Delineating the South African domestic tourist's behaviour amid a crisis: A psychographic segmentation approach

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The COVID-19 pandemic forced transformational thinking regarding resilience and sustainability strategies to ensure the future of the tourism industry. Domestic tourism is predicted to recover first, emphasising the importance of profiling crisis-induced domestic tourist behaviour through market segmentation.

Purpose: The research was conducted from a developing country perspective focusing on South African domestic tourists. A multi-psychographic segmentation approach was applied. Based on South Africa's marketing and media profile, perceived risk factors induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the perceived safety of domestic travel and tourism activity, domestic tourists were profiled.

Methods: An online questionnaire was employed from 2020 to 2021, and 427 responses were included in the analysis. Exploratory Factor analysis and hierarchical cluster analysis were performed to identify the segments based on the identified factors.

Results: Four discernible domestic tourist segments emerged: *Psychocentric*, *Traditional idealist*, *Apprehensive* and *Despondent domestic tourists*. Each segment differed significantly based on their rating of the segmentation bases; thus delineating the heterogeneity of domestic tourist behaviour amid a crisis. The results show that a generic marketing approach is not feasible for domestic tourism in South Africa. Conclusion: It is vital to understand domestic tourist behaviour during a crisis to project and manage it proactively. This research addresses this urgent need. Marketing the country to South Africans requires dynamic and distinguished marketing efforts based on the perceptions of domestic tourists.

Keywords: Cluster analysis, COVID-19, domestic tourism, market segmentation, psychographics

INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has underscored the fragility and susceptibility of global tourism to the deleterious effects of crisis events (Singh, Nicely, Day & Cai 2022; Tan, Zha, Tang, Ma & Li 2021). Globally, a combination of the effects of the pandemic and non-pharmaceutical interventions instituted to curb the spread of the virus have significantly constrained international tourism demand, thus eroding the safety perceptions of tourists along with consumer confidence, attitudes, and subjective safety perceptions towards tourism (Adongo, Amenumey, Kumi-Kyereme & Dube 2021; Godovykh, Ridderstaat, Baker & Fyall 2021; Hussain & Fusté-Forné 2021). Moreover, as the worst health crisis since World War II, and the first pandemic of the post-digital era, emerging empirical evidence suggests that beyond the deleterious socio-economic impact of the pandemic, there is a palpable paradigm shift in the psyche of tourists buoyed by an information-rich global environment (Baños-Pino, Boto-Garcia, Del Valle & Sustacha 2021; Matiza & Kruger 2021a; O'Farrell 2021; Singh et al. 2022). However, prior experience from the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) and Ebola outbreaks indicate a lack of consensus on the influence of health-related crises on domestic tourism demand behaviour. The SARS severely curtailed domestic tourism demand at Asian destinations, while the same crisis buoyed domestic tourism demand amongst American tourists (Wang 2017; Wen, Huimin & Kavanaugh 2005). Conversely, the 2014 Ebola outbreak constrained American domestic tourism due to heightened infection risk perceptions despite only a single reported case of the virus in the country (Cahyanto, Wiblishauser, Pennington-Gray & Schroeder 2016). This demand disparity indicates potential heterogeneity in crisis-induced domestic tourist behaviour (Baños-Pino et al. 2021; Tan et al. 2021), albeit that consumptive decision-making is idiosyncratic.

Notwithstanding the limited understanding of the evolving role of domestic tourism as a stopgap measure to constrained international tourism and a vector for the resilience and recovery of the global tourism sector (Hao, Bai & Sun 2021; Volgger, Taplin & Aebli 2021), the pandemic has renewed academic and practitioner interest in domestic tourist behaviour. Scant studies (Adam, Agyeiwaah & Dayour 2021; Hao et al. 2021; Toyama 2021) profiled domestic tourists during the ongoing crisis. As a result, some of the extant literature bemoans the failure of academic inquiry to consider the manifestation and impact of health crises on the subjective preferences and consumptive choices of tourists (Sánchez-Pérez, Terán-Yépez, Marín-Carrillo, Marín-Carrillo & Illescas-Manzano 2021), particularly on a domestic tourism level. However, seminal models may be less effective in explaining tourist behaviour due to the multidimensional nature and ubiquity of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Sigala 2020; Singh et al. 2022). Therefore, this study aimed to apply a psychographic segmentation approach to profile South African domestic tourists. Based on South Africa's marketing and media profile, perceived risk factors induced by the COVID-19 pandemic and the perceived safety of domestic travel and tourism activity, domestic tourists were profiled. Thus, this research contributes empirical evidence that provides an impetus for more concerted domestic tourist profiling during a 'glocal' crisis [global crisis with idiosyncratic destination implications].

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

MARKET SEGMENTATION IN TOURISM

Tourist behaviour is susceptible to the subjective stimulus of social, psychological, and cultural factors (Hao et al. 2021). Hence, the behavioural predispositions of tourists may be exploited to delineate the broader tourism market into discernable groups based on socio-demographic, psychographic, geographical, and behavioural variables (Matiza & Kruger 2021a). While objective socio-demographic profile factors are essential in profiling tourism market segments, Market Segmentation Theory – MST (Dickson & Ginter 1987) also acknowledges the utility of heterogeneity in consumers based on subjective (psychographic) factors; hence exploiting their differences as a basis for clustering them based on a set of observable homogenous characteristics (Sánchez-Pérez et al. 2021). The notion of psychographic segmentation of domestic tourists during a crisis is a burgeoning discourse, with contemporary academic inquiry (Adam et al. 2021; Adongo et al. 2021) being prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic and affirming the viability of market segmentation in tourism during and post-crisis.

DESTINATION MARKETING PROFILE AND TOURIST BEHAVIOUR

During health-related crises, tourist decision-making is particularly susceptible to heuristic cues related to health infrastructure, the safety of the location and the pervasiveness of disease spread (Hao et al. 2021). To this end, the theory of Bounded Rationality – BR (Cyert & March 1963; Gigerenzer & Goldstein 1996) hypothesises the susceptibility of human decisions to biases and their choice limitations, then to the information available to them. Critical to tourist perceptions during and post-crisis are formal [tourism websites, media coverage, advertisements, government initiatives] and informal [social media, entertainment content] destination marketing communications as they provide information symmetry for tourists, optimise tourist choice, manage destination reputation, and mitigate the effects of crises by positively influencing tourist perceptions of safety in cases of crisis-induced perceived risk (Schroeder & Pennington-Gray 2015; Sigala 2020; Singh et al. 2022). Information symmetry via marketing communications frames crisis-related information and informs the subjective safety of travel and tourism activity associated with a particular destination. Hence, crisis-induced media imagery associated with a destination predicates tourist behaviour (Tan et al. 2021).

PERCEIVED RISK, SAFETY, AND TOURIST BEHAVIOUR

Perceived risk is a subjective multidimensional [social, psychological, financial, equipment, satisfaction, physical risk] construct that influences the decision-making process of tourists (Matiza 2020). The Theory of Planned Behaviour - TPB (Ajzen 1991) affirms how subjective risk perceptions induced by crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic influence the attitude [as one of a triad of factors] of people towards tourism (Godovykh et al. 2021). Emerging contemporary studies (Adam et al. 2021; Matiza & Kruger 2021a) have utilised risk perception induced by the COVID-19 pandemic as a viable segmentation basis. The present study explores the propensity of domestic tourism resulting in tourists experiencing a financial discrepancy (financial risk); exposure to life-threatening diseases or illness (physical risk); a detrimental effect on the tourists' social image within their social reference group (social risk); and feelings of anxiety, tension, or worry (psychological risk) in terms of psychographic segmentation (Hasan, Ismail & Islam 2017).

The Protection Motivation Theory - PMT (Rogers 1975) establishes the extent of crisis-induced tourist behaviour. The PMT submits that tourist behaviour is predicated on the ability of tourists to mediate decision-making during a crisis via threat assessments (severity and vulnerability) that inform subsequent threat mitigating behaviour (Tseng & Wang 2016). Risk perception also extends to how safe and secure specific travel and tourism activities are perceived (Adongo et al. 2021; Tan et al. 2021). Infection risk and non-pharmaceutical interventions - as a reflexive approach to managing the pandemic - stimulate tourists' protective behaviour and impact the tourists' willingness to engage in travel and tourism activity across the broad spectrum of the tourism value chain (Hao et al. 2021; Sánchez-Pérez et al. 2021). The impact of the pandemic on the perceived safety of tourism typology, transport choice, the availability of tourism attractions, access to hospitality conveniences, and level of interaction with other tourists (Matiza & Slabbert 2021) are considered in this study.

METHODOLOGY

An online research survey marketing campaign directed to a panel of *N*=843 South African consumers through a South African research firm [iFeedback] was launched to generate the data. A final sample of *n*=427 usable responses, representing a 50.7% response rate, was analysed, which is valid for the practical significance of the findings based on sampling heuristics (Krejcie & Morgan 1970). The online survey was published and self-administered by iFeedback during South Africa's peak holiday season between the 18th December 2020 and the 6th January 2021.

Ethical clearance [NWU-00883-20-A4] was obtained from a South African university. The English-language survey solicited information under the following sections:

- A section on socio-demographic profile factors, including profile particulars, media channels, income and potential tourism budget (Fuchs & Reichel 2006; Statistics South Africa 2020).

- A section measuring the influence of South Africa's marketing and media profile based on 12 items drawn from the literature (Huong & Lee 2017; McCabe 2014; Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin 2017; Soliman 2011), recorded on a 5-point Likert scale of influence.

- A section identifying the perceived risk factors induced by the COVID-19 pandemic based on 16 items drawn from the literature (Adam 2015; Deng & Ritchie 2018; Fuchs & Reichel 2006; Fuchs & Reichel 2011) measured on a 5-point Likert scale of agreement.

- A section measuring the perceived safety of domestic travel and tourism activity based on nine activity items (Adam 2015; Reisinger & Mavondo 2005; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty 2019), recorded on a 5-point Likert scale of safety.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

Since a multi-segmentation approach was applied, exploratory factor analyses (EFAs) were performed using the IBM Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26 (IBM Corp 2019) to reduce the data and to identify domestic tourists' different psychographic segments (Sarstedt & Mooi 2019). A hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's method with squared Euclidean distances (Parreira, Pestana, Santos & Fernández-Gámez 2021) was performed with the EFAs as the segmentation bases. This was performed using TIBCO Statistica® 13.6.0 (2019) to identify the various segments of domestic tourists. To indicate statistically significant differences based on the socio-demographic and travel profiles of the respondents, ANOVAs and Cross-tabulations and chi-square test results were performed in SPSS (Pallant 2016).

RESULTS

The results are based on a sample with an even gender profile of males and females, 47%, respectively, with 6% opting to abstain from gender identification. Up to 50% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 34 at the time of the survey, with at least 25% possessing a high school diploma. A significant proportion of respondents (50%) were single, while just over a third were married and travelled with family (adults and children). Nearly 40% of the respondents resided in the economic hub of South Africa [Gauteng Province] and earned below USD1500/month, and had travelled at least once for tourism in the preceding two years. Most respondents (75%) indicated their intention to engage in domestic tourism in the year subsequent [2021] to the survey and a willingness to spend less than R10 000[1] [USD667] for a seven-day domestic trip.

EFA RESULTS: IDENTIFYING THE SEGMENTATION BASES

Table 1 shows that the KMO (>0.7) and Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < 0.05$) confirmed the factorability of the data. The respective EFA and PCA tests [EV>1, Factor Loading ≥0.05, Cronbach's alpha - α > 0.6, Inter-item correlation between 0.15 and 0.55] identified the valid and reliable segmentation bases (Clark & Watson 2016). The EFA for marketing and media influence extracted three somewhat influential factors: *Country image perceptions* ($\bar{x}$ = 3.24) [perceiving South Africa to be an attractive, value-for-money and unique tourism destination]; *e-Marketing/content marketing perceptions* ($\bar{x}$ = 3.18) [promotional initiatives on websites and social media]; and *Mainstream marketing perceptions* ($\bar{x}$ = 2.91) [country-specific marketing by the government through advertisements and in traditional and broadcasting media], accounting for a cumulative 72.89% of the variance in the data. The EFA for perceived risk (Table 1) extracted four risk factors: *Physical* ($\bar{x}$ = 3.47) [related to the importance of sanitation and hygiene and the risk of infection]; *Financial* ($\bar{x}$ = 2.48) [the perception that domestic travel will be too expensive]; S*ocial* ($\bar{x}$ = 2.49) [the disagreement by others to pursue domestic travel pursuits]; and *Psychological* ($\bar{x}$ = 2.33) [related to personal feelings of distress when thinking about travelling domestically] *risk*, accounting for 73.10% variance in the data. For domestic travel and tourism activity, two factors were extracted: *Lower-risk travel pursuits* ($\bar{x}$ = 2.81) [related to self-drive and visiting local travel attractions] and *Higher-risk travel pursuits* ($\bar{x}$ = 2.01) [related to travelling in groups and using public transport]. For the complete list of items and their factor loading coefficients, refer to Matiza and Kruger (2021a), Matiza and Kruger (2022), and Matiza and Slabbert (2022).

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[1] USD1 = R15 on average

TABLE 1:
EFA AND PCA RESULTS

	Items	Eigenvalues (EV)	Var. (%)	Loading Coeff. (>.50)		Avg, inter-item correlation	Mean (x̄)	Cronbach (α)
				Min	Max			
[1]Marketing & Media Influence [5-point Likert-scale: 1 = Not at all influential and 5 = Extremely influential]								
Mainstream marketing perceptions	4	6.81	56.77	0.51	0.83	0.62	2.91	0.87
E-marketing/ content marketing perceptions	3	1.03	8.62	0.72	0.82	0.62	3.18	0.83
Country image perceptions	5	1.01	7.49	0.52	0.80	0.57	3.24	0.87
[2]Perceived risk [5-point Likert-scale: 1 = Strongly disagree and 5 = Strongly agree]								
Financial risk	4	7.50	46.89	0.74	0.79	0.59	2.49	0.85
Psychological risk	4	1.84	11.49	0.53	0.87	0.64	2.33	0.88
Social risk	4	1.37	8.57	0.68	0.77	0.62	2.48	0.87
Physical risk	3	0.98	6.15	0.72	0.88	0.64	3.47	0.85
[3]Domestic travel & tourism activity [5-point Likert-scale: 1 = Very risky and 5 = Very safe]								
Higher-risk travel pursuits	4	4.86	53.97	0.66	0.88	0.61	2.01	0.86
Lower-risk travel pursuits	5	1.22	13.51	0.59	0.77	0.50	2.81	0.83

[1]Marketing & Media: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation: KMO = 0.94 and Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (66) = 3222.588, $p < 0.05$
[2]Perceived risk: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation: KMO = 0.91 and Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (120) = 4312.454, $p < 0.05$
[3]Domestic travel & tourism activity:Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation: KMO = 0.88 and Bartlett's test of sphericity: x^2 (36) = 2086.782, $p < 0.05$

A TYPOLOGY OF DOMESTIC TOURISTS IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

As shown in Figure 1, the cluster analysis revealed four distinct clusters (segments) based on the factors identified in Table 1.

FIGURE 1:
FOUR-SEGMENT (CLUSTER) SOLUTION

Tree Diagram for 427 Cases
Ward's method
Squared Euclidean distances
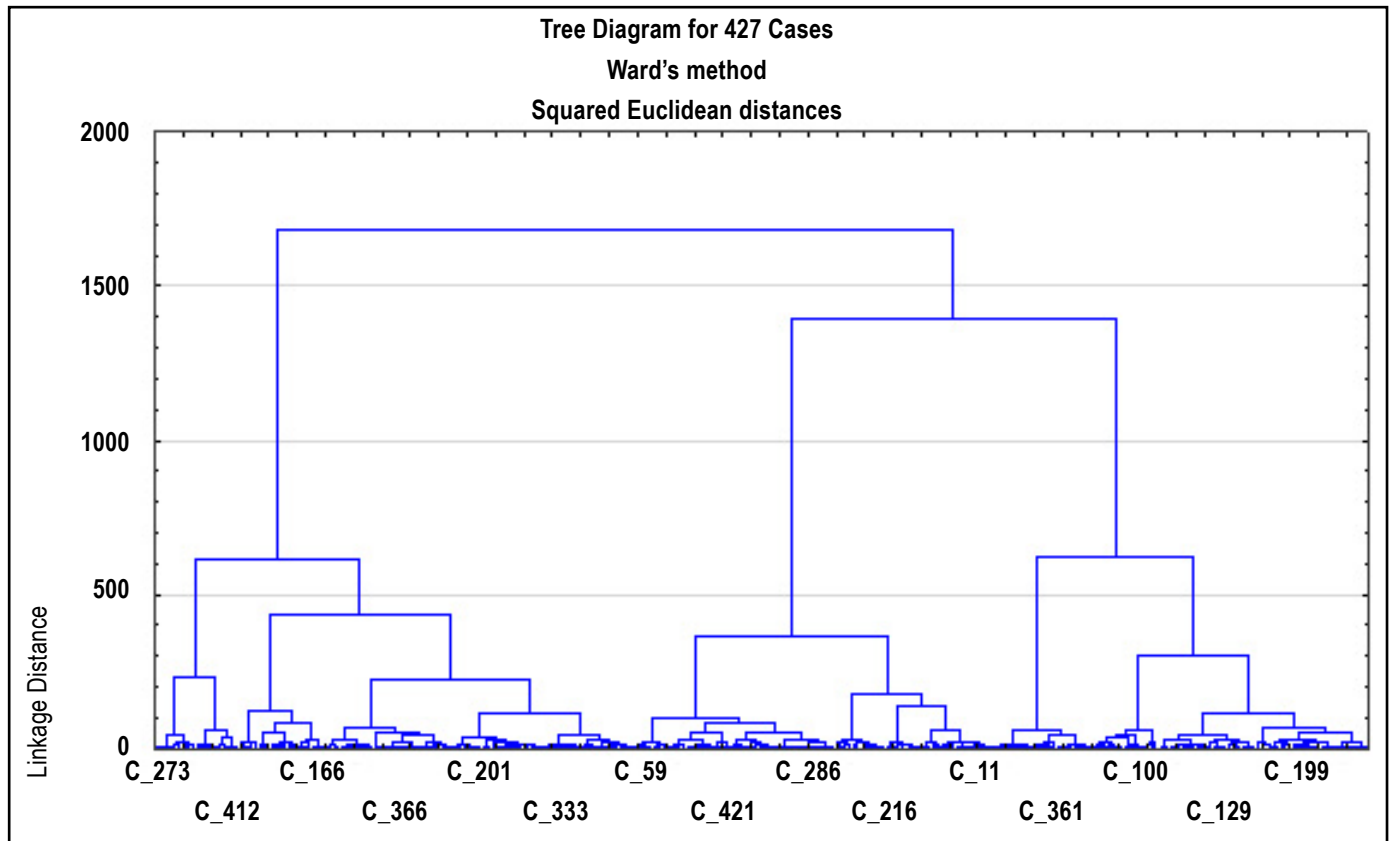
After the four-cluster solution, the ANOVAs in Table 2 indicate that all four segments perceive domestic travel and tourism differently based on the statistically significant difference in their rating of the factors ($p < 0.05$).

TABLE 2:
IDENTIFIED DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE DOMESTIC TOURIST SEGMENTS

	Seg. 1	Seg.2	Seg. 3	Seg. 4	F-ratio	Sig. level
	N = 97	N = 124	N = 170	N = 36		
Marketing and media perceptions						
Mainstream marketing perceptions	2.07[a]	3.86[b]	3.00[c]	1.47[d]	108.11	0.001*
e-Marketing/content marketing perceptions	2.86[a]	4.12[b]	3.08[a]	1.30[c]	87.39	0.001*
Country image perceptions	2.72[a]	4.21[b]	3.14[c]	1.82[d]	102.41	0.001*
Perceived risk						
Financial risk	2.24[a]	1.80[b]	3.39[c]	1.23[d]	125.05	0.001*
Psychological risk	1.54[cd]	1.86[d]	3.33[b]	1.39[c]	141.74	0.001*
Social risk	1.89[a]	2.03[a]	3.37[b]	1.38[c]	97.20	0.001*
Physical risk	3.14[a]	3.55[a]	4.04[b]	1.38[c]	70.15	0.001*
Domestic travel and tourism activity perceived risk						
Higher-risk travel pursuits	2.13[a]	2.01[a]	2.11[a]	1.23[b]	8.18	0.001*
Lower-risk travel pursuits	3.13[a]	3.13[a]	2.69[b]	1.40[c]	42.12	0.001*

*Statistically significant
A different alphabet letter indicates that the segments differ.

Segment 1 was the third-largest cluster (97 respondents). Domestic tourists in this segment were somewhat susceptible to South Africa's *e-marketing/content marketing* and *country image*, less so to *mainstream marketing* associated with the country as a domestic tourism destination. Akin to the other segments, health-related *Physical risk* factors related to the COVID-19 pandemic were the highest rated, while other risk factors appeared to be sedentary to their perceptions. Of the three segments influenced by *Physical risk*, Segment 1 appears to be the least susceptible. This segment [like Segments 2 and 3] considered travel and tourism activities such as domestic travel, private, self-drive transport, visiting popular local attractions and air travel to be somewhat safe, low-risk activities. Therefore, Segment 1 domestic tourists were categorised as *Traditional idealist domestic tourists* (Swarbrooke & Horner 2001).

Segment 2 comprised the second largest number of domestic tourists (124 respondents). Domestic tourists in this segment were the most susceptible to the influence of South Africa's marketing and media profile across all its [*e-marketing/content marketing, country image*, *mainstream marketing*] dimensions, including domestic tourism product placement in adverts and tourism offering on travel and tourism websites, the government's initiatives to promoting domestic tourism, and the perceived value for money received from South African domestic tourism products. Like *Traditional idealist domestic tourists* and tourists in Segment 3, they agreed that *Physical risk* concerns would shape their views of domestic tourism while the other risk factors were less influential. Like *Traditional idealist domestic tourists*, *lower-risk travel pursuits* are considered safer domestic travel and tourism activities. As a result, Segment 2 tourists were considered *Psychocentric domestic tourists* (Matiza & Kruger 2021b).

Segment 3 represented the largest cluster of domestic tourists (170 respondents). Akin to *Traditional idealist domestic tourists*, this segment found South Africa's marketing and media profile to be mostly somewhat influential in their decision-making, rating all factors higher but significantly lower than *Psychocentric domestic tourists*, with South Africa's *country image* being most significant. Intriguingly, Segment 3 respondents were the most susceptible to perceived risk perceptions, considering all [*financial*, *social* and *psychological* physical] risk dimensions in domestic tourism, including aspects such as the potentially damaging financial impact of travel and tourism during a crisis, the worry and tension associated with travelling amidst a health crisis, the approval of social reference groups, the increasingly important role of the availability of proper sanitation and hygiene, as well as the risk of infectious diseases on South Africa. Typically, they regard both *lower-* and *higher-risk travel pursuits* as risky to somewhat risky. Segment 3 tourists are, thus, characterised as *Apprehensive domestic tourists* (Matiza & Kruger 2021a).

With only 36 respondents, Segment 4 was the smallest. Based on their overall lowest rating of all the psychographic dimensions, none of the marketing and media factors influenced their perceptions. Nor did any perceived risk factors impact their views on domestic tourism, and they regarded both higher- and lower-risk travel pursuits as very risky. Hence, due to the passive psychographic profile of respondents in this segment, Segment 4 was considered as *Despondent domestic tourists*.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF DOMESTIC TOURIST SEGMENTS

Cross-tabulations and chi-square tests were performed to create a comprehensive profile of the segments (see Appendix 1). The categorical variables revealed statistically significant differences based on most variables with medium effect, as summarised in Table 3. Two variables were insignificant, province of residence and travel plans respectively (Cohen, 1988).

Variable	Chi-square (χ^2) (p-value)	Cross-tabulations (Phi-value) [ϕ]
Gender	0.001*	0.252
Age	0.001*	0.315
Marital status	0.001*	0.306
Level of education	0.001*	0.344
Gross monthly income	0.001*	0.355
Employment status	0.005*	0.278
Usual travel companions	0.001*	0.314
Travel frequency	0.001*	0.392
Influential media channels	0.002*	0.305
Planning to travel domestically	0.001*	0.325
Willingness to pay for a 7-day trip	0.002*	0.289
Province of residence	0.544	0.231
International travel intention	0.459	0.078

*Statistically significant

ϕ: 0.1 = small effect, 0.3 = medium effect; 0.5 = large effect

Traditional idealist domestic tourists

The typical *Traditional idealist domestic tourist* is a married, 55+-year-old male with a post-graduate degree. Their high level of education translates to them earning a gross monthly income much above the average income in South Africa, with most employed in the private sector or retired. They travel with their family or partners, and just over 60% have travelled more than once in the past two years. In line with their psychographic profile, online [Internet and social media-based] marketing platforms are the most influential regarding their perceptions. Of all the segments, traditional idealist domestic tourists were the most likely to travel domestically within the subsequent year, albeit acknowledging perceived physical risk concerns. As the most affluent segment, traditional idealist domestic tourists can afford either air or self-drive transport, which they consider low risk, and they visit popular tourist attractions - with cumulatively 51% of the segment willing to spend between R11 000 and R40 000 (USD733 and USD2667) on a 7-day domestic trip.

Psychometric domestic tourists

The typical *Psychocentric domestic tourist* is a single female aged between 18 and 44 years, with a certificate or non-formal education. Expectedly, their gross monthly income is much below the average, with only 16% earning above the norm. *Psychometric domestic tourists* are primarily employed in the private sector, while 25% were unemployed. Their usual travel companions typically consist of their family or partners, while under half the segment has travelled more than once in the past two years. A significant proportion of *Psychocentric domestic tourists* indicated they plan to travel domestically in the subsequent year. Due to their limited financial capacity, most indicated a willingness to spend less than *Traditional idealist domestic tourists*; less than R10 000 [USD667] on a 7-day trip. Corresponding with their psychographic profile, online platforms [the Internet and social media] were the most influential channels for information symmetry.

Apprehensive domestic tourists

The typical *Apprehensive domestic tourist* is either male or female, predominantly within the 18- and 34-year old cohort and is typically single, with a small proportion being married. With a high school diploma as their highest qualification, the archetypal *Apprehensive domestic tourist* earns much below the average income in South Africa, stemming from being unemployed or studying, thus implying they may depend on their family or partners. Akin to *Traditional idealist* and *Psychocentric domestic tourists*, this segment mostly travels with family or partners. However, the *Apprehensive domestic tourists* represent the second-largest cohort of solo travellers of all the segments. Most domestic tourists in this segment had not travelled more than once in the two years before the survey, with less than a third having travelled once for leisure. Characteristic of their psychographic profile, this segment is the most circumspect of all the tourist segments, being influenced by all perceived risk dimensions; hence, online platforms play a significant role in the decision-making of apprehensive tourist. While intending to travel domestically, *Apprehensive domestic tourists* tend to spend less than R10 000 [USD667] on a 7-day trip.

Despondent domestic tourists

The final segment is intriguing. The typical *Despondent domestic tourist* is female, although it is critical to note that 19% of tourists in this segment preferred not to indicate their gender. Like *Apprehensive domestic tourists*, this segment falls within the 18 to 34-year old cohort with a high school diploma and are students or unemployed. However, nearly a third of this segment possesses non-formal education, thus earning much below the average income in South Africa. They are primarily solo travellers, with over half not having travelled in the past two years. Contrary to all the other segments, television is the most influential media channel. Most tourists in this segment did not plan to engage in domestic tourism in the next year. Similar to *Apprehensive domestic tourists*, *Despondent domestic tourists* were willing to spend only less than R10 000 [USD667] on a 7-day domestic trip.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Confirming the notion by Baños-Pino et al. (2021), the results show that the behavioural adaptation of South African domestic tourists due to crisis events such as the COVID-19 pandemic can be explained by their socio-demographic, cultural and psychological profile. This study utilised multiple psychographic segmentation bases and identified four distinct South African domestic tourist market segments – *Traditional idealist, Psychocentric, Apprehensive and Despondent* domestic tourists. The socio-demographic characteristics profile each segment. Each segment was labelled based on the importance each segment assigned to (i) marketing and media heuristics, (ii) perceived risk, and (iii) the perceived safety of travel and tourism activity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the COVID-19 pandemic, the research findings are beneficial to tourism practitioners as it adds to the academic and practical understanding of the behaviour of domestic tourists. Tourism scholars emphasise the latter's importance (Adam et al. 2021; Tan et al. 2021; Volgger et al. 2021).

Theoretically, the heterogeneity among the South African domestic tourists and the establishment of discernible segments extends and improves the conceptualisation of MST (Dickson & Ginter 1987; Sánchez-Pérez et al. 2021) to domestic tourism during a crisis. The influence of marketing and media heuristics on domestic tourist decision-making confirms BR theory, affirming the viability of tourist bias in *framing* information symmetry during a crisis (Cyert & March 1963; Gigerenzer & Goldstein 1996; Hao et al. 2021; Tan et al. 2021). Re-examining the TPB in a domestic tourism context confirms the predictive power of the TPB (Ajzen 1991; Godovykh et al. 2021) in the influence of perceived risk on tourist attitude toward domestic tourism during the crisis; hence furthering theoretical understanding of the model. The ability of tourists to discern between travel and tourism activities they considered to be high-risk or low-risk pursuits during the COVID-19 pandemic affirms the viability of PMT (Adongo et al. 2021; Rogers 1975; Tseng & Wang 2016) in predicting the adaptive behaviour of domestic tourists when faced with health-related risks. Overall, given the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings, to an extent, assuage the concerns (Sigala 2020; Singh et al. 2022; Volgger et al. 2021) related to the predictive power of seminal tourist behavioural models. Hence, there are some significant practical management implications.

The empirical evidence suggests that three segments (*Traditional idealist, Psychocentric and Apprehensive domestic tourists*) are the most viable and suitable domestic target market segments. However, in line with the contemporary literature, two critical practical management implications arise for crisis-affected domestic tourism. First, a universal marketing approach is impractical for South African domestic tourism (Tan et al. 2021), particularly when contextualised by crisis events (Matiza & Kruger 2021a). Managing COVID-19-induced heterogeneity in aspects such as frequency of domestic travel, stay duration, tourism typology, mode of transport and locality of tourism destination choice across the established tourist segments may pose challenges for tourism marketers (Sánchez-Pérez et al. 2021; Zheng, Luo & Ritchie 2021). For instance, economic modelling generally attributes an estimated 24% decline in the length of stay amongst tourists and corresponding shifts in tourist spending from accommodation to increased expenditures for transport and outdoor activities to the pandemic (Baños-Pino et al. 2021). More pertinently, our findings indicate that three segments identified in South Africa's domestic tourism have limited funding to finance their tourism activity. The findings imply that segmentation allows tourism marketers to target consumers with the propensity to engage in domestic tourism [*Traditional idealist* domestic tourists] more effectively and efficiently. Thus, optimising tourism marketing spend by innovating [product development and resource optimisation] and promoting [pricing regime, incentives] bespoke outdoor-oriented socially distanced 'untact' tourism products that appeal to the segment's quality-of-life oriented need for well-being, socialisation, and pleasure (Hussain & Fusté-Forné 2021; Parreira et al. 2021).

Second, risk perception is a function of uncertainty. Therefore, crisis marketing communications serve the dual purpose of managing information and meaning when conveying messaging to allay tourist safety concerns and promote tourism, respectively (Singh et al. 2022). The impact of crisis marketing communications models in promoting domestic tourism will vary across the domestic tourist market segments. Hence, understanding the heterogeneity in marketing and media consumption, risk and safety perception aids in the development of bespoke communication to influence tourist behaviour across the spectrum of affluent [*Traditional idealist*] and domestic tourists who are more susceptible [*Psychocentric and Apprehensive domestic tourists*] to the influence of recovery-oriented marketing communications. For instance, our results indicate a significant demographic shift in the age profiles of domestic tourists. According to Statistics South Africa (2020), in 2019, the average South African domestic tourist was aged between 25 and 44 years old, while the empirical evidence of the present points to the segment that is willing and able to travel is now the 55+ cohort. Therefore, in the short-term, it would be prudent to target the affluent, albeit ageing, *Traditional idealist domestic tourist* segment with health risk mitigation strategy information via e-marketing content on official and informal travel and tourism websites, as well as social media posts to appeal to their sense of safety regarding health-related physical risk (Schroeder & Pennington-Gray 2015; Singh et al. 2022; Swarbrooke & Horner 2001). The younger and now more circumspect *Psychocentric* and *Despondent domestic tourists* would be more susceptible to crisis marketing communications via South Africa's image. Tourism marketing practitioners promote the country's value-for-money domestic tourism products and their attractive uniqueness while providing information symmetry on measures to manage the multidimensional risk factors associated with COVID-19 (Hao et al. 2021; Tan et al. 2021; Toyama 2021).

While the study makes significant findings, its limitations are its cross-sectional nature and location-specific focus on South Africa. The empirical evidence relates to tourist behaviour at a specific time and can only be generalisable to South African domestic tourism. However, the findings offer critical and novel insights for emerging domestic tourism research in the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The limitations provide the impetus for a longitudinal study to map any changes in domestic tourist behaviour and replicate the study in other destinations. The limited academic inquiry into how effective crisis and post-crisis marketing communications messaging, product innovations and other marketing variables are as crisis recovery measures warrant further segmentation-based research (Singh et al. 2022; Volgger et al. 2021). Furthermore, the influence of cultural dimensions as a segmentation basis offers other avenues for segmentation-oriented research in both the context of domestic tourism and periods of global tourism crises.

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APPENDIX 1: DOMESTIC TOURIST SEGMENT CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristics		Traditional idealist domestic tourists N = 97	Psychocentric domestic tourists N = 124	Apprehensive domestic tourists N = 170	Despondent domestic tourists N = 36	X²	Degrees of freedom	Φ-value	p-value
Gender	Male	55%	44%	50%	25%	27.090	6	0.252**	0.001*
	Female	37%	50%	49%	56%				
	Prefer not to indicate	8%	6%	1%	19%				
Age	18-24	19%	25%	36%	44%	42.315	15	0.315***	0.001*
	25-34	14%	20%	22%	25%				
	35-44	14%	20%	10%	17%				
	45-54	15%	13%	15%	8%				
	55+	33%	21%	16%	3%				
	Rather not say	4%	1%	0%	3%				
Marital status	Single (never married)	30%	48%	58%	72%	40.081	15	0.306***	0.001*
	Married	54%	37%	28%	17%				
	Domestic partnership	6%	5%	4%	0%				
	Widowed	0%	0%	3%	3%				
	Divorced	8%	9%	6%	8%				
	Separated	2%	2%	1%	0%				
Level of education	Technical and business skills (Non-formal)	6%	5%	13%	28%	50.432	15	0.344***	0.001*
	Matric	14%	23%	30%	39%				
	Certificate	22%	25%	18%	19%				
	Diploma	11%	12%	15%	11%				
	Bachelor's Degree	13%	13%	11%	0%				
	Postgraduate Degree	33%	22%	14%	3%				

Characteristics		Traditional idealist domestic tourists	Psychocentric domestic tourists	Apprehensive domestic tourists	Despondent domestic tourists	X²	Degrees of freedom	Φ-value	p-value
		N = 97	N = 124	N = 170	N = 36				
Gross monthly income	Much below-average income	16%	36%	31%	50%	53.419	15	0.355***	0.001*
	Below average income	4%	12%	11%	14%				
	Same as average income	18%	10%	11%	0%				
	Above average income	18%	16%	11%	3%				
	Much above average income	24%	12%	7%	8%				
	Rather not say	21%	13%	29%	25%				
Employment status	Student	13%	13%	21%	25%	32.863	15	0.278**	0.005*
	Unemployed	21%	26%	27%	22%				
	Private sector	39%	37%	21%	22%				
	Public sector	9%	8%	14%	8%				
	Retired	12%	9%	8%	0%				
	Prefer not to say	5%	7%	9%	22%				
Province of residence	Limpopo	4%	10%	5%	14%	22.593	24	0.231**	0.544
	Free State	6%	1%	5%	11%				
	North West	7%	3%	6%	3%				
	Northern Cape	2%	4%	2%	0%				
	Western Cape	20%	20%	18%	19%				
	Eastern Cape	6%	7%	9%	14%				
	Gauteng	39%	40%	38%	25%				
	Mpumalanga	5%	4%	6%	3%				
	Kwazulu-Natal	10%	10%	10%	11%				

Characteristics		Traditional idealist domestic tourists	Psychocentric domestic tourists	Apprehensive domestic tourists	Despondent domestic tourists	X²	Degrees of freedom	Φ-value	p-value
		N = 97	N = 124	N = 170	N = 36				
Usual travel companions	Alone	14%	19%	27%	33%	42.124	18	0.314***	0.001*
	Partner(s)	31%	22%	26%	8%				
	Family (Adults & children)	35%	33%	28%	19%				
	Children	3%	6%	4%	19%				
	Friends	8%	6%	2%	3%				
	Friends and family	7%	7%	11%	11%				
	Work colleagues	1%	6%	2%	6%				
Travel frequency in the past two years	None. I am yet to travel as a tourist (business or leisure)	15%	23%	49%	56%	64.532	6	0.392***	0.001*
	Once	24%	30%	29%	31%				
	More than once	61%	47%	22%	14%				
Most influential media channels	Television	14%	11%	16%	44%	39.734	18	0.305***	0.002*
	Print media (newspaper/magazine)	1%	1%	2%	6%				
	The internet	36%	29%	34%	17%				
	Social media (Facebook. Twitter. Instagram)	18%	28%	25%	19%				
	Previous visits (Websites)	9%	7%	5%	3%				
	Word-of-mouth (friends. family. work colleagues)	16%	15%	9%	11%				
	Travel/trade shows	5%	9%	8%	0%				
International travel intention	Yes	51%	48%	43%	39%	2.592	3	0.078**	0.459
	No	49%	52%	57%	61%				
Domestic travel intention	Yes	84%	82%	73%	31%	44.910	3	0.325***	0.001*
	No	16%	18%	27%	69%				

Characteristics		Traditional idealist domestic tourists	Psychocentric domestic tourists	Apprehensive domestic tourists	Despondent domestic tourists	X^2	Degrees of freedom	Φ-value	p-value
		N = 97	N = 124	N = 170	N = 36				
Willingness to spend on a trip for 7	< R10 000	29%	44%	56%	66%	35.026	15	0.289**	0.002*
	R11 000 – R20 000	37%	30%	24%	17%				
	R21 000 – R30 000	14%	13%	8%	11%				
	R31 000 – R40 000	14%	5%	8%	3%				
	R41 000 – R50 000	2%	4%	0%	0%				
	More than R51 000	4%	4%	4%	3%				

* 5% level of significance; φ-value: **small effect = 0.1; ***medium effect = 0.3 and ****large effect= 0.5.