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**FINAL OVERAL REPORT:  
DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT THROUGH  
UNDERSTANDING TOURISTS'  
EXPECTATIONS AND MEMORABLE  
TOURIST EXPERIENCES AT MAJOR TOURIST  
ATTRACTIONS**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA: TOURISM  
MANAGEMENT DIVISION**

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## DEFINITIONS

<b>Attraction:</b>	A designated permanent resource which is controlled and managed for the enjoyment, amusement, entertainment and education of the visiting public (Middleton, 1994)
<b>Destination:</b>	A destination in this study is defined as a pre-determined geographical area consisting of an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited.
<b>Expectations:</b>	Expectations are defined as anticipated traits, formed beliefs, and predictions related to future events or states (Larsen, 2007)
<b>Factor:</b>	“denotes an independent variable in an experiment; factors are divided into treatment levels for the experiment” (Cooper & Schindler, 2008)
<b>Factor analysis:</b>	“a technique for discovering patterns among the variables to determine if an underlying combination of the original variables (a factor) can summarize the original set” (Cooper & Schindler, 2008).
<b>Gap analysis:</b>	The comparison of actual experiences with potential or desired expectations.
<b>Item (variable):</b>	“a characteristic, trait or attribute that is measured; a symbol to which values are assigned...” (Cooper & Schindler, 2008).



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<b>Memorable Tourism Experiences:</b>	Memorable tourism experience (MTE) has been operationally defined as “a tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred” (Kim, Ritchie and McCormick, 2012)
<b>Motivation:</b>	“an internal factor that directs and integrates an individual’s behaviour” (Iso-Ahola, 1982).
<b>(Core) Tourism product:</b>	A term that is roughly synonymous with the destination mix, meaning all the facilities and services offered for the visitors to a destination area (Lubbe, 2003). The core tourism product would be the dominant benefit or satisfaction that a customer expects from a good or service he or she buys.
<b>Tourist motivation:</b>	“A special subset of the wider interest area of human motivation and can be defined as the total network of biological and cultural forces which give value and direction to travel choice, behaviour and experience” (Pearce, 2011:59).
<b>Travel Patterns:</b>	Travel patterns – defined as the locations people visit, their travel routes, and the amount of time spent at any location (Beeco & Hallo, 2014)
<b>Visitor/Tourist:</b>	Any person travelling to a place other than that of his or her usual environment for less than 12 consecutive months, and whose main purpose of trip is other than the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited (Lubbe, 2003)



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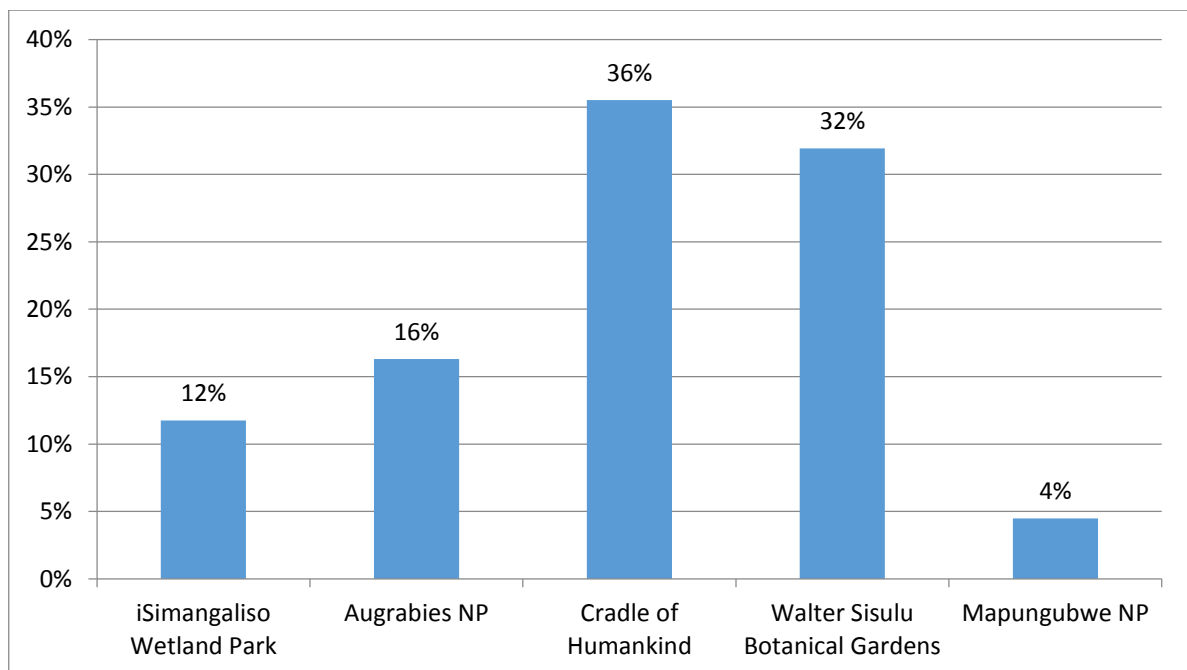
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary focusses on the overall results in terms of the performance of all the selected sites on the identified factors, the results of which are presented below.

### Total number of respondents across all sites

A total of 1537 responses were generated from all sites (indicated in Figure A), more or less equally divided between the pre and post visitors.

**Figure A: Respondents per site**



### Gap analysis (expectations vs experiences)

Eleven factors (each made up of a number of items (variables)) were used to measure the difference between expectations and experiences with the composite score of the items making up each factor. On an overall level (across all sites) the majority of results indicated a negative gap i.e. expectations on

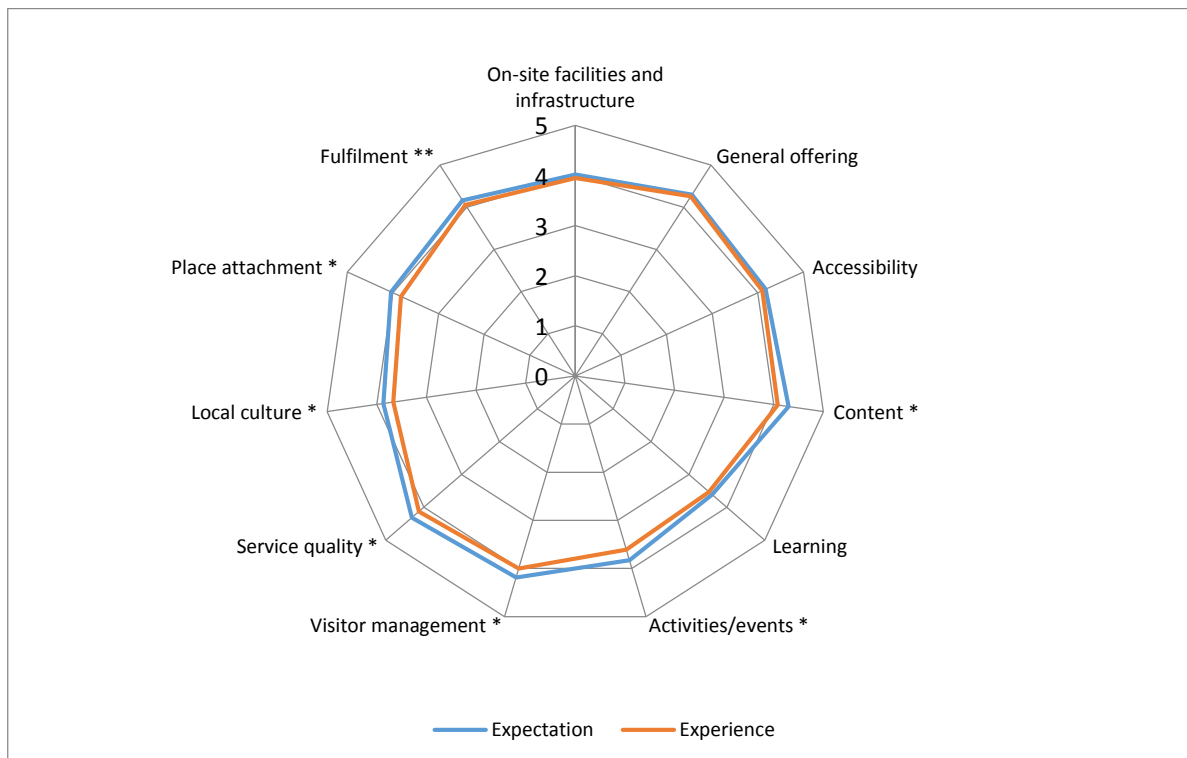


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majority of factors were not met. It is important to note that the results for each site individually differed and are presented under each separate site report. These results refer to the overall picture. Significance was tested and those factors that proved to be significant are indicated with a \* or \*\*.

### Gap between expectations and experiences



It is evident that overall, within the boundaries of the sample and limitations of the research, a gap exists between expectations and experiences on all of the factors shown in Table A:

The category that presented the most significant negative gap was in terms of the 'content' of the attractions. This was followed by 'visitor management' and 'service quality'.



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**Table A: Factors and items**

<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>
<b>On-site facilities &amp; infrastructure</b>	Easy accessible visitor facilities
	Well-maintained facilities
	Internet access
	Book additional activities
	Able to buy souvenirs
	Universal accessibility
	Safety of person and belongings
	Unique design infrastructure/architecture
	Quality infrastructure/architecture
	Signage/directions
<b>General offering</b>	Cater for families/children
	Value for money
	Match marketing material
<b>Accessibility</b>	Convenient to get to
	Short travel distance
	Efficient parking/access system
<b>Content</b>	Challenged to spot/interact
	Surprised by unusual things
	Guided by rules/regulations
	Variety of things
	Authenticity
	Close encounters
	Excitement viewing rarities
<b>Learning</b>	Engage with other visitors



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	Articulate guide
	Talks
	Literature
	Interpretation facilities
	Audio guide
<b>Activities/events</b>	Variety of recreational activities
	Specific event/exhibition of interest
	Affordable activity options
<b>Visitor management</b>	Good information
	Viewing in predictable locations
	Well-structured layout
	Easy movement between areas
	Viewing time in one spot
<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>ITEMS</b>
<b>Service quality</b>	Efficient service reception/entry
	Helpful friendly staff
	Personalised service
<b>Local culture</b>	Experience local way of life
	Engage with informative locals
<b>Place attachment</b>	Most favourite place to visit
	Finally seeing unique thing
<b>Fulfilment</b>	Connect with nature
	Connect with mankind
	Connect with history





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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Destinations around the globe are looking for creative solutions to common challenges in tourism development. Researchers have argued that the central challenge facing tourism destination development is the design of effective tourism experiences (Horváth, n.d:1). Creativity has been employed to transform traditional cultural tourism, shifting from tangible heritage towards more intangible culture and greater involvement with the everyday life of the destination. Nowadays tourists are looking for more engaging, interactive experiences that can contribute to their personal growth. Each and every tourist perceives the destination and experience offered by the destination in their very special, personal way which is the sum of their past life experience, education, attitudes, *i.e.* a whole series of personal characteristics. The focus of the tourism experience is to fulfil the aspirations, wishes and expectations relating to the individual's personal growth. This study is about understanding those aspirations and expectations and determining what constitutes a memorable tourist experience with particular reference to major tourist attractions. The purpose is to enhance destination development through minimising the gap between tourists' expectations and experiences.

## **2. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

Destination development is often focussed on major tourist attractions for good reason, as these are generally the drawcards for tourist visits and expenditure. Resources are directed towards the development of these major attractions due to their popularity and revenue potential. Major attractions also form part of tourist itineraries as "must experience" activities, with tourists being highly motivated to go to these attractions. Tourists are drawn to major attractions based on their knowledge or awareness of the attraction and their desire to experience what the attraction offers, either intrinsically or extrinsically. These reasons are investigated in this research, the results of which will partly inform the recommendations relating to strategies for potential interventions. Interventions may also be required on the basis of what is currently being offered in the selected attractions and the extent to which the tourist offerings or products are offering memorable tourist experiences.



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### 3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

With the recognition of tourism destinations as amalgams of tourism products offering an integrated experience to tourists, the emphasis for tourism destinations should be to deliver unique, extraordinary and memorable tourism experiences (MTE) to target tourists in order to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013:177). Smith quoted in Benur and Bramwell (2015) asserts that “*tourism products are fundamentally experiences*”, with experiences seen as central to tourist choice and satisfaction. A tourist experience is not only affected by tangible products and experienced services, but also by the degree in which a specific experience is unforgettable and thus, memorable (Cornelisse, 2014:104). Few studies have examined the relationship between destination attributes, tourism performance, and tourism experiences (Assaf & Josiassen, 2012). Although this area of study has begun to receive attention, our understanding of these determinants of tourism experiences remains poorly developed. Using five sites as cases this study further investigates these concepts.

### 4. OVERALL AIM OF THE STUDY

The overall aim of the study is to identify whether gaps exist between the expectations of tourists and their experience at major tourist attractions, based on established criteria of what constitutes a memorable tourist experience, with a view to developing the destination to serve the interest of visitors more effectively. Major tourist attractions that have been identified for investigation are:

- **Mpungubwe National Park, both as a heritage site and a national park.**

Mapungubwe National Park is a “world heritage landscape” located in the northern part of SA at the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers bordering Botswana and Zimbabwe. The park has a rich history, fauna and flora. South Africa’s first kingdom was established here before 1300AD and was home to a powerful tribe that traded with China and India. The only evidence of this civilization’s existence is the unique Golden Rhino excavated (by the University of Pretoria) on the Hill of the Jackal, as well as numerous other artefacts. The award-winning architecturally designed Interpretation centre and Museum offer an educational experience, and hosts a curio shop restaurant for visitors. Today Mapungubwe serves both as National Park and World Heritage Site (inscribed in 2003) due to its extraordinary contribution to the country



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and the world's historical and natural heritage. All Mapungubwe's camps are accessible by sedan although a higher clearance vehicle such as a 4x4 is advisable to ensure an enjoyable ride inside the park. There are also a number of eco-trails for which a 4x4 is required.

### - **Augrabies Falls National Park**

The name Augrabies was given to the Water Fall by a Swede, Hendrik Jakob Wikar, when he passed there in 1799. The name is derived from the Nama word as the Khoi people would refer to "Aukoerebis" meaning the "Place of Great Noise." This refers to the Orange River water thundering its way down the 56 m spectacular main Water Fall.

Augrabies Falls National Park was proclaimed on 5 August 1966. Augrabies is one of 19 National Parks in South Africa managed by South African National Parks (SANParks) who manages a system of parks which represents the indigenous fauna, flora, landscapes and associated cultural heritage of the country. National parks offer visitors an unparalleled diversity of adventure tourism opportunities including game viewing, bush walks, canoeing and exposure to cultural and historical experiences.

Augrabies Falls National Park currently consists of 55 383 hectares. The Park caters for both day and overnight visitors. Activities available in the Park include: Waterfall viewpoints; game viewing at leisure using own vehicle; Klipspringer Hiking Trail; Dassie Nature Trail; Night drives; mountain bikes; the Wilderness road and several panoramic viewpoints that can be visited inside the park, all of which give stunning vistas of the park, the gorge and the Orange River. These points also provide great opportunities to spot local birdlife.

### - **Walter Sisulu National Botanical Gardens**

One of the eight botanical gardens in South Africa, the Walter Sisulu Gardens in Roodepoort is a haven for birds, reptiles and small mammals, and those wanting to escape the bustle of city life. Part manicured lawns, part nature reserve, the focal point is the waterfall, the cliffs of which



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are home to a breeding pair of Verreaux's Eagles. This Botanical Garden was founded in 1982, but has been a popular venue for outings since the 1800's. The natural vegetation of the area is known as the 'Rocky Highveld Grassland' and consists of a mosaic of grassland and savanna, with dense bush in kloofs and along streams. The variety of habitats accommodates over 600 naturally occurring plant species. The majestic Verreaux's Eagles nest on the cliffs alongside the waterfall. The Garden is home to an abundance of wildlife with over 220 birds species recorded on site. There are also a number of reptiles and small mammals, including small antelope and jackals, which occur naturally in the Nature Reserve.

### - **The Cradle of Humankind World Heritage Site**

Situated in the Witwatersberg and Magaliesberg mountain ranges, Maropeng is the official Visitor Centre of the Cradle of Humankind, one of South Africa's eight World Heritage Sites and one of the major tourist attractions in South Africa. The exhibition centre takes visitors on a journey of discovery to learn more about the origins of humankind, and is housed in the Tumulus, a unique architectural structure resembling an ancient burial mound. An underground boat ride starts the adventure, taking visitors through the various stages of Earth's creation. Visitors then emerge into the main exhibition halls, where the evolution of humankind is illustrated through fun and interactive displays and games.

More than just an exploration of human origins, the Maropeng exhibition also inspires visitors to be more aware of threats to the environment. The sustainability wall, which runs across the main exhibition room, highlights important facts about modern humans and our consumption of rapidly decreasing natural resources. Maropeng provides visitors with a rare opportunity to view original hominid and dinosaur fossils, as well as ancient artefacts housed in the fossil display room. The collections on display change throughout the year, ensuring there is always something new to see at Maropeng.

### - **iSimangaliso Wetland Park**



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The iSimangaliso Wetland Park was listed as South Africa's first World Heritage Site in December 1999 in recognition of its superlative natural beauty and unique global values. It falls within the legal framework of a UNESCO site and has to be managed in a specific manner to retain this status. It cannot be modified without thorough consideration and permission. The iSimangaliso Authority was set up to manage the Park, created from 16 different parcels of land – a patchwork of state-owned land, commercial forests and former military sites. The all-weather 'Lubombo Road' (R22) – linked to the N2 from Durban – from Hluhluwe to the Mozambique border, via Kosi Bay has created an easy route for tourists and improved community access. Close co-operation between the Mozambican, Swazi and South African governments has almost entirely removed the threat of malaria from the area.

The visa waiver agreement between South Africa and Mozambique, effective since April 2005, has eased access into the region.

The 332 000 hectare Park contains some internationally significant features such as three major lake systems, interlinking ecosystems, 700 year old fishing traditions, most of South Africa's remaining swamp forests, Africa's largest estuarine system and 25 000 year-old vegetated coastal dunes – among the highest in the world. Main features promoted include the lakes (including Lake St Lucia as Africa's largest estuary); water surfaces; extensive biodiversity (8 ecosystems); the coastline (ocean and sand dunes), land-based wildlife (mammals, birds, reptiles, insects), marine wildlife (coral reefs, fish, mammals). The Park strongly focuses on conservation. Park establishment programs have seen the removal of some 12 000ha of alien plants and commercial forests. Wetland and dune rehabilitation programs, the introduction of game, the building of new roads, game fences, new water supply and bulk electricity supply systems and substations have all contributed to building the new Park.

This report covers the description of the overall results for all sites. The results of each site will be presented as a separate document.



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## **5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

In meeting the overall aim of the study on developing tourist destinations based on why tourists visit major attractions, their travel patterns around major attractions and what their overall experience is, the following specific objectives were set:

- (a) To analyse the product offering at selected tourist attractions in terms of its image and communication about the site;
- (b) To determine tourists' flow of movement within the major attractions during their visit;
- (c) To determine tourists' motivations for visiting a tourist site, encompassing the reasons for visitation;
- (d) To measure tourists' expectations of their visit to a tourist site
- (e) To determine tourists' overall memorable tourism experience of the tourist site
- (f) To conduct a gap analysis between the expected and actual experiences
- (g) To recommend site-specific interventions and plans to facilitate/deliver a memorable tourism experience

## **6. CONDENSED LITERATURE OVERVIEW**

Saraniemi and Kylänen in Cooper and Hall, (2008) define a destination as a spatial or geographical concept, thus featuring both the geographical concept of space and the movement of people from outside to it. It is therefore primarily defined by visitors from outside the location and, by definition, exists by virtue of the people that visit it. Murphy, Pritchard and Smith (2000) link the destination with the tourism product by stating that a destination is an amalgam of individual products and experience opportunities that combine to form a total experience of the area visited. The attractiveness of a destination reflects the feelings and opinions of its visitors about the destination's perceived ability to satisfy their needs. The more a destination is able to meet the needs of the tourists, the more it is perceived to be attractive and the more the destination is likely to be chosen (Vengasayi, 2003:637). The ability of a destination to deliver individual benefits is enhanced by the attributes of a destination, i.e. those components that make up a destination. The importance of these attributes help people to evaluate the attractiveness of a destination and make relevant choices. The attractiveness of a tourist



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destination encourages people to visit and spend time at the destination. Therefore, the major value of destination attractiveness is the pulling effect it has on tourists. Benur and Bramwell (2015) say that destinations depend on their primary tourism products as key pull factors motivating tourists to visit the destination and suggest that products such as accommodation, food services and transportation are less likely to provide a substantial tourist “draw” to specific destinations. Without the primary attractiveness of destinations, tourism does not exist and there could be little or no need for the development of tourist facilities and services. It is only when people are attracted to a destination that facilities and services would be developed (Ferrario, 1979b cited in Vengasayi, 2003:637).

With the recognition of tourism destinations as amalgams of tourism products offering an integrated experience to tourists, the emphasis for tourism destinations should be to deliver unique, extraordinary and memorable tourism experiences (MTE) to target tourists in order to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013:177). Smith quoted in Benur and Bramwell (2015) asserts that “tourism products are fundamentally experiences”, with experiences seen as central to tourist choice and satisfaction. A tourist experience is not only affected by touchable products and experienced services, but also to the degree in which a specific experience is unforgettable and thus, memorable (Cornelisse, 2014:104).

According to Chandralal, Rindfleish and Valenzuela (2015) the significance of the theory of MTEs stems from the fact that memories about previous consumption experiences tend to have a significant impact on consumer decision-making situations (Kozak, 2001; Lehto, O’Leary, & Morrison, 2004; Marschall, 2012; Mazursky, 1989). For example, Hoch and Deighton (1989) demonstrate three reasons behind the significance of past experiences stored in the memory. Firstly, the product involvement and motivation to purchase the product are high when the information is drawn from their past experiences, secondly, consumers tend to perceive past experiences as valuable and credible information sources and, thirdly, there is a powerful influence of past experiences on future behavioural intentions. In the context of tourism, scholars have recognised that “memory is perhaps the single most important source of information [that a traveller] will use in making a decision about whether or not to revisit” a particular destination (Braun-LaTour, Grinley, & Loftus, 2006, p. 360). According to Tung and Ritchie (2011)





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research has commonly considered tourists' positive MTEs with outcome factors such as revisiting a destination and spreading positive word-of-mouth (Woodside, Caldwell, & Albers-Miller, 2004). Managerially, destination management organizations have credited the delivery of MTEs as fundamental to competitiveness and sustainability (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Despite memorable tourism experiences, some travellers decide not to revisit a destination, since they view MTE as an once-in-a-lifetime experience that is purely unique and cannot be replicated. Many of these individuals explain that "things change so quickly that if you go back, you may ruin your memory of it," and "don't ever [want to] go back to ruin this once-in-a-lifetime memory (Tung & Ritchie, 2011:1380)." With reference to the impact of these memorable tourism experiences on future travel decisions, in a study by Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) the majority of participants expressed that they neither revisited those memorable experience destinations nor will they revisit them again in the near future. The major reason they brought into the discussion was that they want to experience something new from every leisure travel. They expressed various opinions such as "there are many new places to visit before re-visiting places", "the world is a big place", "better to see as many as possible places during the limited lifespan", may decide to revisit places when the list of "must see" comes to an end and "re-visiting places is wasting money". Nevertheless, the majority of participants affirmed that they usually recommend such memorable trips and destinations to others (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013).

Few studies have examined the relationship between destination attributes, tourism performance, and tourism experiences (Assaf & Josiassen, 2012). Although this area of study has begun to receive attention, our understanding of these determinants of tourism experiences remains poorly developed. Assaf and Josiassen (2012) indicate that the destination attributes of MTEs include the following 10 dimensions: local culture, the variety of activities, hospitality, infrastructure, environment management, accessibility, the quality of service, physiography, place attachment and superstructure (Kim, 2014). However, Benur and Bramwell (2015) say that destinations depend on their primary tourism products as key pull factors motivating tourists to visit the destination and suggest that products such as accommodation, food services and transportation are less likely to provide a substantial tourist "draw" to specific destinations. Without the primary attractiveness of destinations, tourism does not exist and





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there could be little or no need for the development of tourist facilities and services. It is only when people are attracted to a destination that facilities and services would be developed (Ferrario, 1979b cited in Vengasayi, 2003:637). Kim, Ritchie and McCormick (2012) focus on the experience that relate to personal growth and enrichment and propose 16 experiential constructs as the components of a MT (see table 1). From these constructs they developed an MTE scale consisting of seven dimensions and 24 indicators (see table 1).

**Table 1: Seven dimensions of MTE**

Dimensions	Indicators
Hedonism	Thrilled about having a new experience
	Indulged in the activities
	Really enjoyed this tourism experience
	Exciting
Novelty	Once-in-a-lifetime experience
	Unique
	Different from previous experiences
	Experienced something new
Local culture	Good impressions about the local people
	Closely experienced the local culture
	Local people in a destination were friendly
Refreshment	Liberating
	Enjoyed sense of freedom
	Refreshing
	Revitalized
Meaningfulness	I did something meaningful
	I did something important



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Dimensions	Indicators
	Learned about myself
Involvement	I visited a place where I really wanted to go
	I enjoyed activities which I really wanted to do
	I was interested in the main activities of this tourism experience
Knowledge	Exploratory
	Knowledge
	New culture

Source: Kim *et al.* (2012)

Kim (2014) discussed these seven dimensions in detail.

**Hedonism:** Tourism researchers have long recognised that tourism activities possess a predominantly hedonic component. When “consuming” tourism products (experiences), unlike other activities and products, people primarily seek enjoyment (hedonism/ pleasure). Consistent with the notion that the primary purpose of consuming tourism products is to pursue hedonic or pleasurable experiences, an emotional component is a significant aspect of tourism experiences. Of particular significance in relation to the understanding of MTEs is the fact that memory researchers have discussed the significant influence of intensely emotional stimuli on memory (e.g., Bohanek, Fivush, & Walker, 2005; Porter & Birt, 2001). In empirical tourism studies, researchers found that hedonic experiences allow tourists to construct memorable experiences. For example, Dunman and Mattila (2005) identify hedonism as a major determinant of the perceived value of cruise travel experience. Moreover, Tung and Ritchie (2011) find that positive emotions and feelings associated with tourism experiences, such as happiness and excitement, were a critical component of MTEs.

**Refreshment:** Refreshment, or relaxation and renewal, is most likely the most defining basic component of tourism activities. Empirical research supports the importance of escapism and refreshment in travel experiences (e.g., Boo & Jones, 2009; Leblanc, 2003; Pearce & Lee, 2005; Richards, 2002; Snepenger, King, Marshall, & Uysal, 2007). For example, Leblanc (2003) found that rest, relaxation, and



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recuperation were among the major motivations of tourists who attend special events and festivals. Moreover, in a study that identified factors that enhance the memorability of tourism experiences, Kim (2010) suggests that the feeling of being refreshed positively influences people's memories of travel.

**Novelty:** Novelty-seeking has been consistently reported as another important component of the subjective tourism experience and a popular motivation for an individual to travel (e.g., Dunman & Mattila, 2005; Farber & Hall, 2007). Travellers tend to choose destinations in which the culture and lifestyles are different to satisfy the need and desire to experience something new or "other, something" that cannot be found in their home countries (Pearce, 1987). While exploring the antecedents of MTEs, Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) confirmed that the perceived novelty, which is derived from experiencing something new (e.g., culture, food, and accommodation) and encountering different types of tours, is a component of MTEs.

**Social interaction and local culture:** Tourism experiences are co-created by involving people in experience-based situations (Ryan, 1998). For example, through social interaction with residents at a destination, travelers increase their understanding of the local people (who are frequently culturally different) and ultimately achieve global citizenship. In the tourism literature, experiencing local culture has been discussed as an important motivational factor for traveling (e.g., Funk & Bruun, 2007; Richards, 2002; Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). In studies of MTEs, researchers have found that experiencing local culture makes one's travel more memorable. For example, Tung and Ritchie (2011) found that learning about local culture, including residents' way of life, and the language of the destination significantly enhanced MTEs. Moreover, Morgan and Xu (2009) suggest that local culture (interaction with the local culture and people) constructs a memorable holiday experience.

**Involvement:** People remember an experience that is personally relevant and meaningful more than an experience that is not relevant. Previous research findings that revealed the effects of involvement in a customer experience on memory may provide a plausible explanation for this notion. For example, Pine and Gilmore (1999) indicate that when individuals find themselves immersed in an activity, the



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individuals are more likely to have a memorable experience. Kim (2010) established that the tourists' involvement with travel experiences was the most influential factor for one's memory. The more individuals are involved with a vacation in terms of the place they have longed to visit and activities that they have wanted to participate in, the better they can recollect and retrieve past travel experiences.

**Knowledge:** Tourism researchers have also reported that people wish to learn new things and develop new insights and skills because of their tourism experiences (Richards, 2002; Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005). Tourism motivation studies suggest that one of the socio psychological motivations that predispose individuals to travel is to satisfy the need to gain knowledge. For example, people travel in response to the urge to acquire new knowledge and understanding regarding the destinations (particularly in areas such as geography, history, language, and culture). In a study on the "essence" of memorable tourism experiences, Tung and Ritchie (2011) found that intellectual development was one of the most significant components of memorable experiences.

**Meaningfulness:** Because meaning is essential to happiness and well-being (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002), people strive to find meaning in their lives (Frankl, 1985). Similarly, people search for meaningful experiences within their travel and tourism activities, such as seeking a sense of physical, emotional, or spiritual fulfillment through tourism, rather than pursuing mere escapism or a hollow search for authenticity (Digance, 2003; Noy, 2004). For example, some individuals consider a tourism experience as an inner journey of personal growth and self-development rather than the mere consuming of sights, faces, and places. Moreover, in the study on the essence of MTEs, meaningful tourism experiences were found to last longer in human memory (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). The same study noted that when people learn more about the world and expand their perspectives on life because of eye-opening travel experiences, these experiences can be some of the most memorable experiences of a lifetime.

**Adverse feelings:** The pursuit of pleasurable, positive feelings is the primary motivation for participating in tourism experiences. However, tourists can unexpectedly realize negative emotions or feelings during their tourism experiences. If these emotions are sufficiently intense, the emotions can result in negative



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memorable experiences. Memory researchers support the notion that negative valence leads to a stronger memory than positive valence (Kensinger & Schacter, 2006). Tourists usually develop severe adverse feelings because of accidents or illness (Aziz, 1995; Ryan, 1991, 1993). However, considering that the primary tourism products are service-related and thus have an inconsistent nature (largely derived from the inevitability of human error), tourists can always develop adverse feelings (e.g., anger and frustration) during tourism experiences.

A revised version of the Kim *et al.* (2012) MTE scale was used to test the differences in memorable tourist experiences at varied major tourist attractions in South Africa. The MTE scale was shortened to avoid repetitive questions as some of the items of the scale were also asked in the separately developed on-site scale. This is further explained in the ensuing methodology section.

## **7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Two phases make up the empirical part of the study. The first phase covers the analysis of the selected sites in terms of their core tourism product offering and the second phase covers an analysis of the tourists' experiences at each selected site. Once all data had been collected from both phases a gap analysis between the expected and actual experiences of tourists to the selected tourist attractions was conducted.

### **7.1 Phase 1: Analysis of the core product offering at each selected site**

In this first phase the primary product or what “pulls” tourists towards the attraction, according to the site management (i.e. the CEO, Manager and/or Marketing Manager were requested to participate) and promotional messages, was determined.

#### **i. Research site overview (ANNEXURE A)**

The purpose of the research site overview was for the researcher to gain an understanding of the tourism potential of the site by completing the Tourism Attraction Assessment Sheet (McKercher & Ho, 2006) through:



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- a. Reviewing background documentation to familiarise themselves with the site.
- b. Interviewing one or two managers (CEO and/or Marketing Manager) for insight as per indicators from the management's perspective
- c. Conducting on-site inspection independently assessing each indicator holistically i.e. providing an overall view of what they are perceiving.

### ii. **Observation sheet (ANNEXURE B)**

The purpose of the observation was to assess the quality of the physical layout and facilities at the site as well as to form an idea of the movement of tourists around the site.

## 7.2 **Phase 2: Analysis of the tourists' experiences at each selected site.**

The second phase covered the analysis of the tourist's expectations and experiences.

### i. **Pre-visit survey (ANNEXURE C)**

The pre-visit questionnaire was designed to measure tourists'/visitors' motivations for visitation as well as their expectations of the major components of the experience. The scale used to measure these expectations contained 43 items under 11 factors and measured a range of aspects of the product offering.

### ii. **Post-visit survey (ANNEXURE D)**

The post-visit questionnaire was designed to measure tourists'/visitors' experiences – both overall memorable experiences and site-specific experiences. The overall MTEs were measured using a 4-factor MTE scale. The site-specific experiences were measured using the same scale used in the pre-visit survey, but stated as experiences (current) and not as expectations (future). This allowed for direct comparisons between expectations and experiences regarding the 43 listed aspects (11 factors) of the product offering.



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Dimensionality of both the MTE and experiences/expectations scales were tested by means of exploratory factor analysis

**In terms of the MTE scale** (in the post-visit survey), the factor analysis brought about changes to the scale: Four factors emerged with Eigenvalues larger than 1, explaining 66% of the variance. Items with factors loadings  $>0.5$  were retained where they had the highest loading. Five items did not load onto any of these four factors but were significant aspects of a tourist's experience, namely all three items under 'local culture', as well as 'liberating' and 'refreshing' under 'refreshment on the original scale. Because of the importance of 'local culture' in the South African context, it was included in the 43 item experiences/expectations scale to ensure that the overall factor of 'local culture' was still tested. The factor of refreshment was retained in the revised MTE scale and the two related items (liberating and refreshing) were not included in the 43 item scale in order to avoid duplication. Table 2 shows the new factor structure for the MTE scale.

**Table 2: New factor structure (MTE scale)**

Hedonism	Thrill about having a new experience
	Indulgence in the activities
	Real enjoyment
	Excitement
Novelty	Once-in-a lifetime experience
	Uniqueness
	Different from previous experiences
	Something new
	Accomplishment
	Self-discovery
	Knowledge gain
	New culture



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Refreshment	Sense of freedom
	Revitalisation
	Meaningfulness
Involvement	Place where I really wanted to go
	Activities really wanted to do
	Main activity of great interest
	Exploration





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**In the case of the experiences/expectations scale** (in the pre-and post-visit surveys), different factors formed from the data for the pre and post samples. It was therefore not possible to restructure the scale and use for both samples. It was decided to leave the scale item groups under the headings in the questionnaire (factors), which were derived from literature. Cronbach's alpha was used to test the reliability of these existing scale groupings. Only in the instance of 3 categories in the pre-questionnaire were alpha levels below .60 achieved but it was decided to retain all items for further analysis across the different sites in order not to lose valuable information (individual items/aspects) that could have managerial implications (despite not falling within a theoretical 'factor')

Data was collected from tourists through a survey instrument on their expectations (pre-visit survey) and experiences at the site (post-visit survey). While the ideal would have been to collect the pre-visit and post-visit from the same tourists at each site, this was logistically very difficult and the decision was made to collect data from tourists entering the site and tourists exiting the site. This had implications for the data analysis.

The initial aim was to conduct a gap analysis of visitors' expectations (pre visit) versus visitors' experiences (post visit) and then compare the differences in perceived experiences between different categories of visitors. During the analysis it became apparent that such a comparison is not possible as two different samples of individuals were used (i.e. not the same people giving their pre and post evaluations). It was therefore not possible to credibly conduct tests to make a comparison of pre and post scores originating from different individuals. The pre and post data sets could not randomly be 'matched' to create a scenario of a pre-post evaluation per respondent. It was therefore decided that the main focus would be on determining on the overall sample level how the factors and items performed (total study sample and total sample for each site) and how these pre and post scores differed, not based on specific individuals/respondents as if the results originated from the same person. The issue would then be the homogeneity of the pre and post samples to add to the generalisability of the results. As indicated in the overall sample and site specific profiles, the research team managed to achieve a fairly similar profile of people based on trip behaviour and demographics in most instances. It was



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therefore decided to regard the samples as suitable for comparisons from the standpoint of identifying 'trends' among respondents.

However, what was possible was to compare the experiences (post scores) between visitor groups. This was done for all the factors of the gap analysis scale and for each site as well as the overall sample. This still answers to the project's objective of determining the experiences of different visitor types to the attractions as the post questionnaire is what was used to test experiences (versus the pre which was focused on expectations). Both the Motivations as well as the Memorable Tourism Experience scale results were tested with only one of the visitor samples (pre-sample for the Motivations scale; post-sample for the MTE scale) and did not present this limitation.

In selecting respondents, convenience sampling was employed i.e. those prepared to complete the questionnaires were included in the sample.

## **8. RESULTS: OVERALL SAMPLE DESCRIPTION**

This document presents the results of the overall sample (all five sites) with an indication of some significant differences between the sites relating to "motivation to visit" and "memorable tourist experiences".

The results for each of the five selected sites are presented as separate documents.

This section covers the demographic profile of the overall sample (for all five sites) with an indication of some of the significant differences that were found between the sites on respondents' "motivation to visit" the site and the "memorable tourist experiences" at the different sites.



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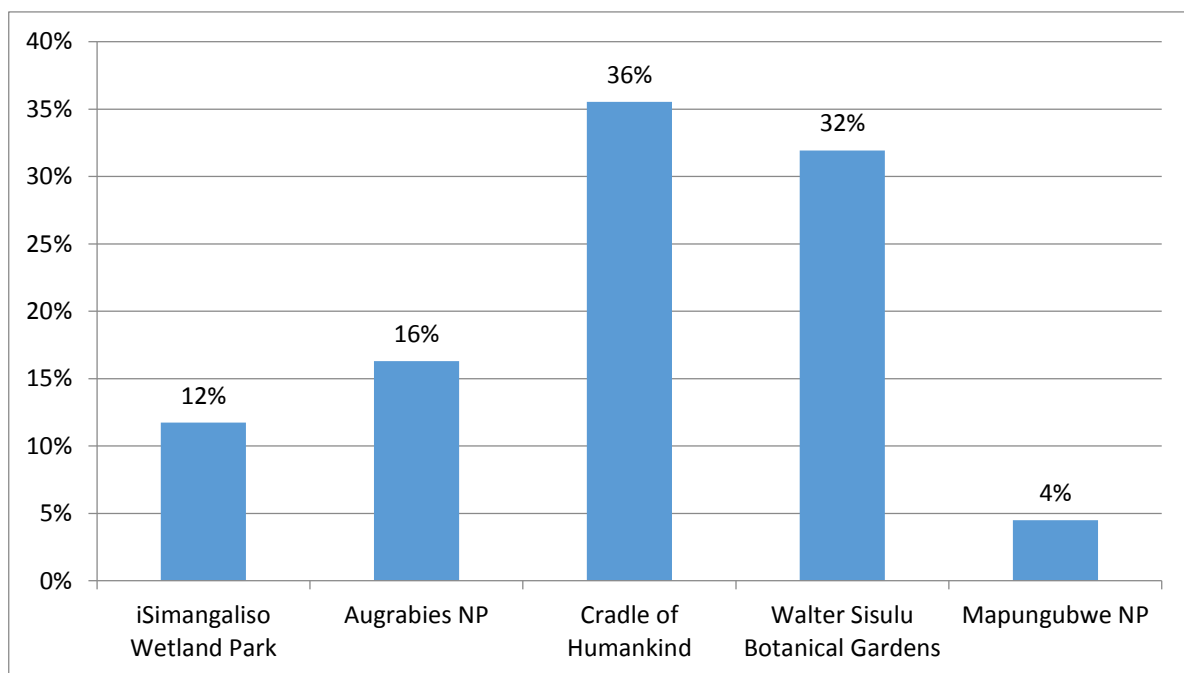
### 8.1 Number of respondents

**Table 3: Overall number of respondents for all sites**

SITE	PRE	POST
iSimangaliso Wetland Park	78	79
Augrabies NP	111	107
Cradle of Humankind	275	200
Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens	212	215
Mapungubwe NP	25	35
<b>TOTAL SAMPLE</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>636</b>

A total of 1537 responses were generated from all sites, with 701 making up the pre-visit responses and 636 the post-visit responses.

**Figure 1: Percentage of respondents per site (pre- and post-visitation)**





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Most respondents were generated from Maropeng and Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens (36% and 32% respectively), followed by Augrabies (16%), iSimangaliso (12%) and Mapungubwe (4%). Challenges were encountered in Sodwana and Mapunbugwe with data collection. These challenges are further explained under each site.

## 8.2 Demographic profile of respondents

**Table 4: Demographic profile of all respondents**

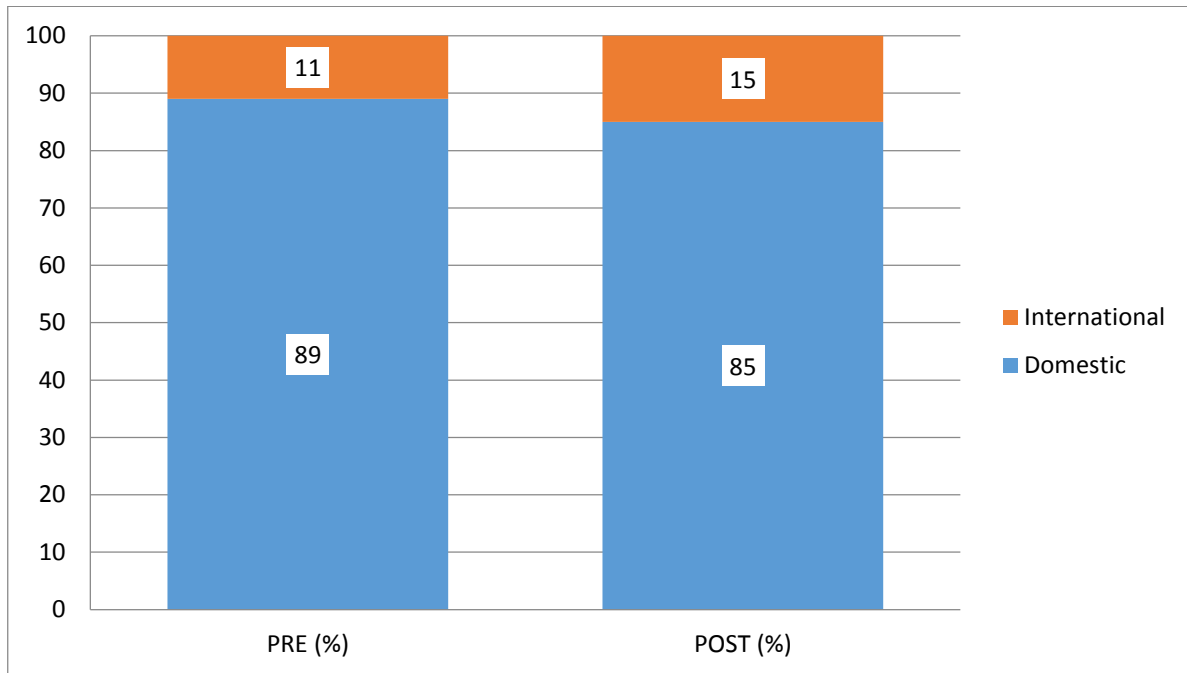
		<b>PRE (%)</b>	<b>POST (%)</b>
Place of residence	Domestic	89	85
	International	11	15
Gender	Male	47	47
	Female	53	53
Age	18 - 35	34	30
	36 - 50	49	49
	Over 50	17	21
Level of education	Primary school	4	2
	Secondary school/matric	254	25
	National diploma/certificate	27	25
	Undergraduate degree	16	18
	Postgraduate degree	28	29
Population group	African	22	15
	Coloured	8	11
	Indian	7	7
	White	59	65
	Asian	3	2



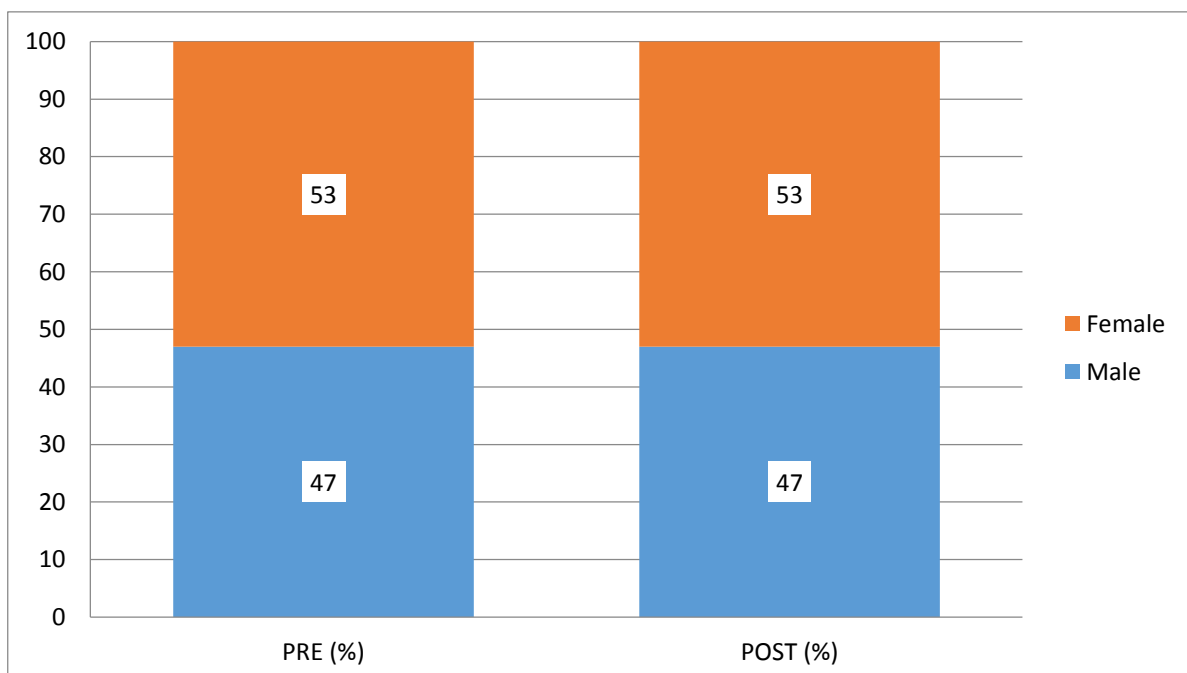
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**Figure 2: Place of residence pre- and post-visitors**



**Figure 3: Gender (pre- and post)**





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Figure 4: Age range of respondents (pre- and post)

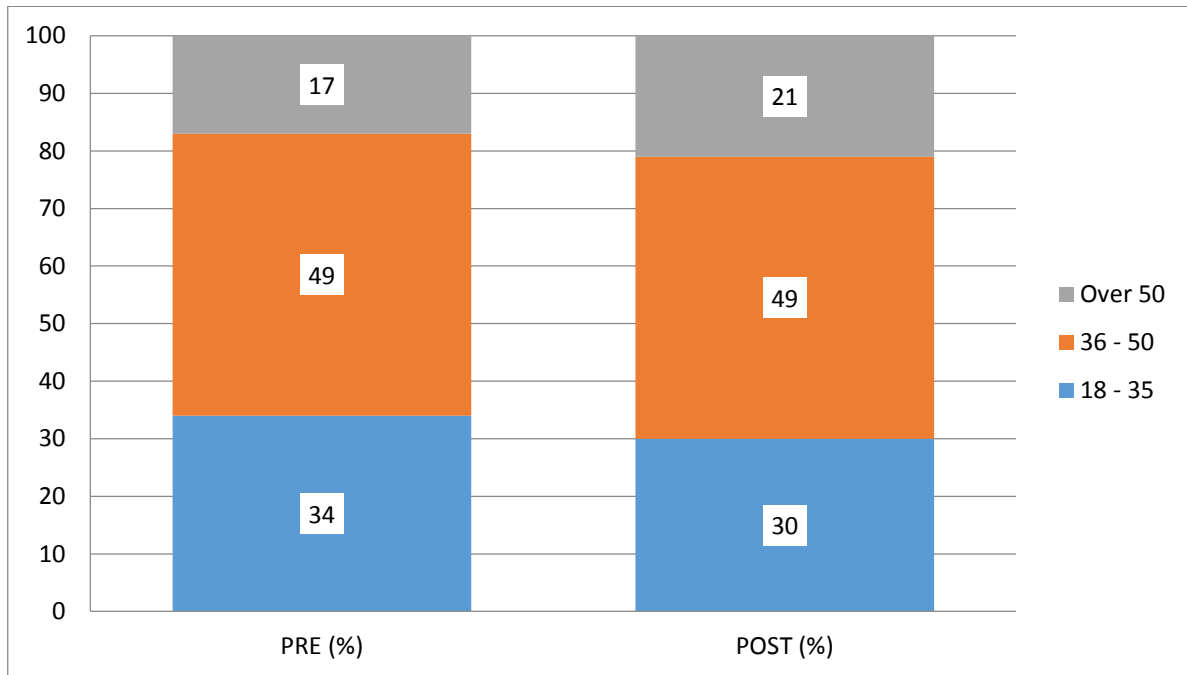
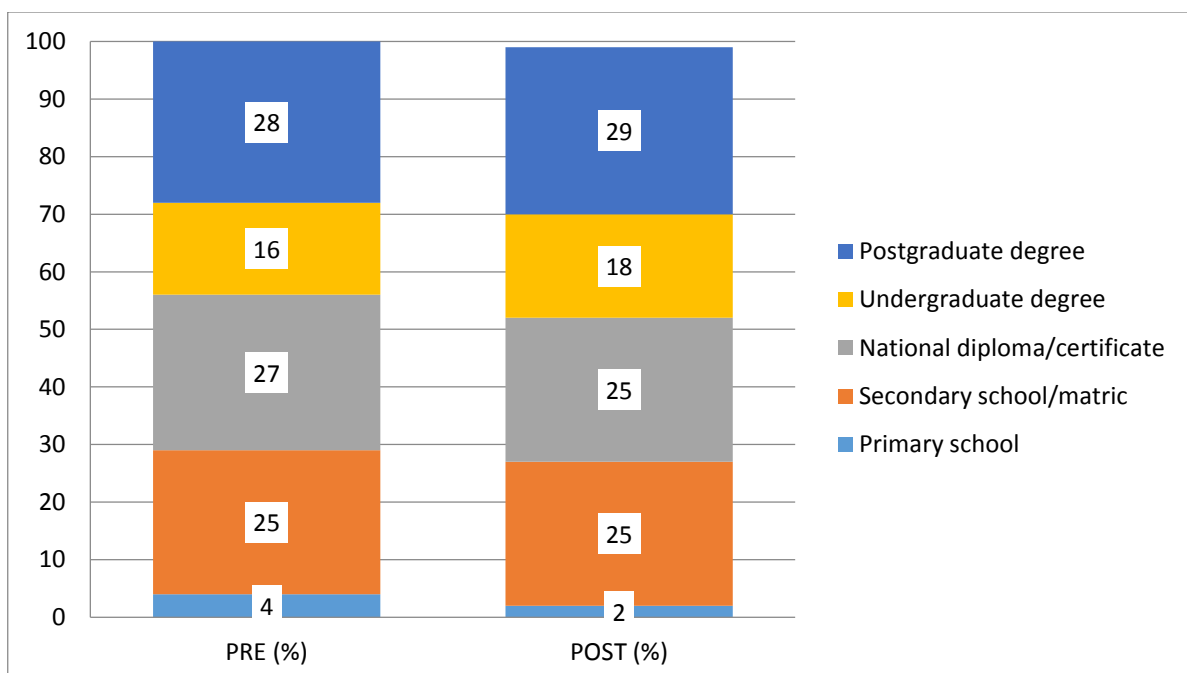


Figure 5: Level of education of respondents (pre- and post)

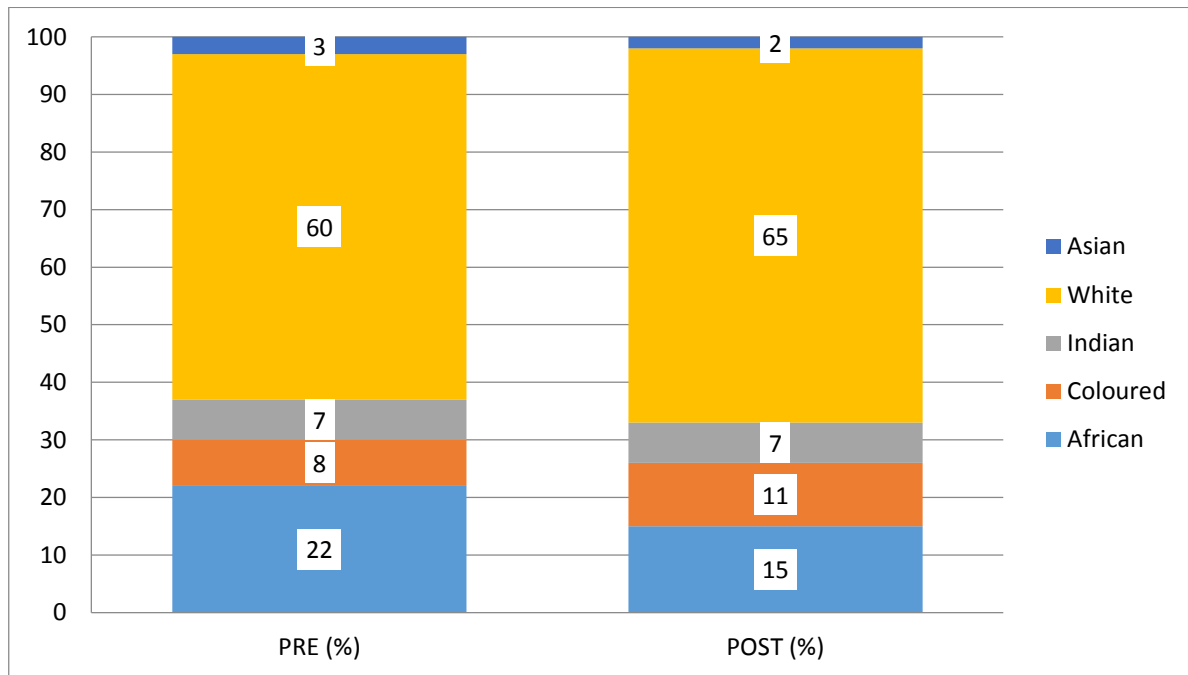




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Figure 6: Population group (pre- and post)



The majority of the respondents to both the pre (89%) and the post (85%) questionnaire were domestic visitors. Female respondents dominated the pre and post samples (which achieved a similar gender profile in both cases). The majority of respondents in the pre sample were between the ages of 36 and 50 for both the pre (48%) and post samples (49%). The level of education was dominated in the pre sample by the 'secondary school/matric' category, but fairly evenly spread for the post sample. The majority of respondents in the pre and post samples were White, followed by African.

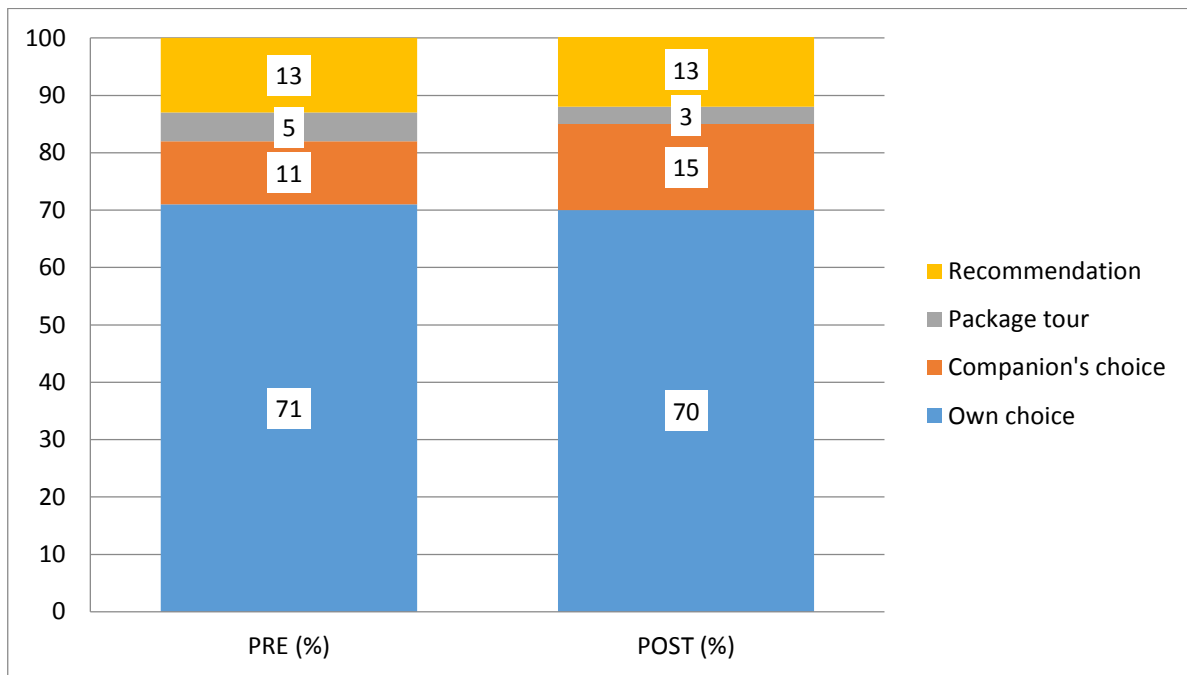


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### 8.3 Trip behaviour

Figure 7: Choice for visitation to site



Most respondents indicated that it was their own choice to visit the attractions

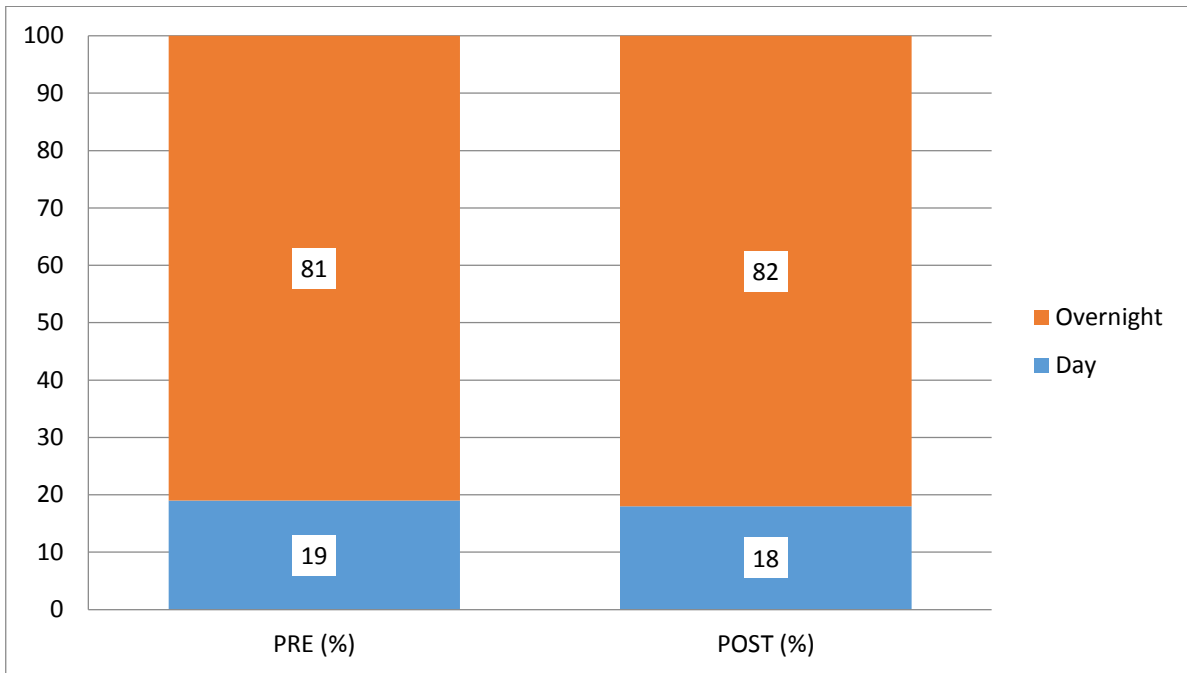




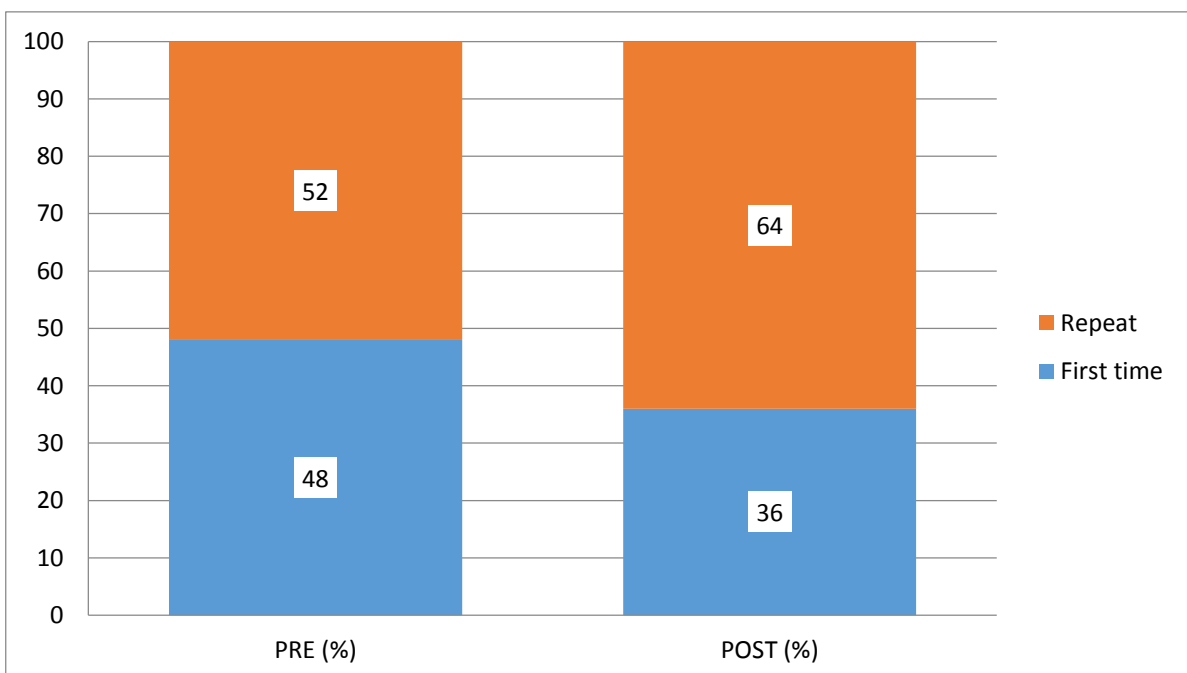
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**Figure 8: Day vs overnight visitors (at all sites)**



**Figure 9: Frequency of visits**



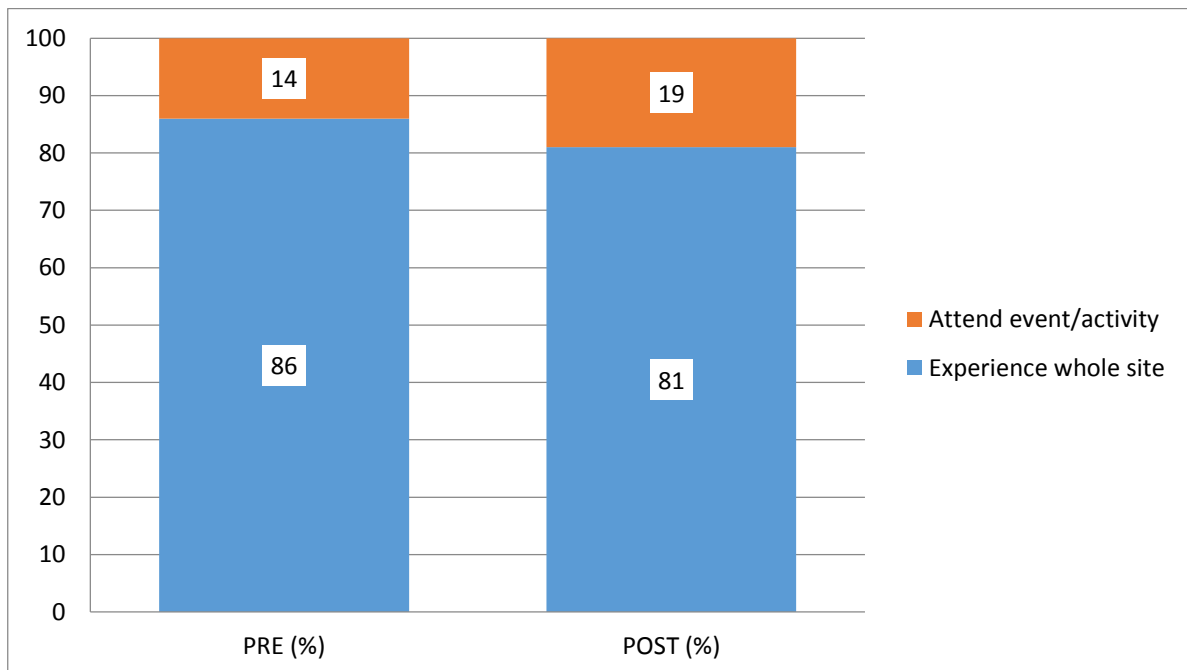


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Just under half of respondents to the pre questionnaire were first time visitors (48%), followed by those visiting the attractions once or numerous times before.

**Figure 10: Purpose of the visit**



For both the pre and post questionnaire, the main focus of the visit was to experience the whole site.

**Table 5: Travel companions**

Travel companions	PRE (%)	POST (%)
Family	60	62
Friends	38	49
Alone	5	8
Work colleagues	11	10
Education group	13	5



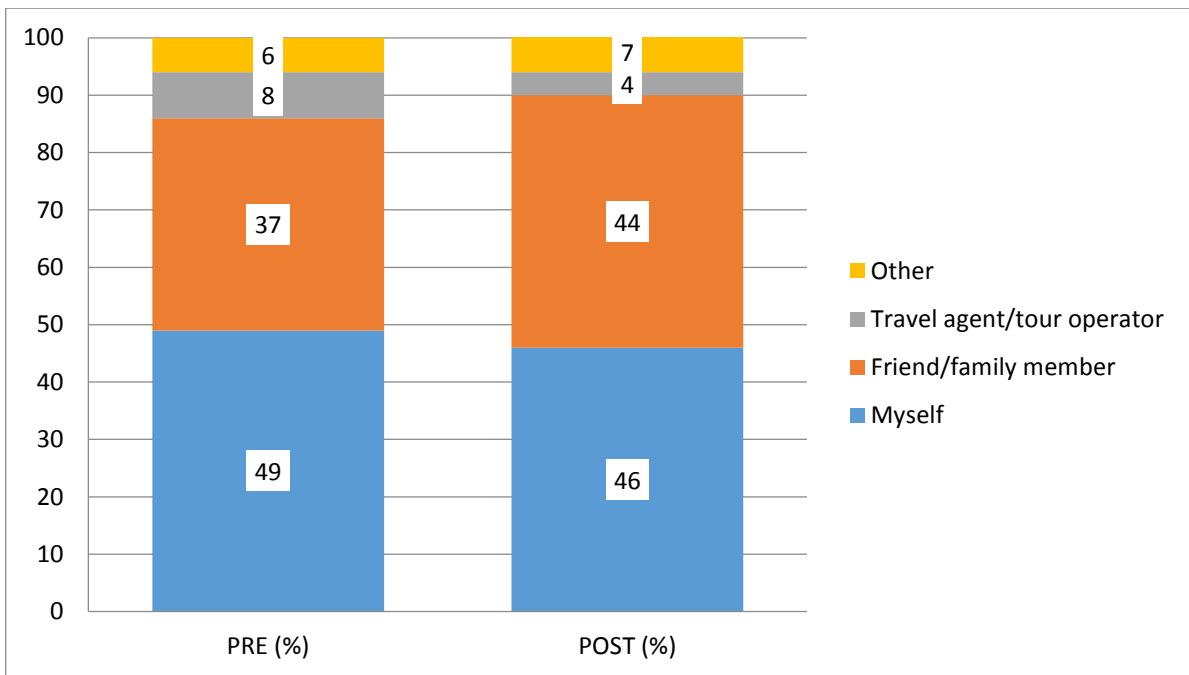
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Travel companions	PRE (%)	POST (%)
Special interest group	3	4
Other	3	4

For both the pre- and the post questionnaire, the majority of respondents indicated that family made up their travel companions, followed by friends.

**Figure 11: Who arranged the visit**



For both the pre and post questionnaire samples, about half of the respondents indicated that they arranged the visit themselves, followed by the trip being arranged by a friend or family member.



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**Table 6: Source of information about sites**

Source of information	PRE (%)	POST (%)
Site's website	39	37
Site's social media account	10	9
Word of mouth	60	67
DMO website	8	6
VIC of surrounding destination	7	4
VIC of other destination	3	1
Travel agent/tour operator	5	3
Other	6	8

Respondents to both the pre and the post questionnaire mentioned word of mouth as their primary source of information, followed by the attractions' websites. Other sources mentioned were 'other websites' and 'has always been our holiday destination' (no new information searched).

#### **8.4 Motivations to visit the sites**

Visitors to the sites were asked what motivated them to go to the site.

**Table 7: Motivation to visit the site**

Motivation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Beautiful surroundings	4.45	.773
Positive life experience	4.28	.873
Learn new things	4.17	.917
Time with friends and family	4.16	1.035
Have a nice holiday	4.00	.989
New place never visited	3.88	1.159



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Motivation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Self-expression of interests	3.69	1.066
Spiritual experience	3.18	1.240
Socialise with other visitors	2.96	1.270

When viewing all the sites together and considering the mean scores where 1= strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree, the results show that respondents were in strong agreement that they were motivated to enjoy the beautiful surroundings of the attractions, followed by the desire to have a positive life experience, learn something new and spending time with friends and family.

In testing the different motivations between sites some significant differences were evident.

**Table 8: Comparisons of motivations between sites**

	Significance
Beautiful surroundings	5.112*
Positive life experience	-
Learn new things	21.758*
Time with friends and family	4.621*
Have a nice holiday	6.082*
New place never visited	19.624*
Self-expression of interests	-
Spiritual experience	5.993*
Socialise with other visitors	9.118*

\*p < .01



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Visitors to WSBG (n=207, M=4.64) were motivated more to enjoy beautiful surroundings than those visitors to the Cradle of Humankind (n=258, M=4.34) and were significantly less (WSBG n=203, M=3.47) motivated to learn new things than those to the Cradle (n=261, M=4.49), Mapungubwe (n=25, M=4.32) as well as Augrabies (n=110, M=4.30). Visitors to iSimangaliso (n=72, M=3.93) were also motivated less by learning than those visiting the Cradle.

Visitors to WSBG (n=203, M=4.38) were motivated more by the desire to spend time with family and friends than those to the Cradle (n=260, M=4.00). These visitors from WSBG (n=202, M=2.59) were also less motivated by the desire to socialise with other visitors than those visiting Augrabies (n=108, M=3.34), iSimangaliso (n=70, M=3.31) and the Cradle (n=255, M=2.96).

Visitors to iSimangaliso (n=73, M=4.30) were motivated more by the desire for a nice holiday than those visiting the Cradle (n=254, M=3.86). Visitors to iSimangaliso (n=72, M=3.56) and WSBG (n=196, M=3.34) were motivated less than visitors to Augrabies (n=109, M=4.22) and the Cradle (n=260, M=4.22) to experience a new place never visited before. Visitors to WSBG were also motivated less than visitors to Mapungubwe (n=25, M=4.16) to experience a new place.

Visitors to WSBG (n=201, M=3.41) were motivated more than visitors to iSimangaliso (n=70, M=2.86) to have a spiritual experience.

## 8.5 Memorable tourism experiences across all sites

The newly developed MTE scale (referred to under section 7.2) was used to test the MTEs of visitors across the five major tourist attraction sites. Table 9 shows the sites, sample sizes and Cronbach's alpha of the scale factors and as indicated, the factors achieved favourable scores across all the sites, providing support for the reliability of the newly formed factors.

**Table 9: Four dimensions of MTE**



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Site	N	Hedonism ( $\alpha$ )	Novelty ( $\alpha$ )	Refresh- ment ( $\alpha$ )	Involvement ( $\alpha$ )
Overall sample (all sites)	630	.800	.892	.801	.853
Walter Sisulu Botanical Garden	215	.747	.895	.793	.828
iSimangaliso Wetland Park (WHS)	79	.847	.902	.897	.872
Cradle of Humankind (WHS)	200	.841	.882	.755	.865
Mapungubwe (WHS)	35	.861	.940	.877	.818
Augrabies National Park	107	.748	.809	.783	.867

Based on the MTE scale (four factors and related items), post-visit respondents were asked to indicate what their most memorable tourist experiences were and table 10 indicates the items that contributed the most to memorable tourism experiences across the sites.



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**Table10: Memorable tourist experience comparisons between sites experience**

FACTORS	Mean	Std Dev
<b>Hedonism</b>		
Thrill about having a new experience	3.89	.986
Indulgence in the activities	3.62	1.012
Real enjoyment	<b>4.19</b>	.790
Excitement	3.92	.927
<b>Novelty</b>		
Once-in-a lifetime experience	3.47	1.227
Uniqueness	3.98	.991
Different from previous experiences	3.78	1.037
Something new	3.74	1.131
Accomplishment	3.64	1.104
Self-discovery	3.58	1.140
Knowledge gain	3.92	1.037
New culture	3.49	1.249
<b>Refreshment</b>		
Sense of freedom	<b>4.08</b>	1.004
Revitalisation	3.94	.971
Meaningfulness	4.04	.944
<b>Involvement</b>		
Place where I really wanted to go	<b>4.02</b>	.988
Activities really wanted to do	3.75	1.085
Main activity of great interest	3.76	1.058
Exploration	3.97	.990





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The items that contributed most to a memorable tourism experience across the sites were: real enjoyment, sense of freedom and visiting a place where the visitor really wanted to go.

The composite scores of the items were used to test for differences between different visitor categories (using t-tests and ANOVAs) for each site as shown in table 11.

**Table 11: Memorable tourist experience comparisons between sites**

Hedonism	Novelty	Refreshment	Involvement
2.840	12.041*	10.497*	.500

\* $p < .01$

Tests for significance were done across the factors. In terms of the novelty factor, iSimangaliso Wetland Park ( $n=77$ ,  $M=3.44$ ) scored lower than Augrabies National Park ( $n=106$ ,  $M=3.93$ ) and Cradle of Mankind ( $n=199$ ,  $M=3.92$ ); Walter Sisulu Gardens ( $n=213$ ,  $M=3.48$ ) also scored significantly lower than these two attractions.

In terms of the refreshment factor, Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens ( $n=213$ ,  $M=4.25$ ) scored significantly higher than iSimangaliso Wetland Park ( $n=76$ ,  $M=3.92$ ) and Cradle of Humankind ( $n=198$ ,  $M=3.79$ ). Augrabies National Park ( $n=106$ ,  $M=4.10$ ) also scored significantly higher than the Cradle of Mankind.

### 8.6 Gap analysis

In order to do an analysis of the gaps between tourist expectations and tourist experiences, a further scale of items was employed which included items related to physical attributes or features of tourists attractions, as well as a few more abstract aspects related to a memorable tourism experience (that was not already covered in the MTE scale) and is shown in table 12. This scale was derived from various sources of literature and shows items under the related factors or categories; not a previously developed and tested scale like the previously used MTE scale. The scale was used to determine:



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- Which items scored the highest in terms of visitor expectations;
- Which items scored the highest in terms of visitor experiences;
- For which items a significant difference was shown in terms of visitor experiences in relation to their expectations;

Table 12 provides the results to the above with the significant differences indicated where items were more positively experienced by visitors (a positive gap) as green shaded results and where items were more negatively experienced than expected (a negative gap) as red shaded results.

**Table 12: Expectations vs experiences – items**

FACTORS	PRE	POST	Significance
<b>On-site facilities and infrastructure</b>			
Easy accessible visitor facilities	4.28	<b>4.33</b>	-
Well-maintained facilities	4.34	4.27	-
Internet access	3.22	3.06	-
Book additional activities	3.78	3.65	4.454**
Able to buy souvenirs	3.38	3.76	32.866*
Universal accessibility	3.99	3.89	-
Safety of person and belongings	<b>4.58</b>	4.16	84.354*
Unique design infrastructure/architecture	4.08	4.03	-
Quality infrastructure/architecture	4.08	3.88	12.550*
Signage/directions	4.39	4.13	26.626*
<b>General offering</b>			
Cater for families/children	4.27	<b>4.42</b>	7.914*
Value for money	4.41	4.22	13.903*
Match marketing material	4.21	4.09	4.092**



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<b>Accessibility</b>			
Convenient to get to	4.27	4.13	7.490*
Short travel distance	3.89	3.89	-
Efficient parking/access system	4.34	4.30	-
<b>Content</b>			
Challenged to spot/interact	4.11	4.03	-
Surprised by unusual things	4.31	3.88	66.864*
Guided by rules/regulations	4.01	3.99	-
<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>PRE</b>	<b>POST</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Variety of things	4.41	4.07	52.573*
Authenticity	4.47	4.16	39.810*
Close encounters	4.41	4.13	30.719*
Excitement viewing rarities	4.42	4.08	44.497*
<b>Learning</b>			
Engage with other visitors	3.35	3.60	14.455*
Articulate guide	3.81	3.61	8.132*
Talks	3.56	3.47	-
Literature	3.65	3.55	-
Interpretation facilities	3.66	3.42	11.440*
Audio guide	3.41	3.13	12.468*
<b>Activities/events</b>			
Variety of recreational activities	3.67	3.64	-
Specific event/exhibition of interest	3.74	3.52	10.886*
Affordable activity options	4.09	3.66	53.497*
<b>Visitor management</b>			
Good information	4.24	3.79	68.080*
Viewing in predictable locations	4.06	3.81	20.669*



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Well-structured layout	4.13	3.96	9.987*
Easy movement between areas	4.24	4.18	-
Viewing time in one spot	4.23	4.27	-
<b>Service quality</b>			
Efficient service reception/entry	4.48	4.24	28.248*
Helpful friendly staff	<b>4.59</b>	<b>4.34</b>	33.932*
Personalised service	3.88	3.75	4.604**
<b>Local culture</b>			
Experience local way of life	3.96	3.70	18.072*
Engage with informative locals	3.77	3.60	7.161*
<b>Place attachment</b>			
<b>FACTORS</b>	<b>PRE</b>	<b>POST</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Most favourite place to visit	3.89	3.72	8.483*
Finally seeing unique thing	4.17	3.92	22.257*
<b>Fulfilment</b>			
Connect with nature	<b>4.52</b>	4.32	16.028*
Connect with mankind	3.89	3.90	-
Connect with history	4.01	3.92	-

The items 'helpful friendly staff', 'safety of person and belongings' and 'connect with nature' achieved the highest mean scores in terms of visitor expectations in the overall sample.

Cater for families/children, 'helpful friendly staff' and 'easily accessible visitor facilities' achieved the highest mean scores in terms of visitor experiences.



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From table 12 it is clear that the majority of statistically significant differences between visitors' expectations and their experiences (indicated with \* or \*\*), present a negative gap (in other words, the experience of the attraction was less than expected). The most notable differences are in terms of:

- 'safety of person and belongings',
- 'good information', and
- 'affordable activity options'.

Three instances where visitor experiences exceeded their expectations were in terms of the attractions:

- catering for families/children,
- having opportunities to engage with other visitors (note that this was the least stated motivation to visit the attractions), and
- the ability to buy souvenirs.

Similarly an analysis was done at the category/factor level to determine how well the 11 factors performed on the expectations vs experiences. Table 13 presents the differences in the composite scores of the factors/categories (the Cronbach's alphas for each factor is also presented to indicate the reliability of the factor).

**Table 13: Expectations vs experiences - overall factors/categories**

FACTORS	$\alpha$ (pre)	$\alpha$ (post)	Comp mean score PRE	Comp mean score POST	Statistical Difference (pre/post of overall sample)
On-site facilities and infrastructure	.798	.874	4.02	3.95	-
General offering	.699	.768	4.30	4.26	-
Accessibility	.706	.732	4.17	4.10	-



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Content	.801	.832	4.30	4.08	53.295*
Learning	.862	.909	3.61	3.53	-
Activities/events	.739	.810	3.83	3.61	17.990*
Visitor management	.800	.813	4.19	4.00	23.076*
Service quality	.616	.792	4.31	4.13	20.857*
Local culture	.712	.747	3.87	3.67	13.442*
Place attachment	.699	.759	4.04	3.82	19.564*
Fulfilment	.631	.665	4.16	4.06	4.223**

\*  $p < .01$

\*\*  $p < .05$

In line with the previous table, the category that presented the most significant negative gap was in terms of the 'content' of the attractions. This was followed by 'visitor management' and 'service quality'. None of the gaps at category level were positive.



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Figure 12: Graphic illustration of expectations and experiences at all sites



As explained, the gap analysis was only performed at the factor level to determine the gaps between the pre/post scores, but not on the difference in gaps between visitor categories. However, further analysis was done on the composite scores of the post questionnaire (visitor experiences) to determine if significant differences existed between visitor categories and these experiences. Table 14 presents the results of this analysis.



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**Table 14: Comparison between visitor experiences and visitor categories**

	Choice of visit	Last visit	Focus of visit	Stay-over	Who arranged	Place of origin	Gender	Age	Population group
On-site facilities and infrastructure	-	-	20.758*	3.931**	-	-	-	-	7.281*
General offering	-	-	28.285*	4.078**	4.580*	-	-	-	
Accessibility	-	-	38.745*	7.529*	-	-	-	7.322*	
Content	4.289*	-	16.434*		-	-	-	-	
Learning	-	4.906**	5.420**		-	-	-	-	5.608*
Activities/events	-	-	5.002**		-	-	7.872*	-	
Visitor management	-	-	26.239*	3.948**	-	-	4.502*	-	
Service quality	-	-	22.469*		-	-	4.877*	-	
Local culture	-	-	20.0215*		-	7.478*	-	-	7.109*
Place attachment	3.134**	8.899*	28.784*	3.946**	-	5.649*	-	-	3.730*
Fulfilment	-	-	15.134*		-	-	-	-	

Significant differences were found in the categories:





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Choice to visit.

First/repeat visitors

Focus/purpose of the visit

Day/overnight visitors

Who arranged the visit

Domestic/international visitors

Gender

Age groups

Ethnicity

Visitors who visited the sites out of own choice ( $n=424$ ,  $M=4.10$ ) gave more positive scores to the content of the sites than those visiting after being given a recommendation ( $n=77$ ,  $M=3.85$ ). These visitors also gave more positive scores to place attachment than those who visited because of a travel companion's choice ( $M=4.05$  versus  $M=4.02$ ).

First time visitors ( $n=201$ ,  $M=3.66$ ) gave more positive scores to learning than repeat visitors ( $n=368$ ,  $M=3.46$ ). Repeat visitors ( $n=369$ ,  $M=3.91$ ) gave more positive scores to place attachment than first time visitors ( $n=202$ ,  $M=3.66$ ).

Day visitors ( $n=514$ ) gave higher scores than overnight visitors ( $n=113$ ) (to the specific sites where such facilities are available) in terms of on-site facilities and infrastructure ( $M=3.98$  versus  $M=3.82$ ), general offering ( $M=4.29$  versus  $M=4.13$ ), accessibility ( $M=4.15$  versus  $M=3.90$ ), visitor management ( $M=4.04$  versus  $M=3.85$ ), as well as place attachment ( $M=3.86$  versus  $M=3.66$ ).

Noticeably visitors whose focus was on experiencing the whole site gave significantly more positive scores on all of the factors than visitors who came only to attend a hosted event/activity at the site.



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Visitors whose visit was arranged by their work (n=17, M=3.69) gave lower scores to aspects of the general offering than those whose visits were organised by their school/university (n=24, M=4.53), themselves (n=273, M=4.35), friend/family members (n=273, M=4.35), as well as travel intermediaries (n=21, M=4.02).

Domestic visitors (n=407) gave higher scores than international visitors (n=69) to aspects of local culture (M=3.70 versus M=3.30) as well as place attachment (M=3.85 versus M=3.54).

Male respondents (n=259) gave higher scores than female respondents (n=291) in terms of activities/events (M=3.75 versus M=3.42), visitor management (M=4.08 versus M=3.95), as well as service quality (M=4.22 versus M=4.09).

Visitors over the age of 50 (n=110, M=4.33) gave higher scores than those between 36 – 50 (n=267, M=4.11), as well as 18 – 35 (n=168, M=3.99) in terms of accessibility.

Coloured visitors (n=61) gave higher scores than White visitors (n=360) in terms of on-site facilities and infrastructure (M=4.29 versus M=3.86), local culture (M=4.18 versus M=3.52), as well as place attachment (M=4.23 versus M=3.77). Indian visitors (n=37, M=3.98) gave higher scores than white visitors (n=346, M=3.41) in terms of learning.

## 9. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

A total of 1537 responses were generated from all sites, more or less equally divided between the pre and post visitors. Most respondents were from Maropeng and Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens (36% and 32% respectively), followed by Augrabies (16%), Isimangaliso (12%) and Mapungubwe (4%). iSimangaliso and Mapungubwe presented certain challenges which are further explained in those reports. The general profile of respondents coincided with those of the various sites making it possible to assess whether any significant differences occurred between how the various sites performed in terms of expectations versus experiences. This similarity was also found in the trip behaviour of the



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respondents from the various sites which covered aspects such as first time/repeat visitors, frequency of visits, day/overnight visitors, the purpose of visit, who arranged the visit and sources of information. Overall it is evident that word of mouth is the primary source of information, followed by the attractions' websites which points to the importance of both in marketing attractions. The beautiful surroundings linked to all the sites (except the Cradle) served as strong motivations for visits, followed by the desire to have a positive life experience, learn something new and spending time with friends and family. More than the other sites, a visit to a botanical garden such as Walter Sisulu is strongly motivated by the desire to spend time with family and friends and Isimangaliso showing that it is more of a 'holiday destination' than the other sites.

The items that contributed most to a memorable tourism experience across all the sites were: real enjoyment, sense of freedom and visiting a place where the visitor really wanted to go. Comparisons across sites showed that Augrabies scored the highest on the 'novelty' factor and Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens on the 'refreshment' factor.

Across the board visitors expected 'helpful friendly staff', 'safety of person and belongings' and to 'connect with nature'. As far as experiences are concerned 'cater for families/children, 'helpful friendly staff' and 'easily accessible visitor facilities' achieved the highest mean scores.

While the initial aim was to conduct a gap analysis of the same set of visitors' expectations (pre visit) versus visitors' experiences (post visit) and then compare the differences in perceived experiences, this was not logistically possible so two different sets of visitors (one pre and one post) were used. This had implications for data analysis but as indicated in the overall sample and site specific profiles, the research team managed to achieve a fairly similar profile of people based on trip behaviour and demographics in most instances which allowed for comparisons from the standpoint of identifying 'trends' among respondents. Thus the project's objective of determining the experiences of different visitor types to the attractions versus their expectations could still be met. Overall, it was found that across all sites a negative gap existed on items (in other words, the experience of the attractions overall was less than expected). The most notable differences are in terms of:



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- 'safety of person and belongings',
- 'good information', and
- 'affordable activity options'.

Three instances where visitor experiences exceeded their expectations were in terms of the attractions:

- catering for families/children,
- having opportunities to engage with other visitors (note that this was the least stated motivation to visit the attractions), and
- the ability to buy souvenirs.

At the factor level, responses were analysed to determine how well the 11 factors performed on the expectations vs experiences. The most significant negative gap was in terms of the 'content' of the attractions. This was followed by 'visitor management' and 'service quality'. The majority of the gaps at category level were negative. Some differences between groups of tourists were evident, e.g. at the ethnic level Coloured visitors gave higher scores than White visitors in terms of on-site facilities and infrastructure, local culture as well as place attachment and Indian visitors gave higher scores than White visitors in terms of learning.

## 10. RECOMMENDATIONS

While each site analysis is explained in the relevant report, a number of critical issues should be mentioned:

The demographic characteristics of respondents still indicate a majority of white visitors at all sites, thus more attention should be given to the promotion of sites promoting to the emerging market and addressing accessibility issues. While all sites appeared to have aligned the visitor motivations to visit sites with the core product offering, this is an ongoing process of ensuring that it remains so. In this regard the website of each site must be constantly updated as this is also the primary source of information for visitation.



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It is evident that MTEs relate mostly “intangible” constructs (e.g. sense of freedom, real enjoyment *etc*), thus it is particularly important to understand how visitors “feel” when visiting a site.

Gaps between expectations and experiences have shown to be significant in a number of incidences and must be addressed at the site level. It is thus imperative that the research results are disseminated to the relevant sites as soon as possible and consideration should be given to how the research can be replicated each year by the site management themselves, using the instrument as designed in this study.

While some general trends are exhibited which can be addressed at a policy level (e.g. emerging market tourism, service quality, visitor management issues) each report has a wealth of information and it is thus recommended that each site assesses their report in detail for adequate interventions, especially where significant results are shown. Recommendations are not done on the overall results since each site requires interventions that are unique to that site thus the recommendations will be included in each site’s report.

## **11. ETHICAL ASPECTS**

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Pretoria to undertake data collection at the various sites (with each site giving permission).

## **12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

A major limitation is the fact that the same individuals could not be used to complete a pre and post visit evaluation. This would have allowed for a more reliable representation of gaps in experiences. Another limitation is the fact that the survey was not inside of the tourism peak season, limiting samples to some of the sites. Another limitation is that this is a once-off study. Tourists’ experiences are influenced by outside factors such as weather conditions, events hosted at the sites and so forth and it is necessary



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to test the experiences of an attraction through repetitive measures to eliminate (or determine) the influence of such external factors. A limitation in the data analysis is the fact that the pre-post scale could not effectively be restructured into new factors after factor analysis as the factors varied too much. This limitation is somewhat countered by the fact that the factors were mostly reliable (based on Cronbach's Alpha scores) for the overall as well as site samples. Problematic items were removed.



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## ANNEXURE A

### RESEARCH SITE OVERVIEW

RESEARCHER NAME.....

DATE OF ASSESSMENT.....

Attractions drive tourism. Cultural and heritage assets are ideally suited to become tourist attractions, for they encompass the unique features of a place, are experiential in nature and help promote the rich tapestry of a destination's traditions, ethnic backgrounds and landscapes.

#### **A Qualitative Framework consisting of four dimensions:**

Cultural

Physical

Product

Experiential

Each dimension is assessed holistically through the indicators.

Indicators provide guidance about what to consider but are not discrete sub-elements to be assessed in their own right.

#### **An ordinal scale marking system is based on five categories:**

1. Low
2. Low/Moderate
3. Moderate



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- 4. Moderate/High
- 5. High

**STEPS FOR EACH RESEARCHER (2 PER SITE):**

**STEP 1**

**Complete Tourism Attraction Assessment Indicators Table 1**

- 1. Review background documentation to familiarise yourself with site
- 2. Interview one or two managers (CEO and/or Marketing Manager) for insight as per indicators of management’s perspective
- 3. Conduct on-site inspection independently assessing each indicator holistically i.e. provide an overall view of what you are perceiving.

Score the indicator according to the ordinal scale

- 4. Provide a brief written motivation for score
- 5. Highlight major flaws

**STEP 2**

**Transfer score onto Assessment of Tourism Potential Table 2**

**TABLE 1: TOURISM ATTRACTION ASSESSMENT INDICATORS**

ROBBEN ISLAND		
Tourists Attraction Typology	Scale Value	Leisure Superstructure Historical: Museum & Heritage Site
<i>Cultural values</i>		
1. Do the stakeholders want tourists/tourism?		



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2. Can the asset withstand visitation without damaging its cultural values (tangible and intangible)?		Obtain reports/policy documents: visitation numbers and impact on asset values (tangible and intangible)
3. Does the asset reflect a unique character in terms of its value (living or disappeared)?		
4. Is the asset of local, regional or international cultural significance?		For whom is it important?
<b>Tourists Attraction Typology</b>	<b>Scale Value</b>	<b>Leisure Superstructure Historical: Museum &amp; Heritage Site</b>
5. Does a visit create an emotional connection with the individual?		Memorable Tourism Experience
6. Is the asset worth conserving as a representative example of the community's heritage?		
<b>Physical values</b>		
1. Can all areas be accessed (if not what can be done to rectify)?		
2. Does the site represent potential hazards for visitors (if so what can be done to rectify)?		
3. What is the physical state of repair (any wear and tear) and will its authenticity be damaged after repairs are made?		
4. Can it be modified for use (legally, practically)?		Legally: UNESCO? Practically: Physical outlay



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5. Are both the site (inside its physical boundaries) and the setting (its surrounds) appealing to tourists?		An overall assessment
<b>Product values</b>		
1. Is the site big enough to attract and retain tourists for a long time?		
2. Is the effort required by tourists to get to it too difficult to make a visit worthwhile (time, cost, effort)?		
3. Is it near other attractions (similar or different types)?		
<b>Tourists Attraction Typology</b>	<b>Scale Value</b>	<b>Leisure Superstructure Historical: Museum &amp; Heritage Site</b>
4. Is there sufficient information about the site available (e.g. magazine, website, etc.)?		
5. Does the site have tourist market appeal?		
<b>Experiential values</b>		
1. Does this asset have the potential to offer interesting experiences to tourists?		
2. In what ways is this asset capable of providing a participatory, engaging and/or entertaining experience?		
3. Is this asset capable of meeting different tourists' expectations?		





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4. How authentic would general tourists perceive of the experiences offered by the asset?		
5. Is good quality interpretation currently available and if not, how		

**TABLE 2: OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF TOURISM POTENTIAL:**

Asset	Cultural values	Physical values	Product values	Experiential values	Overall assessment	Fatal flaws
Robben Island						
Isimangolisa						
Mapungubwe						
Augrabies						
Maropeng						
Walter Sisulu						

**Source:** McKerchner, B. & Ho, P.S.Y. 2006. Assessing the Tourism Potential of Smaller Cultural and Heritage Attractions. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 14(5):473-488.



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**ANNEXURE B**  
**OBSERVATION SHEET PER SITE**

**SITE:**

**DATE:**

<b>TRANSPORTATION/SELF DRIVE TO SITE:</b>					
<b>SIGNAGE/DIRECTIONS ON GOOGLE MAPS:</b>					
<b>PARKING AT SITE</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comment</b>
- EASY TO ACCESS					
- SUFFICIENT PARKING BAYS					
- SECURE AREA WITH GUARDS					
<b>ENTRANCE AT SITE</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comment</b>
- ARCHITECTURE OF BUILDING					
- QUEUING/BOTTLENECK AT ENTRANCE					
- ENTRANCE FEE					
- COURTEOUS STAFF OVERALL					
- INFORMATION/INTERPRETATIVE SERVICES STAFF					
- INFORMATION TO TAKE: MAPS/BROCHURES					
- SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS FOR EXTRA CHARGE					
- BOOKING FOR ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES					
- GUIDED TOURS AVAILABLE					
- AUDIO GUIDES FOR RENT					



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<b>FACILITIES AT SITE AND QUALITY</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comment</b>
- LAYOUT OF SITE					
- WALKWAYS					
- DISTANCE BETWEEN ITEMS TO VIEW					
- UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY					
- CATERS FOR CHILDREN					
- WIFI/INTERNET ACCESS					
- ACTIVITIES ON SITE					
- FOOD/RESTAURANTS					
- SHOPS TO BUY CURIOS					
- BENCHES/RESTING AREAS					
- PICNIC AREAS					
- WC/ABLUTION					
- BEACHES (SODWANA)					
- CATERED LODGE					
- SELF-CATERING CHALETS/CAMPING					
- DUSTBINS					
- SAFETY (AREAS OF RISK)					
- SECURITY ON SITE					



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<b>FACILITIES AT SITE AND QUALITY</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comment</b>
- MEDICAL ASSISTANCE ON SITE					
- SURROUNDINGS NEAT OVERALL					
<b>MOVEMENT OF VISITORS AT SITE</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b><i>BOTTLENECKS/QUEUING</i></b>					
- AT EXHIBITS/AREAS					
- WC SIZE (TOO FEW) – QUEUING					
- RESTAURANTS					
<b><i>BEHAVIOUR OF OTHER VISITORS</i></b>					
<b>OTHER ASPECTS</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comment</b>



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YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

## ANNEXURE C: PRE-VISIT QUESTIONNAIRE

### Consent for participation in a research study

#### Division Tourism Management

### DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT THROUGH UNDERSTANDING TOURISTS' EXPECTATIONS AND MEMORABLE TOURIST EXPERIENCES AT MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

Research conducted by:  
Division Tourism Management  
Tel: 012 420 4374

Dear Respondent

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by the Division Tourism Management at the University of Pretoria on behalf of the National Department of Tourism.

The purpose of the study is to determine the aspects that contribute to a memorable tourist experience when visiting a major tourist attraction.

Please note the following:

- This study involves an anonymous survey. Your name will not appear on the questionnaire and the answers you give will be treated as strictly confidential. You cannot be identified in person based on the answers you give.
- Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may, however, choose not to participate and you may also stop participating at any time without any negative consequences.
- Please answer the questions in the attached questionnaire as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 10 minutes of your time.
- The results of the study will be used for academic purposes as well as to inform policy decision making and may be published in an academic journal.
- Please contact the study leader, Prof Berendien Lubbe, on e-mail. [Berendien.lubbe@up.ac.za](mailto:Berendien.lubbe@up.ac.za) if you have any questions or comments regarding the study.

Please sign the form to indicate that:

- You have read and understand the information provided above.
- You give your consent to participate in the study on a voluntary basis.



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\_\_\_\_\_  
Respondent's signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



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**GENERAL**

1. Please indicate the following context (tick the most applicable option):

Visiting this attraction was:	
My own choice	
My travel companions' choice	
Part of a packaged tour	
Recommended by someone	

2. What first comes to mind when you think of (site name)?

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3. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements as your **reasons for visiting this attraction** (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

I decided to visit this place because I want to ...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Explore/see a new place where I have never been before					
2. Have a spiritual experience (opportunity to reflect)					
3. Spend time with friends and family					
4. Just have a nice holiday/visit					
5. Engage with other visitors to socialise					
6. Express part of my interests					
7. Enjoy beautiful surroundings					
8. Have a positive life experience					
9. Learn new things					

1. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements regarding **aspects related to your visit to this attraction** (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).



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During the visit I want to ...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
<b>Experience a site:</b>						
1. That has easy access to visitor facilities (ablution, shops, catering, accommodation)						
2. With well-maintained facilities (ablution, shops, catering, accommodation)						
3. That offers access to the internet						
During the visit I want to ...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
<b>Experience a site:</b>						
4. Where I can easily book for additional activities						
5. Where I am able to buy souvenirs						
6. That is accessible to the physically challenged						
7. Where I feel safe and know my belongings are safe						
8. That has uniquely designed infrastructure/architectures						
9. That has high quality of infrastructure/architectures						
10. That has good signage/directions						
<b>Experience a site that:</b>						
11. Caters for families/children						
12. Offers value for money						
13. Offers what were depicted on the marketing material (website, brochures)						
<b>Experience a site that:</b>						
14. Is convenient to get to						
15. Is within a short travel distance						
16. Has an efficient parking/access system						
<b>Have the opportunity to:</b>						





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17. Identify/spot as many species as possible/to interact with as many exhibits as possible						
<b>Have the opportunity to learn about the site via:</b>						
18.1 engaging with other visitors						
18.2 a knowledgeable articulate guide						
18.3 talks						
18.4 literature						
18.5 an interpretive centre/interactive displays (e.g. videos)						
18.6 an audio guide						
<b>During the visit I want to ...</b>						
19. Be surprised by unusual things						
20. Be guided by rules to behave appropriately						
21. See different kinds of animals/species/exhibits						
22. Experience wildlife/nature in its natural state						
23. Come as close as possible to wildlife/nature/artefacts						
24. Be excited by viewing rare species of animals/flowers /artefacts						

During the visit I want to ...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Not applicable
25. Partake in different kinds of recreational activities						
26. Attend a specific event/exhibitions that I am interested in						
27. Have affordable options for different activities						
28. Receive good information (maps, brochures, signage)						
29. Easily view animals/nature in predictable locations						
30. Easily view exhibits in a well-structured layout						
31. Easily move between different sightings/exhibits						
32. Be able to spend as much time as I want in the same location viewing my favourite animal/exhibit/plant						
33. Experience fast and efficient service at reception/entry						
34. Be served by helpful and friendly staff						
35. Be offered personalized service						



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36. Have a variety of opportunities to experience the local way of life						
37. Engage with local people that are willing to share information about the place						
38. Spend time at this place as it's my most favourite place to visit						
39. See many things unique to this park/site that I have always been interested in						
<b>Have a deep connection with:</b>						
40.1 Nature						
40.2 Mankind						
40.3 History						

## DEMOGRAPHICS

5. Are you (tick all applicable):

1. A day visitor to the attraction (not visiting other attractions in the surrounding area)	
2. A day visitor to the surrounding destination (also visiting other attractions)	
3. An overnight visitor to the attraction (staying over at the attraction)	
4. An overnight visitor to the surrounding destination (not staying over at the attraction)	

6. When last did you visit this attraction?

6.1 Including this visit, how many times have you visited in total? \_\_\_\_\_

1. This is the first time	
2. Less than a year ago	
3. A year ago	
4. 2 – 3 years ago	
5. 4 – 5 years ago	
6. More than 5 years ago	

7. Are you visiting the attraction?



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1. To experience the whole attraction	
2. Only to attend an event/activity hosted within the attraction	

8. With whom are you visiting the attraction? Please tick all applicable

1. Family	
2. Friend/s	
3. Alone	
4. Work colleague/s	
5. Educational group	
6. Special interest group (e.g. a club, society)	
Other (please specify)	

9. Who arranged this visit? Please tick most relevant option

1. Myself	
2. A friend / family member	
3. A travel agent/tour operator	
Other (please specify)	

10. Where did you find information about this attraction? Please tick all applicable

1. The attraction's website	
2. The attraction's social media account (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	
3. Word of mouth (family/friends)	
4. The destination's official tourism website	
5. A visitor information centre (the surrounding destination)	
6. A visitor information centre (a different destination)	
7. A tour operator/travel agent (face-to-face or online)	
Other (please specify)	

11. Please indicate your country of residence (city IF South African): \_\_\_\_\_.

12. Please indicate your gender:

1. Male	
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2. Female	
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13. Please indicate your highest level of qualification:

1. Primary school	
2. Secondary school/Matric	
3. National diploma/certificate	
4. Undergraduate degree	
5. Postgraduate degree	

\_\_\_\_\_

FOR ADMIN PURPOSES ONLY:					
A	G1YA	G2A	G3S		
G	G1M	G2F			
E	G1A	G2C	G2I	G2W	G2A

**\*\* THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION \*\***