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## Article

### Residents and domestic leisure travel : Mtubatuba local municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

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## **Residents and Domestic Leisure Travel: Mtubatuba Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa**

**Ikechukwu Onyekwere Ezeuduji<sup>1</sup>, Nokulunga C. Dlomo<sup>2</sup>**

**Abstract:** Domestic tourism research has grown in popularity. This study, conducted at Mtubatuba Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, explored local residents' willingness to participate in domestic tourism, and sought after major and relevant marketing tool to be used in promoting domestic tourism. Previous studies indicate that domestic tourism is a crucial contributor to the growth of tourism. Structured questionnaire was used to collect usable data from randomly selected 400 respondents. Data analyses generated descriptive and inferential statistics to address study objectives. Residents are highly willing to participate in domestic tourism and find South Africa a very attractive destination; especially those who are young (18-30 years old), those who are employed and those with tertiary education. South African Tourism should use technology to market South African tourist attractions to local residents. Marketing South Africa as a tourism destination should use modern technology to promote the destination, targeting especially young, employed and educated South Africans. Identifying tourists' needs and wants, and making concerted efforts to satisfying them is the hallmark of destination marketing.

**Keywords:** domestic tourism; leisure travel; market segmentation; sub-Saharan Africa

**JEL Classification:** Z32

### **1. Introduction**

Rogerson (2011) reports that the National Government of South Africa declared tourism as one of the six pillars for economic growth. The commitment provided for in the National Tourism Sector Strategy called for the development of a Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy for South Africa. This was in recognition that domestic tourism is a crucial contributor to the growth of tourism. Tourism is widely perceived as an economic development tool for the local community, providing factors that improve the quality of life, such as employment and investment opportunities, tax revenues, restaurants, accommodation services, natural and cultural attractions, festivals, and outdoor recreation opportunities (Tichaawa & Mhlanga, 2015). With regard to the South African province where this study was conducted, tourism had a significant contribution in the KwaZulu-Natal local economy, growing from a R9billion contribution to the Provincial Gross Domestic Product in 2014 to over R10billion by 2018 (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal, 2019).

Domestic tourism demand translates into international tourism demand, and retaining much of the tourism expenditure within the tourism destination, such as South Africa, is necessary for local

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economic growth. This study was conducted in Mtubatuba Local Municipality, found within KwaZulu-Natal Province, one of the nine provinces of South Africa. Mtubatuba Local Municipality was selected for this study as it is one of the municipalities in South Africa that have major tourist attractions (for example a World Heritage Site - Isimangaliso Wetland Park, Nature Reserves and Crocodile Park) and receives significant number of tourists yearly. This study area has heavy reliance on tourism as an economic activity with many tourism-related businesses. The demand for the local residents of Mtubatuba Local Municipality to travel domestically (within South Africa), particularly for leisure, is worth investigating.

Not all countries and regions are equally able to attract and retain domestic tourists (Eugenio-Martin & Campos-Soria, 2010). From this study's literature review, it is found that many international studies were conducted on domestic tourism and leisure travel (such as Kanagara & Bindu, 2013; Khuong & Ha, 2014; Baniya & Paudel, 2016; Litheko & Potgieter, 2016; Makhaola, 2017). However, not many similar studies have been done in the sub-Saharan Africa. This study, conducted at Mtubatuba Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal Province, South Africa, explored local residents' willingness to participate in domestic tourism, and sought after major and relevant marketing tool to be used in promoting domestic tourism. This will contribute to the regional knowledge of this phenomenon.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Domestic Tourism in South Africa**

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (2014) refers domestic tourism as the activity where the resident travels within the country of reference but outside of his/her own environment. The intention of traveling could be holiday, business, medical, shopping, visiting family and friends. Litheko and Potgieter (2016) state that interest in domestic tourism in developing countries is ascribed to the size, the rapid growth, the economic value, and domestic tourism's ability to counter the seasonality of tourism, as well as its valuable contribution towards local development. This local development boosts the wellbeing of either the community or the businesses within the area. Tourists may travel locally, provincially, or nationally, with the intention of visiting tourism destinations or friends and family (Makhaola, 2017). Domestic tourism plays a critical role in the success of any tourism destination and should form the backbone of the tourism sector. For South Africa, the Tourism Satellite Account (2017) released by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) reports that domestic tourism plays a critical role in the tourism sector as it generates more than half the internal tourism revenue. It also contributes a lot to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the country. Developing countries (such as South Africa) continue to ignore, neglect and disregard domestic tourism, compared to the well-developed nations who have taken domestic tourism seriously as a way of attaining sustainable tourism development (Skanavis & Sakellari, 2011; Ghimire 2013).

The use of domestic tourism for social integration is a new concept in South Africa, coming after the 1994 democratic election (Makhaola, 2017). This is because South Africa's tourism became recognized after 1994, when the country opened itself up to the world. Makhaola (2017) posits that in South Africa, there has been a significant tourism growth since 1994, with the sector now the country's key economic component. South Africa's recent governments and the tourism department are working hard to promote



tourism amongst residents, especially those who were previously disadvantaged during the apartheid era. Of all the industries, tourism has the most potential, either directly or indirectly (due to its most rapid growth rate), to achieve the country's major objectives of job creation, economic growth, and poverty alleviation in all provinces. In South Africa, backpacker tourism, for example, is one of the subtypes of tourism and has the potential to make valuable contributions toward local economic development for communities and to lead to reductions in seasonality, as this tourism niche allows for year-round flows of visitors (Visser & Hoogendoorn, 2011). Domestic tourism remains an under-researched theme in South Africa partly due to the difficulty of tracking domestic tourism, and also as a result of government and policy-makers placing emphasis on the attractive higher expenditures from foreign visitors (Bui & Jolliffe, 2011; Ghimire, 2013).

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

## **2.2. Residents' Participation in Domestic Tourism**

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

Potential tourists' personal preference does serve as another important factor that influences their choice of destination choice (Hsu et al., 2009). Researchers such as Goodall and Cooper (1991) state that motivation generates actions and guide corresponding behaviours, but it is the preference that decide

people's more precise choices. Although earlier studies have explored travellers' preference (such as Suh & McAvoy, 2005), preference is not specifically addressed in the destination selection process (Hsu et al., 2009). The study by Hsu et al. (2009) relates motivational factors to tourists' destination preference ratings, and this can help us to understand what factors or criteria essentially drive preferences. This study is however exploring residents' willingness to travel domestically, and not specifically measuring which attractions within the destination that they prefer.

### **2.3. Marketing in the Tourism Industry**

Recent developments and growth of information and communication technologies have changed the traditional frame for marketing, and brought smartness into the tourism industry. In the modern marketing landscape, with the presence of the Internet, social media, blogs and Search Engine Optimisation (SEO); many platforms have been created for organisations (including tourism organisations) to share information with potential customers (or tourists). Chetty (2015) posits that a strong online presence of any organisation is considered a valuable asset for the business operation. Tourism organisations use a variety of platforms of technology (such as TripAdvisor, Tripcast, social media, and HearPlanet) to share information about their organisations (Jovicic, 2019). By using such platforms, organisations also gain knowledge of what the tourists are expecting from the destination as they allow participant's review. This makes it easier for the marketing management to understand the target market, their needs and wants. Zeng and Gerristen (2014), and Gidakou (2015) therefore advise that tourism industry should take advantage of social media, as the industry relies on destination reputation, consumer opinion, word-of-mouth, and advertising.

## **3. Study Area, Research Design and Methods**

### **3.1. Study Area**

Mtubatuba Local Municipality in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa receives and provides for a wide range of travellers. Accommodation facilities in KwaZulu-Natal compare favourably to the best hotels and resorts in the world (Nyawo & Mubangizi, 2015). The strength of this municipality lies in its two major tourist attractions: iSimangaliso Wetland Park (a World Heritage Site) which encompasses the entire coastline of more than 200 km and Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Park (Mtubatuba Municipality, 2017). Mtubatuba Local Municipality is one of the five municipalities in uMkhanyakude District Municipality (known as the most rural district in KwaZulu-Natal Province). St Lucia town in Mtubatuba Local Municipality is a tourism hub and service centre for the surrounding rural areas (Mtubatuba Municipality, 2017).

### 3.2. Research Design and Methods

The study used survey design to explore residents' willingness to participate in domestic leisure tourism. The research objectives have more leaning towards a positivist research paradigm, this study therefore used quantitative research methods to collect data from respondents. The researchers used structured questionnaire to collect data. According to Creswell (2009), survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of the population. In many cases, tourism research needs quantitative data from respondents to get the required information (Nkwanyana, Ezeuduji & Nzama, 2016; Ezeuduji & Mbane, 2017). This study employed a quantitative research technique as the study involves a large number of respondents. Variables introduced into the questionnaire to measure the constructs of 'travel willingness' and 'marketing strategy' were obtained from previous work (such as Hong, 2009; Nejati et al., 2014; Sharpley, 2014; Du Plessis et al., 2015; Bimonte & Punzo, 2016; Monterrubio, 2016).

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

The first stage of data analysis employed descriptive statistics to generate frequency of respondents' responses (in percentages) and mean scores of responses. Bivariate analyses were conducted at the second stage of data analysis. Bivariate analyses (comparing two variables) employed Spearman's Correlation (two-tailed) and Pearson Chi-square tests to check for relationships between variables (Bolboacă et al., 2011). Spearman's Correlation (two-tailed) test (non-parametric test) was used to find out if there are positive or negative correlations between the measured ranked or ordinal variables (Veal, 2011). Also, Pearson Chi-square test was used to examine relationships between nominal and/or categorical variables (Veal, 2011). This study consequently recoded ordinal variables into nominal variables (agree, neutral, disagree), to allow for the Chi-square tests. Strongly agree and agree responses were recoded to 'agree'; neutral response remained 'neutral' and strongly disagree and disagree responses were recoded to 'disagree'. The third stage of data analysis conducted multivariate analysis: the reliability test (using Cronbach's Alpha) to check for the level of internal consistencies of variables used to explain the dimensions of 'travel willingness' and 'marketing strategy' respectively. Ezeuduji et al. (2016) state that Cronbach's Alpha should be calculated as reliability parameter to check the internal consistency of the variables within a study dimension. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of between 0.5 and 0.7 are acceptable in social science research, to explain adequate consistency of variables (George & Mallery, 2003; Chawla & Sondhi, 2011). However, Tavakol and Dennick (2011) posit that a low

Cronbach's Alpha score may occur if there is a weak interrelationship amongst questionnaire variables used in the analysis, or when few variables are being used to explain a particular dimension or factor. This study confidently accepts that the variables used in measuring the 'travel willingness' and 'marketing strategy' dimensions have internal coherence or consistency, as both Cronbach's Alpha coefficients are above 0.7 (see next section; Table 2).

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

Table 1 presents the profile of Mtubatuba Local Municipality residents who were respondents to this study. 100% of the respondents were permanent residents of the municipality. The majority of respondents fall into the age bracket of 18 – 30 years (about 76%), showing that the sample is relatively young. Nonetheless, Moisa (2010) argues that the social ills experienced by young people, such as unemployment and poverty, may hinder their participation in domestic tourism activities. The results of the surveys such as those conducted by Alzboun (2019) have shown that the main challenges of domestic tourism are related to economic, services and socio-cultural aspects. However, Alzboun's study findings did not unearth any significant differences in respondents' perceptions of domestic tourism challenges, between demographic groups in terms of age, gender, income, and level of education. The results of this study indicate that the majority of respondents are female (about 64%), and about 54% of respondents are employed. Authors, such as Moon et al. (2019) and Nassuna (2019) argue that females take domestic tours as a way to overcome their doubled disadvantaged position as ethnic minority (females) and as housewives under patriarchy. About 41% of the study respondents have secondary education, and about 58% have tertiary education. It can therefore be argued that much of the respondents have adequate formal education. Majority of the respondents were positive about tourism having a good influence in the country's development, as about 86% of them answered in the affirmative to the question: 'do you think tourism has a good influence in the community?'. This result supports that of Manwa and Modirapula (2019), who state that there are opportunities for the tourism industry to contribute to sustainable livelihoods and poverty alleviation in many local communities in sub-Saharan Africa. Jacobs and du Plessis (2019) also point out that the tourism sector in South Africa has contributed more to the economy than other industries such as agriculture.

Another good news is that about 45% of the respondents perceive tourism development as 'very productive' and about 40% of the respondents perceive tourism development as 'mostly productive'; agreeing to earlier authors that tourism contributes significantly to the economy and does create a huge labour market (such as Pham et al., 2019). The researchers' fieldwork experience has shown that, in most cases, those residents who do not work (unemployed) are negative towards tourism mostly due to the myth that 'tourism' is only for 'the rich' South Africans.

The results also reveal that the respondents who perceive South Africa as a good or very good destination for leisure tourism were in the majority in Mtubatuba Local Municipality (about 86%). This is also good news for the South African domestic tourism. If local residents appreciate their own destination, they will likely participate in domestic tourism.

**Table 1. Respondents' Profile and General Information (N = 400)**

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Are you a permanent resident of Mtubatuba Local Municipality?	Yes	100
	No	0.0
Which age group do you belong to?	18-24yrs	27.5
	25-30yrs	48.3
	31-35yrs	20.5
	36-40yrs	3.3
	41-59yrs	0.0
	60+yrs	0.5
Gender	Female	63.7
	Male	36.3
Employment status	Working	54.3
	Not working	45.7
Educational level	Primary education or less	1.8
	Secondary education	40.8
	Tertiary education	57.5
Do you think tourism has a good influence in the community?	Yes	85.8
	No	14.2
How do you perceive tourism development in South Africa?	Very productive	44.5
	Mostly productive	39.8
	Neither productive nor unproductive	8.3
	Mostly unproductive	6.4
	Very unproductive	1.0
How do you perceive South Africa as a leisure tourism destination?	Very good	48.0
	Good	38.5
	Neither good nor poor	7.8
	Poor	4.0
	Very poor	1.7

In the results presented in Table 2, respondents were asked their level of agreement or disagreement to the five statements (variables) used to measure 'willingness to travel South Africa for leisure' – and these variables were correlated with the 'perception of South Africa as a leisure tourism destination'. The results show that the respondents agree much more than they disagree towards 'willingness to travel South Africa for leisure' variables. About 87% of the respondents strongly agree or agree to the statement: 'I am willing to participate in domestic tourism'. 85% of the respondents reported that 'South Africa is a very interesting country to visit'. Much of the respondents (about 86%) strongly agree or agree to the statement: 'I want to get more insight why South Africa is famous'. Likewise, 84% of respondents strongly agree or agree that 'tourism destinations and facilities are easily accessible'. According to Ferreira et al. (2016), accessibility to a tourist destination may be regarded as a travel constraint. Some 86% of the respondents strongly agree or agree to the statement: 'I have a strong desire to see both the rural and urban areas of South Africa'. These results show a very high demand for domestic tourism among the respondents.



The results in Table 2 further indicate that there is a strong positive correlation between the ‘willingness to travel for leisure’ and the local’s ‘perception of South Africa as a leisure tourism destination’. This means that respondents who agree to these statements, also perceive South Africa as a good leisure tourism destination.

Also in Table 2, respondents were asked to demonstrate their level of agreement or disagreement on the statements used to assess ‘marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination’ – and these variables were also correlated with the perception of South Africa as a leisure tourism destination. The results show that about 90% of the respondents strongly agree or agree that ‘South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents’. 89% of the respondents reported that ‘local residents in South Africa should be made aware of specific tourism attractions in South Africa’. Again, much of the respondents (about 90%) strongly agree or agree to the statement: ‘South African Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions’. It is important to note that 58% of respondents strongly agree or agree that ‘South African tourist destinations and attractions are very expensive’; and some 61% of respondents strongly agree or agree to this statement: ‘local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions’. These two latter results are addressed in the next section (conclusion and recommendations) of this paper. Muchapondwa and Stage (2013) state that South Africa has beautiful landscapes ranging from mountain ranges to vast grassy plains, from coastlines to meandering rivers and desert dunes. Also Manwa and Modirapula (2019) posit that the promotion of community participation in tourism initiatives is a critical component of growth, development and poverty alleviation in post-apartheid South Africa.

The results in Table 2 indicate that there are positive correlations between ‘perception of South Africa as a leisure tourism destination’, and these two statements: ‘South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents’ and ‘South African Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions’. These will also be addressed in the next section.

**Table 2. Willingness to Travel and Marketing South Africa Correlated with Perception of South Africa as a Leisure Tourism Destination**

<i>Statements<sup>a</sup></i> <i>Willingness to travel South Africa for leisure (%)</i>	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean Score	<i><sup>b</sup>Correlation with perception</i>
(i) I am willing to participate in domestic tourism.	32.3	55.0	9.8	2.3	0.6	1.84	** (positive)
(ii) South Africa is a very interesting country to visit.	29.5	55.5	10.0	4.3	0.7	1.91	** (positive)
(iii) I want to get more insight why South Africa is famous.	30.3	54.3	11.3	3.1	1.0	1.91	** (positive)
(iv) Tourism destinations and facilities are easily accessible.	23.3	47.0	22.0	6.0	1.7	2.16	** (positive)
(v) I have a strong desire to see both the rural and urban areas of South Africa.	49.5	36.3	9.8	3.0	1.4	1.71	** (positive)
<i>Reliability statistics (Willingness to travel South Africa for leisure): Cronbach's Alpha = .802, N of items = 5, Valid cases = 400 (100%), Excluded cases = 0 (0.0%), Total = 400</i>							



<b>Marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination (%)</b>							
South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents.	49.5	40.3	6.8	2.8	0.6	1.65	* (positive)
Local residents in South Africa should be made aware of specific tourism attractions in South Africa.	49.5	39.0	8.5	2.8	0.2	1.65	No correlation
South African Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions.	48.8	42.0	6.0	1.8	1.4	1.65	* (positive)
South African tourist destinations and attractions are very expensive.	28.5	29.3	20.2	21.0	1.0	2.37	No correlation
Local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions.	32.5	28.0	19.3	18.0	2.2	2.30	No correlation
<i>Reliability statistics (Marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination): Cronbach's Alpha = .755, N of items = 5, Valid cases = 400 (100%), Excluded cases = 0 (0.0%), Total =400</i>							

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

<sup>b</sup>Spearman's Rank correlation (two-tailed) test significance: \*,  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ .

In Table 3, 'willingness to travel South Africa for leisure' variables were compared with 'respondents' profile' variables. The results indicate that young respondents, those who are 18-30 years old agree more than others regarding these statements: 'I am willing to participate in domestic tourism', and 'tourism destinations and facilities are easily accessible'. Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed respondents to these statements: 'I am willing to participate in domestic tourism', 'South Africa is a very interesting country to visit', 'I want to get more insight why South Africa is famous', and 'Tourism destinations and facilities are easily accessible'. The results also show that the respondents with tertiary education agree most to these statements: 'South Africa is a very interesting country to visit', 'I want to get more insight why South Africa is famous' and 'tourism destinations and facilities are easily accessible'. These results consistently show that young residents, employed residents, and those with tertiary education are more willing to travel South Africa for leisure than their counterparts. These results therefore, have implications for South African Tourism (the Destination Marketing Organisation), and the provincial tourism marketing offices. The findings of this study support Li et al.'s (2016) results that economic situation can constrain domestic travel. They (Li et al.) posit that residents who are less educated and have lower income are less likely to travel.

**Table 3 Willingness to Travel and Marketing South Africa Compared with Respondents' Profile**

<i>Statements</i>	<i>Compared with Profile</i>
<b><i>Willingness to travel South Africa for leisure</i></b>	
(i) I am willing to participate in domestic tourism.	**Age group 18 – 30 years agree more than the others. **Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed.
(ii) South Africa is a very interesting country to visit.	**Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed. **Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most.
(iii) I want to get more insight why South Africa is famous.	*Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed. *Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most.
(iv) Tourism destinations and facilities are easily accessible.	*Age group 18 – 30 years agree more than the others. *Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed. **Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most.
(v) I have a strong desire to see both the rural and urban areas of South Africa.	N.S.
<b><i>Marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination</i></b>	
South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents.	**Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most.
Local residents in South Africa should be made aware of specific tourism attractions in South Africa.	*Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed.
South African Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions.	*Females agree more than males. **Respondents with Tertiary Education agree most.
South African tourist destinations and attractions are very expensive.	**Age group 18 – 30 years agree more than the others. **Unemployed respondents agree more than the employed.
Local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions.	*Males agree more than females. **Unemployed respondents agree more than the employed.

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

Also in Table 3, 'marketing South Africa as a leisure travel destination' variables were compared with 'respondents' profile' variables. The results show that the respondents with tertiary education agree most to these statements: 'South Africa as a tourism destination should be more promoted to the local residents', and 'South African Tourism should use technology (Internet) to market South African tourist attractions'. Anwar et al. (2014) recognise the importance of using Information and Communication Technology in the tourism industry since tourism is largely perceived as an industry that is based on intensive information. Employed respondents agree more than the unemployed respondents to these statements: 'local residents in South Africa should be made aware of specific tourism attractions in South Africa', 'South African tourist destinations and attractions are very expensive', and 'local residents do not have enough awareness of South African tourism destinations and attractions'. Female respondents agree more than males to this statement: 'South Africa Tourism should use technology



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

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study found that the local residents of Mtubatuba Local Municipality are mostly willing to participate in domestic tourism, and perceive South Africa a favourable leisure tourism destination; however, some concerns such as domestic tourism awareness and high cost of travel (expensive destination) were raised. The prevalent socio-economic challenges in South Africa notwithstanding, residents have a strong demand for domestic tourism. The hallmark of tourism destination marketing is identifying tourists' needs and wants and satisfying them, whether domestic or international tourists. Domestic tourists will likely bring in numbers, while international tourists will likely bring in more cash per capita. Promoting domestic tourism supports international demand and also addresses the socio-economic problems of seasonality in the tourism industry. This study posits, based on data analyses that young residents, employed residents, and those with tertiary education, demonstrate higher demand for domestic tourism than their counterparts. We therefore recommended that domestic tourism marketing efforts by South African Tourism (the Destination Marketing Organisation) and the provincial tourism marketing offices should be increased on these demographic groups. Intensive and continuous domestic tourism awareness (using social media and other modern forms of Information and Communication Technology) and competitive pricing (through reduced operational costs and bundle pricing) are areas that still need national attention. Future studies can explore the perceptions of South African residents in other parts of the country towards domestic tourism, to compare with this study's findings.

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