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COMMUNITY TOURISM ORGANISATIONS AS A VALUE-BASED LEVER FOR DESTINATION MARKETING IN SOUTH AFRICA

ABBY MARJORIE JACOBS

STUDENT NUMBER: 585934

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SUPERVISOR: DR NAKUZE CHALOMBA

Abstract

This dissertation examines the potential of community tourism as a strategic tool for enhancing destination marketing in South Africa, focusing specifically on how interactions with local communities influence brand loyalty among Millennial and Gen Z consumers. Community tourism is explored as a "value-based lever" that can serve to improve South Africa's appeal as a tourism destination. The study's primary objective is to determine whether positive interactions with locals can impact travellers' perceptions, satisfaction, and loyalty to the destination, ultimately supporting the notion that community-driven tourism can create a sustainable competitive advantage.

The research applies attribution theory within a community tourism context, utilizing variables such as brand experience, customer satisfaction, affective brand image, brand-related attributions, and brand loyalty. A key focus of the study is the role of brand authenticity as a moderating factor, evaluating its influence on the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty, as well as on affective brand image and brand loyalty. The study develops a conceptual model to represent these relationships, providing a structured framework to investigate how local interactions shape destination perceptions among younger consumer cohorts.

A comprehensive literature review informs the study's conceptual model, drawing from research on destination marketing, values-based marketing, and consumer behaviour. Specifically, the study highlights how Millennial and Gen Z consumers, who prioritize values alignment in their purchasing decisions, may respond favourably to destinations that offer authentic, community-based experiences. The literature suggests that storytelling through local perspectives can enhance destination appeal and serve as a differentiator in a competitive tourism market. The review underscores the importance of creating immersive, value-oriented travel experiences that align with the ethical and social values of these consumer groups.

The study uses a quantitative methodology, employing a survey distributed to respondents based in Johannesburg, South Africa. The sample targets South African Millennials and Gen Z, specifically individuals aged 24 to 44. The survey collects data on respondents' experiences and perceptions of community tourism, using a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale to capture responses on variables related to brand experience, satisfaction, affective brand image, and brand loyalty. Structural equation modelling (SEM) is used to analyse the data, testing the proposed conceptual model and the hypothesized relationships between variables.

Key findings reveal that positive interactions with locals in a community tourism context significantly enhance tourists' brand experience, satisfaction, and brand attachment. The study finds that brand-related attributions, such as perceptions of authenticity, reliability, and value, are integral in shaping brand loyalty. Brand authenticity as a moderating variable is shown to have no moderating effect in the relationship between brand attachment and loyalty and it negatively moderates the relationship between affective brand image and loyalty. The findings that were not in accordance with anticipated outcomes, namely brand related attributions and its influence on brand loyalty, and negatively moderating effect of brand authenticity on affective brand image and brand loyalty were significant contributions to the body of knowledge regarding South African consumer segments. This is due to the contextual factors impacting these outcomes, specifically related to community tourism, while in global alternate studies these results were different. In terms of the overall findings however, with most of the hypotheses being accepted in relation to the conceptual model for this study, the insights suggest that community tourism can effectively foster destination loyalty by offering authentic, meaningful experiences that align with the values of Millennial and Gen Z consumers.

In conclusion, the research supports the idea that community tourism is a viable strategy for enhancing South Africa's destination brand and competitive standing. The study's contributions are twofold: theoretically, it advances understanding of attribution theory's applicability in a tourism context; practically, it offers insights for policymakers, tourism marketers, and small business owners on leveraging

community tourism to attract and retain visitors. The findings advocate for a non-market strategy approach, where community-driven narratives and interactions become central to destination marketing, offering a compelling case for using community tourism to create an emotionally resonant and value-aligned tourism experience.

KEYWORDS

Tourism, destination marketing, place marketing, innovation, branding, ambassadors, sustainable competitive advantage, small businesses, community tourism, value chain, South Africa, global tourism, millennials, Gen Z

DEDICATIONS

This paper is dedicated to my parents, my father, Frederick Swartz and my late mother, Marjorie Swartz for all their love, support and guidance. I'm so grateful for the strong foundation of love and the ingraining of important values that enabled me to complete this paper.

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DECLARATION

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

Candidate's Declaration

Name of Candidate:	Abby Marjorie Jacobs
Person Number:	585934
Degree:	Master of Business Administration (MBA)
Supervisor / Co-Supervisor:	Dr Nakuze Chalomba
School:	School of Economic and Business Sciences
Title of Thesis/Dissertation/ ResearchReport:	Community tourism as a value-based lever for destination marketing in South Africa

Candidate's Declaration:

i. I hereby submit my PhD Thesis/**Masters dissertation** for examination (circle applicable).

ii. I confirm that my signed declaration in terms of Rule G9.7 is included in each copy of the thesis/ dissertation.

iii. I have checked all copies of my thesis/ dissertation and declare that no pages are missing or poorlyreproduced.

iv. I hereby submit a CD/USB containing a PDF version of my submission for examination and ___N/A_____bound copies.

Candidate's Signature:_____ **Date:**___11 November 2024

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Statement of purpose

This research aims to interrogate the role that community tourism, through locals and entrepreneurs in these spaces, contributes to creating a value-based lever for a destination brand, using a South African cohort of consumers as a case study.

In applying attribution theory variables to a community tourism context, this study aims to examine whether positive relationships exist between a number of variables. Specifically, it will examine how brand experience, customer satisfaction, affective brand image and brand related attributions influence brand loyalty, and whether brand authenticity has a moderating role some of these relationships.

1.2 Background and context of the study

Destination marketing can be defined as an organisation at the centre of marketing a country or place for tourism and investment purposes (Gowreesunkar, et al., 2018). Destination marketing is evolving at a rapid pace as a result of technology, an aspect that has been accelerated but the occurrence of the COVID19 pandemic (Sorokina, et al., 2022). As a result of this evolution, collaboration and stakeholder alignment is increasingly becoming pivotal to the success of destination marketing efforts (Huang, et al., 2022). Tourism arrivals contribute to a country's gross domestic product (GDP) through the foreign direct spend that tourists spend in the country (Fioramonti, et al., 2019). From this perspective,consistent growth of tourist arrivals and tourism income is important, and it is therefore important for destinations to focus on staying ahead of competitiors (González-Torres, et al., 2021). According to Bassano et al., (2019), story telling about places through the people that live there are tools that enhance destination repuation. This is significant because people experiences and stories

are unique and become a brand differentiator, and ultimately a contending factor in creating sustainable competitive advantage (Mitchell & Clark, 2021).

1.3 Research problem

According to brand tracker results from a destination perspective, globally, South Africa scores poorly on destination appeal; safety and security perceptions and price perceptions (South African Tourism, 2022). These brand attributes serve as a significant deterrence for tourism to South Africa (Hikido, 2018) and require collective action in remedying the barriers (Fawcett, 2021).

From a destination perspective, tourism is regarded as a tool to support both poverty alleviation and community development (Stone, et al., 2021).

In exploring previous literature covered by this topic, Rogerson (2024) highlights how urban regeneration can take place through heritage tourism. He states that heritage tourism becomes an enabler for area and attraction development, ultimately benefitting the locals in that community (Rogerson, 2024). His research explored Kliptown specifically, as an area in South Africa, and his aim was to interrogate the existing literature on the topic.

Concurrently, Musavengane & Kloppers (2020) posit that investment in community based tourism creates community resilience and enhances social capital in the long term. Their research made use of a systems thinking approach, using a causal loop model to highlight the impact of community tourism on different areas.

Rogerson and Rogerson, (2021) explored the nature of shifting tourism demand in a post COVID context, highlighting consumer preferences more aimed at sustainable travel behaviour.

In highlighting the prevalence of South African literature on this topic, no authors had focused on the consumer mindset toward the adoption of community tourism, nor has it been used as a lever for sustainable competitive advantage from a destination or place marketing perspective.

This research therefore aims to interrogate the relationships between various brand related attributes to ascertain whether it would ultimately cause loyalty toward the destination brand by South African Gen Z and millennial cohorts.

1.4 Research objectives OR research questions

The research objectives for this study are:

- To investigate the impact of brand experience on satisfaction
- To investigate the impact of satisfaction on affective brand image
- To investigate the impact of affective brand image on brand related attributions
- To investigate the impact of affective brand image on brand attachment
- To investigate the impact of affective brand image on brand loyalty
- To investigate the impact of brand related attributions on brand loyalty
- To investigate the impact of brand attachment on brand loyalty
- To determine whether brand authenticity moderates the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty
- To determine whether brand authenticity moderates the relationship between affective brand image and brand loyalty

1.5 Rationale and justification of study

The business context of tourism is complex, especially in a post COVID era (Nunes & Cooke, 2021). The COVID19 pandemic had devastating effects on the tourism industry and the resultant tourism businesses within this space (Škare, et al., 2021) In stating this, various destinations have been aggressively attempting to regain tourism market share that has been lost, in an attempt to stay top of mind for target consumers (Avraham, 2021) In stating this, value co – creation between a destination, it's citizens and its value chain is a key opportunity to create sustainable competitive advantage over time (Bassano, et al., 2019), as the destination's unique attributes will be told through its people.

Non – market strategy, it's impact, benefits and application are an area that has sparsely been covered in academic literature in a post pandemic era. In addition

to this, while a vast array of data exists about Gen Z and millennial consumers and their propensity to make decisions aligned to their values, this values-based decision-making context has not been explored in a destination and place marketing context. This research paper will therefore contribute to the body of literature for policy makers in tourism, business owners in tourism as well as becoming a contribution to the body of knowledge in an academic space. A summary of literature consulted in determining the research gaps that led to this study and the need for it is detailed in table 1.1.

Table 1.1 Literature matrix substantiating research gaps

No	Paper title	Author and year	Organisational problem	Research problem	Conceptual frame used	Population and sample	Research gap
1	Brand Tracker	South African Tourism, 2022	Other destinations are more appealing, negative value for money perceptions, negative safety and security perceptions	What are successful levers that create sustainable competitive advantage	N/A	800	Factors that contribute to consistent destination appeal
2	Constructing a smart destination framework: A destination marketing organization perspective	Sorokina et al., 2022	There is little understanding about how “smart tourism” technological led innovative solutions can be applied to tourism businesses from business owners	Articulation of the roles that Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) play in facilitating technology led solutions for tourism businesses	The conceptual smart destination framework	Qualitative study – interviews conducted.	No real application of technology from a governance and best practice perspective

No	Paper title	Author and year	Organisational problem	Research problem	Conceptual frame used	Population and sample	Research gap
3	The Future of Destination Marketing Organizations in the Insight Era	Huang et al., 2022	DMOs need to leverage tools that leverage insight provision through technology (i.e. Artificial intelligence etc.) to lend additional relevance to stakeholders and collaborators	AI and data-led technologies are a new area of research that need to be applied to tourism to add value to the literature in this area	A framework for advancing DMO's data – driven decision making	N/A	Collaboration with stakeholders and leadership in digital innovation tools is an opportunity for DMOs to explore
4	Storytelling about places: Tourism marketing in the digital age	Bassano et al., 2019	Brand differentiation and the creation of sustainable competitive advantage in a context where various destinations are competing for share of voice	Value co – creation for unique positioning of a destination	Place story telling management		Story telling is a unique strategic communication tool that can create sustainable competitive advantage. This opportunity has not fully been leveraged or

No	Paper title	Author and year	Organisational problem	Research problem	Conceptual frame used	Population and sample	Research gap
							researched in a South African tourism context.
5	Entrepreneurship in South African township tourism: the impact of interracial social capital	Hikido, 2018	Another destination was more appealing	Social capital gaps in previously disadvantaged communities in South Africa amongst entrepreneurs in tourism		Qualitative study on small businesses in Cape Town Townships	Female entrepreneurs in townships have built social capital and gained a following from European travellers through bed and breakfast and homestay experiences. Lending to the notion that local businesses provide a sustainable competitive

No	Paper title	Author and year	Organisational problem	Research problem	Conceptual frame used	Population and sample	Research gap
							advantage – warranting further research in this area
6	“We are reconciliators”: When Indigenous tourism begins with agency	(Curtin & Bird, 2022)		Community Tourism			
7	A review on tourism destination competitiveness	(Cronjé & du Plessis, 2020)	Tourism competitiveness and the ability for a destination to retain and grow market share	Most research case studies on tourism competitiveness were based in Europe, with limited focus on the African and South African context	Qualitative research design for an application of a systematic literature review on previous destination competitiveness studies	121 obtainable articles included in the literature review	Limited focus on Africa and South Africa for destination competitiveness studies

1.6 Delimitations of the study

The scope of this study focuses on tourism businesses in South Africa and the impact a brand ambassadorship created through them in a community tourism context can have on the perceptions of millennial and Gen Z South African consumers. A quantitative research methodology is applied to evaluate brand related attributions and its impact on destination loyalty, with constructs adopted from attribution theory.

1.7 Assumptions

There are a few assumptions adopted pertaining to this research study. The first assumption is that the brand related attributes listed impact brand loyalty from a consumer's perception. The second assumption is that brand loyalty translates to a consumption pattern and choice, that ultimately allows that choice to be chosen over a competitor product. The third assumption is that respondents have respond truthfully and in accordance with their perceptions and values relating to community-based tourism. A final assumption is that by virtue of a consumer experiencing tourism within a community context - community tourism, there would be an extensive degree of interaction with locals. The interaction with locals then becomes the basis of the community tourism experience.

1.8 Operational definitions

TERM	DEFINITION	REFERENCE
Place marketing	The action, process and deliberate promotion and demand creation of based on the goods and services that a geographical location represents	(Boisen, et al., 2011)
Destination marketing	The promotion of the collective tourism experiences and activities that encompass a location inclusive of city, country province or state to attract visitors to said location	(Pike, 2012)
Non – market strategy	The pursuance of strategic goals that utilise leverage points linked to social, political and societal elements to increase competitive advantage	(Lawton, et al., 2014)
Sustainable competitive advantage	The combination of characteristics, resources, skills and tools that enable a business, firm or entity to outperform their competitors consistently	(Weerawardena & O'Cass, 2004)
Value chain	The steps, partners and distributors that a business, entity or industry uses to create value for the end customer for goods or services to be delivered	(Simatupang, et al., 2017)
Brand ambassador	Representatives of a value system, product, attribute	(Smith, et al., 2018)

	or lifestyle that is in alignment with a business, entity or industry	

1.9 Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation will employ the following structure:

- Chapter 1 – Chapter 1 outlines the relevance of this study. It details the study background and context; the research problem and gaps and the objectives the study aims to meet. Chapter one further outlines the study justification, rationale and finally the contributions that this study will make to both theoretical and business contexts.
- Chapter 2 – Chapter 2 covers a contextual literature review pertaining to industry, consumer and research themes within which this study is based.
- Chapter 3 – Chapter 3 is a continuation of the literature review, focusing specifically on theoretical and empirical aspects that the study covers in building toward the research methodology, hypothesizing and conceptual framework employed to conduct this study.
- Chapter 4 – Chapter 4 outlines the mixed method research methodology that has been used as well as the reasons for this. It also further outlines the research process and tools that have been used for this study
- Chapter 5 - discusses data analysis as well as the findings and interpretation of the results.
- Chapter 6 – Discussion of findings and recommendations – this chapter will discuss findings and provide recommendations in alignment with objectives that the research aims to achieve

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This literature review aims to provide a contextual overview validating the importance of exploring community tourism as a value-based lever for destination marketing. It further aims to highlight the importance of a destination like South Africa remaining competitive in attracting tourist arrivals, due to the economic and social benefits that tourism provides. The review further outlines how different cohorts drive demand for consumption behaviour and how these drivers impact tourism and choice of tourism destinations. In exploring these aspects, the themes of values-based marketing, the prevalence of community tourism and the emerging theme of non-market strategy and its relation to attaining sustainable competitive advantage as a Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) is then explored before concluding this chapter.

2.2 Contextual review

2.2.1 *Destination marketing and tourism*

Destination marketing can be defined as a consistent, progressive developmental practice that is undertaken by a destination marketing organisation (DMO) that enables the growth of tourist arrivals to that particular destination (Morrison, 2023). The DMO uses statistical data obtained through research, and implements plans and strategies to attract consumers, in accordance with their objectives (Ketter, 2018). Destination marketing organisations function as a mandate of the government of the country under which they operate and are generally responsible for the marketing of the destination in addition to policy, value chain amplification and aspects of industry regulation for market access objectives (Kubickova & Campbell, 2020).

The COVID19 pandemic that occurred in 2020 had a devastating impact on tourism and tourism businesses, and as such, on destination marketing efforts as

a whole (Gössling, et al., 2020). These impacts lead to destinations needing to find competitive ways to gain travellers back and recover tourism numbers they had achieved prior to the pandemic (Quang, et al., 2022).

Tourism can be defined as the process in which consumers vacate their place of residence out of their own accord to visit a different environment (Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). Tourism as an industry is considered to be a pivotal contributor to economies globally as it has the ability to generate jobs and revenue (Woyo & Slabbert, 2021). According to the UNWTO (2024), tourism numbers are expected to reach pre-pandemic number globally by the end of 2024. As a result of the benefits that tourism yields, destinations place importance on remaining competitive and either maintaining or growing their market share in terms of tourist arrivals and revenue that tourism brings (Bazargani & Kiliç, 2021). In remaining competitive as a destination, there are various metrics and considerations that destinations need to consider (Huang, et al., 2023).

2.2.2 *Tourism destination competitiveness*

Tourism destination competitiveness can be defined as location's proficiency in attracting visitors, competing with other destinations, and continually elevating its appeal by leveraging factors like attractions, infrastructure, marketing tactics, and overall visitor satisfaction (Fernández, et al., 2020). Woyo and Slabbert, (2021) Further defines destination competitive as the capacity of the place to enhance its demand for both residents and non-residents to visit, offering high-quality, innovative, and enticing tourism services to customers, and securing market share in both domestic and global markets, all while ensuring the sustainable use of available resources. This definition is important as it highlights Cronjé and du Plessis (2020) note that signifcant growth in tourist arrivals also contributes to increased competition between destinations. This competition highlights the need for a destination to maintain it’s competitive advantage (Kandampully & Solnet, 2020).

2.2.3 *Sustainable competitive advantage*

Sustainable competitive advantage can be defined as a position a company works towards and holds in both acquiring as well as maintaining market leadership against its competitors (Pratono, et al., 2019). This position requires considerations in maintaining leadership in aspects of how a company creates value (Azeem, et al., 2021); the level of differentiation of the value versus competitors (Kuncoro & Suriani, 2018) and the extent to which the value that has been created is not easily replicated (Sołoducho-Pelc & Sulich, 2020). Further to this, a company's sustainable competitive advantage also displays the ability to adapt to shifting market conditions with agility and speed, and ultimately translates into profitability over a sustained period (Miceli, et al., 2021). In defining sustainable competitive advantage, when applied to a destination marketing and tourism context, aspects such as destination uniqueness, infrastructure, natural and cultural assets and the quality of the tourism offering all contribute to the competitive offering (Ching, et al., 2019). Sustainability as an offering and growing consumer demand for the preservation of tourism environments and the livelihoods of people living in destinations represents another factor greatly impacting destination competitiveness (Goffi, et al., 2019) in a post COVID-19 era.

Bassano, et al. (2019) however, reflects aspects beyond the tangible tourism proposition created and highlights that creating story-telling aspects about a place and destination brand is a powerful strategic communication tool that allows different stakeholders to shape and co-create the identity of a place. They go on to state that the creation of this identity provides an opportunity for competitive advantage through the uniqueness of stories told through the eyes of those who have experienced it (Bassano, et al., 2019). The rationale for this is that story telling allows for a destination to create a distinct brand and personality, communicate it's values and those of its people, and brings about a sense of belonging and trust for the audience that interact with the stories (Dias & Cavalheiro, 2022). de Andreis, et al., (2022) echoes a similar stance when they state that story telling has become an essential tool for place marketing that is

used to shift and shape the brand narrative in accordance with brand values that align with those of the consumer.

2.2.4 *Values-based marketing and tourism*

Consumers have a willingness to purchase goods and services from companies that are in alignment with their principles and values (Bernytė, 2018). Effective marketing and marketing communications are generally structured around consumer behaviour, what they need, want and who they are (Febriyantoro, 2020). Values-based marketing is the principle that brands align their proposition to a set of values (Breuer & Lüdeke-Freund, 2018), in the same way that consumers make consumption and purchase decisions that are aligned to what their values are (Sharma, 2021). Sustainability as a growing need in tourism decision making hinges on the ability to align a destination offering to what consumers value in the protection of the environment, what the cost of sustainability means, and the impact on people (Walker, 2020). Bernytė (2018) notes that sustainability impacts a consumer's decision-making process through rational, psychological and sociological avenues, impacting their decision-making through various considerations. This is important because sustainability in travel and consumption behaviour as a consideration is an aspect of values based choices that consumers make (Boz, et al., 2020). In terms of drivers of this occurrence, Generation Z (Gen Z) – an age cohort pertaining to years and group of consumers were born, and millennials are at the forefront of this visible change in consumption behaviour being led by values and ethics (Agarwal & Vaghela, 2018).

2.3 Consumer insights and behaviour as drivers for tourism

2.3.1 *Millennial and Generation Z cohorts*

Consumer cohorts categorised by the year or generation they were born in are often identified by similar trends and characteristics in their behaviour (Bathmanathan, et al., 2018). These behaviours tend to also encompass preferences, values and beliefs, and can also extend to consumption behaviour

(Kim & Park, 2020). As a result of collective experiences identified among generational cohorts, Kim and Park (2020) posit that an acknowledgement of cohesive traits within generational groupings, provides a valuable approach for market segmentation, including when investigating travel preferences and behaviour.

Millennials as a cohort were born between 1980 and 2000 (Weber, 2019), making them between the ages of 24 and 44 years old in 2024. Millennials are characterized as a generational cohort who are defined as open-minded, tolerant, having a strong social conscience, motivated, intelligent and trustworthy (Onukwuba, 2020). Millennials are a sought-after consumer group to study as they represent a significant economic opportunity and make up a large population base globally (Mundel, et al., 2021). In addition to this, researchers have identified them as having substantial purchasing power as well as the ability to shift and mould what brands reflect as core values (Essiz & Senyuz, 2023).

Generation Z (Gen Z) consumers are categorised as a group of consumers born between 2000 and 2012 (Reisenwitz, 2021). Gen Z are also known as the C generation: connected, computerised, content-centric, community-oriented, communicating and changing (Kirchmayer, 2020). They are referred to as the responsibility generation due to their commitment to doing the right thing (Barhate & Dirani, 2022). They make decisions based on their value system and therefore align with brands that mirror similar values to them (Dabija, et al., 2019)

The prevalence of values alignment for both millennials and Gen Z consumers and their related consumption behaviour is relevant for this study as it aims to interrogate a millennial and Gen Z consumer, and whether their interaction with communities and locals at destinations would impact their affinity for the destination brand.

2.3.2 *Consumer decision making processes for tourism destinations*

From a tourist decision making perspective, Camilleri, (2018) notes that travellers choose destinations that they perceive as accessible to them. The perception of accessibility can be achieved through a sufficient amount of awareness of a

destination, to the extent that the consumer perceives the destination as familiar (Kim, et al., 2019). Familiarity impacts the way a consumer thinks and feels about a destination and is a key factor in allowing a destination to be chosen for travel (Bigne, et al., 2019). Various factors lend to creating familiarity, and destinations leverage specific value propositions to enable favourable perceptions (Kim, et al., 2019).

One such proposition, in the case of South Africa, are the people that represent the brand (South African Tourism, 2022). People as a value proposition allows for the destination and destination values to be communicated in a unique way (Widayat, et al., 2020). Bringing travellers closer to people interaction can impact travel positively, specifically for travellers who seek to immerse themselves in a destination's culture (Michael, et al., 2020).

In interrogating the motives of travel for Gen Z and millennial travellers, Kim and Park (2019) note that millennials and Gen Z have a propensity for seeking out diversity and authentic learning experiences when travelling, because of their worldly, open-minded view and consistent search for purpose. Similarly, Waljee, et al. (2020) note that both these segments aim to be connected to others, due to an awareness and empathy for the world beyond their own environment. In applying this context to a travel behaviour and preference, people and community focused destinations that align with social and values-oriented objectives become important contributors to investigating how these cohorts would respond to destinations that amplify these propositions in an authentic way.

2.3.3 *Community tourism, small businesses and its linkage to values-based marketing*

Community tourism can be defined as an area of tourism that solicits the inputs and collaboration of residents in a particular area, to improve the area's economic status (Khalid, et al., 2019). Further to this definition, community tourism has been identified as a tool that can eliminate poverty and contribute to sustainable growth and upliftment of marginalised communities (UNWTO, 2023). Community tourism initiatives allow for immersive travel experiences and present a unique opportunity for destination marketing objectives as well as for communities that

are the beneficiaries of tourism activity (Yin, et al., 2023). Successful implementation of community tourism initiatives occurs when there is a high degree of resident involvement, and an entrepreneurial mindset as a driving force to allow for success (Eichelberger, et al., 2020). Community tourism represents various benefits to communities such as sustainable development of the population in the area (McNaughton, et al., 2020). Community tourism, as a value proposition to tourists, exists because of a growing demand for travellers to interact and understand local cultures when travelling (Huber & Gross, 2022). In meeting this demand, Community tourism allows for the preservation of local culture, and an invitation for travellers to experience this culture (Giampiccoli & Saayman, 2018).

This prevalence is important when highlighting a dual benefit for travellers and destinations alike, in ensuring that tourism and destination marketing initiatives yields the kind of results that allows consumers to form a connection with the destination brand (Rosalina, et al., 2021). The value set presented by Millennials and Gen Z, become an additional motivator to fully explore the impact that community tourism, personal interaction with locals at a destination and the opportunity for community tourism to be a sustainable competitive advantage factor to impact destination competitiveness among Millennial and Gen Z consumers.

2.3.4 *Nonmarket strategy*

Nonmarket strategy, its definition and its prevalence has been included in this literature review to demonstrate applying its principles to allow for a destination marketing organisation (DMO) to gain competitive advantage over competitor destinations. This is done by outlining non-market strategy levers that align with the utilisation of small businesses as brand ambassadors, in a context where values–based marketing decisions are increasingly prevalent among millennial and Gen –Z travellers(Francis & Hoefel, 2018) thus providing a path for a non-traditional approach in gaining and attracting a traveller customer base.

Non-market strategy can be defined as set of actions and tactics undertaken by organizations to influence or respond to factors beyond conventional market

dynamics (Rodgers, et al., 2022). While a market strategy predominantly focuses on traditional business activities such as distribution, production and revenue generation (Parnell, 2018), non-market strategies address issues related to social responsibility, stakeholder relations, government policies and additional external forces out of the company's control that can have an impact on the company's reputation, operations and profitability (Kamasak , et al., 2019). In applying this to a destination and place marketing organisation context competing with other destinations, the consideration of non-market strategy becomes a key strategy for a country like South Africa, where challenges such as negative safety and security perceptions (South African Tourism, 2022) are often outside of the DMO's control. Non-market strategies further aim to navigate political, social, environmental, and legal landscapes to mitigate risks, seize opportunities, and enhance the organization's overall competitiveness and sustainability (Rodgers, et al., 2022).

For South Africa as a destination, utilizing and leveraging community tourism, sustainability indicators pertaining to millennial and Gen Z cohorts and the entrepreneurs that are the face and value proposition behind an immersive tourism experience, non-market strategy is a beneficial approach. Applying non-market strategy to how growth in market share for the destination is impacted, allows for a focus beyond the tangible challenges that the destination faces. The inclusion of non-market strategy and its relation to community tourism becomes important in the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage for a destination and place brand.

2.4 Chapter summary

Destination marketing and tourism provides a lucrative opportunity in growing GDP for destinations, particularly in economies that are stagnant and require the additional revenue stream that tourism brings in both local and foreign currency.

In a post COVID-19 era, destination competitiveness is a key consideration as travel demand has grown following global lockdowns that halted travel for almost two years. Market share for tourism arrivals and revenue between destinations

depend on destination perception of both tangible and intangible benefits, and sustainability as a context becomes a contributor to consumer decision making.

For South Africa, perceptions about the country are influenced by aspects outside of a DMOs control and needs to be managed to ensure that a competitive advantage can be gained. Millennial and Gen Z consumers seek immersive experiences when travelling that link to social, environmental and economic benefits aligned with their values and as such, community tourism as a value proposition provides an opportunity for competitive advantage to be gained. The employment of such a strategy by a DMO can be defined as non-market strategy, as the focus is on gaining market share from their competitors through nonmarket strategy levers.

CHAPTER 3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an explanation of the theories that underpin the conceptual model and hypothesis formulation for this study. The main theory utilised for the study is attribution theory, and additional literature regarding attribution theory was then consulted to evaluate attribution theory and its application to place branding as well as destination branding. A brief historical background on attribution theory will be outlined, before explaining the main tenants of this theory. The rationale for why this theory has been used to inform the conceptual model for this study will then be explained. The conceptual model will outline the hypothesis elements testing the likelihood of South African Gen Z and millennial consumers to form brand loyalty to a destination after interaction with community tourism experiences and locals at a particular destination. In presenting the conceptual model, each construct within the model will be explained, followed by a reflection of their hypothesised relationship or influence on other constructs within this study.

3.2 Theoretical grounding

Attribution theory can be defined as a psychological framework that explores how events and behaviours are interpreted by individuals, as well as their perception on whether the occurrence is through themselves or others (Graham, 2020). In stating this, it can further be defined as a theory that explains how people make sense of behaviour both within themselves and others (Malle, 2022). Attribution theory is therefore also because of perceived reasons why an occurrence has happened or causal inferences (Weiner & Graham, 1990).

Attribution theory was developed by social psychologists Harold Kelley, Bernard Weiner and Fritz Heider (Malle & Korman, 2013). Fritz Heider is described as the father of attribution theory due to his research and work in the social sciences in

the 1950s and 1960, while Kelley then expanded on Heider's existing ideas, particularly in the spheres of how people attribute aspects of causality to events (Hilton, 2012). Bernard Weiner's contribution to attribution theory extended to causality in the areas of motivation and achievement (AlAwadhi, 2017). He stipulated that there are various dimensions and elements that determine how one attributes success and failure, both within and outside of their control (Weiner, 1985). The relevance of this theory is that, since it's application in social sciences, it has also been used to describe occurrences in the areas of consumer behaviour, education, organisational and sports psychology (Graham, 2020). Attribution theory has also been widely applied to destination and tourism marketing, and is a basis of the sections to follow, outlining how consumer attributions to experiences can contribute to the sustainable competitive advantage of a destination, specifically when seeking to attract Gen Z and millennial consumers.

3.2.1 *Attribution theory contributions to conceptual model*

Attribution theory is the theory selected for this study, due to the brand ambassador role that tourism businesses would play in creating a value proposition for the South African brand from a destination perspective.

The model in figure 1 has been adapted for tourism by Orth, et al., (2012). The study was focused on explaining tourist attachments to place brands, exploring the mediating role of brand related attributions between tourist experiences and their emotinal attachment to places as brands (Orth, et al., 2012). The results from their study found that brand attributions fully mediated the impact of satisfaction and pleasure on a tourist's attachment to the place brand.

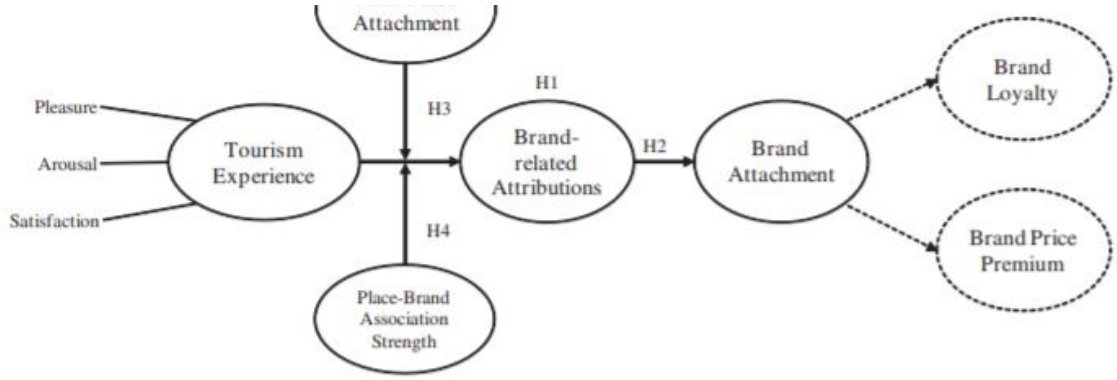
In Orth et al.'s (2012) study, satisfaction is posited as a direct resultant impact of tourist experience, ultimately influencing place attachment. As such, satisfaction as a stand-alone construct has been included in the conceptual model for this study. Brand-related attributions, as a central role to the theoretical model and the causal influence between affective experiences and attachment as a response outlined in the results, were pivotal for inclusion since the community tourism business owners represent such brand-related attributions for this

particular study. Brand loyalty as an additional construct was also included as an outcome variable as a result of brand-related attributions impacting attachment and, ultimately loyatly for the tourist. The questions selected for this study were therefore adapted from the literature from Orth et al. (2012) for the constructs that were used from this literature. In a similar study, Jeuring and Haartsen (2017) explored what the percieved responsibility of residents were, for postive and negative word of mouth in the case of destination branding. The study explores the extent to which residents feel responsible for communicating positively about their destination to impact it's image, and how the attribution of this behaviour impacts their word of mouth choices in order to ultmately influence the perception of their destination.

An outcome of this literature and the study conducted found implications in how citizen management can positively impact destination management. This is relevant because, similar to the referenced literature, business owners of community tourism establishments become the brand and personality attribution of the destination, that interacts with the end tourist, and thus constructs from this literature were relevant for inclusion in the current study being undertaken (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). A further outcome to be noted, is that the participation of residents in amplifying destination branding significantly impacts their ability impact the experience of the visitor to their destination (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017). This particular outcome is therefore one of the main motivators for the study being undertaken, and aspects from this theoretical model is therefore important for inclusion.

Figure 2 depicts the theoretical model that was used in the literature, and from this model, two constructs were adapted for use in this study, namely affective image and place attachment. Questions from these constructs were also adapted and utlized for the required outcome for the study.

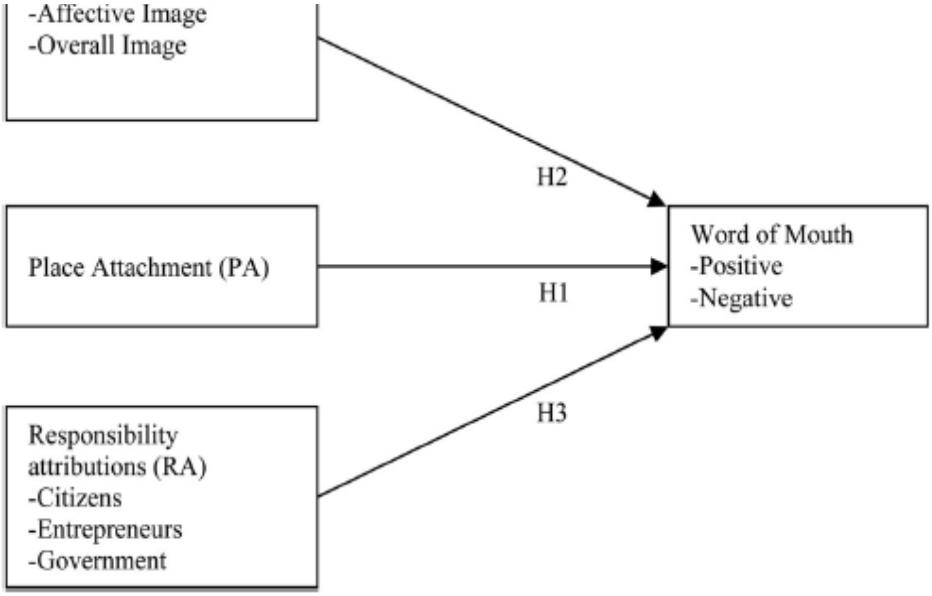
Figure 3.2 ***Attribution theory model to explain place brands***



Source: (Orth, et al., 2012)

Source: (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017)

Figure 3.1: ***Theoretical model on the role of residents perceived responsibility in destination branding***

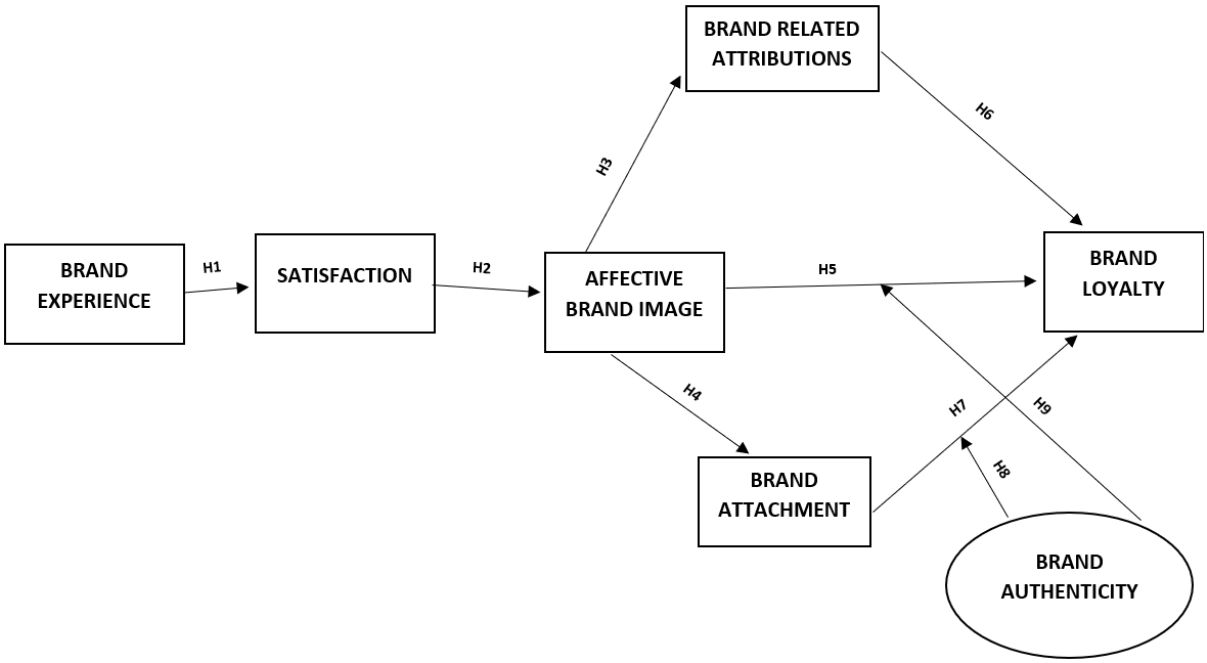


3.3 Proposed theoretical model

Figure 3 represents the proposed theoretical model for this study and is in accordance with attribution theory constructs adapted for tourism as detailed in previous sections of this chapter. Brand authenticity has been added as a moderating variable to measure the moderating impact it will have between brand attachment and brand loyalty, as well as on brand related attributions and brand loyalty.

Table 2 provides a summary of the theoretical grounding and constructs used in the proposed theoretical model, specifically referencing where the questions that contributed to the survey of this study was obtained from.

Figure 3.3: ***Proposed theoretical model***



Source: Author's own compilation

Table 3.1: Constructs that were adapted for inclusion in conceptual model

THEORY	CONSTRUCT	REFERENCE
Attribution theory	Satisfaction; brand experience; brand related attributions; brand attachment, brand loyalty	Orth, et al. (2012)
Attribution theory	Affective image; brand attachment	Jeuring and Haartsen, (2017)

3.4 Hypothesis statement

The conceptual model consists of seven different constructs and nine hypothesis statements contributing to the objectives of this study. This section will expand on the hypothesis statements detailed in the proposed conceptual model as well as outline the constructs that have been selected and the purpose they will serve in the conceptual model. The constructs that will be explained are satisfaction, brand experience, affective brand image, brand-related attributions, brand loyalty and brand authenticity.

3.4.1 *Brand Experience*

The experience that the consumer has while interacting with a brand, which in the context of this study is the destination or tourism experience the consumer is encountering, is an aspect that will directly influence their behaviour (Hwang, et al., 2021). According to Orth et al. (2012), the affect that gets evoked from an experience has the ability to create an attachment to a particular place, and this then becomes what is known as an “emotional memory” – the memory of the emotions that the experience made the consumer feel. From this perspective, the consumer’s experience of the brand, as outlined by the literature, has then been hypothesised to influence satisfaction.

In accordance with these cited literature sources, the brand experience will then also be tested as having an influence on satisfaction for purposes of this study.

H1: brand experience has a positive influence on satisfaction

3.4.2 *Satisfaction*

Customer satisfaction can be defined as the psychological state that occurs when emotions resulting from unmet expectations are combined with pre-empted feelings about the customer's consumption experience (Rather, et al., 2021). Satisfaction as a construct takes the form of a hedonic motivation – which is an intrinsically experienced motivation linked to emotions and actions that elicit positive feelings and well-being (Armbrecht & Andersson, 2020). Satisfaction as a variable is predominantly found in consumer behaviour research, as an outcome variable with behavioural antecedents leading to satisfaction as an outcome (Haghpour, et al., 2022).

In this study, satisfaction is posited as an outcome from a positive experience of a tourism brand, and the hypothesis is that satisfaction will then have an influence on affective brand image.

H2: satisfaction has a positive influence on affective brand image

3.4.3 *Affective brand image*

Affective brand image refers to the emotional associations and perceptions that consumers have towards a brand (Cho & Hwang, 2020). These perceptions include emotions, feelings, and sentiments that are elicited by the brand, which have the potential to ultimately impact consumer behaviour and foster brand loyalty (Li, et al., 2020). According to Orth et al. (2012), affective tourism experiences such as satisfaction, impact the ultimate attachment to the brand by the consumer. A strong affective brand image can create deep connections with consumers, leading to positive attitudes, trust, and attachment to the brand. (Barreda, et al., 2020). The inclusion of affective brand image as an outcome of satisfaction, an affective brand experience, therefore, posits that a positive brand experience will also positively impact the brand image of a place in the consumer’s mind, eliciting an effective response, or an emotional association, in accordance with both Barreda et al. (2020) and Cho and Hwang’s (2020) description.

As affective brand image is central to eliciting various consumer responses that impact consumer behaviour and choices, this variable is tested for its influence on brand related attributions, brand attachment and ultimately brand loyalty, the principal outcome variable that this research aims to investigate in creating a sustainable competitive advantage for the destination.

H3: Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand related attributions

H4: Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand attachment

H5: Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand loyalty

3.4.4 *Brand related attributions*

Brand related attributions are defined as the perceptions and judgements that consumers make regarding a brand and are influenced by various factors namely it's characteristics, traits, values, and associations (Yu, et al., 2018). These attributions are defined by aspects such as perceptions of reliability, value for money, quality, authenticity, innovation, social responsibility, and overall brand image (Muniz & Guzmán, 2023) that the brand represents and creates in the mind of the consumer. Furthermore, the perceptions that consumers attribute toward the brand is formed through the consumers' interactions with the brand but can also be formed through effective marketing communication strategies (Dwivedi & McDonald, 2018). From a destination marketing context perspective, positive tourism brand-related attributions can enhance the destination's appeal, increase visitor satisfaction, and foster repeat visits (Jackson, 2019), while negative attributions can deter travellers and harm the destination's reputation (So, et al., 2023).

Linking tourism brand related attributions to the purpose of this study, the core brand related attributions are created through the tourism business in a community tourism context, also referred to as the South African local in the survey questionnaire, co creating an experience for the end customer. As outlined from the literature, either positive or negative brand related attributions has the

ability to have an influence on brand loyalty, and this is hypothesised for this study.

H6: Brand related attributions have a positive influence on brand loyalty

3.4.5 *Brand loyalty*

Brand loyalty can be defined as an ingrained commitment consumers feel towards a brand developed over time through positive experiences, emotional connections, and perceived value created by the brand (Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi, 2017). Further to this, brand loyalty can be described as the extent to which consumers consistently choose one brand over another (Akoglu & Özbek, 2022) when comparing products in a define category. Brand loyalty is the action of a customer displaying a strong commitment and preference for a particular brand, leading to repeat purchases as well as a reluctance to switch to any brands that compete in the particular category (Kegoro & Justus, 2020).

From a business perspective, brand loyalty shown from a customer is a significant brand performance indicator (Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi, 2017), ultimately influencing competitive advantage. From a tourism perspective, a study undertaken by Liu, et al. (2020) states that enabling a consumer to build an emotional relationship with a destination and destination branding is a critical competitive tool to win share of market, especially in the context of diminishing budgets and resources that destination marketing authorities face. They further state that brand loyalty is significantly impacted by place attachment (Liu, et al., 2020). As such, this further lends relevance to brand loyalty as a principal outcome variable for this study where affective brand image (H5), brand related attributions (H6) and brand attachment (H7) are all hypothesised to have an influence on brand loyalty.

H7: Brand attachment has a positive influence on brand loyalty

3.4.6 *Brand authenticity*

Brand authenticity is defined as the degree to which a brand is perceived as genuine, transparent, and true to its core values, promises, and identity (Södergren, 2021). Akbar and Wymer (2017) further define brand authenticity as the extent to which a brand lacks falsity, is truthful to its claims and is unique and legitimate. In a study conducted by Fritz, et al. (2017), they found that brand authenticity has a positive impact on the relationship quality of a consumer with a brand, which in turn also impacts behavioural intention to purchase. A further observation from their study was that consumers are increasingly seeking authentic brands (Fritz, et al., 2017). In highlighting this occurrence, consumer demand, specifically in the realms of Gen Z and millennial consumer cohorts, are progressively opting for brands that are authentic and in alignment with their values (Singer, et al., 2023). Authentic brands increase the likelihood of consumers developing an emotional connection with a brand as they are associated with sincerity and passion (Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2018).

Authenticity in a tourism context, likewise elicits the same attachments as detailed in other literature, and this is specifically because tourism destinations that are in a unique environment, representing a true reflection of culture and showcasing the warmth and hospitality of locals are sought after characteristics for travellers (Tiberghien, et al., 2020). While the direct positive relationship between authenticity and brand attachment in brand literature is positive, in a tourism context brand related attributions and the prevalence of brand attachment is contextual, and thus in the instance of this literature brand authenticity is posited as a moderating variable in relation to those two constructs.

When interrogating the moderating effect of brand authenticity, contextual variables within which brand authenticity is measured moderate how authenticity impacts consumer perception (Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2018). Affective brand image refers to the extent to which a brand has an emotional impact on a consumer (So, et al., 2023), and therefore allows brand authenticity to moderate the impact of affective brand image as well as brand attachment on brand loyalty.

H8: Brand authenticity has a moderating effect on brand attachment and brand loyalty

H9: Brand authenticity has a moderating effect on affective brand image and brand loyalty

3.5 Chapter summary

The theoretical and empirical validation of this research has been outlined in detail in this chapter. Attribution theory has been selected as the main theoretical grounding informing the conceptual model, with detailed application to a tourism and destination marketing context, due to the prevalence of brand related attributions that tourism contributes in terms of tourism experiences and emotions, perceptions and subjective judgements that travellers attribute to a destination as a result of such experiences.

The conceptual model that was created, applied variations of constructs from studies that used attribution theory for place branding research. These studies specifically highlighted attribution theory as the primary theoretical validation. This included research interrogating the perceived responsibility of locals or residents in their propensity to either communicate negative or positive word of mouth about their destination. The attribution lever in the latter case was the responsibility attributed by the locals to ultimately impact the place brand. It also included constructs from a study that found that brand related attributions positively impacted brand attachment and ultimately brand loyalty in a place brand.

The constructs selected for this research was therefore a combination of both these models, highlighting specifically brand loyalty as an outcome variable, while also including the consideration of the moderating effect of brand authenticity on brand related attributions and brand attachment on brand loyalty. In linking the conceptual model and research to the purpose of this study, the tourism businesses in a community tourism context would form a key part of the tourism experience and brand related attributions, and their ability to impact brand

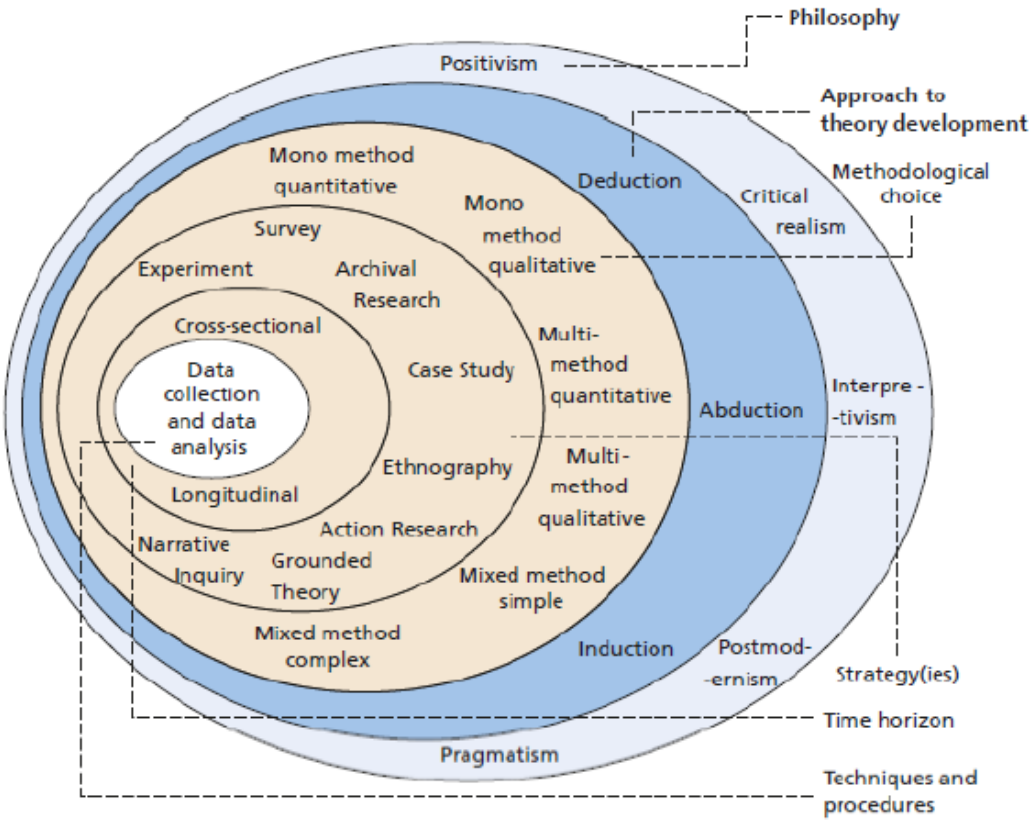
attachment, brand related attributions, the reflection of brand authenticity, and their ultimate contribution to brand loyalty as an outcome to consumers.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology that was followed to meet the study objectives. The method in which the chapter will be explained, is in accordance with the research onion developed by Saunders, et al. (2019) with a visual representation relflected in Figure 4. The chapter will systematically explore each layer of the research onion, in explaining the reseach methodology and design. The chapter will commence by explaining the research philosophy followed, and thereafter the research approach. The next phase, informed by the philosophy and approach, will explore the methodological choice, before explaining the research strategy, time horizon and techniques and procedures used. The techniques and procedures outline the data analysis tools and techniques used for this study, before concluding with ethical considerations.

Figure 4.1: *Research onion*



Source: Saunders, et al., 2019

4.2 Research philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the set of beliefs and assumptions that guide how researchers understand the nature of reality and knowledge (Khatri, 2020) and the resultant methods used to discover the required knowledge – known as the methodology (Palagolla, 2016). Research philosophy or paradigms can be listed in the paradigms of positivism, critical realism, interpretivism, post modernism and pragmatism (Saunders, et al., 2019). These philosophical underpinnings shape the approach to research, influencing how questions are framed, how data is collected and analysed, and how findings are interpreted (Mezmir, 2020).

Positivism is a philosophical stance that accumulates knowledge through observable social reality and experimentation aiming to produce findings that reflect causal interactions and consistencies in data from which generalizations can be made (Maretha, 2023). This philosophy is based on the premise that data is collected through observation and experiments that identify patterns, causal relationships, and functional relations, maintaining an objective nature (Pham, 2018).

In terms of this study, the research is based on the positivism philosophy. As positivism is based on the principle that data is collected as a result of experiments and observations that have casual relationships (Saunders, et al., 2019), likewise this study gathers data from a set sample that is quantifiable, to test the data collected against the outcomes of existing theory pertaining to attribution theory and it's linkages to destination and place marketing.

4.3 Research approach

The research approach is an outline and plan of how the research will be conducted, defining how the data is collected, analysed and interpreted in accordance with research objectives (Al-Ababneh, 2020). It further outlines what the approach that the study takes to theory development (Saunders, et al., 2019). Research approaches can be either inductive or deductive (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). An inductive approach takes specific information with the aim of creating a generalized theory, whereas a deductive approach uses existing

theories to make inferences about data, by testing a hypothesis based on theory (Hayes & Heit, 2018). This means that a deductive approach in based on scientific methods that references existing theory and literature in order to test hypotheses (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018)

This study follows a deductive approach to theory development, as a literature review was undertaken to review existing theories to apply the general theory of attribution theory to the purpose of this study. The data used for this study was collected from a large sample and tested quantitatively using scientific methods ultimately testing variables in relation to each other and in accordance with the existing theory used to define the conceptual model. This process is aligned to the steps undertaken in a deductive research approach.

4.4 Methodological choice

Methodological choice refers to the selection of a data collection method that aligns with the intended data interpretation and the conclusions to be drawn (Rahi, 2017)**.** In accordance with both the research methodology and approach, the methodological choice will dictate what the process will be to best answer the research question (Tobi & Kampen, 2018).

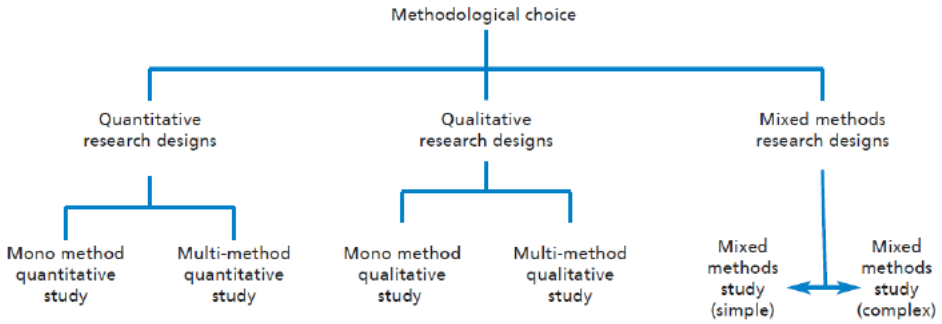
Determining the methodological choice informs what the research design will be, and the type of data required as an output would then dictate the methodology used (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). If the goal is to produce numeric data, a quantitative research method is appropriate while if the data involves words, audio, imagery, or video, qualitative methods are necessary (Hayes & Heit, 2018).

Qualitative methods are subjective, collect data on thoughts and emotions and generally based on a small group of people, whereas quantitative methods require a large sample, are objective and has the aim of describing a set of data (Mohajan, 2018).

Figure 5 outlines the different areas that a methodological choice is made up of, namely: quantitative research designs that consist of either mono-method or

multi-method study; qualitative research designs that consist of mono-method or mixed-method study; and mixed-method research designs that comprise of either simple or complex mixed-methods study (Saunders, et al., 2019).

Figure 4.2: *Methodological choice*



Source: Saunders et al. (2019)

Quantitative research is predominantly associated with the positivism research philosophy and a deductive approach to theory development. This study adopted a quantitative method for data collection, in alignment with the research positivist philosophy and deductive approach that this research follows. The study collects data from a large sample and employs the use of statistical software to analyse the collected data, testing hypothesis deduced from existing theory.

4.5 Research strategy and design

A research strategy is the plan that the researcher follows to reach their research objectives, and this plan is in accordance with the research philosophy (Palagolla, 2016) which in the case of this study is positivism. According to Saunders et al., (2019), research strategies are chosen is accordance with the research approach chosen and can therefore be grounded theory, documentary research, case study or action research for inductive approaches, and survey strategy and experiments for deductive research approaches.

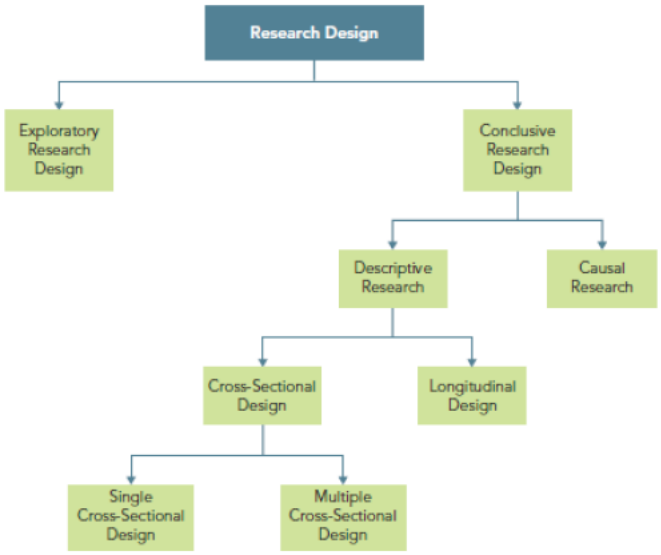
A survey strategy is typically employed in descriptive or exploratory research to gather standardized data from large samples (Nardi, 2018). This strategy involves using structured questionnaires to obtain specific information from a

sample of a particular population group and utilize pre-designed questionnaires with a set order of questions, where respondents select their answers from given options (Malhotra, 2021). Additionally, survey strategies are used to assess behaviours, opinions, or thoughts related to specific issues or contexts within a particular population group (Saunders et al., 2019).

For purposes of this study, a survey strategy was used to obtain data from South African millennials and Gen Z consumers to determine how community tourism can contribute to creating a sustainable competitive advantage.

In explaining what the research strategy is, the research design then forms the framework or blueprint that is used to answer research questions (Malhotra, 2021). Figure 6 provides a graphic depiction of exploratory vs conclusive research designs. An exploratory research design is used when the researcher seeks to gain insight and a deeper understanding, while conclusive designs aim to test hypotheses and examine relationships (Maretha, 2023).

Figure 4.3: *Classification of research designs*



Source: Malhotra (2021).

Conclusive research designs can then be further segmented into causal or descriptive research, with causal research aiming to test for cause and effect, using experiments as the research strategy (Remler & Van Ryzin, 2021).

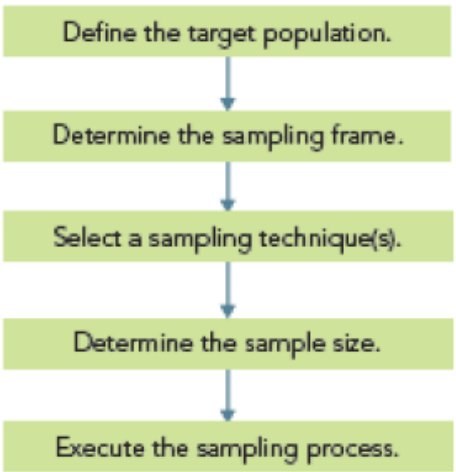
Descriptive research is used to describe characteristics of objects, events or situations and in a quantitative context the design is planned with questions that are pre-determined and answers that must be quantitatively analysed (Darade, 2021).

The study that is being conducted is defined as conclusive research design, aiming to gather descriptive research at a single point in time, interrogating the experiences and beliefs of South African millennials and Gen Z consumers and their interactions in a community tourism context and its impact on their loyalty to the destination brand.

4.6 Target Population and sample

In defining research objectives, the broader population that is being observed or studied needs to be represented by a sample of that population (Malhotra, 2021). The sample selection process is depicted graphically in figure 7, and states that the steps entail defining the target population; determining a sampling frame from the population; selecting a sampling technique; determining the sampling size and then finally executing the sampling process.

Figure 4.4:*The sampling design process*



Source: Malhotra (2021)

4.6.1 *Target population*

The target population is the complete number or set of cases that the researcher has set out to understand and consists of all events, people or objects required for investigation (Rahi, 2017). The population is the group of people, subjects or events that research will make inferences about (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019).

In the context of this study, Gen Z and millennial consumers between the ages of twenty-four (24) and forty-four (44) in 2024. The specific population are students that attend the university of the Witwatersrand across all academic categories and inclusive of Wits Business school, enabling all the age categories relevant for the study to have a chance of participation to form part of the sample.

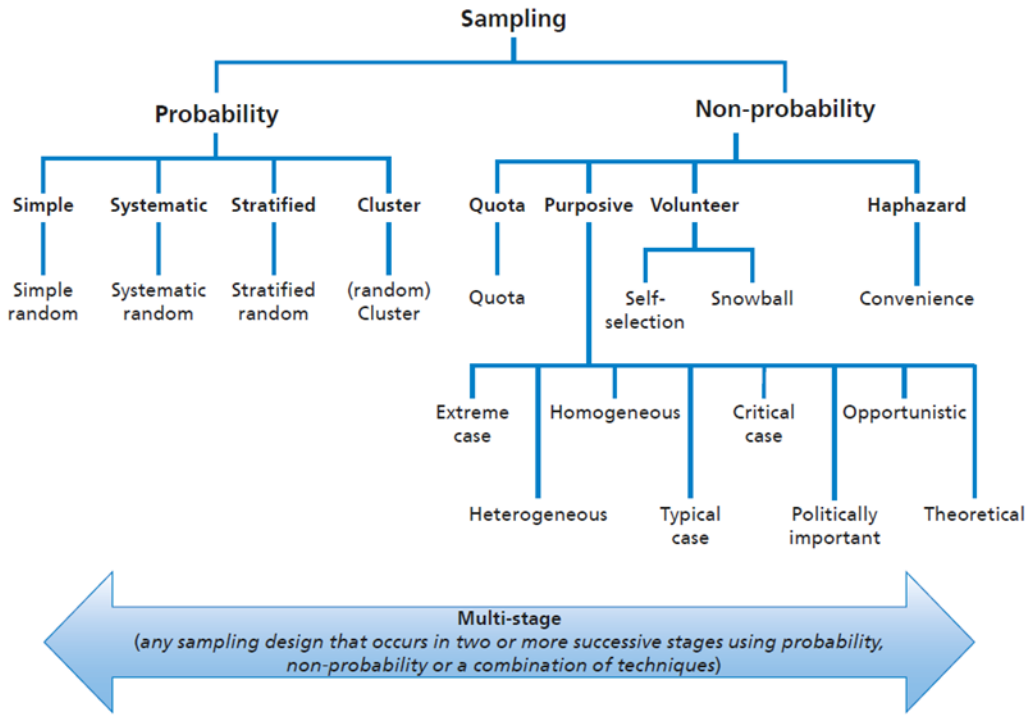
4.6.2 *Sampling*

In terms of sampling, Turner (2020) gives an indication that sampling from the population is practical and allows the collection of data to be faster and cost less than attempting to reach the entire population. Probability sampling refers to the process where the entire population has an equal chance of being selected as a respondent (Saunders, et al., 2019) and is possible when the researcher has a list of each person within that population, known as a sampling frame (Malhotra, 2019). Furthermore, in research, probability samples are based on known probabilities for each case to be selected from the target population (Malhotra, 2019) and this allows researchers to estimate and answer research questions about the population characteristics based on the sample. Probability sampling is commonly used in survey and experimental research (Saunders et al, 2012).

On the other hand, non-probability samples do not have known probabilities for each case to be selected from the target population (Malhotra, 2019). As a result, it is not possible to make statistical inferences or answer research questions about the population characteristics based on these samples however, generalizations about the target population can still be made from non-probability samples, but not on statistical grounds (Zikmund, et al., 2010). Both types of samples can be used to answer different types of research questions, such as

understanding what job attributes attract people to certain jobs (Saunders et al, 2012). A graphical representation in provided in Figure 2.

Figure 4.5: Sampling techniques



Source: Saunders et al., (2019)

In terms of this study, as the data was collected from University of the Witwatersrand across the different schools, however convenience sampling was applied in selection of respondents as the researcher relied on networks of students within the school to garner responses for the survey.

4.6.3 *Sample size determination*

The size of the sample selected relies on different aspects such as sample sizes of previous similar studies, expected results and the precision thereof and statistical requirements (Zikmund, et al., 2010). Further to this, the sample size chosen should be determined by the analysis method, and this is particularly true when using structural equation modelling (SEM), a statistical analysis tool that explores a variety of connections between different concepts (Rahi, 2017).

The sample size that was realised for this study was 378 respondents, which is sufficient as the recommended sample size for SEM studies are a minimum of 200 respondents (Hair, et al., 2017) which is the analysis tool used for this study as the conceptual model for this study incorporates are number of variables from adapted research based on a theory (Rahi, 2017).

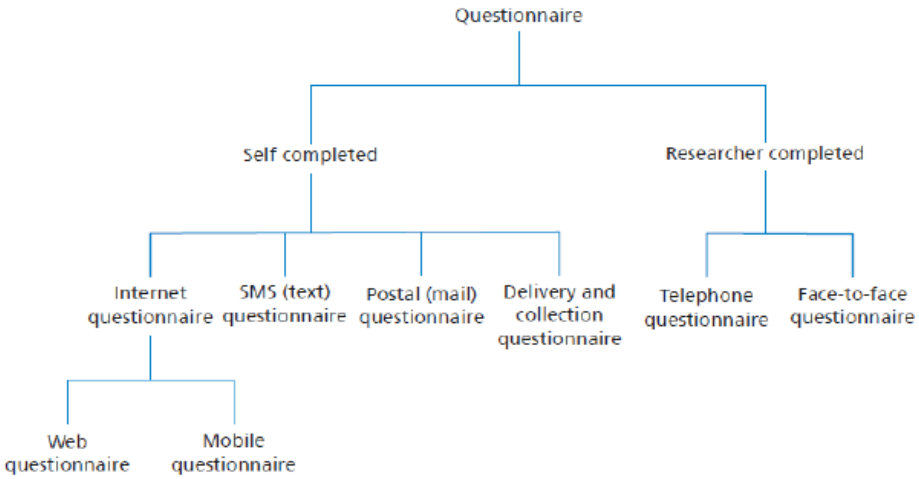
4.7 Data collection

There are primarily two types of data sources that may be used in business research: Primary and secondary (Dalati & Marx Gómez, 2018). Primary data was collected for this study. Within primary data, there are multiple data collection methods available to researchers, amongst the popular methods are questionnaires and interviews (Bell, et al., 2022). For the purposes of this study, primary data was collected through a method of self-administered questionnaires. This allows the researcher to collect large samples of respondents without the need of being physically present through the completion of the questionnaire.

Options of techniques available within self-administered questionnaires between online, mail or physically distribute and collect later (Saunders, et al., 2019).

Figure depicts the different modes in which questionnaires can be delivered.

Figure 4.6: *Questionnaire modes*



Source: Saunders et al. (2019)

Due to this research seeking to describe phenomena relating to perceptions and attitudes, a close ended questionnaire with structured, static responses with fixed alternatives were required (Malhotra, 2021).

This research used a self-completed internet questionnaire that was disseminated via mobile, email and web to potential respondents. There were two screening questions included in the questionnaire, to ascertain age category as well as whether any domestic or international travel was taken by the respondent. The constructs outlined in the conceptual model in chapter 3 were based on interval scales, making use of a 5-point Likert scale for respondents to answer on. The questionnaire was developed on survey monkey, and data collection tool, and the link to the questionnaire as well as cover letter can be found at this link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BPZZTJZ

Prior to designing the measurement instruments, the constructs needed to be operationalised (van der Vaart, 2021). The operational definition, measurement items and empirical origins of each variable is stipulated in table 3.

Table 4.1: Operationalisation of constructs

CONSTRUCT	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT ITEMS	REFERENCE
BRAND EXPERIENCE	Brand experience can be described as the affect that gets evoked from an experience and has the ability to create an attachment to a particular place, known as an "emotional memory" – the memory of the emotions that the experience made the consumer feel (Orth, et al., 2012).	• Interacting with locals impacted me having a once in a lifetime experience when travelling • Interacting with locals allows me to experience my trip differently from other trips when travelling. • Interacting with locals allows me to experience something new when travelling. • Interacting with locals allows makes my travel experience better and more fulfilling than if I did not interact with locals. • Interacting with locals allows me to grow and learn new things through my travel experience	(Orth, et al., 2012)

CONSTRUCT	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT ITEMS	REFERENCE
SATISFACTION	Customer satisfaction can be defined as the psychological state that occurs when emotions resulting from unmet expectations are combined with pre-empted feelings about the customer's consumption experience (Rather, et al., 2021).	• Interacting with friendly locals contributed to feeling satisfied about my travel experience • Interacting with friendly locals contributed to having a pleasant travel experience and to feel pleasure. • Interacting with locals allows me to experience something new when travelling.	(Rather, et al., 2021)
AFFECTIVE BRAND IMAGE	Affective brand image refers to the emotional associations and perceptions that consumers have towards a brand (Cho & Hwang, 2020), including emotions, feelings, and sentiments that are elicited by the brand, impacting consumer behaviour and foster brand loyalty. (Li, et al., 2020).	• The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel impacts the way I feel about a destination or attraction in a positive way. • The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel excited about a destination or attraction. • The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel energized about a destination or attraction. • The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel relaxed about a destination or attraction	(Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017)

CONSTRUCT	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT ITEMS	REFERENCE
BRAND RELATED ATTRIBUTIONS	Brand related attributions are defined as the perceptions and judgements that consumers make regarding a brand and are influenced by various factors namely it's characteristics, traits, values, and associations (Yu, et al., 2018). These attributions are defined by aspects such as perceptions of reliability, value for money, quality, authenticity, innovation, social responsibility, and overall brand image that a brand represents (Muniz & Guzmán, 2023).	• Emotional connections experienced with locals at an attraction/ destination contributes to positive attributes I associate with an attraction/ destination • A destination or attractions attractiveness in terms of experiences is amplified (either negatively or positively) by the people that I get to interact with at the destination or experience. • A destination or attraction's attractiveness in terms of its alignment with my own values is strongly influenced by the people that I get to interact with at the destination or experience. • My own feelings of enjoyment and happiness experienced with locals at an attraction/ destination contributes to positive attributes I associate with an attraction/ destination	(Orth, et al., 2012); (Kim, 2014)
BRAND ATTACHMENT	Brand attachment, relating to attachment to the destination or	• I felt a strong sense of attachment to a destination/ attraction because of interacting with a friendly local during my visit	(Jeuring & Haartsen,

CONSTRUCT	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT ITEMS	REFERENCE
	place in the context of this study, refers to the degree that the customer has an emotional attachment to the brand (Liu, et al., 2020).	• I felt/ would feel a strong emotional connection to a destination/ attraction because of interaction with a friendly local. • Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be a crucial factor that impacts whether I would take an insult made about the destination or attraction personally. • Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be a key factor that impacts whether the destination or attraction aligns to my own values and principles. • Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that allows me to reflect my own lifestyle and value set	2017); (Orth, et al., 2012); (Prayag & Ryan, 2012)
BRAND LOYALTY	Brand loyalty can be defined as an ingrained commitment consumers feel towards a brand developed over time through positive experiences, emotional connections, and perceived value	• The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me want to go the extra mile to visit the destination or attraction in the future • The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me highly recommend the destination or attraction to my relatives or to my friends.	(Rather, et al., 2021); (Jeuring & Haartsen, 2017)

CONSTRUCT	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT ITEMS	REFERENCE
	created by the brand (Al Abdulrazak & Gbadamosi, 2017).	• The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me definitely want to visit again in future. • The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me have a strong preference for the destination/ attraction. • The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me actively search for deals and opportunities to visit the destination/ attraction. • The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me find the destination/attraction reliable and credible	
BRAND AUTHENTICITY	Brand authenticity is defined as the degree to which a brand is perceived as genuine, transparent, and true to its core values, promises, and identity (Södergren, 2021). Brand	• The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception of its value promise. • The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception whether it cares about consumers. • The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception whether its offering is timeless.	(Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2018); (Safeer, et al., 2023)

CONSTRUCT	OPERATIONAL DEFINITION	MEASUREMENT ITEMS	REFERENCE
	authenticity is further defined as the extent to which a brand lacks falsity, is truthful to its claims and is unique and legitimate (Akbar & Wymer, 2017).	• The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether the destination has a history or story of meaning. • The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether it is a destination or attraction aligned with my values and principles. • The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether it is a destination or attraction that adds meaning to the lives of people who live there and who visit there	

Millennial and Gen Z consumers from Wits University and Wits Business School were targeted, with the use of pre-screening questions in place to ensure that only qualifying respondents answer the survey.

4.7.1 *Data editing, coding and filing*

Once the 378 survey responses were received, the data was then prepared for analysis which included checking for completeness and consistency in responses (Malhotra, 2021). Thereafter, the data was given numerical codes before filing, and thus then followed the process for data editing, coding and filing ahead of the data analysis process (Malhotra, 2021).

The coding process entailed the allocation of numerical codes to each construct and response, so that it can be effectively entered in the statistical analysis tool. The codes for each construct that have been assigned to this study is documented in table 3. The final step was then to transfer the collected data to a file compatible with the data analysis tools used, and for this study the data was stored in an SPSS data file as the analysis was carried out using SPSS statistics.

Table 4.2: Coding information

Data type	Code
Brand Experience	BE 1 – BE 5
Satisfaction	SAT 1 – SAT 3
Affective Brand Image	ABI 1 – ABI 4
Brand Related Attributions	BRA 1 – BRA 4
Brand Attachment	BAT1 – BAT 5

Brand Loyalty	BL 1 – BL 6
Brand Authenticity	BAU 1 – BAU 6

4.8 Data analysis

Data analysis involves processing the collected data to address the study's objectives and can be defined as the systematic cleaning, organizing, and co1ding of data to model and analyse it statistically (Zikmund, et al., 2010). For this study, data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS for descriptive statistics, and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was carried out with SPSS AMOS version 29. In SEM, the measurement model is assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to evaluate model fit, reliability, and validity, followed by analysing the structural model to test hypotheses. The detailed steps of the data analysis process will be elaborated on in the subsequent section.

4.8.1 *Descriptive statistics*

To begin the data analysis, the first step requires an analysis of the characteristics and demographics of the collected data using IBM SPSS software version 29 for descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics, defined as computations that statistically describe the characteristics of a sample (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019), help identify patterns in the data, simplifying large amounts of information into understandable summaries (Malhotra, 2019). These statistics are calculated in both frequencies and percentages to infer the characteristics of the sample from which the data was collected (Malhotra, 2019).

Next, measures of central tendency for the measurement constructs are evaluated to identify a single value representing the entire sample (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) Commonly used descriptive statistics include the mean and standard deviation (Malhotra, 2021). The mean and standard deviation of each

scale item within the conceptual model were determined to understand the distribution of the collected data (Saunders, et al., 2019). The mean, or arithmetic mean, is calculated by adding all values in the dataset and dividing by the number of observations, representing the average of all responses per scale (Malhotra, 2021). The standard deviation measures the distribution of values around the mean, indicating the variability in responses (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019).

After finalizing the descriptive statistics, the reliability of the research instrument is evaluated, reflecting its internal consistency and stability (Vaske, et al., 2017).

4.8.2 *Structural equation modelling (SEM)*

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a statistical technique used to analyse complex variables by assessing their measurement properties and theoretical relationships (Malhotra, 2021). It involves examining interrelationships between constructs, which are tested through multiple structural equations (Hair, et al., 2017). According to Malhotra (2019), SEM should be applied to research that meets the following criteria: (1) the variables are unobservable directly and depend on other variables to determine the relationship; (2) the relationships are interdependent and defined in a conceptual model informed by existing theory; and (3) the models are estimated based on cross-sectional data. These criteria align with the model and basis of this study.

SEM consists of two models: the measurement model, which evaluates how measures of variables converge to represent constructs, and the structural model, which illustrates how constructs relate to each other (Hair, et al., 2017). Both processes will be explained in greater detail in the following sections.

4.8.3 *Measurement model analysis using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)*

The measurement model in Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is a theoretically derived model that specifies how factors or measured variables contribute to representing a latent construct (Hair, et al., 2017). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) is used to test and evaluate the extent to which measured variables

represent a set of hypothetical latent constructs derived from theory (Hair, et al., 2017). Latent constructs are variables that cannot be observed directly and must be represented through factors or scale items that can be directly measured or observed and this involves comparing the collected data (reality) with an existing measurement theory to assess whether any measurement error exists (Rahman, et al., 2015).

The purpose of CFA is to confirm that a pre-existing theory is accurate by observing its alignment with real data (Hair et al., 2018). In determining this alignment, CFA evaluates the reliability and validity of indicator variables representing a group of constructs in a model. The processes for assessing reliability and validity, as well as determining model validity, will be explained in detail in the following sections.

4.8.3.1 Reliability

The research instrument used for data collection must be structured and designed to ensure the internal consistency of the collected data, achieved by using scales that have been validated and established by existing theory (Malhotra, 2019). Internal consistency refers to the ability of the scales used in the instrument to produce consistent results when repeated at different times (Clark & Watson, 2019).

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are two techniques used to assess the internal consistency of scale items, with values ranging from 0 to 1. A score of 0.7 or higher indicates acceptable reliability in both cases (Clark & Watson, 2019). Composite reliability is calculated through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and is defined as the ratio of true score variance to total score variance (Malhotra, 2019)

4.8.3.2 Validity

Validity refers to the accuracy of analysis, the appropriateness of measures, and the generalizability of findings (Saunders et al., 2019). It also measures how well a concept is captured by the instrument used (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019). In this study, construct validity was assessed through Confirmatory Factor Analysis

(CFA) as part of the SEM process (Malhotra, 2019). Construct validity examines how well the scales align with the underlying theory (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019) and includes both convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2018).

Convergent validity checks if the scales for a construct correlate sufficiently to confirm they measure the intended variable (Zikmund, et al., 2010). It is assessed using factor loading estimates, average variance extracted (AVE) scores, and composite reliability scores (Hair, et al., 2017). High factor loadings indicate that scale items converge and accurately measure the latent variable (Zikmund, et al., 2010). Acceptable factor loadings are ideally 0.7 or above, though 0.5 is acceptable (Blumberg, et al., 2014). The AVE, calculated as the square of the standardized factor loading, represents the mean variance of the items loaded on a construct, with 0.5 or above indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Malhotra, 2021). Composite reliability also indicates convergent validity.

Discriminant validity ensures that each construct is distinct and not conflated with others (Hair, et al., 2017) avoiding collinearity issues (Ab Hamid, et al., 2017). This study used the Fornell-Larcker criterion to assess discriminant validity, a method that states that the square root of a construct's average variance extracted (AVE) should exceed the correlation between that construct and any other construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Both convergent and discriminant validity are crucial for evaluating the measurement model through CFA. The detailed process of determining model validity for this study is discussed in the following section.

4.8.3.3 Model validity

To determine model validity, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) tests the model fit against theoretical expectations by comparing an estimated covariance matrix with an observed covariance matrix using maximum likelihood estimation (MLE) (Malhotra, 2021). Essentially, a null model is compared with the proposed conceptual model (Hair, et al., 2017).

Model fit is assessed using various indices that measure both goodness of fit and badness of fit (Hair, et al., 2017). The goodness of fit indices measure how closely

the specified model replicates the theory, with values closer to 1 indicating a better fit (Zikmund, et al., 2010). Badness of fit indices measure error and deviation from the specified model, with values closer to 0 being preferable (Malhotra, 2021).

For this study, the following indices were used to assess model validity:

- Absolute fit indices: Goodness of Fit (GFI) and Adjusted Goodness of Fit (AGFI)
- Incremental fit indices: Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI)
- Parsimony fit index: Normed Fit Index (NFI)
- Badness of fit indices: Normed chi-squared (CMIN/DF), P value, root mean square residual (RMSR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Malhotra, 2019)

A summary of the desired values for these indices is provided in Table 4. SEM validates a model through a confirmatory process (Bougie & Sekaran, 2019) with CFA assessing model fit and construct validity before estimating the structural model for hypothesis testing. The structural model, the next phase in SEM, is discussed in the following section.

Table 4.3: Model fit indices

Index	Acceptable fit
GOODNESS OF FIT INDICES	
AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index)	AGFI > 0.80
GFI (goodness of fit index)	GFI > 0.90
CFI (comparative fit index)	CFI > 0.90
TLI (Tucker Lewis index)	TLI > 0.90
NFI (normed fit index)	NFI > 0.90
P CLOSE	PCLOSE < 0.05
BADNESS OF FIT INDICES	

CMIN/DF (normed chai-squared/degrees of freedom)	≤ 3 good 3-5 acceptable > 5 not acceptable
P VALUE	< 0.05
SRMR (standardized root mean square residual	< 0.08
RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation)	RMSEA < 0.05 good 0.06-1 acceptable > 1 not acceptable

Source: Values sourced from Malhotra (2021).

4.8.4 *Structural model analysis*

The final step in SEM is building and analysing the structural model, which is done after confirming that the measurement model fits the data and is both valid and reliable (Malhotra, 2019). This step involves specifying the connections and impacts between different latent constructs in the model (Zikmund, et al., 2010). The structural model represents the proposed theory through a set of structural equations outlining relationships between constructs (Hair, et al., 2017).

In the structural model, relationships between constructs are assigned according to theoretical expectations and structural parameter estimates, or path estimates, indicate the empirically represented relationships between constructs and are depicted graphically in a path diagram in Chapter 5.

For structural model assessment, model fit indices are evaluated, and individual parameter estimates for each hypothesis are presented (De Bruin, 2019). Parameters with a p-value of 0.05 or lower are considered significant and are used to accept or reject hypotheses (Hair et al., 2018). Finally, path coefficients for endogenous and exogenous constructs are estimated, and the overall coefficient of determination (R^2) is calculated (De Bruin, 2019).

4.8.5 *Moderation analysis*

The final step is moderation analysis to evaluate brand authenticity as a moderator between brand attachment and brand loyalty, and between brand related attributions and brand loyalty. This is done using the Process macro for SPSS by Hayes (2017). A moderating variable can alter the relationship between a dependent and independent variable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019).

Moderation analysis was conducted using PROCESS, a regression-based tool developed by Hayes (2013). This tool calculates the interaction term, and the variance attributed to the moderator, indicating the change in R^2 due to the interaction between the moderator and the independent variable (Field, 2013). PROCESS v4 was used as a plugin for IBM SPSS.

4.9 Ethical considerations

It is the researcher's responsibility to conduct the research process in an ethical and responsible manner specially when dealing with participants (Oliver, 2003). Every phase of the research process should mitigate possible ethical concerns and should place the human dignity, privacy, and well-being at the centre of the research study (Saunders, et al., 2019).

For this study, the following ethical considerations were measured:

- All respondents had the freedom of choice to or not to volunteer in the survey.
- Participants were made aware of the purpose for the study allowing them to choose to participate or not.
- Respondents had full contact details of the researcher should they want to clarify or raise concerns with the research study.
- Participants were made aware of the confidentiality and anonymity of their rights as respondents using a global leading survey software. No form of formal identification was requested such as name and surname.

- Although ethical clearance was not required for this study, all protocols and adherence to the conduct and rules of Wits Business School was observed.

4.10 Chapter summary

This chapter aimed to explain the research process step by step, following the research onion model by (Saunders, et al., 2019). It offered detailed explanations of the research philosophy of positivism and the associated deductive approach, followed by the mono-method quantitative methodology chosen for this study. Based on relevant literature, the chapter also discussed the rationale for using the survey research strategy and the validation processes. The research design, target population, selected sample, and sampling methods were explained, followed by an overview of the measurement techniques used in this study. The chapter then detailed the sources and origins of the constructs in the conceptual model, pilot testing, and its results. Finally, it covered data collection, the data analysis process, and ethical considerations, concluding the chapter.

CHAPTER 5. DATA ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 will provide an in-depth reporting of results obtained from the data analysis procedure. The data that was collected was analysed using IBM SPSS statistical software version 29.0.2.0 (20) as well as IBM SPSS AMOS version 29 for the structural equation modelling processes required for both the measurement model analysis and the structural model analysis. This chapter consists of five sections. The first two sections will outline descriptive statistics pertaining to the sample that has been collected, with the first section providing a summary of demographic information and the second section outlining the mean and standard deviation of each of the constructs to provide insight to the variability of the data collected from the mean.

The third section provides all results reported from the measurement model process followed, the process required to test reliability and validity of the model and model fit, including reporting of both convergent and discriminant validity before being able to move on to the structural model analysis.

The fourth section provides the structural model, developed to test the hypotheses outlined in the conceptual model in addition to the moderation analysis done using the Process for SPSS tool developed by Hayes, (2012).

The fifth and final section contains a discussion of the results of all nine hypotheses that has been presented.

5.2 Descriptive statistics: demographics of the sample

The following section presents the demographics of the sample collected, outlining in percentage form, a breakdown of gender, age, educational level, socio-economic status and marital status of respondents for this study. A summary of all results achieved is outlined in table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Demographic results for sample

Item	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	160	42.3%
	Female	215	56.9%
	Prefer not say	3	0.8%
Age	18 - 24	212	56.1%
	25 - 34	58	15.3%
	35 - 44	108	28.6%
Education level	I completed up to high school/matric (NQF 4)	165	43.7%
	I have a diploma (NQF 6)	23	6.1%
	I have an undergraduate degree (NQF 7)	86	22.8%
	I have an Honours/professional degree (NQF 8)	80	21.2%
	I have a Master's degree and above (NQF 9 – 10)	24	6.3%
Socio-Economic class	Low income (annual household income of less than R86 000)	154	40.7%
	Emerging middle class (annual household income of R86,000 to R197,000 per year)	93	24.6%
	Middle class (annual household income of R197,001 to R400,000 per year)	92	24.3%
	Upper middle class (annual household income of R400,001 to R688,000 per year)	26	6.9%
	Elite (annual household income of R688,001 to R1,400,000 + per year)	13	3.4%
Marital status	Single	313	83%
	Married	36	9.5%
	Prefer not say	29	7.7%

5.2.1 *Gender*

The results for gender of this sample reveals that out of 378 respondents, 42,3% (n=160) were male, 56,9% (n=215) were female, and 0.8% (n=3) opted not to disclose their gender. Female respondents were proportionally greater than males, with over half of the respondents being female.

5.2.2 *Age*

Three age categories were provided in the questionnaire, due to the population group being targeted falling into the Gen Z and millennial age cohorts. The age groups that responded on this study, from the three age categories provided, reflected that 56,1% (n=212) were between the ages of 18 to 24. The second age category, ranging between 25 to 34 years of age, made up 15,3% (n=58) of the sample. Finally, the third age category for respondents aged between 35 and 44 years of age consisted of 28,6% (n=108) of the total sample. The age group of 18 to 24 years of age reflected the greatest proportion of respondents at over half of all responses, aligned to the predominance of age groups of university students, as this was where respondents to the survey was sought.

5.2.3 *Education level*

The education level for respondents spanned five different categories. The first category was completion of school up until matric, and 43,7% (n=165) of respondents stated that their highest education level was up until matric at the time of responding on the questionnaire. 6,1% (n=23) of respondents indicated that their highest education level is a diploma; and 22,8% (n=86) of respondents have an undergraduate degree. 21,2% (n=80) of respondents indicated that they have an Honours or professional degree while the remainder of the sample, at 6,3% (n=24) indicated that they have a Master's degree and above. Cumulatively, 50,2% of respondents have an education level of an undergraduate degree or higher, and 49,8% have an education level of up to a diploma.

5.2.4 *Socio – economic class*

In terms of socio-economic class, statistics South Africa criteria was employed in outlining five different categories of socio-economic options. The first category stipulated was termed as low income with an annual household income of less than R86 000. 40,7% (n=154) of respondents fell into this category. The second category was termed as emerging middle class, with an annual household income of R86,000 to R197,000 per year, and 26.4% (n=93) of respondents selected this category. The third category was termed middle class, with an annual household income of R197,001 to R400,000 per year, and 26% (n=92) of respondents were part of this category in terms of socio-economic status. The fourth category is referred to as the upper middle class socio-economic class, with an annual household income of R400,001 to R688,000 and was selected by 6,9% (n=26) of the sample. The highest income category, termed Elite, includes households earning R688,001 to R1,400,000 or more annually, making up 3,4% (n=13) of the total responses. The majority at 65,3%, identified as either low income or emerging middle class, while the Elite category had the lowest representation among respondents.

5.2.5 *Marital status*

The results of this sample reveal that out of 378 respondents, 82.8% (n=313) of respondents are single. 9,5% (n=36) of respondents are married and 7,7% (n=29) opted not to disclose their marital status.

In summary, while the targeted population group spanned both Gen Z and millennial consumers who are currently students in Johannesburg, the demographics of the sample population reached are predominantly Gen-Z consumers falling within the low income to emerging middle class socio-economic status category. Half the sample are reported as having an education level up to NQF 6, and half the sample having achieved and NQF 7 level of education or higher. Additionally, over 80% of respondents reported themselves as being single in terms of marital status.

5.3 Descriptive statistics: Measures of central tendency per construct

This section presents and discusses the constructs that make up the study's conceptual model, outlining the measures of central tendency for each of them.

There are seven constructs in total, namely: Brand Experience, Satisfaction, Affective Brand Image, Brand Related Attributions, Brand Attachment, Brand Loyalty and Brand Authenticity. The measurement of the constructs is on a five-point Likert scale response system where 1 is strongly disagree, 2 is disagree, 3 is neutral, 4 is agree and 5 is strongly agree. The objective of this section is to present a descriptive explanation of the extent to which respondents agree or disagree with statements in each of the seven constructs, while reporting the mean and standard deviations from the mean for each construct outlined.

5.3.1 *Measures of central tendency: Brand Experience*

Brand Experience measures the extent to which respondents perceive interacting with locals in a community tourism context to have an impact on the overall experience of the tourism brand or destination. Table 5.2 presents the mean and standard deviation of each scale item, as well as the overall mean and standard deviation of the construct.

Table 5.2: Descriptive statistics for Brand Experience

Measures of construct: Brand Experience		**Mean**	**SD**
BE1	Interacting with locals impacted me having a once in a lifetime experience when travelling	3.88	0.780
BE2	Interacting with locals allows me to experience my trip differently from other trips when travelling	3.89	0.771
BE3	Interacting with locals allows me to experience something new when travelling	4.06	0.653
BE4	Interacting with locals allows makes my travel experience better and more fulfilling than if I did not interact with locals	3.85	0.800
BE5	Interacting with locals allows me to grow and learn new things through my travel experience	4.12	0.637
OVERALL BRAND EXPERIENCE		**3.96**	**0.547**

Table 5.2 reflects that Brand Experience as a construct has a mean of 3,96 with a standard deviation of 0,547. This indicates that many respondents responded as neutral to the questions, but overall, there was a tendency toward agreement for each question in the construct. The question that scored the lowest is the question that states: “Interacting with locals allows makes my travel experience better and more fulfilling than if I did not interact with locals” at a score if 3,85 while the highest score was the question stating “Interacting with locals allows me to grow and learn new things through my travel experience” with a score of 4,12.

5.3.2 *Measures of central tendency: Satisfaction*

Table 5.3 outlines the questions and measures of central tendency for the second construct, pertaining to the satisfaction that travellers would experience through interacting with locals in a community tourism context.

Table 5.3: Descriptive statistics for satisfaction

Measures of construct: Satisfaction		**Mean**	**SD**
SAT1	Interacting with friendly locals contributed to feeling satisfied about my travel experience	4,09	0.667
SAT2	Interacting with friendly locals contributed to having a pleasant travel experience and to feel pleasure	4.10	0.688
SAT3	Interacting with locals allows me to experience something new when travelling	4.15	0.680
OVERALL SATISFACTION		**4.11**	**0.571**

Satisfaction as a construct consisted of three questions and recorded a mean of 4,11 and a standard deviation of 0,571. The means of all three questions were closely linked, with the lowest mean recorded at 4,09 for the question: “Interacting with friendly locals contributed to feeling satisfied about my travel experience” and the highest mean recorded for: “Interacting with locals allows me to experience something new when travelling” at 4,15. This mean score indicates that most respondents agreed with the statements in this construct.

5.3.3 *Measures of central tendency: Affective Brand Image*

Affective Brand Image as a construct aimed to measure the extent to which interaction with locals within a community tourism context caused travellers to have an emotional response to the destination or attraction, thus impacting their affective image of the brand. The construct consisted of four questions and results from the measures of central tendency are depicted in table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Descriptive statistics for Affective Brand Image

Measures of construct: Affective Brand Image		**Mean**	**SD**
ABI1	The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel impacts the way I feel about a destination or attraction in a positive way	4.01	0.683
ABI2	The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel excited about a destination or attraction	4.02	0.698
ABI3	The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel energized about a destination or attraction	3.95	0.678
ABI4	The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel relaxed about a destination or attraction	4.02	0.687
OVERALL AFFECTIVE BRAND IMAGE		**4.00**	**0.686**

The results for this construct reflect a mean value of 4,00 and a standard deviation of 0,576. The lowest scoring mean was for question three, that states: “The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel energized about a destination or attraction” at the mean score for this question was 3,95. While two of the highest scoring questions had a mean value of 4,02.

5.3.4 *Measures of central tendency: Brand Related Attributions*

This construct measured personality and attractiveness attributes that a traveller would associate with a destination because of experiences that included interactions with a local in a community tourism context. The construct consisted of four different questions and the results from the measures of central tendency for each question are depicted in table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Descriptive statistics for Brand Related Attributions

Measures of construct: Brand Related Attributions		Mean	SD
BRA1	Emotional connections experienced with locals at an attraction/ destination contributes to positive attributes I associate with an attraction/ destination	3.87	0.710
BRA2	A destination or attractions attractiveness in terms of experiences is amplified (either negatively or positively) by the people that I get to interact with at the destination or experience	3.94	0.684
BRA3	A destination or attraction's attractiveness in terms of its alignment with my own values is strongly influenced by the people that I get to interact with at the destination or experience	3.86	0.692
BRA4	My own feelings of enjoyment and happiness experienced with locals at an attraction/ destination contributes to positive attributes I associate with an attraction/ destination	3.99	0.639
OVERALL BRAND RELATED ATTRIBUTIONS		**3.92**	**0.681**

The overall mean score for Brand Related Attributions as a construct is 3.92, with a high standard deviation for each question, indicating that respondents had varying views on the impact of brand related attributions in the form of personality associations and attractiveness as an outcome on their perception on a destination. The overall standard deviation was 0,681. The lowest mean score was for question 3 which states: "A destination or attraction's attractiveness in terms of its alignment with my own values is strongly influenced by the people that I get to interact with at the destination or experience" with a mean score of 3,86 and the highest mean score was for question four which states: "My own feelings of enjoyment and happiness experienced with locals at an attraction/ destination contributes to positive attributes I associate with an attraction/ destination" with a mean score of 3,99. None of the questions achieved a mean beyond 3,99.

5.3.5 *Measures of central tendency: Brand Attachment*

The Brand Attachment construct measures the extent to which a friendly and amicable encounter with a local in a community tourism context had an impact on the overall attachment that the traveller felt towards the destination or

attraction as a result of the interaction. Table 5.6 provides a summary of mean and standard deviation results for this construct.

Table 5.6: Descriptive statistics for Brand Attachment

Measures of construct: Brand Attachment		**Mean**	**SD**
BAT1	I felt a strong sense of attachment to a destination/ attraction as a result of interacting with a friendly local during my visit	3.88	0.801
BAT2	I felt/ would feel a strong emotional connection to a destination/ attraction as a result of interaction with a friendly local	3.85	0.795
BAT3	Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that impacts whether I would take an insult made about the destination or attraction personally	3.66	0.865
BAT4	Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that impacts whether the destination or attraction aligns to my own values and principles	3.77	0.782
BAT5	Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that allows me to reflect my own lifestyle and value set	3.90	0.720
OVERALL BRAND ATTACHMENT		**3.81**	**0.792**

The results for the Brand Attachment construct reflect that an average mean score the construct is 3,81 with a standard deviation of 0,600. The lowest mean score recorded is for question three with a mean of 3,66, and the question states: “Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that impacts whether I would take an insult made about the destination or attraction”. The highest mean score was 3,90 for question five that states” Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that allows me to reflect my own lifestyle and value set”.

5.3.6 *Measures of central tendency: Brand Loyalty*

The brand loyalty construct measures the extent to which a friendly and amicable encounter with a local in a destination or attraction in a community tourism context elicited a level of loyalty the traveller felt towards the destination or attraction as a result of the encounter. Table 5.7 contains mean and standard deviation scores recorded for the Brand Loyalty construct.

Table 5.7: Descriptive statistics for Brand Loyalty

Measures of construct: Brand Loyalty		Mean	SD
BL1	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me want to go the extra mile to visit the destination or attraction in the future	3.98	0.620
BL2	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me highly recommend the destination or attraction to my relatives or to my friends	4.04	0.631
BL3	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me definitely want to visit again in future	4.06	0.673
BL4	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me have a strong preference for the destination/ attraction	4.01	0.651
BL5	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me actively search for deals and opportunities to visit the destination/ attraction	3.97	0.685
BL6	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me find the destination/attraction reliable and credible	3.98	0.696
OVERALL BRAND LOYALTY		**4.00**	**0.659**

The results for the construct Brand Loyalty reflect an overall mean score of 4,00 and a standard deviation of 0,530. The highest mean score reflected for this construct is question three which states: “The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me definitely want to visit again in future” with a mean score of 4,06 and the lowest mean score reflected for this construct is 3,97, a mean score reflected for question five, stating: “The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me actively search for deals and opportunities to visit the destination/ attraction”

5.3.7 *Measures of central tendency: Brand Authenticity*

The final construct, Brand Authenticity, aimed to measure the extent to which a friendly and amicable interaction with a local in a destination or attraction in a community tourism context contributed towards the respondent’s perception of authenticity about the destination as a result of this interaction

Table 5.8: Descriptive statistics for Brand Authenticity

Measures of construct: Brand Authenticity		Mean	SD
BAU1	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception of its value promise	3.96	0.692
BAU2	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception whether it cares about consumers	4.06	0.630
BAU3	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception whether its offering is timeless	3.94	0.704
BAU4	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether the destination has a history or story of meaning	3.99	0.719
BAU5	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether it is a destination or attraction aligned with my values and principles	3.89	0.758
BAU6	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether it is a destination or attraction that adds meaning to the lives of people who live there and who visit there	4.02	0.659
OVERALL BRAND AUTHENTICITY		**3.98**	**0.693**

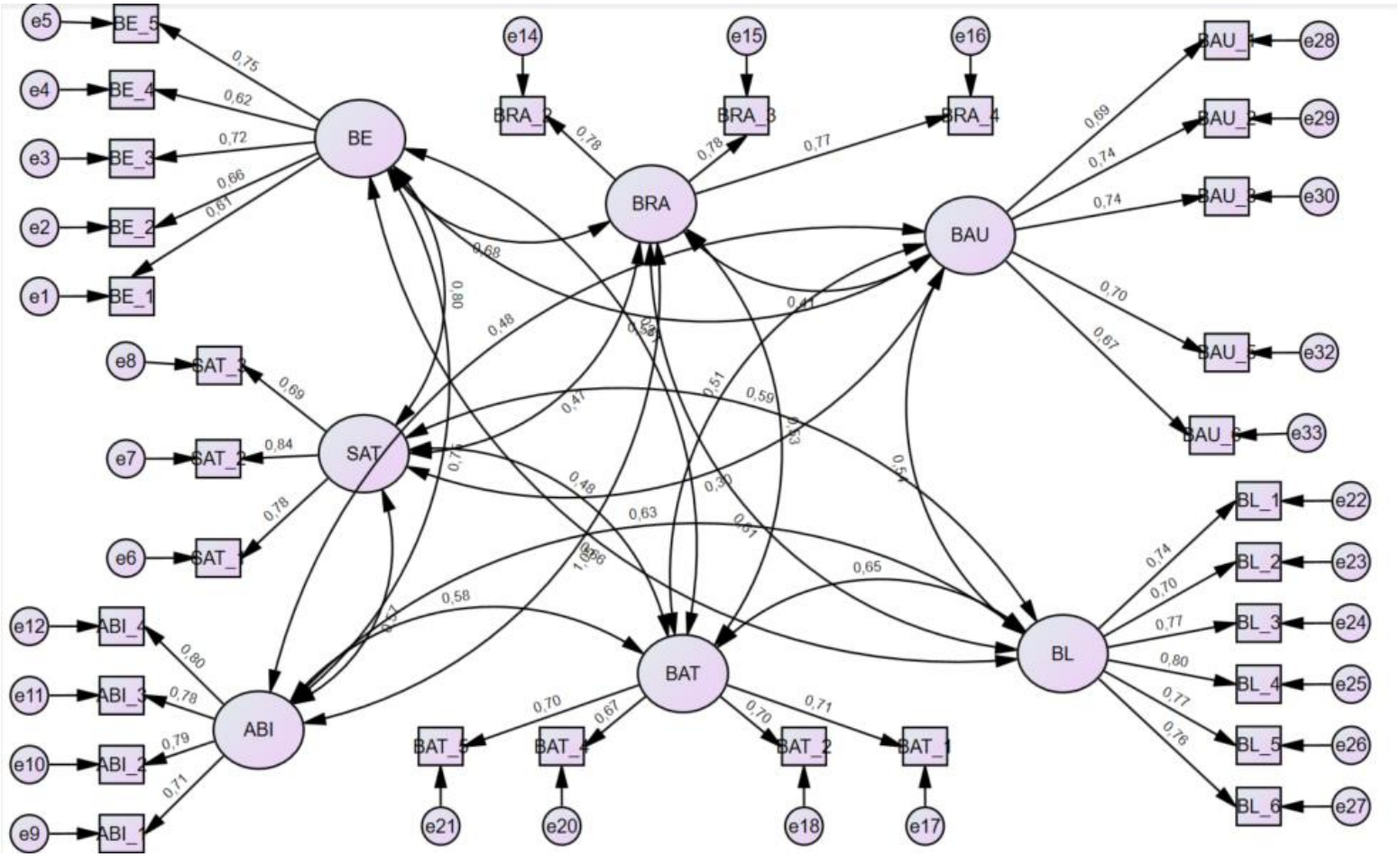
Results for the construct Brand Authenticity indicate that a mean of 3,98 for the construct was achieved and a standard deviation of 0,693. The construct consisted of six questions and the highest mean score achieved of 4,06 was for question two: “The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception whether it cares about consumers” and the lowest mean score of 3,89 for question five: “The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether it is a destination or attraction aligned with my values and principles”.

In summary, all the constructs achieved mean scores above 3,80, indicating a tendency toward agreement with the statements provided in the questionnaire, for each of the seven constructs provided.

5.4 Measurement model analysis using Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The measurement model, analysed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), is a method for validating the reliability and validity (Malhotra, 2021) of the model used in this study. This approach assesses whether the observed variables associated with latent constructs align with theoretical expectations (Hair, et al., 2017). Detailed explanations of the measurement model and CFA are provided in Chapter 4, section 4.8.2. The sections below present the results from the CFA, including reliability analysis, construct validity, and overall model validity to confirm its suitability for structural analysis. The measurement model was prepared using SEM on AMOS, with a path diagram shown in Figure 5.1, illustrating the paths required for the analysis. Some items were removed to improve model fit indices and construct validity, with further details on these improvements given in section 5.4.1 under model validity.

Figure 5.1: Path diagram of measurement model



5.4.1 *Model validity: Model fit indices*

Model fit indices provide an indication on how well the collected data aligns with the proposed theoretical model (Malhotra, 2019). Unlike individual reliability and validity tests, which focus on specific elements, these indices evaluate the overall coherence of the model (Hair et al., 2018). The model's fit was enhanced by removing certain scale items. Indicators labelled BRA1 for Brand Related Attributions, BAT3 for Brand Attachment and BAU4 for Brand Authenticity were deleted in order to achieve a better model fit. Although each of these variables had high factor loadings, they were removed because their standardized residual covariances exceeded the absolute value threshold of 2.5 during model diagnostics (Hair et al., 2014).

A detailed summary of accepted model fit indices is outlined in Chapter 4, section 4.8.3, Table 4.3. table 5.9 provides a breakdown of the final model fit indices for this study.

In accordance with table 5.9, the CMIN/DF for the measurement model is recorded at 2.081, indicating a good model fit as anything less than 3 is good. The p value is recorded at 0.000 while acceptable model fit needs to be anything

less than 0.05. The GFI outcome value is recorded as 0.875. This is less than the 0.90 threshold value, however the GFI is sensitive to sample size, and this study's sample size was 378 respondents. The AGFI however, makes allowances for smaller sample sizes (Malhotra, 2021), and the score for this index recorded a value of 0.848, which exceeded the acceptable model fit threshold of 0.80. The CFI, TLI and P close values are all also withing the acceptable model fit ranges, as are the SRMR and RMSEA values. Model fit indices must also be reported for the structural model, and the same fit thresholds apply. The results from the model fit evaluation indicate that a good overall fit has been achieved, confirming the model's validity. This represents the final step in the measurement model process for conducting SEM, signalling that the specification of the structural model can now proceed. With validity, reliability, and acceptable model fit established, the structural model is ready to be specified, allowing for the testing of the proposed hypotheses.

Table 5.9: Model fit indices

INDEX	ACCEPTABLE FIT	MEASUREMENT MODEL AFTER REFINEMENT
CMIN/DF	≤ 3 good 3-5 acceptable > 5 not acceptable	2.081
P VALUE	< 0.05	0.000
AGFI	> 0.80	0.848
GFI	> 0.90	0.875
CFI	> 0.90	0.924
TLI	> 0.90	0.914
P CLOSE	> 0.05	0.131
SRMR	< 0.08	0.022
RMSEA	< 0.05 good 0.06-1 acceptable > 1 not acceptable	0.054

5.4.2 *Reliability analysis*

Reliability estimates require values above 0.7 for both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability to demonstrate that the measurement instrument used reflects internal consistency (Malhotra, 2021). These reliability tests are an essential part of validating the measurement model to ensure its alignment with the underlying theory (Hair, et al., 2017). The discussion of reliability and the minimum criteria for internal consistency can be found in Chapter 4, section 4.8.3. Table 5.10 presents the Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability results for all the constructs in this study, including Brand Experience, Satisfaction, Affective Brand Image, Brand Related Attributions, Brand Attachment, Brand Loyalty and Brand Authenticity. All seven constructs recorded reliability coefficients above 0.7. Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.8 across most constructs except for Brand Related Attributions, which recorded 0.735, indicating very good reliability, while most composite reliability values were also above 0.8, except for Brand Experience, Brand Related Attributions and Brand Attachment which recorded values of 0.748, 0.735 and 0.787 respectively. Overall, these results confirm that the measurement instrument is reliable and demonstrates strong internal consistency across the constructs.

Table 5.10: Reliability Estimates

CONSTRUCT	CRONBACH'S ALPHA	COMPOSITE RELIABILITY
Brand Experience	0.803	0.748
Satisfaction	0.809	0.817
Affective Brand Image	0.859	0.859
Brand Related Attributions	0.735	0.735
Brand Attachment	0.805	0.787
Brand Loyalty	0.887	0.888
Brand Authenticity	0.840	0.821

Table 5.11: Assessment of convergent validity

Construct	Factor loading	Corrected item total correlation	Average variance extracted
Brand Experience			0.500
BE1	0.60	0.534	
BE2	0.68	0.619	
BE3	0.74	0.668	
BE4	0.62	0.525	
BE5	0.75	0.620	
Satisfaction			0.600
SAT1	0.69	0.675	
SAT2	0.85	0.719	
SAT3	0.78	0.582	
Affective Brand Image			0.605
ABI1	0.79	0.701	
ABI2	0.77	0.705	
ABI3	0.78	0.714	
ABI4	0.77	0.698	
Brand Related Attributions			0.475
BRA1	Item deleted		
BRA2	0.61	0.540	
BRA3	0.63	0.514	
BRA4	0.72	0.550	
Brand Attachment			0.481
BAT1	0.67	0.617	
BAT2	0.67	0.621	
BAT3	Item deleted		
BAT4	0.70	0.609	
BAT5	0.73	0.585	
Brand Loyalty			0.569
BL1	0.73	0.688	
BL2	0.69	0.648	
BL3	0.76	0.721	
BL4	0.79	0.739	
BL5	0.78	0.712	
BL6	0.76	0.709	
Brand Authenticity			0.479
BAU1	0.70	0.577	
BAU2	0.70	0.636	
BAU3	0.70	0.640	
BAU4	Item deleted		
BAU5	0.68	0.658	
BAU6	0.67	0.604	

5.4.3 *Discriminant validity*

The next validity assessment of the measurement model analysis is to assess discriminant validity. This can be defined as the extent to how constructs differ from each other (Hair, et al., 2017). To assess discriminant validity using this technique, the square root of the AVE for each construct needs to be greater than the relationship it has with another construct. The results of the discriminant analyses conducted for this study using the Fornelll-Larcker technique is recorded in table 5.12. In accordance with the results, it is evident that the lowest square root of the AVEs (the values that are diagonal and in bold) is 0.689. This estimate is greater than the highest bivariate correlation of 0.687, between brand loyalty and brand authenticity, and thus confirms discriminant validity.

Table 5.12: Discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion

	BL	BE	SAT	ABI	BRA	BAT	BAU
BL	**0.754**						
BE	0.642	**0.707**					
SAT	0.589	0.684	**0.774**				
ABI	0.628	0.675	0.581	**0.778**			
BRA	0.599	0.601	0.469	0.624	**0.689**		
BAT	0.658	0.613	0.474	0.584	0.650	**0.694**	
BAU	0.687	0.569	0.443	0.596	0.603	0.650	**0.692**

5.4.4 *Structural model*

Once the measurement model has been formulated and validity confirmed, the structural model is then able to be developed. The structural model represents the interrelationships between the constructs, also known as the path, estimates between the constructs (Hair, et al., 2017). The measurement models the measurement model was transformed into the structural model by replacing the double-headed arrows shown in Figure 5.1 with single-headed arrows. This change signifies a transition from evaluating correlational relationships to estimating paths, aimed at assessing dependence relationships (Malhotra, 2021).

The structural model is depicted graphically in figure 5.2 and drawn and tested using AMOS 29. The model fit indices and associated thresholds have been explained in detail in Chapter 4, and model fit values for the measurement model was recorded in table 5.9. When evaluating the structural model, model fit indices are then again recorded to ensure model fit values are still valid for the structural model. For this reason, only the model fit indices will be recorded along with an indication of validity. All model fit indices were indicative of acceptable validity and can be recorded as follows: CMIN/DF =2.82; GFI = 0.835; AGFI = 0.807; TLI =0.856; CFI =0.869; RMSEA =0.069; SRMR =0.080. These results indicate that the model fits the data in an acceptable way and hypotheses testing can therefore proceed.

5.4.5 *Collinearity diagnostics*

Collinearity diagnostics are assessed in order to assess whether two or more independent variables are related within the statistical model (Senaviratna & Cooray, 2019). Multi-collinearity can lead to unstable regression estimates (Kyriazos & Poga, 2023). For this reason, collinearity diagnostics need to be run prior to presenting the structural model results and findings from the hypothesis tests. The collinearity diagnostics for this study was run in IBM SPSS version 29. Mult-collinearity is assessed through the measurement of the tolerance of a variable as well as the variance inflation factor (VIF) (Saunders, et al., 2019). Tolerance measures the proportion of variability in an independent variable not explained by other variables (Hair, et al., 2017). Values should be 0.2 or higher to indicate low multicollinearity (Senaviratna & Cooray, 2019). The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), as the inverse of tolerance, should ideally be 5.0 or below to reflect minimal multicollinearity (Kyriazos & Poga, 2023). Table 5.13 reflects the results the multicollinearity diagnostics for the model's independent variables.

Acceptable collinearity results are computed for all independent variables in the model, (all tolerance values = > 0.2); all VIF values = < 5.0), demonstrating that there isn’t a high level of correlations between the independent variables in the model and that the testing of hypotheses may proceed.

Table 5.13: Collinearity diagnostics results

Predictor	Dependent variable	Collinearity Tolerance	VIF values
Brand Experience	Satisfaction	1.000	1.000
Satisfaction	Affective Brand Image	1.000	1.000
Affective Brand Image	Brand Related Attributions	1.000	1.000
	Brand Attachment	1.000	1.000
Affective Brand Image	Brand Loyalty	0.659	1.518
Brand Related Attributions		0.612	1.634
Brand Attachment		0.678	1.476

5.5 Hypotheses testing, findings and discussion

This section explores the results that have been achieved as a result of hypothesis testing using SEM. Figure 5.2 represents, the final, improved structural model for this study, that was used to conduct hypothesis testing. Table 5.14 contains the results for the path significance of each hypothesised relationship as shown in the structural model and also provides the data of the variance obtained per construct, reflected as (R^2).The t value, p value, regression weights (path estimates) (β) and regression paths are also provided in table 5.14, with the results explained in detail in the sections to follow.

Figure 5.2: Path diagram of structural model

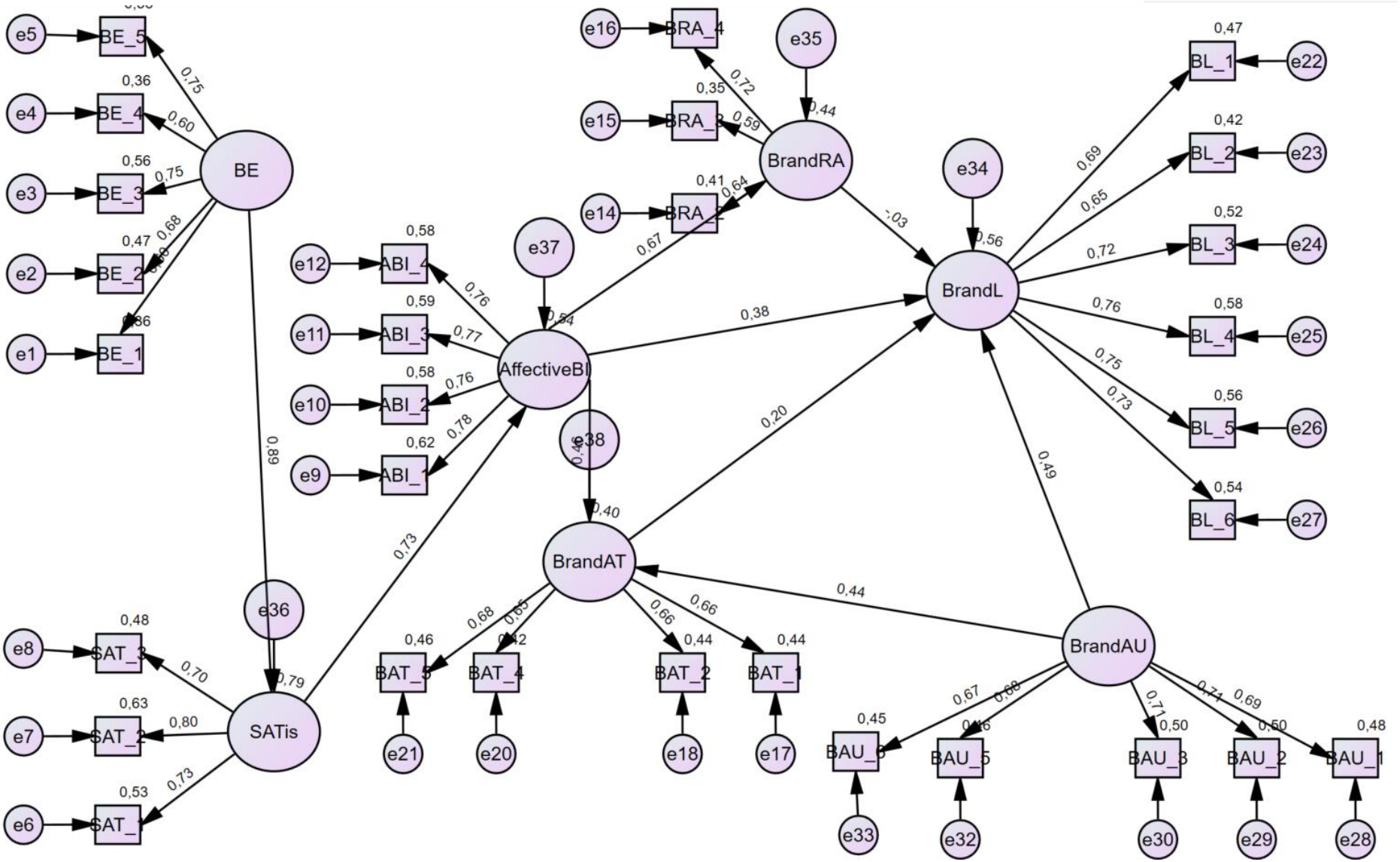


Table 5.14: Regression weights and hypothesised conclusions

Predictor	Path	Dependent variable	p-value	t-value	Path estimates (β)	Hypotheses	Variance explained (R2)
Brand Experience	→	Satisfaction	***	10.198	0.890	Accepted	0.79 (79%)
Satisfaction	→	Affective Brand Image	***	11.125	0.735	Accepted	0.54 (54%)
Affective Brand Image	→	Brand Related Attributions	***	8.585	0.665	Accepted	0.44 (44%)
Affective Brand Image	→	Brand Attachment	***	7.199	0.460	Accepted	0.40 (40%)
Affective Brand Image	→	Brand Loyalty	***	4.499	0.383	Accepted	0.56 (56%)
Brand Related Attributions	→	Brand Loyalty	0,677	-0.416	-0.032	Rejected	
Brand Attachment	→	Brand Loyalty	0.007	2.699	0.195	Accepted	

***** indicates that p < 0.001**

5.5.1 *Hypothesised relationships in the model*

This section discusses the results achieved of the hypotheses that has been tested. Of the hypotheses H_1 to H_7 presented, H_1, H_2, H_3, H_4 H_5 and H_7 were statistically significant while H_6 was not statistically significant. In terms of the moderation analysis, H_8 indicated no moderation effect, while H_9 was statistically significant, however indicating a negative moderating effect. Results are explained in detail in the sections to follow.

5.5.1.1 Effect of brand experience on satisfaction (H_1)

The hypothesis H_1 of this study theorized that Brand Experience has a positive influence on satisfaction. Results obtained for H_1 reflect that H_1 is accepted and as reflected in table 5.14, the results are ($\beta = 0.890$, $p < 0.001$) and this result is

highly statistically significant. The finding is therefore that Brand Experience has a positive influence on satisfaction.

Satisfaction as the dependant variable accounts for 79% of the variance explained by the independent variable of brand experience contained in model.

5.5.1.2 Effect of satisfaction on affective brand image (H_2)

The second hypothesis for this study (H_2), posits that satisfaction has a positive influence on Affective Brand Image. This hypothesis is accepted in terms of results obtained, and table 5.14 reflects that ($\beta = 0.735$, $p < 0.001$). The p value indicates that this result is highly statistically significant. The finding is therefore that satisfaction has a positive influence on affective brand image.

Affective brand image as the dependent variable accounts for 54% of variance explained by the independent variable of satisfaction contained in the model.

5.5.1.3 Effect of affective brand image on brand related attributions (H_3)

The third hypothesis (H_3) stipulates that affective brand image has a positive effect on brand related attributions. Results obtained reflect that the hypothesis for H_3 is accepted, and in accordance with table 5.14, the results state: ($\beta = 0.665$, $p < 0.001$) and is highly statistically significant. The finding is therefore that affective brand image has a positive effect on brand related attributions.

Brand related attributions as a dependent variable accounts for 44% of the variance explained by affective brand image as the independent variable contained in the model. This variance is documented as an indicator of the discrepancy between theory and the actual data obtained. A variance of 44% is acceptable as an R – squared value of between 0.10 and 0.50 in social science research when most explanatory variables are statistically significant (Ozili, 2023).

5.5.1.4 Effect of affective brand image on brand attachment (H_4)

The fourth hypothesis (H_4) posits that affective brand image has a positive influence on brand attachment. According to the results obtained and reflected in

table 5.14, H_4 is accepted ($\beta = 0.460$, $p < 0.001$), with the p value indicating a high statistical significance. This result indicates that affective brand image has a positive influence on brand attachment.

As a dependent variable, brand attachment has 40% of its variance explained by affective brand image as an independent variable which in accordance with Ozili (2023), is acceptable for social science research.

5.5.1.5 Effect of affective brand image, brand related attributions and brand attachment on brand loyalty (H_5, H_6 and H_7)

The fifth hypothesis (H_5) proposes that affective brand image has a positive influence on brand loyalty. The results presented in table 5.14 indicate that H_5 is accepted ($\beta = 0.383$, $p < 0.001$) – highly statistically significant. This result therefore concludes that affective brand image has a positive influence on brand loyalty.

For hypothesis H_6, it was stipulated that brand related attributions had a positive influence on brand loyalty. The results, as provided in table 5.14, rejects this hypothesis where: ($\beta = -0.032$, $p > 0.05$) and is therefore not a statistically significant result. The finding is that affective brand image does not have a positive influence on brand loyalty.

Hypothesis H_7 states that brand attachment has a positive influence on brand loyalty. According to the results recorded in table 5.14, this hypothesis is accepted ($\beta = 0.195$, $p < 0.05$) and results state this probability as statistically significant. This therefore means that brand attachment has a positive influence on brand loyalty.

Brand loyalty as a dependent variable, accounts for 56% of the variance explained by the independent variables of affective brand image, brand related attributions and brand attachment contained in the model. In terms of social science research, this result indicates an acceptable explanation of variance for latent variables tested using SEM (Hair, et al., 2017).

5.5.2 *Moderation analysis – brand authenticity as a moderation variable (H_8 and H_9)*

The investigation of brand authenticity as a moderating variable was conducted with a computational tool called PROCESS. This tool is a regression-based approach formulated by Hayes (2012).

The PROCESS tool was selected for this study because it is specifically designed to analyse moderation in complex models that include various combinations of regression analyses (Hayes, 2012). In this study, PROCESS is utilised to examine the moderating effect of brand authenticity on two variables— brand attachment and affective brand image — with the outcome intended to assess whether brand authenticity moderates their impact on brand loyalty. The findings from the moderation analysis are displayed in Tables 5.15 and 5.16. These tables include key values, such as the p-value indicating the interaction between X and M, the Lower Level Confidence Interval (LLCI), the Upper Level Confidence Interval (ULCI), and the R^2 value, which indicates whether the interaction increases or decreases the effect (Hayes, 2012). Significance is determined by the p-value ($p < 0.05$) and by checking if zero lies between the LLCI and ULCI, which would imply a 95% probability of no effect from the moderating variable (Kumar, et al., 2020). The final results are discussed in the sections to follow.

5.5.2.1 Moderation results: Moderating effect of brand authenticity on brand attachment and brand loyalty (H8)

The moderation effect is depicted as a graphical representation in figure 5.3. The regression equation that evaluates the hypotheses to prove or disprove moderation is the following:

$$Y = i1 + b1X + b2M + b3XM + e1$$

i = intercept; b (1,2, 3) = regression coefficients; X = independent variable (brand attachment); M = moderator (brand authenticity); Y = outcome/ dependent variable (brand loyalty) and e1 = standard error.

Figure 5.3: Graphical representation of the moderator effect for brand attachment and brand loyalty

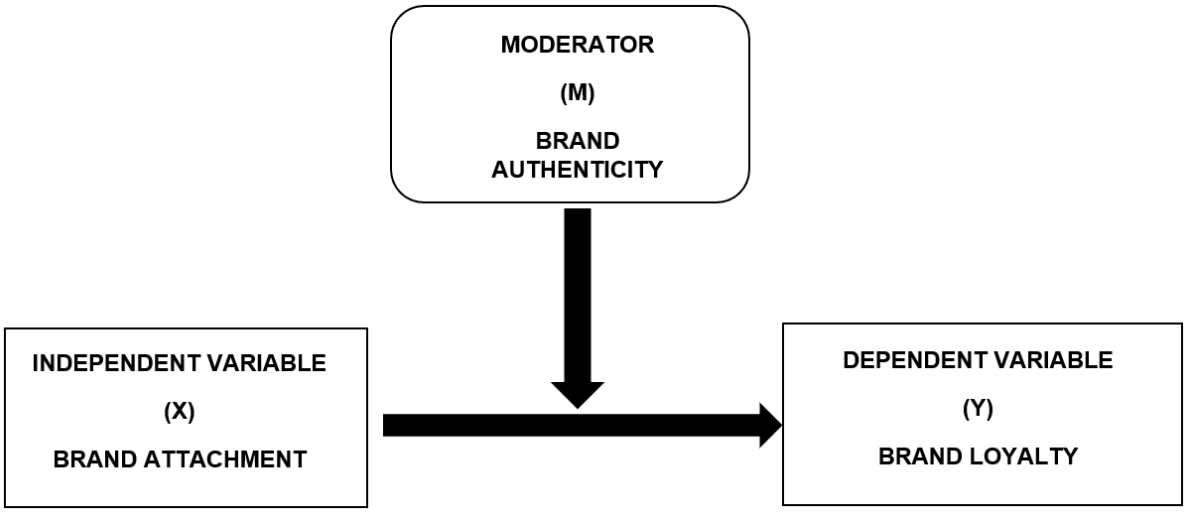


Table 5.15: Summary of moderation analysis: brand authenticity

MODEL						
	Coefficient	**SE**	**t-value**	**P - value**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
Constant	2.2134	0.7816	2.8319	0.0049	0.6765	3.7503
Brand Attachment	-0.0612	0.2072	-0.2953	0.7679	-0.4687	0.3463
BRAND AUTHENTICITY	0.1733	0.1981	0.8748	0.3822	-0.2162	0.5527
Interaction variable (X.M)	0.0819	0.0507	1.6146	0.1072	-0.0178	0.1817
R2 increase due to interaction:						
	R2-change	**F**	**Df1**	**Df2**	**P**	
Interaction variable (X.M)	0.0036	2.6069	1.0000	373.000	0.1072	

*LLCI – lower level of confidence interval; *ULCI – upper level of confidence interval

The hypothesis **H_8** stated that brand authenticity has a moderating effect on the influence between brand attachment and brand loyalty. The coefficient value of the interaction between brand attachment and brand authenticity (X.M) is 0.0819, the p value is 0.1072 > 0.05 and the t value is 1.6146. The p value is not statistically significant, indicating that the hypothesis is rejected. In addition to the p value, and additional indicator of statistical significance is the indicators

provided for the lower and upper-level confidence intervals (LLCI AND ULCI), and whether there is a zero value between the two intervals. LLCI = -0.0178 and ULCI = 0.1817, indicating that a zero (0) is present, and further confirming the results are not statistically significant. It can therefore be concluded that brand authenticity does not have a moderating effect on the influence of affective brand image and brand loyalty.

5.5.2.2 Moderation results: Moderating effect of brand authenticity on affective brand image and brand loyalty (H_9)

The graphical representation of the moderation effect is depicted in figure 5.4. The regression equation that tests the hypotheses to prove or disprove moderation is the following:

$$Y = i1 + b1X + b2M + b3XM + e1$$

i = intercept; b (1,2, 3) = regression coefficients; X = independent variable (affective brand image) M = moderator (brand authenticity); Y = outcome/ dependent variable (brand loyalty); and e1 = standard error.

Figure 5.4: Graphical representation of the moderator effect for affective brand image and brand loyalty

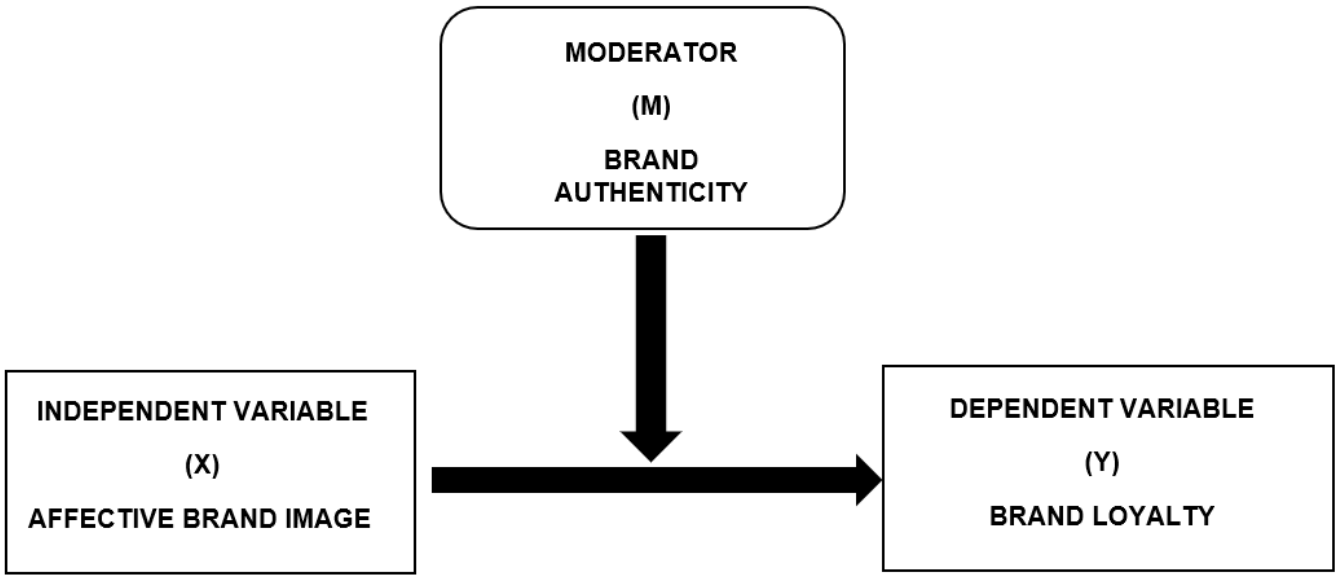


Table 5.16: Summary of moderation analysis - affective brand image

MODEL						
	Coefficient	**SE**	**t-value**	**P - value**	**LLCI**	**ULCI**
Constant	-0.8306	0.9113	-0.9284	0.3538	-2.6381	0.9459
Affective brand image	0.7156	0.2260	3.1665	0.0017	0.2712	1.1599
BRAND AUTHENTICITY	0.9519	0.2318	4.1058	0.0000	0.4960	1.4078
Interaction variable (X.M)	-0.1117	0.0560	-1.9955	0.0467	-0.2218	-0.0016
R2 increase due to interaction:						
	R2-change	**F**	**Df1**	**Df2**	**P**	
Interaction variable (X.M)	0.0055	3.9820	1.0000	374.000	0.0467	

*LLCI – lower level of confidence interval; *ULCI – upper level of confidence interval

In accordance with Hypothesis **H_9**, it was postulated that brand authenticity would have a moderating effect on the influence between affective brand image and brand loyalty. The coefficient value of the interaction between affective brand image and brand authenticity (X.M) is -0.1119, the p value is 0.0467 < 0.05 and the t value is -1.9955, these values indicate that the hypothesis is accepted, and results are statistically significant. In addition to this, additional confirmation that there is a moderating effect because of brand authenticity, is the LLCI = -0.2218 and ULCI = -0.0016, and there is no zero (0) contained between these two values (- 0.2218 < - 0.0016 < 0). The variance change explained is at 0.55% and this increase is statistically significant (p = 0.0467 < 0.05). The finding is therefore that the presence of brand authenticity decreases the influence that affective brand image has on brand loyalty.

5.6 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a presentation of the statistical analysis process conducted using IBM SPSS, AMOS 29 and PROCESS. This was done by presenting all analysed data and the associated interpretation required. The first section provided an overview of descriptive statistics, including demographic information for all respondents, followed by central tendency measures for each construct, such as mean and standard deviation scores. The second section examined the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument and constructs used in this study through confirmatory factor analysis. Results for reliability, construct validity, and model fit were satisfactory, allowing the creation and specification of the measurement model to test the study's hypotheses.

The structural model demonstrated satisfactory fit indices and multicollinearity results, after which path directions were established to test hypotheses. Out of nine (9) hypotheses, seven (7) were accepted, while hypotheses concerning brand related attributions influence on brand loyalty was rejected, as was the moderation impact of brand authenticity on brand attachment and brand loyalty. For affective brand image however, the outcomes showed that brand authenticity had a diminishing effect on the relationships between affective brand image and brand loyalty. In terms of variance explained, variance values ranged from between 40% and 79% across the different dependent variables and their explained variance on independent variables—indicating acceptable associations. The next section will cover interpretation and conclusions about the findings linked to the study's purpose and objectives, limitations, and recommendations based on this study's findings.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the research findings, incorporating relevant literature. The chapter commences with an analysis of the results of the hypotheses, followed by associating these findings to existing studies before concluding the chapter.

6.2 Main findings

This section provides outcome for each hypothesis tested in the study, and a summary of literature that support these findings. A summary of these findings is also outlined in table 6.1.

6.2.1 *H1: brand experience has a positive influence on satisfaction*

The findings for H1: brand experience has a positive influence on satisfaction is supported. This outcome is in alignment with an abundance of literature that has been covered on this topic.

In accordance with Orth, et al., (2012) who applied attribution theory to destination marketing - brand experience, or the experience of interacting with a brand, elicts an emotional memory that allows consumers to form an attachment with the experience. This attachment then affects a number of different reactions, one of them being satisfaction (Orth, et al., 2012). Further to this, brand experience has been posited to directly influence satisfaction (Hwang, et al., 2021) across different studies in various different industries, such as fashion apparel brands for Gen Z consumers in India (Joshi & Garg, 2021); the impact of airport service quality (Ma & Ma, 2022) and online user experience in the banking industry (Safeer & Le, 2023) in addition many others.

The findings of this study therefore supported a relationship that has been tested previously, and found to be in alignment with theory and the relationship between these constructs.

6.2.2 *H2: satisfaction has a positive influence on affective brand image*

The findings for hypothesis 2 was accepted and indicate a positive relationship between satisfaction and affective brand image. This study posited that satisfaction would have a positive influence on affective brand image. According to Armbrecht and Andersson (2020), satisfaction is a hedonic motivation in the sense that it has the ability to elicit feelings of enjoyment. The occurrence of that enjoyment and its ability to impact the affective brand image response of the target consumer to the brand is what was explored in this study. In a study conducted by Pina and Dias (2021), they found that because of the occurrence if products and services becoming similar, a key differentiating factor is the emotional connections that brands create, and as such the linkage to affective brand image. They further highlight the need for experiential marketing in enabling this response for potential customers (Pina & Dias, 2021). This is relevant because in the questions posed to respondents of this study, they were required to relfect on a community tourism interaction and context and thus requiring experiential aspects to be a determinant of their responses. The finding for this hypothesis was highly significant, and affirms the theory that was used, in addition to other studies that were explored in creating the hypothesis.

6.2.3 *H3: Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand related attributions*

The findings for H3 stated that affective brand image has a positive influence on brand related attributions. Affective brand image refers to the emotional responses and feelings consumers associate with a brand (Barreda, et al., 2020). These emotional connections play a crucial role in shaping how consumers perceive and attribute qualities to the brand, known as brand-related attributions (Pina & Dias, 2021). Numerous studies and marketing research have demonstrated that a positive affective brand image can significantly enhance these attributions. Some of these are: a study in India exploring the attributions of luxury brands and the self-attribution impact to affective brand image of these

brands (Jacob, et al., 2020); functional attributes of a brand and it's ability to elicit emotion and an affective brand image (Pina & Dias, 2021); from a hospitality perspective, the attributes of a hotel post COVID-19 and it's impact on brand image (Kim, et al., 2021) and from the food industry, the impact that restaurant attributes had on brand image and the resultant brand loyalty (Erkmen & Hancer, 2019).

6.2.4 *H4: Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand attachment*

For the fourth hypothesis, affective brand image had a positive influence on brand attachment, and the relationship was significant. Affective brand image is central to eliciting both attachment and brand loyalty responses as has been the case found in various studies (Cho & Hwang, 2020; Barreda, et al., 2020; Li, et al., 2020 and Orth, et al., 2012). The literature therefore consistently supports the outcome of this relationship as an affective brand image allows for stronger attachment to a brand that a consumer identifies with (Barreda, et al., 2020).

6.2.5 *H5: Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand loyalty*

The findings for H5 indicated that affective brand image has an influence on brand loyalty. Published data referencing this relationship outline an overwhelming amount of support of the notion that brand attachment has a positive influence on brand loyalty (Kegoro & Justus, 2020; Liu, et al., 2020 and Akoglu & Özbek, 2022). By fostering strong emotional bonds, brands can enhance customer retention, encourage repeat purchases, and cultivate advocates who drive long-term business success (Zhang, 2024). The outcome of this hypothesis was in alignment with previous studies and the relationship between these two constructs, and it was beneficial to then apply it to a study exploring a community tourism context in South Africa.

6.2.6 *H6: Brand related attributions has a positive influence on brand loyalty*

The findings for H6 indicate that a positive relationship does not exist between brand related attributions and brand loyalty.

The relationship between brand-related attributions and brand loyalty has been extensively studied in marketing and consumer behaviour research. Brand-related attributions refer to the attributes, associations, and perceptions that consumers hold about a brand, including its quality, reputation, values, and emotional connections (Javed, et al., 2024). These attributions play a crucial role in shaping consumer attitudes and behaviours, ultimately influencing brand loyalty (Min, et al., 2023). Despite the amount of literature that provide supporting evidence that a positive relationship exists between brand related attributions and brand loyalty, there are however studies that indicate that there is more complexity involved in this relationship. Song, et al. (2016) highlight that attributions did not directly affect brand loyalty in a study conducted for product failure and it's ability to impact loyalty, however they did highight that emotions such as anger, dissapointment and percieved control moderated the relationship that brand related attributions had on brand loyalty. This study, linked with the findings of the current research undertaken is therefore relevant as it highlights the perceptions that South African Gen Z and millennial cohorts have on the brand related attributions connected to community tourism in South Africa.

6.2.7 *H7: Brand attachment has a positive influence on brand loyalty*

The findings for H7 indicate that brand attachment has a positive influence of brand loyalty. Shimul, (2022) highlights that establishing brand attachment by building strong emotional connections with consumers enhances brand loyalty. This study similarly highlights that fostering a sense of connection, especially within community tourism, can encourage brand loyalty. The findings further confirm that creating an affective brand image supports brand attachment, which, individually and together, promotes brand loyalty. Consequently, community tourism has significant potential to attract brand loyalty from South African Millennials and Gen Z consumers.

6.2.8 *H8 and H9: Brand authenticity has a moderating effect on brand attachment and Brand authenticity has a moderating effect brand loyalty*

Brand authenticity has in previous studies conducted proved to be an element that created positive affective brand image or brand love. One such study, conducted in an Asian context focusing on millennials found that brand authenticity significantly impacted brand love, which then had a significant impact on behavioural outcomes (Safeer, et al., 2023). From a destination perspective, a study conducted on cultural heritage tourism found that brand trust mediates the impact of brand authenticity on brand loyalty (Chen & Lee, 2021). From this perspective, and as outlined in detail in Chapter 3, this variable was applied as a moderator variable linked to the existing attribution theory model applied to this study.

The outcomes for the study found that brand authenticity had no impact as a moderator variable on the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty, and that it negatively moderated the relationship between affective brand image and brand loyalty. Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016) notes that the ability for authentic brands to evoke an emotional response and attachment to a product or experience is dependent on contextual or situational and individual circumstances. The relevance of this paper is that it provides a lens into when and for whom authenticity becomes a deciding factor to impact brand loyalty (Guèvremont & Grohmann, 2016). The historical context of South Africa has meant that social disparities and poverty still exists within community contexts (Mary, 2020) in 2024. When applying the demographic profile of respondents, outlined in detail in Chapter 5, table 5.1, it demonstrates that approximately 60% of respondents fall within a Gen Z cohort age group, and that 64% of respondents fall within a low and emerging middle-income band. Brand authenticity also creates two distinct approaches: an objective approach that allows consumers to assess authenticity based on facts, and a subjective approach based on interpretation and prior knowledge (Safeer, et al., 2021). This context is relevant in explaining the significant moderation impact that brand authenticity has on the relationship between affective brand image and brand loyalty as a finding in this

study. This essentially means that the presence of brand authenticity negatively moderates the affective brand image that community tourism presents in creating brand loyalty for community tourism experiences. The prevalence of consumers as respondents who have innate knowledge of the communities within the landscape that this research covers, allows for subjective interpretation of what brand authenticity represents.

Based on this, it can therefore be deduced that a brand authenticity contextual perception of these environments, for a youth cohort that currently experience this, would negatively impact the relationship between affective brand image and brand loyalty. This is a unique perspective for South Africa because of the cohort chosen, the demographic circumstances and the community context that currently exists.

Table 6.1: Summary of hypotheses results

	HYPOTHESIS	RESULTS
H1	Brand experience has a positive influence on satisfaction	Accepted***
H2	Satisfaction has a positive influence on affective brand image	Accepted***
H3	Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand related attributions	Accepted***
H4	Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand attachment	Accepted***
H5	Affective brand image has a positive influence on brand loyalty	Accepted***
H6	Brand related attributions has a positive influence on brand loyalty	Rejected
H7	Brand attachment has a positive influence on brand loyalty	Accepted*
H8	Brand authenticity has a moderating effect on brand attachment and brand loyalty	Rejected
H9	Brand authenticity has a moderating effect on affective brand image and brand loyalty	Accepted*

6.3 Chapter summary

Overall, the findings affirm several positive relationships between brand experience, satisfaction, affective brand image, brand-related attributions, brand attachment, and brand loyalty. However, the study also uncovers nuanced dynamics regarding brand-related attributions and the moderating role of brand authenticity, especially within the specific socio-economic and cultural landscape of South Africa. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of consumer behaviour in community tourism and highlight the importance of emotional and authentic brand strategies in fostering brand loyalty among Gen Z and millennial consumers. Recommendations and additional insights regarding these findings are explored in the concluding chapter of this research.

CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this research was to interrogate how community tourism would contribute to being a value-based lever for destinations and applied to a South African destination marketing context. In determining this, hypotheses were proposed in accordance with attribution theory applied to a destination and place marketing framework, using existing theory and empirical objectives to investigate the aspects related to community tourism that would lead to brand loyalty among a South African millennial and Gen Z cohort. The hypotheses that were tested and findings thereof were presented in chapter five. The aim of this chapter is to recap on the aim and objectives of this study, before discussing the implications of the findings and in so doing provide recommendations and conclusions based on these findings. Further to this, this chapter also aims to highlight the theoretical and practical contributions of this study. Finally, the chapter ends with outlining limitations and possible directions for future research, before delivering concluding remarks.

7.2 Overview of study

This section provides a recapitulation of the problem statement and objectives of this study, in addition to a summary of what each chapter of this research has covered.

7.2.1 *Overview of research problem*

In 2019, ahead of the COVID19 pandemic, tourism was recorded as the third largest foreign revenue generating sector globally, in terms of exports (Van der Schyff, et al., 2019). In 2023, as tourism continued to recover from COVID19 lockdowns, global tourism for international travel recorded 4% less than 2019 (UN Tourism, 2024), with a steady increase in the trajectory for 2024. International tourism arrivals are depicted as a pivotal indicator for tourism demand, according

to the UN Tourism, (2016). Tourism has historically represented 10% of global GDP and employment and has the potential to be a key contributor to community development and prosperity globally (World Economic Forum, 2024). For South Africa, categorised as a developing country, tourism is positioned as a tool for economic growth and poverty alleviation (Meyer & Meyer, 2015). Community Tourism specifically, is increasingly being amplified as a preferred tourism development approach as it creates inclusivity and community level empowerment for locals based in these communities (Dolezal & Novelli, 2022). In highlighting this, the community tourism value proposition not only creates opportunities for poverty alleviation and economic growth, but also allows for immersive interaction with locals in these communities for travellers (Roque, 2022). In a study conducted by Seattle based company Remitley, South Africa was ranked as the friendliest nation in the world, out of a sample of three thousand (3000) respondents (Getaway, 2024). In accordance with Porter's competitive advantage theory (2008), this is achieved through an appeal that is superior to competitors (Lesmana & Sugiarto, 2021) and thus creates an opportunity through locals to create a unique value proposition for tourism. It is from this context, that the case for South Africa and community tourism has been developed, to investigate how community tourism can create a value-based lever in creating a competitive advantage and economic growth opportunity pertaining to attracting travellers domestically and globally to community tourism experiences. Consumer preferences from a millennial and Gen Z cohort perspective for travelling is sparsely covered in academic literature, especially in relation to the opportunity for community tourism. The value-based levers that this study therefore aimed to investigate was from an economic development, international and domestic travel opportunity and sustainable competitive advantage opportunity perspective, while exploring the South African traveller's preference in relation to community tourism.

7.2.2 *Overview of the objectives of the study*

This section provides an overview of the theoretical, empirical and managerial objectives of this study.

6.2.2.1 Primary objectives (theoretical and empirical)

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the potential for Community Tourism to be a value-based lever for destination marketing in South Africa. This was investigated to ascertain the impact that locals in community-based tourism settings and experiences would have on South African millennial and Gen Z travellers, and their loyalty toward a destination because of it. In theoretically structuring this objective, attribution theory was applied to a destination and place marketing context, to succinctly test key variables in this theory, and their ability to impact loyalty of a destination brand. Based on this, a summary of the empirical objectives were as follows:

- Investigate whether brand experience has a positive influence on satisfaction (H_1)
- Investigate whether satisfaction has a positive influence on affective brand image (H_2)
- Investigate whether affective brand image has a positive influence on brand related attributions (H_3) and brand attachment (H_4)
- Investigate whether affective brand image, brand related attributions and brand attachment have a positive influence on brand loyalty (H_5, H_6 and H_7)
- Investigate whether brand authenticity has a moderating effect on the relationship between brand attachment and brand loyalty (H_8) and between affective brand image and brand loyalty (H_9)

6.2.2.2 Managerial objectives

The secondary objectives for this research study, in line with the problem statement outlined, was to apply the findings from the theoretical and empirical objectives to:

- Establish whether community tourism could be a value-based lever to be amplified for destination marketing in South Africa
- Ascertain how community tourism can be used and positioned to create a sustainable competitive advantage proposition for destination and place marketing organisations

- Discover the perspectives of millennial and Gen Z consumers on community tourism and if it would impact their loyalty to a brand
- Propose actionable marketing strategies for destination and place brands based on the outcomes of the research
- Provide recommendations on the positioning of community tourism experiences for tourism businesses based on the outcomes of the target group perceptions

7.3 Main findings of the study and conclusions drawn

This section outlines key findings and conclusions for the research conducted to answer to the research objectives that were formulated.

7.3.1 *Findings for the influence of brand experience on satisfaction (H_1)*

In accordance with research findings outlined in Chapter 5, brand experience was found to have a positive impact on satisfaction. There has been an abundance of literature theoretically testing this relationship and this outcome is not different from those that have been documented. In applying this outcome to destination marketing, in a notable study conducted by Chen, et al., (2020) focussed on tourism as an aspect of the experience economy. The study particularly investigates night tourism in South Korea, where there is a noting of a general trend in consumption from services to emotional and sensory or perceptual experiences. (Chen, et al., 2020). This is in alignment with brand experience elements as listed in the construct for brand experience pertaining to community tourism having a significant impact on satisfaction about experiences within a community tourism context.

7.3.2 *Findings for the influence of satisfaction on affective brand image (H_2)*

An affective brand image by definition is a construct that elicits positive emotion linked to perception (Dam, 2020) about a brand, and in the case of this study, and tourism experience in relation to community tourism. The hypothesis finding

for this study relating to this construct, was that satisfaction has a significantly positive influence on affective brand image, meaning that the brand experience elements (H_1) that significantly impacted satisfaction, then also indirectly positively influenced the satisfaction levels that would impact affective brand image. In a study conducted by (Rather, et al., 2021), they focus on affective brand commitment and its impact as an antecedent to brand loyalty from the context of India as a developing country, as is the case with South Africa. The findings revealed that customer satisfaction is a catalyst in driving affective brand commitment and that the prevalence in driving customers to participate in brand related activities can positively influence their affective commitment and image toward the brand.

7.3.3 *Findings for the influence of affective brand image on brand related attributions and brand attachment (H_3 and H_4)*

The third and fourth hypotheses focused on affective brand image as an antecedent for both brand related attributions as well as brand attachment, for community tourism among South African millennials and Gen Z consumers. The results for both these hypotheses were significantly positively related. Brand related attributions are both emotional and functional elements of a brand that, ultimately creating a brand personality (Jacob, et al., 2020). An existing affective brand image has then been found in previous studies to positively impact brand attributions that may be either positive or negative attributes, as the affective brand image already existed. One such study, focused on Kashmir, and Asian destination brand, outlined the prevalence of affective brand image and its ability for brand forgiveness because of negative experiences (Sahaf & Fazili, 2024). This is significant because as highlighted for this study, South Africa has several safety perception barriers, forming part of the brand related attributions context, and the building of an affective brand image in the mind of the consumer can negate the negative effect, in accordance with this finding.

For affective brand image and brand attachment, the literature consistently supports the outcome of this relationship as an affective brand image allows for stronger attachment to a brand that a consumer identifies with (Barreda, et al.,

2020). It is notable that in terms of this study, creating an affective brand image through the locals in a community tourism context would significantly impact brand attachment.

7.3.4 *Findings for the influence of affective brand image, brand related attributions and brand attachment on brand loyalty (H_5, H_6 and H_7)*

Brand loyalty was the main outcome variable selected for this study, as brand loyalty has been posited as a key variable in creating higher growth and market share gains, higher purchase and re-purchase intentions and less sensitivity to price (Rather, et al., 2021). The antecedents of affective brand image, brand related attributions and brand attachment were selected for testing for this study, due to previous positive associations with these constructs. For purposes of this study, both affective brand image and brand attachment significantly positively influenced brand loyalty for community tourism. Shimul (2022) states that brand attachment impacts brand loyalty as a result of building a strong emotional connection with consumers. The prevalence of human connection through a local in a community tourism context, in accordance with outcomes of this study, therefore has the ability to do the same. The outcomes from this study further validate that the creation of an affective brand image, allowing for opportunities to create brand attachment would therefore both combined and individually create the opportunity for brand loyalty creation, and community tourism as a product proposition therefore has the propensity to create this among South African millennial and Gen Z consumers.

The hypothesis for brand related attributions positively impacting brand loyalty was however rejected, meaning that for this study, brand related attributions is not an antecedent of brand loyalty. Brand related attributions are judgements based on either positive or negative perceptions based on innate observations and knowledge that consumers have of a brand (Alamrawy, et al., 2023). In similar studies conducted, the impact of brand related attributions on brand loyalty was dependent on the strength that respondents had with the associations (Santoro, et al., 2020). In the instance of this study the perceived negative and positive attributions about community tourism to South African consumers proved

to not be an aspect to impact brand loyalty, and this could be a context of negative attributes relating to South Africa, that the target respondents have then attributed to other destinations as well. This context is prevalent in a developing country context, due to higher crime rates and other negative perceptions impacting attributes about the brand (Yasin, et al., 2019). This context is an important consideration for practical recommendations for destinations, to be covered in the recommendations section to follow.

7.3.5 *Findings for the moderating role of brand authenticity (H_8 and H_9)*

Studies suggest that brand authenticity plays a key role in developing positive brand image and brand love, which influence consumer behaviour. Safeer et al. (2023) found that among Asian millennials, brand authenticity significantly boosted brand love, leading to positive behavioural outcomes. Similarly, research on cultural heritage tourism by Chen and Lee (2021) highlighted that brand trust mediates the effect of authenticity on loyalty. Based on this perspective, brand authenticity was integrated into the attribution theory model in this study as a moderator to examine its impact on brand attachment and loyalty.

However, the findings indicated that brand authenticity had no effect on the brand attachment-loyalty relationship and even negatively moderated the link between affective brand image and brand loyalty in community tourism. Guèvremont and Grohmann (2016) suggest that the ability of authentic brands to evoke emotional responses is highly contextual, depending on specific situations and individual perceptions. This study underscores that authenticity's influence on loyalty can vary significantly depending on factors such as context, consumer demographics, and prior community ties.

The results are particularly relevant in the South African context, where a significant portion of Gen Z respondents comes from low to middle-income backgrounds and possess local community knowledge. This background may shape their interpretation of authenticity, potentially reducing brand loyalty in the community tourism sector. Thus, for South African youth, the contextual perception of authenticity within their environments may undermine the positive effects of an affective brand image on loyalty in community-based tourism.

7.4 Recommendations

Following the findings and insights drawn from each of the hypotheses explained in previous sections, this section aims to provide recommendations that align with the hypothesis findings, based on the research study outcomes.

7.4.1 *Recommendations based on findings for H_1, H_2, H_3 and H_4: the influences of brand experience, satisfaction, affective brand image, brand related attributions and brand attachment*

The elements outlined in the conceptual model reflected the impacts of brand experience, satisfaction, affective brand image, brand related attributions and brand attachment and the resultant influences that these variables had on each other as reflected in detail in Chapter 3, with outcomes provided in Chapter 5 and an explanation of findings provided in section 6.3. All the relationships yielded significantly positive results and provides insight into elements that need to be applied to a destination marketing, business and educational context for community tourism in South Africa.

From a destination marketing aspect, experiences brought to life through personalities in community tourism environments should be strongly encouraged and used as a lever to create a stronger value proposition. The amplification of these experiences not only creates satisfaction among the target audience, but also has the propensity to create a positive or affective brand image and attachment to the place brand or experience. Further to this is that brand related attributions, which can be both positive or negative attributions, also allow for attachment to the brand to be realised, indicating that the amplification of positive brand attributes should be communicated at the forefront when marketing community tourism experiences.

From a business and educational aspect, an opportunity exists to create entrepreneurship workshops in outlining the business opportunities of community tourism and employment opportunities for communities to utilize their environments they must create an impact where they are. Community collaboration opportunities can be highlighted and leveraged from a geographical

and service delivery perspective, to ultimately impact the sustainability and profitability of community tourism initiatives. Entrepreneurship with a focus on tourism specifically could be explored in the academic space to enable and equip the youth that come from these communities to explore and expand on business opportunities that relate to community tourism.

7.4.2 *Recommendations based on findings from H_5, H_6 and H_7: the influence of affective brand image, brand related attributions and brand attachment on brand loyalty*

Brand loyalty as the outcome variable was selected due to the propensity for loyalty to impact purchase and re-purchase intention. The recommendations pertaining to brand loyalty, extend to creating long term affiliation with the destination brand, in the form of brand equity. Brand equity can be described as a multilayered concept that encompasses brand loyalty, brand recognition, brand connection, perceived excellence, brand image, and branded or commercial resources. (Kegoro & Justus, 2020). The prevalence of brand equity will also assist in the removal of barriers outlined in the research problem, brought about by safety perceptions and consumers finding other destinations more appealing. From a marketing perspective, the highlighting of emotional connections that are enabled through community tourism are also key strategies to be able to unlock to ensure that brand attachment gets created.

7.4.3 *Recommendations based on findings from H_8 and H_9: the moderating effect of brand authenticity*

To remedy the negatively moderated impact of brand authenticity on affective brand image and brand loyalty and recognising the context of the South African cohort that was studied for this research, a brand ambassador program is recommended. The program should highlight the benefits of tourism and community led change in different areas, and as such, create an awareness of the benefits of authentic brands and how it attracts others to want to learn about, connect and interact with a brand. Another element of brand authenticity is an amplification of culture, food and heritage, and this kind of amplification also

allows for locals to participate in having control over what authenticity in community tourism would mean. An education drive about these opportunities would be beneficial if led by the government, as it would then open different avenues of employment and a way for communities to have control over what authenticity as place brand would be represented as.

7.5 Contributions of the study

The objectives of this study aimed to contribute to the body of literature for both theoretical and practical areas within the strategy and destination marketing realms of academia and business. In highlighting this and reviewing the findings and conclusions drawn, this section will outline both the theoretical and practical contributions of this study.

7.5.1 *Theoretical contributions*

From a theoretical perspective, this study has firstly contributed to the understanding of South African millennials and Gen Z consumers, and the antecedents that would lead them to adopting brand loyalty for community tourism to explore value-based levers for community tourism in South Africa. This contribution therefore also provides a perspective on this topic from a developing country.

The second contribution that this study makes pertains to the use of attribution theory for place and destination marketing. While it was adapted from an existing model, the incorporation of brand authenticity as a moderator variable has contributed to the body of knowledge of brand authenticity for community tourism within a South African context, especially as the findings are different to what other findings have been in different geographies.

In outlining the third contribution that this study makes, the explanatory power of brand attachment, it’s antecedents and its ultimate impact on brand loyalty in a South African context is a key contribution in terms of the use of variables as it further validates the efficacy of these variables in explaining brand loyalty.

As a fourth theoretical contribution, the importance of affective brand image as a construct in contributing to brand loyalty has been validated throughout all the findings of this study, however it's importance as a stand-alone variable has also been validated. The findings reflected that the presence of an affective brand image would have a positive influence on brand related attributions, even though the brand related attributions would not have an impact on brand loyalty in a South African context.

Finally, this study also highlights that there is a need for additional research required on community tourism in South Africa, specifically highlighting areas of brand experience, brand related attributions and brand authenticity, as three variables that are not included in destination and place marketing contexts regularly.

7.5.2 *Practical contributions*

From a practical contribution's perspective, this study contributes to strategic perspectives that destination and place marketers can consider when trying to create a sustainable competitive advantage versus other destinations, and amplifying value-based levers for community tourism.

The second practical contribution that should be highlighted is that both market share and market growth gains are important in growing tourism to a destination, and creating maturity as a brand lends support in these areas (Rather, et al., 2021). In stating this, this study has contributed to how community tourism can contribute to bringing market growth to sectors of the tourism value chain that are not as conventional or mainstream as other tourist attractions. It also provides clear insights on the elements that need to be leveraged, and how the variables should be operationalised and applied to practical areas.

The third practical contribution made is in the area of millennial and Gen Z travel behaviour. The prevalence of brand loyalty being achieved in an area like community tourism indicates that investment from local travellers is possible for this area of tourism, and this will assist managers to make decisions about how to target these consumers for community tourism purposes.

Brand related attributions provides a complex layer for consideration when applying it practically to community tourism, and the contribution it brings is how managers would manage, message and create favourable brand related attributions when crafting community tourism experiences, since these attributions become a supporting environment for the experience to be successful.

Finally, the South African contextual layer that outlined the brand authenticity story and how it was negatively moderating factor contributed tremendous insight to brand authenticity perceptions for South African consumers in community tourism and how this should be navigated to create buy in from locals when creating a community tourism value proposition as a lever for tourism growth.

7.6 Limitations and future research

This section will provide a summary of both the limitations of this study as well as possible directions for future research.

7.6.1 *Limitations of this study*

This study was able to provide important findings for both theoretical and managerial/ practical outcomes, however some limitations were presented and could be considered for future research. The limitations were as follows:

- Only a South African cohort was accessed, and therefore perceptions from the study was solely from a South African perspective and not an international traveller perspective.
- The study focused on brand authenticity as a moderating variable but not an independent variable, so the impact that brand authenticity would have on brand loyalty or brand image was not explored
- The sampling technique only focused on Gen Z and millennials consumers in Johannesburg and not everywhere in South Africa, and this limited the segments that contributed to the outcomes
- The respondents, even though they covered Gen Z and millennial consumers, were skewed to Gen Z consumers as opposed to a more

equal split, which may have indicated a bias toward Gen Z perception responses

7.6.2 *Directions for future research*

The outcomes of this study were predominantly aligned with existing theoretical relationships, despite contextual realities that impacted two of the findings. Based on these impacts, as well as the limitations of the study, directions for future research are as follows:

- Tourists that are outside of the country where community tourism perceptions are being tested, that are not affected by the negative realities that brand authenticity creates may yield different results. As such, the exploration of cohorts in other countries, both developing and developed countries would be beneficial as a future direction to take
- Incorporation of brand authenticity as an independent variable and not just a moderator variable
- Incorporation of brand trust as a moderator and how this would impact brand related attributions and the relationship with brand loyalty
- Incorporation of brand reputation as a mediator for the relationship between brand related attributions and brand loyalty (Kim & Cho, 2014)
- Inclusion of attachment theory and brand forgiveness (Shimul, 2022); as antecedents to brand loyalty
- Enable a more equal split between Gen Z and millennial cohorts
- Conduct the study in different geographical areas in South Africa in addition to Johannesburg

7.7 Concluding remarks

This study set out to investigate how community tourism can serve as a value-based lever for destination marketing in South Africa, focusing on its influence on brand loyalty among Millennials and Gen Z travellers. By applying attribution theory within a destination and place marketing framework, several hypotheses were tested to explore the relationships between key constructs such as brand

experience, satisfaction, affective brand image, brand-related attributions, brand attachment, and brand loyalty. The findings for the most part revealed outcomes that is aligned to previous studies and literature on brand loyalty models and antecedents and underscored the role of engaging tourism experiences in fostering traveller contentment. The inclusion of affective brand image and brand attachment linked with satisfaction highlighted that emotional bonds encourage repeat visits and advocacy. *Brand-Related Attributions, however,* did not significantly impact *Brand Loyalty*, and *Brand Authenticity* negatively moderated the link between affective brand image and loyalty, indicating complexities in how authenticity is perceived by local travellers. These outcomes underscore the critical role of emotional and experiential factors in building brand loyalty within the community tourism context. The study contributes theoretically by expanding the application of attribution theory in destination marketing and highlighting the nuanced role of brand authenticity among South African millennial and Gen Z consumers.

Practically, the research offers valuable insights for destination marketers and tourism businesses. Marketing strategies should focus on creating and promoting positive affective brand images to foster brand attachment and loyalty. In stating this, addressing negative brand-related attributions and perceptions of authenticity is crucial, possibly through community engagement and brand ambassador programs. Limitations of the study include its focus on a specific demographic within Johannesburg, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Future research directions suggest exploring diverse cohorts, incorporating international travellers, and examining additional variables such as brand trust and reputation. In conclusion, this study highlights the potential of community tourism to drive destination marketing success in South Africa by fostering strong emotional bonds and loyalty among young travellers. By leveraging these insights, stakeholders can enhance competitive advantage, contribute to economic growth, and promote sustainable community development within the tourism sector.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics clearance certificate

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BA585934/870

This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below)
This certificate is only valid if permission has been granted by the Registrar's Office of Wits University.
This certificate is only valid if accompanied by formal permission from the relevant stakeholder(s).

Project title	Community tourism organisations as value-based levers for destination marketing in South Africa
Investigator / Researcher	Mrs Abby Jacobs
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	2023/10/13
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Pius Oba ☎ +27 11 717 3976 +27 82 733 6587 ✉ pius.oba@wits.ac.za

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Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

13 October 2023
Date:

Appendix B: Consent form and questionnaire

Dear Sir/Madam

You are invited to participate, by completing this questionnaire, in a study being conducted to understandwhether community based tourism businesses are perceived as adding value to a tourists' experience andperception of a destination.

Further details of the study are provided below.

Research title	**Community tourism organisations as a value-based lever for destination marketing in South Africa**
Researcher Team	Researcher: Abby Jacobs Abbyswartz07@gmail.com Research supervisor: Dr Nakuze Chalomba nakuze.chalomba@wits.ac.za
Purpose	This study will explore whether community based tourism businesses are perceived as adding value to a tourists' experience and perception of a destination.
Procedure	For this study, you will be required to participate in a survey by completing a paper-based questionnaire which will take 10 - 15 minutes to complete.
Risk of participation	There are no known risks associated with this research project
Benefits	Your participation will contribute to findings that will add to the academic body of knowledge through the compilation of dissertation and journal articles.
Participation right	Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this research study at any time without any reprisal and or penalty
Contacts	Should you have any questions or concerns regarding completing this questionnaire, you may contact the researcher or research supervisor and the contact details have been provided above.

Consent Form

Community tourism organisations as a value-based lever for destination marketing in South Africa

This survey is designed to obtain feedback from respondents regarding community based tourism businesses as brand ambassadors and whether they add value to a tourists' experience and perception of a destination. To participate in this study, you should be between the ages of 18 and 43 years old. The results from this study will be used for academic purposes and could potentially inform strategies in a destination marketing context that contribute to competitive advantage over time. This survey forms part of the requirements that need to be fulfilled for the researchers' Master of Business Administration degree at Wits Business School.

Please note the following:

- Participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time, without any negative consequences.
- Your response will remain anonymous and confidential and will not be linked to any identifiable information. Please do not provide your name or personal details on any part of the questionnaire
- By completing this questionnaire, you agree that your responses can be used in the study. No names or identifying details are to be provided. The demographic section of the questionnaire is to assist with categorising results.
- There are no risks involved in participating, and you will not be disadvantaged in any way for choosing to participate.
- Furthermore, only the researchers and the research supervisor will have access to the password-protected data retrieved from the online questionnaires.
- The dataset may be used for future research, in which the same confidentiality and anonymity will be upheld.
- The results will be used in the publication in the researcher's thesis as well as journal publications and or / conference presentations.

The questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes of your time. Your participation is much appreciated. Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Should you have further questions relating to this study, please feel free to contact: the researcher - Abby Jacobs abbyswartz07@gmail.com or the research supervisor: Dr Nakuze Chalomba - nakuze.chalomba@wits.ac.za

I agree to participate in this study and my responses may be used for the study. ☐

A. **Demographic details** (tick the appropriate box)

A1 Please indicate your gender:

Male	
Female	
Prefer not to say	

A2 Please indicate your current age:

18 – 25 years of age	
25 – 43 years of age	

A3 Have you travelled internationally or regionally before (outside the borders of South Africa for work or leisure purposes):

Yes	
No	

A4 Have you travelled domestically (in and around South Africa for work or leisure purposes):

Yes	
No	

A3 Please indicate what your highest level of education is?

I completed up to high school/matric	
I have a diploma	
I have an undergraduate degree	
I have an Honours/ professional degree	
I have a Master's degree and above	

A4 Which social class would you categorise yourself as?

Working class	
Middle class	
Upper middle class	
Elite	

B. Satisfaction

	This question pertains to the impact that a story telling local and business owner has on the overall tourism experience when travelling. Please choose a number between 1 and 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
SAT1	Interacting with friendly locals contributed to feeling satisfied about my travel experience	1	2	3	4	5
SAT2	Interacting with friendly locals contributed to having a pleasant travel experience and to feel pleasure	1	2	3	4	5
SAT3	Interacting with locals allows me to experience something new when travelling	1	2	3	4	5

C. Brand experience

	This question pertains to a friendly and amicable encounter with a local in a destination or attraction that you have travelled to. The local can either be a tour guide/ service provider or a stranger that you had interacted with. The question requires you to reflect on the impact that the local had on the overall tourism experience you had when travelling. Please choose a number between 1 and 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
BE1	Interacting with locals impacted me having a once in a lifetime experience when travelling	1	2	3	4	5
BE2	Interacting with locals allows me to experience my trip differently from other trips when travelling	1	2	3	4	5
BE3	Interacting with locals allows me to experience something new when travelling	1	2	3	4	5
BE4	Interacting with locals allows makes my travel experience better and more fulfilling than if I did not interact with locals	1	2	3	4	5
BE5	Interacting with locals allows me to grow and learn new things through my travel experience	1	2	3	4	5

D. Affective brand image

	This question pertains to interaction with friendly locals (either supporting/ accompanying you on your trip, or getting to engage with a helpful local by chance encounter). Please choose a number between 1 and 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
ABI1	The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel impacts the way I feel about a destination or attraction in a positive way	1	2	3	4	5
ABI2	The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel excited about a destination or attraction	1	2	3	4	5
ABI3	The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel energized about a destination or attraction	1	2	3	4	5
ABI4	The interaction with locals in the form of a tour guide or an engaging person when I travel makes me feel relaxed about a destination or attraction	1	2	3	4	5

E. Brand related attributions

	This question pertains to personality attributes that you will associate with a destination or attraction. Please choose a number between 1 and 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
BRA1	Emotional connections experienced with locals at an attraction/ destination contributes to positive attributes I associate with an attraction/ destination	1	2	3	4	5
BRA2	A destination or attractions attractiveness in terms of experiences is amplified (either negatively or positively) by the people that I get to interact with at the destination or experience	1	2	3	4	5
BRA3	A destination or attraction's attractiveness in terms of its alignment with my own values is strongly influenced by the people that I get to interact with at the destination or experience	1	2	3	4	5
BRA4	My own feelings of enjoyment and happiness experienced with locals at an attraction/ destination contributes to positive attributes I associate with an attraction/ destination	1	2	3	4	5

F. Brand attachment

	This question pertains to a friendly and amicable encounter with a local in a destination or attraction that you have travelled to. The local can either be a tour guide/ service provider or a stranger that you had interacted with. The question requires you to reflect on the impact that the local had on the overall attachment you felt towards the destination or attraction as a result of the interaction. Please choose a number between 1 and 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree	Very negative impact on my attachment to the destination	Negative impact on my attachment to the destination	No attachment at all – did not impact the outcome of my visit	Positive impact on my attachment to the destination	Very positive impact on my attachment to the destination
BAT1	I felt a strong sense of attachment to a destination/ attraction as a result of interacting with a friendly local during my visit	1	2	3	4	5
BAT2	I felt/ would feel a strong emotional connection to a destination/ attraction as a result of interaction with a friendly local	1	2	3	4	5
BAT3	Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that impacts whether I would take an insult made about the destination or attraction personally	1	2	3	4	5
BAT4	Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that impacts whether the destination or attraction aligns to my own values and principles	1	2	3	4	5
BAT5	Interacting with a friendly local during my visit would be an important factor that allows me to reflect my own lifestyle and value set	1	2	3	4	5

G. Brand loyalty

	This question pertains to a friendly and amicable encounter with a local in a destination or attraction that you have travelled to. The local can either be a tour guide/ service provider or a stranger that you had interacted with. The question requires you to reflect on the level of loyalty you felt towards the destination or attraction as a result of the encounter. Please choose a number between 1 and 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
BL1	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me want to go the extra mile to visit the destination or attraction in the future	1	2	3	4	5
BL2	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me highly recommend the destination or attraction to my relatives or to my friends	1	2	3	4	5
BL3	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me definitely want to visit again in future	1	2	3	4	5
BL4	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me have a strong preference for the destination/ attraction	1	2	3	4	5
BL5	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me actively search for deals and opportunities to visit the destination/ attraction	1	2	3	4	5
BL6	The impact of interacting with a friendly local at a destination or attraction would be an important factor that makes me/ would make me find the destination/attraction reliable and credible	1	2	3	4	5

H. Brand authenticity

	This question pertains to a friendly and amicable encounter with a local in a destination or attraction that you have travelled to. The local can either be a tour guide/ service provider or a stranger that you had interacted with. The question requires you to consider whether this interaction contributed towards your perception of authenticity about the destination as a result of this interaction. Please choose a number between 1 and 5 where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
BAU1	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception of its value promise	1	2	3	4	5
BAU2	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception whether it cares about consumers	1	2	3	4	5
BAU3	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception whether its offering is timeless	1	2	3	4	5
BAU4	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether the destination has a history or story of meaning	1	2	3	4	5
BAU5	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether it is a destination or attraction aligned with my values and principles	1	2	3	4	5
BAU6	The interaction with friendly locals at a destination or attraction would impact my perception on whether it is a destination or attraction that adds meaning to the lives of people who live there and who visit there	1	2	3	4	5