IDENTIFICATION OF MARKETING STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE TOURISM: THE CASE OF SOETDORING NATURE RESERVE IN THE FREE STATE PROVINCE

by

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DECLARATION

I, **Matshidiso Pholoana**, solemnly and sincerely declare that the work presented in this dissertation is my original work and has not been submitted by me for evaluation at any other university. I can confirm that where information has been sourced from other sources, it has been indicated in the study.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate and identify marketing strategies to promote tourism at Soetdoring Nature Reserve located in the Free State Province. The primary question that was explored was what recommendations can be made with regard to marketing of the Soetdoring Nature Reserve.

For research objectives to be achieved, an in-depth literature review was undertaken. Additionally, a survey was also conducted to determine the current status of the Soetdoring Nature Reserve and data were sourced by means of self-administered questionnaires. The hypothesis was proven to be correct by a literature review, namely that marketing plays a significant role in promoting tourism and has the potential of attracting tourists and raising revenue.

The recommendations were made within the context of empirical survey findings. To improve the current marketing at the Soetdoring Nature Reserve, it has been recommended that there should be a turnaround marketing strategy and that resources in a form of funds and staff should be augmented. Furthermore, the 7Ps of marketing, which are of paramount importance, were also recommended, as well as that there more marketing should be done on social media and on the internet.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There are three capital cities in South Africa, Cape Town, Bloemfontein and Pretoria within the nine provinces (Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, North West, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape and Free State). South Africa's tourism sector has been identified as a key enabler of economic growth in 2011. Therefore, the National Development Plan, Vision 2030 (National Planning Commission 2011:131) prioritises the development of the tourism sector to support the government's overarching objectives of reducing poverty and equality. In particular, the tourism sector can play a key role in supporting employment, developing an inclusive and integrated rural economy and increasing revenue. The National Tourism Strategy (2017:8) indicates that one of the performing sectors in South Africa is the tourism economy. It has identified tourism as one of the mechanism for job creation for long and short term periods.

The Free State currently has a population of 2.8 million people, which grew from 2.7 million in 2001, according to Estimates of Provincial Revenue and Expenditure (FSPG 2016:5-6). This indicates a potential increase of tourists or visitors to the province. The Free State Growth and Development Strategy (FSP 2005:53) prioritizes the tourism sector development as a key driver of development for job creation and revenue generation. Due to political stability, the number of foreign tourists will increase, which will lead to tourists being willing to spend their money in the country. The mining, agriculture and tourism sectors are instrumental industries to attract, retain and grow investment, business opportunities and job creation. In Bloemfontein, Soetdoring Nature Reserve (hereinafter referred to as Soetdoring) has a potential of attracting tourists and increasing revenue.

Soetdoring is situated near Bloemfontein in the Free State Province. Soetdoring generates revenue mainly through tourism from within and outside the province and mainly through fishing license fees, camping fees and entrance fees. It is situated near the N1 route where tourists are passing, close to Bloemfontein where many of activities take place such as Bloemshow, Mangaung African Cultural Festival (MACUFE) and many more. This research focuses on the identification of new marketing strategies to increase tourism, with specific reference to Soetdoring Nature Reserve. It is important to note that the revenue generated by Soetdoring is deposited into the Provincial Revenue Fund (bank account of the Free State Provincial Government).

1.1 BACKGROUND AND REASON FOR THE STUDY

The Free State is surrounded by to six provinces, Gauteng, the Eastern Cape, Northern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and North West. The Free State is also close to the neighbouring Kingdom of Lesotho. Most people travelling from one province to another are likely to pass through the Free State, particularly Bloemfontein, using the N1 route. The N1 route passing through Bloemfontein is utilized by people who travel to the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and Gauteng. This places the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality at the centre for travellers who are en route to other provinces.

Mangaung is a metropolitan municipality that was established in May 2011 after the local government elections of 18 May 2011. Within the Mangaung Metropolitan area, there is reserve called Soetdoring which is managed by the Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs. According to Pembi (n.d.), Soetdoring has two entrances. The eastern entrance is at the Modder River on the Bloemfontein/Bultfontein road (R700). The Modder River enters the resort at its eastern boundary and runs through the 7 500 hectares reserve before entering Kruger Drift Dam, which forms the western boundary. This is mainly an area for water sports, as visitors can boat in the water. The resort offers accommodation and visitors can also fish in the Modder River. The visitors pay entrance fees, as well as for accommodation and for other activities like gaming. These payments are classified as revenue for the resort. An amount of R648 352,00, according the Basic Accounting System (BAS), was collected in 2018 from entrance fees, boarding services, gaming licenses, camping service fees and hunting services.

According to Free State Peoples' Guide (FSPG 2017b:2), the Provincial Government's purse (the money that the provincial government has) is influenced by three sources of income, namely Conditional Grants (Money from the National Government with specific conditions), Equitable Share, and Provincial Own Revenue. The Conditional Grants imply that the Provincial Government should spend the Conditional Grant money according to its purpose. The Equitable Share is money from national government disbursed to provinces annually according to the equitable formula, which determines the allocations according to the demographics of the province. The third source of income, Provincial Own Revenue, refers to money raised by the Provincial Government. For the 2018/2019 financial year, an amount of R32 898 billion was allocated by the National Treasury to the Free State Provincial Government. The Equitable Share constitutes 74,6% of total revenue, Conditional Grants 22,1% and Provincial Own Revenue 3,3%. This situation indicates that revenue raised by the province (the third source of income), is far less than what is allocated by National Government

and there is a need to explore or improve on sources of revenue raised at Soetdoring Nature Reserve.

According to Robert (2011:6), tourism happens when people move from their familiar surroundings to travel and stay elsewhere for particular purposes like business, vacation and others for a period of not more than a year. Tourism and visitors cannot be separated, as people who are touring from one place to another become visitors at their destination. When people travel to a particular place, they spend money on food, clothes and, importantly, on accommodation and other expenses. In this way, they will somehow contribute to a particular country or province economically.

Places that have activities such as music events, sports and gaming, among others, often attract tourism. The Free State Province, in particular Mangaung, is seen as one of the places that attract tourism through MACUFE, and Bloemshow, as well as professional rugby and soccer games. These are some of the benefits in Mangaung where people flock from other provinces to the Free State, in particular to Mangaung. However, there is a need to identify challenges of why people do not utilise Soetdoring and why it does not attract tourists.

Through tourism, attractions to a particular place can be increased. Services can be improved and it can also give people different perspectives about the culture of other people. Most importantly, it can generate revenue through revenue streams such as accommodation and resorts, as explained by Glenn (2001:9-12). He further indicates that tourism can augment tax revenue as tourists will go to shopping malls and restaurants. Resorts can also contribute largely to the revenue of a province.

The Free State Provincial Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2017 (2017:4) indicate an estimated increase in population by 116 010 from 2011 to 2016, which translates to the Free State having the second-smallest increase after the Northern Cape (45 839). The increase in population indicates that there will also be an increase in tourism to the province, as people will visit family and friends for different occasions. This would mean that people might be willing to explore the city by visiting resorts and exploring other entertainment activities.

South Africa's tourism sector has been identified as a key enabler of economic growth. The National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 (NPC 2011) prioritises the development of the tourism sector to support the revenue of the South African government. According to the NDP (NPC 2011:131), the disadvantage of South Africa is that it is far from wealthy investors and consumers to visit and spend money, which forms part of the income for the country. However, several advantages can be found in South Africa, including well-managed national resorts and other parks. The NDP further states that other economic spin-offs like investments can be inspired by the tourism industry.

Coupled with the above, the NDP indicates that a key focus will be on attracting and increasing the number of tourists who will spend money in the country. This means that all provinces should work towards ensuring that they are able to attract tourists, making sure that the quality of infrastructure including accommodation at resorts, are prioritised.

In terms of the National Tourism Sector Strategy (SA Government 2011:26-30), the National Department of Tourism will develop a domestic tourism growth strategy by identifying all the existing resorts that are not fully utilised in all municipalities. Other government-owned resorts and reserves will be upgraded with the aim of targeting new travellers. It further stipulates that there is a potential to turn the rural areas into tourist destinations and attract tourists in South Africa. Innovations of tourism products can be initiated in those areas. However, most of the areas are not developed; they have inadequate infrastructure and the unavailability of basic services hampers development. This indicates a need to recognise tourism opportunities in the rural areas.

Tourism plays a critical role in the economy and development of the country (Larisa 2016:2). When a tourist spends, a portion goes to the province as part of revenue in the form of taxes. The major contribution of tourism is that it creates job opportunities. In other words, if a province or a city attracts more tourists, it means that people will need accommodation at the hotels and resorts which, in turn, will employ more people. In addition, companies operating in the tourism sector can contribute to the revenue of the province in the form of fees payable.

The Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (DESTEA) (FSPG 2016) has a number of resorts in the Free State, including Soetdoring in Bloemfontein, that can support Provincial and National development objectives, Malakoane (2017:np). The resorts can support the tourism sector development by attracting tourists to the area or extending their stays, thereby increasing overall spending in the province.

According to the Annual Report of the DESTEA (FSPG 2016:53), the department planned to do marketing sessions for the resorts in the 2013/2014 financial year; however, nothing was achieved. In the 2014/15 and 2015/16 financial years nine and eight marketing platforms were conducted respectively. In the 2016/17 book year, only three marketing platforms were achieved. Based on the analysis, there seem to be challenges concerning the marketing of resorts. The achievement of marketing has been dwindling since the 2013/14 to 2016/17 financial years. This poses a challenge to the economic development and growth of the Province.

For the 2017/18 financial year, according to the Annual Performance Plan of the DESTEA, the target number of marketing platforms for the resorts is four, which indicates a small number of

marketing platforms. During the 2017 Free State Provincial Budget Speech (FSPG 2017:27), the Member for the Executive Council (MEC) for Finance indicated that there is a potential of revenue augmentation through resorts and reserves. This means that one of the focus points for the province will be to accelerate revenue through resorts.

1.2   PROBLEM STATEMENT

Tourists often want to explore the place they want to visit on the internet before considering a tourist destination or choosing a place to stay for any tourism-linked activities. As at the time of writing this proposal, Soetdoring Nature Reserve's website is not active and it was last modified on 31 May 2012. Tourists are unable to know about the Soetdoring and its amenities. Marketing platforms such as social media can be fully explored to market Soetdoring Nature Reserve; for example, Facebook or Twitter.

There is a strong view by the province to increase revenue generated from the resorts. The 2017/18 Budget Vote Speech of the DESTEA indicates that the department is on the drive to increase revenue through resorts and reserves and the focus will be on developing the four flagship resorts, namely Maria Moroka in Thaba Nchu, Sandveld in Hoopstad, Soetdoring near Bloemfontein and Willem Pretorius near Winburg. For Soetdoring to increase its revenue, there must be an identification of new and the development of existing marketing strategies that will attract tourism. If there are no new marketing strategies, there will be no increase in income. If there is no website for people to access, there will be no information about the resort. The problem statement, therefore, is to what extent innovative tourism marketing strategies will have an impact on the revenue generation of the Free State Province.

1.3   AIM

According to Olivier (2018:11), the purpose of the research aim is to explain what needs to be researched. The aim of this research is to identify tourism marketing strategies at Soetdoring in order to increase the economic growth and development in the Free State Province. The focus will be on updating the current website in order to develop new marketing strategies.

1.4   OBJECTIVES

Research objectives, according to Thomas and Hodges (2010:39), are key issues to be focused on in the research, as identified through specific statements. The following are the objectives of the study:

- To conduct a literature review for the identification of tourism marketing strategies as tool to increase revenue at Soetdoring Nature Reserve.

- To gather data on current tourism marketing strategies.

- To identify tourism marketing strategies that will be used to promote Soetdoring Nature Reserve.

- To find solutions and make recommendations that will contribute to the increase and promotion of tourism at Soetdoring Nature Reserve.

1.4.1 Conceptual framework

According to Svinicki (2010:5), a conceptual framework refers to how a set of ideas relates to one another to achieve a certain function. Furthermore, Yamauchi, Ponte, Ratliffe and Traynor (2017:11) indicate that a conceptual framework is also regarded as a system of ideas and theories that support the research. Yamauchi *et al.* (2017:11) further highlight that a conceptual framework can be used to explain what needs to be studied either graphically or narratively. From these explanations, it is evident that the conceptual framework comprises ideas and activities that relate to one another to achieve a particular objective.
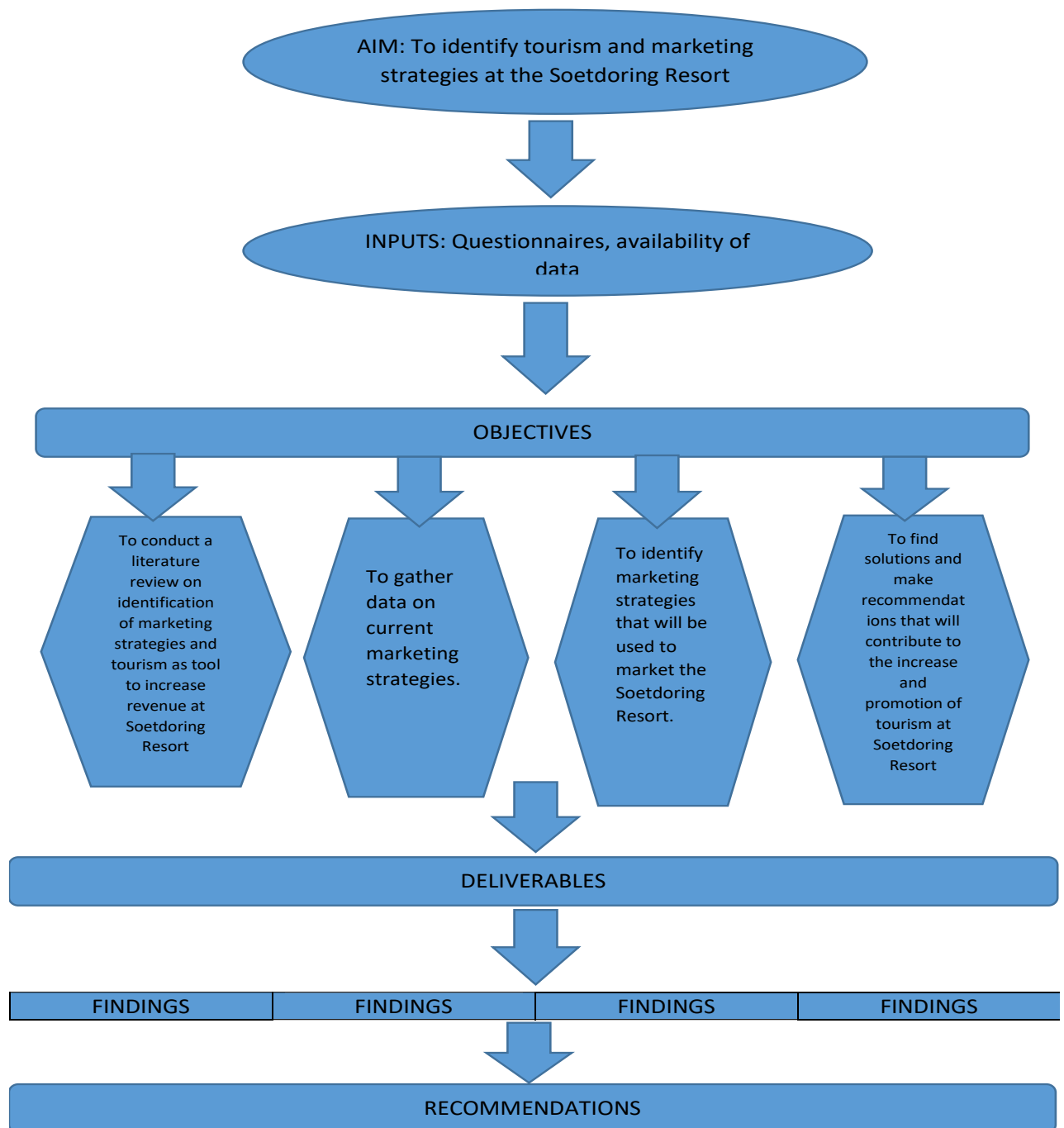
Figure 1: Conceptual framework of study (Pholoana 2019)

The figure above depicts the conceptual framework of this study. It depicts the correlation of different activities and ideas and how they flow in order to achieve the objectives of the study.

1.5   RESEARCH QUESTION

According to Doody and Bailey (2016:19), a research question is important, as it provides specifics regarding the research aim and research objectives. It provides guidelines on what

the study seeks to address. In addition, Akhidime (2017:638) explains that a research question develops a framework that will address the research problem and assists by identifying the nature of the problem. For this study, the following research questions have been identified:

i) What should be done to ensure that Soetdoring gains popularity amongst local and international tourists?

ii) What data exist on current tourism marketing strategies?

iii) To what extent does a lack of marketing affect the revenue generated from Soetdoring Nature Reserve?

iv) What recommendations can be made to increase and promote tourism at Soetdoring Nature Reserve?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is expected that the outcomes of this study will provide the findings to the marketing of Soetdoring Nature Reserve, which will in turn contribute to the increase of revenue and tourism in the Free State Province. The research will also propose solutions and provide recommendations regarding the marketing of Soetdoring and also provide different suitable marketing platforms that can be explored.

Therefore, if the DESTEA that manages Soetdoring is to apply the proposed recommendation from this study, it will be possible to market the resort, which will increase tourism and revenue in the province.

1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hassan, Emalgalfta and Azhar (2010:86), a resort is often described as a place for rest or recreation for a holiday where visitors often go. A resort is where visitors stay for at least one night in a geographical area that comprises tourism products such as transport, accommodation and infrastructure facilities (Haarhoff and Gany 2017:20). According to Wisnom (2013:1), a resort is a facility that provides various amenities with the aim of providing experience for leisure. A resort should have entertainment facilities, recreation facilities and leisure facilities. It also caters for business meetings and day and night accommodation. Further, according to Wisnom (2013:1) resort facilities can determine the success and the failure of the resort, in a sense that if the facilities are poor and outdated, they are likely to cause dissatisfaction to the tourist who will in turn not visit again. The amenities include items

such as shampoos and a coffee machine among others. This indicates that a resort needs to have certain standards that will attract visitors.

Brey, Klenosky, Lehto and Morrison (2011:2-4) explain that resorts are changing and upgrading amenities to satisfy guests by addressing changing needs; for example, by offering a spa and indoor waterpark. This can also assist with the development of the resort. Tourists are attracted by the resorts located at the destination, which fulfil the needs and wants of the tourists through the provision of quality services and accommodation. Resorts add amenities to attract customers and to make the environment attractive and beautiful. Hassan *et al.* (2010:86) indicate that there are important factors of how resorts should look like, amongst others, the following:

➢ As part of the resort design, signage and symbols play an important role as they provide directions to tourists for the identification of a resort;

➢ The exterior design of the resort should include a roof, veranda and exterior review;

➢ The interior design should include interior finishes and furnishers;

➢ The active design should include ventilation, shades, natural lightning, room temperature, and artificial lightning; and

➢ The design of facilities includes toilet facilities, bathing facilities, accessibility and room facilities.

According to Brey *et al.* (2011:2-4), there is a diversity in existing literature for resort marketing; some issues have been examined in depth, while others did not receive the necessary attention. Those that have received in-depth attention are pricing, marketing through internet, packaging and branding of the resort. Furthermore, according to Brey *et al.* (2011:2-4), other studies that have been conducted demonstrate how resort operations can be influenced by discounting and pricing. Additionally, the internet has been identified as the key activity of resort marketing.

The increasing role that the website on resorts plays has been emphasised as Brey *et al.* (2011:2-4) indicate. The internet-based approach of marketing has possibly replaced the old traditional way of marketing resorts. Another role played by third parties have been identified as important; websites such as www.wheretostay.co.za where resorts are marketed are being adopted by major players in the resort industry. Furthermore, other methods used to explore methods used for the collection of data on guest have been identified. It is important to understand guests and the changing guest market by applying technology to obtain data. As Brey *et al.* (2011:2-4) explain, improvement on resort operation can be guided by the use of

the internet to provide feedback on their stay; it will assist the resort management to understand the expectations of the guests.

Another area that has been addressed for marketing of the resort is branding (Brey *et al.* 2011:2-4). For example, it has been indicated that emotional relationships to guests are created by the branding of a resort. Effective marketing through packaging of the product is identified as one of the contributing factors to successful marketing of the resort. Through partnership with entities such as cinemas, the resort can also benefit. Additionally, a holistic experience will need to be applied by the resorts to understand guests, explore other websites, maintenance of previous guests, and creation of a strong industry. Building of infrastructure will need to be planned by the resorts as it will contribute to the success of the resort.

According to Lehtinen and Paaki (2015:5-12), a company can detect what the market anticipates through a marketing plan. A marketing plan plays a critical role by preparing the company/resort in terms of what is expected, as the market changes continuously. Furthermore, the marketing of a company is influenced by the use of social media platforms. Social media help companies to communicate with new and old customers in order to maintain and grow the standard. Lehtinen and Paaki (2015:5-12) indicate the following marketing platforms that can be utilized by resorts:

Social media information is where communication takes place through the internet; it promotes relationships between people (Lehtinen and Paaki 2015:5-12). The important element of social media is that people will share their experience of the resort and provide suggestions for the betterment of the operations. Social media influence the decision of the tourist to visit a particular resort by providing information on attractions, amenities and why tourists should visit a particular resort.

Activities of tourist travelling from one place to another outside their home are regarded as tourism (Lehtinen and Paaki 2015:5-12). Leisure and business are normally the reason why people travel. Accommodation and transportation are key factors that are considered by a tourist before deciding on a place or resort. Additionally, the history of a place, the culture of the area, climate and the landscape also contribute to the tourists' decision. These factors can be marketed through packaging and promotion.

Revenue refers to the monies raised by national, provincial and local government as Muriithi (2013:880) explains. It is an important source of income for the Free State Provincial Government as it provides guidance for expenditure. For the Free State Provincial Government to perform its duties, a large amount of revenue is needed; this can be in the form of taxes, fines and fees, among others. Revenue plays a significant role towards the economy of the country. By meeting the competing government's needs, it contributes directly to the

economy of the country. According to Muriithi (2013:1), a government funds its operations by raising revenue. It is an important instrument of a government as it determines government expenditure and indicates how much money is available for a government to spend. A government needs to deliver services to people, and these services require large amounts of revenue.

According to Mayer (2014:11), revenue management is a practice or a method used to augment revenue in business, government, hotels, resorts and other related business. Furthermore, apart from revenue maximisation, revenue management also assists hotels or resorts to decrease operational costs by improving the utilisation of their assets. Resorts can also gain knowledge about the market segments that will determine the pricing with the aim to increase revenue collection. There are five pillars of revenue management, which will be explained below (Mayer 2014:15):

- Segmentation and customer knowledge assist with better personalisation of products to meet the needs of the customers or guests. The application of these segments assists by making sure that different customers are catered for and attracted to the resort (Mayer 2014:17).

- In the case of resorts, capacity relates to number of rooms, chalets, number of seats and conference rooms. Capacity management, when applied, will ensure that the resort or hotel is able to manage the number of guests who visit, and also assist with guest satisfaction by providing guests with the information (Mayer 2014:19).

- Forecasting is the process of calculating and estimating conditions in future, which might be revenue to be received. This pillar assists with the prediction of future bookings, which might be affected by different activities, for example, a World Cup, music events or cultural activities (Mayer 2014:21).

- Distribution is referred to as the way of making a service available to the customer. It provides the customer with the information on the intended product that the consumer wants to buy; therefore, the sale of rooms and seats will be referred to as channel management (Mayer 2014:23).

- One of the most important instruments that can be used by revenue managers to determine demand and supply is pricing. For hotel managers to determine the effectiveness of revenue management pricing strategies, financial ratios like daily rate per night are utilized (Mayer 2014:29).

As Timothy and Dubey (2014:17) elaborate, one of the contributing factors to revenue is tourism. It contributes to the economy of a province and increases revenue generation.

Tourism generates revenue for the private and public sector. Tourists are therefore likely to book at resorts which offer value for money. According to Vellas (2011:15), tourism should be regarded as a key component for economic growth and should assist by accelerating revenue. If the Free State Province could host many tourists or be a tourist destination, this would mean that the Free State economy would be stimulated through an increase in revenue generation.

According to Fatai (2011:6), the creation of social amenities and infrastructure in the area will encourage tourism to increase. When these creations are developed, it is believed that tourism will develop the area. Fatai (2011:6) further stresses that tourism can never be discussed and concluded without tourism planning. The three spheres of government have acknowledged the importance of tourism. At the national sphere of government, tourist attractions, services and facilities to cater for tourists' needs are developed, whilst planning and management of tourism is done at local government level. This plays an important role in tourism, including supply services such as accommodation, information and other related tourism activities. Tourism plays a critical role in economic development by making sure that the tourism industry is acknowledged by the business community, public officials and the community in general, which will ensure that the policies of government will consider tourism.

One of the largest and fastest-growing industries is the tourism industry (Van Vuuren and Slabbert 2011:295). Tourists' decisions encourage the tourism industry to maintain and improve its status of being an attractive industry. This indicates that it is important for resorts to understand the travel behaviour and motivation of tourists as it may assist by providing information for improvement and marketing strategies (Van Vuuren and Slabbert 2011:295).

According to the South African Planning Toolkit (NDT 2010:12), tourism faces several challenges in all nine provinces. They include, amongst others, that the demand for tourism can be seasonal. It is influenced by factors such as politics and community protests. Another issues is the inadequate support by local government to support tourism activities, a shortage of skills in tourism and a decrease in revenue, all contributing negatively to the tourism industry.

1.8   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

According to Cilliers, Davids and Bezuidenhout (2014:93), a research design is what researchers use to try and answer the validity, accuracy and objectives economically by adopting a procedural plan. It is also described as a complete plan of what the researcher is trying to achieve. It explains what the researcher will do, from question formulation or hypothesis, to collecting the data, to the final analysis. As explained by Kumar (2011:95), a research design provides answers to the research problems and questions through a plan and

a strategy. Through a research design, the researcher communicates and explains the type of design which will be used, how data will be collected, the selection of people who will provide answers, how the information obtained will be analysed, and how the outcomes and findings of the research will provided.

This study will use a qualitative design and the approach will be case study method. Qualitative design will be a suitable approach for this study. According to Hancock, Windridge and Ockleford (2007:7), qualitative research is aimed at exploring social phenomena and to develop an explanation about a particular behaviour. It assists by exploring the social views about a particular issue. In this study, a qualitative design will explore the opinion and source information from the general public, government officials and officials from the Soetdoring Nature Reserve.

1.8.1   Case-study approach

According to Kumar (2011:123), a case study design is when a researcher tries to gain knowledge or an understanding of a condition by exploring an area where information is lacking. The case study approach is applied when a researcher tries to gain an understanding, rather than confirming and quantifying the problem.

This study will be approached through an exploratory case study. According to Kumar (2011:335), exploratory study is when the researcher explores a condition where little is known, with the aim to identify possibilities for a particular research study. According to Zaidah (2007:3), an exploratory case study is when a researcher has an interest in a particular phenomenon to be explored and examined. The exploratory case study approach will be relevant to this study, as this study seeks to explore and identify tourism and marketing strategies at Soetdoring in order to increase tourism and economic development in the Free State Province.

1.8.2   Theoretical framework

As Carbone (2009:14) explains, a structure of concepts that are found in the literature is defined as the theoretical framework. Jacobs (2016:208) defines the theoretical framework as a viewpoint that provides an overview with regard to the research problem. It provides clarity in the research process and assists with the focus of the research. From these explanations, it is clear that a theoretical framework provides a vantage point of the research and a perspective from the literature review. The theoretical framework for this study is explained below, using graphical representation.

Resort	Revenue	Marketing	Tourism
•Rest	•Monies	•Advertisment	•Travelling
•Holiday	•National	•Media	•Vacation
•Recreation	•Provincial	•Banners	•Investment
•Visitors	•Local Government	•Emails	
•Bookings	•Budget	•Newspaper	
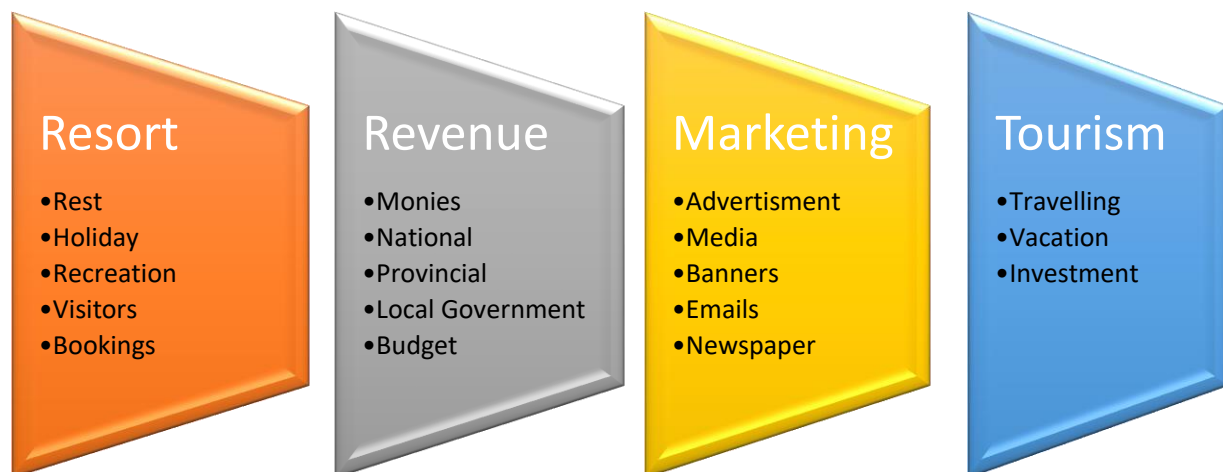
Figure 2: Theoretical framework of study (Pholoana 2018)

1.8.3 Data collection method

According to Abawi (2013:1), data collection is the collection of information for the study which the researcher wants to know about. It helps the researcher to identify the sources of data for the study. In this study, documents or textual data strategy and interviews (semi-structured interviews) were applied.

According to Maree (2016:88), documents or textual data strategy is primarily focused on all written materials that may provide clarity on what the researcher is investigating. In this study, provided clarity on tourism strategies and which are the best strategies to market the Soetdoring Nature Reserve. It includes, amongst others, reports, minutes of the meeting, letters from the Free State Provincial Government and any legal reports or documents related to the study. The researcher may collect data from secondary sources such as books and articles. Kumar (2011:154) indicates that secondary sources relate also to government or semi-government publications, which include statistics reports, demographic information and others. Information was collected from the DESTEA in the form of reports. Furthermore, publications from the Free State Provincial Government that relates to the study were used.

1.8.3.1 Interviews (semi-structured interviews)

According to Maree (2016:92) an interview is when an interviewer asks questions with the aim to collect data or learn about new ideas through a two-way discussion. For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews will be applied. According to Maree (2016:93), a semi-structured interview is often applied by researchers when they want to establish and confirm data emerging from other sources. The data obtained through interviews from different people are then corroborated. Kumar (2011:136-154) explains that an interview gives a researcher freedom of deciding what type of questions to ask the interviewee. Bloom and Crabtree

(2006:315) explains that semi-structured interviews are often conducted at a specific place and the scheduling of interviews is also prepared in advance. In this study, interviews were scheduled in advance with officials from department and other people to receive information.

1.8.3.2 Population

Ali (2011:2) describes a population as an individual group living in the same particular area at the same time. Spencer-Oatey (2012:8) refers to population as individuals who are organised in different ways by language, race, social groups and interest group. In this study, population related to DESTEA officials, the Bloemfontein community, Soetdoring officials and Free State Provincial Treasury officials.

1.8.3.3 Sampling

According to Cilliers *et al.* (2014:134), sampling is the development of a list of people that the researcher would like to interview in order to get information for the study. It provides the researcher with the population that should be targeted for interview. Kumar (2011:346) further explains that sampling is when a researcher selects few population target from a bigger population to source information.

For the purpose of this study, under non-probability sampling, purposive and convenience sampling were applicable. According to Kumar (2011:189), the purposive design relates to a judgment of a researcher about who will provide the information needed to achieve the objective of the study. According to Kumar (2011:189), convenience sampling indicates that a researcher may contact or come across any person to provide data. This sampling design was be applicable for the study as the researcher interviewed the top management, the deputy directors and directors as they are part of the decision making. They are in a better position to provide accurate information about Soetdoring. Government officials, from assistant directors to chief directors, and the general public were interviewed to collect diverse opinions.

1.8.4   Data analysis

According to Flick (2013:4), data analysis is the important part in qualitative research. Whatever data that have been collected by the researcher, the analysis of the data will determine the outcomes of the study. According to Cilliers *et al.* (2014:232) qualitative data analysis is when a researcher analyses a huge data set collected in order to have structured data.

According to Kumar (2011:342), primary data include sources such as interviews, observations and questionnaires that a researcher receives from the interviewees. My primary

data included interviews and questioner. The primary data were analysed through a conversation analysis approach. According to Maree (2016:111), conversation analysis relates to informal talk which the researcher seeks to describe the structure. This approach was applicable in my case, because during my studies I had interviews and accidental, informal interviews.

According to Maree (2016:88), secondary data relate to documents previously published and may form part of the literature review. For the secondary data, content analysis will be applied. According to Maree (2016:111) content analysis is the technique which is used to compress massive data into a less data. This method was applicable for this study as it provided guidelines on how massive data should be compressed.

1.10   ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

According to Kumar (2011:217), a code of ethics serves as guideline to all professions. The ethics determines how the professional should handle the research. In order to conduct a research, approval was given by the Free State Provincial Government. Approval was also requested from the people who were interviewed. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants. The following guidelines were be adhered to:

- Transparency by explaining in detail the purpose of the study.

- Informed consent to make aware the interviewees that they are taking part in a study.

- Ensure that confidentiality is provided by making sure that the information provided is safe.

- Provide participants with the outcomes of the study to verify the interpretation of the results

- Any information obtained from participants may not be used for any other purpose.

1.11   DEMARCATIONS OF THE STUDY

As Baron (2008:4) states, limitations of the study are factors that are normally beyond the control of the researcher that have an impact on the outcomes of the study. They are of critical importance for the provision of the reader to acknowledge the possible errors and difficulties in the research. Dean (2004:1240) indicates that limitations are found in all studies. He further highlights that it is important that the researcher points out the limitations rather than it being pointed out by the reader. Based on these explanations, the following limitations for this study are identified:

- This study was only sampled on a very small part of the Free State Province.

- Some of the respondents could have misunderstand the questions when completing the questionnaires.

- Some of the officials could fear victimisation for providing the researcher with challenges they are facing at the Nature Reserve.

- Confidential documents such as revenue generated from the resort might not be accessible due to their sensitivity.

- The availability of literature was a challenge as no study had been done before on Soetdoring, resulting in no comparison.

1.12 KEY WORDS AND CONCEPTS

Resort - A place for a rest or recreation for a holiday where visitors often go (Hassan *et al.* 2010:86).

Revenue - Monies raised by national, provincial and local government (Muriithi 2013:880).

Marketing –advertisements such as sales calls, TV and radio commercials, banners, direct mail offers and e-mail pitches are referred to as marketing (Lehitinen and Paakki 2015:8).

Tourism – It is when tourist move from their usual surroundings to travel and stay elsewhere for a particular purpose like business and vacation, for a period not exceeding a year (Robert 2011:6).

1.13 Chapter outline

Chapter one: Overview and background

This chapter outlines the overview and background of the study. It also gives a synopsis about the research statement, research problem and research objectives.

Chapter two: Literature review

Chapter two explores what is known and not known about the research; what has already been written that relates to the research topic is reviewed. It further provides tentative solutions and clarity to the research topic.

Chapter three: Research design and methodology

This chapter discusses in detail the methodology used in this research. It provides the reader with accurate detailed descriptions of how research will contribute to the existing literature

Chapter four: Data analysis and research findings

In this chapter, the analysis of data that were collected to find solutions of the research topic is discussed. The findings of the study are presented. The data collected are recorded and presented as valuable information for the study.

Chapter five: Findings, recommendations and conclusion

This is the concluding chapter, which provides an overall outlook and answers to questions derived from the objectives of this study. In this chapter, results emanating from research questions are interpreted and well-informed and relevant recommendations for the study are provided. It will also provide a way forward of what needs to be done to address the research topic.

1.14   CONCLUSION

South African Tourism is identifying resorts that are not fully utilised by municipalities or provincial governments to be upgraded as a way to boost tourism. The preliminary literature indicates that the Free State Province is identifying resorts as a way to increase tourism in the province, which will increase the revenue base in the province.

It is, however, important and necessary to determine effective ways and to conduct research on identifying marketing strategies to promote tourism at Soetdoring Nature Reserve. This will assist the management of the resort by providing different types of marketing platforms and how they should be applied.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Communication channels and their tools between a customer and a seller have changed since the birth of social media. Social media are a tool that is used by companies, government departments and other stakeholders to market their products. It is worth noting that social media have been regarded as a fast way to send a message to a large group of people. Unlike in the past, technology and social media have become the avenue for advertisement where companies can extend their campaign to a large group of consumers.

The manner in which people use technology nowadays to book for accommodation has improved. Customers are able to view the nature reserves, resorts, hotels or any place intended for booking online, and they are able to book and pay online. Customers' reviews through social media help other customers to know more about the quality of service they can expect from a particular accommodation. It is worth noting that businesses must learn to use social media channels effectively for the successful promotion of their product or business.

This paper begins by providing an explanation of a nature reserve, resort, marketing and different social media platforms. It is followed by different types of marketing and social media platforms. This review examines the literature on the use of social media as a marketing tool for nature reserves and other types of accommodation. It also examines the benefits of social media as a marketing platform and revenue management. It explains the impact on tourism from the economic development perspective.

2.2.1 Definition of nature reserve

According to Segage (2015:6), a nature reserve is a geographical area that is managed through the use of legal means to promote a long-term environmental conservation. Boonzaaier (2010:1) explains further by highlighting that nature reserves, particularly in Africa, exist for the protection of the environment and for tourism development purposes. From these descriptions above, it can be concluded that nature reserves are developed for the benefit of protecting the environment and tourism. The Department of Environmental Affairs (2009:13) indicates that the management authority of the Nature Reserve is with the MEC (Member of the Executive). It can also be added that in order for Soetdoring to promote tourism, it can operate as a nature reserve and resort. The resort will be explained in detail below.

2.2.2 Definition of resort

According to Wisnom (2013:1), a resort is a place that provides a service for meetings, lodging and recreational facilities. The Department of Environmental Affairs and Development Planning (2005:5) defines a resort as a holiday place which attracts tourists, members of the public and holiday makers. The resort offers a day pass or overnight accommodation and provides visitors with unique tourism resources. Hassan *et al.* (2010:86) also explain that a resort is a place that accommodates customers with recreational activities and amenities that attract tourists.

Haarhoff and Gany (2017:2) define a resort as a tourism destination for visitors to rest for a holiday. It provides accommodation and transport facilities. In addition, as Haarhoff and Gany (2017:2) highlight, resorts are located at a strategic location that attracts tourists and provide them with the services they need, such as entertainment, food and recreational facilities. Nasimbwa (2009:5) supports the definition of a resort by indicating that resorts are lodging places that have amenities and recreational facilities. From these explanations provided by different authors, it can be indicated that a resort is a place of relaxation that has recreational facilities and amenities to attract tourists or the general public. Therefore, amenities play an important role in the existence of a resort. Amenities as defined by Jay (2011:8) are items such as linen, towels and soap, a minibar, parking and pools that are normally included in the price of the room.

To provide further context to the meaning of resort, Venter (2006:94) provides the following three characteristics of a resort:

- Resorts offer customers and tourists the experience of accommodation, either for weekend visits or vacations;

- Resorts provide easy access to natural and cultural amenities that make them attractive to customers and tourists; and

- Resorts are mainly developed real estates.

2.2.2.1 Resort amenities and design

According to Brey *et al.* (2011:2-4), the expectations of customers with regard to resort amenities are increasing. This has also caused resorts to develop new amenities to satisfy the changing needs of consumers. Adding new amenities may assist with the development of a resort. Tourists are attracted by the resorts located at the destination, which fulfil the needs and wants of tourists through the provision of quality services and accommodation. Wisnom (2013:1) states that resort facilities can determine the success or failure of a resort, in the

sense that facilities that are poor and outdated are likely to cause dissatisfaction to the tourist who will then not visit the specific resort again. This is supported by Viljoen, Saayman and Kruger (2018:14), who indicate that visitors regard amenities such as business services, spa, food and others as essentials.

Hassan *et al.* (2010:86) indicate that there are important factors that determine what resorts should look like (and which will be explained below in subsequent paragraphs):

- As part of the resort design, signage and symbols play an important role as they provide direction to tourists for the identification of a resort;

- The exterior design of the resort should include a roof, veranda and exterior review;

- The interior design should include interior finishes and furnishers;

- The active design should include ventilation, shades, natural lightning, means to adjust room temperature, and artificial lightning; and

- The design of facilities includes ablution facilities, bathing facilities, accessibility and room facilities.

As explained above by different authors, a resort's design and amenities are important, because these attract the interest of a customer during marketing. An attractive design and amenities can determine the success or failure of the resort. Therefore, it is important that when designing a resort, the development should cater for the customers' interests. It is also important to remember that the development of new or maintaining existing amenities is a priority for the existence of the resort.

2.2.3 Marketing

According to Brey *et al.* (2011:2-4), there is diversity in the existing literature for resort marketing; some issues have been examined in depth, while others did not receive the necessary attention. Those that have received in-depth attention are pricing, marketing through the internet, packaging, and branding of the resort. Furthermore, other studies that have been conducted demonstrate how resort operations can be impacted and influenced by discounting and pricing. In addition, the internet has been identified as the key activity of resort marketing.

Marketing, according to the Charted Institute of Marketing (2009:1), is the process of satisfying a customer by identifying the right product, the right price, the right place and the right time for the product. In addition, Brunswick (2014:108) defines marketing as the process that involves the activities of advertising the product, selling and buying the product, and the satisfaction of a customer through the exchange. Iyamabo and Otubanjo (2013:19) refer to marketing as the

process of satisfying society at large by communicating the product to the customer and delivery of a particular product. From these definitions provided, it is the clear that at the centre of marketing, the process of advertising the product to the consumer is of critical importance. For one's product to be known by different people, the process of marketing one's product plays a critical role, as it determines whether one's product will sell or not. This means that marketing the reserve will also attract tourists and generate revenue.

2.2.3.1 Marketing mix

According to Gronholm (2012:6), the marketing mix involves the set of tools that can be utilised to have an impact on the sale of products. The Charted Institute of Marketing (2009:3) explains that the marketing mix includes the 7Ps that are important to consider, namely Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process and Physical Evidence. Hamzam and Hashim (2013:1560) also indicate that the Marketing Mix includes the 7Ps that should be taken into account during the marketing process. The 7Ps of marketing are discussed below.

Figure 3: 7Ps of marketing (Pholoana 2019)

The figure above depicts the 7Ps of marketing, which should be taken into consideration during the marketing process.

Product

According to Issakova (2014:5), the product refers to goods and services to the customer. They are important because their main focus is to satisfy the customer's needs and wants.

When developing a product, Issakova (2014:5) suggests that the following questions be taken in to consideration:

- What is the brand to be offered to a customer?

- How will the design of the product look?

- Who will be a potential stakeholder?

- What will be the customer's expectations?

- Type of accommodation?

- Cost of the product?

- The level of completion offering the same product? and

- How will the product satisfy the demand of customers?

Price

Isoraite (2016:25) expresses the view that price is an important element of the marketing mix as it increases or decreases the profit or revenue. The price of a product is the amount of money that the customer is willing to pay in order to receive goods and services. Price also assists the customer in determining the value of the service or a product to be received.

Place

Products are manufactured and services are rendered to the customer or consumer (Eavani and Nazari 2012:992). Products and services should be made available to the customers at a place where it is easy to access the product or service rendered. The location of the product or service is important, as it will determine the type of customer it will attract.

Promotion

According to Qurneh and Muala (2012:2), promotion is a selling technique which consists of advertising, communication, selling and publicity of the products or services. Promotion can influence the decision of a customer. The promotion of a service or product can be done through diverse media platforms such as the TV, radio and/or the internet. Promotion provides the customer with information on how the customer will benefit from the product or service.

People

Soediatji and Pratminingshih (2011:3) state that in the marketing mix, the element of people refers to employees of the service provider. The staff needs to be developed in order to ensure that customers are happy with the product that is offered. The quality of employees is able to influence the judgement of a customer concerning the product or service to be rendered.

Process

According to Amofah (2015:33), the process in marketing mix refers to the service delivery approach, which aims to satisfy the needs and wants of the customers. Furthermore, process aims to influence the purchasing behaviour of a customer and ensure that the customer is satisfied with the product. Amofah (2015:33) further explains that quality management as part of a control measure plays a role in the improvement of services to customers.

Physical evidence

Physical evidence relates to the tangible face of service delivery, such as external appearance, décor, websites and premises, amongst others (Youssef 2017:4). Soediatji and Pratminingshih (2011:3) also explain that physical evidence refers to the tangible items that are offered to a customer, such as brochures, amongst others. Physical evidence will provide the customers with the first impression of the service they are about to receive.

2.2.3.2 Internet marketing

The increasing role that the website of resorts plays has been emphasised as Brey *et al.* (2011:2-4) indicates. The internet-based approach of marketing resorts has possibly replaced the old traditional way of marketing resorts. Another role played by third parties that has been identified as important are websites such as www.wheretostay.co.za where resorts are marketed, and which are being adopted by major players in the resort industry. Improvement on resort operation can be guided by the use of the internet to provide feedback on their stay; it will assist the resort management to understand the expectations of the guests.

2.2.3.3 Social media

According to Point (2018:1), social media are a platform where people communicate through social networking. It is sometimes used as a source for news updates, marketing, education and entertainment. The importance of social media is that it is a powerful tool which provides opportunities for marketing. Social media are used by business owners to improve their sales and market their products at a reduced cost.

- According to Lehtinen and Paaki (2015:5-12), a company can detect what the market anticipates through a marketing plan. A marketing plan plays a critical role by preparing the company/resort in terms of what is expected, as the market changes continuously. Furthermore, the marketing of a company is influenced by the use of social media platforms. Social media help companies to communicate with new and old customers in order to maintain and grow the standard. Lehtinen and Paaki (2015:5-12) indicate the following marketing platforms that can be utilised by the resorts:

- Social media information is where communication takes place through the internet; it promotes relationships between people. The important element of social media is that people will share their experience of the resort and provide suggestions for the betterment of the operations. Social media influence the decision of the tourist to visit a particular resort by providing information on attractions, amenities and why tourists should visit a particular resort.

2.2.3.3 Benefits of social media marketing

Given that social media provide opportunities for companies to communicate with customers about products, there are benefits attached to social media marketing. According to Neti (2011:6), social media marketing provides the following benefits:

- Business exposure is provided.

- Subscribers to the marketing page are increased.

- New business opportunities are established.

- Search engines about the product are on the increase.

- More products are sold and advertised online.

- Cost saving in marketing expenses are achieved.

In addition to the above-mentioned social media benefits, Van der Ross (2015:95) identifies five core benefits of social media. The following five benefits will be to the advantage of the business if they are fully implemented:

Relationship management with customers

The company has to ensure that the customers receive relevant information about the product. Social media help institutions to connect directly with customers and so build relationships.

Generation tool

Customers have been attracted through the use of internet channels and other social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter. It is of critical importance for a company or institution to use correct communication channels for the target market. The common communication platforms that institutions can utilise to communicate directly with the customers are Facebook and Twitter.

- Feedback tool to customers

Business response to customers has improved through the use of social media to satisfy the needs of customers. Response time to customers is quick as the message reaches the

customer directly. Social media also enable the company to deal promptly with the negative feedback from customers. This ensures that the brand of the institution and the image are protected.

- Management tool of the brand

Customer relationships and brand management have been transformed by social media in terms of how the brand is received by the customers. It is important that institutions carefully consider the feedback from customers and address issues in order to protect the brand.

- Product and service development

Social media enable institutions to think fresh and redesign products in order to satisfy the needs of the customer. It enables institutions to attract the customer through new offerings.

2.3.3.4 Social media applications

According to Fridolf and Arnautovic (2011:20), there are different types of social media applications such as Blogs, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, which will be explained below:

Blogs

A blog is a type of content management system (CMS) which enables the publishing of short articles easily by anyone who wishes to publish his/her articles. Blogs give customers the opportunity to interact directly with the owner of the products by giving feedback on the product. Kornejeva (2012:14) states that customers can be given the impression that the company cares about them when blogging is implemented right, which will, in turn, strengthen the image of the company.
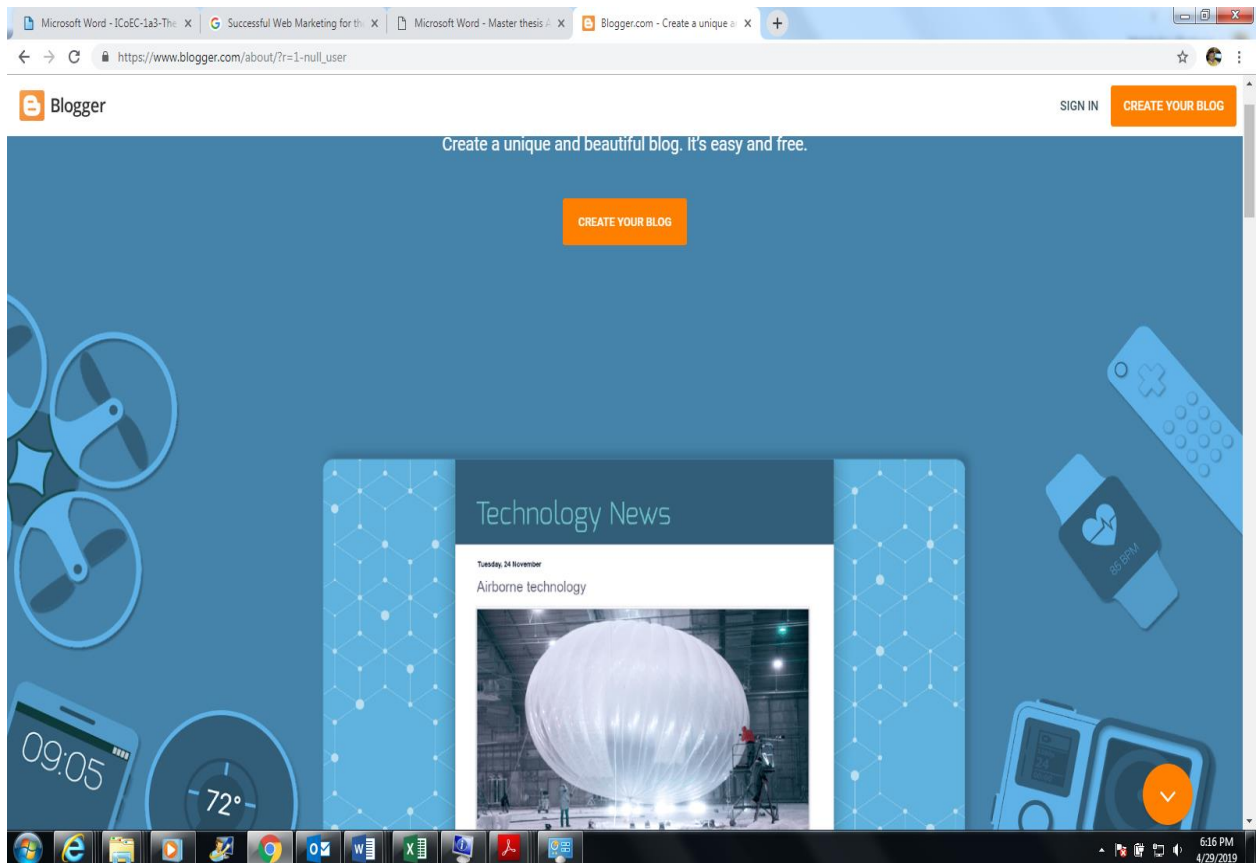
Source: www.blogger.com

Figure 4: Example of a blog

YouTube

YouTube is a platform where people upload and share videos with other people around the world. The platform enables the user to update customers who are interested in the product. According to Reino and Hay (2011:10), YouTube is one of the most useful tools for marketing accommodation. It allows companies to develop videos to be viewed by people searching for accommodation.
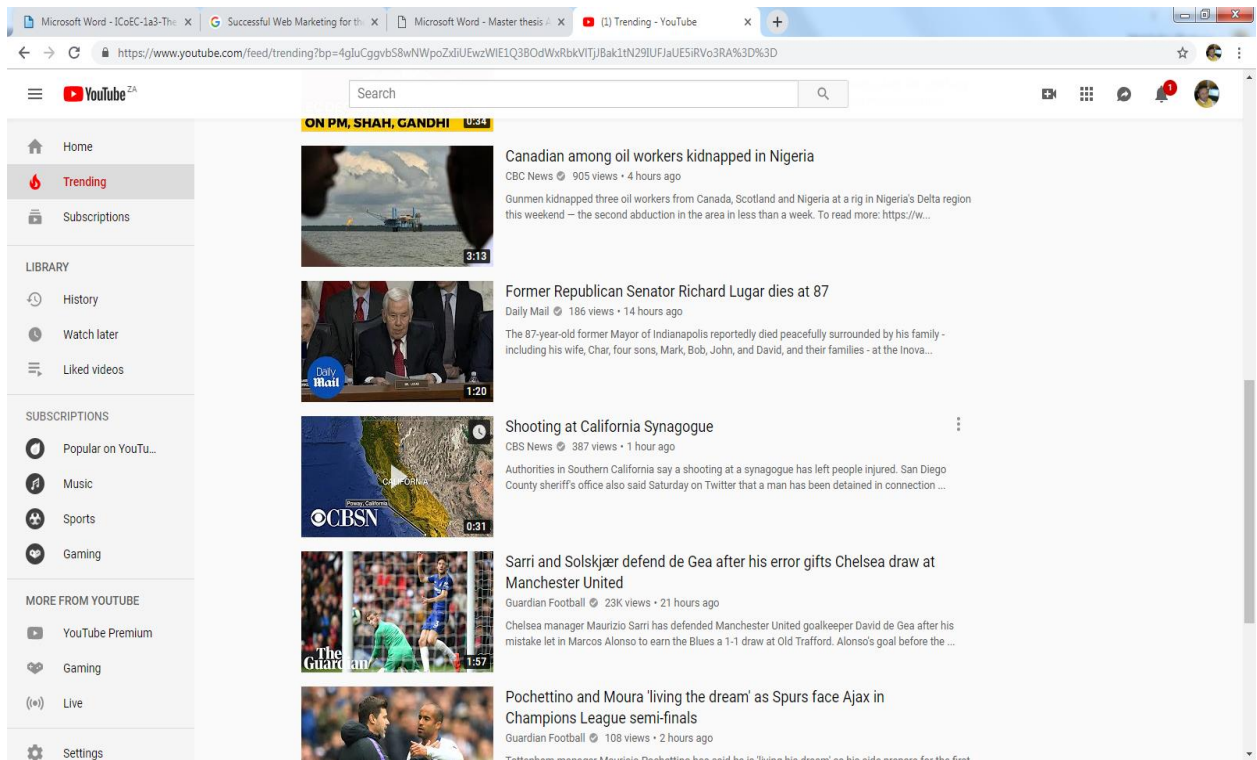
Source: www.youtube.com

Figure 5: Example of YouTube

Facebook

It is regarded as a social networking site. It poses features that are useful for business owners to market their products. Businesses can create their public profiles, post pictures and videos, events and messages on the wall. Ramsaran-Fowdar and Fowdar (2013:75) state that through Facebook, valuable information can be obtained by marketers that will be used for direct marketing. This will be done by studying the community members' profile posts on news feed. One of the benefits of marketing through Facebook is the lower marketing cost compared to phone calls or meetings.

Source: www.facebook.com

Figure 6: Example of Facebook

Twitter

The user is allowed to tweet about 140 characters on the wall. Twitter can be useful to business owners to tweet about their products, new content offers as well as to respond to questions posed by followers or people who are interested in the product. Companies should be on Twitter as it is cost effective and can increase sales. According to Odhiambo (2012:18), companies now share their business information faster by using Twitter. It helps the company to reach large audiences and to receive feedback from users. This will assist the companies to boost their market intelligence and enhance business relationships.

Source: www.twitter.com

Figure 7: Example of Twitter

Lehtinen and Paaki (2015:5-12) indicate that leisure and business are normally the reason why people travel. Accommodation and transportation are key factors considered by a tourist before deciding on a place or resort. A well-marketed resort is likely to attract tourists and so increase the revenue of the resort.

2.2.4   Revenue

Revenue refers to the monies raised by national, provincial and local government, as Muriithi (2013:88) explains. It is an important source of income for the Free State Provincial Government as it provides guidance for expenditure. For the Free State Provincial Government to perform its duties, a large amount of revenue is needed; this can be in the form of taxes, fines and fees, among others. Revenue plays a significant role in the economy of the country. By meeting the competing government's needs, it contributes directly to the economy of the country. According to Muriithi (2013:1), a government funds its operations by raising revenue. It is an important instrument of a government as it determines government expenditure and indicates how much money is available for the government to spend. A government needs to deliver services to the people and these services require large amounts of revenue.

According to Mayer (2014:11), revenue management is a practice or a method used to augment revenue in business, government, hotels, resorts and other related business. Furthermore, apart from revenue maximisation, revenue management also assists hotels or resorts with the decrease in operational cost by improving utilisation of assets. Resorts can also gain knowledge about the market segments, which will determine the pricing with the aim of increasing collection of revenue. There are five pillars of revenue management, which will be explained below (Mayer 2014:15).

- Segmentation and customer knowledge assist with better personalisation of products to meet the needs of the customers or guests. The application of these segments assist by making sure that different customers are catered for and attracted to the resort (Mayer 2014:17).

- In the case of resorts, capacity relates to number of rooms, chalets, number of seats and conference rooms. Capacity management, when applied, will ensure that the resort or hotel is able to manage the number of guests who visit, available space, and also with guest satisfaction by providing the guests with information (Mayer 2014:19).

- Forecasting is the process of calculating and estimating the conditions in future, which might be revenue to be received. This pillar assists with the predictions of future booking, which might be affected by different activities, for example, the World Cup, music events or cultural activities (Mayer 2014:21).

- Distribution is referred to as the way of making a service available to the customer. It provides the customer with information about the intended product the consumer wants to buy. The sale of rooms and seats is referred to as channel management (Mayer 2014:23).

- One of the most important instruments that can be used by revenue managers to determine demand and supply is pricing. For hotel managers to determine the effectiveness of revenue management pricing strategies, financial ratios like daily rate per night are utilised (Mayer 2014:29).

Despite the fact that revenue plays an important role in the provincial purse, common problems hamper revenue administration. According to Allan (2008:7), these challenges include:

- Revenue receipts are processed slowly: This creates a negative effect on the ability to deposit revenue to the government revenue fund.

- Slow billing to customers: Failure to send billing timeously to customers often leads to problems of account receivables.

- Lack of enforcing revenue laws: This challenge leads to a loss of revenue collection by some departments failing to enforce penalties.

- Officials that are not properly trained: Officials that did not receive training may lead to ineffective and inefficient revenue collection processes.

- Internal control: Lack of internal control in government may lead to fraud, which will also lead to loss in revenue collection.

- Lack of records management: It will be difficult to make a follow-up on outstanding collection of revenue if the records are not properly managed.

Sohne (2003:2) points out that, for a government to manage the collection of revenue effectively and efficiently, the use of an automated system has proven to assist in revenue collection. The benefits of computerising revenue collection are as follows:

- Access to revenue data is quick due to a decentralised, automated revenue collection system.

- Automated revenue collection systems can reach as many people as possible, even those who live in rural areas.

- Fraud related to collection will be minimised as transactions will be checked thoroughly.

- The high volume of data relating to revenue will be handled through the automated system.

- Late payments will result in penalties being effected automatically.

- The system will be able to alert officials on outstanding collection and the critical dates.

The more revenue is collected at the resorts, the more it will assist the government in using it for the improvement of infrastructure of the resorts and upgrading amenities. This will attract tourism to the resort, which will boost the economy of the province.

2.2.5 Tourism

As Timothy and Dubey (2014:17) elaborate, one of the contributing factors to revenue is tourism. It contributes to the economy of a province and increases revenue generation. Tourism generates revenue for the private and the public sector. Tourists are therefore likely to book at resorts that offer value for money. According to Vellas (2011:15), tourism should be regarded as a key component for economic growth and should assist in accelerating revenue. If the Free State Province could host many tourists or be a tourist destination, this would mean that the Free State economy would be stimulated through increases in revenue generation.

Bond (2008: 3) indicates that tourism can also be explained by identifying the following sub-sectors in the tourism industry (which will be explained below in subsequent paragraphs):

- Transportation – the means to reach the destination;

- Accommodation – includes hotels, guesthouses and private accommodation;

- Attractions – natural resources, such as forests and mountains, and built attractions, such as theme parks and heritage sites; and

- Intermediaries – comprising packaging of tourism products.

According to Fatai (2011:6), the creation of social amenities and infrastructure in the area will encourage tourism to increase. When these creations are developed, it is believed that tourism will develop the area. Fatai (2011:6) further stresses that tourism can never be discussed and concluded without tourism planning. The three spheres of government have acknowledged the importance of tourism. At the national sphere of government, the tourist attractions, services and facilities to cater for the tourists' needs are developed, while planning and management of tourism is done by local government. This plays an important role in tourism, including supply services such as accommodation, information and other related tourism activities. Tourism plays a critical role in economic development by making sure that the tourism industry is acknowledged by the business community, public officials and the community in general, which will ensure that the policies of government will consider tourism.

One of the largest and fastest-growing industries is the tourism industry (Van Vuuren and Slabbert 2011:295). Tourists' decisions encourage the tourism industry to maintain and improve its status of being the attractive industry. This indicates that it is important for resorts to understand the travel behaviour and motivation of tourists as it may assist by providing information on the improvement and marketing strategies (Van Vuuren and Slabbert 2011:295).

internet connection has played a role in how the tourism industry operates. Some of the hotels have implemented an electronic system for handling bookings. According to Beatrice and Mihalcesu (2013:290), the development of electronic bookings in the tourism industry has created electronic tourism (e-tourism). According to Pauna (2017:281), e-tourism means the use of the internet or electronic means to communicate tourism activities and advertisements. E-tourism involves the following three aspects:

2.2.5.1 Electronic Information (E-information)

The e-information stage happens when the information about a hotel or guesthouse is distributed through the use of electronic brochures, audio travel guides and photo albums, amongst others.
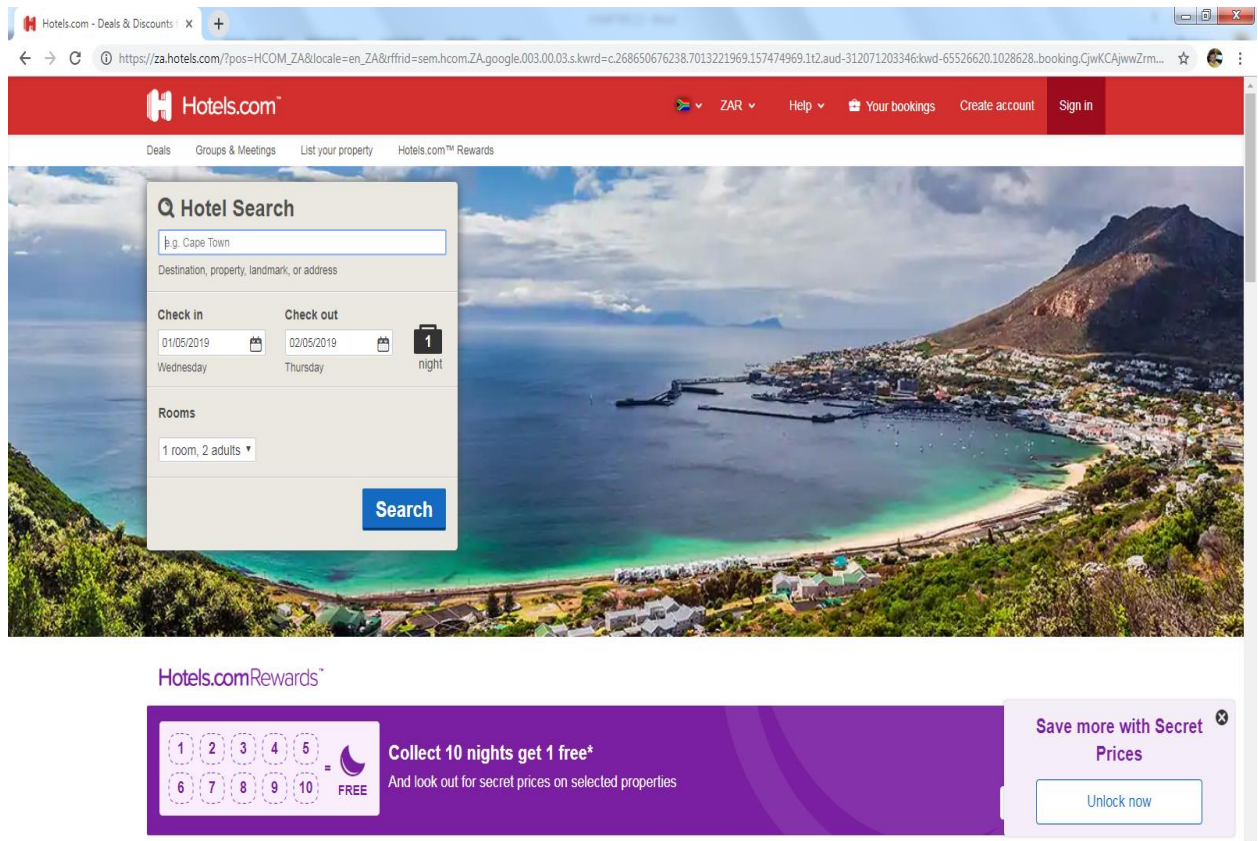

Source: www.hotels.com

Figure 8: Example of e-information method

Electronic booking (e-booking)

Most of the hotel industry currently uses the online e-booking system. According to Baharin and Sam (2018:2), this system is where people are allowed to book hotels using the internet. It is a method that is used for publishing information about the hotels, resorts and nature reserves - such as prices and availability. According to Kin and Kamsin (2005:2), the benefits of e-booking are as follows:

- There is the convenience of an online system of booking and potential lower prices.

- When booking for a hotel, a consumer can easily get information about the price of rooms and facilities and then compare before booking.

- It saves time for consumers; and the consumer can avoid traffic jams and travelling costs.


Source: www.bookings.com

Figure 9: Example of electronic booking method

Electronic payment (E-payment)

According to Kaur and Pathak (2015:1), e-payment is secure. Users use their credit card numbers, smart card number or other electronic means to make a payment. The objectives of e-payment include:

- The establishment of relationships between the bank and the customer.

- Exploring how payments are made through online system.

- To bring understanding on how different types of payment technology works.

Source: www.bookings.com

Figure 10: Example of electronic payment

According to the South African Planning Toolkit (2010:12), tourism is faced with several challenges in all nine provinces. These include, amongst others, that the demand for tourism can be seasonal and that it is influenced by factors such as politics and community protests. Also, the inadequate support by local government to support tourism activities, shortage of skills in tourism and decreases in revenue contribute negatively to the tourism industry.

2.2.5.2 Tourism impact

Despite the challenges that have been mentioned above, tourism has some positive impact on the development of a particular area. According to Zahedi (2008:48), tourism has economic, social and cultural, political and environmental effects. It is important that those who are involved in the process of tourism understand these impacts. These impacts will be explained below.
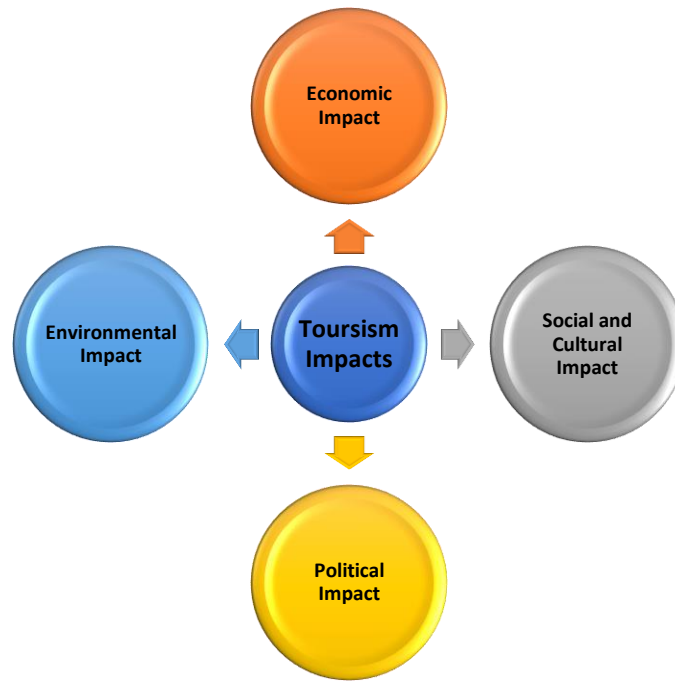
The figure above depicts the four tourism impacts that should be taken to account during tourism development.

Economic Impact

According to Ardahaey (2011:206), economic impacts associated with tourism are related to demand and supply in the tourism industry. Various economic impacts such as sales, jobs, tax revenue and income in a specific area contribute to the tourism industry. Economic impacts in the tourism industry include the creation of employment opportunities, spending on infrastructure and increases in the local economy.

Social and Cultural Impact

As Mason (2003:43) states, to discuss social and cultural impacts, it is important to define sociology and culture. Sociology relates to the study of the behaviour of a particular group of society, their attitudes and interactions. Culture is about social interaction and how people relate socially. Some of the social and cultural impacts are the development of local arts, cultural activities and traditional activities, amongst others. Tourism provides opportunities for people from different cultural groups to meet and exchange ideas and promote their beliefs. Sandaruwani and Gnanapala (2016:61) highlight that the socio-cultural impact focuses more on the community, their lifestyle, relationships and community structure.

Political Impact

According to Zahedi (2008:48), tourism development has positive political impacts such as alleviating unrest caused by the community due to unemployment and provision of security among different communities. Tourists are often attracted to an area where there is political stability and low levels of community unrest and protests.

Environmental Impacts

Tourists are attracted to a good environment, whether a built or natural one (Zaei and Zaei, 2013:8). Environment relates to coastal resorts, museums, historic cities, nature reserves and mountains, amongst others. The environment is affected by tourism; when there is investment in the area, then improvement in facilities and infrastructure will improve. If the community is involved in the tourism development of their area, the environment is likely to be protected.

2.3   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study has determined the importance of social media as marketing tool for the Nature Reserve. It has shown how service providers can be creative by using Facebook, Twitter and other social medias as way of communicating the product to the consumers. It has also demonstrated the positive economic impacts through tourism. Social media platforms are not only important to the customers but also to the service providers.

Furthermore, the feedback that consumers provide can be of assistance by helping the service provider to improve or maintain the quality of services. Social media is being used to augment the target market of a company or institution. For service providers to stay relevant in the market, it is important that marketing platforms are continuously updated as time changes. The impact of social media cannot simply be ignored.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this research is to find solutions to the research problem as highlighted in the study. In order to find solutions, the investigator must apply different types of research methodologies, such as qualitative design, the case study method or exploratory method. It is of critical importance that the investigator identifies the approach of the research as this will determine the design of the study.

There are three approaches that a researcher can employ in the study, namely qualitative, quantitative and mixed method designs. The type of the research to be conducted will assist the researcher in selecting the approach or the design suitable for the study. In this study, the researcher has employed the qualitative design, which focuses more on data that are non-numerical such as words, pictures and other communication.

Depending on the approach the researcher takes, data can be collected through observation, documents, interviews and other techniques. It is important to note that the researcher must use the correct technique to collect data in line with the research design. This will ensure that data collected will add relevant value to the study.

After data have been sourced, it must be analysed so that suggestions can be derived from it. The analysis of data requires that the investigator familiarise himself/herself with the software or application used to analyse data. This will enhance the quality of the findings.

It is important to note that the research must observe issues of ethics all the time. This will assist the researcher in treating information received as confidentially as possible and respecting the privacy of the sources. If needs be, the necessary approval to conduct interviews and to source data from different organisations should be obtained.

3.3.1   Definition of research design

As Cilliers *et al.* (2014:93) explain, a research design is when the researchers try to answer the validity, accuracy and objectives questions economically by adopting a procedural plan. It is also described as a complete plan of what the researcher is trying to achieve. It explains what the researcher will do, from question formulating or hypothesis statements, to collecting the data, to the final analysis. A research design is to provide answers for the research problems and question(s) through a plan and a strategy (Kumar 2011:95). Through a research design, the researcher communicates and explains the type of design that will be used, how

data will be collected, the selection of people who will provide answers, how the information obtained will be analysed, and how the outcomes and findings of the research will be provided.

3.3.1.1 The purpose of research design

According to Pandey and Pandey (2015:18), research designs have the following purposes discussed below:

(i) Minimization of expenditure

A research design provides a solid base for the research. It provides the information required by minimising the cost and effort of research through advance planning of the research.

(ii) Smooth scaling facilitation

Research design is important, as it makes numerous operations of research smooth scaling. Research involves different steps and activities that follow one another; therefore, research design is needed to ensure that there is a smooth running of different activities. This will ensure that efficiency is realised in the research.

(iii) Collection of relevant data and technique

A research design assists by providing proper planning in advance of the methods how data will be collected and the techniques to be applied. The design of a research study also provides the technique to analyse data that have been collected. It is worth mentioning that poor preparations in research design will lead to an overall unsuccessful project.

(iv) Blueprint for plans

A research design provides a blueprint that will be important for the collection of data in the research. It gives a researcher guidelines in advance to plan the methods to be applied for relevant data collection.

(v) Provision of overview to other experts

Experts in the field of research are provided with an overview of the research process. The research design provides clarity on what the research is all about and the technique that is applied to collect data. The design assists the researcher in planning and carefully organising ideas for the study.

(vi) Provision of direction

A research design provides direction to the contributors of the research in terms of the process and what the researcher seeks to achieve. The available literature helps the researcher to learn about new developments and alternative approaches to the study.

As outlined above, the importance of a research design cannot be ignored. The purpose of research is important, because it provides the direction of what the researcher is trying to achieve and how the objectives of the research will be attained through different stages. This study will use a qualitative design and the approach will be a case study.

3.3.1.2 Qualitative design

According to Hancock *et al.* (2007:7), qualitative research is aimed at exploring the social phenomena and to develop an explanation about a particular behaviour. It assists by exploring the social views about a particular issue. In this study, qualitative design will explore the opinions and source information from the general public, government officials and officials from the Nature Reserve.

Ospina (2004:1) highlights that qualitative research focuses on the study of things by researchers in order to make sense and interpret the meaning of people's observation. Mohajan (2018:2) argues that in qualitative research, the researcher is more interested in the beliefs of the people and their experience towards what the research aims to achieve. The researcher in qualitative approach investigates the local knowledge and understanding of factors by the people. Qualitative research has the following advantages, as reflected by Mohajan (2018:20):

- It is flexible and allows the researcher to follow the process effectively.

- Sensitivity towards contextual factor is raised.

- Expectations are clear to the investigators.

- An in-depth evaluation on issues covered can be undertaken.

- It saves costs by employing a smaller sample size.

- Details can be evaluated on subject materials.

- Complexities about the subject of the research can be avoided.

- The social meaning and dimensions to be studied are enhanced.

- The availability of data determines the research framework.

- Questions for the interview are not limited; the researcher can redirect the questions in real time.

- The data obtained by the researcher are based on the observations and human experience.

- A qualitative design enables the creation of new ideas by providing more content.

- In the event that new and fresh ideas emerge, the direction of the framework can quickly be revised by the researcher.

- Opportunities to develop new empirical ideas for the study are increased and supported.

A qualitative design, as explained by Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2014:9) has the following characteristics:

- Qualitative design is non-numerical; it consists of reasoning and applies words.

- To define the condition, situation and 'get a feeling' is the aim of the qualitative research.

- Graphs cannot be used for qualitative data.

- Qualitative research is exploratory.

- The design investigates the decision making in terms of the *how* and *why* part.

Kheider (2016:33) also indicates the following main characteristics of qualitative design:

- Qualitative research should be kept open to allow new ideas, opinions and details that may emerge during the research so that it can respond in a flexible way to the new developments.

- The design works with various means of data during the investigation, which includes interviews and documents.

- Social phenomena are described in qualitative research.

- The feelings of individuals, their experiences and opinions represent subjects of a qualitative design. In the main, the aim of qualitative research is to explore the views of the individuals regarding the situation where research is taking place.

- Typically, qualitative research is based on the smaller sample of participants in the research.

- The outcomes of the research are largely based on the interpretation of data by the investigator.

There are several methods of conducting qualitative research. According to Williams (2007:68), qualitative designs can be conducted through the following five methods: Case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, content analysis and phenomenological methods.


Figure 12: Qualitative methods (Pholoana 2019)

The figure above depicts the different methods that can be applied during qualitative research. A case study approach will be applied in this research.

3.3.1.3 Case study approach

According to Kumar (2011:123), a case study design is when a researcher tries to gain knowledge or an understanding of the condition by exploring an area where information is lacking. The case study is applied when a researcher tries to gain an understanding, rather than confirming and quantifying the problem. Generally, case studies are associated with qualitative research and there are common features of a case study such as (Rose, Spinks and Canhoto 2015:1) the following:

- A small number of cases are investigated thoroughly.

- There is analysis of data after collection.

- The context of cases in the research is studied in order to get an understanding of how cases are influenced by their context.

- Cases in the case study are not manipulated and they are generally occurring.

- The case study approach uses documents, interviews and observation as a source of data in order to gain informed data.

Kothari (2007:113) describes the case study as a method that is commonly associated with qualitative research and involves the observation of social units. The case study has the following advantages, as Kothari (2007:115) further highlights:

i. It enables the researcher to get a clear understanding of behaviour and perception.

ii. An investigator is able to attain records of personal experience, which might direct him/her to adopt a particular behaviour.

iii. The case study makes it easy for a researcher to trace the relationship between history of social units and social factors.

iv. The data obtained during investigations help the researcher to formulate relevant hypotheses.

v. The case study enables the researcher to study social units intensively, which is why a case study method is often used in social research.

vi. Appropriate questionnaires are constructed through the assistance of collecting data in the case study.

vii. In the case study, the researcher may use different types of research methods such as in-depth interviews, reports, questionnaires and available documents.

viii. The method has proven to be beneficial by providing guidance on which units are eligible to be studied.

ix. The case study assists the investigator in understanding the past of social unit due to the emphasis of historical data. In addition, it helps by providing measures for improvement in the current environment of social units.

x. Case study represents a real, personal experience record, which often skilled researchers pay less attention to.

xi. The method increases the experience of a researcher and enhances the ability of analysing data.

xii. This study enables the researcher to study social changes.

xiii. The technique in case study is important for administrative purposes. It can influence the decision makers to arrive at a particular conclusion.

According to Baxter and Jack (2008:547), once the researcher has determined that the case study will be applied in the research, it is important that the researcher also considers what

type of case study approach will be conducted. The case study includes the following types as depicted in Figure 10 below:

Figure 13: Types of case study (Pholoana 2019)

3.3.1.4 Exploratory case study

This study was approached through exploratory case study. According to Kumar (2011:335), exploratory study is when the researcher explores a condition where little is known, with the aim of identifying possibilities for a particular research study. According Zaidah (2007:3), an exploratory case study is when a researcher has an interest in a particular phenomenon to be explored and examined. The exploratory case study is relevant to this research, as this study seeks to explore and identify tourism and marketing strategies at the Nature Reserve in order to increase tourism and economic development in the Free State Province.

According to Nkhululeko (2018:21), exploratory research tales place when the investigator tries to gain new knowledge and ideas about the research he/she is conducting. It is a study that enables the researcher to discover the truth and to provide the necessary knowledge. This study will in the main explore new ideas relating to marketing of the Nature Reserve. Adepeju (2017:29) describes exploratory design as a method undertaken by a researcher in order to get a full understanding of the study. The researcher in this study applied exploratory designs to get a full understanding of how the marketing strategies can be utilised in the Nature Reserve to promote tourism. Furthermore, Hearn (2012:38) explains that exploratory design optimally employs qualitative approaches and open-ended questions.

3.3.2   Theoretical framework

As Carbone (2009:14) explains, a structure of concepts found in the literature are defined as the theoretical framework. Furthermore, Jacobs (2016:208) defines the theoretical framework as a viewpoint that provides an overview with regard to the research problem. It provides clarity on the research process and assists with the focus of the research. From these explanations, it is clear that the theoretical framework provides a vantage point of the research and the perspective from the literature review. The theoretical framework for this study will be explained below using the graphical representation.
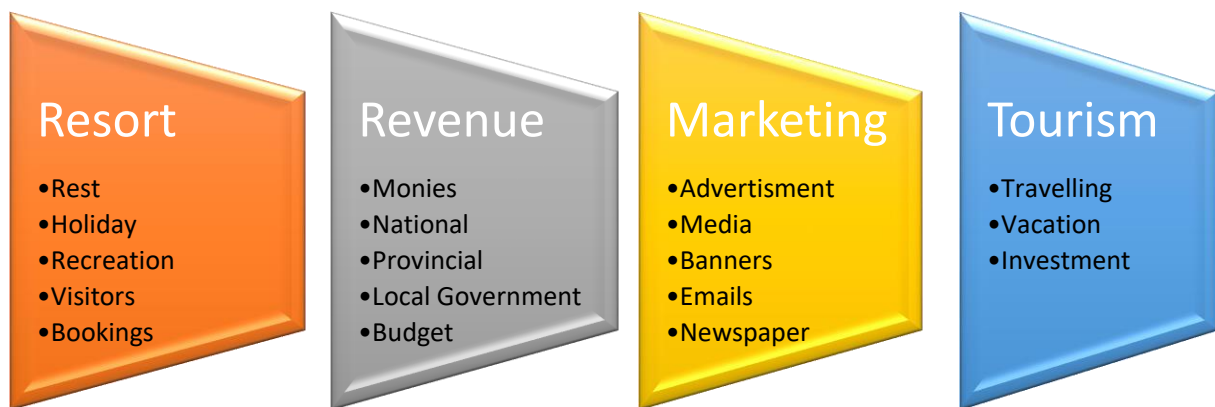
Figure 14: Theoretical framework of study (Pholoana, 2019)

Grant and Osanloo (2014:12) indicates that the theoretical framework in a study serves as the structure and support for the rationale behind the study. It provides guidance for the study and without it, the structure and vision of the research will be unclear. Furthermore, Jacobs (2016:208) indicates that the theoretical framework provides clarification in the research process and sharpens the focus of the investigator in the research. Additionally, Goes and Simon (2011:1) indicate that a theoretical framework provides a researcher with a supported rationale to conduct a study and helps the reader to understand the reasons why the study was conducted. The methods of collecting data for this study will be discussed below.

3.3.3   Data collection method

According to Osang *et al.* (2013:59), data may be referred to as a collection of facts, perceptions and observations from different people. Data play an important part in the study, because incorrect data may lead to invalidity of the study. According to Abawi (2013:1), data collection is the collection of information for the study that the researcher wants to know about. It helps the researcher to identify the sources of data for the study. Data can be classified into two parts, primary and secondary data. This study employed the secondary data method.

3.3.3.1 Secondary data method

With this method, a researcher gathers data through publications, data generated from the computer, government documents, and company records, amongst others (Osang *et al.* 2013:59). In addition, Hox and Boeijie (2005:596) describe secondary data as the data that are collected or retrieved from the archives and are easy to access. They include files obtained from the internet and DVD data, amongst others.

The researcher may collect data from secondary sources such as books and articles. Kumar (2011:154) indicates that secondary sources relate also to government or semi-government publications, which include statistics reports, demographic information and others. Information will be collected from the DESTEA in form of reports. Furthermore, publications from the Free State Provincial Government that relate to the study will also be used.

In this study, documents or textual data strategy and interviews (semi-structured interviews) were applied. Documents and interviews from this study's perspective will be explained below:

3.3.3.2 Documents and textual data

According to Maree (2016:88), documents or a textual data strategy is primarily focused on all written materials that may provide clarity on what the researcher is investigating. In this study, it will provide clarity on which are the best strategies to market the Nature Reserves and tourism strategies. It includes, amongst others, reports, minutes of the meeting, letters from the Free State Provincial Government and any legal reports or documents related to the study.

3.3.3.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews as a method was used to collect information for this study. According to Oats (2014:88), an interview can be described as process of when an individual engages with another individual with the particular purpose of gaining insight and knowledge of the other. Kumar (2011:136-154) explains that an interview gives a researcher freedom of deciding what type of questions to ask the interviewee. An interview can also be defined as a one-on-one conversation utilising designed questions with an individual to get responses.

Alshenqeeti (2014:39) explains that semi-structured interviews are flexible and allows the researcher to probe and expand the responses from the interviewee. Furthermore, Bradley and Harrell (2009:27) indicate that semi-structured interviews use a guide in the form of questions and topics that must be asked. It allows the researcher to determine the manner in which questions are put before the interviewee. These types of interviews are used when the investigators want to gain an the insight into a topic. In this study, the semi-structured interview

was relevant. The questions were structured by the interviewer to ask the interviewees in order to gain knowledge about the Nature Reserve.

According to Maree (2016:93), a semi-structured interview is often applied by researchers when they want to establish and confirm data emerging from other sources. The data obtained through interviews from different people were corroborated. Bloom and Crabtree (2006:315) explain that semi-structured interviews are often conducted at a specific place and that the scheduling of interviews is also prepared in advance. The interviews were scheduled in advance with officials from the Department and others. Different types of individuals were approached and interviewed. The population will be explained below.

3.3.3.4 Population

Ali (2011:2) describes a population as an individual group living in the same particular area at the same time. Furthermore, Spencer (2012:8) refers to a population as individuals who are organised in different ways by language, race, social groups and interests. In this study, the population relates to DESTEA officials, Bloemfontein community, Soetdoring officials and Free State Provincial Treasury officials. Asiamah, Mensaah and Abayie (2017:1609) point out that a researcher may need to have a small sample from a large population to study, which will be made up of relevant members. The researcher expected to draw the appropriate sample in order to ensure that the research produced credible results. The sampling is discussed below.

3.3.4   Sampling

According to Cilliers *et al.* (2014:134), sampling is the development of a list of people that the researcher would like to interview in order to get information for the study. It provides the researcher with the population that should be targeted for interview. Kumar (2011:346) further explains that sampling happens when a researcher selects a small population target from a bigger population to source information.
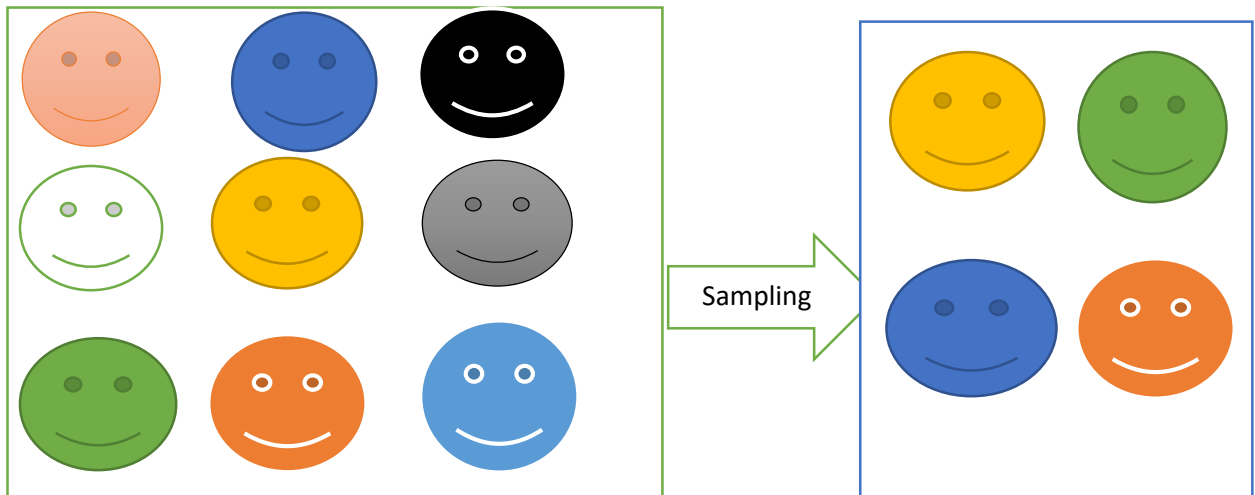
Figure 15: Sampling (Pholoana 2019)

The figure above illustrates how sampling is employed in the research. It indicates how the researcher selects a number of people from a large population. Fridah (2002:1) defines sampling as the act or process where the researcher selects suitable representatives of the population for a particular study. It can also be referred to as a group of people selected by the investigator to make a contribution to the study. Ajwok (2015:92) further explains that sampling is the method used by researchers to select a number of people from a large group or population to participate in the study.

Sampling refers to a portion of a population that has been selected from the large population in the area of a research (Landreneau and Creek 2008:1). Sharma (2017:1) indicates that sampling is a technique employed by an investigator to select a number of individuals or items to serve as a data source for his/her study. Alvi (2016:12) highlights that sampling can be divided into two major methods, as shown in the figure below:
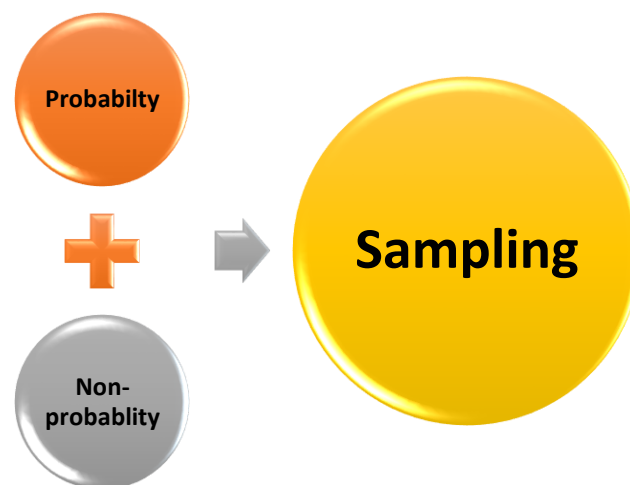
Figure 16: Sampling methods (Pholoana 2019)

For the purpose of this study, under non-probable sampling, purposive and convenience sampling were applicable for the study. This will be discussed below.

3.3.4.1 Non-probability sampling

According to Matheson (2008:1), the non-probability technique is generally used when the researcher is not concerned with a balanced sample population. It does not take the general approach of the population during the study. Omona (2013:179) explains that non-probability sampling is also called biased sampling by some researchers. The goal of this sampling is not to generalise the population, but in the main to obtain knowledge and insights from individuals about a phenomenon.

Eitikan and Bala (2017:2) mention that non-probability sampling is purposive by nature and assists the researcher in addressing the research question. Non-probability sampling employs techniques that are familiar with purposive sampling. Ragab and Arisha (2018:1) indicate that non-probability sampling focuses on the selection of individuals from the large group of the population, which is not random, but based on the decision of the researcher.

Senam and Akpan (2014:471) indicate that when the investigator applies non-probability sampling, the sampling does not follow any systematic guidelines. Ragab and Arisha (2017:7) highlight that non-probability sampling involves the following types:

Figure 17: Non-probability sampling (Pholoana 2019)

Convenience Sampling

As indicated by Eitikan, Musa and Alkassim (2015:2), convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling that other researchers refer to as haphazard or accidental sampling. It is sampling that includes members of the population who meet a criterion such as accessibility and willingness for participation in the study.

According to Farrokhi and Hamidabad (2018:785), convenience sampling is the part of the non-probability sampling where a particular part of the population is specifically selected for the study. Criteria such as geographical proximity, accessibility and willingness to participate in the study are applied when selecting the population. Additionally, Panacek and Thompson (2007:77) explain that as the name suggests, convenience sampling refers to the population or subjects who are of interest and convenient to the investigator in one way or the other.

This sampling design will apply in this study, as the researcher will interview the top management, the deputy directors and directors, as they are part of the decision making. They are in a favourable position to provide accurate information about the Nature Reserve. The officials in government, from assistant directors to chief directors, and the general public will be interviewed to provide diverse solutions.

Purposive Sampling

According to Gledhill *et al.* (2008:1), purposive sampling is often selected and applied to obtain data in a qualitative research. It provides the researcher with the opportunity to get information from the selected population. Haegele and Hodge (2015:70) explain that this sampling is when investigators use their judgment to select a population for a study. The researcher can apply purposive sampling to target a specific population and obtain information from individuals that may be unique from a large population.

Purposive sampling has advantages that can be summarised as follows (Hendriks 2016:131):

- Only members who are eligible to make a contribution to the study are selected, and those who are unsuitable are eliminated.

- The process becomes effective as soon as some members of the population have been eliminated and appropriate ones have been selected.

- The cost is reduced, as there are fewer time constraints and appropriate members have been selected.

- In purposive sampling, there is an expectation of results to be more accurate, compared to those of the alternative sampling.

- Purposive sampling is often applied as the way to trace a group of people who are appropriate for a particular study.

Oppong (2013: 203) agrees with Gledhill, Abbey and Schweitzer (2008:1) that purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research. It is a method where a researcher selects subjects that will provide information and are familiar with the research issue. In the research, participants were selected based on the geographical proximity, such as residents of Mangaung. Furthermore, the selection was made regarding participants who are familiar with the research topic, such as officials working for the Free State government.

3.3.5 Data analysis

According to Flick (2013:4), data analysis is the important part in qualitative research. Whatever data that have been collected by the researcher, the analysis of the data will determine the outcomes of the study. According to Cilliers *et al.* (2014:232), qualitative data analysis is when a researcher analyses a huge data set collected in order to have a structured data.

Hendriks (2014:134) indicates that once data have been collected, the next step is the analysis of the data. Data analysis refers to the reduction of data into a manageable size by developing a synopsis. Furthermore, Sharma (2018:4) indicates that data analysis is the process of data conversion into an information and knowledge. There are key considerations that a researcher must take into account during the process of data analysis (which will be explained below):

- The necessary skills to analyse data are important.

- Different data types need to be distinguished.

- Statistical tests need to be distinguished.

- Selection of the right tests needs to be identified.

- Statistical significance needs to be determined.

- Correlation and regressions should be distinguished.

- Unbiased inferences should be drawn.

- Inappropriate analysis of subgroups should be avoided.

- Objective outcomes measurements should be clearly defined.

- Reliability and validity of data are important.

Hendricks (2014:135) points out that modern technology can be used to analyse data. There are different types of software in the market which the researcher can apply to analyse data,

such as the Microsoft Office Suite. Suitable and cost-effective data analysis approaches such as the Microsoft Office Suite should be shared with the community if implemented (Bree and Gallager 2016:2831). This study made use of the Microsoft Office Suite available from the computer of the Free State Provincial Treasury.

The research process involves the engagement of many different people from different backgrounds. It involves accessing data in the form of reports from different departments. It is therefore important that a researcher pays attention to ethical considerations.

3.3.6   Ethical considerations

According to Mantzorou and Fouka (2011:3), research ethics or ethical consideration in the research refers to the protection of the dignity of subjects by the investigator. It further requires that the publication of information needs to be protected. Akaranga and Makau (2016:2) agree with Mantzorou and Fouka (2011:3) that research ethics are important and requires that investigators protect the dignity of their subjects of the research and publish the information that is researched.

Hammersley and Goldsmiths (2012:1) indicate that there are several ethical principles that need to be taken into consideration by the researcher:

Harm minimisation – it should be determined whether the research is likely to cause harm in the form finances or reputation.

Respecting autonomy – the researcher should respect and allow the subject to present their decisions for themselves, and whether they want to participate or not.

Privacy protection – the aim of the research is to make findings available to the public. However, the researcher must be able to determine which information can be published and which must be kept private.

Reciprocity offering – the research depends on the data that are received from the participants. This may mean that people will participate in a different way in order to add to the contribution. However, it should be noted that some participants may expect payment for their contribution.

Treating people as equal – it is important that various participants who contributing to the study should be afforded equal treatment. Favourability and discrimination should not take place when the researcher contacts the participants.

In order to conduct the research, approval was given by the Free State Provincial Government. Approval was also requested from the people to be interviewed. The purpose of the study was explained to the participants. The following guidelines were adhered to:

- Transparency by explaining in detail the purpose of the study.

- Informed consent to make the interviewees aware that they are taking part in a study.

- Ensuring that confidentiality is provided by making sure that the information provided is safe.

- Providing participants with the outcomes of the study to verify the interpretation of the results.

- Any information obtained from participants may not be used for any other purpose.

3.3.7   Demarcation of the study

According to Goes and Simon (2013:1), limitations or demarcations are occurrences in the study that the investigator do not have control over. They limit the extent to which the investigator can go, which might impact the conclusion of the study. Theofanidis and Fountouki (2019:156) state that research limitations are weaknesses of the study that are beyond the control of the researcher. They may affect the study design, conclusions and must be clearly stated by the researcher.

As Baron (2008:4) states, limitations of a study are factors that are normally beyond the control of the researcher and which impact the outcomes of the study. They are important for the reader to acknowledge the possible errors and difficulties in the research. Furthermore, Dean (2004:1240) indicates that limitations are found in all studies. He further highlights that it is important that the researcher points out the limitations rather than them being pointed out by the reader. Based on these explanations, the following limitations for this study are identified:

- This study was only sampled on a very small part of the Free State Province.

- Some of the respondents may have misunderstood the questions during the completing of the questionnaires.

- Some of the officials might have feared victimisation for providing the researcher with challenges they are facing at the Nature Reserve.

- Confidential documents such as revenue generated from the resort may not be accessible due to their sensitivity.

- To date, the availability of literature was a challenge, as no previous study had been undertaken regarding Soetdoring, resulting in a non-comparative study.

3.4   CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to identify marketing strategies in order to promote tourism at the nature reserve. The study made use of the qualitative research methodology, as it was applicable to provide answers to the research problem. The researcher employed non-probability sampling, which assisted in terms of selecting the appropriate individuals from the large population.

Data were collected by means of reports, questionnaires, published documents, and personal interviews, amongst others, to provide answers to the research problem. Once data had been collected, the data were analysed by making use of the Microsoft Office Suite. The sources of the data were treated the same as the data obtained.

It was very important for the researcher to observe ethical considerations in the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and they were requested to participate and provide inputs voluntarily. Written approval was granted by the Department of Economic and Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and the Free State Provincial Treasury in order to allow the researcher to interview officials from both departments.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the data that were collected through questionnaires for this study. The findings will also be provided which are guided by the aim of this study, namely to identify tourism and marketing strategies at Soetdoring Nature Reserve in order to increase the economic development and growth in the Free State Province. Data were collected by means of self-administered questionnaires that were all sent by e-mail. The data were subsequently analysed to identify tourism and marketing strategies at Soetdoring Nature Reserve.

A total of forty (40) questionnaires were distributed to Free State Provincial Treasury, Free State Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs and Soetdoring Nature Reserve. Of the forty (40) questionnaires distributed, thirty (30) were received back. This represents a response rate of 75%. Although no reasons were provided for refusal to participate, the challenge experienced was with some officials being unable to access e-mails at home as the country was faced with a total shutdown due to the corona virus pandemic.

The questionnaire comprised forty-seven (47) questions and it was divided into six sections. The data collected will be presented as follows:

- The first section of the questionnaire comprises demographic information such as hobbies, gender, education level, occupation, and area of residence.

- The second section covers the data relating to marketing, whether the Nature Reserve is well marketed, and whether there is a high demand for the Nature Reserve to be marketed.

- The third section of the questionnaire comprises the branding platforms and whether there is enough branding at the Nature Reserve.

- The fourth section deals with leadership department, such as commitment of leadership towards the success of the Nature Reserve and challenges that may exist.

- In the fifth section, data relating to commutation were obtained, covering issues relating to communication between nature reserve leadership, executive, officials and potential visitors.

- The sixth section deals with the certainty regarding the status of the Nature Reserve, such as the position/location, branding, marketing, management and sustainability.

4.4.1 Methods of data collection

In this study, descriptive statistical analysis was applied to identify frequencies and percentages to address all the questions in the questionnaire. According to Maree (2016:204), descriptive analysis is used to summarise data and organise the data in a meaningful way to enhance an understanding of the data. Furthermore, Okuande (2009:4) explains that descriptive analysis is a summary of specific data aspects in which diagrams, graphs and charts are utilised to provide more understanding. In this study, graphs and diagrams will be utilised to provide the reader with more understanding of the data.

4.4.2 Approval of the research

Formal requests to conduct research were directed to the Head of Free State Provincial Treasury and Head of Free State Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs. Approval was granted by both departments that research could be conducted, and that research questionnaires can be distributed to officials working at the departments and at Soetdoring Nature Reserve.

4.4.3 Questionnaires

Forty (40) questionnaires were distributed for completion in accordance with the target group that was identified. Twenty (20) questionnaires were sent to Free State Provincial Treasury officials; ten (10) were sent to Free State Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs officials; and ten (10) to Soetdoring Nature Reserve. These questionnaires were sent by e-mail, accompanied by the letter of approval, and the letter explaining the purpose of the research and assurance of confidentiality.

4.4.3.1 Questionnaires' response rate

Out of forty (40) questionnaires, thirty (30) responses were received, which meant that the study attracted a response rate of 75% overall. In order to collect questionnaires, a weekly reminder was communicated by means of e-mails and phone calls. The researcher visited the Free State Department of Economic, Small Business Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs to explain the importance of receiving responses from questionnaires. An appointment was made with the Head of the Department.

It took five months to secure the responses and retrieve questionnaires sent by respondents through e-mails. The questionnaires were sent on 16 March 2020. The response time was influenced by the impact of the corona virus pandemic, as most of offices were closed and many respondents did not have equipment to work at home. During this time, the country went

into a complete shutdown of services, excluding those who provided essential services. After five months, in August 2020, the researcher concluded that the responses received were enough to secure validity of findings. Therefore, the process of collecting data was concluded.

4.4.3.2 Questionnaire design

The questionnaire comprised forty-seven (47) in total that were distributed to respondents electronically via e-mail. Thirteen (13) of the questions were open-ended and thirty-four (34) were closed-ended. The fact that the study was conducted at a time when the Covid-19 pandemic had a global, national and provincial impact, and where the country experienced shutdown of offices, economy and movement of people, was also taken into cognizance when the questionnaire was administered. The average time to complete the questionnaire was thirty (30) minutes.

The research title and instructions preceded the research question. Respondents were assured of confidentiality of the information they would provide. The participants were provided with the contact details of the researcher for further clarity and whereto they should return their completed questionnaires. Participants were guided to choose one response from a series of questions posed and mark the appropriate answer of their choice with an X.

4.4.4 Discussion of findings

The results and findings of the study are interpreted below. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to provide a summary and organise the data in a meaningful way by using diagrams and charts. Graphs were used to present results according to the same order from the questionnaire. The 2016 Microsoft Office program and the R software program were used to generate the graphs and statistics.

4.4.4.1 Personal profile

The first part of the questionnaire required of the participants to complete the general biographical data, inter alia, name, employment status, age, education level, hobbies, and place of residence. The results are provided below:

[1] Position

Position	Number of respondents	Percentage
Admin Clerk	1	3%
Deputy Director	14	47%
Resort Manager	3	10%
Analyst	1	3%
Director	2	7%
Scientist	1	3%
Assistant Director	4	14%
EPWP Contract	1	3%
Chief Director	2	7%
Reserve Ecologist	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
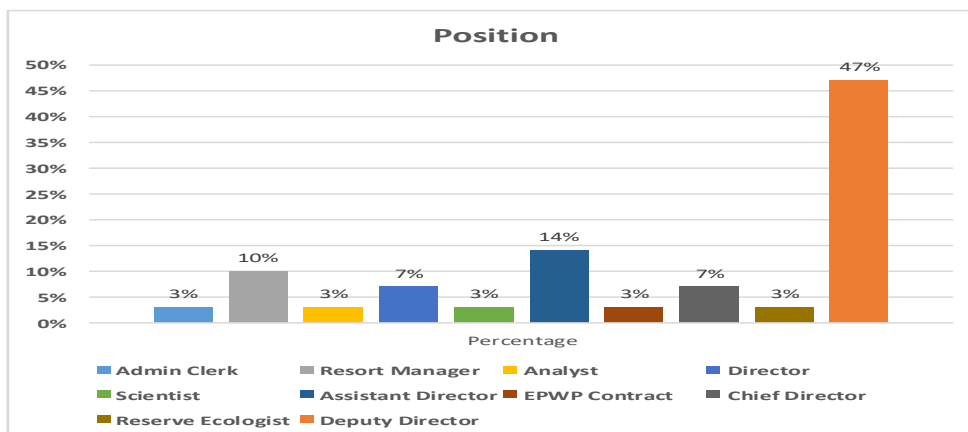
Figure 18: Position analysis

The figure above depicts different positions held by participants. Most of the participants are Deputy Directors, followed by the Assistant Directors. The percentage analysis of Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors who responded is 47% and 14%, respectively.

[2] Age

Age	Number of respondents	Percentage
18>30	1	3%
31>40	11	37%
41>50	12	40%
51>60	5	17%
51>65	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
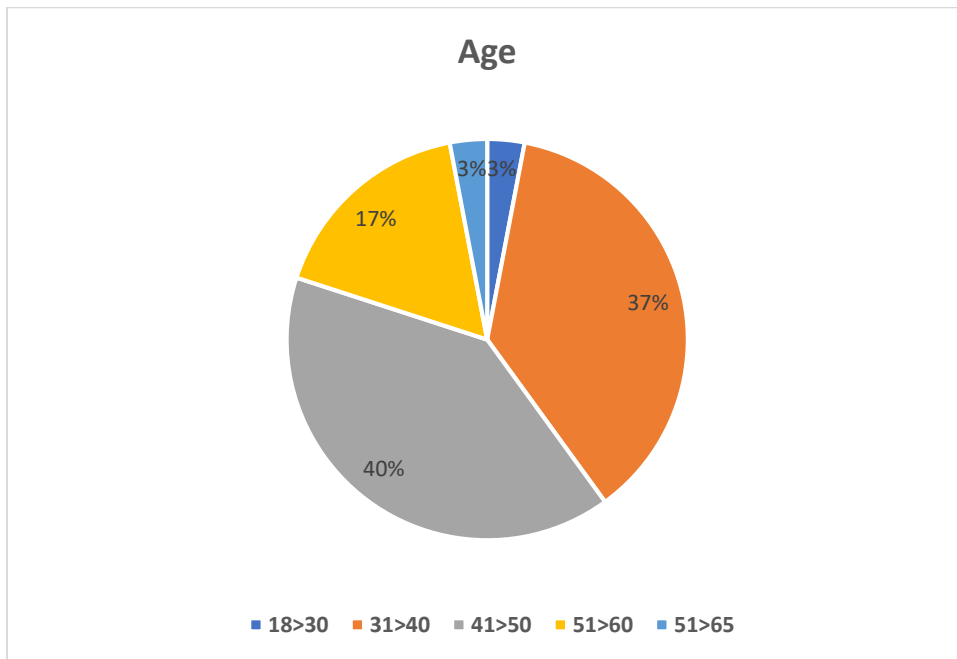
Figure 19: Age analysis

The figure above presents the age analysis. Most of the respondents are aged between forty-one (41) and fifty (50), followed by those who aged between thirty-one (31) and forty (40). Those who were between forty-one (41) and fifty (50) are 40% and those between thirty-one (31) and forty (40) were at 37%.

[3] Gender

Gender	Number of respondents	Percentage
Female	14	47%
Male	16	53%
Total	**30**	**100%**
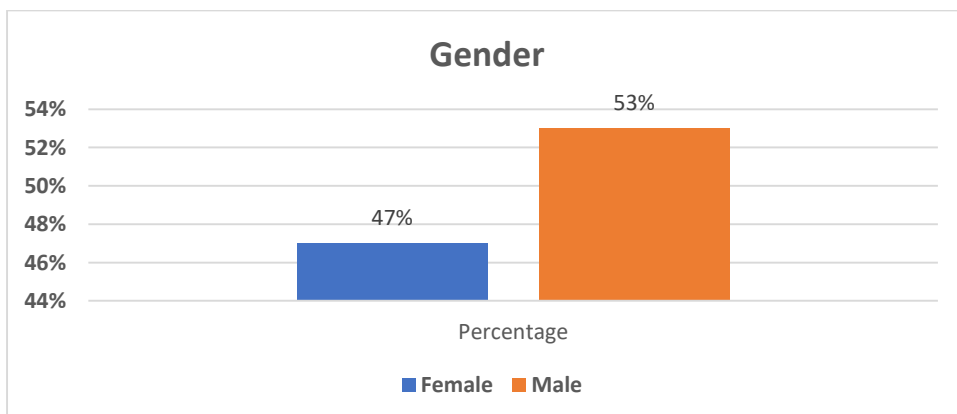
Figure 20: Gender analysis

From the figure above, most participants were male, followed by females. The male participation was at 53%, whilst the females contributed 47%.

[4] Education

Education	Number of respondents	Percentage
B Tech	1	3%
Degree	14	47%
Diploma	2	7%
Honours	3	10%
Masters	6	20%
Matric	2	7%
PhD	1	3%
Post grad	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
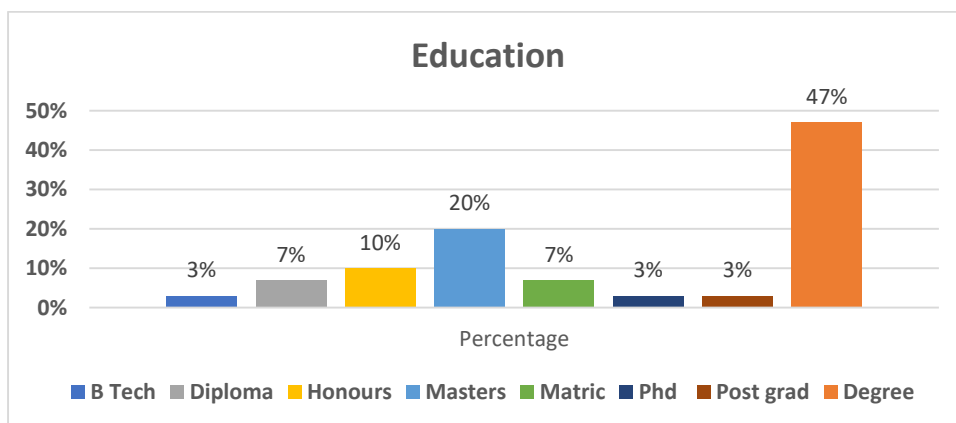
Figure 21: Education analysis

The figure above indicates that most of the participants have a degree. There were 47% degreed participants, followed by 20% participants with possess a 10 degree. The lowest qualification is matric with 7% of participants.

[5] Location

Location	Number of respondents	Percentage
Bloemfontein	26	87%
Brandfort	1	3%
Soetdoring	1	3%
Soutpan	2	7%
Total	**30**	**100%**
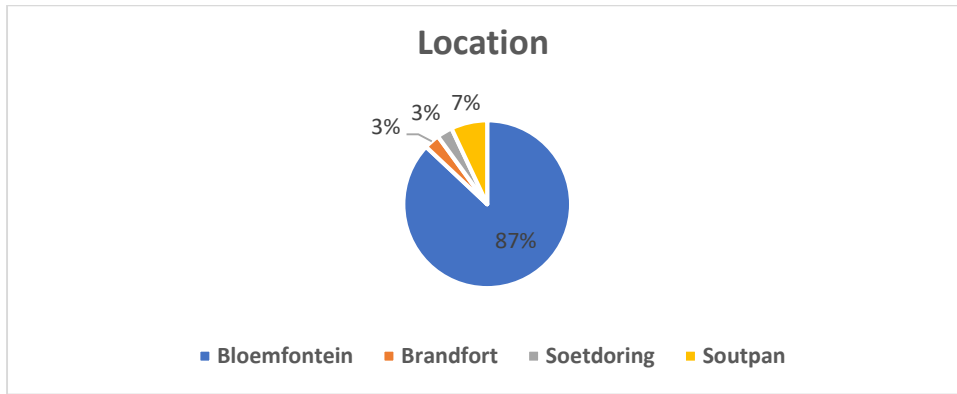
Figure 22: Location analysis

In this figure above, it appears that 87% of participants reside in Bloemfontein. Soutpan contributed 7%, followed by Brandfort with 3%, and also Soetdoring with 3%.

[6] Hobbies

Hobbies	Number of respondents	Percentage
Gym	1	4%
Television	1	4%
Music	1	3%
Travelling	6	20%
Nature Tours	1	3%
Walking	1	3%
Outdoor	1	3%
Reading	11	37%
Sports	7	23%
Total	**30**	**100%**
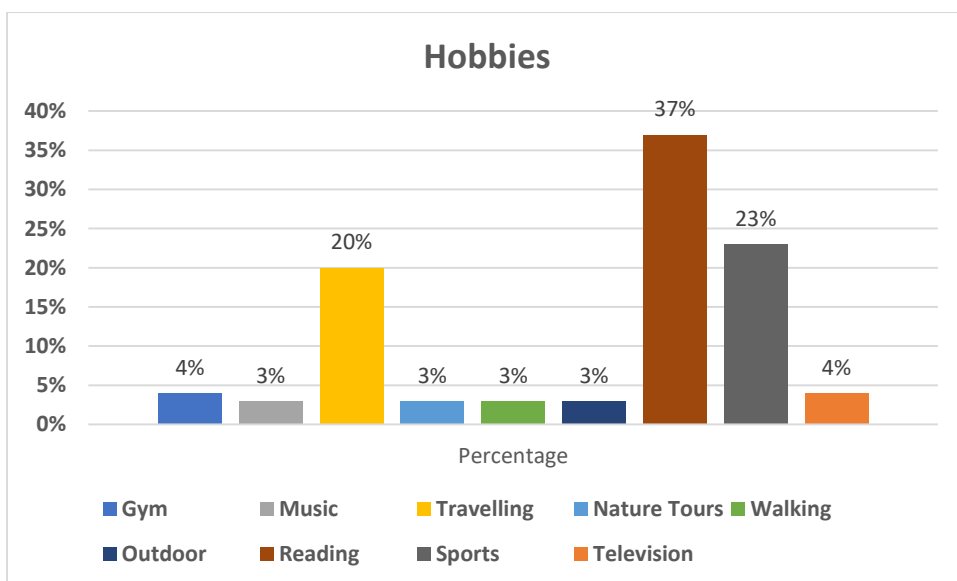
Figure 23: Hobbies analysis

The above analysis indicates that 37% of participants prefers reading, followed by 23% who like to participate in sport. The analysis further depicts that 20% prefer to travel, whilst those who like gym, walking, music and television appeared to be very low, at 4% and below.

[7] Free time

Free time	Number of respondents	Percentage
Beach	1	4%
Gathering	1	3%
Gym	1	3%
Home	21	70%
No answer	1	3%
Park	1	3%
Reserves	2	7%
Visits	2	7%
Total	**30**	**100%**
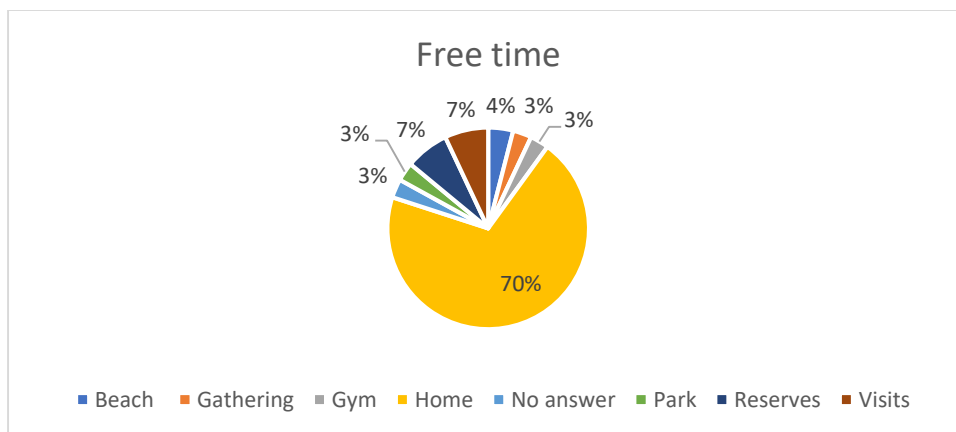
Figure 24: Free time analysis

It can be observed from the figure above that about 70% of participants prefer to be at home during their free time. On the other hand, those who like visits and reserves are represented with 7%, followed by those who prefers a beach with 4%. About 4% of participants did not provide an answer to this question.

[8] Travelling

Travelling	Number of respondents	Percentage
No	2	7%
Yes	28	93%
Total	**30**	**100%**
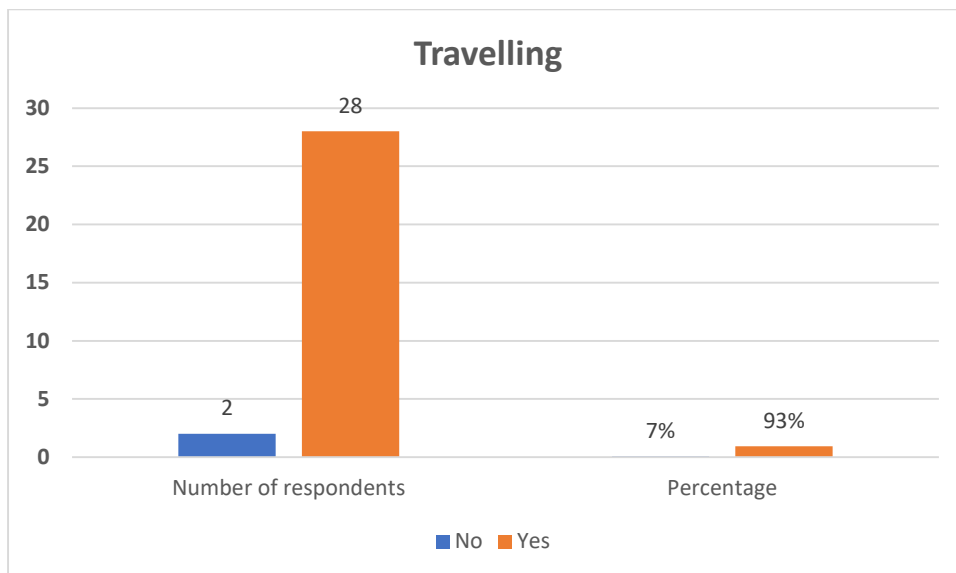
Figure 25: Travelling analysis

The picture above depicts the travelling analysis of participants. 93% of the participants prefer travelling, whilst only 7% do not like to travel.

4.4.4.2 Data interpretation and analysis

The results and findings of the study are interpreted and analysed below. The results are presented graphically and in the form of a chart in the same order as they appear in the questionnaire. The R software program was used to generate statistics and the Microsoft Office program was applied to generate tables, graphs and charts.

[9] Do you think the Nature Reserve is well marketed?

Do you think the Nature Reserve is well marketed?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	16	53%
Disagree	5	17%
Agree partly	4	13%
Totally agree	5	17%
Total	**30**	**100%**
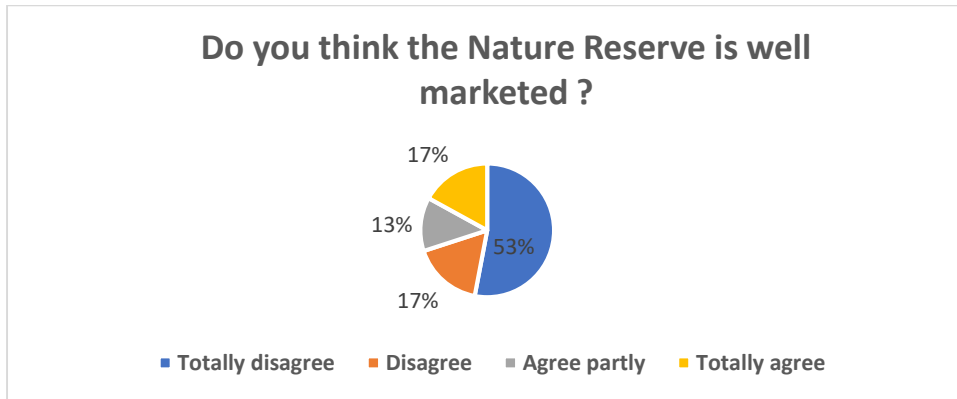
Figure 26: Nature Reserve is well marketed

From the table and figure above, out of thirty (30) of participants, 53% believe that the Nature Reserve is not well marketed. This indicates that a lot of tourists may not be aware of the existence of the Nature Reserve. Only a small portion of the participants indicated that the Nature Reserve is well marketed.

[10] Do you think marketing can bring more people to the Nature Reserve?

Do you think marketing can bring more people to the Nature Reserve?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Agree partly	10	33%
Totally agree	20	67%
Total	**30**	**100%**
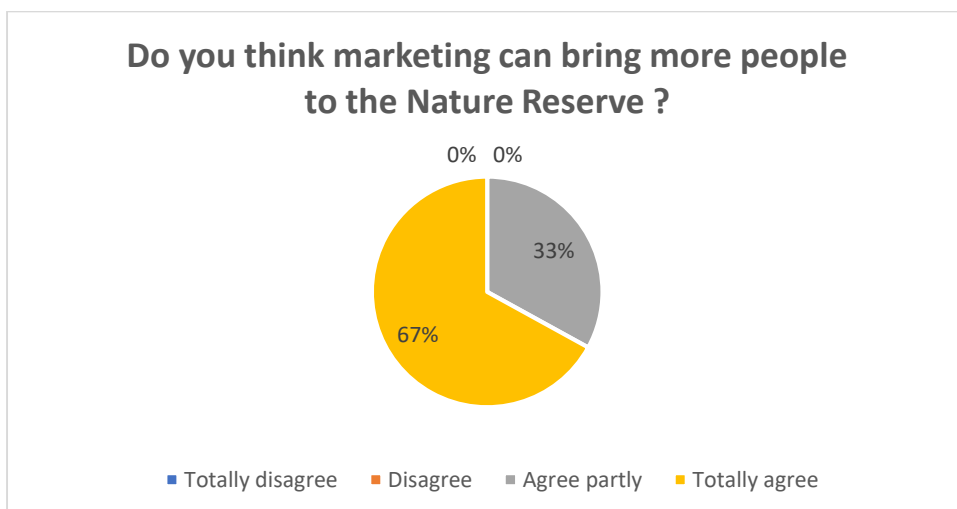
Figure 27: Marketing can bring more people to the Nature Reserve

Most of the participants agreed that marketing can bring more people to the Nature Reserve, as shown in the above table and figure. Those who agreed constitute 67%, whilst those who partly agreed are at 33%. It should be noted that there was no disagreement in relation to the above question. This means that the Nature Reserve should ensure that proper marketing is effective so that it can attract tourist to visit the area.

[11] Do you think the Nature Reserve has adequate resources for marketing?

The Nature Reserve has adequate resources for marketing	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	8	27%
Disagree	6	20%
Agree partly	12	40%
Totally agree	3	10%
No answer	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
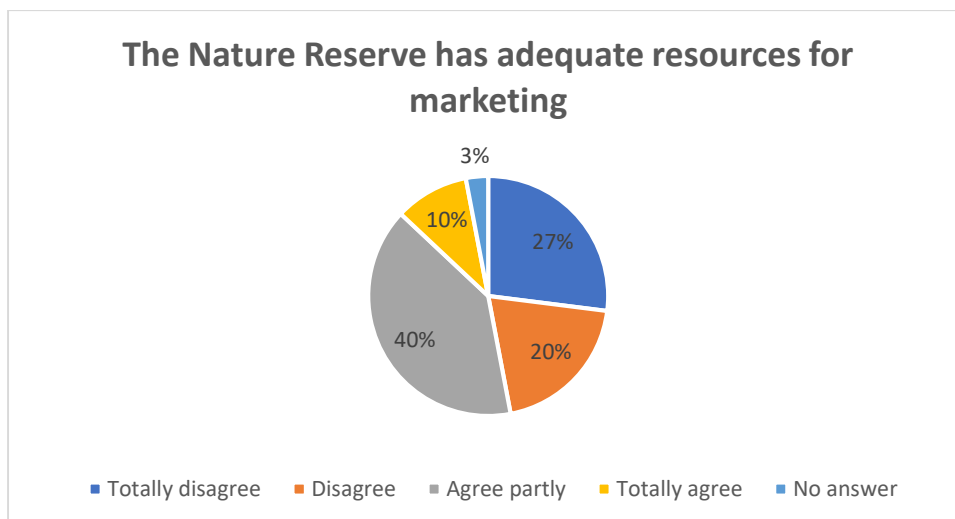
Figure 28: The Nature Reserve has adequate resources for marketing

The participants were asked whether the Nature Reserve has adequate resource for marketing. About 40% partly agreed that there are adequate resources at the Nature Reserve. However, 27% totally disagreed that there are resources. This is an indication that although 40% partly agreed, 27% of participants totally disagreed, whilst 20% disagreed that the Nature Reserve, as indicated by those participants, does not have adequate resources for marketing.

[12] Do you think there is a high demand for marketing the Nature Reserve?

There is a high demand for marketing the Nature Reserve	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	1	3%
Disagree	3	10%
Agree partly	8	27%
Totally agree	18	60%
Total	**30**	**100%**
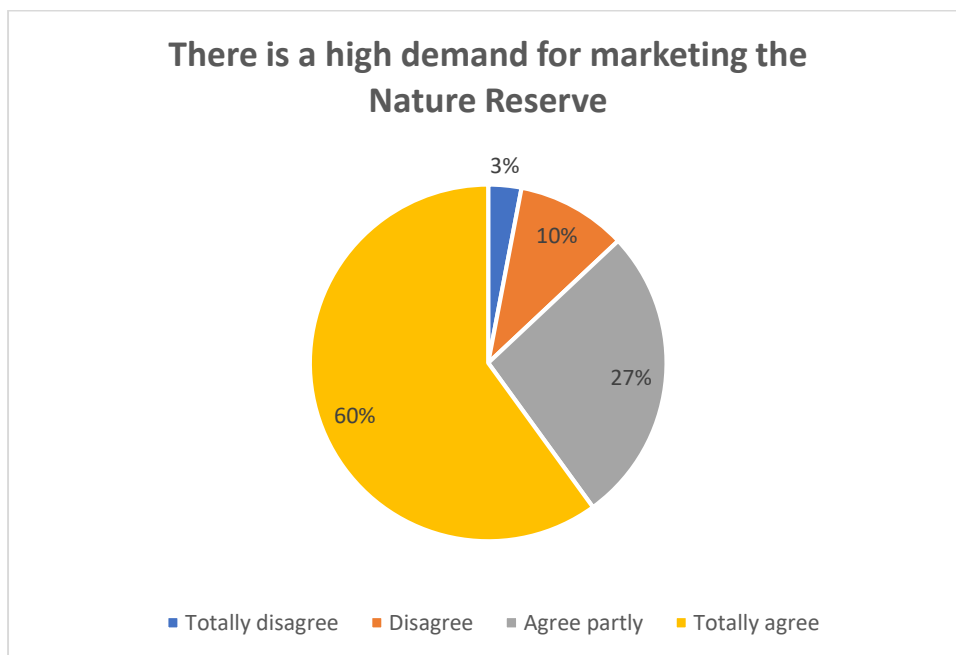
Figure 29: There is a high demand for marketing the Nature Reserve

The majority of participants (60%) felt that there is a high demand for marketing the Nature Reserve. 27% agreed partly. This is an indication that there is a high demand for people to know about the Nature Reserve and its activities.

[13] Will marketing the Nature Reserve be expensive?

Marketing the Nature Reserve will be expensive	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	6	20%
Disagree	9	30%
Agree partly	11	37%
Totally agree	3	10%
No answer	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
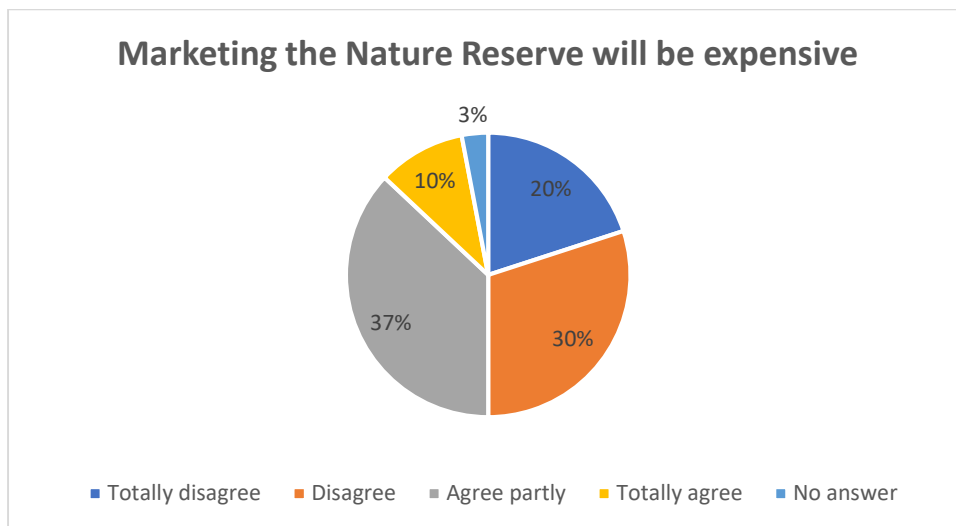
Figure 30: Marketing the Nature Reserve will be expensive

From the above analysis, it can be seen 37% of participants partly agree that it will be expensive to market the Nature Reserve. Those who disagree are also fairly represented by 30%. The analysis indicates that it will not generally be expensive to market the Nature Reserve.

[14] What, in your opinion, is the biggest practical challenge in relation to marketing the Soetdoring Nature Reserve? Please motivate your answer.

What, in your opinion, is the biggest practical challenge in relation to Marketing Soetdoring Nature Reserve	Number of respondents	Percentage
Maintenance	11	37%
Internet	1	3%
Turnaround strategy	9	30%
Resources	4	14%
Modernised technology	1	3%
Skills	1	3%
No answer	3	10%
Total	**30**	**100%**
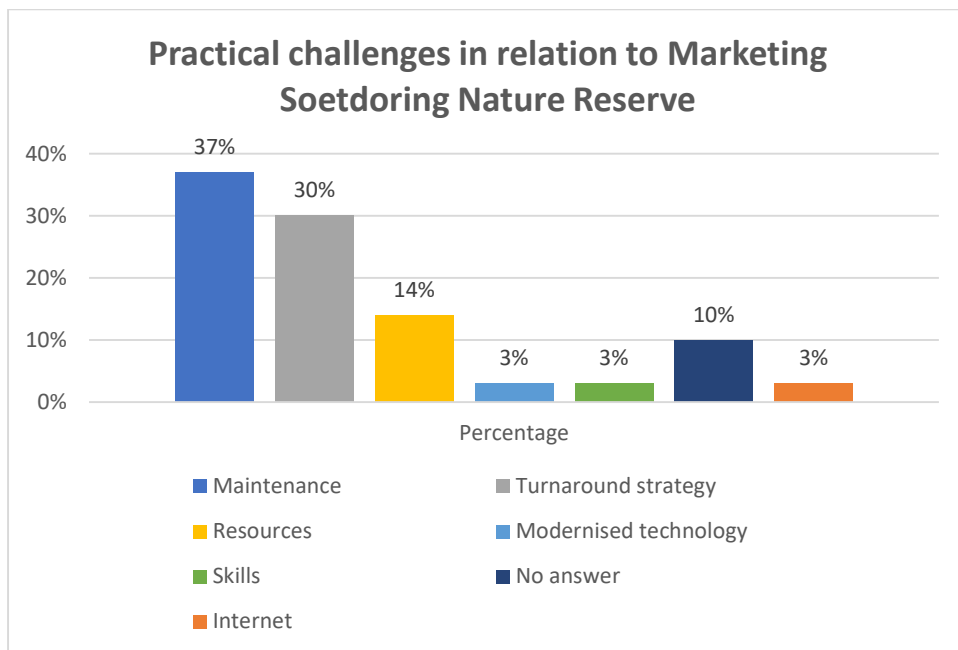
Figure 31: Practical challenges in relation to marketing Soetdoring Nature Reserve

As reflected in the table and figure above, the participants (37%) believe that maintenance is the biggest challenge in relation to marketing of the Nature Reserve. They expressed the view that it will be difficult to market a product that is not fully maintained. On the other hand, 30% believed that there is a need for a turnaround strategy. They mentioned that the operations should adapt to the current marketing strategies that are available and move away from the old-fashioned strategies. Furthermore, 14% presented another argument, namely that resources in the form of a computer, and a stable internet are some of the challenges faced by the Nature Reserve.

The analysis above presents the view that maintenance is the biggest challenge that needs to be prioritised for the success of the Nature Reserve. It further points out that new technology must be utilised to overcome the challenge of marketing as well as to ensure that resources are available.

[15] What suggestions will you recommend to eliminate practical shortcomings in relation to marketing Soetdoring Nature Reserve?

What suggestions will you recommend to eliminate practical shortcomings?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Maintenance	8	27%
Internet	4	14%
Qualified staff	3	10%
Media	1	3%
Turnaround strategy	5	17%
Resources	5	17%
Customer satisfaction	1	3%
Outsource	1	3%
Government departments	1	3%
No answer	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
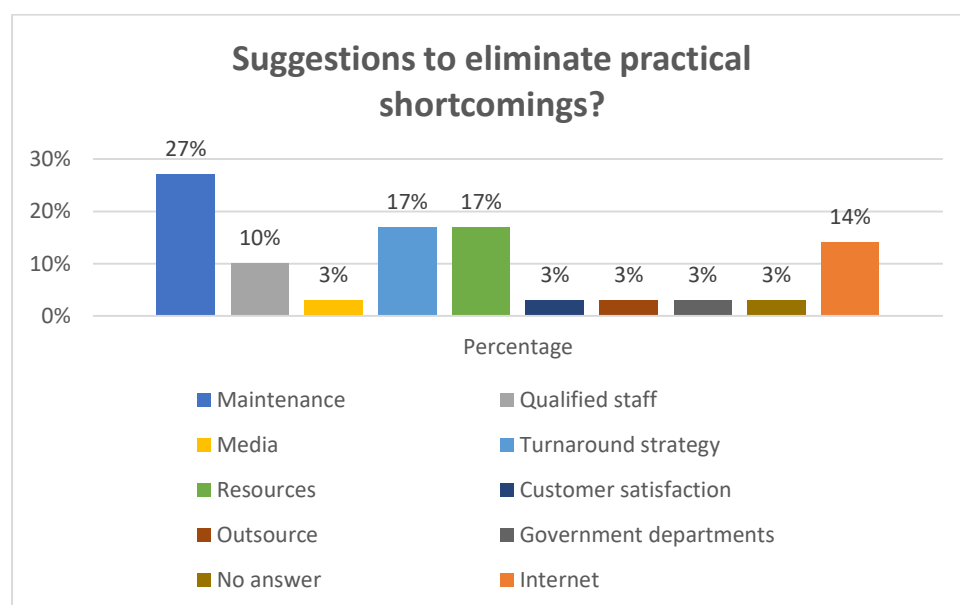
Figure 32: Suggestions to eliminate practical shortcomings

97% of participants answered this question, whilst 3% could not answer; they either left the space open because they were not sure or did not have any comments. From the analysis above, it can be deduced that the participants (27%) suggested that the maintenance should be prioritised to eliminate the challenge in marketing of the Nature Reserve. In addition, 17% suggested that a turnaround strategy should be implemented and resources in a formal budget should be taken into account. They explained that when enough funds are available, the Nature Reserve will be able to cater for needs of the resorts. Furthermore, 14% suggested

that the internet in the form of social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, amongst others, should be used.

Others (3%) also suggested the use of other government departments, outsourcing of the marketing function, and media to assist in marketing the Nature Reserve. It is also highlighted that 10% of the participants suggested that qualified staff should be appointed, which will then ensure that the correct decisions are made.

[16] Which platforms of marketing do you think will best be suited to the Nature Reserve?

Which platforms of marketing do you think will best be suited to the Nature Reserve	Number of respondents	Percentage
Internet	13	43%
Feedback	1	3%
Media	14	47%
Government departments	2	7%
Total	**30**	**100%**
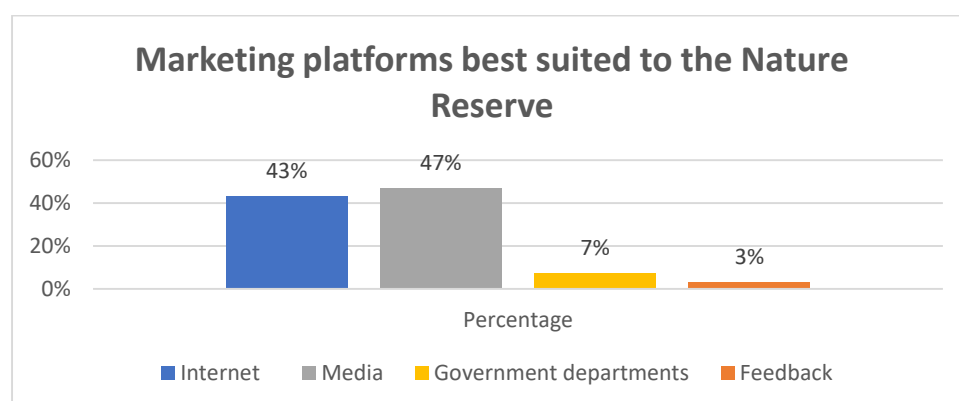
Figure 33: Marketing platforms best suited to the Nature Reserve

All the participants answered this question. 47% recommended that media in the form of newspapers, television and radio should be considered as platforms of marketing the Nature Reserve. The use of the internet is fairly represented by 43%. The participants suggested that social media, as mentioned above, could assist the Nature Reserve with marketing.

[17] Who do you think should be the target market for the Nature Reserve?

Who do you think should be the target market for the Nature Reserve?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Internet	2	7%
Tourist	7	23%
Black people	2	7%
Local population	6	20%
Males	1	4%
Members of the public	4	14%
Young people	1	3%
Working class	2	7%
Business travel	1	3%
Government departments	1	3%
International	1	3%
Caravan clubs	1	3%
Employees	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
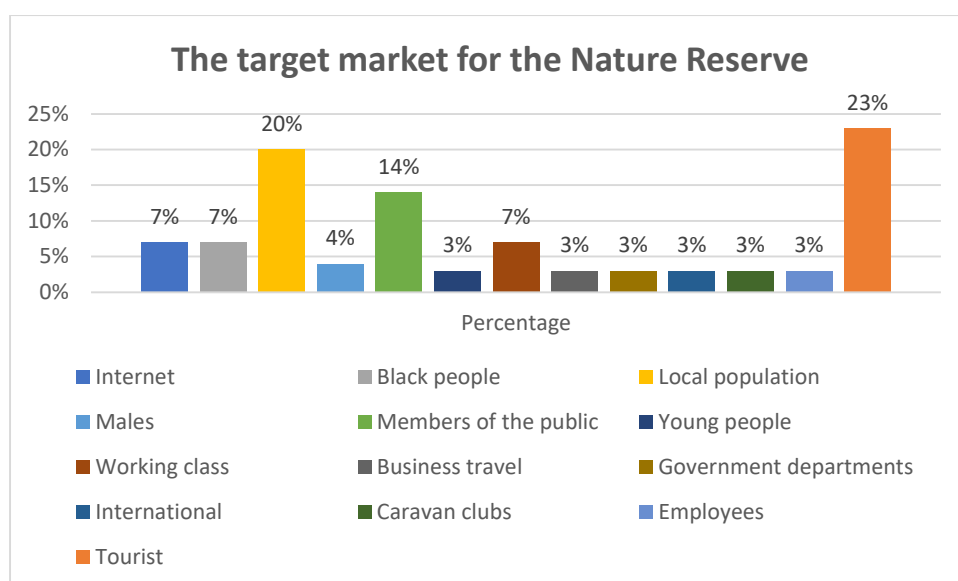
Figure 34: The target market for the Nature Reserve

The figure and table above depict the possible target market for the Nature Reserve. 23% of the participants proposed that the Nature Reserve should focus more on attracting tourists to visit the area. They expressed that tourists are always ready to visit facilities for different reasons. Others (20%) indicated that the local population should also be identified as a target market for the resort. They expressed that before the Nature Reserve can attract foreign tourists, it must first attract the local population.

Other participants (14%) also suggested that the target market should generally be the members of the public. They argued that the message should reach all members of the public to ensure that people know about the Nature Reserve and its offerings. There were also suggestions (3%) that the target market should be young people, business travel, government departments, international travellers and caravan clubs.

[18] How can marketing be improved to compete with other competitors in the industry?

How can marketing be improved to compete with other competitors in the industry?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Maintenance	6	20%
Internet	4	14%
Qualified staff	1	4%
Communication	1	4%
Turnaround strategy	7	23%
Resources	1	3%
Competitive prices	1	3%
Customer satisfaction	1	3%
Modernised technology	1	3%
Survey	1	3%
Benchmark	3	10%
Government departments	1	3%
No answer	2	7%
Total	**30**	**100%**
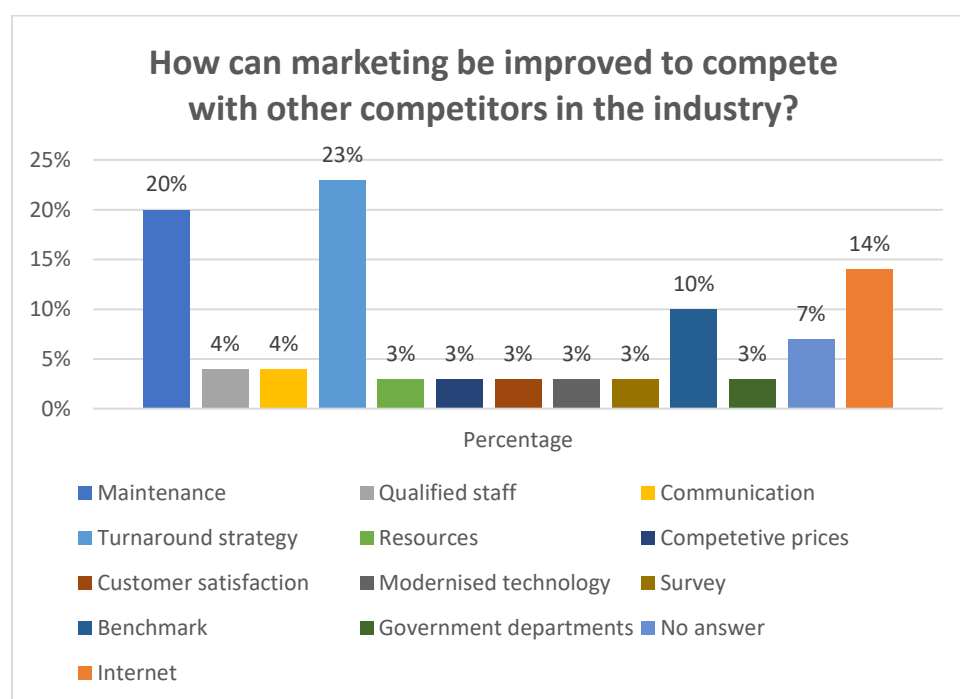
Figure 35: Improvement of marketing to compete with other competitors

Although 23% of respondents indicated a turnaround strategy is needed so that the Nature Reserve can compete with other competitors in the market, 20% believed that maintenance should be undertaken to ensure that the facilities will attract tourists. As explained above, the participants emphasised that before the Nature Reserve can embark on the marketing journey, the facility needs to be upgraded and maintained. Other suggestions were fairly represented; 14% of responses suggested that the internet be considered as the effective and efficient way to market the resort so that it can be competitive. They suggested that other well-known Nature Reserves use the internet as a way of attracting more customers.

The results above indicate that the management of the Nature Reserve needs to consider a turnaround strategy to compete with other developed competitors. The responses further suggest that the management needs to do away with the old way of managing the Nature Reserve and introduce a turnaround strategy where a new management style is implemented. Again, the issues of maintenance and internet marketing are also important, as stressed by the participants and the facilities need to be of a good standard.

[19] Do you think digital platforms for branding are essential for the Nature Reserve?

Digital platforms for branding are essential	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	1	4%
Disagree	0	0%
Agree partly	7	23%
Totally agree	22	73%
Total	**30**	**100%**
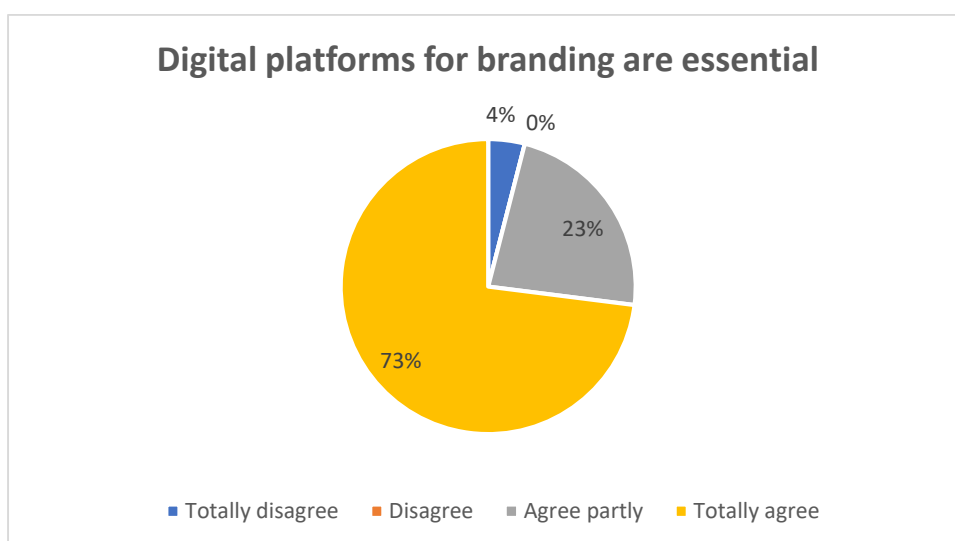
Figure 36: Digital platforms for branding are essential

The majority of participants (73%) totally agree that digital platforms for marketing the Nature Reserve are essential. They suggested that digital platforms such as social media platforms and the internet, amongst others, are essential. The explained that most companies use digital platforms for successful marketing and attracting tourists.

Furthermore, 23% of participants partly agreed, whilst only 0% disagreed. The above table and the figure suggest that digital platforms for the Nature Reserve should be considered as the primary tool for branding the property. This indicates that the Nature Reserve should use platforms such as the internet and social media for marketing purposes. It should be easy for potential visitors to access information on the internet about the Nature Reserve.

[20] Do you think signs and symbols are important?

Signs and symbols are important	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	1	4%
Disagree	1	3%
Agree partly	4	13%
Totally agree	24	80%
Total	**30**	**24%**
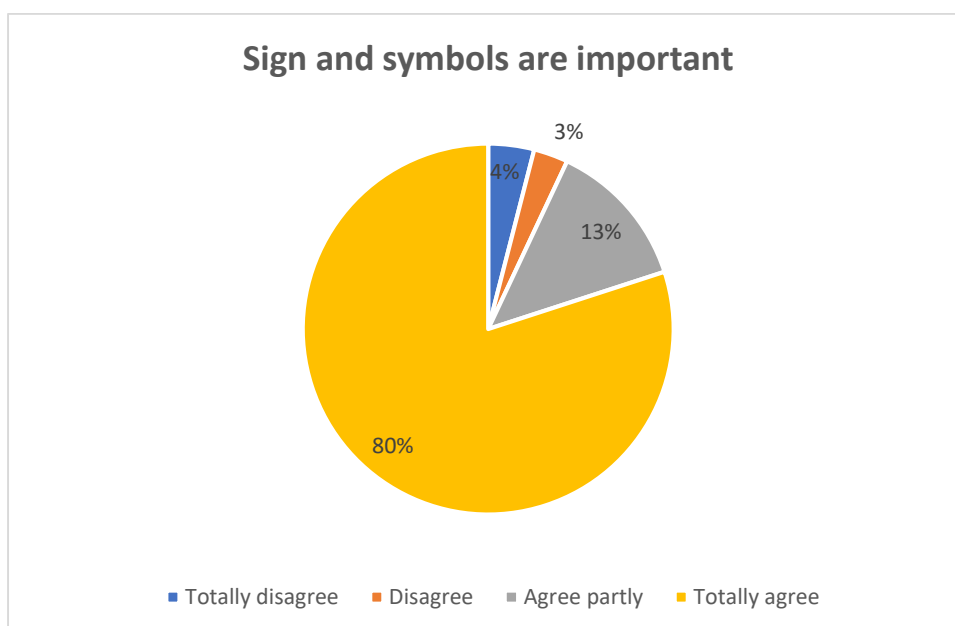
Figure 37: Signs and symbols are important

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the majority (80%) of respondents totally agree that signs and symbols are important at the Nature Reserve. This indicates that the management of the Nature Reserve needs to ensure that there are enough signs and symbols available to market the Nature Resort.

[21] Is branding of the Nature Reserve adequate at the moment?

Branding of the Nature Reserve is adequate at the moment	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	13	43%
Disagree	5	17%
Agree partly	5	17%
Totally agree	7	23%
Total	**30**	**100%**
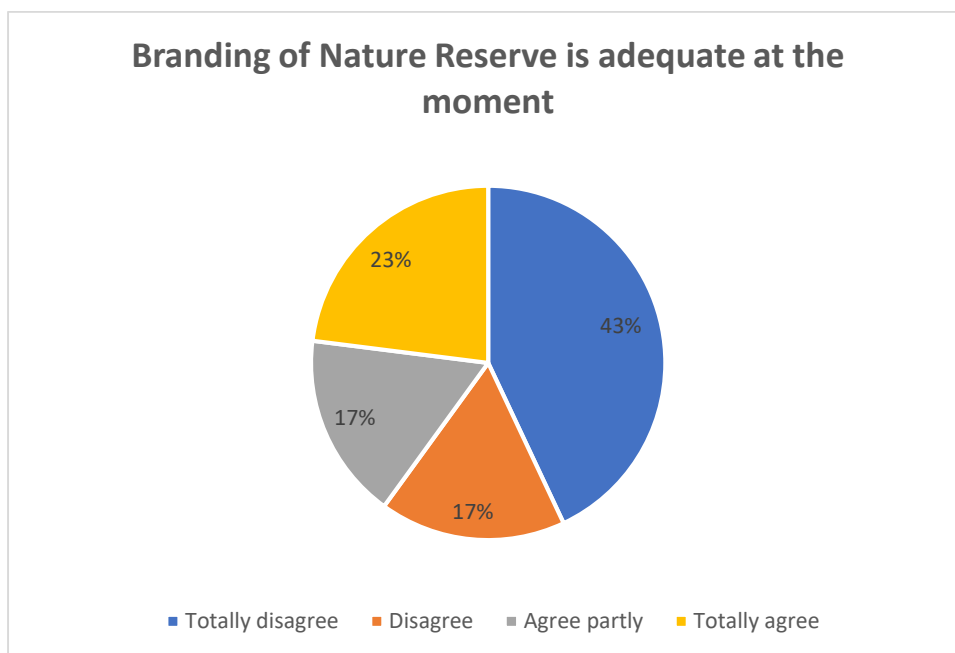
Figure 38: Branding of Nature Reserve is adequate at the moment

As reflected in the figure and table above, 43% of participants totally disagreed that branding at the Nature Reserve is adequate, whilst 17% disagreed. A small group (23%) totally agreed that there is enough branding at the Nature Reserve. This confirms that most of the people are not aware of the Nature Reserve and that more branding needs to be utilised.

[22] Would you like to see the branding of the Nature Reserve at most tourist attraction places?

Nature Reserve should be branded on most tourist attraction places	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	1	3%
Disagree	0	0%
Agree partly	4	14%
Totally agree	25	83%
Total	**30**	**100%**
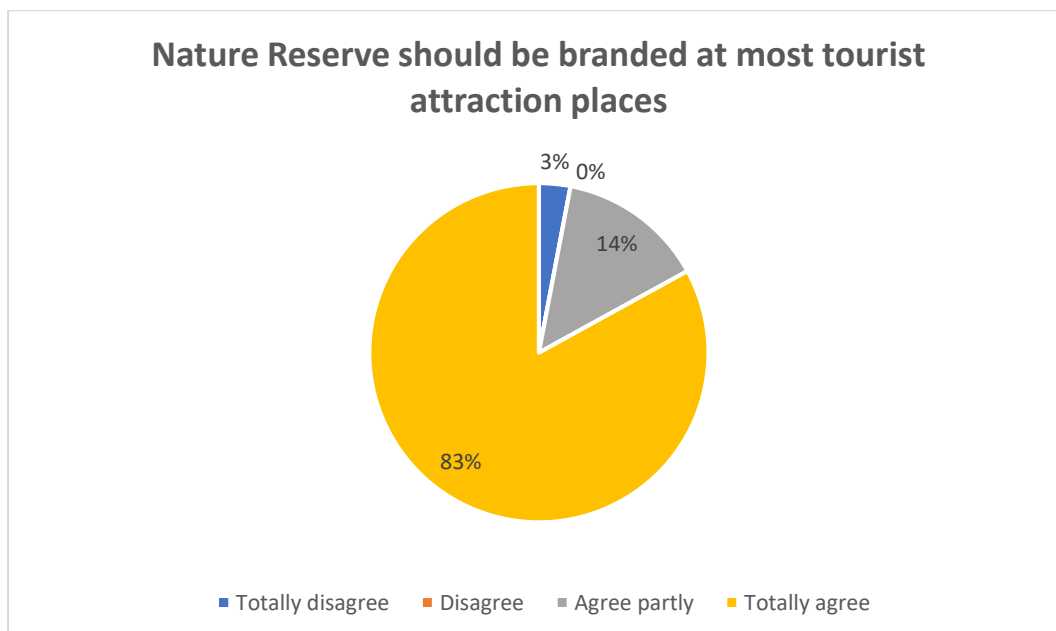
Figure 39: Nature Reserve should be branded at most tourist attraction places

Figure 40 depicts the opinion of participants on whether the Nature Reserve brands should be seen at most attraction places. 83% of participants totally agreed that most of the branding should be placed at tourist attraction places. Only 3% totally disagreed. This entails that the management of the Nature Reserve should place more branding at tourist attraction places.

[23] How does Soetdoring Nature Reserve ensure that branding is done?

How does Soetdoring Nature Reserve ensure that branding is done	Number of respondents	Percentage
Maintenance	1	4%
Internet	3	10%
Tourists	1	3%
Communication	1	3%
Media	1	3%
Turnaround strategy	1	3%
Resources	3	10%
Competitive prices	1	3%
Transparency	1	3%
Government departments	2	7%
No	2	7%
No answer	13	44%
Total	**30**	**100%**
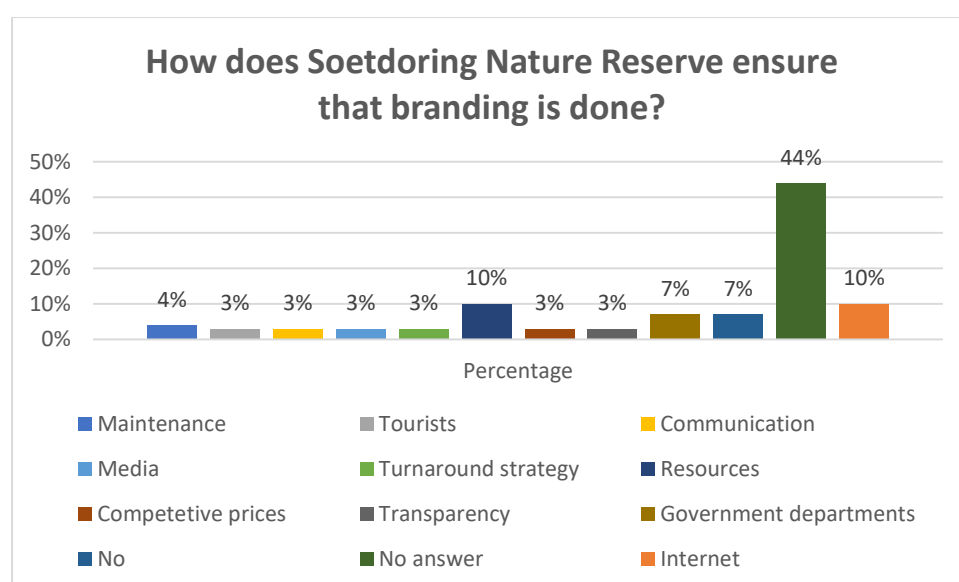
Figure 40: How does Soetdoring Nature Reserve ensure that branding is done?

From the table and figure above, 44% of the participants did not answer the question. Most of them indicated that they could not provide the answer because they were not familiar with the Nature Reserve. Other participants (10%) indicated that the internet and other resources needed to be upgraded to enhance the branding of the Nature Reserve. They also indicated that resources in the form of funding had to be adequate so that branding materials can be purchased.

[24] Are there efforts to test the views of citizens/visitors/tourists regarding branding? If so, please explain briefly.

Are there efforts to test the views of citizens/ visitors/ tourists regarding branding?	Number of respondents	Percentage
No	11	37%
Yes	6	20%
No answer	13	43%
Total	**30**	**100%**
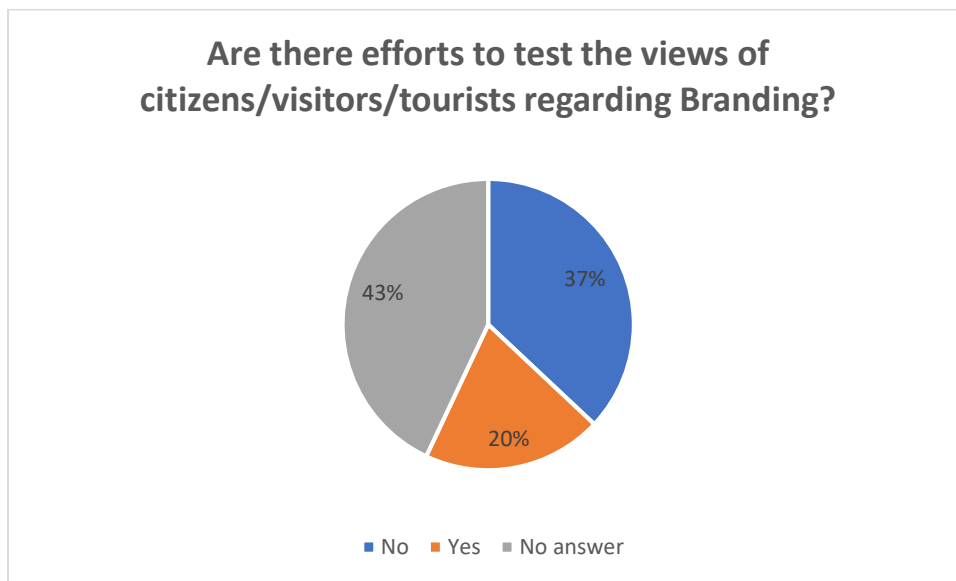
Figure 41: Efforts to test the views of citizens/visitors/tourists regarding branding

57% of the participants did not respond to this question. They indicated that they were not aware of branding efforts at the Nature Reserve. 37% participants indicated that no effort is made to test the views of the citizen regarding the branding. Other participants (20%) indicated that there are efforts and highlighted that the management of the Nature Reserve, by means of the telephone, as well as through verbal interaction, tests the views of the of the visitors.

[25] Do you think branding can be a powerful tool to attract tourists and to market the Nature Reserve? If so, please explain briefly.

Do you think branding can be a powerful tool to attract tourists and to market the Nature Reserve?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	24	87%
No answer	4	13%
Total	**30**	**100%**
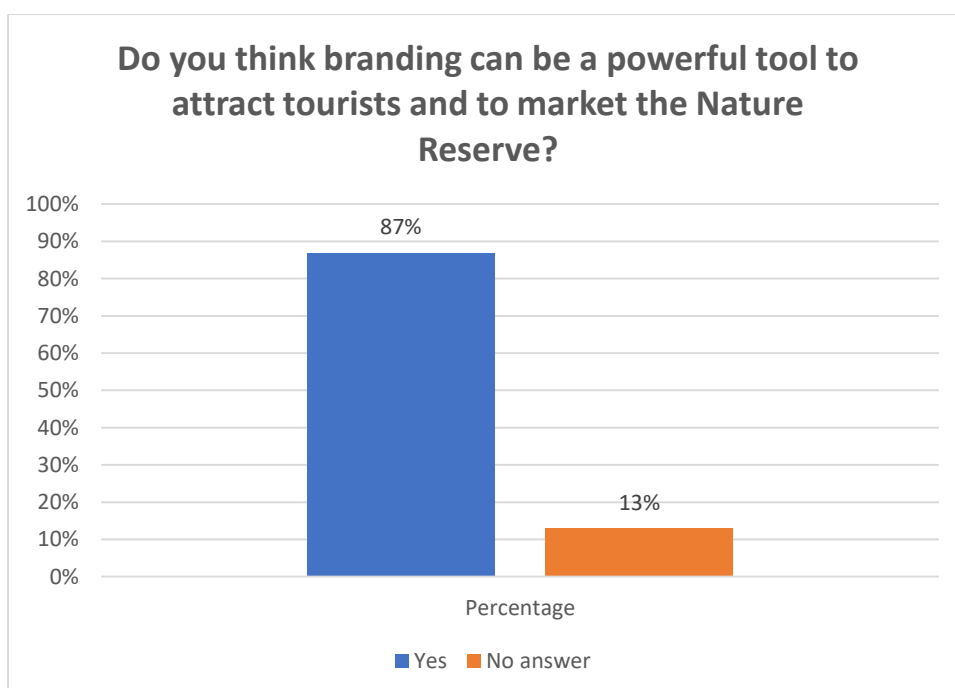
Figure 42: Branding can be a powerful to attract tourists to the Nature Reserve

The majority of participants (87%) felt that branding could indeed be a powerful tool to assist the Nature Reserve in attracting tourists. Participants motivated their responses and highlighted that branding would make a memorable impression on visitors. Some indicated that branding could attract more visitors when the facility is clean and affordable. Furthermore, some participants mentioned that if the correct branding is used, it will attract visitors, as they will want to explore the Nature Reserve. 13% of the participants did not answer this question.

[26] Are there benefits of branding you can think of? If so, please explain briefly.

Are there benefits of branding you can think of?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Marketing	1	3%
Yes	23	77%
No answer	6	20%
Total	**30**	**100%**
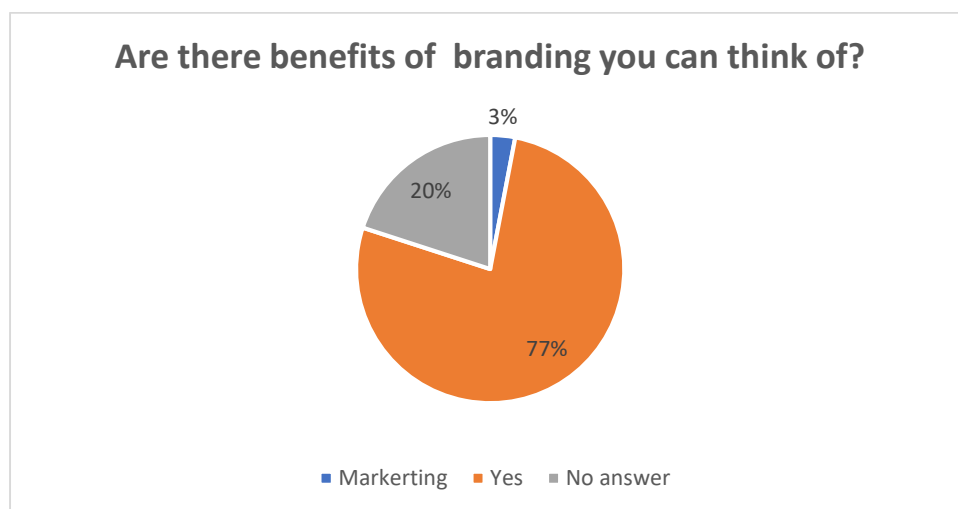
Figure 43: Benefits of branding

Figure 44 and the table above depicts the opinions of participants with regard to the benefits of branding. 77% of the participants agreed that branding has some benefits and they are summarised as follows:

- Branding will give the facility credibility;

- Loyalty with customers can be strengthened through branding;

- Branding could lead to more referrals;

- Branding could attract ideal customers; and

- Online branding can reach many potential visitors.

3% of the participants indicated that the benefits of branding are linked to marketing. A high standard of branding will market the Nature Reserve and lead to more possible attractions. Some participants (20%) did not provide answers to this question.

[27] Is the Nature Reserve leadership fit for purpose?

Nature Reserve leadership is fit for purpose	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	5	16%
Disagree	5	17%
Agree partly	9	30%
Totally agree	8	27%
No answer	3	10%
Total	**30**	**100%**
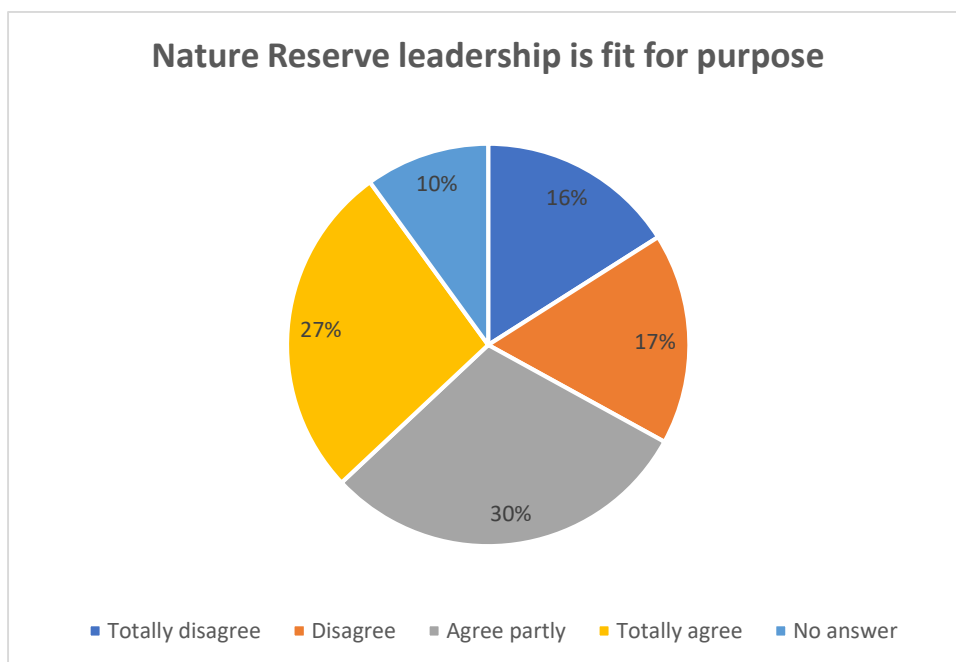
Figure 44: Nature Reserve leadership fit for purpose

From the above analysis, it can be seen that 30% of participants partly agreed that the leadership at the Nature Reserve is fit for purpose. 27% totally agreed, whilst those who totally disagreed and disagreed are at 16% and 17%, respectfully. Only 10% of participants could not provide an answer to the question. Generally, the participants observed that the Nature Reserve leadership is fit for purpose.

[28] Is the leadership committed towards the management of the Nature Reserve?

Leadership is committed towards the management of the Nature Reserve	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	6	20%
Disagree	6	20%
Agree partly	7	23%
Totally agree	8	27%
No answer	4	10%
Total	**30**	**100%**
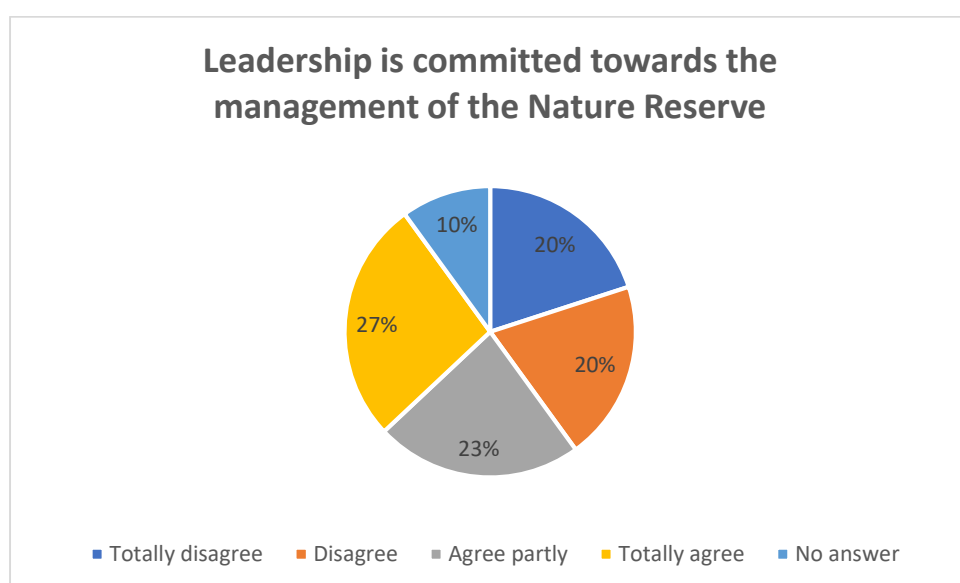
Figure 45: Leadership is committed towards the management of the Nature Reserve

As reflected in Figure 46, 27% of the participants totally agreed that the leadership at the Nature Reserve is committed towards the management of the facility. 20% totally disagreed with the statement above. The observation is that most of the participants feel that the leadership at the Nature Resort is not committed to the successful management of the facility which can have a negative impact.

[29] Does the leadership provide an opportunity for others to lead?

Leadership provides an opportunity for others to lead	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	6	20%
Disagree	5	17%
Agree partly	9	30%
Totally agree	6	20%
No answer	4	13%
Total	**30**	**100%**
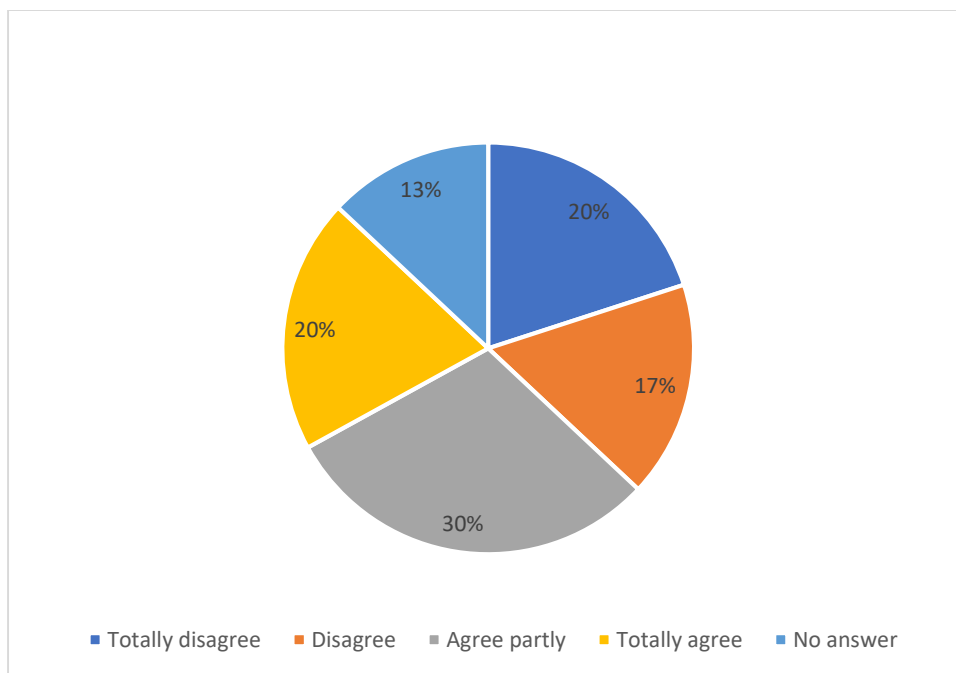
Figure 46: Leadership provides opportunity for others to lead

30% of participants as reflected in the table and figure above partly agreed that the leadership at the Nature Reserve provides opportunities for others to lead. Those who totally disagreed are represented with 20%. Only 13% could not answer the question. The analysis shows that at least half of the participants believed that the leadership does present an opportunity for others to lead.

[30] How is the relationship between the leadership and officials?

There is a good relationship between the leadership and officials	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	3	10%
Disagree	4	14%
Agree partly	7	23%
Totally agree	1	3%
No answer	15	50%
Total	**30**	**100%**
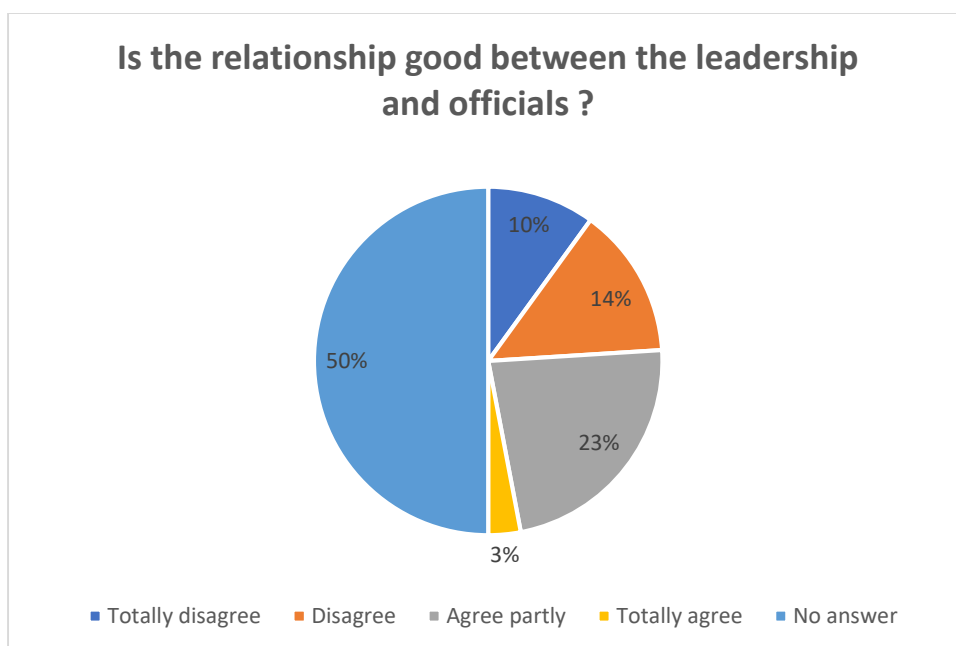
Figure 47: Is the relationship good between the leadership and officials?

The figure above indicates that there is good relationship between the leadership and the officials at the Nature Reserve. 50% of the participants did not provide an answer to this question, while some of the participants indicated that they were not familiar with the management of the Nature Reserve. 23% of the participants agreed that the relationship between the leadership and the officials is good, whilst 14% totally disagreed. From this analysis, it can be noted that most of the participants did not provide an answer to this question; however, the majority of those who answered felt that there is a good relationship.

[31] Do the officials listen to the leadership?

The officials listen to the leadership	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	4	14%
Disagree	7	23%
Agree partly	6	20%
Totally agree	7	23%
No answer	6	20%
Total	**30**	**100%**
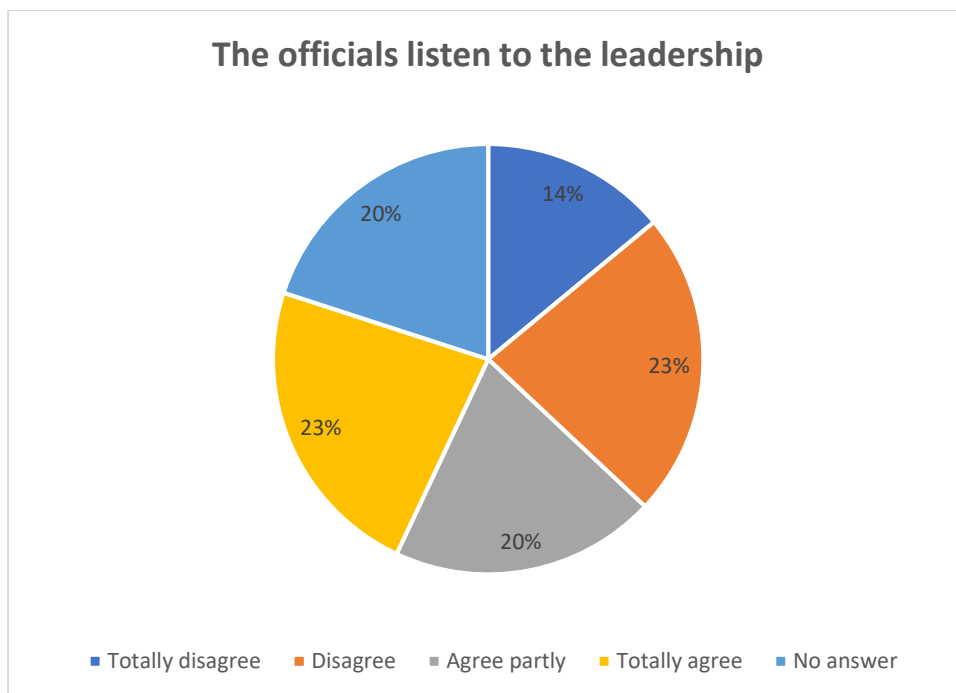
Figure 48: The officials listen to the leadership

From the analysis above, it can be mentioned that 23% of participants totally agreed that the officials at the Nature Reserve listen to the leadership. 23% of those who disagreed are also represented. Those who agreed partly are at 20% and those who totally disagreed are at 14%. About 20% of the participants did not provide an answer to this question. The analysis indicates that participants believed that officials listen to the leadership; however, it must be noted that almost 37% of the participants believed that officials do not listen to the leadership.

[32] Does the leadership provide the necessary support to the officials?

The leadership provides the necessary support to the officials	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	4	14%
Disagree	7	23%
Agree partly	9	30%
Totally agree	4	13%
No answer	6	20%
Total	**30**	**100%**
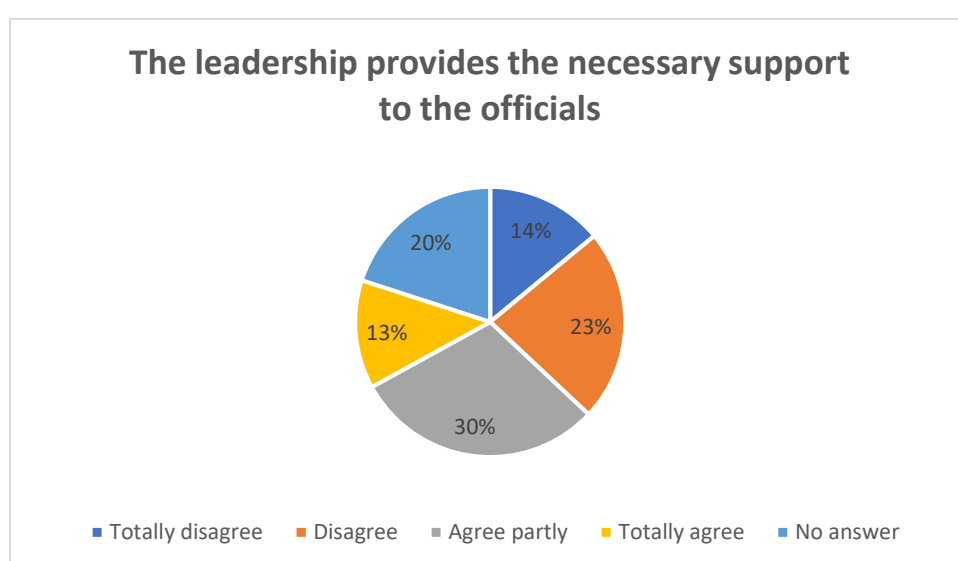
Figure 49: The leadership provides the necessary support to the officials

30% of participants partly agreed that the management provides the necessary support to the officials, as shown in the figure above. 23% argued differently and totally disagreed, stating that no support is provided to the officials by the leadership. The above scenario sends a signal to the management of the Nature Reserve that there are people who believe that management does not support the officials. This should be taken into account, as it might hamper the management of the Nature Reserve. 20% of the participants did not have an answer to this question.

[33] What are, in your view, the greatest challenges in terms of leadership faced by Soetdoring Nature Reserve? Please motivate your answer.

What are, in your view, the greatest challenges in terms of leadership?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Qualified staff	2	7%
Management support	3	10%
Communication	2	7%
Turnaround strategy	1	4%
Resources	1	3%
Workshop	1	3%
Transparency	3	10%
Skills	3	10%
Old people	1	3%
Accountability	1	3%
No answer	12	40%
Total	**30**	**100%**

Figure 50: The greatest challenges in terms of leadership

Participants were asked to provide opinions with regard to the challenges that the leadership at the Nature Reserve might face. As shown in the table and figure above, 40% of participants could not provide an answer to this question, as they indicated that they were not familiar with the management of the Nature Reserve. 10% indicated that the biggest challenges are management support, transparency and lack of skills. Participants indicated that there is a

lack of managerial skills and that the management is not transparent with the information and operation.

7% of participants indicated a lack of qualification and communication. The participants observed that most of the leadership at the Nature Reserve do not have the necessary qualifications for the posts they occupy. They further indicated that some are still old-fashioned and that they need to upgrade their qualifications. They also stressed that management do not communicate decisions on time and at times there is a communication breakdown. The above analysis sends a signal to the leadership that a lack of necessary skills and communication is of concern to the participants.

[34] According to you, what can be done to neutralise the above-mentioned challenges?

According to you, what can be done to neutralise the above-mentioned challenges	Number of respondents	Percentage
Qualified staff	8	27%
Management support	2	7%
Communication	1	3%
Resources	1	3%
Workshop	5	17%
Transparency	2	7%
Outsource	1	3%
No answer	10	33%
Total	**30**	**100%**
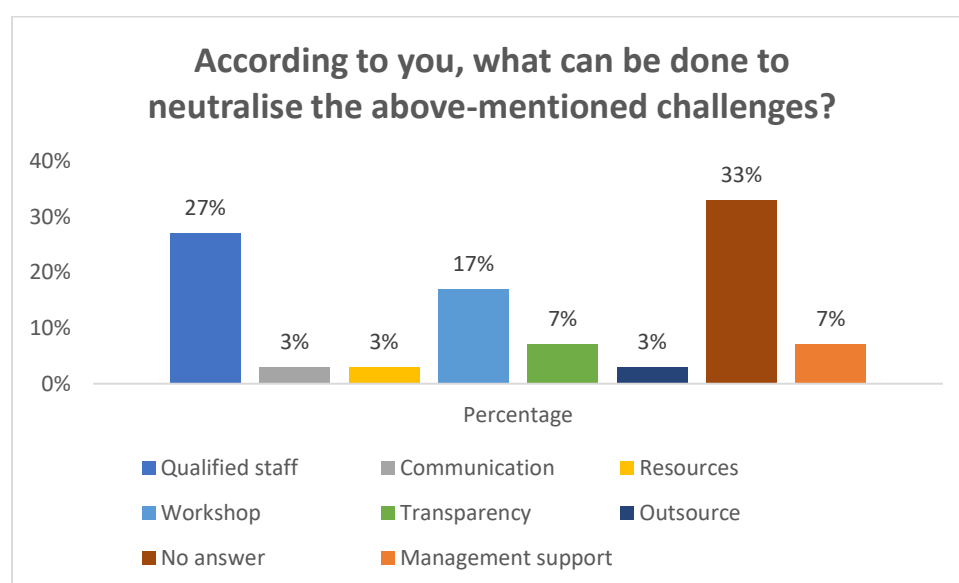
Figure 51: Measures to neutralise the above-mentioned challenges

The figure above depicts the opinions of the participants about measures that should be taken into consideration to neutralise the leadership challenges. 33% did not provide an answer. 27% indicated that there is a need for qualified staff to be appointed. Other participants (17%) highlighted that there should be a workshop for the management of the Nature Reserve where the management will be provided with the necessary multiple skills. In addition, 7% of respondents felt that there is a need for transparency and management should provide the necessary support to the officials. This analysis indicates that participants are concerned about the limited skills at the Nature Reserve.

[35] Is there healthy communication between leadership and the executive?

There is healthy communication between leadership and the executive	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	6	20%
Disagree	3	10%
Agree partly	8	27%
Totally agree	3	10%
No answer	10	33%
Total	**30**	**100%**
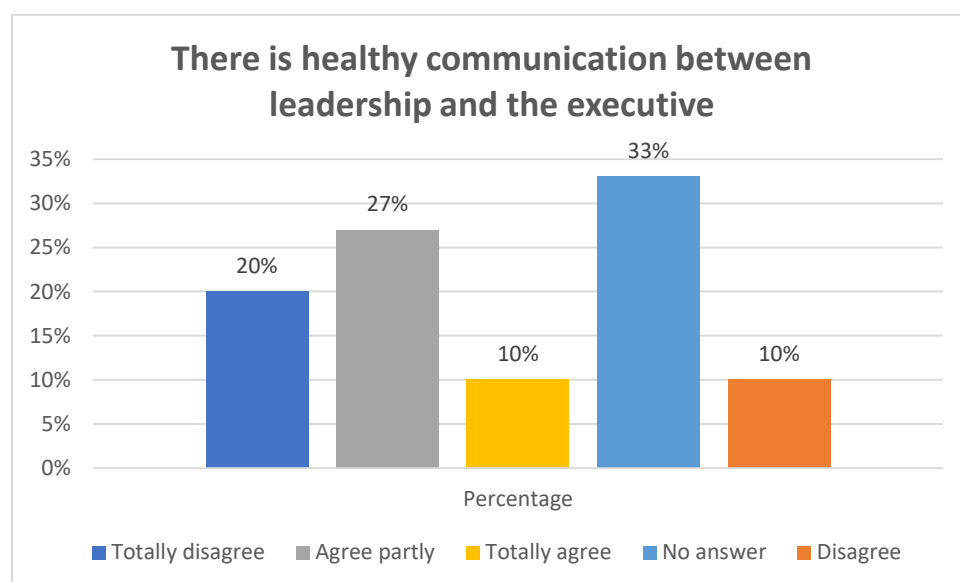
Figure 52: There is healthy communication between leadership and the executive

The figure and the table above depict the views of the participants about the communication between leadership and the executive at the Nature Reserve. 33% of the participants did not answer the question. 27% of the participants partly agreed that there is a healthy relationship, whilst 10% disagreed. 20% totally disagreed and only 10% totally agreed. The above views

indicate that participants generally believed that there is a healthy relationship between executive and leadership, however, it should be noted that those who disagree are also fairly represented.

[36] Is information on issues affecting the Nature Reserve communicated on time between leadership and officials?

Is information on issues affecting the Nature Reserve communicated on time between leadership and officials?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	5	17%
Disagree	8	27%
Agree partly	6	20%
Totally agree	2	6%
No answer	9	30%
Total	**30**	**100%**
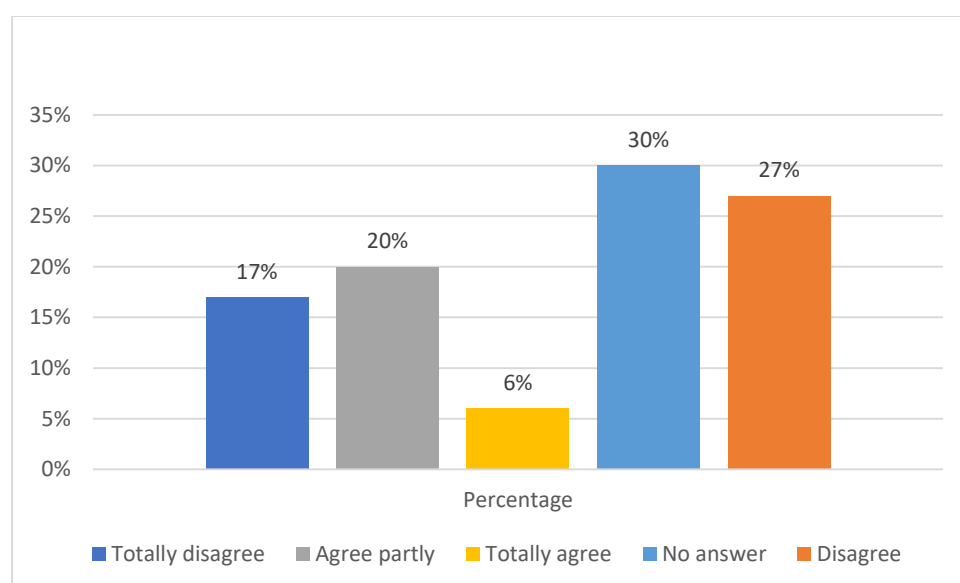
Figure 53: Information on issues affecting Nature Reserve is communicated on time between leadership and officials

27% of participants indicated that they disagreed that information is communicated on time on issues affecting the Nature Reserve. 20% partly agreed that there is effective communication. It should be noted that about 44% of the participants are of the view that information is not communicated on time, which is of great concern, if not addressed. There should be clear communication channels at the Nature Reserve so that the officials may not feel left alone in the matters of their workplace.

[37] Do you think lack of communication can hamper the management of the resort?

Lack of communication can hamper the management of the resort	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	2	6%
Disagree	0	0%
Agree partly	2	7%
Totally agree	20	67%
No answer	6	20%
Total	**30**	**100%**
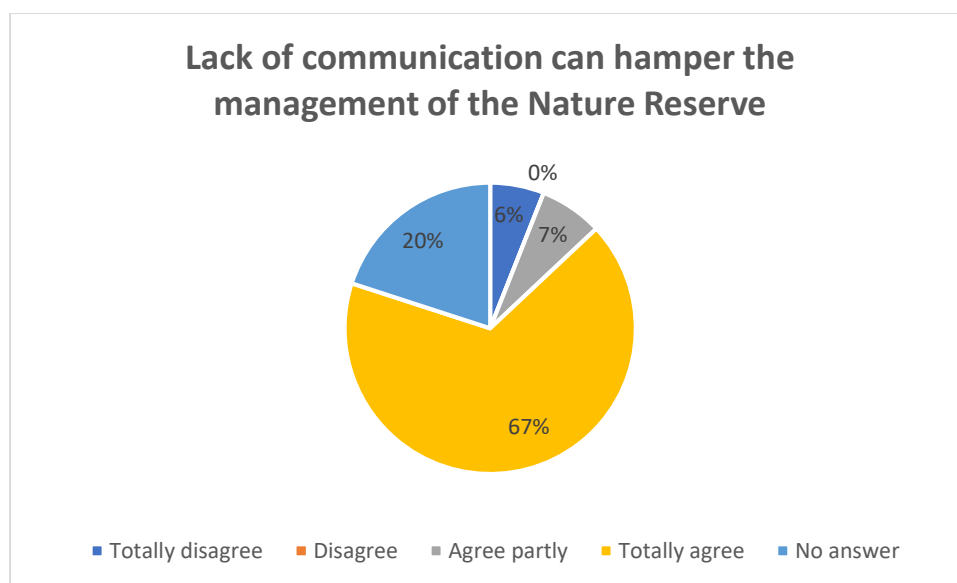
Figure 54: Lack of communication can hamper the management of the Nature Reserve

The majority of participants (67%) totally agreed that lack of communication can hamper the management of the Nature Reserve. No participants disagreed with the question. Only 20% of participants did not answer the question. From this analysis, it can be seen that most participants believed that if there is a lack communication, which will have a negative impact on the operations of the Nature Reserve.

[38] Do you think tourists or potential visitors to the Nature Reserve have easy access to communicate with the management of the Nature Reserve?

Tourists or potential visitors to the Nature Reserve have easy access to communicate with the management of the Nature Reserve	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	11	37%
Disagree	4	13%
Agree partly	7	23%
Totally agree	2	7%
No answer	6	20%
Total	**30**	**100%**

Figure 55: Tourists or potential visitors to the Nature Reserve have easy access to communicating with the management of the Nature Reserve

37% of respondents expressed the view that tourists or potential visitors do not have easy access to engage with the management of the Nature Reserve. This indicates that there should be easy communication channels where visitors can express their views. 20% of participants did not respond to the question. Only 23% partly agreed that tourists have access to communicate with the management of the Nature Reserve.

[39] Do you think the management of the Nature Reserve communicates the activities of the Nature Reserve effectively and efficiently to potential visitors?

The management of Nature Reserve communicates the Nature Reserve's activities effectively and efficiently to potential visitors	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	8	27%
Disagree	7	23%
Agree partly	7	23%
Totally agree	2	7%
No answer	6	20%
Total	**30**	**100%**

Figure 56: The management of the Nature Reserve communicates the activities of the Nature Reserve effectively and efficiently to potential visitors

From the analysis, it can be seen that 27% of the participants disagreed that the management communicates the activities taking place at the Nature Reserve to potential visitors. Those who partly agreed are fairly represented with 23%, and those who disagreed with 23%. The views expressed indicates that participants were of the view there is a lack of communication between the management and potential investors.

[40] What, in your view, is the biggest obstacle to effective communication? Please motivate your answer.

What, in your view, is the biggest obstacle to effective communication?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Management support	1	4%
Language	1	3%
Communication	1	3%
Marketing	1	3%
Turnaround strategy	8	27%
Resources	2	7%
Transparency	3	10%
Modernised technology	1	3%
Skills	4	14%
Accountability	1	3%
Victimisation	1	3%
No answer	6	20%
Total	**30**	**100%**
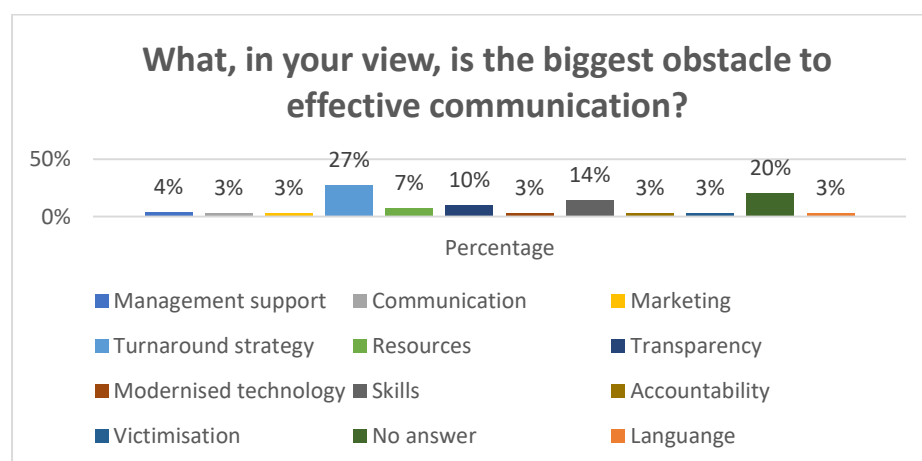
Figure 57: The biggest obstacle to effective communication

As reflected in Figure 58, 27% of respondents expressed that there is a need for a turnaround strategy that will change how information is communicated to the tourist and potential visitors. 20% did not provide a proposal to the question. Other participants (14%) indicated that the Nature Reserve should employ people with the right skills for the specific job, as there is a perceived lack of skills at the Nature Reserve. 3% were represented by the view that the biggest obstacle to effective communication is fear of victimisation, the language used by the Nature Reserve not reaching the potential visitors, while a lack of accountability was also indicated as an obstacle.

[41] According to you, what can be done to neutralise the above-mentioned obstacles? Please motivate your answer.

According to you, what can be done to neutralise the above-mentioned obstacles?	Number of respondents	Percentage
Internet	2	7%
Qualified staff	2	7%
Management support	2	7%
Language	1	3%
Marketing	1	3%
Turnaround strategy	2	7%
Resources	2	7%
Workshop	4	13%
Transparency	4	13%
Modernised technology	2	7%
Accountability	1	3%
No answer	7	23%
Total	**30**	**100%**
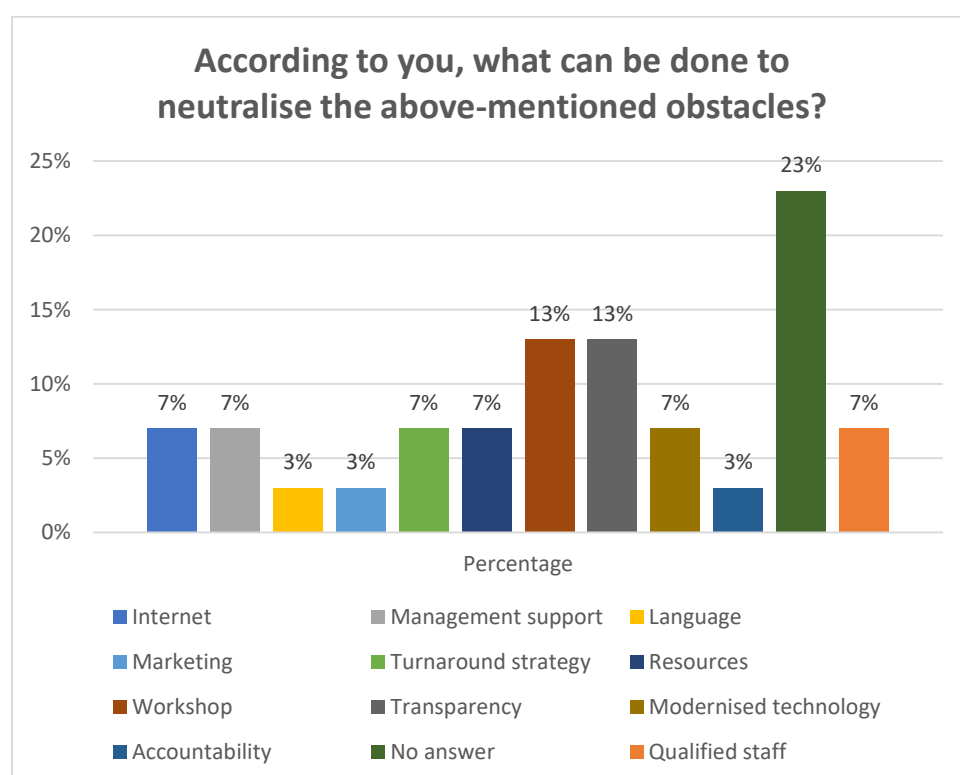
Figure 58: Suggestions to neutralise the above obstacles

The figure above depicts the suggestions made by the participants to neutralise the communication obstacles. 23% of participants did not provide an answer to this question. 13% believed that there should be transparency about issues affecting the Nature Reserve and that

workshops and training should be provided to both management and staff so that there could be engagements. Other participants (7%) suggested that the internet should be used to communicate messages to visitors and amongst staff; management support is also reflected as a suggestion and a turnaround strategy on how communication should be handled and be put into practice.

[42] The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well positioned to contribute to the tourism economy in the Free State.

The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well positioned to contribute to the tourism economy in the Free State	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	4	13%
Disagree	2	7%
Agree partly	7	23%
Totally agree	16	54%
No answer	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
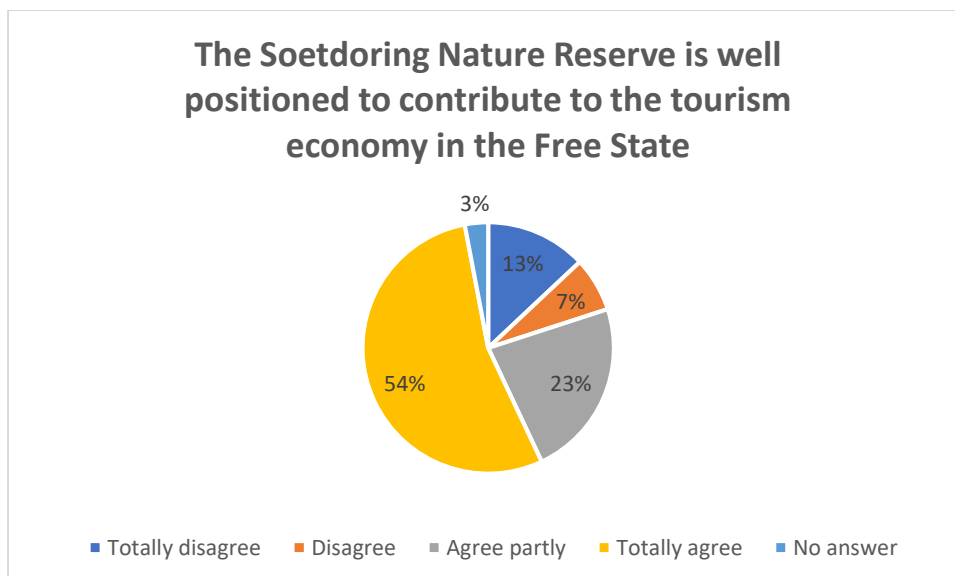
Figure 59: THE Nature Reserve is well positioned to contribute to the tourism economy in the Free State

54% of respondents totally agreed that the Nature Reserve is well positioned to contribute to the tourism economy in the Free State. Only 13% disagreed, whilst 3% did not provide an answer. This indicates that the participants agreed that the Nature Reserve can attract more visitors because of where it is positioned and raise revenue for the province.

[43] The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well marketed.

The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well marketed	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	14	47%
Disagree	10	33%
Agree partly	3	10%
Totally agree	2	7%
No answer	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
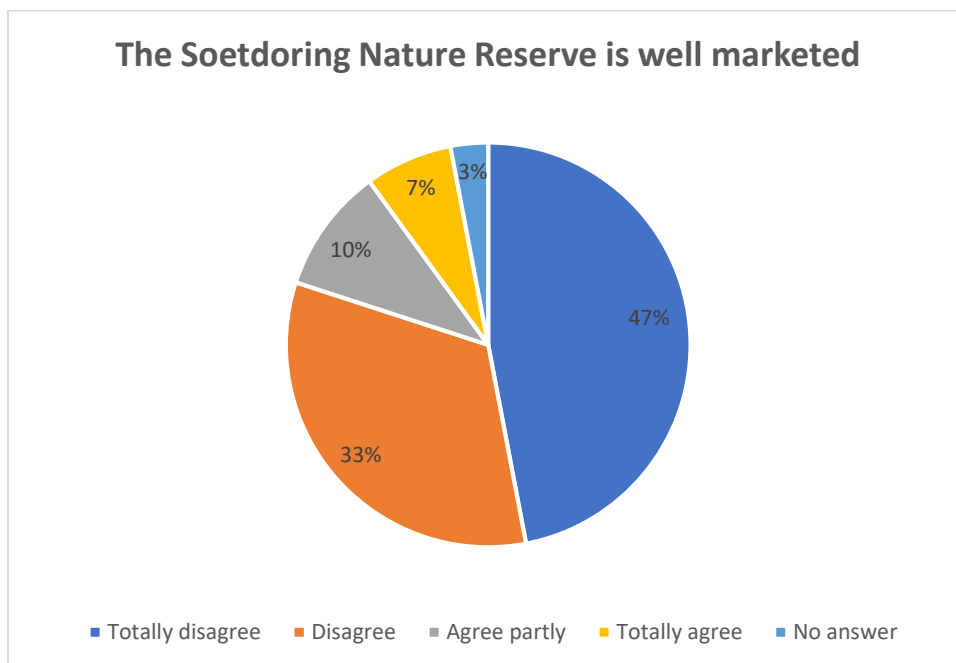
Figure 60: The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well marketed

As transpires from the figure above, the participants were asked if the Nature Reserve is well marketed. 47% of participants totally disagreed and 33% disagreed that the Nature Reserve is well marketed. Only 10% partly agreed and 7% agreed that it is well marketed. The responses indicate that the management of the Nature Reserve needs to ensure that there is a proper marketing plan in place.

[44] The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well branded.

Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well branded	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	14	47%
Disagree	7	23%
Agree partly	5	17%
Totally agree	3	10%
No answer	1	3%
Total	**30**	**100%**
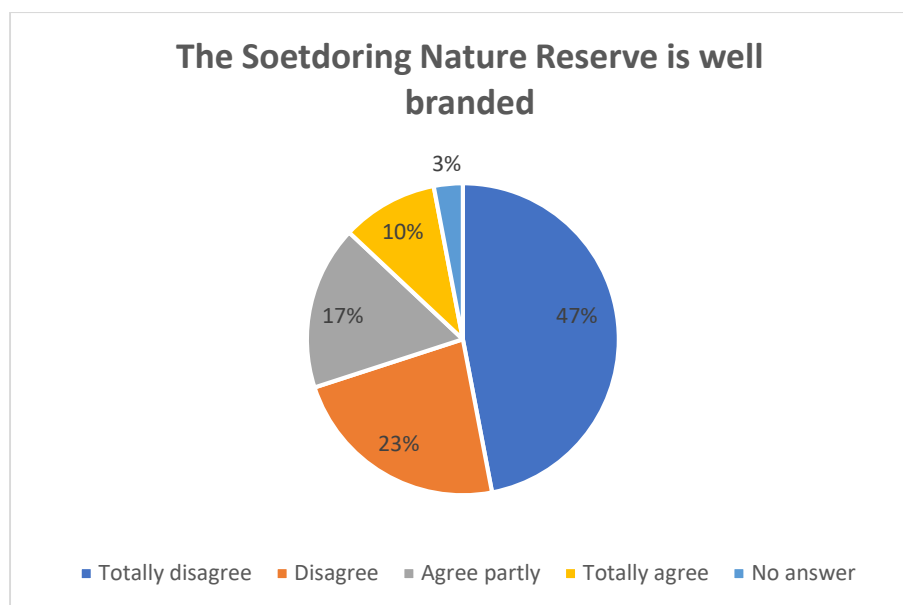
Figure 61: The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well branded

47% of participants totally disagreed that the Nature Reserve is well branded, as shown in the figure above. 23% also disagreed with the question. Only 10% and 17% totally agreed and partly agreed, respectively.

[45] The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well managed.

The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well managed	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	9	30%
Disagree	6	20%
Agree partly	10	34%
Totally agree	1	3%
No answer	4	13%
Total	**30**	**100%**
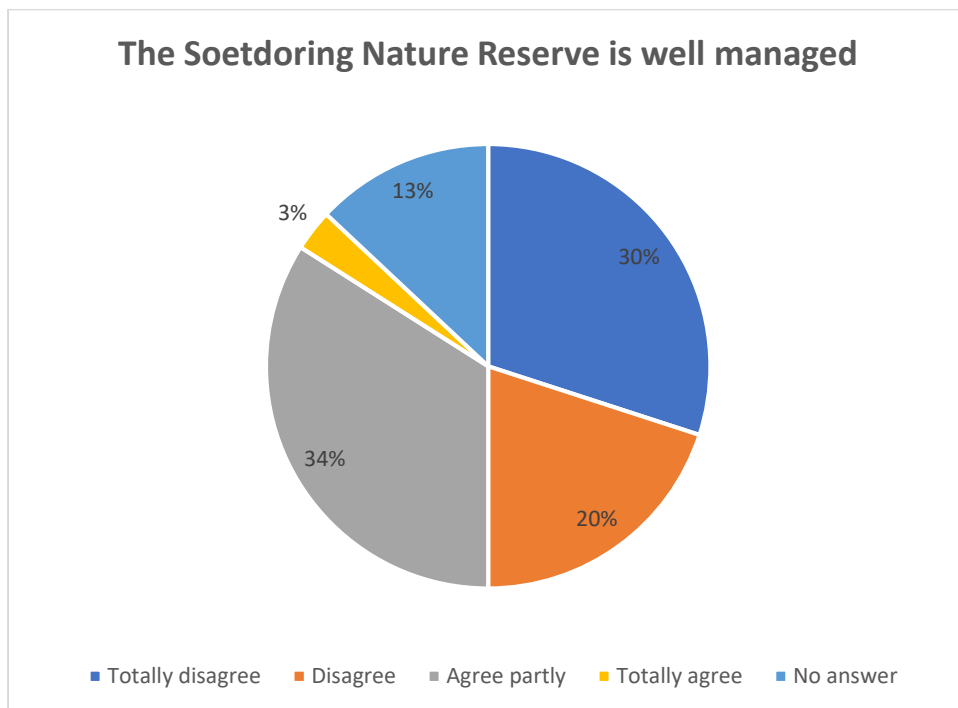
Figure 62: The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is well managed

Figure 63 depicts the views of participants of whether the Nature Reserve is well managed. 34% expressed the view that they believe it is well managed. However, those who totally disagreed are fairly represented by 30%. 13% of the participants did not provide an answer to this question.

[46] The Soetdoring Nature Reserve message is well received.

The Soetdoring Nature Reserve message is well received	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	10	33%
Disagree	6	20%
Agree partly	9	30%
Totally agree	2	7%
No answer	3	10%
Total	**30**	**100%**
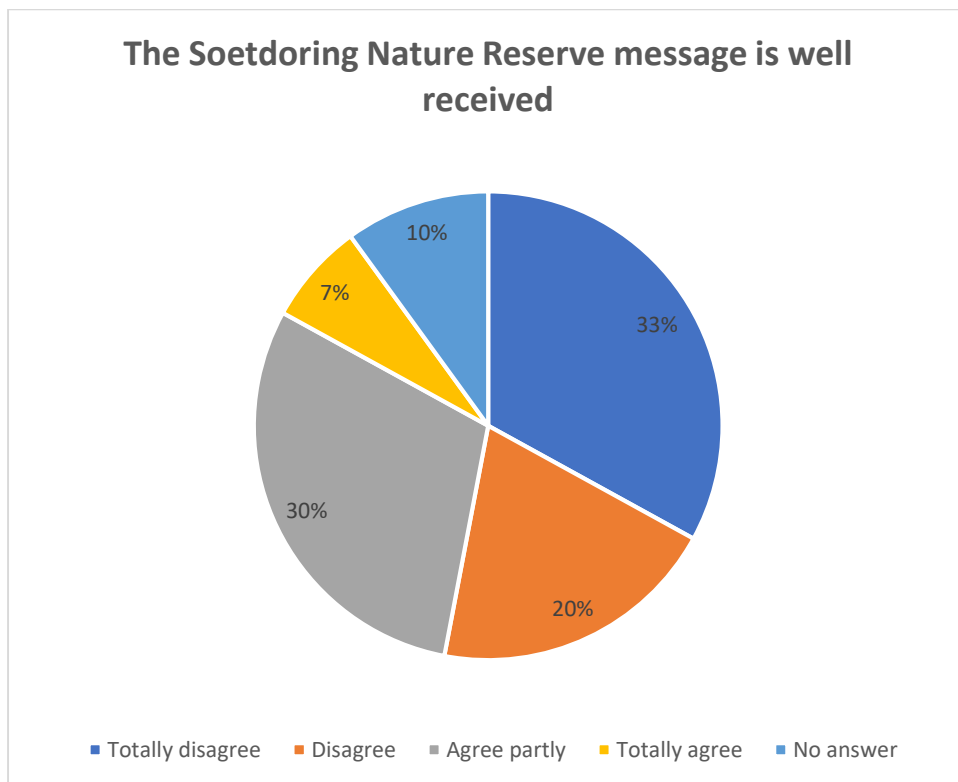
Figure 63: The Soetdoring Nature Reserve message is well received

33% of participants totally disagreed that the Nature Reserve is well received by visitors, whilst 20% disagreed. Only 30% partly agreed to the question above. It should be noted that 10% of participants did not provide the answer to this question.

[47] The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is sustainable

The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is sustainable	Number of respondents	Percentage
Totally disagree	4	13%
Disagree	7	23%
Agree partly	10	33%
Totally agree	6	20%
No answer	3	10%
Total	**30**	**100%**
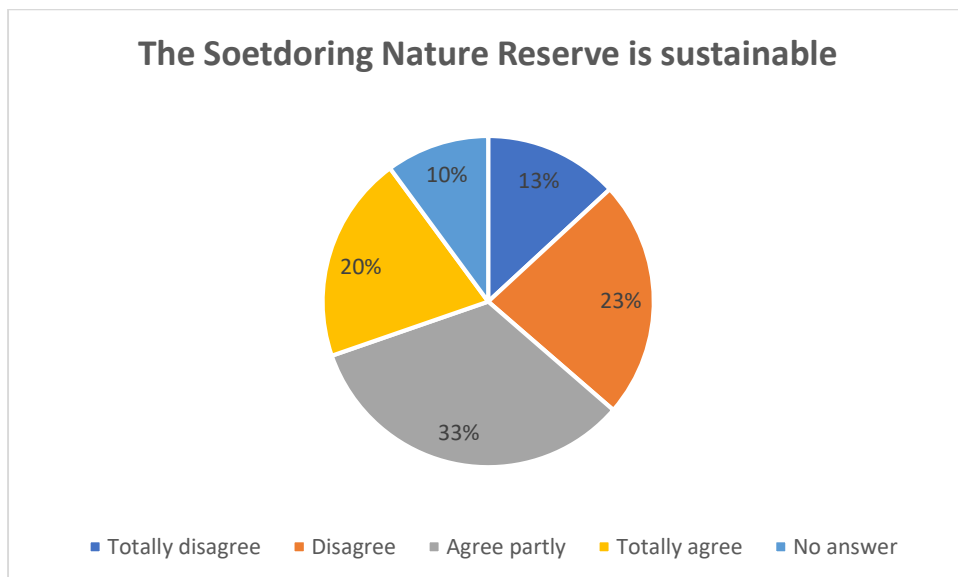
Figure 64: The Soetdoring Nature Reserve is sustainable

Figure 65 above depicts that 33% of participants partly agreed that the Nature Reserve is sustainable. 23% disagreed and 20% totally agreed. Generally, the view of that participants is that the Nature Reserve is sustainable.

4.4.5   Summary of research findings

A brief summary of research is presented in the following paragraphs. This will provide a summary of what has been established through the study and they can be regarded as research findings. The findings will provide a synopsis of what has been established. It is important and necessary to summarise findings so that the study will recommend best practices which could be applied by the Nature Reserve. Therefore, the findings will be selected based on the subject matter of the study, namely identification of marketing strategies to promote tourism: the case of Soetdoring Nature Reserve in the Free State Province. The summary of findings will be presented according to the following sections.

4.4.5.1 Findings pertaining to marketing

The majority (70%) of participants indicated that the Nature Reserve is not well marketed. The fact that the remaining 30% of participants believeds that there is proper marketing should send a strong signal to the management of the Nature Reserve that a proper marketing strategy is needed. 100% of participants agreed that if the Nature Reserve has a proper marketing plan, the Nature Reserve will be able to attract more tourists to the facility. This means that there is an opportunity to promote tourism in the Free State Province.

Furthermore, while about 50% of respondents agreed that the Nature Reserve has adequate resources for marketing, it is worth noting that about 47% disagreed with the statement. Only

3% did not provide an answer. This indicates that resources for marketing should be made available for proper marketing. The participants (87%) further agreed that there is a high demand for marketing and 50% believed that it will not be expensive to market the Nature Reserve, which will ensure that tourists are aware of the Nature Reserve.

37% of participants expressed the view that maintenance is a challenge for marketing. They indicated that before the Nature Reserve can be marketed, it should be upgraded to a satisfactory standard. Others (30%) believed that a turnaround strategy is a challenge, which hampers the effectiveness of marketing. 47% of participants suggested that media platforms should be considered as effective channels of marketing; others (43%) suggested the usage of the internet (social media platforms) to be the best suited for the Nature Reserve. It was suggested by 23% of participants that the target market for marketing should be tourists, and 20% suggested the local population. 23% indicated that for the Nature Reserve to be able to compete with other competitors, a turnaround strategy should be implemented. 20% reflected that maintenance should take place to upgrade the Nature Reserve so that it can offer quality service.

4.4.5.2 Findings pertaining to branding

97% of participants believed that digital platforms are essential for branding. This means that the management of the Nature Reserve should consider digital platforms for branding. 93% of respondents indicated that signs and symbols are also important, as they give the Nature Reserve its identity. There was also a view by 60% of the participants that branding at the Nature is currently inadequate. It was suggested by 97% that the Nature Reserve should be branded at most tourist attraction places.

10% of respondents suggested that in order to ensure that there is proper branding at the Nature Reserve, there should be adequate resources and usage of the internet. 87% of the participants agreed that branding can be applied as a powerful tool to attract tourists. Furthermore, 77% of the participants indicated that branding could be of benefit if it is well implemented.

4.4.5.3 Findings pertaining to leadership

Participants were asked to express their views about the leadership. 57% believed that the leadership at Nature Reserve is fit for purpose. It should be noted that those who oppose the view were fairly represented by 33%. 50% indicated that the leadership is committed towards the management of the Nature Reserve, while 40% opposed the view.

It is also noted that 50% of participants agreed that the leadership provides an opportunity for others to lead. Those who opposed the view were represented at 37%, which indicates to the management that there are people who feel that the leadership does not provide an opportunity to others. 50% of the participants could not indicate whether there is a good relationship between the leadership and officials. 23% agreed that the relationship is good, whilst 20% did not agree with the view.

10% of participants further pointed out that the challenges with regard to leadership are transparency, management support and lack of skills, respectively. The participants (27%) suggested that there is a need to appoint qualified staff and there should workshops to provide training in order to address leadership challenges.

4.4.5.4 Findings pertaining to communication

The opinion of a large proportion of respondents (37%) agreed that there is healthy communication between the leadership and the executive, while 30% of the participants held a different view. 47% of the participants argued that information affecting issues of the Nature Reserve is not communicated. This provides a signal to the management that there is a communication breakdown.

Furthermore, 37% of participants disagreed that tourists and potential visitors have easy access to communicate with the management of the Nature Reserve, while 30% agreed to this view, which is fairly representative. 27% of participants indicated that an obstacle to effective communication is the turnaround strategy. Others (14% and 10%) indicated transparency and shortage of skills as a challenge, respectively. It was further proposed that in order to address the communication channels, 13% believed there should be transparency and workshop should be presented to officials and management.

4.4.5.5 Findings pertaining to certainty on the status of the Nature Reserve

The overall majority of participants (77%) were certain that the Nature Reserve is well positioned to attract tourists and contribute to the economy of the Free State. Only 20% of participants held a different view. 80% and 70% of participants were not certain whether the Nature Reserve is well marketed and branded, respectively. Furthermore, participants (50%) were also not certain whether the Nature reserve is well managed, while 53% were certain and agreed that the Nature Reserve is sustainable.

4.5   CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the outcomes regarding the identification of marketing strategies to promote tourism at the Nature Reserve. The research was conducted by the use of questionnaires with selected respondents. The questionnaire contained closed-ended and opened-ended questions to enable participants to reveal strategies and shortcomings regarding marketing.

The rationale for data gathering was mentioned and explained, as well as challenges encountered during collection of data. The main outcomes of the study are that most of the participants indicated that in order for the Nature Reserve to be marketed well, maintenance and turnaround strategies are of critical importance. They also mentioned that media platforms and the internet (social media) should be considered as effective platforms for marketing. Management support and transparency were also highlighted as measures that need to be implemented in order to address the challenges of marketing and operation of the Nature Reserve.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the reader will be provided with the conclusion to the study as it emanates from the literature reviewed in previous chapters. The primary research question, which seeks to identify marketing strategies to promote tourism at the Nature Reserve, was addressed in previous chapters and preceded by the findings from empirical research. In addition, this chapter seeks to provide the reader with a summary of the study, draw final conclusions and propose recommendations. Should the recommendations of this study be implemented, they will enable the Nature Reserve to enhance the current marketing strategy and increase tourism to the Free State Province.

5.2   SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Marketing is a very important function for any business institution or government department. For people to know about the activities or attract possible clients, a good marketing strategy should be in place. A marketing function is not a once-off activity; it should continuously be conducted to different platforms to reach a large or targeted audience. In order for the researcher to meet the requirements of the aim of the study, the following objectives were identified:

- To conduct a literature review on the identification of marketing strategies and tourism as tool to increase revenue at the Nature Reserve.

- To gather data on current marketing strategies.

- To identify marketing strategies that will be used to market the Nature Reserve.

- To find solutions and make recommendations that will contribute to the increase and promotion of tourism at the Nature Reserve.

To fulfil the above objectives, the study was divided in to five (5) chapters. These chapters provided the reader with the process that was undertaken to address the objectives of the study. The summary of chapters is as follows:

Chapter one provided the reader with a general introduction to the study, which focused on an investigation of marketing strategies to promote tourism, with specific reference to the Soetdoring Nature Reserve. The chapter provided the background and reason for the study, the problem statement, aim, objectives of the research and significance of the study, amongst others.

Chapter two reviewed relevant articles to the study, books, and other publications that are relevant to the topic. The definitions for *nature resort* and *reserve* and *marketing* were provided. Additionally, the seven principles of marketing, different marketing platforms, and tourism impact were also discussed.

Chapter three presented the research methodology that was adopted for this study. During data collection from participants, the researcher used a self-administered questionnaire that consisted of closed-ended and opened-ended questions. This chapter further discussed the research design, sampling and ethical consideration amongst others.

Chapter four presented the questionnaire design response rate. Furthermore, the chapter critically analysed and discussed research findings. Methods of data collection, approval of the research and summary of the findings were also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter five summarises the study. It seeks to draw a conclusion and recommend the best marketing strategies to promote tourism at the Nature Reserve. The recommendations are further discussed and an attempt is made to link the specific findings of the research and recommendations.

5.3   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, the recommendations will be made emanating from the empirical surveys. Furthermore, the findings that were discussed in Chapter three also assisted the researcher to make informed recommendations. The recommendations for this study is discussed as follows:

5.3.1   Conclusions and recommendations on marketing

5.3.1.1 Marketing of the Nature Reserve

Findings: 53% of the participants indicated that the Nature Reserve is not adequately marketed. Only 17% of the participants held a different view that there is adequate marketing.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that a lot of tourists are not aware of the activities at the Nature Reserve. The study further concludes that there is a lack of marketing at the Nature Reserve.*

Recommendations:

    (i)   Implementation of a turnaround strategy for marketing.

    (ii)   Development of maintenance plan before any marketing should take place.

(iii)   Upgrade the facilities, as this will enable the Nature Reserve to compete with other competitors on the market. Facilities can determine the success or failure of the Nature Reserve; if facilities are poor and outdated, they are likely to cause dissatisfaction to the tourist, who will then not visit again.

(iv)   Maintenance of ablution facilities, bathing facilities, accessibility and room facilities should always be undertaken. Ventilation, shades, natural lightning, controlled room temperature, artificial lightning, interior finishes, furnishers and roofing, amongst others, should also be taken in to account.

(v)   Discontinuation and disregard of old-fashioned marketing strategy of the Nature Reserve should be effected. New turnaround strategy on how the Nature Reserve should conduct marketing should be introduced. the turnaround strategy should focus on the new ways of marketing, the target market, and the appointment of qualified officials, amongst others.

(vi)   Implement the 7Ps of marketing, namely Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Process and Physical Evidence. These 7Ps are important to consider during the stage of marketing.

(vii)   Allocate more resources the form of budget is also important to fund priorities. For these recommendations to be implemented, sufficient funding should be set aside; therefore, it is important that when resources are allocated to other priorities in the province, the Nature Reserve should also be adequately funded to fulfil its mandate.

5.3.1.2 Attraction of tourists to Nature Reserve through marketing

Findings: The majority (67%) of respondents believed that marketing could bring more people to the Nature Reserve. 33% partly agreed and 0% totally disagreed.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that more tourists can be attracted through marketing.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Implement the 7Ps of marketing for the successful marketing of the Nature Reserve, will attract more visitors. A well-marketed Nature Reserve is likely to attract more visitors to its facilities.

(ii)   Increase capacity in the marketing department, as there is a high demand for tourists to become aware of this facility. This should be done by availing resources in the form of a budget, as this will enable the procurement of proper marketing material. As explained above, the previous chapter indicated that there is a high demand for marketing of the Nature Reserve. This indicates that most people are not aware of

the Nature Reserve and its offerings and they do not often see any advertisement about the facility.

5.3.1.3 Platforms of marketing best be suited to the Nature Reserve

Findings: 47% of the participants believe that media is the best-suited platform for marketing. 3% (43) indicated that the internet and the respective government departments are the best suited*.*

Conclusion: The study concludes *that media should be employed for marketing the Nature Reserve. The study further concludes that the internet and government departments should also be employed to assist the Nature Reserve with marketing.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Advertise on media platforms. Although there might costs be a fee to be paid, media platforms such as radio, television and newspapers attracts large number of audience which might be beneficial to the Nature Reserve. A budget should be set aside for marketing on media platforms.

(ii)   Develop the Nature Reserve dedicated website. The website address www.soetdoring.co.za is currently not active; it was last modified in 2012. This should be addressed as soon as possible, as nowadays, tourists prefer to explore the tourist destinations on the internet.

(iii)   Advertise the Nature Reserve on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube. The majority of people using these social media platforms are overwhelming, which indicates that if the Nature Reserve is advertised on these platforms, it will be able to reach a large audience. As indicated in Chapter two, social media can have a positive impact on the marketing of the Nature Reserve, which will in turn increase tourism in the province.

(iv)   Procure a reliable internet connection. It is worth noting that it will not be expensive to advertise on these social media platforms. The Nature Reserve will only need a reliable internet connection, as it is free of charge to advertise on them. This can be done by procuring an unlimited Wi-Fi connection and an unlimited internet fibre connection.

(v)   Appoint dedicated personnel to disseminate information on the internet and provide clarity where potential visitors might need it. Dedicated personnel should interact with potential visitors on the internet at all times.

(vi)   Utilise government departments as a platform for marketing the Nature Reserve. Pamphlets and booklets should be available at all departments for them to be accessed by both officials and the community as they visit the departments.

5.3.1.4 Target market for Nature Reserve

Findings: 23% of the participants indicated that tourists should be the target market for marketing. Furthermore, 20% identified the location population as a target market.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that tourists should be prioritised as a target market for the Nature Reserve. It further points out that the local population should also be given a priority as a target market.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Advertise on the internet to target tourists all over the globe. There are always tourists who are ready to explore new places and ready to be on the road. As explained above, tourists in modern days often explore the internet to identify new places

(ii)   Employ local media and the internet to reach the local population. Before a Nature Reserve can be explored or be attractive for people, it must first be explored by the local population at home. By so doing, the local population will be able to spread the word about the facility.

(iii)   Encourage government departments to utilise the Nature Reserve for meetings and other functions. This will ensure that the facility will continuously be maintained and it will be exposed to government officials who might not be aware of it.

5.3.2   Conclusions and recommendations on branding

5.3.2.1 The importance of branding and digital branding platforms

Findings: The majority (73%) of participants indicated that digital platforms for branding play important role. Only a small portion of 4% disagreed.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that digital branding platforms are important.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Apply branding on items such as pens, notebooks, soaps, and towels, amongst others, as branding materials. People visiting the Nature Reserve will be able to have

access to these branded materials, which will then boost the marketing of the Nature Reserve

(ii)   Develop an online branding is also as it will boost the name of the Nature Reserve to potential clients.

5.3.2.2 The branding of the Nature Reserve should be visible on most of tourist attraction places

Findings: The majority (83%) of respondents believe that Nature Reserve branding should be visible on tourist attraction places.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that Nature Reserve should be marketed at tourist attraction places.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Identification of tourist attraction places should be implemented by the Nature Reserve and branding should be visible. For instance, there are annual activities that normally attract a large audience of tourists to the Free State, such as the Mangaung Cultural Festival (MACUFE). The Nature Reserve should utilise the space to brand and expose the facility to the visitors.

(ii)   Utilisation of internet sites where tourists like to explore should be used to brand the Nature Reserve. Resources should also be made available to procure branding materials.

5.3.3   Conclusions and recommendations on leadership

5.3.3.1 Commitment towards Nature Reserve management by leadership

Findings: 27% of participants, the majority, indicated that leadership is fit for purpose and it is committed towards the management of the Nature Reserve.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that the leadership is fit for the management of Nature Reserve.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Provide leadership skills to the management of the Nature Reserve. When the leadership is fit for purpose, it will lead to the successful running of the Nature Reserve.

(ii)   Commit and maintain good leadership towards the affairs of the Nature Reserve; this will enable a good relationship between the officials and leadership. This should be done by continuously engaging with officials to provide assistance where it will be required.

5.3.3.2 The relationship between the leadership and officials and support to officials

Findings: 23% of the participants partly agreed that there is a good relationship between leadership. 14% disagreed that there is a relationship.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that there is a minimal relationship between leadership and officials.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Develop the good relationship that exists between leadership and officials. As mentioned above, a good relationship between leadership and officials will lead to the successful running of the Nature Reserve.

(ii)   Interact with some officials where there is a lack of support and provide support.

(iii)   Develop a platform where officials would provide the leadership with the needs required to fulfil their functions. It is worth noting that where there is no support, officials are likely to be less motivated and that could lead to a collapse of the Nature Reserve.

(iv)   Institute monthly meetings to address all the support-related issues. In addition, officials maybe requested to provide a list of support materials they require to the leadership through the use of e-mails or signed documents. This will speed up the process and assist where the leadership may not be available to organise a meeting.

5.3.3.3 Challenges of leadership faced at the Nature Reserve

Findings: 10% believe that management support, transparency, and lack of skills are challenges of leadership. Furthermore, 7% indicated that qualifications, communications are also part of challenges.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that there is a lack of management support, lack of transparency, and skills. Furthermore, the study also concludes that lack of qualifications and communication contributes to the challenges.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Provide support to officials, where necessary.

(ii)   Appoint people who possess the required skills and qualifications. It is worth mentioning that the correct skills are important for the success of any private company or a government institution. It was observed during the analysis that a lack of qualified staff and lack of skills are the challenges of the Nature Reserve.

(iii)   Attend workshops, upgrade qualifications to learn more about the functions.

(iv)   Inform officials about the affairs of the Nature Reserve. Information such as lack of funding and lack of resources, amongst others, should be communicated to officials. This will enable the officials to understand more about the status of the Nature Reserve. It will also enhance trust between officials and the leadership. Transparency was also identified as a challenge.

5.3.4   Conclusions and recommendations on communication

5.3.4.1 Communication between leadership and the executive

Findings: 27% (the majority) of the participants partly agreed that there is healthy communication between leadership and the executive. Those who totally disagreed constituted 20%.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that communication does exist between leadership and the leadership.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Intensify communication between the leadership and the executive of the Nature Reserve. As indicated in the previous chapter, it was observed that there is communication between leadership and management although minimal.

(ii)   Improve communication structures. Develop clear guidelines on of communication. available means to communicate the affairs of the Nature Reserve should also be explored, such as e-mails, telephone calls, short message services (SMSs), amongst others, to ensure that information is communicated effectively and efficiently.

5.3.4.2 The effects lack of communication

Findings: 67% of the participants, which is the majority, indicated that lack of communication will hamper the management of the Nature Reserve.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that the efficient and effective management will be hampered due to lack of communication.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Develop clear communication channels. Communication is an important tool to relay messages between the leadership, officials and visitors.

(ii)   Review existing communication policies and implement the proposed recommendation on the revised policies.

5.3.4.3 Access to communication between tourists and management of Nature Reserve

Findings: The majority (37%) of respondents totally disagreed that tourists have access to communicate with the management.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that there is no access for potential visitors to communicate with management.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Create an account for social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and e-mails amongst others to allow the visitors to express their view. The use of social media platforms can also assist the Nature Reserve to communicate the activities of the Nature Reserve and potentially be a marketing platform.

(ii)   Participate in tourists' events to liaise with tourists.

5.43.4.4 Obstacles to effective communication

Findings: The majority (27%) of participants pointed out that absence of turnaround strategy is the obstacle to effective communication.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that lack of turnaround strategy, shortage of skills, lack of transparency and inadequate are obstacles to effective communication.*

Recommendations:

(i)   Develop a clear turnaround strategy on how information will be communicated to potential visitors.

(ii)   Appoint qualified communicators with the necessary skills.

(iii) Implement transparency at all times. Visitors should be given the correct information before and during the visit. Officials should also be aware of challenges in the Nature Reserve.

(iv)   Allocate resources to the communication department. Procure equipment that will assist in terms of communicating with visitors, such as a fast internet connection, computers and cameras, which will be beneficial to the Nature Reserve.

(v)   Organise a workshop to provide training on how information should be communicated. A workshop will assist management with regard to new skills of communication, communication channels and other important related communication programmes

5.3.5   Conclusions and recommendations on certainty regarding the status of the Nature Reserve

5.3.5.1 Position of the Nature Reserve

Findings: The majority (54%) of the participants agreed that the Nature Reserve is well positioned to contribute to the tourism economy in the Free State.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that the position of the Nature Reserve will contribute to the economy of the province through tourism*.

Recommendations:

(i)   Take advantage of the location of the facility. As mentioned in Chapter one, the Nature Reserve is situated near the N1 route where tourists travel it is situated close to where many activities such as Bloemshow, Mangaung Cultural Festival (MACUFE) and many more in Bloemfontein.

(ii)   Market more to those who visit and pass by near the Nature Serve. Procure billboards for passers-by to notice the facility.

5.3.5.2 Marketing of Nature Reserve

Findings: 57% (the majority) of participants indicated that the Nature Reserve is not marketed well.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that the Nature Reserve is not well marketed.*

Recommendation:

(i)   Implement a strong marketing mechanism. As mentioned in previous chapters, for the success of the Nature Reserve, there should be strong marketing so that more tourists are attracted to the province. Marketing is able to reach tourists locally and abroad through different means of the internet such as e-mails and social media platforms.

5.3.5.3 Marketing of Nature Reserve

Findings: 47% of the participants disagreed that the Nature Reserve is well branded.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that there is no visible branding at the Nature Reserve.*

Recommendations:

(i) Implement branding on items such as pens, t-shirts and shirts, billboards, and towels, amongst others as a way of branding.

(ii) Source external professional service that will assist with branding. This will provide a platform of marketing and in turn increase tourism in the province.

5.3.5.4 Management of Nature Reserve

Findings: 30% of the respondent disagreed that the Nature Reserve is well managed.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that there is a lack of management skills at the Nature Reserve.*

Recommendations:

(i) Provide workshops for management on how to manage the Nature Reserve.

(ii) Appoint qualified management where there is a shortage of skills.

(iii) Interact on a monthly or quarterly basis with the officials to source proposals and be alerted of new challenges that may not be known by the management. This will ensure that the management will be able to address issues that will enable the Nature Reserve to be managed well.

5.3.5.5 Sustainability of Nature Reserve

Findings: 33% of participants agreed that the Nature Reserve is sustainable.

Conclusion: The study concludes *that the Nature Reserve is sustainable.*

Recommendations:

(i) Improve the level of sustainability by generating revenue and marketing to attract more visitors.

(ii) Maintain the facility and add improvements, where necessary.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Current and future research could improve on this research. This can be done by conducting similar research comparing private and public Nature Reserves. This study hopefully sets the tone for the development and sustainability of public Nature Reserves.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The main aim of the study was to identify tourism and marketing strategies at the Soetdoring Nature Reserve in order to increase the economic development and growth in the Free State Province. The study has attempted to contribute to key marketing strategies for the Nature Reserve by considering key questions in marketing, branding, communication and leadership. It is trusted that the literature consulted for this study, as well as findings of the empirical part will provide a positive contribution to the improvement of marketing the Nature Reserve in order to attract tourism in the Free State Province. It is worth mentioning that the management should continuously improve how marketing is conducted, as there are many competitors who use advanced skills and technology.

The study revealed that marketing does play an important role in various aspects such as attracting tourists, the relationship between officials and management, branding of the Nature Reserve, communication, and more. Nonetheless, it can be deduced that marketing does not receive the attention it ought to receive at the Nature Reserve. In its endeavours to improve marketing, it is proposed that management should consider the findings and recommendations of this study, which might be fruitful to the Nature Reserve.

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