision making processes before travelling. Go and Govers (2011) also propose that the information accumulated before a traveler goes to a destination in this way furnishes tourists with a pre-experience of what can be relied upon when going to the destination.

### **2.3 DESTINATION BRAND IMAGE**

As indicated by Ezeudji, November and Haupt (2016) brand image is centered on the manner by which a group of individuals or an individual sees a specific brand. Brand image can be alluded to as the entirety of brand observations that are reflected by the brand affiliation held in purchaser's memory (Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011). A strong brand image is vital to tourists because the brand image differentiates the brand from other competing brands (Mabkhot, Shaari & Salleh, 2017). The KwaZulu-Natal brand is different from other destination brands as it is popular among tourists from Africa and the rest of the world who look for a unique blend of vibrancy, cultural diversity, sophistication and excitement in a beautiful setting. The province may be perceived as fun, culturally rich, relaxing, and inspiring. The name KwaZulu meaning 'the place of the Zulu people' is also a strong brand image (see also Ezeudji & Nkosi, 2017) on its own as it attracts tourists who are interested in learning more about the Zulu customs (in KwaNongoma there is an annual event called The Reed dance, for virgin Zulu girls) and what it means to be Zulu.

Nel and Strydom (2004) put forward that attitudes and perceptions consumers have towards a destination or tourism products impacts on the purchasing decisions of these consumers. When tourists support a brand they will probably have constructive views of it. Hence Go and Govers (2011) talk about positive picture building. Destination brand image has also been studied and defined by various authors such as (Bruwer, Pratt, Saliba & Hirche, 2017; Ezeudji, November & Haupt, 2016; Jraisat, Akroush, Alfaouri, Qatu & Kurdieh, 2015; Artuğer, Çetinsöz & Kiliç 2013). Brand image has therefore been recognised as one of the most important elements of a destination (Lopes, 2011). Hence, as destination image is also one of motivators in the travel and tourism industry, since the attitudes and

perceptions customers have towards a tourism product or destination influences the buying power of an individual (Nel & Strydom, 2004). It can therefore be said that a destination brand is a way to distinguish a destination from its competitors, a way to communicate destination's uniqueness to tourists and establish a unique look that all destination stakeholders can constantly use (Amujo & Otubanjo, 2012; Anholt, 2011).

The competitiveness of the tourism industry has led to a broad range of destinations and tourist activities that potential tourists can choose from when they travel. In KwaZuluNatal, there is a variety of attractions such as museums, beaches, and bird parks. The perception and images that potential tourists have towards a particular destination can strongly influence an individual's buying decision or return visit. Lopes (2011) further suggests that brand image can play an important role in creating the satisfaction of the customers and also, the characteristics of the product or services are influenced by the consumers' perception of the destination brand. Jamaludin, Johari, Aziz, Kayat and Yusof (2012) state that destination brand image is a mental perception made by tourists through multiple sources of information. Ayad and Shujun (2013) add that the perceptions that a tourist may have of a destination can also be based on all the destinations they have visited or have heard of.

Rajesh (2013) suggests that destination image is made up of two elements of image, which are the organic images and induced images. Organic images are formed by individuals themselves through past experiences with destinations and unbiased sources of information (i.e., reports, newspaper articles, movies and news (Sönmez & Sirakaya, 2002). This is why it is vital that destinations in the province of KwaZulu-Natal position themselves in a way to attract tourists as not only will they be competing in a very competitive industry to win over tourist, but also because the tourists decision making process to visit a destination is highly influenced by their perceptions of the image of a destination.

Destination brand image can therefore be acknowledged as a key element of any destination as it has a strong influence on a tourist's motivation, preferences and behaviour towards

tourism product or services that contribute to the pull factors for an individual to visit a destination (Ezeuduji, November & Haupt, 2016).

### **2.3.1 The symbolic value of brands**

Brands are perceived as symbolic by the fact that they are able to communicate information about the individual (tourists) using them (Escalas & Bettman, 2017; Solomon, 2015). This can suggest that if tourists have positive symbolic representations for KwaZulu-Natal as a preferred destination, this will work in the province's favour. Tourists may perceive a destination to be 'fun', relaxed, 'natural' and 'vibrant'. Thus, the symbolic properties of reference groups turn out to be associated with the brands those groups are perceived to use (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Tourists choose to use a product not only for its practical purposes but also for what they associate it with. In this way, the brand image and its symbolic value are created and reinforced by the brand community (Solomon, 2015; Berger & Ward, 2010).

### **2.3.2 Brand image and brand identity**

Previous studies have maintained that brand identity and brand image are key elements for a successful destination brand (Florek & Insch, 2011; Nandan, 2005). The two concepts are important as the relationship between destination brand image and brand identity tends to be linear. Brand image is linked to brand identity (Florek & Insch, 2011). Brand image thus, plays an important role in building brand identity (Li, Cai, Lehto & Huang, 2010). In a marketing perspective, although brand image and brand identity are related, they are also different.

The key difference between the two concepts is that brand image is an individual's perception of a particular brand, whereas brand identity originates from the firm (Nadan, 2005). Consumers tend to build a destination image in their minds based on the brand identity that has been projected by the tourism destination marketers. Ghodeswar (2008) elucidates that a brand must prioritise its focus on the brand identity that will enable its target customer to evaluate its particular brand accurately and properly. Researchers have strongly suggested that brand identity is a theoretical concept that would best be understood from the supply-side perspective (Kapferer, 2012; Nandan, 2005).

In line with what has been said by the above authors, Huang and Cai (2015) reason that image building comes one step closer to branding, but it lacks a critical link which is a brand identity. Therefore, destination image is critical in creating a positive and recognizable brand identity. This can be achieved through creating strong, unique and favorable associations that will lead customers to be loyal and favor a brand.

### **2.3.3 Factors that influence brand image**

Lopes (2011) states that brand image plays a significant role in creating the satisfaction of the consumers and the characteristics of the product or services are motivated by the perception of the brand. The tourists' perceptions of the destination brand image can be influenced by various aspects; some of which are discussed below.

#### **2.3.3.1 Previous travel experience**

Lopes (2011) posited that personal travel experience plays a significant role in the tourist future decision making when travelling to a destination. In addition, past experience is thought to have a greater influence than external source on brand image developed as tourists are inclined to place more value on their experience (Lopes, 2011). Past travel experience can increase the tourist's familiarity positively. This affects the way in which an individual perceives the image of a place or destination. Travel experience influences an individual's overall image of the tourist destination (Lopes, 2011).

Previous travel experience has been recognised as one of the most important elements of competitiveness of destinations. The attitude that an individual or tourist has towards the destinations' products and offerings' attributes has a strong influence over the buying behaviour of the tourist (Nel & Strydom, 2004). A tourist with positive perceptions of a brand image is more likely to visit the destination, recommend it to other people and revisit it in the future. Furthermore, Ezeudji, November and Haupt (2016) posit that brand image can be viewed as a multidimensional construct as it is highly influenced by various aspects, such as external information sources, cognitive and affective images, as well as by the direct experience of the tourist. Taking the above into consideration, it can be said that the tourist perceptions of a destination brand are formed due to numerous factors that are combined in order to form an overall image of a destination.

### **2.3.3.2 Perceived brand quality**

According to Ruzzier, Antoncic and Ruzzier (2014) perceived quality can be defined as the consumers' judgment of the superiority of a brand. Chow, Ling, Yen and Hwang (2017) add that though consumers may have a great awareness of a branded product or service, this does not suggest that they will perceive it to be of high quality. The perceived quality can shape the brand image, serve as a determinant in the brand equity model and increase the perceived value of the given brand in consumers' minds (Pike, 2016, Buil, De Chernatony & Martínez, 2013; Gartner & Ruzzier, 2011). Moreover, this means that a destination must constantly provide quality service or products to tourists so that their brand image is perceived in a good manner, as satisfied tourists become repeat purchasers of product or service and may also provide positive word of mouth to other people.

### **2.3.3.3 Tourist behaviours**

Destination brand image has been studied by various authors who found out that the overall image of the destination is highly influential not only on the destination selection process but also on tourist behaviours in general (Andrades-Caldito, Sánchez-Rivero & Pulido-Fernández, 2013; Harrison-Walker, 2011; Alcaniz, Garcia & Blas, 2009). According to Prayag and Ryan (2012) positive brand image can influence tourists' intentions to revisit the destination and to also spread a positive word-of-mouth to other people to consider visiting a destination, therefore it can be said that the two aspects have been the two most important behavioural consequences in destination image and post-consumption behaviour studies.

Previous research studies have revealed that overall image is one of the most significant elements to stimulate the intention to revisit the same destination (Andrades-Caldito, Sánchez-Rivero & Pulido-Fernández, 2013; Alcaniz, Garcia & Blas, 2009). HarrisonWalker (2011) defines word-of-mouth as informal, person to person communication between a communicator and a receiver in relationship to a brand, a product, an organisation, or a service. Word of mouth can have positive or negative effects on a brand. Considering the above arguments, it can be stated that tourists' general perceptions of a destination brand image can be influenced by many factors including tourists' behaviours as they affect the way visitors view a brand and affect their decision making process to visit a destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005).

#### **2.3.3.4 The role of cognitive images and affective images**

According to Rajesh (2013), cognitive image of a destination is defined as an individual's beliefs and knowledge about the attributes of the destination. These attributes are recreational facilities that a tourism destination has to offer such as; landscape, the weather, cuisine, transportation and attitudes of the local community members towards tourists. Alternatively, affective image relates to the emotional evaluation stage of an individual that relates to the feelings that the individual associates with the destination of travel in which the individual evaluates the strengths or weaknesses of the destination attributes (Lopes, 2011). These attributes include how individuals feel in a destination of travel; whether they feel, relaxed, happy, comfortable or scared, sleepy or gloomy. Beerli and Martin (2004) add that an affective image is the value that is attached to the destination. Affective images in the minds of the tourists can therefore be considered to be significant factors if one seeks to understand the tourists' behaviour in making travel choices.

Qu, Kim and Im (2011) express the view that the cognitive image can directly impact the general picture of a destination and furthermore, by implication, affect it through the affective image of a destination. Qu, Kim and Im (2011) additionally state that the interaction of cognitive and affective images depicts an overall image of a destination. Cognitive and affective images are interrelated in a way that the formation of an affective image depends on the cognitive image and its functions (Ezeuduji, November & Haupt, 2016).

#### **2.4 DESTINATION BRAND LOYALTY**

Mittal and Frennea (2010) state that customer loyalty is attained by the post-consumption experience of a product or service and it is different from concepts of brand image, brand trust, brand commitment and brand equity. Kirpalani (2014) defines brand loyalty as a form of repeated purchases by customers or tourists with a positive attitude towards the brand. Kirpalani (2014) indicates that brand loyalty consists of two components: commitment attributed to a strong attitude or liking for the brand and repeat purchase behaviour. Moreover, the attitudes that tourists have towards a destination are considered to be an important determinant when they decide to return to the destination (Ezeuduji, November &

Haupt, 2016). Kotler and Keller (2009) also maintain that brand loyalty is a commitment to rebuy or to re-patronise a preferred product or service. In the tourism industry, consumer brand commitment is regarded as important and is well known (Su, Hsu & Swanson, 2017; Ghafoor, Aslam, Nazir & Bashir, 2016; Ramaswami, Raju & Page, 2016; Chen & Phou, 2013; Lee & Shen, 2013; Royo-Vela & Casamassima, 2011; Hur, Ahn & Kim, 2011; Nawaz & Usman, 2011; Belaid & Temessek Behi, 2011; Iglesias, Singh & Batista-Foguet, 2011; Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011).

According to Lee and Shen (2013) countries that are still on the maturity stage of travel destination life cycle in the tourism industry rely greatly on loyal visitors. Tourism literature identifies four reasons destinations can benefit from promoting loyalty among tourists. First, marketing costs that are associated with attracting repeat tourists are lower than those associated with attracting newcomers (Correia, Kozak & Ferradeira, 2013; McKercher, Shoal, Ng & Birenboim, 2012). Second, repeat tourists create more revenue than new tourists (Li, Cai, Lehto & Huang, 2010). Third, repeat tourists tend to revisit a travel destination more frequently than newcomers (Artuğer, Çetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013; Alegre & Cladera, 2010). Lastly, repeat tourists are more likely to recommend a destination to other potential visitors (Mechinda, Serirat, Anuwichanont & Gulid, 2010).

Some studies revealed that there is a significant relationship between brand image and brand loyalty (Huang & Cai, 2015; Andreani, Taniaji & Puspitasari, 2012) as when tourists favour or have positive perceptions about a brand and become attached to it, they are also more likely to become loyal to the brand. Brand loyalty as defined by Odin, Odin, and Valette-Florence (2001) is the degree to which people are committed to a specific brand as shown both by their inner attitudes reflected in lasting biases toward a given brand, as well as by externally exhibited behaviours such as repeat purchases of a certain brand among other several alternatives to choose from. Clark and Melancon (2013) state that tourist loyalty can be associated with the destination brand name which can have positive connotations that affect tourists' attitudes that may contribute to their travel motivation and add to their satisfaction. This suggests that the attitude a tourist has towards a destination is considered to be an important determinant when deciding to return to a destination.

According to Neuts, Romão, van Leeuwen and Nijkamp (2013), destination loyalty has been considered a vital aspect of destination competitiveness as it has an effective form of destination promotion, without any marketing costs being incurred. Neuts, Romão, van Leeuwen and Nijkamp (2013) also further states that destination loyalty refers to the intention of tourists choosing to return to a particular destination as well as the possibility of these tourists to recommend the destination to others through positive word-of-mouth. The overall destination loyalty is greatly influenced by the perceptions that tourists have towards the destination image, before traveling to the destination as well as the overall satisfaction of experience received while at the destination (Rajesh, 2013).

Bandyopadhyay and Martell (2007) conducted a study on brand loyalty and revealed two dimensions of loyalty, namely attitudinal and behavioural loyalty. The behavioural loyalty dimension denotes the proportion of purchasing a brand repeatedly, and the attitudinal loyalty depicts the psychological commitment of consumer in the buying act. These types of consumers actually repeatedly buy a product and recommend it. For instance, tourists who are loyal to KwaZulu-Natal as a preferred destination of choice may in turn be repeat visitors and recommend it to others.

Kiliç and Sop (2012) identified three dimensions to measure destination loyalty: behavioural, attitudinal and composite loyalty. Firstly, behavioural loyalty refers to the tourists' willingness and the probability of them choosing to visit the destination in the future (Artuğer, Çetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013). Secondly, attitudinal loyalty refers to the emotional attachment that tourists have towards the destination (Kiliç, 2016). This dimension also involves the willingness of tourists to recommend others (friends and family) to visit the destination through the spread of positive word-of-mouth (Artuğer, Çetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013). Lastly, the intentions of tourists to be willing to recommend the destination to others as well as to return to the destination are combined to form composite loyalty (Kiliç, 2016).

Ezeuduji, November and Haupt (2016) also add that tourists that have a positive image towards a destination have higher intent to return to a destination and are more likely to encourage others to travel to it.

It can be said that brand loyalty is built overtime through a collection of positive experiences that require consistent effort and attention to detail (Manternach, 2010), hence loyal customers are usually repeat tourists who visit a destination without considering other options available to them. Tourists who are loyal to a destination brand frequently recommend the brand to others, buy more, and buy more regularly (Manternach, 2010).

#### **2.4.1 Brand loyalty and brand equity**

Brand equity has been associated with brand loyalty as it is one of the important elements that encompass the brand attitude, performance, name awareness, and image (Gursoy, Chen & Chi, 2014). It is believed that a differential response toward brand communication should be understood as brand equity, while the consumers purchase intentions and loyalty are the outcomes of brand equity (Oppermann, 2000). Brand equity is also said to have the value proposition that is built on the extent to which it has a high brand loyalty, strong brand associations, perceived quality, and other assets such as; trademarks, patents and channel relationships (Kotle, Haider & Rein, 2002).

The confidence that consumers have on a brand can translate into consumer's loyalty to the brand and their willingness to pay an extra price for the brand. Brand equity includes various dimensions such as social image, performance, trustworthiness, value and identifications (Lassar, Mittal, and Sharma, 1995). For the tourism marketer, the brand is a value and the name brand of the product or service they are marketing should lead them to reaching brand equity.

Once a consumer is able to recall the brand name and its attributes for the long period (Krishnakumar, 2009), they are more inclined to favour the elements of the marketing mix for the brand than they do to the same marketing mix elements when it is attributed to a fictitiously named or unnamed form of the product or service (Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011). Furthermore, Krishnakumar (2009) states that a brand has equity when the consumers favour buying the branded product instead of an unbranded commodity. From this argument, brand equity is the extension of brand knowledge and brand loyalty.

## **2.4.2 Customer satisfaction and brand loyalty**

Rajesh (2013) evokes that overall destination loyalty is strongly affected by the perceptions that tourists have before deciding to travel to the destination, the perceptions that tourists have towards the destination and its image as well as the overall satisfaction of experience received while at the destination. Destination loyalty is a complex concept influenced by customer satisfaction and is explained in detail below.

According to Correia, Kozak and Ferradeira (2013), satisfaction can be defined as the emotional circumstances that tourists find themselves in after being exposed to experiences at a tourist destination (Ibrahim & Gill, 2005). Satisfaction plays a significant role during destination choice, choice of products and services, destination loyalty and the decision of tourists to recommend the destination to other potential travellers (Gursoy, Chen & Chi, 2014). As noted by Carlson and O'Cass (2010), satisfaction is a tourist's fulfillment response. The overall image that tourists have of a tourist destination has a vital influence on the overall tourism satisfaction (Puh, 2014).

In addition, Martenson (2007) suggests that tourists' satisfaction can be determined by how consumers experience a product or service. The overall assessment of the destination experience can result in a tourist determining whether the experience was pleasurable or not. If the experience is pleasurable it is expected for tourists to return or recommend others to visit the destination (Torres-Moraga, Vasquez-Parraga & ZamoraGonzalez, 2008). Furthermore, Asmal (2012) affirms that customer satisfaction is regarded as an extremely personal factor that can greatly impact on the relationship between the customer and the tourist destination.

Customer satisfaction has also been regarded a fundamental factor of long term destination success, as much of the research on tourists' satisfaction examines the impact it has on consumers' post consumption evaluations such as behavioural and attitudinal loyalty (Keiningham, Cooil, Malthouse, Lariviere, Buoye, Aksoy & De Keyser, 2015). It has been widely acknowledged that satisfied consumers are less price sensitive, loyal to the firm, and less influenced by competitors' attack than dissatisfied customers (Dimitriades, 2006).

Therefore, it can be said that tourist who are satisfied with the brand service or product are more likely to be loyal to the brand and recommend it to other people to use it.

### **2.4.3 Factors influencing tourist's perception about a destination**

Kotler and Armstrong (2006) posit that in a demanding competitive environment, there are some elements that play an important role in the success of service organisations that are prerequisites to high levels of achieving customer satisfaction, increasing customer retention and rates service quality. Therefore, there are many various influences that can affect the tourist's perception about the destination. Aspects such as; Lodging, shopping, tourist attractions, restaurants, transportation facilities, environment and safety are the vital determinants for destination satisfaction as stated by many researchers (Correia, Kozak, & Ferradeira, 2013; Weiermair, 2004; Poon & Low, 2005; Sarikaya & Woodside, 2005; Hankinson, 2004; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Factors that can influence a tourist's perception about a destination are further explained in detail below.

#### **2.4.3.1 Lodging**

Tourists' perceptions of lodging have been acclaimed as one of the critical factors to be used in measuring destination satisfaction. The significance of satisfaction with lodging experience and restaurant meal is that they are the fundamental deciding components of destination satisfaction (Gursoy, Chen & Chi, 2014). Kandampully, Zhang and Bilgihan (2015) also conducted a study on customer loyalty and established a positive relationship between customer loyalty and satisfaction with housekeeping services, reception, food and beverage and price (Kandampully, Zhang & Bilgihan, 2015).

#### **2.4.3.2 Transportation**

Transportation service is considered as very important in the tourism industry as it is one other dimension of the destination satisfaction. Weiermair (2004) stated that transportation service that is offered to a tourist both to and from destination is perceived and valued by the tourist as a significant factor in destination satisfaction. One other researcher who conducted research on transportation issues is Hankinson (2004), whose study was under the accessibility dimension and affirmed that transportation is one of the main factors that lure tourists to choose a specific destination to travel. In addition, other important dimensions of transportation that make this service important in destination satisfaction are the ease of

access, quality of the service, closeness of the airport and the motorways (Hankinson, 2004).

#### **2.4.3.3 Brand trust**

Brand trust is a significant factor mediating on the consumer's behaviour before buying a product and after the purchase of the product; it strengthens the relations between two parties as well as cause long term loyalty (Liu, Li, Mizerski, & Soh, 2012). According to Chinomona (2013), trust is the extent to which a consumer believes and considers that a particular brand satisfies his or her desire.

As noted by Cakmak (2016), brand trust is a secure feeling which consumers have that the brand in question will meet their personal expectations. In addition, Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) add that brand trust can also be the willingness of the average consumer to depend on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function. Furthermore, brand trust is defined by Chinomona (2013) as a consumer's confident beliefs that the brand will deliver the promised service or product that he/she wishes to purchase. Many scholars have studied the relationship between brand trust and brand loyalty (Dehdashti, Kenari & Bakhshizadeh, 2012; Aydin & Özer, 2005), and their findings revealed that the most vital antecedent of brand loyalty is trust.

Trust has been established as a significant factor as it is illustrated in a sustainable relationship between the seller and buyer (Sahin, Zehir & Kitapçı, 2011)). Trust is also formed when a travel destination promises to provide quality products and services to consumers and successfully meets the promise (Ahmed, Shaukat, Nawaz, Ahmed & Usman, 2011). Others argued that brand trust is a fundamental determinant of attitudinal loyalty and behavioural loyalty (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Consumers who have strong trust in a brand are more eager to stay loyal to that brand, pay a high price for it, purchase new brands introduced under it in new categories or in the existing ones and to share the same information about consumers' behaviour, preferences and tastes (Mabkhot, Shaari & Salleh, 2017).

Moreover, trust can reduce the consumer's uncertainties about the brand and the awareness that a brand can be worth trusting (Soong, Kao & Juang, 2011). It can be interpreted that brand trust is created and developed through direct experiences of consumers via brands (Kabadayi & Alan, 2012). Therefore, it can be said that when customers have trust in a brand, they are more likely to repurchase a product or service, which leads to them being committed to the brand. Thus the relationship amongst consumers and the brand can be built up.

#### **2.4.3.4 Commitment**

According to Donio, Massari and Passiante (2006), commitment strongly affects loyalty. Satisfaction and commitment are indicators of brand loyalty, and customer satisfaction is measured as congruence between expected and perceived values, and is a matter of value perception (Donio, Massari & Passiante, 2006). This means that tourists that are committed and satisfied with a brand are more likely to be loyal to a destination brand.

Commitment can also be considered as a dependable variable of satisfaction and loyalty and therefore signifies the propensity to change the brand. Fullerton (2014) states that satisfaction affects commitment, purchase intention and advocacy. Lacey (2009) concurs that commitment is affected by various factors including trust that tourists have towards a brand and these factors affect commitment and that commitment affects purchase intention and market share. Thus, it can be said from the above statements that commitment has a strong and positive relationship with overall attitude toward the brand, brand preference, recommendation and purchase intentions (Shuv-Amin, 2012).

## **2.5 BRAND ATTACHMENT**

According to Go and Govers (2011), brand attachment is a significant concept in describing the strength of the bond connecting consumers to a destination brand because it should affect behaviours that foster brand profitability and consumer lifetime value. This is also supported by Smaoui and Temessek-Behi (2011) as they state that attachment is an emotional and affective bond that is built by a consumer in respect of a particular brand. Brands can have personalities just like humans. Consumers tend to project their own personality on a brand that they are using and therefore creating an emotional bond with

them (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegge, 2011). This bond affects the consumer's purchase behaviour (decision making process) which enables a brand to establish loyalty features and thus resulting in the consumers' repurchase of brand's products. Brand attachment has also been gaining its value due to its strong emotional bond between the consumer's selves and a brand (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegge, 2011). Mollen and Wilson (2010) state that the tourists' experience and bonding with the brand develops over a period of time and hence, may lead to 'engagement attachment' with a particular brand.

The bond that tourists create affects their visiting behaviour, enabling a brand to establish loyalty features and thus resulting in the tourists' repeat visit to a destination. Brand attachment also possesses marketing value as it assists tourists to choose a brand from a set of available ones in a certain market as it is based on emotional bond between the tourists' selves and the tourists' perceived representations of a brand's personality (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegge, 2011).

In order to get a clear understanding of brand attachment one would also have to look at the interpersonal attachment theory that has been researched by various authors (Ismail & Ali, 2013; Bowlby, 2012; Amin & Malin, 2012; Tsai, 2011). The interpersonal attachment theory explains the distinctive human need to form affectionate bonds (Bowlby, 2012). Ismail and Ali (2013) state that the basic underlying premise of the attachment theory is "separation distress", that refers to the degree in which consumers show their emotions when they are exposed to real or imagined separation from an object of strong attachment. The interpersonal attachment theory puts forward that attachment to figures is an inborn behavioural system (Tsai, 2011). Equally, Moussa and Touzani (2013) argue that various attachment theories' premises are transferable to consumer-brand relationship.

Amin and Malin (2012) also highlight that according to the theory, a child can show distress and separation anxiety as soon as a parent is no longer present. In this case, this would be the attachment to brands, and if the consumer expresses feelings of regret when the object is no longer available (Amin & Malin, 2012). Therefore, drawing from the above explanations

it can be noted that if the attachment theory is taken into consideration it can help brand managers of several destinations develop customer relationships.

### **2.5.1 Brand experience and brand attachment**

Attachment is an affective and emotional bond that is built by a consumer in respect of a particular brand (Smaoui & Temessek-Behi, 2011). A consumer's attachment to a particular brand can be influenced by brand experience which is explained in detail below.

When consumers have positive experiences with a particular brand, they also become attached to it. Naidoo (2011) argues that brand experience deals with consumers or an individual audience as he/she interacts with a brand. Further, Naidoo (2011) states that every time a consumer is in interaction with that brand it can bring about either a positive, negative or neutral experience. Rogers and Schmitt (2008) emphasised that brand experience is a personal source of information that can be used to form the basis of future decisions such as, repeat visits or repurchase intention. Brand experience is also created when customer's use the brand, seek out brand information, talk to others about the brand; promotions, and events, and so on (Nadzri, Musa, Muda, & Hassan, 2016). Ardyan, Kurnianingsih, Rahmawan, Wibisono and Winata (2016) therefore, conclude that the experience that is able to touch the consumer emotional side will cause the formation of consumer attachment on the specific product or a brand.

### **2.6 DESTINATION BRAND POSITION**

Destination positioning is a process of establishing and maintaining a distinctive place for a destination in the minds of travellers in the targeted markets (Kotler Haider & Rein, 2002). Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob (2011) state that brand positioning is not what you do to the product itself but it is how you position the product in the prospects' mind. The characteristics of a good position for the brand are thought to be seen as the strength of perceived uniqueness (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2012). The way in which a brand positions itself is very important as it involves the establishment of a fit between the supply and the demand perspectives on the destination attributes (Ndlovu, 2009).

Destination positioning studies have a tradition of referring to image as a key construct (Pike, 2016) and have primarily been conducted within image context (Gallarza, Gil-Saura & Arteaga Moreno, 2013). Most applications determine the relative image positions of a set of competing destinations by comparing them against a list of predominately cognitive attributes relevant to tourists' destination choice (Chen & Phou, 2013; Qu, Kim and Im, 2011). Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2011) stated that brand positioning task consists of three steps: to identify a set of possible competitive advantages to build a position, to select the right competitive advantage, and to effectively communicate and deliver the chosen position to a carefully selected target market.

In addition, Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob (2011) state that brand positioning is the act of designing a company's offer and image so it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target consumer's mind and this act is at the heart of marketing strategy. The brand positioning of a destination can help guide the marketing strategy for that destination. A good brand positioning clarifies what the brand is all about, how similar it is to competitive brands, how unique it is and why consumers should purchase and use the brand (Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011).

### **2.6.1 Brand positioning using brand attributes**

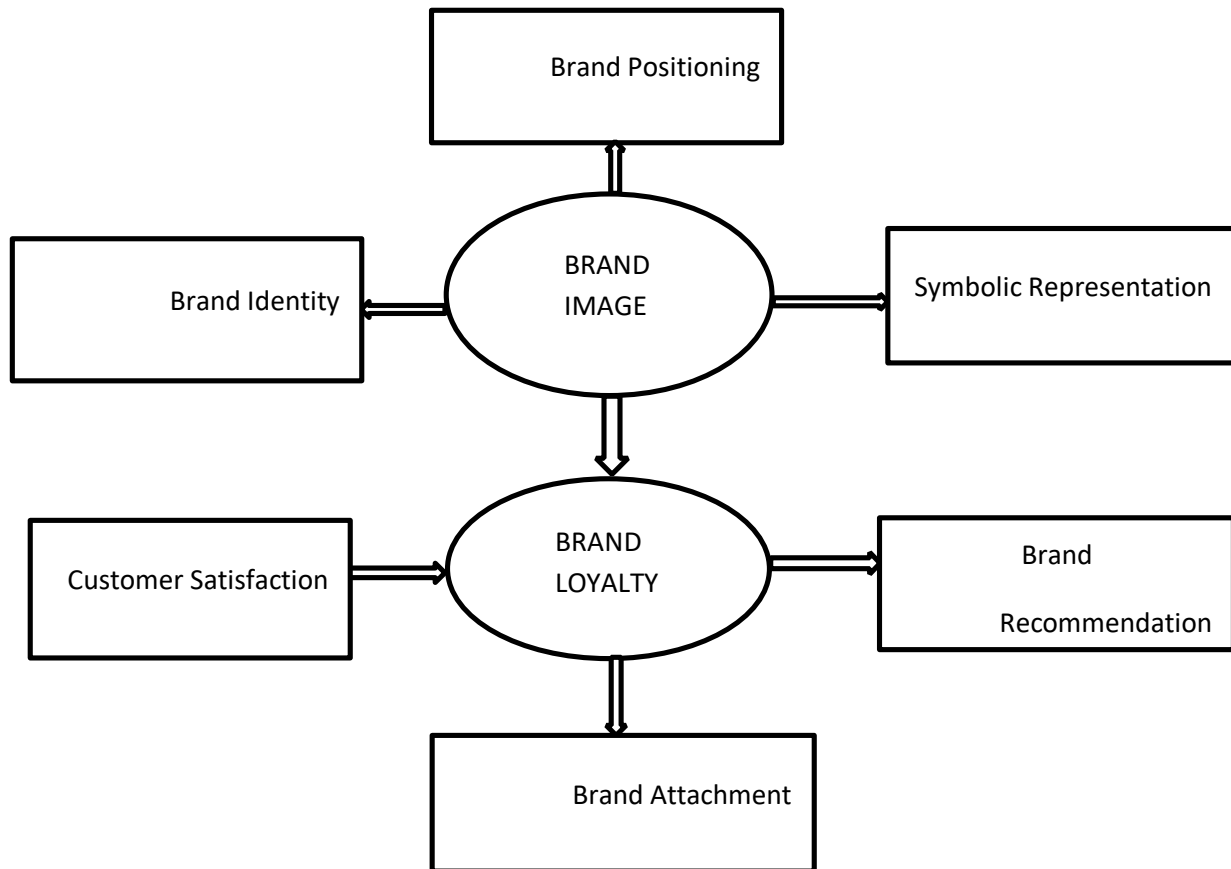
O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2000) affirm that positioning is the most repeatedly used base that associates the brand with a particular attribute. In addition, O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy (2000) caution that the major attribute that are selected for positioning a particular brand or a country must represent something attainable rather than wishful thinking. In other words, the strategy must be entrenched in the reality of the brand rather than being an invention that may have little relation to the brand reality (Dinnie, 2016; Anholt, 2011). Brands are frequently tempted to position themselves along multiple attributes. Nevertheless, positioning strategies that involve various attributes can lead to a reduced brand position.

## **2.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

This study mostly be guided by the combination of ideas (theoretical framework) on the destination brand image (Mabkhot, Shaari, Salleh, 2017; Lien, Wen, Huang & Wu, 2015; Lopes, 2011; Gao & Zhang, 2009), destination brand positioning (Ezeuduji, November & Haupt, 2016; Ezeuduji, 2015; Harrison-Walker, 2011), destination brand identity (Kumar & Ghodeswar, 2015; Roy & Banerjee, 2014) and destination symbolic representation (Ezeuduji, November & Haupt, 2016). Literature has been reviewed on these key and related concepts. Destination brand image is considered vital in any destination, as a destination that has a strong brand image can be easily identified by travellers and if they position themselves well, travellers will clearly know what the brand is about and how unique it is to other competitive brands (Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011). This will in turn plays an important role as travellers will advertise the destination through word of mouth, recommend the destination to others. This will also increase the tourists' visits to the destination (Xinman & Wonglorsaichon, 2017).

The conceptual framework (figure 2.1) guided the analysis of tourists' perceptions of brand image and brand positioning on the one hand, and how these perceptions relate or affect the KwaZulu-Natal destination brand loyalty on the other. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in this study provided focus for the design, implementation and analysis of data for the evaluation of tourists' perceptions on destination brand image and brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal province. The knowledge of the customers' brand image for the products and services offered are very important for the marketers to optimise the businesses' offerings to establish brand loyalty. It can therefore be said that, destination loyalty is influenced by the perceived satisfaction of the overall experience received, as this could influence the willingness of tourists to return to the destination as well as to recommend others to travel to the destination (Huang & Cai, 2015).

## 2.8 STUDY'S CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



**Figure 2.1 Conceptual framework illustrated diagrammatically (Source: author's own construction)**

The conceptual framework (Figure 2.1) presents the research conceptual framework which clearly shows a great link between brand image that can strongly influence the following aspects; brand identity, the brand symbolic representation and brand positioning. It also shows the link between brand image and brand loyalty and decision to recommend the brand to others and become attach to the brand. A strong brand image distinguishes the brand from its competitors (Mabkhot, Shaari & Salleh, 2017). Since brand image is a customer's perception of a brand, destinations must create an effective image of the brand in the minds of consumers (brand position).

According to Mabkhot, Shaari and Salleh (2017), marketing programmes can create a positive and favourable brand image by building a strong relationship between a brand and its image in the memory of the customers. A brand should position itself to the prospects' mind so that travellers are able to easily identify a brand as studies show that brand image and brand identity are the key elements for a successful destination brand (Huang & Cia, 2015). Travellers who choose a particular brand can do so not only for practical use, but also, for what they identify it with, hence having a positive brand image is vital as its symbolic value can be created. Travellers can associate a brand with symbols of fun, excitement, vibrancy and sleepy.

The relationship between brand image and brand loyalty is important for travel destinations as previous researchers have showed that brand image has a positive influence on brand loyalty (Andreani, Taniaji & Puspitasari, 2012; Sean Hyun & Kim, 2011). Studies have also revealed a significant relationship between brand image and brand loyalty (Andreani, Taniaji & Puspitasari, 2012; Im, Kim, Elliot & Han, 2012) also posit that brand image is recognized as a crucial determinant that influences brand loyalty.

As brand loyalty is seen as a key force of the brand competitiveness and positioning that is acquired over time through name recognition and goodwill (Vitez, 2013), this can lead to an increase in sales and higher profit margins against competing brands (Usman, Madiha & Mohsin, 2012). Additionally, Customers who trust the brand or are satisfied with it are more willing to stay loyal to that brand, pay a greater price for it and also recommend the brand to other potential visitors (Mabkhot, Shaari and Salleh, 2017; Mechinda, Serirat, Anuwichanont & Gulid, 2010). Travellers who are loyal to the brand are also more likely to become attached to it (Malär, Krohmer, Hoyer & Nyffenegge, 2011). Lastly, loyal tourists tend to become repeat tourists and revisit a travel destination and favour it over other travel destinations (Artuğer, Çetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013; Alegre & Cladera, 2010).

## **2.9 CONCLUSION**

It is common knowledge that the tourism industry is a very competitive industry, as it plays a significant role in the development of the African continent. Tourism related income is a major force for the economy, poverty alleviation, sustainable development and diversification (Matiza & Oni, 2014). Phiri (2016) concurs that the tourism industry is key to the financial development of South Africa. It is subsequently vital that a tourist destination like KwaZulu-Natal builds up a solid and positive brand image that is derived from unique, successful image affiliations, in order to expand visitor numbers and pull in new vacationers to the destination. The competitive nature of the tourism industry makes it possible for tourists to compare attributes of various destinations during their decision making process (Goa & Zhang, 2009), hence destinations must market themselves well as this can affect the tourists' decision to visit a destination.

A positively perceived brand image can help the tourists to support the destination or directly influence their intention to revisit and make further recommendations to other people (Anastassova, 2011; Alcaniz, Garcia & Blas, 2009). Tourists who favour a destination brand also become loyal to it and its brand name, which can have positive associations that can affect the tourists' attitudes that may result in their motivation and add to satisfaction (Clark & Melancon, 2013). This chapter has highlighted the ways in which tourist perceptions towards a destination brand image can affect their choice to visit the destination, and to become loyal to the brand. It has also highlighted the drivers that make tourists become loyal and attached to the destination brand. The next chapter (chapter three) discusses how primary data were collected and analysed as empirical evidence of this study (methodological approaches).

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Research is a systematic process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting information (data) in order to increase our understanding of a phenomenon in which we are interested or concerned (Leedy & Newby, Ertmer, 1997). According to Tummons and Duckworth (2013), in order for research to be accurate and sound, it has to be carried out in a way that will apply scientific principles. The methodology section is significant as it demonstrates a clear plan that will be used to address research objectives (Tummons & Duckworth, 2013). This study aimed at measuring the tourists' (domestic and international) perception of KwaZulu-Natal brand image and their loyalty towards KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination. Therefore, this study made use of a quantitative research method as it is a more viable approach to this research, as most responses required from tourists were better presented in numbers (Veal, 2011). In the application of a quantitative research method, the researcher used questionnaires to collect data from respondents (tourists). The questionnaire consists of mostly a structured set of close-ended questions. The researcher identified the questions from the literature as the root for the data collection method of this research study.

The questionnaire that was used consisted of three sections: Section A: General questions; Section B: Travellers' Profile; and Section C: The tourists' perceptions on destination brand image and brand loyalty. Section A and B questions were mostly nominal or categorical questions or variables, and section C included 5 point Likert scale questions – ordinal variables (response options, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). In addition, this chapter discusses the study's population, sampling, piloting, field study procedure, collection of data and analysis, instrument validity and reliability of the study, along with ethical considerations when this research was conducted.

## **3.2 RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA COLLECTION**

Bernard (2013) states that each discipline has to develop techniques of handling and gathering data. Walliman (2011) states that research methods are the techniques and tools that are used for doing research. Research methods also represent the tools of the trade, provide a researcher with ways to collect, sort and analyse information he/she the researcher arrives at a conclusion (Walliman, 2011). According to Veal (2011), qualitative methods rely on using words and at times images, as units of analysis; whereas quantitative research method contains numbers and leads to statistical analysis. Ezeuduji (2013) posits that for a mass phenomenon like tourism, hospitality and leisure planning, quantified data can be used to make decisions. Quantification is limited and unobservable realities are not easy to capture in objective form (Veal, 2011).

Nevertheless, quantification can easily identify meaningful patterns of data in spite of its weaknesses (Abbott, 2010). Therefore, a questionnaire survey is a very common method that is used in obtaining quantified data (Tummons & Duckworth, 2013). The nature of this study requires numbers to generate information necessary to reach research conclusions. Thus, a questionnaire survey is a very common method to use when obtaining quantified data. The following section will further discuss the choice behind the quantitative method instead of a qualitative approach.

### **3.2.1 Quantitative method**

Park and Park (2016) state that quantitative research method is used in social sciences to predict social phenomena. The researcher can measure, evaluate and generalise result findings (Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative research also uses data that is normally gathered and can then be analysed using statistics so as to answer a particular question (Tummons & Duckworth, 2013). This study employed a quantitative research technique as a means of finding out how loyal tourists are to the KwaZulu-Natal brand image as a tourism destination.

### **3.2.2 Qualitative methodology in research**

According to Kumar (2014), the qualitative method of research is a flexible and unstructured approach that aims at exploring diversity. Kumar (2014) further states that this approach describes and narrates experiences and feelings rather than their measurement. The qualitative approach is also focused on applied and theoretical findings, based on research

questions through field study in natural conditions (Park & Park, 2016). Additionally, the qualitative approach places less emphasis on generalisations as it communicates its findings in a descriptive and a narrative manner (Kumar, 2014). Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2014) support the above views by stating that a qualitative approach allows the researcher make face to face interaction, know people personally, see them as they are, and experience their daily struggles when they are confronted with real-life situations. This phenomenological qualitative strategy was not used in this research, as the nature of this study requires numerical data from many respondents (tourists) to reach conclusions.

This study aimed to assess the perceptions of tourists, looking at the relationship between related perception dimensions. Therefore, the qualitative method is not suitable for the desired outcomes of this research study. This dissertation will in the next section hold discussions on this study's population size showing how the possible numbers of respondents were sampled.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study focused on the tourists' perceptions towards the KwaZulu-Natal destination brand image and brand loyalty. The targeted population for this research study was tourists visiting major tourist attractions in KwaZulu-Natal (King Shaka International Airport, Richards Bay Airport and Pietermaritzburg Airport, Hluhluwe Game Reserve, uShaka Marine World, Durban and Richards Bay beach). This study surveyed respondents aged 18 years and above, as these are classified nationally as adults who can be approached to supply required research information without ethical constraints. The researcher surveyed domestic (excluding KZN residences) and international tourists to find out if there are differences in opinions on KwaZulu-Natal tourism destination perceptions. The aim was to find if tourists are loyal towards the KwaZulu-Natal brand image as a tourism destination. As mentioned earlier, the quantitative research method is a more viable approach to this research, as most responses required from tourists will be better presented in numbers (Veal, 2011), furthermore, it would have been too overwhelming to use an interview method on individual tourists, as they will not have time to respond in a qualitative way. In the collection of data, a questionnaire survey method was used. Isaac and Michael (1997) posit

that the survey research can be used to answer questions raised, solve problems that have been posed, assess set goals, determine whether specific objectives have been met, establish baselines against which future comparisons can be made, analyse trends across time, and generally, to measure what exists, in what amount, and in what context.

The questionnaire method was deemed as an appropriate tool for this quantitative research as this involved numbers and landed itself to statistical analysis (Veal, 2011). This made it easier for the researcher to analyse data collected from the respondents. Explorable (2009) states that the quantitative research technique allows the researchers to generate numerical data, which was represented by two-way frequency tables in order to explain what had been observed. Research data collected through questionnaires consisted mainly of close-ended questions as data obtained from the administration of closed questions were easier to analyse than data obtained from open questions. Closedended questions also allowed the researcher to gather statistical data, which was represented in the form of numerical graphs.

### **3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING**

A research population is explained by Blankenship (2010), Argyrous (2011), Tummons and Duckworth (2013), as the number of possible participants in any area of investigation. In research, the word 'population' does not refer only to a group of individuals found in a specific environment but a complete set of cases from which a sample can be drawn (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). A research population is described by Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) as the full set of cases from which a sample can be taken. Studying the entire parent population may be challenging, therefore it is important that a sample of the population is drawn. In order to draw a reliable, valid and accurate sample, it is vital for the researcher to name the target population that is suitable for the research survey. O'Leary (2017) articulates that naming a population assists the researcher to know and characterise the population appropriately. The target population for the study simply consisted on both domestic and international tourists visiting KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher chose not to use people who were originally from KwaZulu-Natal as they would favour their province of origin.

The researcher employed the non-probability sampling method in this study. According to Kumar (2014), non-probability sampling is mostly used when the population under study cannot be easily identified or specified, or is unknown. Convenience sampling (nonprobability method) is used when the researcher selects a sample from a population based on what the researcher intends to achieve, or the researcher's judgment of the participants' likelihood to give the desired information. Hence, this is why the researcher used this method to conduct this research study on tourists' perceptions.

KwaZulu-Natal received about 900,000 foreign tourists in 2016 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2016), but the number of domestic tourists could not be estimated. Statistically speaking, if a probability sampling is to be used for this research, the researcher will require a sample size of 384 respondents to measure perceptions at 95% level of accuracy or confidence interval (The Research Advisors, 2006). This study used non-probability sampling (convenience sampling) as probability sampling is not feasible (data collection period was spread between tourism peak and off-peak seasons in South Africa, but limited within a one-year period, and not well spread to all the regions of KwaZulu-Natal). This study using non-probability method of data collection had to envisage a sample size of 500. The researcher ended up distributing a number of 450 questionnaires to respondents, so as to make room for questionnaires that might not be returned. 411 were returned by respondents, as Veal (2011) posits that in non-probability sampling, the absolute size of the sample is more important than the sample size relative to the population. He argues that the criteria for sample size determination are threefold: the required level of results' precision, the proposed details in analysis, and the budget available.

### **3.5 FIELD STUDY PROCEDURE**

This section elaborates on how the fieldwork of this research study was conducted. The section also details on how the questionnaire was constructed. The pilot study procedures followed by how the data was collected are discussed.

### 3.5.1 Questionnaire variables and measure of constructs

Previous researchers (such as Ezeuduji & Nkosi, 2017; Ezeuduji, Lete, Correia & Taylor, 2014; Artuğer, Cetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013; Shestakov, 2012; Anastassova, 2011) have studied the effect of destination brand image and brand loyalty on the selection of a destination, the tourists' willingness to recommend a destination, and tourists' attachment to a destination.

### 3.5.2 Questionnaire design

The researcher made use of self-administered questionnaires that comprised of brand loyalty and brand image variables mentioned above. The questionnaire used to collect data from respondents (tourists) consisted of close-ended questions. The questionnaire had three sections: Section A: General questions; Section B: Travellers' Profile; and Section C: The tourists' perceptions on destination brand image and brand loyalty. Section A and B questions are mostly nominal or categorical questions or variables, and section C includes 5 point Likert scale questions – ordinal variables (strongly agree to strongly disagree). Questionnaire variables emanated from previous studies (such as Ezeuduji & Nkosi, 2017; Ezeuduji, 2015; Ezeuduji, Lete, Correia & Taylor, 2014; Artuğer, Cetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013; Shestakov, 2012; Anastassova, 2011; Lopes, 2011; Gao & Zhang, 2009; Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2007; Morrison & Anderson, 2002), to increase the validity and reliability of findings.

**Table 3.1: Questionnaire variables and previous authors**

Dimensions	Authors
Brand Attributes	Ezeuduji & Nkosi, 2017; Ezeuduji, 2015; Ezeuduji, Lete, Correia & Taylor, 2014; Go & Govers 2011; Gao & Zhang, 2009; Nel & Strydom ,2004; Morrison & Anderson, 2002.
Brand Image	Mabkhot, Shaari & Salleh, 2017; Bruwer, Pratt, Saliba & Hirche, 2017; Ezeuduji,
	November & Haupt, 2016; Jraisat, Akroush, Alfaouri, Qatu & Kurdieh, 2015; Artuğer, Cetinsöz & Kiliç, 2013; Amujo & Otubanjo, 2012; Anholt, 2011; Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2007.

Brand Loyalty	Su, Hsu & Swanson, 2017; Ghafoor, Aslam, Nazir & Bashir, 2016; Ramaswami, Raju & Page, 2016; Chen & Phou, 2013; Lee & Shen, 2013; Shestakov, 2012; Anastassova, 2011; Lopes, 2011; RoyoVela & Casamassima, 2011; Hur, Ahn & Kim, 2011; Nawaz & Usman ,2011; Belaid & Temessek Behi, 2011; Iglesias, Singh & Batista-Foguet,2011; Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011.
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### 3.5.3 Field study

The researcher had to write an email to ask for permission to collect data from areas (such as, Hluhluwe Game Reserve, Durban North Ricksha Bus station, Richards Bay Airport, King Shaka International Airport and Pietermaritzburg Airport). These are areas tourists could be found, one month prior to the actual data collection. Tourists responded to the questionnaire after they have signed participant informed consent. Questionnaires were also administered in public places such as Durban and Richard Bay beaches (here only participant informed consent was needed). The number of questionnaires distributed was based on how busy a tourism destination is, places such as airports usually have more foreign travelers than in beaches and other tourist attractions. The survey questionnaires were directed to both domestic (tourists who are not from the province of KwaZulu-Natal) and international tourists.

#### 3.5.3.1 Piloting

According to Clement (2012), a pilot study can be described as the small scale investigation conducted prior to the data collection process of a larger study. The pilot study is conducted on a small amount of participants and allows the researcher to become aware of any problems in the data collection methods, which may be corrected in preparation for the larger study (Clement, 2012).

A pilot test was conducted beforehand (in Richards Bay, KwaZulu-Natal) in order to test the respondents' understanding and accuracy of the questionnaire. In this study, a pilot survey was conducted on 15 tourists in Richards Bay. This allowed the researcher to determine whether the questions being asked could be clearly understood, were relevant to the topic at hand and were able to produce the relevant answers of the study (Bernhardt & Geise, 2014). Responses collected from the pilot study were used to update and clarify the questionnaire for the large scale study.

### **3.5.3.2 Data collection**

The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from respondents (tourists) from November 2017 to July 2018, cutting across peak and off-peak tourism seasons in South Africa. The questionnaire contained close-ended questions. The questionnaires were randomly handed out to the respondents to fill-in. The respondents were tourists visiting the major tourist attractions in KwaZulu-Natal. Public tourist areas such as the beaches in Richards Bay (Alkantstrand Beach) and Durban (South beach and North beach), where some tourists take the Ricksha bus in Durban Beachfront to see the city); airports such as the Richards Bay Airport; King Shaka International Airport and Pietermaritzburg Airport and uShaka Marine World in Durban were also targeted. The researcher also went to Hluhluwe Game Reserve to collect data as it is also in KwaZulu-Natal with plenty of foreign tourists who are usually found there to explore nature. The researcher had to write an email to the Hluhluwe Game Reserve managers, Ricksha tour bus managers to collect data at the bus station before the bus leaves North Beach and also sought for permission to conduct research in all the airports beforehand.

As this study is focused on domestic and international tourists visiting KwaZulu-Natal, the researcher ensured that local residents of KwaZulu-Natal Province in which the data is collected were not included in the study. Thus, a screening question was asked by the researcher in order to identify the desired respondents: Do you live in KwaZulu-Natal? Tourists living in this province were to be excluded from the study. This screening method had a particular limitation as it excluded the participation of domestic tourists who were from KwaZulu-Natal. Nonetheless, it ensured that day visitors who are not referred to as tourists did not participate in this study.

**Table 3.2: Questionnaire distribution**

	Distributed questionnaires	Collected Questionnaires	Valid questionnaires
<b>DURBAN</b>	(Total number of questionnaires distributed in this area)	(Total number collected from respondents)	(Total number used in analysis)
North Beach	60	60	55
South Beach	60	55	52
uShaka Marine World	50	45	40
King Shaka International	100	90	85
<b>PIETERMARITZBURG</b>			
Pietermaritzburg Airport	40	40	35
<b>RICHARDS BAY</b>			
Richards Bay Airport	40	35	30
Alkantstrand Beach	50	40	39
Hluhluwe Game Reserve	100	80	75
TOTAL	500	445	411

### 3.6 DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

Data analysis of the collected data was done using IBM's SPSS Statistics, version 24 (IBM Corporation, 2016). The first stage of data analysis conducted descriptive analyses (frequencies, mean and standard deviation). The second stage of data analyses conducted bivariate analysis (comparing two variables) employing Spearman's Correlation (two-tailed) and Mann-Whitney U tests. The third and final stage of data analysis conducted reliability tests for the Likert-scale sub-sections using Cronbach's Alpha. The results were presented using tables.

This study conducted reliability test (Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient, used as benchmark for reliability) on questions with ordinal responses (dimensions of brand perception statements). This measures the level of internal consistency of variables used to explain the study dimensions: brand attributes, brand image – symbolic representations, brand image – affective, brand image – physical atmosphere, brand image – accessibility, and brand loyalty, respectively. Cronbach's Alpha value ranges from 0 to 1. A cut-off point of 0.7 and above is commonly used by researchers to show or validate internal consistency or reliability of variables used in measuring a particular dimension (Bühl & Zöfel, 2005; George & Mallery, 2003; Hair, Black, Babin & Tatham, 2005; Iwu, Ezeuduji, Iwu, Ikebuaku & Tengeh, 2018). Some researchers agree that a low Cronbach's Alpha score may be obtained where researchers used few items to explain a particular dimension or where there is poor statistical interrelatedness among variables used in analysis (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This study, however, considered a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.7 and above, acceptable for reliability measurements for different brand perception dimensions.

As is known or common in social sciences, population distributions of the ordinal dimensions were found not to be normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov's and Shapiro-Wilk's tests of normality yielded  $p$ -values of less than 0.001). Hence this research conducted Mann-Whitney U tests of comparing means of responses from two independent groups to validate if they were different from each other. Responses to brand perception statements were compared with some respondents' profile. Mann-Whitney U tests were conducted based on the following rules: that the dependent variables (brand perception statements) have ordinal scale; the independent variables (respondents' profile) have only two groups; and normality of distribution and homogeneity of variance did not prove true in a trial t-test (George & Mallery, 2003; Veal, 2011).

Because Mann-Whitney U tests require the use of nominal variables (only two groups), one respondents' profile variable (age group) used in Mann-Whitney U tests which was set in more than two groups were recoded into two groups: less than 30 years of age (younger tourists) and above 30 years of age (older tourists). Spearman's correlation (twotailed) tests

were also done on ordinal variables (level of visit satisfaction and enjoyment of activities on the one hand, versus brand perception statements on the other hand) to detect any correlations. Using Spearman's correlation tests for comparing ordinal variables was supported by Veal (2011). Results are presented in the next chapter.

### **3.7 INSTRUMENT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

According to Kumar (2014) the validation of the instrument that is used in conducting a research study is essential for any research activity. Therefore, this section covers the validity and reliability of the instrument relating to this research.

#### **3.7.1 Validity and reliability of research**

Kumar (2014) defined reliability as a research procedure that assures the ability for another researcher to repeat the same process and obtain similar results. More so, Bernard (2013) states that validity refers to the accurate trustworthiness of research instruments, data and findings. Kumar (2014) further articulates that validity is about making sure that correct procedures have been applied in any given research. 'External validity' of this research, regarded as the extent to which the researcher can generalise the obtained results from the sample size studied to a wider population, was increased with the relatively large size of the sample to be surveyed (500). It is not, however, possible in social sciences, as absolute validity cannot be guaranteed, based on the social dynamic nature of humans (Veal, 2011). 'Internal validity', the extent to which this study identifies and measures all relevant variables, is enhanced through the usage of variables identified already in literature, and other variables that come from the researcher's personal knowledge (Ezeuduji, 2013; Veal 2011).

Veal (2011) also states that it is not possible in social sciences to obtain results that are completely reliable (achieving same results, if the research is repeated at a later stage using different respondents). Tourists, the subject of this study, do live in ever-changing socioeconomic situations and therefore, further studies are often needed to track their ever changing conditions and needs (Ezeuduji, 2013). Reliability tests conducted for the Likert-scale sub-sections of the questionnaire, using Cronbach's Alpha, enhanced results' reliability.

### **3.8 SECONDARY RESEARCH SOURCES**

Relevant studies on tourism, destination brand image, brand attachment, and destination brand loyalty were sourced from journal articles, books, internet websites and published government documents. These were all cited accordingly.

### **3.9 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

This study focused solely on four places in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (Hluhluwe, Richards Bay, Durban and Pietermaritzburg). In many studies a probability sampling is more favoured than a non-probability sampling. For this study, a probability sampling was not possible as data collection period was limited within duration of one year and not spread to all the regions of KwaZulu-Natal. This was a limitation to this research, which was however addressed by using a relatively large sample size (500 questionnaires, with 411 that were collected and used in data analysis).

Truthfulness on the part of the respondents may have similarly affected the findings of this study. This is beyond the researcher's control. Nevertheless, the questionnaire was structured to be in simple language and uncomplicated in filling-in.

### **3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The principles underlying the research ethics are universally concerned with issues such as honesty and respect for the rights of research participants (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005). The researcher assessed the tourists' perceptions of destination brand image and brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal and in doing so, the study was designed in a way that it attempted to focus on the expected ethical standards and principles related to research. Ethics defined as a set of moral principles which is suggested by an individual or a group, is subsequently widely accepted. It offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students (Welman, Kruger & Mitchell, 2005).

The researcher used the questionnaire survey method to get the participants' responses and in doing so, the researcher ensured that all participants of this research study were not

forced to participate in the study; their responses remain confidential and all respondents were 18 years old (adult age) and above. The researcher consistently sought participants' informed consent before the questionnaire was administered. Research and academic plagiarism such as, failing to acknowledge all secondary sources used in the study and material cited, were avoided in this study.

### **3.11 CONCLUSION**

This chapter described the research methods used in conducting this study. The quantitative research method was employed for this research study in the form of a structured self-administered questionnaire. Domestic and international tourists (respondents) visiting KwaZulu-Natal were surveyed. Only willing tourists participated in this study. The researcher consistently sought participants' informed consent before the questionnaire was administered. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed within the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Data analyses procedures used in this study consist of descriptive analysis, bivariate analysis, and multivariate analysis.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the questionnaire survey conducted in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa) regarding the tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal brand image and brand loyalty. In addition, these study results are discussed and compared with existing literature, and this is done to confirm or disconfirm the study findings. Furthermore, findings raised by the study results will then be addressed in the final chapter (chapter 5) which is the conclusions and recommendations section. The findings from this study will have some important tourism marketing implications for the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

#### 4.2 PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS AND GENERAL LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

This study surveyed 411 respondents (both international and domestic tourists) in major tourism destinations around the province of KwaZulu-Natal, whose socio-demographic characteristics are presented in the following Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Profile of the respondents (N = 411)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Female	54.5
	Male	45.5
Age group	Less than 20	11.7
	21-30	37.2
	31-40	23.4
	41-50	15.3
	51-60	8.8
Origin	More than 60	3.6
	South African	65.0
Continent of origin	Non South African	35.0
	Africa	70.1
	Australia/ Oceania	4.9
	Asia	3.4
	Europe	14.4
	North America	3.2
Type of tourist	South America	4.1
	Domestic tourists	65.5
	International tourists	34.5

Source of Information about KwaZulu-Natal	Internet	25.6	31.7
	Word of Mouth	32.4	
	Media (travel magazines and books, T.V)	6.8	
	Travel Agency/ Tour Operator	3.4	
	Other		
Group travel	Yes	51.1	
	No	48.9	
Length of stay in KwaZulu-Natal	1-5	49.5	
	6-10	31.5	
	11-15	8.3	
	16 days or longer	10.7	
Purpose of visit to KwaZulu-Natal	Business (seminar, event, attending a conference)	13.6	
	Business (import and export)	8.0	
	Holiday	51.1	
	Visiting friends and family	18.0	
	Medical	2.9	4.4
	Academic exchange	1.9	
Have you visited any KwaZulu-Natal destination before?	Yes	78.8	
	No	21.2	
Level of satisfaction	Totally satisfied	40.1	37.2
	Mostly satisfied	16.3	
	Moderately satisfied	4.9	
	Mostly dissatisfied	1.5	
	Totally dissatisfied		

This study has some good news for KwaZulu-Natal tourism, as about 80% of sampled tourists are repeat visitors, with media and “word-of-mouth” the most common source of information (64%) for tourists visiting the province. This shows not only the popularity of this province in the world, but also the loyalty of its visitors. This study’s results concur with those of Ezeudji, November and Haupt (2016) who stated that the attitudes that tourists have towards a destination are considered to be an important determinant when they decide to return to the destination. The fact that most of the respondents were returning tourists shows that they had a positive attitude towards KwaZulu-Natal and also shows the level of loyalty they have towards the province as their preferred destination of choice. Kirpalani (2014) also affirms that brand loyalty is a form of repeated purchases by tourists who have a positive attitude towards the brand. The research results show that female tourists (54.5%) in KwaZulu-Natal dominated the sample. About 50% of the respondents are young (not

more than 30 years of age). This shows that young females travel more to KwaZulu-Natal than male tourists.

The results revealed that a large number of tourists that were found in KwaZulu-Natal were from Africa (about 70%), with 65% of the survey respondents being South Africans (domestic tourists). This is also positive for South Africa as it shows that people are exploring their own country by travelling domestically. In addition, this study showed that the respondents who participated in the survey were tourists who were travelling in groups (above 50%) and visiting for a short period of time (1-5). These results also show that more than 73% of the respondents who visited KwaZulu-Natal were either totally or moderately satisfied. Therefore, it can be concluded that tourists who are satisfied with a destination are more likely to return to a destination, become loyal and recommend a destination to other people such as their friends and family members (Ezeuduji, November & Haupt, 2016; Iglesias, Singh & Batista-Foguet, 2011; Keller, Parameswaran & Jacob, 2011; Kotier & Keller, 2009).

#### 4.3 TOURISTS' LEVEL OF ACTIVITIES ENJOYMENT

Respondents were asked how they enjoyed some tourist activities during their visit to KwaZulu-Natal, namely: nature and outdoors, food and wine, beaches, history and culture, and shopping. The results are shown in Table 4.2 and discussed in detail.

**Table 4.2: Tourists' level of activities enjoyment (N = 411)**

Activities	Highly enjoyable	Mostly enjoyable	Moderately enjoyable	Mostly unenjoyable	Not enjoyable
Nature and outdoors	45.3	30.0	10.6	3.7	1.5
Food and wine	38.1	39.8	14.0	5.4	2.7
Beaches	40.2	42.4	11.5	4.2	1.7
History & Culture	39.1	38.9	15.8	3.0	3.2
Shopping	40.9	33.6	16.4	5.4	3.7

The study results show that most of the respondents mostly or highly enjoyed tourist activities in KwaZulu-Natal. The research results therefore, imply that a large number of tourists who visited KwaZulu-Natal had positive reviews or attitude towards the activities that are offered in the province. KwaZulu-Natal has unique culture and heritage and does cater

for tourists who engage in only history and cultural activities, but also in food and wine, shopping and recreation. Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2016) concur that the Zulu Kingdom in the province of KwaZulu-Natal is well liked for its heritage and cultural experiences. Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2016) further state that the rich heritage (cultural and natural, a rich mix of diverse cultures with exciting variety of music, dance and food and history) of KwaZulu-Natal is a key anchor to its tourism industry.

#### 4.4 BRAND ATTRIBUTES

According Gao and Zhang (2009), the way in which travellers perceive a destination is also thought to have a strong influence on destination choice as possible tourists are able to compare the attributes of various destinations at some stage of their decision making process. Therefore, Prayag, Hosany and Odeh (2013) maintain that destinations that are perceived to offer potential tourists with travel expectations are more likely to be chosen over rival destinations. Respondents for this study were asked to show their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of variables that denote 'KwaZulu-Natal brand attributes'. Respondents were mostly much more positive than negative in their responses as shown in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Tourists' level of agreement on KwaZulu-Natal brand attributes (N = 411)**

<b>Brand Attributes</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
KwaZulu-Natal is unique and has diverse attractions	52.6	37.0	7.8	2.7	0.0
KwaZulu-Natal provides tourists with good value for their money	43.5	38.6	14.4	2.4	1.0
I feel safe when travelling in KwaZulu-Natal	28.1	35.9	27.9	6.6	1.5
KwaZulu-Natal tourism destinations offer quality products, service and valuable experiences to tourists	25.4	53.2	16.6	3.7	1.2
KwaZulu-Natal offers unique cultural and nature experiences	38.7	41.7	16.2	2.7	0.7
KwaZulu-Natal local communities have friendly people who make visiting the province pleasant	43.6	36.3	16.3	2.7	1.2

According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2012), the characteristics of a good position for any brand are understood to be seen as the strength perceived uniqueness. The study results revealed that more than 89% of the surveyed respondents strongly agree or agree that KwaZulu-Natal is a unique destination with diverse attractions, cultural and native experiences. The findings of this study align with that conducted by authors such as Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2017), that KwaZulu-Natal does indeed offer unique and diverse tourism attractions. In addition, Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2017) add that KwaZulu-Natal is very popular for its heritage (cultural and natural) experiences. Furthermore, the above table shows that 80.4% of respondents indicated that KwaZulu-Natal is a tourism destination with unique cultural and nature experiences. This is true as the KwaZulu-Natal population has diverse population of people with unique cultures (such as the Zulus, Indians, Xhosas and Afrikaners). The Tourism KwaZulu-Natal 2013-2018 Strategic Plan (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2016) has pledged to develop on its eight attributes of heritage, warmth, gateway, adventure fun, family-friendliness Zulu identity and beaches, as they seek to make KwaZulu-Natal one of the globally renowned top African destinations to visit.

KwaZulu-Natal also takes pride in its brand attribute of Zulu identity as the Zulu Kingdom has a legacy of royalty, which dates back to the era of the great King Shaka (Ezeuduji & Nkosi, 2017). The unique attractions that the province of KwaZulu-Natal has, such as the uShaka Marine World (a theme park), offers great entertainment (uShaka Marine World, 2016). Attractions like this might be the contributing factors as to why more than 82% of surveyed tourists would view KwaZulu-Natal as a destination that gives great value for their money. Safety is also an important factor when tourists choose a destination. Respondents had positive response when asked if they felt safe when travelling to KwaZulu-Natal with more than 64% stating they did. The province of KwaZulu-Natal, however, can also beef up their security measures as some of the respondents (about 7%) did not feel safe. KwaZulu-Natal beaches tend to be over crowded in peak seasons, which can contribute to the crime rate and make tourists not feel at ease when relaxing at the beach with their loved ones.

The research findings also show that about 82% of respondents agreed that the local community have friendly people who make visiting the province very pleasant. Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2017) also conclude that the societal values and attitudes in the Zulu Kingdom, such

as the spirit of *Ubuntu*, meaning humanity; respect for strangers and the elderly, are the pivots of the of KwaZulu-Natal people’s identity that differentiate them from the rest of South Africans and the world.

About 78.6% of the respondents agreed that KwaZulu-Natal tourism destinations offer quality products, service and valuable experiences to tourists. These are strong brand attributes with which this region can market itself and sustain long-term destination competitiveness.

#### 4.5 BRAND IMAGE- SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION

According to Lopes (2011), brand image has been recognised as one of the most significant elements of a destination, as destination image is also one of motivators in the travel and tourism industry. The attitudes and perceptions customers have towards a tourism destination influence the buying power of an individual (Nel & Strydom, 2004). Respondents were asked to indicate how they regard KwaZulu-Natal brand image in terms of its symbolic representations. They were asked to report their level of agreement or disagreement to a set of variables representing ‘brand image – symbolic representations’ of KwaZulu-Natal. Table 4.4 indicates that respondents generally had much more positive than negative responses to these variables. Results obtained are fully discussed below.

**Table 4.4: Tourists’ level of agreement on KwaZulu-Natal brand image – Symbolic Representations (N = 411)**

Brand Image – symbolic representations					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
KwaZulu-Natal is a peaceful province	37.3	40.5	15.9	5.4	1.0
KwaZulu-Natal is at peace with their neighbouring provinces and countries	28.6	39.9	24.4	6.4	0.7
KwaZulu-Natal local economy is doing well	26.5	34.5	29.7	7.3	1.9
KwaZulu-Natal is rich in cultural and natural attributes	44.4	37.7	13.2	2.5	2.2

Mabkhot, Shaari and Salleh (2017) state that a strong brand image is significant to travellers for the reason that the brand image differentiates the brand from other competing brands. The KwaZulu-Natal brand is unique or different from other destination brands as it is popular among tourists from Africa and the rest of the world who look for a unique blend of vibrancy, cultural diversity, sophistication and excitement in a beautiful setting. The above statement proved to be true as about 82% strongly agreed or agreed to the statement that KwaZulu-Natal is rich in culture and natural attributes. KwaZulu-Natal being positively perceived as rich in culture may also be enhanced by the fact that the province has Zulu traditional ceremonies such as the Reed Dance (uMkhosi Womhlanga) that also attracts a large number of tourists to the Zulu Kingdom (Nkosi, 2013). Thus, tourists who are associated with culture and nature attributes are likely to visit KwaZulu-Natal (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

Brands are perceived as symbolic by the fact that they are able to communicate information about the individual (tourists) using them (Escalas & Bettman, 2017; Solomon, 2015). The results in Table 4.4 show that respondents perceived KwaZulu-Natal as symbolic as they indicated the province to be 'peaceful'. About 77.8% of the respondents agree or strongly agree that KwaZulu-Natal is a peaceful province; and a similar respondent size agree or strongly disagree that KwaZulu-Natal is at peace with their neighbouring provinces and countries.

The findings show that about 61% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that the KwaZulu-Natal local economy was doing well. Adinolfi and Ivanovic (2015) affirm that since the South African first democratic elections in the year 1994, the tourism industry has grown tremendously and been identified as a priority sector because of the substantial economic benefits it brings to the country's economy.

#### **4.6 BRAND IMAGE- AFFECTIVE**

Cognitive image of a destination is an individual's beliefs and knowledge about the attributes of the destination (Rajesh, 2013). These attributes are recreational facilities that a tourism destination has to offer such as; landscape, the weather, cuisine, transportation and

attitudes of the local community members towards tourists. In addition, affective image relates to the emotional evaluation stage of an individual that relates to the feelings that the individual associates with the destination of travel (Lopes, 2011). These attributes include how individuals feel in a destination of travel; whether they feel, relaxed, happy, comfortable or scared, sleepy or gloomy. Beerli and Martin (2004) also state that an affective image is the value that is attached to the destination.

Respondents' were asked to show their level of agreement or disagreement with the variables that indicate 'brand image-affective' of KwaZulu-Natal. The tourists again, were more positive than negative in their responses, as can be seen in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5 Tourists' level of agreement on KwaZulu-Natal brand image – Affective (N = 411)**

<b>Brand image (affective)</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
KwaZulu-Natal is a pleasant destination	48.8	36.3	10.7	3.2	1.0
KwaZulu-Natal is a relaxed destination	42.7	43.9	9.3	2.7	1.5
KwaZulu-Natal is a beautiful destination	42.1	46.0	8.3	2.2	1.5
KwaZulu-Natal is an exciting destination	51.7	35.5	8.6	3.2	1.0

Brand image has been recognised as one of the most important elements of any destination (Lopes, 2011). KwaZulu-Natal has a strong brand image as the name 'KwaZulu' meaning 'the place of the Zulu people', is also a strong brand image (see also Ezeuduji & Nkosi, 2017) on its own as it attracts tourists who are interested in learning more about the Zulu customs (in KwaNongoma there is an annual event called The Reed dance, for virgin Zulu girls) and what it means to be Zulu. KwaZulu-Natal also has beautiful and relaxing places that tourists can enjoy such as the beaches in Richards bay (Alkantstrand Beach) and Durban (South beach and North beach), where some tourists take the Ricksha

bus in Durban Beachfront to see the beautiful city, the uShaka Marine World in Durban and Hluhluwe Game Reserve for nature lovers and outdoor tourists.

The province of KwaZulu-Natal indeed is not short of places to enjoy with friends and loved ones and these study findings showed just that. About 86.6% of the surveyed respondents strongly agree or agree to the statement that KwaZulu-Natal is a 'relaxed' destination; about 88% agreeing that it is a 'beautiful' destination. In fact, more than 85% of the population that were of the view that KwaZulu-Natal is pleasant, beautiful, relaxed and an exciting place to visit. These are very positive findings for the province of KwaZulu-Natal, as positive reviews for a destination can increase the number of visitors to a destination and still could lead to job creation for the local population.

#### 4.7 BRAND IMAGE-PHYSICAL ATMOSPHERE

Respondents' were asked to denote their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of variables depicting 'brand image-physical atmosphere' factor, according to literature. Again tourists responded more positively than negatively to these set of variables as can be seen in Table 4.6. However, about 80% of the respondents who participated in the study feel they 'KwaZulu-Natal is a calm destination'; 72% reported that 'KwaZulu-Natal is quite conservative'. Destination brand image can be acknowledged as a key element of any destination as it has a strong influence on a tourist's motivation, preferences and behaviour towards tourism product or services that contribute to the pull factor for an individual to visit a destination (Ezeuduji, November & Haupt, 2016).

**Table 4.6: Tourists' level of agreement on KwaZulu-Natal brand image – Physical Atmosphere (N = 411)**

Brand image (physical atmosphere)					
Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
KwaZulu-Natal is a calm destination	44.4	35.9	15.1	3.2	1.5

KwaZulu-Natal local population has high moral standards	25.9	44.0	23.5	5.6	1.0
KwaZulu-Natal destination is quite conservative	28.8	43.2	22.0	3.9	2.2
KwaZulu-Natal destination is overcrowded	29.7	28.4	22.8	13.0	6.1

The research findings regarding brand image statements on physical atmosphere in KwaZulu-Natal show respondents' strong agreements with statements: "KwaZulu-Natal is a calm destination", "KwaZulu-Natal population has high moral standards", and "KwaZulu-Natal destination is quite conservative". Attention though, should be paid to the relatively high score of the overcrowding item in the brand image section of the questionnaire. About 58% of respondents strongly agree or agree that KwaZulu-Natal is over-crowded, which might also affect the way they may feel about their safety in the province. Accordingly, Ezeuduji (2013) strongly advised that strong police presence in the destination and proper policing in South Africa (such as, zero-tolerance for crime, and responsiveness within the South African Police service) can help towards dealing with crime in South Africa, and can help decrease the negative perception that tourists may have towards South African destinations.

#### **4.8 BRAND IMAGE-ACCESSIBILITY**

Authors (such as Rajesh, 2013; Lopes, 2011; Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Beerli & Martin, 2004) state that brand image is a multidimensional concept that is influenced by various factors from the tourist's perspective; such as affective images (emotional evaluation of destination attributes), external information sources cognitive images (destination attributes), socio-demographic characteristics, as well as the direct experience of the tourist. The traveller combines all of these influences and establishes an overall image of a particular destination.

Respondents were again asked to denote their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of variables depicting 'brand image-accessibility' factor, according to literature. Again tourists responded more positively than negatively to these sets of variables as can be seen in Table 4.7. This is great news for this province as accessibility also plays a significant role in brand image for any destination.

**Table 4.7: Tourists' level of agreement on KwaZulu-Natal brand image – Accessibility (N = 411)**

<b>Brand image (accessibility)</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
KwaZulu-Natal destination is developed for tourism	38.0	38.9	18.5	3.2	1.5
KwaZulu-Natal local population is friendly	34.5	47.7	12.7	4.1	1.0
KwaZulu-Natal is an easily accessible destination	33.9	49.5	12.4	2.7	1.5
KwaZulu-Natal destination is interesting	43.3	44.0	9.5	1.7	1.5

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2006), in a demanding competitive environment, there are some elements that play a significant role in the success of service organisations that are prerequisites to high levels of achieving customer satisfaction, increasing customer retention and service quality. Therefore, accessibility of a in a destination can also influence and affect the tourist's perception about the destination.

The research result findings show that more than 83% of respondents either strongly agree or agree that KwaZulu-Natal is an easily accessible destination. More so, about 77% of travellers also concurred that KwaZulu-Natal is developed for tourism. After the apartheid era, South Africa tourism industry has grown greatly (Adinolfi & Ivanovic, 2015), contributing to the country gross domestic product which allows for development in the country. After the 2010 World Cup, South Africa reaped the benefits of being the host nation as there was great development in our infrastructure; for example new roads, airports and train stations were built which made it easier to travel and access destinations around the country. Results also show that more than 82% of respondents also strongly agree or agree to the statement that KwaZulu-Natal population is friendly. This is true as a study conducted by Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2016) concurred that the Zulu people in particular live by the notion of '*Ubuntu*', which in other words, means 'humanity' and respecting your elders and others the way that you would like them to respect you.

#### 4.9 BRAND LOYALTY

According to Donio, Massari and Passiante (2006), satisfaction and commitment are indicators of brand loyalty, and customer satisfaction is measured as congruence between expected and perceived values, and is a matter of value perception. This means that tourists that are committed and satisfied with a brand are more likely to be loyal to a destination brand. Tourists were again asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with a set of statements depicting 'brand loyalty'. Again respondents answered more positively than negatively to these set of variables as can be seen in table

4.8.

**Table 4.8: Tourists' level of agreement on KwaZulu-Natal brand loyalty (N = 411)**

<b>Brand Loyalty</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
KwaZulu-Natal would be my preferred choice when choosing a destination to visit	40.9	36.7	17.5	3.6	1.2
I would consider visiting KwaZulu-Natal in the future	39.4	46.2	11.7	2.4	0.2
I would recommend KwaZulu-Natal to my friends and family	40.0	48.8	8.0	2.2	1.0
I feel at home in KwaZulu-Natal	35.5	40.4	18.2	4.9	1.0
I feel connected to this destination, KwaZulu-Natal	36.0	40.4	19.5	3.4	0.7
KwaZulu-Natal has 'a special place in my heart'	41.0	35.4	18.5	4.1	1.0
I am in love with KwaZulu-Natal	45.6	32.9	15.9	3.7	2.0

The results of this study regarding brand loyalty statements show respondents' strong agreements with statements: "KwaZulu-Natal would be my preferred choice when choosing a destination to visit; "I would consider visiting KwaZulu-Natal in the future"; "I would recommend KwaZulu-Natal to my friends and family"; "KwaZulu-Natal has 'a special place

in my heart”; and I am in love with KwaZulu-Natal”. Similarly, some studies revealed that there is a significant relationship between brand image and brand loyalty (Huang & Cai, 2015; Andreani, Taniaji & Puspitasari 2012). If tourists favour or have positive perceptions about a brand and become attached to it, they are also more likely to become loyal to the brand and become repeat visitors.

These are positive results for the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The results do not only show that tourists visiting the province are loyal, but also reveal that they would recommend this destination to their friends and family. This study obtained similar research results with that conducted by Ezeudji, November and Haupt (2016) on tourist profile and destination brand perception: the case of Cape Town, South Africa, that tourists who are loyal to Cape Town as a tourist destination are mostly repeat visitors , satisfied tourists and who would recommend the destination to other people. Kirpalani (2014) also adds that tourists with positive attitude towards the brand are usually loyal to it shown in a form of repeat purchases.

The results in Table 4.9 also show that about 86% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that they would visit KwaZulu-Natal in the future, and about 89% reported that they would recommend KwaZulu-Natal to their friends and family. These indicate that the respondents in question are loyal to the KwaZulu-Natal brand as they are repeat visitors. Kirpalani (2014) adds that brand loyalty consists of two components: commitment attributed to a strong attitude or liking for the brand and repeat purchase behaviour. The attitudes that tourists have towards a destination are considered to be an important determinant when they decide to return to the destination (Ezeudji, November & Haupt, 2016). The results show that about 76% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that KwaZulu-Natal has a special place in their heart, and about 79% of the respondents reported that they are in love with KwaZulu-Natal.

#### **4.10 BRAND ATTRIBUTES - CORRELATION WITH TOURIST ACTIVITIES**

Respondents were asked to show how they enjoyed or not enjoyed main tourists’ activities in KwaZulu-Natal, and also indicate their level of agreement with brand perception

statements (brand attributes) about KwaZulu-Natal. A correlation test (Spearman's Rank correlation, two-tailed) was conducted between tourist activities and these brand perception statements. Results are shown in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9: Correlation between level of activity enjoyment and tourists' brand attributes perceptions**

Brand Attributes					
Statements	Correlation with activities				
	Nature & outdoors	Food & wine	Beaches	History & culture	Shopping
KwaZulu-Natal is unique and has diverse attractions	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal provides tourists with good value for their money	**	**	**	**	**
I feel safe when travelling in KwaZulu-Natal	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal tourism destinations offer quality products, service and valuable experiences to tourists	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal offers unique cultural and nature experiences	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal local communities have friendly people who make visiting the province pleasant	**	**	**	**	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance. \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

Table 4.9 shows that there is a strong correlation between all tourist activities on the one hand, and all variables used to explain brand attributes, on the other hand. This means the more tourists agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the more they agree to the brand

attributes statements. In addition, the less tourists agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the less they agree to the brand attributes statements.

#### 4.11 BRAND IMAGE (SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION) - CORRELATION WITH TOURIST ACTIVITIES

Escalas and Bettman (2017) articulate that brands are perceived as symbolic by the fact that they are able to communicate information about the individual (tourists) using them. Tourists were asked to indicate how they enjoyed or not enjoyed main tourists' activities in KwaZulu-Natal, and also denote their level of agreement with brand perception statements (brand image-symbolic representation) about KwaZulu-Natal. A correlation test (Spearman's Rank correlation, two-tailed) was conducted between tourist activities and these brand perception statements. Results are discussed in Table 4.10.

**Table 4.10: Correlation between level of activity enjoyment and tourists' brand image (symbolic representations) perceptions**

Brand Image – symbolic representations					
Statements	Correlation with activities				
	Nature & outdoors	Food & wine	Beaches	History & culture	Shopping
KwaZulu-Natal is a peaceful province	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal is at peace with her neighbouring provinces and countries	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal local economy is doing well	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal is rich in cultural and natural attributes	**	**	**	**	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

The results of analysis show that there is a strong correlation between all tourist activities on the one hand, and all variables used to explain brand image – symbolic representations, on the other hand. This means the more tourists agree to enjoying these tourist activities,

the more they agree to the brand image – symbolic representations statements. Also the less tourists agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the less they agree to the brand image – symbolic representations statements.

Results show that tourists who visit KwaZulu-Natal perceive it as peaceful and as a rich destination in culture and natural attributes. Authors such as Solomon (2015) and Berger and Ward (2010) affirm that tourists choose to use a product or visit a particular destination not only for its practical purposes, but also, for what they symbolize it with, thereby the brand image and its symbolic value are created and reinforced by the brand community.

#### **4.12 BRAND IMAGE (AFFECTIVE) - CORRELATION WITH TOURIST ACTIVITIES**

Respondents were asked to answer how they enjoyed or not enjoyed main tourists' activities that are shown in Table 4.11, during their visit in KwaZulu-Natal, and also indicate their level of agreement with brand perception statements (brand image-affective) about KwaZulu-Natal. A correlation test (Spearman's Rank correlation, two-tailed) was conducted between tourist activities and these brand perception statements. The results in Table 4.11 were obtained.

**: Correlation between level of activity enjoyment and tourists' brand**

**Table 4.11 image (affective) perceptions**

<b>Brand image (affective)</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Correlation with activities</b>				
	Nature & outdoors	Food & wine	Beaches	History & culture	Shopping
KwaZulu-Natal is a pleasant destination	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal is a relaxed destination	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal is a beautiful destination	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal is an exciting destination	**	**	**	**	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*\*, p < 0.01.

The results of analysis show that there is a strong correlation between all tourist activities on the one hand, and all variables used to explain brand image – affective dimension, on the other hand. This means the more respondents agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the more they agree to the brand image – affective dimension statements. Also, the less tourists agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the less they agree to the brand image – affective dimension statements.

**4.13 BRAND IMAGE (PHYSICAL ATMOSPHERE) - CORRELATION WITH TOURIST ACTIVITIES**

Respondents were asked to denote how they enjoyed or not enjoyed main tourists' activities in KwaZulu-Natal, and also show their level of agreement with brand perception statements (brand image-physical atmosphere) about KwaZulu-Natal. A correlation test (Spearman's Rank correlation, two-tailed) was conducted between tourist activities and these brand perception statements. The results in Table 4.12 were obtained.

**: Correlation between level of activity enjoyment and tourists' brand**

**Table 4.12 image (physical atmosphere) perceptions**

<b>Brand image (physical atmosphere)</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Correlation with activities</b>				
	Nature & outdoors	Food & wine	Beaches	History & culture	Shopping
KwaZulu-Natal is a calm destination	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal local population has high moral standards	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal destination is quite conservative	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal destination is overcrowded	**	**	*	**	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*,  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

The research results depict that there is mostly a strong correlation between all tourist activities on the one hand, and all variables used to explain brand image – physical atmosphere dimension, on the other hand. This means the more respondents agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the more they agree to the brand image – physical atmosphere dimension statements. Also, the less tourists agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the less they agree to the brand image – physical atmosphere dimension statements.

**4.14 BRAND IMAGE (ACCESSIBILITY) - CORRELATION WITH TOURIST ACTIVITIES**

Respondents were asked to show how they enjoyed or not enjoyed main tourists' activities in KwaZulu-Natal, and also denote their level of agreement with brand perception statements (brand image-accessibility) about KwaZulu-Natal. A correlation test (Spearman's Rank correlation, two-tailed) was conducted between tourist activities and these brand perception statements. Results are discussed in Table 4.13.

**: Correlation between level of activity enjoyment and tourists' brand**

**Table 4.13 image (accessibility) perceptions.**

<b>Brand image (accessibility)</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Correlation with activities</b>				
	Nature & outdoors	Food & wine	Beaches	History & culture	Shopping
KwaZulu-Natal destination is developed for tourism	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal local population is friendly	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal is an easily accessible destination	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal destination is interesting	**	**	**	**	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*\*, p < 0.01.

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2006), in a demanding competitive environment there are some elements that play an important role in the success of service organisations that are prerequisites to high levels of achieving customer satisfaction, increasing customer retention and rates service quality. One element that can also be seen as vital to brand satisfaction is accessibility.

The results of analysis (Table 4.13) show that there is a strong correlation between all tourist activities on the one hand, and all variables used to explain brand image – accessibility dimension, on the other hand. This means the more respondents agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the more they agree to the brand image – accessibility dimension statements. Also, the less tourists agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the less they agree to the brand image – accessibility dimension statements. Accessibility is an important element in satisfaction for KwaZulu-Natal. If tourists cannot access tourists' they, tourists will not be satisfied and their visit will not be pleasant. Hankinson (2004) affirmed that

**: Correlation between level of activity enjoyment and tourists' brand**  
transportation is one of the main factors that lure tourists to choose a specific destination to visit.

#### 4.15 BRAND LOYALTY - CORRELATION WITH TOURIST ACTIVITIES

Respondents who visited KwaZulu-Natal were asked to indicate how they enjoyed or not enjoyed main tourists' activities during their visit, and also denote their level of agreement with brand perception statements (brand Loyalty) about KwaZulu-Natal. A correlation test (Spearman's Rank correlation, two-tailed) was conducted between tourist activities and these brand perception statements. Results are discussed in Table 4.14.

**Table 4.14: Correlation between level of activity enjoyment and tourists' brand loyalty perceptions**

Brand Loyalty					
Statements	Correlation with activities				
	Nature & outdoors	Food & wine	Beaches	History & culture	Shopping
KwaZulu-Natal would be my preferred choice when choosing a destination to visit	**	**	**	**	**
I would consider visiting KwaZuluNatal in the future	**	**	**	**	**
I would recommend KwaZulu-Natal to my friends and family	**	**	**	**	**
I feel at home in KwaZulu-Natal	**	**	**	**	**
I feel connected to this destination, KwaZulu-Natal	**	**	**	**	**
KwaZulu-Natal has 'a special place in my heart'	**	**	**	**	**
I am in love with KwaZulu-Natal	**	**	**	**	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

The above results depict that there is a strong correlation between all tourist activities on the one hand, and all variables used to explain brand loyalty, on the other hand. This means the more respondents agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the more they agree to the brand loyalty statements. Also, the less tourists agree to enjoying these tourist activities, the less they agree to the brand loyalty statements. Studies conducted by some authors (Huang & Cai, 2015; Andreani, Taniaji & Puspitasari 2012) revealed that there is a strong relationship between brand image and brand loyalty. They reported that if tourists favour a brand they become attached to it, and they also, somewhat, become loyal to it. This and the

study results, therefore, suggest that the attitude a tourist has towards a destination is considered to be an important determinant when deciding to return to a destination.

#### 4.16 BRAND ATTRIBUTES – CORRELATION WITH VISIT SATISFACTION

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their visit to KwaZulu-Natal and the results obtained were then compared with their perceptions of brand attributes statements.

A correlation test (Spearman’s Rank correlation, two-tailed) was conducted between tourists’ level of satisfaction and brand perception statements. This study obtained the research results in Table 4.15 from analysis.

**Table 4.15: Correlation between level of visit satisfaction and tourists’ brand attributes perceptions**

Brand Attributes	
Statements	Correlation with level of visit satisfaction
KwaZulu-Natal is unique and has diverse attractions	**
KwaZulu-Natal provides tourists with good value for their money	**
I feel safe when travelling in KwaZulu-Natal	**
KwaZulu-Natal tourism destinations offer quality products, service and valuable experiences to tourists	**
KwaZulu-Natal offers unique cultural and nature experiences	**
KwaZulu-Natal local communities have friendly people who make visiting the province pleasant	**

Notes: Spearman’s Rank correlation test significance: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

The study results show that there is a strong correlation between brand attributes statements on the one hand, and level of visit satisfaction on the other hand. This means that the more tourists are satisfied, the more they agree with the brand attributes statements in Table 4.15.

These results do not come as a surprise as KwaZulu-Natal brand is different from other destination brands as it is popular among tourists from Africa and the rest of the world who look for a unique blend of vibrancy, cultural diversity, sophistication and excitement in a beautiful setting. Ezeuduji and Nkosi (2017) also found that the province may also be perceived as fun, relaxing, culturally rich and inspiring. They also add that, the name ‘KwaZulu’; meaning ‘the place of the Zulu people’ , is also a strong brand image on its own

as it attracts tourists who are interested in learning more about the Zulu customs and what it means to be Zulu. As Rajesh (2013) concurs, brand image is a multidimensional construct as it is influenced by various factors from the tourist’s perspective, such as affective images (emotional evaluation of destination attributes) and cognitive images (destination attributes).

#### **4.17 BRAND IMAGE (SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION) – CORRELATION WITH VISIT SATISFACTION**

Ezeuduji, November and Haupt (2016) indicate that brand image is centred on the manner by which a group of individuals or an individual sees a specific brand. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction in terms of their visit to the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The results obtained were then compared (correlation test) with tourist’s perceptions of brand image-symbolic representation statements. This study obtained these results in Table 4.16.

**Table 4.16: Correlation between level of visit satisfaction and tourists’ brand image (symbolic representations) perceptions**

<b>Brand Image – symbolic representations</b>	
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Correlation with level of visit satisfaction</b>
KwaZulu-Natal is a peaceful province	**
KwaZulu-Natal is at peace with her neighbouring provinces and countries	**
KwaZulu-Natal local economy is doing well	**
KwaZulu-Natal is rich in cultural and natural attributes	**

Notes: Spearman’s Rank correlation test significance: \*\*, p < 0.01.

These results show there is a strong correlation between brand image (symbolic representations) statements on the one hand, and level of visit satisfaction on the other hand. This means that the more respondents are satisfied, the more they agree with the brand image (symbolic representations) statements. Similarly, Lopes (2011) supports that brand image can play a key role in creating satisfaction to customers and may be influenced by the consumers’ perception of the destination brand.

#### 4.18 BRAND IMAGE (AFFECTIVE) – CORRELATION WITH VISIT SATISFACTION

Respondents were again asked how satisfied they were with their visit to KwaZulu- Natal and the results obtained were then compared (correlation test) with tourist's perceptions of brand image-affective statements. The results in Table 4.17 were obtained after analysis.

**Table 4.17: Correlation between level of visit satisfaction and tourists' brand image (affective) perceptions**

Brand image (affective)	
Statements	Correlation with level of visit satisfaction
KwaZulu-Natal is a pleasant destination	**
KwaZulu-Natal is a relaxed destination	**
KwaZulu-Natal is a beautiful destination	**
KwaZulu-Natal is an exciting destination	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

The research results show that there is a strong correlation between brand image (affective) statements on the one hand, and level of visit satisfaction on the other hand.

This means that the more tourists are satisfied, the more they agree with the brand image (affective) statements.

#### 4.19 BRAND IMAGE (PHYSICAL ATMOSPHERE) – CORRELATION WITH VISIT SATISFACTION

Martenson (2007) states that tourists' satisfaction can be determined by how they experience a product or service. The overall assessment of the destination experience can result in a tourist determining whether the experience was pleasurable or not. The results show that tourists were satisfied with their visit to KwaZulu-Natal, which means that their experience in this province was pleasurable. Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their visit to KwaZulu-Natal. A correlation test was done between level of satisfaction and tourists' brand image - physical atmosphere. The results in Table 4.18 were obtained.

**Table 4.18: Correlation between level of visit satisfaction and tourists' brand image (physical atmosphere) perceptions**

Brand image (physical atmosphere)	
Statements	Correlation with level of visit satisfaction
KwaZulu-Natal is a calm destination	**
KwaZulu-Natal local population has moral high standards	**
KwaZulu-Natal destination is quite conservative	**
KwaZulu-Natal destination is over-crowded	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

The results show that there is a strong correlation between brand image (physical atmosphere) statements on the one hand, and level of visit satisfaction on the other hand. This means that the more tourists are satisfied, the more they agree with the brand image (physical atmosphere) statements in Table 4.18.

#### **4.20 BRAND IMAGE (ACCESSIBILITY) – CORRELATION WITH VISIT SATISFACTION**

Mabkhot, Shaari and Salleh (2017) posit that a strong brand image is important to tourists because the brand image differentiates the brand from other competing brands. Tourists were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with their visit to KwaZulu-Natal. A correlation test was conducted between level of satisfaction and tourists' brand image - accessibility. The results can be seen in Table 4.19.

**Table 4.20: Correlation between level of visit satisfaction and tourists' brand image (accessibility) perceptions.**

Brand image (accessibility)	
Statements	Correlation with level of visit satisfaction
KwaZulu-Natal destination is developed for tourism	**
KwaZulu-Natal local population is friendly	**
KwaZulu-Natal is an easily accessible destination	**

KwaZulu-Natal destination is interesting	**
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Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*\*, p < 0.01.

According to Puh (2014), the overall image that tourists have of a tourist destination has a vital influence on the overall tourism satisfaction. The results depict that there is a strong correlation between brand image (accessibility) statements on the one hand, and level of visit satisfaction, on the other hand. This means that the more tourists are satisfied, the more they agree with the brand image (accessibility) statements.

#### 4.21 BRAND LOYALTY – CORRELATION WITH VISIT SATISFACTION

According to Correia, Kozak and Ferradeira (2013), satisfaction can be defined as the emotional circumstances that tourists find themselves in after being exposed to experiences at a tourist destination (Ibrahim & Gill, 2005). Thus, Clark and Melancon (2013) state that tourist loyalty can be associated with the destination brand name which can have positive connotations that affect tourists' attitudes that may contribute to their travel motivation and add to their satisfaction. The attitude a tourist has towards a destination can in turn be considered to be an important determinant when deciding to return to a destination.

Respondents were asked how satisfied they were with their visit to

KwaZulu-Natal and the results obtained were then compared with tourist's perceptions of brand image - affective statements. Results in Table 4.20 were obtained, after analysis.

**Table 4.20: Correlation between level of visit satisfaction and tourists' brand loyalty perceptions**

Brand Loyalty	
Statements	Correlation with level of visit satisfaction
KwaZulu-Natal would be my preferred choice when choosing a destination to visit	**
I would consider visiting KwaZulu-Natal in the future	**
I would recommend KwaZulu-Natal to my friends	**
and family	

I feel at home in KwaZulu-Natal	**
I feel connected to this destination, KwaZulu-Natal	**
KwaZulu-Natal has 'a special place in my heart'	**
I am in love with KwaZulu-Natal	**

Notes: Spearman's Rank correlation test significance: \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

The study results show that there is a strong correlation between brand loyalty statements on the one hand, and level of visit satisfaction, on the other hand. This means that the more tourists are satisfied, the more they agree with the brand loyalty statements above. Respondents who were satisfied also indicated that they would recommend KwaZuluNatal to their friends and family members as it has a special place in their hearts. Neuts, Romão, van Leeuwen and Nijkamp (2013) also allude to the fact that destination loyalty refers to the intention of tourists choosing to return to a particular destination as well as the possibility of these tourists to recommend the destination to others through positive word-of-mouth. In addition, Dimitriades (2006) affirms that tourists who are satisfied with the brand service or product are more likely to be loyal to the brand and recommend it to other people to use it.

The results show that tourists who are satisfied with a destination are more likely to become attached to it and be loyal to the destination. This is evident as respondents indicated that they feel at home in KwaZulu-Natal and this may be strongly influenced by their perception of the province. Rajesh (2013) likewise posits that overall destination loyalty is strongly affected by the perceptions that tourists have before deciding to travel to the destination, the perceptions that tourists have towards the destination image as well as the overall satisfaction of experience received while at the destination.

#### **4.22 RELIABILITY TEST AND COMPARING TOURISTS' PROFILE WITH TOURISTS' BRAND ATTRIBUTES PERCEPTIONS**

In sections 4.22 to 4.26, Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare differences between dependent variables (brand perception statements) and independent variables (tourists' profile), which are nominal (2 groups) in form. The results in Tables 4.21 to 4.25 show that there are

differences found for some tourists' profile in relation to brand perception statements. Also reliability tests were conducted for each of the brand perception dimensions (brand attributes, brand image – symbolic representations, brand image – affective, brand image – physical atmosphere, brand image – accessibility, and brand loyalty).

Reliability tests were also conducted for variables describing different brand perception dimensions. Results from Cronbach's Alpha coefficients prove that that variables used to measure these different dimensions have internal consistency, and can be used to explain these dimensions (brand attributes, brand image – symbolic representations, brand image – affective, brand image – physical atmosphere, brand image – accessibility, and brand loyalty). Gao and Zhang (2009) state that tourists' perceptions of a destination such as its brand image are considered to have a big influence on destination choice and brand loyalty, as potential travellers are able to compare the attributes of different destinations during their decision-making process of whether they are going to visit that particular destination or not. The respondents were asked to indicate if they have visited KwaZuluNatal, their age, if they were travelling in groups or individually, and if they were domestic or international tourists, to create a tourists' profile. Tourists' profile was compared with tourists' perceptions of brand attributes. Results in Table 4.21 were obtained.

**Table 4.21: Reliability test and comparing tourists' profile with tourists' brand attributes perceptions**

Statements	Mean score <sup>a</sup>	Standard deviation	Compared with tourists' profile <sup>b</sup>
KwaZulu-Natal is unique and has diverse attractions	1.61	.750	*Those who visited before agree more *Above 30 years age group agree more
KwaZulu-Natal provides tourists with good value for their money	1.78	.849	**Those who travelled in a group agree more
I feel safe when travelling in KwaZulu-Natal	2.18	.965	*South Africans agree more **Domestic tourists agree more

KwaZulu-Natal tourism destinations offer quality products, service and valuable experiences to tourists	2.02	.822	N.S
KwaZulu-Natal offers unique cultural and nature experiences	1.85	.832	*Less than 31 years age group agree more
KwaZulu-Natal local communities have friendly people who make visiting the province pleasant	1.82	.883	N.S
<b>Reliability Statistics (Perceptions of brand attributes), Cronbach's Alpha =.836, N of Items = 6, Valid cases = 403 (98.1%), Excluded cases = 8 (1.9%), Total = 411</b>			

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

<sup>b</sup>Mann-Whitney U test significance: N.S, no significant results - \*,  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

- Respondents who have visited KwaZulu-Natal before agree more that the province is unique and has diverse attractions than those who are first time visitors. Travellers who are above the age of 30 also agree more on their love for KwaZulu-Natal's uniqueness and diverse attraction than the younger generation (not more than 30 years of age);
- Group travellers are more satisfied that the province provides good value for their money, than those who were travelling alone. This might be because when you travel in a group, some destinations tend to give more discounts and allow for price bargaining than to those who are travelling alone;
- South African people, particularly domestic tourists, agree more that they feel safer when travelling in the province than international tourists. This may be because they are familiar with the country and its surrounding areas;

- Respondents who are younger than the age of 31 are more satisfied that KwaZuluNatal offers unique cultural and nature experiences and enjoyed them more than travellers who are older than the age of 31.

These results (Table 4.21) are similar to those of previous research studies which have supported that overall image is one of the most significant elements to stimulate the intention to revisit the same destination (Andrades-Caldito, SánchezRivero & PulidoFernández, 2013; Alcaniz, Garcia & Blas, 2009).

#### 4.23 RELIABILITY TEST AND COMPARING TOURISTS' PROFILE WITH TOURISTS' BRAND IMAGE-SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION PERCEPTIONS

Tourists' profile results were compared with tourists' perceptions of brand image (symbolic representation), using Mann-Whitney U test. Results are shown in Table 4.22.

**Table 4.22: Reliability test and comparing tourists' profile with tourists' brand image (symbolic representations) perceptions**

Statements	Mean score <sup>a</sup>	Standard deviation	Compared with tourists' profile <sup>b</sup>
KwaZulu-Natal is a peaceful province	1.93	.913	N.S
KwaZulu-Natal is at peace with her neighbouring provinces and countries	2.11	.918	N.S
KwaZulu-Natal local economy is doing well	2.24	.989	N.S
KwaZulu-Natal is rich in cultural and natural attributes	1.81	.916	N.S
<b>Reliability Statistics (Perceptions of brand image - symbolic representations), Cronbach's Alpha =.842, N of Items = 4, Valid cases = 406 (98.8%), Excluded cases = 5 (1.2%), Total = 411</b>			

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

<sup>b</sup>Mann-Whitney U test significance: N.S, no significant results.

The study results show that there were no significant relationships between the tourists' profile and brand image (symbolic representation) statements in Table 4.23.

#### 4.24 RELIABILITY TEST AND COMPARING TOURISTS' PROFILE WITH TOURISTS' BRAND IMAGE-AFFECTIVE PERCEPTIONS

Tourists' profile results were compared with tourists' perceptions of brand image (affective) statements. The results are presented in Table 4.23.

**Table 4.23: Reliability test and comparing tourists' profile with tourists' brand image (affective) perceptions.**

Statements	Mean score <sup>a</sup>	Standard deviation	Compared with tourists' profile <sup>b</sup>
KwaZulu-Natal is a pleasant destination	1.71	.858	N.S
KwaZulu-Natal is a relaxed destination	1.76	.841	*Those who visited before agree more
KwaZulu-Natal is a beautiful destination	1.75	.817	*Those who visited before agree more
KwaZulu-Natal is an exciting destination	1.66	.843	*Those who visited before agree more *Those who travelled in a group agree more
<b>Reliability Statistics (Perceptions of brand image - affective), Cronbach's Alpha = .885, N of Items = 4, Valid cases = 404 (98.3%), Excluded cases = 7 (1.7%), Total = 411</b>			

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

<sup>b</sup>Mann-Whitney U test significance: N.S, no significant results - \*,  $p < 0.05$

- There were no significant results found between the tourists profile and their perception of KwaZulu-Natal as a pleasant destination;
- Respondents who have visited before agree more that KwaZulu-Natal is relaxed destination;
- Respondents who have visited are more satisfied than first time visitors to the province and agree more that KwaZulu-Natal is a beautiful destination; It can be said that brand loyalty is built overtime through a collection of positive experiences that requires consistent effort and attention to detail (Manternach, 2010), hence loyal customers are usually repeat tourists who visit a destination without considering other options available

to them. Tourists who are loyal to a destination brand frequently recommend the brand to others, buy more, and buy more regularly (Manternach, 2010).

- Respondents who had visited before and were travelling in groups found KwaZuluNatal as an exciting destination. This may be because repeat visitors tend to favour a destination more than first time visitors, they are more familiar and comfortable with the destination compared to others visiting for the first time.

#### 4.25 RELIABILITY TEST AND COMPARING TOURISTS' PROFILE WITH TOURISTS' BRAND IMAGE-PHYSICAL ATMOSPHERE PERCEPTIONS

The profile of the tourists who were surveyed was compared with tourists' perceptions of brand image (physical atmosphere). These results in Table 4.24 were obtained.

**Table 4.24: Reliability test and comparing tourists' profile with tourists' brand image (physical atmosphere) perceptions**

Statements	Mean score <sup>a</sup>	Standard deviation	Compared with tourists' profile <sup>b</sup>
KwaZulu-Natal is a calm destination	1.81	.906	*Those who visited before agree more
KwaZulu-Natal local population has high moral standards	2.12	.893	*Those who travelled in a group agree more
KwaZulu-Natal destination is quite conservative	2.06	.911	**Those who visited before agree more
KwaZulu-Natal destination is over-crowded	2.38	1.209	**Males agree more than females
<b>Reliability Statistics (Perceptions of brand image – physical atmosphere), Cronbach's Alpha = .796, N of Items = 4, Valid cases = 404 (98.3%), Excluded cases = 7 (1.7%), Total = 411</b>			

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

<sup>b</sup>Mann-Whitney U test significance: \*, p < 0.05; \*\*, p < 0.01.

- Respondents who have visited KwaZulu-Natal before agree more that KwaZuluNatal is a calm destination , than from those who are first time visitors;
- Group travellers found KwaZulu-Natal local population to have high moral standards and agree more than those who visited the province for the first time;
- Respondents who have visited before agree more that KwaZulu-Natal destination is quite conservative;
- Male respondents agree more that the province of KwaZulu-Natal is overcrowded than female travellers.

#### 4.26 RELIABILITY TEST AND COMPARING TOURISTS' PROFILE WITH TOURISTS' BRAND IMAGE-ACCESSIBILITY

Tourists' profile results were compared with tourists' perceptions of brand image (accessibility). The results in Table 4.25 were obtained.

**Table 4.25: Reliability test and comparing tourists' profile with tourists' brand image (accessibility) perceptions**

Statements	Mean score <sup>a</sup>	Standard deviation	Compared with tourists' profile <sup>b</sup>
KwaZulu-Natal destination is developed for tourism	1.91	.903	*Males agree more than females *Those who visited before agree more
KwaZulu-Natal local population is friendly	1.89	.845	N.S
KwaZulu-Natal is an easily accessible destination	1.88	.831	N.S
KwaZulu-Natal destination is interesting	1.74	.812	N.S
<b>Reliability Statistics (Perceptions of brand image – accessibility), Cronbach's Alpha = .830, N of Items = 4, Valid cases = 410 (99.8%), Excluded cases = 1 (0.2%), Total = 411</b>			

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

<sup>b</sup>Mann-Whitney U test significance: N.S, no significant results - \*,  $p < 0.05$ .

- Male travellers agree more than female travellers, that KwaZulu-Natal destination is developed for tourism;

- Respondents who visited KwaZulu-Natal before agree more than first-time visitors that KwaZulu-Natal destination is developed for tourism;
- No significant relationships were found between tourists' profile and the other brand image (accessibility) statements in Table 4.25.

#### 4.27 RELIABILITY TEST AND COMPARING TOURISTS' PROFILE WITH TOURISTS' BRAND LOYALTY PERCEPTIONS

Tourists' profile results were compared with tourists' perceptions of brand loyalty. The results in Table 4.26 were obtained.

**Table 4.26: Reliability test and comparing tourists' profile with tourists' brand loyalty perceptions.**

Statements	Mean score <sup>a</sup>	Standard deviation	Compared with tourists' profile <sup>b</sup>
KwaZulu-Natal would be my preferred choice when choosing a destination to visit	1.87	.909	*Males agree more than females
I would consider visiting KwaZulu-Natal in the future	1.78	.763	N.S
I would recommend KwaZulu-Natal to my friends and family	1.75	.773	*Those who visited before agree more
I feel at home in KwaZulu-Natal	1.95	.907	*Males agree more than females **Those who visited before agree more
I feel connected to this destination, KwaZulu-Natal	1.93	.867	**Those who visited before agree more
KwaZulu-Natal has 'a special place in my heart'	1.89	.915	**Those who visited before agree more *South Africans agree more *Domestic tourists agree more **Those who travelled in a group agree more

I am in love with KwaZulu-Natal	1.83	.954	<p>**Those who visited before agree more</p> <p>**South Africans agree more</p> <p>**Domestic tourists agree more</p> <p>*Those who travelled in a group agree more</p>
<p><b>Reliability Statistics (Perceptions of brand loyalty), Cronbach's Alpha =.917, N of Items = 7, Valid cases = 408 (99.3%), Excluded cases = 3 (0.7%), Total = 411</b></p>			

<sup>a</sup>Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

<sup>b</sup>Mann-Whitney U test significance: N.S, no significant results - \*,  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

The overall destination loyalty is greatly influenced by the perceptions that tourists have towards the destination image, before traveling to the destination as well as the overall satisfaction of experience received while at the destination (Rajesh, 2013).

- Male respondents agree more than female travellers that KwaZulu-Natal is their preferred choice when choosing a destination to visit;
- No significant results were found when the tourists profile were compared with tourists' intention to visit KwaZulu-Natal in the future;
- Respondents who have visited KwaZulu-Natal before agree more that they would recommend the destination to their friends and family; if the experience is pleasurable it is expected for tourists to return or recommend others to visit the destination (Torres-Moraga, Vasquez-Parraga & Zamora-Gonzalez, 2008).
- Male travellers and those who have visited KwaZulu-Natal before agree more than female travelers and first-time visitors, respectively, that they feel at home in KwaZulu-Natal;
- Respondents who have visited before favour the statement that they feel connected to KwaZulu-Natal than those who are first-time visitors to the province;
- Group travellers who have visited the province of KwaZulu-Natal before agree more to the statement that KwaZulu-Natal has a special place in their hearts. Domestic and

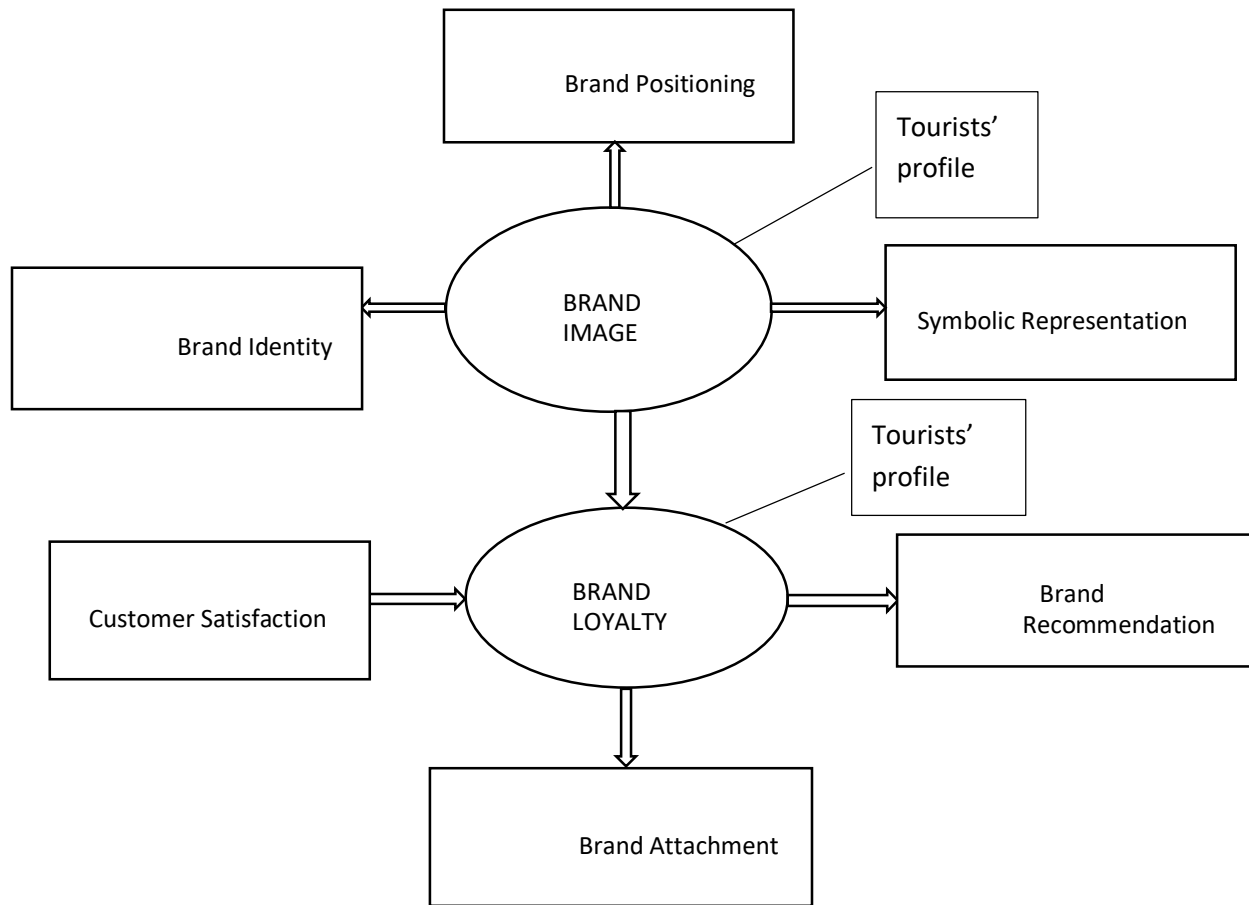
South African tourists and agree more than international tourists also agree that KwaZulu-Natal has a special place in their hearts.

- Respondents who are travelling in groups and those who have visited KwaZuluNatal before agree more that they are in love with the province of KwaZulu-Natal than individual travelers and first-time visitors respectively. Domestic tourists are also more in love with KwaZulu-Natal than international tourists, implying the importance of marketing South Africa more intensively to domestic tourists.

#### **4.28 CONCEPTUAL MODEL**

The research study firstly proposed the conceptual framework on which the study pivots on. Research conducted by various authors aided this study in examining tourists' perceptions of brand image and brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. This study intended to understand the complex relationships that may exist among brand image, brand loyalty and tourist profile. Results from this study show that relationships exist among these dimensions, and explained these relationships between two variables or among many variables. Tourists' profile dimension was added to the original conceptual framework.

This study, therefore, validates the original conceptual framework that guided this research and puts forward that there are strong relationships among brand image, brand loyalty and tourists' profile (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.1: The study’s final conceptual framework illustrated diagrammatically (Source: Authors’ own construction).**

#### **4.28 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the findings were presented and discussed in relation to existing literature by other authors. The data analysis used for this study firstly consisted of descriptive analyses (frequencies, mean and standard deviation). The second stage of data analyses conducted bivariate analysis (comparing two variables) employing Spearman’s Correlation (two-tailed) and Mann-Whitney U tests. The third and final stage of data analysis conducted reliability tests for the Likert-scale sub-sections using Cronbach’s Alpha. The results were presented using tables.

This study also conducted a reliability test (Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient, used as benchmark for reliability) on questions with ordinal responses (dimensions of brand

perception statements). These analyses help understand the frequencies of responses as well as the relationship between variables and tourists' perceptions, in order to address the research topic around tourists' perceptions towards the KwaZulu-Natal destination brand image and brand loyalty in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The following chapter (Chapter five) concludes this research and makes recommendations. The findings from this study will have some important marketing implications that the province of KwaZulu-Natal can use.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study chapter will conclude based on the research objectives which guided it.

#### 5.2 OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The study results show that a very significant number of tourists surveyed were repeat visitors, and revealed that:

- they were highly satisfied with their visit to KwaZulu-Natal,
- KwaZulu-Natal is unique and has diverse attractions,
- KwaZulu-Natal is a beautiful destination,
- KwaZulu-Natal local communities have friendly people who made their visit pleasant,
- KwaZulu-Natal is rich in culture and with natural attributes,
- KwaZulu-Natal is a developed tourism destination,
- they are 'in love' with KwaZulu-Natal,
- they would consider visiting again in the future,
- they would recommend KwaZulu-Natal to their friends and family members.

The researcher concludes this section by addressing study objectives:

- ***Objective 1: To evaluate how tourists perceive the KwaZulu-Natal symbolic representations (image) as a tourism destination.***

This study found that tourists who visited KwaZulu-Natal have a very positive image of the KwaZulu-Natal brand as a tourism destination. They strongly reported that it is a peaceful destination, rich in cultural and natural attributes, and the local economy is doing well.

- ***Objective 2: To analyse the tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal tourism destination position.***

The study findings revealed that tourists' perceived KwaZulu-Natal as having a strong destination brand position. This is evident in the results as tourists perceived the province as: a unique destination with diverse attractions, a tourism destination with unique cultural

and nature experiences, a destination that offers quality products, service and valuable experiences to tourists, and a safe destination that gives great value for money.

- ***Objective 3: To assess the level of tourists' willingness to return to KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination.***

The results show that most tourists were satisfied with their visit to KwaZulu-Natal, and will likely to return to the destination. The results show that most of the surveyed respondents were returning visitors who have a positive attitude towards KwaZulu-Natal destination brand. These also show their high level of loyalty towards KwaZulu-Natal as a destination of choice.

- ***Objective 4: To find out the tourists' willingness to recommend KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination.***

The study results show that tourists were very satisfied with their visit, they mostly enjoyed the tourist activities offered in KwaZulu-Natal, and they are willing to recommend KwaZulu-Natal as a preferred tourism destination to their family and friends.

- ***Objective 5: To analyse tourists' attachment to KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination.***

The study results found that tourists are mostly loyal and attached to KwaZulu-Natal as a tourism destination. This is evident in the study results as most tourists indicated that they are connected to the destination, and they feel at home in KwaZulu-Natal which they regard as a preferred choice when choosing a destination to visit. They also attest that KwaZulu-Natal has a special place in their hearts and they are indeed in love with the destination.

### **5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this dissertation, this research study, therefore, recommends the following:

- KwaZulu-Natal marketers should capitalise on the province' brand attributes that make the destination a strong brand (such as its unique cultural and nature experiences, friendly population, quality products and services, and good value for money) to strengthen the destination's role in South Africa and globally as a culture and nature destination.

- Destination managers in KwaZulu-Natal should continue to market the destination based on its cultural and natural attributes, but also, maintain and create opportunities for tourists who are more interested in meetings, events, sand-season, and visiting friends and relatives, for which the destination has strong potential.
- KwaZulu-Natal managers can find ways of managing tourists' numbers (visitor steering) in different attractions within the destination, especially during their peak season, to avoid overcrowding. Too many tourists in one attraction (e.g. the beaches) may cause tourists to feel unsafe. Destination managers can use some of the effective approaches of managing visitor numbers, such as randomized right of access, defined time of visitation to a given site or locale and pre-visitation reservation systems. KwaZulu-Natal Tourism Destination Managers should take care that the positive brand image of the destination is not damaged. This can be done by continuing to offer and improve on their quality products and services, maintaining the healthy status of its natural and cultural attributes, and continually educating the local population on the values of friendliness towards visitors and foreigners.

#### **5.4 OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This research dissertation explored the relationships between and among variables that are associated with tourists' perceptions of tourism destination brand image and brand loyalty of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. Further research can conduct similar studies around this topic on another province in South Africa, or other nations in Africa. This will support the comparison of this study's findings with future research findings, to check for cultural or geo-political differences. Other potential studies can also explore brand essence, brand equity or brand competitiveness of other African tourism destinations. The major limitation of this study lies on the usage of non-probability sampling, as this study cannot be easily generalized.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE (SURVEY INSTRUMENT)



#### **Tourists' Questionnaire**

Dear Respondent,

My name is Pamela Sinenhlanhla Mhlongo. I am a Master's Degree student at the University of Zululand, KwaZulu-Natal. My research is about measuring tourists' perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal as a tourist destination. The cities of Durban, Pietermaritzburg and Richards Bay are all in KwaZulu-Natal.

Information obtained from this questionnaire will be strictly confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Your participation in the study will be anonymous as no names, or addresses will be required from you. You can withdraw from this study at any given time.

Should you have any enquiries regarding the study, kindly send me an email to [Mhlongop94@gmail.com](mailto:Mhlongop94@gmail.com), or to my study leader: [Ezeudujil@unizulu.ac.za](mailto:Ezeudujil@unizulu.ac.za)

Kind regards

Pamela Mhlongo

**SECTION A: General Questions**

*Please indicate your answer by circling the number that best represents your answer/ write in spaces.*

**1. Have you visited any KwaZulu-Natal destination before?**

Yes	1
No	2

**2. How satisfied are you with your visit to this KwaZulu-Natal destination?**

Totally satisfied	1
Mostly satisfied	2
Moderately satisfied	3
Mostly dissatisfied	4
Totally dissatisfied	5

**3. How did you enjoy these activities in KwaZulu-Natal?**

	Highly enjoyable	Mostly enjoyable	Moderately enjoyable	Mostly unenjoyable	Not enjoyable
Nature and outdoors	1	2	3	4	5
Food and wine	1	2	3	4	5
Beaches	1	2	3	4	5
History & Culture	1	2	3	4	5
Shopping	1	2	3	4	5

**SECTION B: Profile of respondents**

*(Please indicate your answer by circling the number that best represents your answer/ write in spaces)*

<b>1. Gender</b>	
Male	1
Female	2

<b>2. Age Group</b>	
---------------------	--

Less than 20	1
21-30	2
31-40	3
41-50	4
51-60	5
More than 60	6

<b>3. Origin</b>	
South African	1
Non South African	2

<b>4. Continent of origin</b>	
Africa	1
Australia/ Oceania	2
Asia	3
Europe	4
North America	5
South America	6

<b>5. Type of Tourist</b>	
Domestic Tourist	1
International Tourist	2

<b>6. Source of Information about KwaZulu-Natal</b>	
Internet	1
Word of Mouth	2
Media ( travel magazines and books, T.V)	3
Travel Agency/ Tour Operator	4

Other (Please specify.....)

**7. Are you travelling in a Group?**

Yes	1
No	2

**8. Length of stay in KwaZulu-Natal**

1-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16 days or longer	4

**9. Purpose of visit to KwaZulu-Natal**

Business (seminar, event, attending a conference)	1
Business (import and export)	2
Holiday	3
Visiting friends and family	4
Medical	5
Academic exchange	6
Other (Please specify.....)	7

### SECTION C: Tourists' Perceptions

Please indicate your *level of agreement* with the following statements, by circling the number that best represents your opinion.

<b>Brand Attributes</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
1. KwaZulu-Natal is unique and has diverse attractions	1	2	3	4	5
2. KwaZulu-Natal provides tourists with good value for their money	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel safe when travelling in KwaZulu-Natal	1	2	3	4	5
4. KwaZulu-Natal tourism destinations offer quality products, service and valuable experiences to tourists	1	2	3	4	5
5. KwaZulu-Natal offers unique cultural and nature experiences	1	2	3	4	5
6. KwaZulu-Natal local communities have friendly people who make visiting the province pleasant	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Brand Image – Symbolic Representations</b>					
7. KwaZulu-Natal is a peaceful province	1	2	3	4	5
8. KwaZulu-Natal is at peace with other neighbouring provinces and countries	1	2	3	4	5
9. KwaZulu-Natal local economy is doing well	1	2	3	4	5
10. KwaZulu-Natal is rich in cultural and natural attributes	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Brand image (affective)</b>					
11. KwaZulu-Natal is a pleasant destination	1	2	3	4	5
12. KwaZulu-Natal is a relaxed destination	1	2	3	4	5

13. KwaZulu-Natal is a beautiful destination	1	2	3	4	5
14. KwaZulu-Natal is an exciting destination	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Brand image (physical atmosphere)</b>					
15. KwaZulu-Natal is a calm destination	1	2	3	4	5
16. KwaZulu-Natal local population has high moral standards	1	2	3	4	5
17. KwaZulu-Natal destination is quite conservative	1	2	3	4	5
18. KwaZulu-Natal destination is over-crowded	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Brand image (accessibility)</b>					
19. KwaZulu-Natal destination is developed for tourism	1	2	3	4	5
20. KwaZulu-Natal local population is friendly	1	2	3	4	5
21. KwaZulu-Natal is an easily accessible destination	1	2	3	4	5
22. KwaZulu-Natal destination is interesting	1	2	3	4	5

<b>Brand Loyalty</b>					
<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
24. KwaZulu-Natal would be my preferred choice when choosing a destination to visit	1	2	3	4	5
25. I would consider visiting KwaZulu-Natal in the future	1	2	3	4	5
26. I would recommend KwaZulu-Natal to my friends and family	1	2	3	4	5
27. I feel at home in KwaZulu-Natal	1	2	3	4	5
28. I feel connected to this destination, KwaZulu-Natal	1	2	3	4	5

29. KwaZulu-Natal has 'a special place in my heart'	1	2	3	4	5
30. I am in love with KwaZulu-Natal	1	2	3	4	5

**Thank you very much for your participation! Have a pleasant stay in KZN!!**

## APPENDIX B: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE FROM UNIZULU

**UNIVERSITY OF ZULULAND  
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**  
(Reg No: UZREC 171110-030)



**RESEARCH & INNOVATION**

Website: <http://www.unizulu.ac.za>  
Private Bag X1001  
KwaDlangezwa 3886  
Tel: 035 902 6731  
Fax: 035 902 6222  
Email: [asandedlams95@gmail.com](mailto:asandedlams95@gmail.com)

### ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

<b>Certificate Number</b>	UZREC 171110-030 PGM 2017/455			
<b>Project Title</b>	Tourists' Perception of KwaZulu-Natal Brand Image and Brand Loyalty			
<b>Principal Researcher/ Investigator</b>	Mhlongo PS			
<b>Supervisor and Co- supervisor</b>	DR IO Ezeuduji			
<b>Department</b>	Recreation and Tourism			
<b>Faculty</b>	Arts			
<b>Type of Risk</b>	Medium risk – Desktop research			
<b>Nature of Project</b>	Honours/4 <sup>th</sup> Year		Master's	x
			Doctoral	
				Departmental

The University of Zululand's Research Ethics Committee (UZREC) hereby gives ethical approval in respect of the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project. The Researcher may therefore commence with data collection as from the date of this Certificate, using the certificate number indicated above.

- Special conditions:**
- (1) This certificate is valid for 2 years from the date of issue.
  - (2) Principal researcher must provide an annual report to the UZREC in the prescribed format [due date-01 July 2018]
  - (3) Principal researcher must submit a report at the end of project in respect of ethical compliance.
  - (4) The UZREC must be informed immediately of any material change in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the documents that were presented to the meeting.

The UZREC wishes the researcher well in conducting research.

  
Professor Gideon De Wet  
Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research & Innovation  
16 November 2017



## APPENDIX C: LETTER OF AFFIRMATION FROM THE EDITOR

University of Zululand  
Department of English

Dr. L Mafu  
MA, DLITT et Phil, Grad. Ce



Private Bag X1001  
KWADLANGEZWA 3886  
South Africa

email: [MafuL@unizulu.ca.za](mailto:MafuL@unizulu.ca.za)  
Phone: 035-9026086

18 February 2019

To whom it may concern

Editor's Letter of Confirmation of Editing Ms Pamela Mhlongo's Masters  
Dissertation

This letter serves to confirm that I, Dr Lucas Mafu edited Ms Pamela Mhlongo's MA in Tourism dissertation entitled "Tourists' Perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal Brand Image and Brand Loyalty".

I confirm that in the process of editing the dissertation, I concentrated on typing, syntactic, grammatical, punctuation, semantical and other related errors in writing that any editor would normally focus on. In no way did my work on the dissertation affect or in any way interfere with its academic aspects. Apart from the editorial interventions outlined above, I declare the edited document to be the candidate's work in the same original form as when it was first sent to me.

I wish to state a disclaimer that any other changes to the language aspects of the dissertation in its current form that may be subsequently made to the edited version cannot be attributed to the editor.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L Mafu', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Lucas Mafu

(Department of English)

## APPENDIX D: PLAGIARISM REPORT (TURNITIN)

Document Viewer

## Turnitin Originality Report

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 ID: 1085936716  
 Word Count: 36803  
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**TOURISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF KWAZULU-NATAL BRAND ...** By Pamela Mhlongo

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< 1% match (publications) <a href="#">Chux Gervase Iwu, Ikechukwu O. Ezeuduji, Ita Chimezie Iwu, Kenechukwu Ikebuaku, Robertson K. Tengeh, "Job motivation and management implications: a case of teachers in Nigeria", Problems and Perspectives in Management, 2017</a>	✕
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< 1% match (Internet from 09-Apr-2015) <a href="http://www.gov.za">http://www.gov.za</a>	✕
< 1% match (publications) <a href="#">Qu, Ying, and Hailin Qu, "Nonutilitarian Tourism Destination Positioning: A Case Study in China : Tourism Destination Marketing", International Journal of Tourism Research, 2014.</a>	✕
< 1% match (Internet from 19-Feb-2015) <a href="http://reagenesys.co.za">http://reagenesys.co.za</a>	✕
< 1% match (Internet from 26-Dec-2017) <a href="https://d-nb.info/1098173708/34">https://d-nb.info/1098173708/34</a>	✕
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< 1% match (Internet from 12-Feb-2014) <a href="http://www.unlv.edu.sg">http://www.unlv.edu.sg</a>	✕

## ANNEXURES

### ANNEXURE A: CANDIDATE'S ORIGINALITY DECLARATION (RESEARCH PAPERS, MINI-DISSERTATIONS, DISSERTATIONS AND THESES)

#### ORIGINALITY DECLARATION

<b>Full Names and Surname</b>	PAMELA SINENHLANHLA MHLONGO
<b>Student Number</b>	201304365
<b>Title of dissertation/thesis</b>	TOURIST'S PERCEPTIONS OF KWAZULU-NATAL BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND LOYLTY

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the University's policies and rules applicable to postgraduate research, and I certify that I have, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complied with their requirements.


In particular, I confirm that I had obtained an ethical clearance certificate for my research (Certificate Number UZREC 171110-03 PGM 2017/455) and that I have complied with the conditions set out in that certificate.

I further certify that this research paper/ mini-dissertation/ dissertation/ thesis is original, and that the material has not been published elsewhere, or submitted, either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university, except as follows:

.....  
 ..... (Where part of the work has been published elsewhere, or where the work is a continuation or progression of research that was submitted for another degree, e.g. an Honours project or a Master's dissertation this must be stated clearly, the name of the work must be provided, and an explanation must be given regarding the extent of the current work's originality.)

I declare that this research paper/mini-dissertation/dissertation/ thesis (**delete that which is not applicable**) is, save for the supervisory guidance received, the product of my own work and effort. I have, to the best of my knowledge and belief, complied with the University's Plagiarism Policy and acknowledged all sources of information in line with normal academic conventions.

I have/have not subjected the document to the University's text-matching and/or similarity-checking procedures. (One could indicate that this process applied only to some chapters or that it occurred during the course of the research and not in respect of the final product.)

<b>Candidate's signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	06-2019

**ANNEXURE B: SUPERVISOR’S CONSENT, WITH HOD AND DEAN’S ENDORSEMENTS, TO SUBMIT A MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION**

**CONSENT TO SUBMIT A MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION**

(To be completed separately by supervisors and co-supervisors)

I hereby confirm that the manuscript of the following candidate has been submitted for examination

- With my consent
- Without my consent, for the reasons indicated in the attached document  
(Delete that which is not applicable, and attach document if the second option is selected)

My consent implies that I believe that

- The candidate has complied with institutional policies, in particular the Research Ethics Policy, and the conditions, if any, specified by the University’s Research Ethics Committee
- The manuscript meets the required standards and is ready for assessment

My consent does not imply or guarantee that the examiners will hold a similar view and that the examination process will be successful.

<b>Full Names and Surname</b>	PAMELA SINENHLANHLA MHLONGO
<b>Student Number</b>	201304365
<b>Degree</b>	MA-TOURISM (TOURISM STUDIES)
<b>Name of Supervisor</b>	PROF I.O EZEUDUJI
<b>Supervisor e-mail address</b>	<a href="mailto:Ezeudujil@unizulu.ac.za">Ezeudujil@unizulu.ac.za</a>
<b>Name of Co-supervisor</b>	
<b>Co-supervisor e-mail address</b>	
<b>Title of dissertation/thesis</b>	TOURIST’S PERCEPTIONS OF KWAZULU-NATAL BRAND IMAGE AND BRAND LOYALTY
<b>Supervisor’s signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

**HEAD OF DEPARTMENT AND DEAN’S ENDORSEMENT**

To the best of my knowledge, the University Rules and the procedures stipulated in the Postgraduate Assessment Guide have been adhered to in respect of the above-mentioned candidate.			
<b>Name of HoD/Dean</b>	<b>Department/Faculty</b>	<b>Signature</b>	<b>Date</b>
PROF I.O EZEUDUJI	RECREATION AND TOURISM		

**ANNEXURE C: CANDIDATE'S NOTICE OF INTENTION TO SUBMIT A DISSERTATION OR  
THESIS FOR EXAMINATION**

The Head of Department

Department of Recreation and Tourism


Faculty of Art

University of Zululand

**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO SUBMIT A MANUSCRIPT FOR EXAMINATION**

I hereby give notice that I aim to submit my dissertation/ thesis for examination. I undertake to inform the University immediately in the event of a delay in submitting the manuscript by the date stipulated above.

<b>Full Names and Surname</b>	PAMELA SINENHLANHLA MHLONGO
<b>Student Number</b>	201304365
<b>Intended date of submission</b>	
<b>Degree</b>	MA-TOURISM
<b>Name of Supervisor</b>	PROF I.O EZEUDUJI
<b>Supervisor e-mail address</b>	<a href="mailto:Ezeudujl@unizulu.ac.za">Ezeudujl@unizulu.ac.za</a>
<b>Name of Co-supervisor</b>	
<b>Co-supervisor e-mail address</b>	
<b>Title of dissertation/thesis</b>	Tourist's perceptions of KwaZulu-Natal brand image and brand loyalty

<b>Candidate's signature</b>	
<b>Date</b>	06-2019