

**THE PREDICTION OF RURAL TOURIST EXPERIENCE: INVESTIGATION AT THE
CULTURAL VILLAGE IN LESOTHO**

by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The development of different models of service quality motivated the need to use service quality to conduct studies in different industries, including the hotel and hospitality sector (Bahadur & Ali, 2023; Hussain *et al.*, 2023; Wong, & Chan, 2023). A relationship exists between service quality and tourists' experience, which has led to the ongoing debate that tourists' experience is the result of service excellence (Richins & Hull, 2016; Salim, Saeda & Abdelbaset, 2018). Lesotho is positioned as a potential destination with the ability to provide experiences to tourists; as such, recommendations have been made to design tourist experiences to create tourist value (NTMP, 2019). This motivated the need to conduct a study to investigate tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes against the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho. The main objective of the study was to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

The newly proposed theoretical framework for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience constructs was created to accomplish the objectives of this study by confirming the validity and reliability of each construct, which then informed the stated research objectives (RO1, RO2, RO3, RO4 and RO5). The relationships among tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable) were confirmed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and five steps in the structural equation modelling (SEM) process to achieve the research objective (RO6). Therefore, the new latent variables of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience were confirmed as the Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (structural model).

Main research question

Based on the proposed theoretical model for the rural tourist experience at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment), the following main research question was the motivation for the current study:

How are the scores on tourist safety related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes used to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village?

Literature review

A traditional literature review supported the need to develop a theoretical model for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience and to determine the relationships between these constructs at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho. The developed theorisation research objectives (TROs) (TRO1, TRO2, TRO3, TRO4, TRO5 and TRO6) were derived from an extensive review of the literature. Six hypotheses were formulated as guided by the TROs.

Research design

The research design for the study followed the positivism paradigm and quantitative research method, where in-person and self-administered online cross-sectional instruments of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience were used to collect primary data from the field. Statistical data analysis followed two phases: phase 1 included univariate data analysis, and phase 2 included bivariate and multivariate data analysis. A statistical study design was implemented with the intent of generating construct scores and confirming the measurement models of tourist safety (H_1), authenticity (H_2), brand personality (H_3), brand attributes (H_4) and tourist experience (H_5) through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and SEM. In addition, this study was exploratory in nature because it determined the relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes (independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (a dependent/endogenous variable). SEM was conducted on the identified variables (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience) to investigate the

goodness of fit indices for the development of the most parsimonious prediction model for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (H_6).

Research method

The study's questionnaire was developed through a review of the literature on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes and tourist experience to identify dimensions from which items were identified to be included in the questionnaire development. The study population comprised all guests who visited Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment) in the past. As not all guests could have visited Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, snowball nonprobability sampling was used to access convenient guests of this accommodation establishment. Respondents were invited to refer their counterparts who met the screening criteria to participate in the study to increase the sample size. Additionally, convenience sampling was used to select guests of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village who were present during in-person data collection. Ultimately, the study's sample size was 334.

Results and discussion

The IBM SPSS V28 was used to execute CFA to confirm the measurement models of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience. The AVE, Cronbach's alpha and ρ_A were used to confirm the validity and internal consistency and reliability of the following constructs: tourist safety (AVE = 0.40, α = 0.67, ρ_A = 0.70), authenticity (AVE = 0.40, α = 0.66, ρ_A = 0.70), brand personality (AVE = 0.50, α = 0.76, ρ_A = 0.83), brand attributes (AVE = 0.62, α = 0.90, ρ_A = 0.82) and tourist experience (AVE = 0.68, α = 0.86, ρ_A = 0.92) to test hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5 and their respective ROs (RO1, RO2, RO3, RO4 and RO5). The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to find the respective correlations between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as an independent/exogenous variable) and tourist experience (dependent/endogenous variable). SEM on the identified new latent variables (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience) produced goodness-of-fit indices where $\chi^2 = 2.38$, p -value > 0.001, RMSEA = 0.6, GFI = 0.92, which supported H_6 . The empirically manifested Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was confirmed.

Contributions of the study

The study's contribution was based on the theory, methodology and practice of the tourism and hospitality industry.

Theoretical contribution

The selected constructs, with selected dimensions and items, were assessed in unique relationships from the theoretical perspective through the TROs to make a unique contribution to the study.

Methodological contribution

This study makes a methodological contribution by developing and adapting new research instruments for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience for data collection in an accommodation establishment. The AVE, Cronbach's alpha and ρ_A were used to confirm the validity and reliability of the research instrument and to make methodological contributions, as these statistical tests have not been conducted on these newly developed constructs.

This study makes a methodological contribution by utilising CFA to confirm theoretically proposed constructs – tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience – in the measurement model. The unique combination of the new latent variables in the relationship to each other supported the development of the Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, as the most parsimonious model, using SEM.

Practical contribution

The study's findings contribute to Lesotho tourism practices by assisting executives and managers of accommodation establishments (such as the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC), Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC), Lesotho Travel Agency (LTA), Lesotho Council for Tourism (LCT), Lesotho Hotels and Hospitality Association (LHHA), and the Tour Operation Association of Lesotho (TOAL) in the following ways:

Holiday packages that comprise aspects of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes should be designed to ensure that tourists have satisfying experiences when they visit an accommodation establishment. The findings

will guide policy-makers in developing a policy on safety measures to protect tourists who visit Lesotho to maximise their holiday experiences.

Limitations

The data collection was limited only to guests of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village as the rural accommodation establishment. As a result, the findings cannot be generalised to other guests who visit other rural accommodation establishments, especially those that are not heritage related.

This study was limited to respondents who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past. These respondents were subjected to snowball and convenience (nonprobability) sampling approaches to achieve a sample of 334.

This study was conducted using a restricted budget, limiting the researcher from selecting a sample size to represent the population of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village to meet the study's stipulated completion timeframe.

Suggestions for future research

Future studies can adopt this study as a basis for investigating the brand image and identity of an accommodation establishment. This could inform product developers of relevant marketing and promotional activities needed to attract more visitors and gain a large market share and competitive advantage over competitors.

As indicated in section 6.4.2.1.2, local culture as a dimension of authenticity was not confirmed when the CFA was conducted. These results are consistent with those of Makwindi (2016), who found that local culture was not supported by findings when investigating the role of authenticity in Lesotho. Future studies can replicate this study in other countries to confirm whether local culture is a dimension of authenticity, as indicated by previous theoretical studies (Lonardi & Unterpertinger, 2022). This could be very interesting, as most people travel to other countries to experience cultures different from their own.

Conclusion

This study aimed to determine whether the scores on tourist safety were related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and to determine the relationships

among tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho. This was accomplished through the deployment of a quantitative research method where hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5 were achieved and supported. H_6 was supported by the data, as the theoretically hypothesised framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested model known as the Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity and brand personality (excluding brand attributes) to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

This dissertation was run through Turn-It-In to assess similarity and weigh its originality (see Appendix 25). The abstracts of two papers taken from this dissertation were submitted and presented at the International Conference on IACuDIT 2022 (see Appendix 26).

ABSTRACT

The development of various service quality models has been well researched, but they still need to be applied at a rural accommodation establishment in Lesotho is still lacking. Although there is consensus that service quality has a fundamental role in tourists' experience, there is a contentious debate that the tourist experience comes as a result of service experience. This has necessitated the adoption of SERVQUAL as an embedded theory to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The study adopted a quantitative research method to analyse the statistical data using IBM SPSS V29. This study used CFA as a statistical technique to confirm the constructs in the measurement model of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The results of the Pearson product moment correlation indicate the respective correlations between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as dependent/endogenous variables). The SEM results confirmed the performance of the rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (as a structural model). This study developed a practical Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 ($R^{rtepm1b}$) for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. More research is needed to investigate these measurement models in contemporary tourism and hospitality studies. A unique combination of items, under the new latent variables, contributes to the existing body of knowledge. The results of this study have various implications for Lesotho tourism practices by helping executives and managers of accommodation establishments in the design of authentic tourism experiences that are responsive to their brand personality and the safety of tourists.

Key terms

Tourist safety; Authenticity; Brand personality; Brand attributes; Tourist experience; Structural equation modelling

DIE VOORSPELLING VAN LANDELIKE TOERISTE-ERVARING: ONDERSOEK BY DIE KULTUURDORP IN LESOTHO

ABSTRAK

Die ontwikkeling van verskeie diensgehaltemodelle is goed nagevors, maar dit moet steeds by 'n landelike verblyfinstansie in Lesotho toegepas word. Alhoewel daar konsensus is dat diensgehalte 'n grondliggende rol in toeriste se ervaring speel, heers daar 'n omstrede debat dat die toeriste-ervaring voortspruit uit die dienservaring. Dit het die aanvaarding van SERVQUAL as 'n ingebedde teorie genoodsaak om te bepaal of die tellings vir toeristeveiligheid verband hou met outentisiteit, handelsmerkpersoonlikheid en handelsmerkkenmerke om die landelike toeriste-ervaring by die Thaba-Bosiu-kultuurdorp te voorspel. Die studie het 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetode gebruik om die statistiese data met behulp van IBM SPSS V29 te analiseer. Die studie het bevestigende data-analise as 'n statistiese tegniek gebruik om die konstrakte in die metingsmodel van die Thaba-Bosiu-kultuurdorp te bevestig. Die resultate van die Pearson-produkmomentkorrelasie dui op die onderskeie korrelasies tussen toeristeveiligheid, outentisiteit, handelsmerkpersoonlikheid en handelsmerkkenmerke (as onafhanklike/eksogene veranderlikes) en toeriste-ervaring (as afhanklike/endogene veranderlike). Die SEM-resultate bevestig die prestasie van die landelike toeriste-ervaringsvoorspellingsmodel by die Thaba-Bosiu-kultuurdorp (as 'n strukturele model). Die studie het 'n praktiese landelike toeriste-ervaringsvoorspellingsmodel 1 (Rrtepm1b) vir die Thaba-Bosiu-kultuurdorp ontwikkel. Meer navorsing is nodig om hierdie metingsmodelle in kontemporêre toerisme- en gasvryheidstudies te ondersoek. 'n Unieke kombinasie van items, onder die nuwe

latente veranderlikes, dra by tot die bestaande kennisinhoud. Die resultate van hierdie studie het verskeie implikasies vir Lesotho-toerismepraktyke deur uitvoerende beamptes en bestuurders van verblyfinstansies te help met die ontwerp van outentieke toerisme-ervarings wat reageer op hulle handelsmerkpersoonlikheid en die veiligheid van toeriste.

Sleutelsterme

toeriste-veiligheid; outentisiteit; handelsmerkpersoonlikheid;
handelsmerkkenmerke; toeriste-ervaring; strukturele
vergelykingsmodellering

**UKUQAGULA NGOKUPHATHEKA KWEZIVAKASHI ENDAWENI
YASEMAKHAYA: UPHENYO OLWENZIWE ENDAWENI YEZAMASIKO
ELESOTHO**

OKUCASHUNIWE

Sekuye kwenziwa ucwaningo olunzulu mayelana nezinhlobo ezahlukene zokuphuculwa kweqophelo lezinsiza, kodwa lokhu kusafanele kwenziwe nasendaweni yokuhlalisa izivakashi esemakhaya eLesotho. Nakuba kunokuvumelana ngokuthi iqophelo lempatho linendima ebalulekile ekuphathekeni kwezivakashi, kunenkulumompikiswano mayelana nemiphumela yokuphatheka kwezivakashi ngokwezinga eziphatheka ngalo. Lokhu kwenze kwaba nesidingo sokuthi kwamukelwe i-SERVQUAL njengetiyori enqala yokunquma ukuthi imiphumela yokuphepha kwezivakashi ihlobene yini nobuqiniso, ukuhlinzekwa okutholayo kanye nomthelela wokuhlinzekwayo ukuze kuqagulwe impatho yezivakashi endaweni yasemakhaya i-Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Lolu cwano lusebenzise indlela yocwaningo lwezilinganiso ukuze kuhlaziye imininingwane yezibalo ngohlelo lwe-IBM SPSS V29. Lolu cwano lusebenzise i-CFA njengohlelo lwezibalo ukuze kuqinisekise ukwakheka kohlelo lwezilinganiso zase-*Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village*. Imiphumela yokuhlotsaniswa komkhiqizo ngokwa-*Pearson* ikhombisa ukuhlobana phakathi kokuphepha kwezivakashi, ubuqiniso, ukuhlinzekwa okutholayo kanye nomthelela wokuhlinzekwayo (njengokuguquguquka okuzimele/okungaphandle) nokuphatheka kwezivakashi (njengokuguquguquka okuncikile/okungaphakathi). Imiphumela ye-*SEM* iqinisekisa ukuthi ukusebenza kohlelo lokuqagula ukuphatheka kwezivakashi endaweni yasemakhaya e-*Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village* (kungokohlelo lwezakhiwo). Lolu cwano luqhamuke ne-*Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R rtepm1b)* esebenzayo e-*Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village*. Lusaluningi ucwaningo olusadingeka ukuze kuphenywe lezi zinhlelo zezilinganiso ngaphansi kwezifundo zezokuvakasha nokwamukelwa kwezivakashi. Inhlangothi yezinto eziyivelakancane, ngaphansi kokuguquguquka okusha, inomthelela olwazini lwezinto olukhona. Imiphumela yalolu cwano inemithelela eyahlukene kwezokuvakasha eLesotho ngokuthi isiza abaphathi nezimenenja zendawo yokuhlalisa izivakashi bakwazi ukuphucula kahle iqophelo lokuphatheka kwezivakashi likwazi ukumelana nalokho okuhlinzekwayo kanjalo nokuphepha kwezivakashi.

Amagama amqoka

ukuphepha kwezivakashi; ubuqiniso; ukuhlinzekwa okutholayo; umthelela wokuhlinzekwayo; ukuphatheka kwezivakashi; uhlelo lwezibalo zezakhiwo

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index
AMOS	Analysis of Moment Structures
ATPS	African Technology Policy Studies
AU	African Union
BLLA	Boutique and Lifestyle Lodging Association
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CR	Critical Ratio
df	Degree of freedom
DMSs	Destination Marketing Organisations
DSF	Destination Safety Framework
ECC	Ethical Clearance Certificate
ERC	Ethics Review Committee
ERO	Empirical Research Objective
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Goodness-of-Fit Index
H	Hypotheses
HANYC	Hotel Association of New York City
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
IBM	International Business Machine Corporation
LCAR	Lesotho Country Analysis Report
LCT	Lesotho Council for Tourism
LETOFE	Lesotho Tourism Festival
LHHA	Lesotho Hotels and Hospitality Association
LNS	Lesotho National Strategies

LNTD	Lesotho National Tourism Development Plan
LTA	Lesotho Travel Agency
LTDC	Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation
M	Mean
MTEC	Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture
N	Population
<i>n</i>	Sample Size
NFI	Normed Fit Index
NHA	National Health Act
NNFI	Non-Normed Fit Index
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
NTMP	Lesotho National Tourism Master Plan
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<i>p</i>	p-value (significance)
P2P	Peer-to-Peer accommodation
PRO	Primary Research Objective
PRQ	Primary Research Question
<i>r</i>	Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient
REC	Research Ethics Policy
RFI	Relative fit index
rho	Spearman
rho_A	Composite reliability
RMR	Root Mean Square Residual
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
rpb	Point-biserial
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SD	Standard Deviation

SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SE	Standard Error
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRMR	Standardized Root Mean Residual
SRO	Secondary Research Objective
SRQ	Secondary Research Question
tau	Kendall
TBCV	Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village
TLI	Tucker-Lewis Index
TOAL	Tour Operation association of Lesotho
TRO	Theoretical Research Objectives
TTCI	Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNISA	University of South Africa
UNWR	United Nations World Report
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
URERC	Research Ethics Review Committee
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
USBLS	United States Bureau of Labour Standards
WEF	World Economic Forum
χ^2	Chi-Square
α	Cronbach Alpha Coefficient

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The development of different service quality models has sparked interest in investigating service quality in various sectors, for instance, at destinations (Boro, 2022; Shyju, Singh, Kokkranikal, Bharadwaj, Rai & Antony, 2023; Ying-Yen & Studio, 2022); aviation (Hapsari, Clemes & Dean, 2016; Lippitt, Itani, O'Connell, Warnock-Smith & Efthymiou, 2023); the hotel and hospitality industry (Bahadur & Ali, 2023; Ali, Gardi, Othman, Ahmed, Ismael, Hamza, Aziz, Sabir, Sorguli & Anwar, 2021; Hussain, Li, Kanwel, Asif, Jameel & Hwang, 2023; Mutinda, 2020; Nyagadza, Mazuruse, Muposhi & Chigora, 2022; Wong, & Chan, 2023); financial institutions (Fida, Ahmed, Al-Balushi & Singh, 2020; Wang, Mohammad, Syed, Ismail, Chieh-Yu & Yi-Hui, 2023); media studies (Yum & Yoo, 2023); and health institutions (Endeshaw, 2021; Shie, Huang, Li, Lyu, Yang, Dai, Su & Wu, 2022). According to Nithila (2014) and Xie (2011), there is a universal consensus that service quality plays a significant role in tourists' experience and level of satisfaction. Xie (2011) further postulates that service quality is a crucial tourist pulling factor and a source of tourist satisfaction. According to the literature, there is a contentious debate that the tourist experience is the outcome of destination service excellence (going beyond tourist expectations) (Jones & Haven, 2005; Richins & Hull, 2016; Salim, Saeda & Abdelbaset, 2018). There is a need to investigate the safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes of tourists (Georgieva & Bankova, 2021; Mody & Hanks, 2020; Mpaki, 2021; Noonan, 2023; Rasethuntsa, 2021; Tlali & Musi, 2022; Umasuthan & Park, 2018), especially at an accommodation establishment in Lesotho. Therefore, the main objective of the current study is to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the rural tourist experience in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Tourist experience has been investigated for several reasons, among others, to improve tourism service quality (Ramseook-Munhurrun, Naidoo, Seebaluck & Pillai, 2018; Salim *et al.*, 2018), destination loyalty and image (Akroush, Jraisat, Kurdieh, AL-Faouri & Qatu, 2016), and destination branding (Pereira, Antónia & Ronaldo, 2012; Qu, Kim & Im, 2011). However, no single study was found to have investigated rural

tourist experiences at accommodation establishments in Lesotho. Therefore, the present study seeks to investigate the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho. The investigation of the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment through tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes may subsequently lead to the development of strong destination branding and resilient tourism recovery after COVID-19 and provide a baseline for future research on destination marketing strategies, destination loyalty and image.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

Lesotho developed *Tourism and Position and Communication Strategies* and the Lesotho tourism brand to improve marketing and visibility, gain a competitive advantage and make Lesotho a preferred destination of choice (Lesotho National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) II, 2018). Despite these efforts to support the development of the tourism industry in Lesotho, tourists are not satisfied with the quality of service offered by accommodation establishments, taxi and bus transport, retail shops and restaurants in Lesotho (Rasethuntsa, 2021). Additionally, the Lesotho tourism industry is confronted by the following challenges and problems:

“limited access to finance, insufficient infrastructure development and maintenance, poor inter-institutional coordination, limited tourism brand management and communication, lack of policy and regulatory frameworks, low quality standards and services, inability to aggregate sufficient land for tourism development, limited entrepreneurial skills, poor tourism product development, environmental degradation, and associated impacts of extreme climate events” (NSDP II, 2018:95).

The above-stated challenges are perceived to have a severe and concerning impact on the tourist experience of the Lesotho Tourism industry. Blazeska, Strezovski and Klimoska (2018) underlined the need for strategies and policies that could develop tourism infrastructure, sustain the number of visiting tourists, and reassure tourists of longer stays, increasing the interest in tourists visiting other attractions and increasing their expenditure. It is argued that to find the required strategies and policies for tourism development, the first attempt has to be acquiring insights into a clear rating of the particular destination in terms of the tourist experience. Hence, this motivated

the research to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the tourist experience in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

The following are the challenges related to safety that the Lesotho tourism industry faces.

1.2.1 Challenges relating to tourist safety

Several studies were conducted on tourist safety at tourist destinations (Poku & Boakye, 2019; Sarkodie, Acquah & Caroline, 2022; Souza, Kastenholz, Barbosa & Carvalho, 2019). The tourism and hospitality industry faces crisis events, epidemics and pandemics as risks that challenge and threaten tourist safety (Bassil Saleh & Anwar, 2019). This has led to a situation in which Poku and Boakye (2019) suggested the establishment of suitable security procedures and security standards formulated by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) Destination Safety Framework (DSF) of 1996. Nevertheless, scholars argue that to make security available for travellers is to first hunt their own opinions on such security issues; however, relatively little research has been conducted on security (Boakye, 2012). Leung, Yangmand and Dubin (2018) indicate that guests of accommodation establishments are more frightened of crime when it happens in their rooms. Georgieva and Bankova (2021) attest that the major risks related to safety at accommodation establishments are mainly crimes conducted against property and overall dangerous crimes deterring the protection of guests. Rahman, Gazi, Bhuiyan and Rahaman (2021) stated that strict safety measures negatively impact the development of the tourism industry, disrupting the economy and contributing to a high rate of unemployment.

In Southern Sub-Saharan Africa, Lesotho is a member that faces countless challenges, including health and hygiene and the sale of cultural and commercial tourism (World Economic Forum (WEF), 2019: VIII). In 2012, Lesotho held general elections that were declared free and fair; however, the political situation has been demonstrated to be challenging (Nseera, 2018). Lesotho faces problems of poor health and hygiene with a high rate of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections and homicide, which all should be addressed to absorb a large number of visitors across a myriad of markets (WEF, 2019). In January 2016, the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC)

launched a new Lesotho Tourism website and logo with different colours that portray security as one of the quality experiences visitors are promised to enjoy during their vacations in Lesotho (LTDC, 2016). There is a need to update LTDC documents and websites; therefore, this study aims to provide guidelines for LTDC to address safety concerns in the post pandemic era.

In contrast, according to the LTDC (2016), Basotho are advised to warmly welcome guests and refrain from throwing guests with stones. In Lesotho, tourists lodged their complaints about security, highlighting activities such as corruption, harassment, and robbery by local dwellers; all such issues have resulted in tourists having to cancel their holiday bookings, resulting in lower numbers of tourists arriving in the country (Maqutu, 2017), on several occasions. Guests' safety should be prioritised by all Basotho and be instilled in their minds to shield the Lesotho tourism brand as a secure and welcoming destination to increase the number of guests (LTDC, 2016), especially at accommodation establishments.

Most recent studies in the general tourism industry (Cordato, 2021; Rahman *et al.*, 2021; Raina, Nasir & Qazi, 2022; NINH, 2023; Yulia, Widiyanto, Pamastutiningtyas & Imron, 2022) and in accommodation establishments have investigated safety in the context of COVID-19 (Diaz-Pompa, Estevez-Matos, Santos-Assan & Lopez-Baster, 2023; Pillai, Haldorai, Seo & Kim, 2021; Rawal, Pal, Bagchi & Dani, 2020; Shin & Kang, 2020). Despite these contributions, no evidence was found in their studies on whether safety can predict the tourist experience. Based on these studies, the safety of tourists has not been investigated to ascertain whether safety can predict the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment. Therefore, the tourist experience will be investigated through safety, and recommendations will be made on safety measures to improve tourists' feelings of safety at accommodation establishments in Lesotho.

The following challenges relate to the authenticity confronting the Lesotho Tourism industry.

1.2.2 Challenges relating to authenticity

According to Mankind (2016:v), Lesotho tourism is not real even though its motto recites, “Real People, Real Mountains and Real Culture”, and at Lesotho cultural attractions, “there is an apparent research deficiency like tourism experience”.

According to Mankind (2016:128), Thaba-Bosiu visitors raised many complaints due to a shortage of “cultural, food, attire and performances”. Therefore, studies conducted in different geographical areas by scholars (Kuizinaite & Radzevicius, 2020; Noonan, 2023; Yang & Wall, 2009) have motivated the need to put effort into developing high-quality cultural products as tools to attract local and international tourists. It is still unclear how traditional accommodation establishments provide authentic experiences because of changing trends brought about by other options in the accommodation sector, such as Airbnb (Mody, Suess & Lehto, 2017). Manfreda, Presbury and Richardson (2019) explained that tourists are seeking authentic experiences as opposed to luxury based on products and services, creating a challenge in the way in which accommodation establishments respond to new guests' needs. Lee, Low and Low (2019) indicate that there is still a gap in previous research on authentic-seeking experience in accommodation establishments. Mody and Hanks (2020) recommended that future research create a measurement scale of authenticity in the hospitality and tourism industry and validate authenticity as a construct. Therefore, this study seeks to measure the tourist experience through authenticity, and recommendations are made based on tourists' feelings of authenticity at accommodation establishments in Lesotho.

The following are some of the challenges related to brand personality facing the tourism industry in Lesotho.

1.2.3 Challenges relating to brand personality

According to the LTDC (2016) and the Lesotho Country Analysis Report (LCAR) (2017), the tourism industry is overwhelmed by various problems, such as the scarcity of qualified employees and a lack of competitiveness. Local visitors and international visitors indicated their dissatisfaction with the staff's inability to communicate in English as a common global language, less skilled chefs, a shortage of staff professionalism and customer care skills, and a lack of hygiene in the accommodation sector

(Rasethuntsa, 2021). For the industry to be competitive, LTDC (2016) and LCAR (2017) recommended that efforts and resources need to be focused on increasing industry training, especially on customer care and hospitality management. According to Fathy (2018), Rose (2016), and Umasuthan and Park (2018), inadequate education and training [hospitality training] of hotel staff results in inefficiencies and poor customer service, which in turn are assumed to negatively impact the brand personality of accommodation establishments in Lesotho.

Lesotho needs to improve its business environment to attract foreign investment, reduce red tape and invest in human capital (WEF, 2019). Given the aforementioned challenges, tourists consider destination attractiveness, which reflects destination safety and service quality (Ramukumba & Moeketsi, 2018). For this reason, this study seeks to investigate the tourist experience through brand personality and will make recommendations on how to improve the branding of accommodation establishments in Lesotho and increase the tourist experience.

The following are the challenges related to the brand attributes facing Lesotho tourism.

1.2.4 Challenges relating to brand attributes

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, Lesotho enjoyed a significant increase in visitor arrivals. Despite its promising development, Lesotho's tourism industry has not developed to its full potential in comparison with other African countries as well as other developed countries in the world at large (Tlali & Musi, 2022).

Lesotho has a variety of tourism assets that emerge as the country's capacity to attract a vast number of visitors across the globe. This would depend on its ability to plan the tourism industry, which in a real sense should be complemented by a comprehensive understanding of the market segments of the travellers visiting the country (Ramukumba & Moeketsi, 2018). Tourists complain about a shortage of food (attributes) during their visit to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (Makwindi, 2016). Local visitors rated the level of service from average to good, while international visitors rated it low, especially for food (attributes), compared to developed countries; visitors have indicated that Lesotho lacks local food (attributes) cuisine (Rasethuntsa, 2021). For that reason, this study seeks to investigate the tourist experience through

brand attributes and will make recommendations on how better brand attributes can be used to increase the tourist experience in Lesotho.

The section below presents wide-ranging challenges related to the tourist experience in Lesotho.

1.2.5 Challenges relating to the tourist experience

In Lesotho, the literature (Mpaki, 2021; Rasethuntsa, 2021; Saner, Yiu & Filadoro, 2015) stated that poor product development results from a lack of understanding of the tourism industry and a lack of hospitality and customer care. This is evident in both tourism and hospitality employees in Lesotho's tourism sector. For example:

- Employees consider visitors as burdens when they are supposed to serve them;
- There is a low level of tourism awareness among tourism staff and a lack of understanding of services that are supposed to create an enjoyable atmosphere for visitors.
- Tourism and hospitality staff lacks sensitivity in regard to leisure visitors' needs.
- Employees do not know terminology concerning what leisure visitors wish to do and the importance of such guests in Lesotho in terms of increasing revenue through foreign currency.
- Employees know nothing about their crucial role in promoting tourism (Mpaki, 2021; Rasethuntsa, 2021; Saner *et al.*, 2015).

These challenges are used to inform investigations related to safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to determine how they influence Lesotho's tourist experience from a service quality perspective. Without much attention, these challenges might persist for an indefinite period and further damage Lesotho's image as a tourist destination. In recognition of these devastating problems at the heart of Lesotho's tourism industry, there is a need to develop tourism products, increase the experiences of tourists and gain a competitive advantage (Nizette, Evans, O'Brien, & Johnson, 2019: 5). The Lesotho National Tourism Master Plan (NTMP) (2019: 37) highlights that in the marketplace, Lesotho is positioned as a potential destination that is capable of offering experiences and calls for a strategic approach to creating tourists' experiences to increase the value of tourism. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba

Bosiu Cultural Village) through tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes and will make recommendations for increasing tourist experience value.

Based on the challenges related to safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience, the selection of safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as constructs for the current study was motivated to improve the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

1.2.6 Contextualisation of the challenges

Based on the background of the problem, there is an urgent need to conduct a study to investigate the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village). To carry out this study, the researcher will use **tourist safety** (LTDC, 2016; Maqutu, 2017; WEF, 2019), **authenticity** (Yang & Wall, 2009; Makwindi, 2016; WEF, 2019), **brand personality** (Zhang & Enemark, 2015; Karanikola, 2015; Rose, 2016; LTDC, 2016) and **brand attributes** (Klenosky, 2002; Ramukumba & Moeketsi, 2018) to predict the **rural tourist experience** (Saner *et al.*, 2015; Nizette *et al.*, 2019:5) at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho, which is informed by the theory of service quality (SERQUAL).

When conducting research, it is important to consider both theoretical and empirical research gaps that are relevant to the study. Miles (2017) and Müller-Bloch and Kranz (2014) suggested that these gaps should be taken into account during the study design phase. In this particular study, five research constructs are used: tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes, and tourist experience. However, as these constructs did not directly align with the main objective of the study, five new constructs were developed based on the literature and confirmed for validity and reliability through empirical research. This approach is consistent with previous studies based on theory (Ferreira, 2014; Veldsman & Wort, 2013) and business tourism (Nthebe, 2016; Swart & Roodt, 2020), which also used empirical gaps to confirm the validity and reliability of the constructs. Furthermore, when designing a new scale, it is essential to ensure content validity, which can be evaluated empirically, as suggested by Hair *et al.*, (2018).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Against the background of this problem, the following theoretical model for the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) is formulated. Figure 1.1 illustrates the theoretical model for the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village), which stems from the development of a Tourism Experience Model as a result of these preceding investigations related to the services (Chen, Wang & Morrison, 2021; Gnoth, 2014), which is now refined to meet the outcomes of this current study.

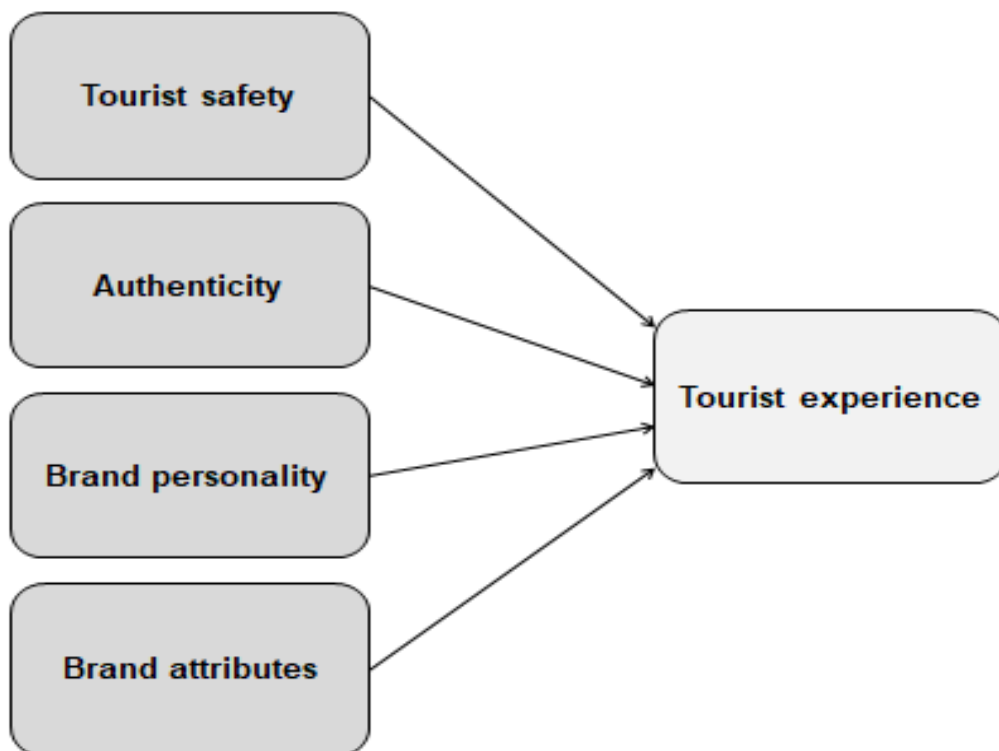


Figure 1.1 Theoretical model for the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

Source: Author's contribution

It is against the above-stated problem that the following primary and secondary research objectives are formulated.

1.4 PRIMARY RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

PRO: To determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the rural tourist experience in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

1.4.1 Secondary Research Objective

SRO1: Whether tourist safety can be validly and reliably measured.

SRO2: Whether authenticity can be validly and reliably measured.

SRO3: Whether brand personality can be validly and reliably measured.

SRO4: Whether brand attributes can be validly and reliably measured.

SRO5: Whether the tourist experience can be validly and reliably measured.

SRO6: Whether the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

To attain the abovementioned objectives, the following research questions have been formulated.

1.5 PRIMARY RESEARCH QUESTION:

PRQ: How are the scores on tourist safety related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes used to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village?

1.5.1 Secondary Research Questions

SRQ1a: Can tourist safety be reliably and validly measured?

SRQ2: Can authenticity be reliably and validly measured?

SRQ3: Can brand personality be reliably and validly measured?

SRQ4: Can the brand attributes be reliably and validly measured?

SRQ5: Can the tourist experience be reliably and validly measured?

SRQ6: Can the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework have a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village?

1.6 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

This section presents the motivation for the study formulated based on research gaps from the literature in an inductive approach by reviewing the literature on tourism research concerning safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes, and tourist experience.

1.6.1 Research motivation for tourist safety

The tourism industry has a significant impact on the country's general economy through its contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) (Rasool, Maqbool & Tarique, 2021). However, global risks and threats occur quite often, and as a result, tourists are very conscious of their safety when they travel to destinations (Popescu, 2011). International travellers are quite knowledgeable about tourist safety, and safety is one of the most common criteria used to choose a particular destination and accommodation establishment (Bronchado, Troilo & Shah, 2017; Mawby, Tecau, Constantin, Chitu & Tescasiu, 2016; Zou & Zheng, 2012, 2014). The importance of safety is highlighted in the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, which is the desire for safety and silencing the guns (Ayorekire, Mugizi & Obua, 2017). Safety and security have myriad benefits; for example, they provide quality in tourism (UNWTO, 2011) and travellers' satisfaction and experiences and the success story of the destination (Xie, Zhang & Morrison, 2020). Without any doubt, safety is a prerequisite for successful travel within the tourism industry (Kovari & Zimanyi, 2008; Wang, 2017). Realising the important role of safety in the sustainability of all businesses, tourism destinations should also consider safety to provide a safe environment for guests and to gain a competitive advantage (Niemisalo, 2014; Tarlow & Santana, 2002; UNWTO, 2011). In this era of unstable world relationships, the need for destination marketing organisations (DMOs) to prove that their destinations are safe for visitors is becoming progressively imperative (Hall, Timothy & Duval, 2003).

Chan and Lam (2013) indicate that safety is one of the significant aspects when customers choose an accommodation establishment. Rittichainuwat (2013) reported that tourists at accommodation establishments acknowledge safety measures; however, very strict safety measures also irritate them. The assurance of tourist safety at accommodation establishments is expressed in the form of a safe tourism certificate

where accommodation establishments are inspected monthly by institutions accredited by “TURKAK (Turkish Accreditation Agency), the International Accreditation Forum (IAF) and the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC)” and awarded a safe tourism certificate based on the satisfaction of ISO 17020 and ISO 17021 on food hygiene and safety and occupational health and safety (Yilmaz, 2021:2). Anichiti, Dragolea, Harsan and Haller (2021) recommended that future research be conducted post-COVID-19 recovery and that the resilience of the tourism market be assessed to show changes and the latest preference for safety and security in accommodation establishments. No study has investigated safety at an accommodation establishment in Lesotho, especially post pandemic. This motivates the current study to use safety to investigate the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho and address the challenges highlighted in section 1.2.1.

1.6.2 Research motivation for authenticity

Tourists' primary motive to travel is mainly to obtain authentic experiences through meaningful communication with residents of visited areas (MacCannell, 1976, as cited in Pearce 2012; Paulauskaite, Powell, Coca-Stefaniak & Morrison, 2017), resulting in real living conditions for people residing in visited geographic areas, also known as back-regions (Pearce, 2012). Furthermore, tourists travel due to curiosity to obtain authenticity in the form of the real being of other people; therefore, it has made significant contributions to understanding changes in customer behaviour (Carroll, 2015). Consequently, travellers regard authenticity as a fundamental aspect to consider when making travel decisions (Bernardi, 2019).

Nonetheless, in scientific research, there is a shortage of knowledge concerning the role of service providers in the traveller experience (Pan, Xu, Lu & Gursoy, 2018). The tourism and hospitality literature has not entirely investigated how heritage and traditional accommodation establishments enable authentic tourist experiences (Mody & Hanks, 2020). Elshaer, Azazz and Fayyad (2022) recommended further research not only to analyse authenticity and involvement but also to analyse other factors (for example, culture and social class) that stimulate the tourist experience at heritage accommodation establishments. This presents the current research with the golden opportunity to use authenticity to investigate the tourist experience at an

accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho and address the challenges highlighted in section 1.2.1.

1.6.3 Research motivation for brand personality

The importance of brand personality cannot be underestimated in all spheres of business sustainability. Brand personality nurtures a resilient and reliable brand of any type of organisation, consequently positioning the brand among competing rivalries (Glińska & Rudolf, 2019). Recent studies have investigated brand personality in accommodation establishments (Ismail, Zahari, Suhartanto, Kutut & Hadi, 2021; Kim, 2023; Li, Yen & Liu, 2020; Su & Reynolds, 2019). Nonetheless, no evidence was found on whether brand personality predicts tourist experience at accommodation establishments.

Further research on various kinds of tourism destinations to measure the brand personalities of all various kinds of tourism destinations is recommended. To fill this gap, some scientific studies have been undertaken on brand personality within the tourism fraternity (Kim, Malek, Kim & Kim, 2017: 16; Tong, Su & Xu, 2018). In these studies, there is no ground for whether brand personality can predict the tourist experience. Furthermore, Tong *et al.*, (2017) investigated brand trust and brand commitment as dimensions of brand personality, and scholars have recommended that further research be undertaken to determine the role of brand personality in other important aspects. Hence, this motivates the current study to use brand personality to investigate tourist experiences at accommodation establishments (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village).

Similarly, Kim *et al.*, (2017: 2) carried out a study to “delineate those criteria by analysing the interrelationships among destination personality, image, and intent to recommend while examining the effects of gender, age, cultural background, and prior tourist experience”. The scholars’ main objective was to identify the elements that form a destination image, and the study metric invariances only showed prior tourist experience in a moderating role. There is no evidence on whether brand personality directly affects the tourist experience. Hence, this motivates the current study to use brand personality to investigate the tourist experience at accommodation establishments (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and address the challenges highlighted in section 1.2.3.

1.6.4 Research motivation for brand attributes

The importance of brands in service businesses because of the undistinguishable characteristics of services to gain customer trust cannot be ignored; academics insist that the proliferation of competition among service providers and the nature of intangible qualities force businesses to build robust brands (Zafar, Niazi, Qazi & Basit, 2019). Accommodation is one of the attributes that influences travel decision-making when choosing a destination (Maricar & Glen, 2021). The attributes of accommodation choice impact the tourist experience, which also influences brand preference (Kim, Lee & Han, 2023). Kim, Hong, Park and Kim (2020) and Tomczyk, Buhalis, Fan and Williams (2022) highlighted the need to understand the different preferences of accommodation selection attributes. Jang, Liu, Kang and Yang (2018) indicate the need to assess accommodation attributes based on the specific accommodation category to ensure that accommodation managers obtain a comprehensive understanding of the attributes of their suitable category to satisfy customers. No study has investigated brand attributes in the context of accommodation establishments in Lesotho. In the current study, brand attributes are used to investigate the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village); hence, the analysis of destination attribute performance and the resolution of challenges are described in section 1.2.4.

1.6.5 Research motivation for tourist experience

In tourism research, the tourist experience has attracted the attention of many academics because it is highly important for satisfying the needs of tourists (Che, 2014; Larsen, Wolff, Doran & Øgaard, 2019; Ooi & Hardy, 2020). Tourism businesses depend solely on producing quality experiences as a strategic technique to meet the needs of travellers and ultimately gain a competitive position (Camilleri, 2018; Nyanga, Pansiri & Chatibura, 2019; Pencarelli, 2019). Experience and service quality are regarded as drivers of tourist satisfaction and an element of differentiation among the providers of accommodation establishments (Wong & Chan, 2023). Guests who visit accommodation establishments consider the provision of a quality service experience, comfortable accommodations, and friendly employees to be valuable for their money (Redzic, 2018). Designing and providing memorable tourist experiences is the primary objective of every business seeking to gain a competitive advantage; hence, there is

a need for tourist experience management among accommodation establishments, as they are customer-driven businesses (Rahimian, ShamiZanjani, Manian & Esfidani, 2021). Abdullah Ismail and Yusoff (2022) indicated that there is still an existing void in the research on tourist experience in the context of establishing accommodations. Therefore, the current study investigated the rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and addressed the challenges highlighted in section 1.2.5.

1.6.6 Summary of research motivation

Blazeska, Strezovski and Klimoska (2018) underlined the need for strategies and policies that could develop tourism infrastructure, sustain the number of visiting tourists, and reassure tourists of longer stays, increasing the interest in tourists visiting other attractions and increasing their expenditure. It is argued that to find the required strategies and policies for tourism development, the first attempt has to be acquiring insights into a clear rating of the particular accommodation establishment in terms of the tourist experience. Hence, this motivated the research to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

1.7 OUTLINE OF REMAINING CHAPTERS

This section presents a summary of the remaining chapters from chapter 2 to chapter 7 of the current study. Next is the short description of chapter 2.

1.7.1 Chapter 2: Literature review: rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment

Chapter 2 will introduce TROs based on ROs and the proposed theoretical framework, as stated in Chapter 1. The TROs will be followed by a review of the literature on the state of tourism and hospitality worldwide, in Africa, in Lesotho Tourism and in Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village as a case study. Then, the demographic characteristics of the respondents who visited Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in terms of age, gender, highest educational qualifications, occupation and number of visits are discussed. The reviewed literature on the proposed theoretical framework will be divided into five sections and their corresponding subsections, each based on the number of

constructs. The definitions and discussions of each construct will be presented to back the proposed theoretical framework. The hypotheses (H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, H₅) based on their respective ROs will be stated to conclude the discussion of the single construct.

1.7.2 Chapter 3: Literature review: development of the rural tourist experience prediction model

Chapter 3 will present the reviewed literature on the relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as dependent/endogenous variables). The reviewed literature on the relationships among the constructs focuses on the tourism industry and accommodation establishments. Finally, H₆ will be stated in the end-reviewed literature on the relationship between the constructs to conclude this chapter.

1.7.3 Chapter 4: Research design and methodology

Chapter 4 will discuss the appropriate research methods followed to carry out this study, guided by the proposed theoretical framework, as indicated in Figure 1.1 and Figure 4.7 (for statistical data analysis). The ROs, TRO and empirical hypotheses listed in chapters 1, 2 and 3, respectively, will be discussed to show the positivism paradigm and quantitative research design as the appropriate research techniques followed to undertake this current study to attain the following PRO:

To determine whether the safety scores are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

This chapter will discuss the research procedure used to obtain ethical approval, collect primary data using in-person and self-administered online questionnaires and conduct data analysis by deploying IBM SPSS V28 to achieve the above-stated PRO and confirm the measurement of the model of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience. Moreover, chapter 4 discusses the procedure followed to test the validity and reliability of measuring instruments of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience through the hypotheses (H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄ and H₅) and conducting CFA to confirm the ROs (RO1, RO2, RO3, RO4 and RO5). Chapter 4 will also discuss the procedure

followed to determine the correlation between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as dependent/endogenous variable) and conduct SEM (using five steps) to confirm tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience in the final structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 ($R^{rtepm1b}$).

1.7.4 Chapter 5: Research results

Chapter 5 will present the frequency of screening questions, followed by the frequency of demographic information such as age, gender, highest educational qualifications, occupation and number of visits of respondents who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Additionally, this chapter will present descriptive items for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience to indicate the mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis and normality graph scores. Moreover, an inferential statistical analysis based on the empirical research objectives and hypotheses guided by the proposed theoretical framework is demonstrated in Figure 1.1. Chapter 5 will present how the CFA supports the reliability and validity of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience with reference to the AVE, Cronbach's alpha and ρ_A .

Furthermore, chapter 5 will present the findings of empirical hypothesis 6 (H6) informed by RO6 from the test of the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient to indicate the relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as dependent/endogenous variables). Finally, the SEM results confirm the most parsimonious rural tourist experience prediction model 1 ($R^{rtepm1b}$).

1.7.5 Chapter 6: Results, discussion and interpretation

Chapter 6 will present the discussion and interpretation of the current study's results, and this will be divided into two phases. Phase 1 will present the results based on descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of respondents who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Phase 2 will discuss CFA based on empirical hypotheses (H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄ and H₅) as per their respective ROs (RO1 RO2, RO3, RO4, RO5) and confirmation of the measurement model of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience. Additionally, phase 2 will present

a discussion of the findings for validity and reliability for measuring instruments of tourist safety, authenticity (H₂), brand personality (H₃), brand attributes (H₄) and tourist experience (H₅) as latent variables. In addition, phase 2 will discuss the findings of empirical H₆ with the corresponding RO₆, as informed by the respective relationships between Tourist safety, Authenticity, Brand personality, Brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and Tourist experience (as dependent/endogenous variable) following the Pearson Product–Moment Correlation Coefficient tests. Chapter 6 will conclude with a discussion of the findings of rural tourist experience model 1 ($R^{rtepm1b}$) at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

1.7.6 Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

Chapter 7 will provide a short summary of each preceding chapter. This section will be followed by a discussion of the current study's theoretical, methodological and practical recommendations, contributions and possible recommendations. Furthermore, the chapter will discuss the study's suggestions for future research. This chapter will conclude with a discussion on the support for all the ROs (RO₁, RO₂, RO₃, RO₄, RO₆ and RO₆).

1.8 SYNTHESIS

Chapter 1 introduces this study by providing an introduction and background to the problem. These were followed by a discussion of challenges relating to tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience in accommodation establishments. In addition, chapter 1 discussed the contextualisation of the challenges and problem statement based on the theoretical model for rural tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho, as illustrated in Figure 1.1. This was followed by PRO and PRQs as indicated below:

To determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Then, PRO was followed by PRQ as stated below:

How are the scores on tourist safety related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes used to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village?

Moreover, chapter 1 discusses the motivation for conducting research on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (dependent/endogenous variable) at accommodation establishments. The discussion of the outline of the remaining chapters from chapter 1 to chapter 7 preceded the discussion of the synthesis concluding chapter 1.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry relies on the provision of quality experiences as a planned system to satisfy visitors' needs for competitive advantage (Camilleri, 2018; Constantin, Ispas & Candrea, 2022; Nyanga *et al.*, 2019; Pencarelli, 2019; Sotiriadis & Gursoy, 2016). Researchers have suggested that the tourist experience is bestowed as a multidimensional consumptive experience emanating from several inputs (Cohen, Prayag & Moital, 2014; Civre & Kolar, 2018; Hwang & Seo, 2016; Martins, Carvalho & Almeida, 2021; Seeler, 2018). In the NTMP (2019:37), it is indicated that Lesotho is placed in the market as a potential destination to provide experiences, and contrary to this, the plea is made to adopt a strategic method to generate tourist experiences to improve tourists' value. In this context, the present study seeks to investigate tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes to predict the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment.

The research objectives stipulated in chapter 1 will control the presentation of the literature review in this chapter. Figure 2.1 illustrates the proposed theoretical model with a synopsis of constructs (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience) measured in the context of accommodation establishments (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho. This chapter provides in-depth discussions on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable) for the development of a rural tourist experience prediction model.

This chapter commences with an outline of theoretical research objectives (TROs) followed by a discussion of an overview of tourism on a global scale. Tourism in Africa is contextualised, followed by a discussion of tourism in Lesotho. The latter is supported by a discussion of the composition of the Lesotho tourism industry incorporating the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, and the chapter concludes with a discussion of the selected market segmentation variables.

2.2 THEORETICAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following TROs were created based on two theoretical models, as shown in Figures 1 and 2. These TROs will be statistically tested in the context of the present study.

TRO1: Describe the tourist safety construct.

TRO2: Describe the authenticity construct and its theoretical dimension.

TRO3: Describe the brand personality construct and its theoretical dimensions.

TRO4: Describe the brand attributes construct and its theoretical dimension.

TRO5: Describe the tourist experience construct and its theoretical dimensions.

TRO6 will be discussed in chapter 3. Figure 2.2 presents the outline of the literature review chapter 2.

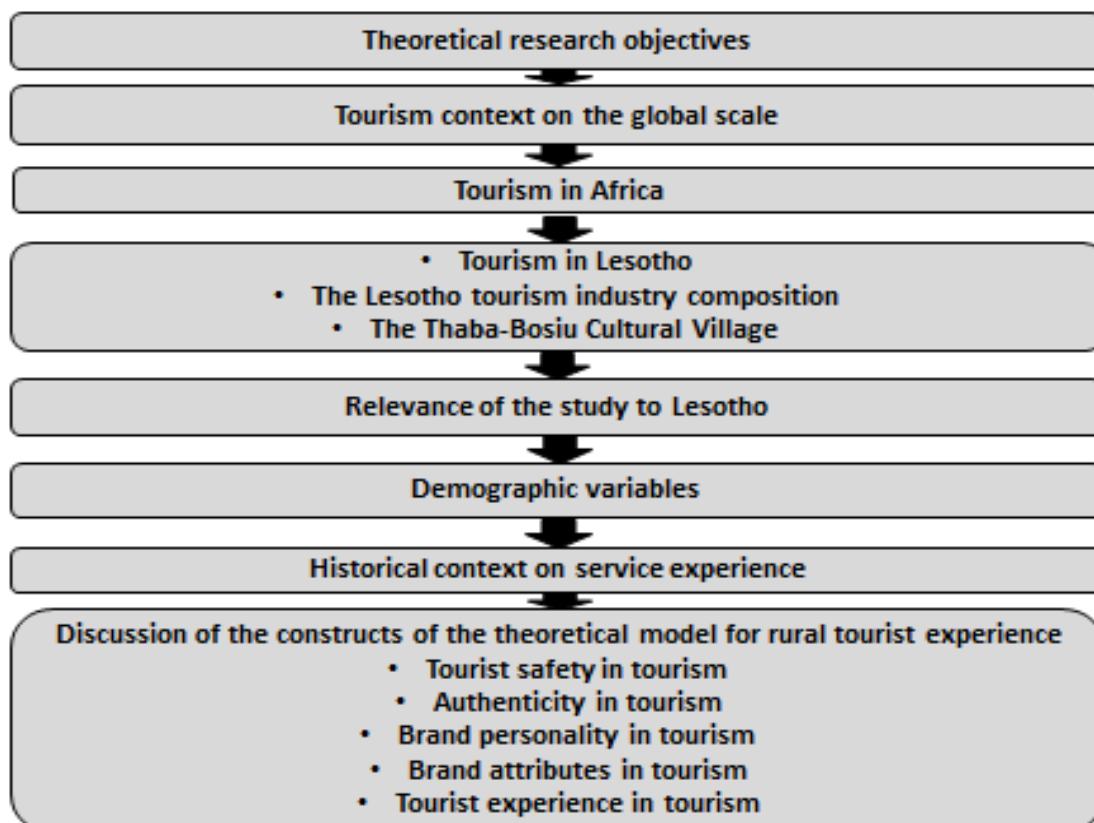


Figure 2.2: Outline of the literature review

Source: Author's contribution

Figure 2.2 shows how the literature review chapter is presented. Chapter 2 describes TROs guided by their respective ROs (see section 1.4.1) as the basis for the current study's theoretical framework. Through the discussions, tourism is contextualised on a global scale, supplemented with content related to tourism in Africa, tourism in Lesotho, the Lesotho tourism industry composition, and the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village as units of analysis. An overview of the relevance of the study to Lesotho is provided. The selected demographic variables of the respondents were used to characterise the respondents later in the study (chapter 5). The historical context of service experience was discussed as embedded theory to inform the current study's rural tourist experience framework. The remainder of Figure 2.2 provides an overview of how the literature informs the discussion of the constructs (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience).

The following is a literature review of the tourism context on a global scale.

2.3 TOURISM CONTEXT ON THE GLOBAL SCALE

The primary objective of tourism is to offer relaxation and entertainment (Sharma, Sharma & Kukreja, 2012). Before the COVID-19 outbreak, tourism was regarded as one of the most recognised and rapidly growing sectors in the world economy (Masa'deh, Nasseef, Sunna, Suliman & Albawab, 2017; Manzoor, Wei, Asif, Haq & Rehman, 2019; Mir, 2017). Until 2019, tourism was recognised as a catalyst for world economic growth (Di Giovine, 2009; Mir, 2017; Ntibanyurwa, 2006; Ohlan, 2017; Shakouri, Yazdi, Niloofar Nategian & Shikhrezaei, 2017; UNWTO, 2018) and was regarded as among the largest industries worldwide (Hole, Khedkar & Pawar, 2019; Holjevac, 2003). Therefore, for these diverse reasons, many countries, such as Jordan, Egypt, Israel, South Africa, Jamaica and Lebanon (Falade, Obalade & Dubey, 2014) opted to adopt tourism as the key generator of revenue and foreign exchange (Masa'deh *et al.*, 2017). Despite this development, the COVID-19 outbreak has not only disrupted the world economy but also drastically impacted the tourism industry, resulting in many countries experiencing a reduction in GDP (Foo, Chin, Tan & Phuah, 2020; Gopalakrishnan, Peters, Vanzetti, Hamilton, Do, Chakravarthy, Clarke, Mott, Nicita, Ok, Razo, Roethlisberger, Traeger & Hadjemian, 2020).

After COVID-19, international tourism has continued to recover at a promising rate. In the first quarter of 2023, international arrivals reached 80% of pre-COVID-19 levels,

which is 20% lower than the pre pandemic figures. This recovery is particularly boosted by strong results from Europe and the Middle East. In the first quarter of 2023, international tourism grew by 86% compared to that in 2022, which shows ongoing strength (UNWTO, 2023a, 2023b). In the first three months of 2023, the forecasted number of 235 million tourists travelling around the globe is double the number of tourists travelling in the same period in 2022. This significant recovery rate is in line with the estimate of the UNWTO, which projected international arrival to recover between 80% and 95% of pre-COVID-19 levels by the end of 2023 (UNWTO, 2023b).

The following is a literature review on tourism in Africa.

2.4 TOURISM IN AFRICA

Through their respective governments, countries within the African continent were incorporating tourism into their national strategic planning and embracing it as the main pillar for economic development (Saner *et al.* 2015). This was not until the outbreak of COVID-19. Before the pandemic, tourism in Africa was the most promising industry for economic development. In 2014, the number of tourists arriving in Africa increased from 26 million in 2000 to 56 million, representing a significant increase of USD36 billion, which is 7% of the entire continent's exports (UNWTO, 2019). Before COVID-19, Africa was considered an alternative continent to counter over-tourism; now, it is considered an alternative destination in a post-COVID-19 scenario based on natural resources, fresh air, and less congestion. In the first three months of 2023, Africa recovered 88% of pre-COVID-19 tourists' arrivals compared to 85% of American tourists' arrivals (UNWTO, 2023b). With the promising recovery of the tourism industry in Africa, this study provides valuable insights to African governments and destination marketing organisations (DMOs) through the investigation of whether scores on *tourist safety* are related to *authenticity*, *brand personality*, and *brand attributes* to predict the *tourist experience* at an accommodation establishment (such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village).

Before the pandemic, tourist purchasing power in terms of tourist spending in tourism-related activities on the African continent was estimated to be \$261.77 billion in 2030, an increase of \$137.87 billion compared with the 2015 numbers (Signe & Johnson, 2018). Tourism was then identified as having massive potential to spearhead growth throughout the implementation and attainment of sustainable development goals

(SDGs) (UNWTO, 2018). Tourism was also seen as a stepping stone to attaining the Africa Agenda 2030 SDGs, namely, “Inclusive and sustainable growth”, which requires that people and participants from a myriad of academic disciplines (government and nongovernmental organisations) cooperate and work collectively (Abdulai, Kagumire & Geoghegan, 2017). Determining whether the scores on *tourist safety* are related to *authenticity*, *brand personality*, and *brand attributes* to predict *tourist experience* at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village will provide a baseline for inclusive and sustainable growth through the tourism industry, especially for developing and rural destinations in Africa.

The following is a literature review on tourism in Lesotho.

2.5 TOURISM IN LESOTHO

Lesotho is a small mountainous country found in the Southern African continent (Saner *et al.*, 2015). Because of this unique feature, Lesotho was named “The Mountain Kingdom”. According to the literature (African Technology Policy Studies (ATPS) 2013: 9; LCAR, 2017:20; United Nations World Report (UNWR), 2002: 2),

“Lesotho is a tiny independent nation, surrounded by the Republic of South Africa, whose mountainous terrain has given it the nickname The Kingdom in the Sky”.

Formerly known as a British colony and therefore called Basutoland, Lesotho was renamed upon gaining independence in 1966 (UNWR, 2002). Upon gaining her independence in 1966, the Government of Lesotho started promoting the tourism industry, as part of the national strategic plans, by introducing policies and strategies to catalyse the country’s economy. This has led to the formation of two important statutory bodies called the Lesotho National Tourism Development Plan (LNTD) in 1994 and the LTDC in 2002 in an attempt to further develop tourism national strategic planning (Mashayekhi, 2013). It is therefore evident that Lesotho has recognised the tourism industry as a potential and powerful pillar for economic growth.

According to pre-pandemic data from the WEF report on Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index (TTCI, 2019) general rankings, the Sub-Saharan African top-performing countries in regard to the tourism industry were Mauritius, which ranks 54th, followed by the Republic of South Africa (RSA), which ranks 61st, while Lesotho ranks

124th (Schwab, Menon, Wolff, Calderwood, Soshkin, Fisher & Weinberg, 2019). According to scholars (Schwab *et al.*, 2019: viii),

“Lesotho (128th to 124th) had the greatest growth in score since 2017; however, it was the average growth in the economies of Western Africa that generated the most subregional improvement”.

Tourism appears on the top list of Lesotho National Strategies (LNS), which has seen it being promoted as the backbone for economic growth and country development. Tourism contributes substantially to GDP and accelerates employment opportunities (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 2013).

Before 2019, Lesotho recorded international arrivals of 1 172 648; this number was higher than the projected international arrivals ranging from 422 000 to 800 000 and showed an increase of 3.1% (Lesotho Review, 2020). In 2018, the tourism industry contributed 5.1% of Lesotho’s GDP. Additionally, it has positively increased the country’s national economy to 15.6% (M5, 941.4 million), equivalent to USD 446.8 million (WTTC, 2019). However, due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Lesotho’s real gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated to contract by 0.6% in 2021 (World Bank, 2020). Although the previous performance of the tourism industry has been quite weaker than expected, there are promising indicators that Lesotho is regarded as a unique tourism destination. Out of 58 million of Africa’s annual visitors who initially came through the RSA, Lesotho received only 2% of visitors (Majoro, 2018). In addition to the reporting of the impact of tourism on Lesotho, tourism data on Lesotho are limited and can be further informed by conducting studies on the tourist experiences at a Lesotho tourism product, such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.5.1 The Lesotho tourism industry composition

In a broader sense, the Lesotho tourism industry incorporates “...Ecotourism, adventure tourism, health tourism, and cultural heritage; Business travel; Leisure (including holidays to non-traditional destinations) ...” (Mashayekhi, 2013: 48). Additionally, the WEF (2019) submits that environmental sustainability and attractive natural assets (e.g., protected areas) are also part of Lesotho tourism products. For this proposed study, the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment)

under the category of cultural heritage will be investigated as outlined in the primary research objective.

2.5.2 The Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village

The Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offers accommodation chalets roofed with thatch that showcase traditional housing for the Basotho nation. As its name suggests, Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offers an array of historic and cultural attractions, making it an authentic Basotho nation cultural flagship, which provides sufficient support to investigate the tourist experience in Lesotho. Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village is a privately managed tourism destination that is located closer to the Thaba-Bosiu village tourist information centre (in Motloang, Lesotho) and is regarded as the counterpart to the national monument. Originally, Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was intended to display a rich cultural life comprising lodging, performing, paintings, artistries, and home-grown flowers. Tourists can taste the authenticity of local culture and the Sesotho lifestyle by engaging with indigenous people, traditional doctors and traditional beer. In addition, Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village has a museum and informational centre where the early Basotho generation and their Stone Age cave houses and the influx of colonial militaries are displayed. Apart from being a historical monument, the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village provides tourists with 41 chalets for accommodation, a conference facility that accommodates 250 visitors, a live music amphitheatre and ritual slots, and the village is also used as a venue for different yearly events, such as the Lesotho Tourism Festival (LETOFE) (Lesotho Review, 2019).

2.5.3 Relevance of this study to Lesotho

The Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village is based in a rural area of Lesotho; therefore, this study will focus on the development of a “rural tourist experience prediction model.

As alluded to in section 2.5, tourism had an estimated decline of approximately 80% in 2020, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2020) in Lesotho. Despite efforts to stimulate domestic tourism in the country (OECD, 2020), Lesotho has been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Measures have been put in place to promote sustainable tourism recovery through digital transformation and the adoption of greener tourism practices for the future of tourism; these measures are reconsidered as intended by the application of the SDGs (OECD,

2020). Aligned with the Lesotho tourism recovery plan, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the experiences tourists seek when visiting Lesotho, especially at accommodation establishments (such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village). With a tourism recovery plan that ensures that tourism businesses remain resilient with excellent product offerings and complemented by tourist experience, the Lesotho tourism industry is more likely to survive; this is further informed by the outcomes of this study.

Next is a discussion of the market segmentation variables to support the characteristics of the sample to be determined in chapter 5.

2.6 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Demographic factors are referred to as descriptive segmentation techniques of socio-demographic variables used to show a description of respondents' segmentation (Mazilu & Mitroi, 2010). Greenberg (2004) describes demographic factors as differences between people in terms of age, gender, birth and so forth. Demographic characteristics are important because they inform researchers about the profile of the people who participate in studies and determine tourists' motivation to travel and their behaviour in visited destinations (Aziz, Hussin, Nezakati, Yusof & Hashim, 2018; Wambani, Ogunjinmi & Oladeji, 2020). Chang, Yen-Chen and Pan (2022) argued that demographic variables are important for understanding the various characteristics of tourists, which is why variables are used in different studies conducted in different locations to indicate whether their levels of influence differ from one geographic location to another.

Today, guests have different expectations and demands; they have become selective when choosing accommodation establishments, and these changes have brought about steady intensive competition between businesses offering accommodations (Naletova, 2017). This competition fosters the reimagining of the significance of customer loyalty, better customer knowledge management, adjusting offerings and improving service quality to meet customer preferences and gain competitive advantage (Uca, Altintas, Tuzunkan & Toanoglou, 2017). This calls for accommodation managers to consider the analysis of tourists' characteristics and the impact of demographic variables on their day-to-day accommodations to effectively

satisfy tourists' needs, formulate marketing strategies and gain a large market share (Gretzel, Sigala & Christou, 2012).

There is evidence of empirical research in hospitality and tourism where *age* (Andoh, Bosiakoh & Afranie, 2012; Bergantino & Catalano, 2016; Khan, Khan, Khan, Nawaz & Yar, 2013; Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016; Seguy, Courgeau, Caussin & Buchet, 2019; Talon-Ballester, González-Serrano, Soguero-Ruiz, Muñoz-Romero & Rojo-Alvarez, 2018; Twumasi *et al.*, 2022; Wijaya, Wahyudi, Kusuma & Sugianto, 2018; Wong, Kim, Kim & Han, 2021), *gender* (Amir, Osman, Bachok & Ibrahim, 2017; Bergantino & Catalano, 2016; Collin & Tisdell, 2002; Kara & Mkwizu, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2013; Lindqvist, Senden & Renstrom, 2021; World Health Organization, 2010; Magliozzi, Saperstein & Westbrook, 2016; Wijaya *et al.*, 2018), *qualifications/education* (Amegayibor, 2021; Bor, Kieti & Rotich, 2018; Uca *et al.*, 2017; Ya'acob, Mohd-Awal, Idris, Hassan, Kaur & Mohd-Noor, 2011), *occupation* (Abdullah & Hamdan, 2012; Fujishiro, Xu & Gong, 2010; Lasonen, 2010; Uca *et al.*, 2017) and *visit times* (Leh, Mokhtar & Rambeli, 2020; Oppermann, 1997) have been used as demographic variables to indicate the profile of respondents. These demographic variables are considered accurate in explaining the tourism market and estimating behaviour and travel patterns (Che *et al.*, 2021; Weaver & Oppermann, 2000). These variables influence tourists' decision to select accommodation establishments (Uca *et al.*, 2017; Saha, Dey & Bhattacharyya, 2010). For this study, age, gender, education, occupation and number of visits are included as variables to show the demographic characteristics of guests at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.6.1 Age

Age influences demographic behaviour (Seguy *et al.*, 2019). Age is observed differently by different people, and for some people, old age is regarded as a richness of experience and knowledge. Andoh, Bosiakoh and Afranie (2012) and Khan *et al.*, (2013) refer to age as the period between a person's date of birth and any time lived thereafter. For this study, age refers to the period of birth of guests visiting the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment).

Age is considered the fundamental aspect of understanding the behaviour of tourists when they visit a specific destination (Patuelli & Nijkamp, 2016). Age provides important destination executives with tourist travel information, which is important in

strategy formulation and implementation (Bergantino & Catalano, 2016). Wijaya *et al.*, (2018) found that age is one of the factors that help in understanding inbound tourists' experience regarding accommodation establishment and ancillary services. Tourists weigh their age against the kind of accommodation available (Twumasi *et al.*, 2022). When selecting accommodation establishments, business tourists consider age because differences in individual age have a significant impact on the tourist experience (Wong *et al.*, 2021). Vigolo (2017) stated that senior tourists who stay at hotels, with relatives and friends, in second homes and in tourist apartments are the preferred type of accommodation. Alen Nicolau, Losada and Domínguez (2014) state that travellers over the age of 65 and 46% of people aged 55 and 64 years prefer to stay with their friends and relatives' homes. Talon-Ballesterro *et al.* (2018) indicated that age is pertinent for the services of accommodation establishments and that it should be given priority to enhance tourists' satisfaction. Therefore, the age of visitors to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village will be investigated.

2.6.2 Gender

Lindqvist, Senden and Renstrom (2021) refer to gender as the state of self-defined identity, and for some people, gender identity remains the same for their entire lifespan, while for others, it changes periodically given daily circumstances. The literature indicates that male and female biological categorisations are referred to as sex rather than gender (World Health Organization, 2010). Khan *et al.*, (2013) added that sex refers to being male or female based on sociocultural differences as opposed to biological differences. People use different options to self-identify their gender, which makes it impossible to include all possible items addressing gender options in research (Magliozzi *et al.*, 2016). For this study, gender refers to the biological characteristics that differentiate guests in terms of males and females who are visiting on the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Again, for this study, gender refers to people who identify themselves as neither male nor female but rather as nonbinary.

Gender is considered one of the aspects stimulating travel demand (Collin & Tisdell, 2002). Men and women have different travel patterns; thus, male tourists choose to travel for business and sports because of their vested interests in the agenda of such domains, while female tourists travel for visiting their relatives, holidays and education purposes (Kara & Mkwizu, 2020). Collin and Tisdell (2002) found that men travel more

than women. Amir, Osman, Bachok and Ibrahim (2017) found no necessary gender difference between male and female guests when assessing expenditure behaviour. Bergantino and Catalano (2016) found that gender gives destination managers important travel information for inbound tourists that helps in formulating and implementing strategies. This is supported by Wijaya *et al.* (2018), who found that gender is one of the aspects used to assess and understand the experience of inbound tourists, especially for accommodation establishment and ancillary services, which further motivated the investigation of this demographic variable in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.6.3 Highest educational qualifications

Education imposes a change on a person's lifestyle, as it sharpens the person's ability to make the best choice, given a multitude of situations (Amegayibor, 2021). In simpler terms, education helps one adjust to any changes in different conditions. Ya'acob *et al.*, (2011) contended that education is deeper than the financial investment concept because it is an important effort for human life, development and persistence. For this study, education refers to the highest educational qualifications held by guests at the Thaba-Bosia Cultural Village.

Education significantly affects tourists' consumer decision-making when selecting accommodation establishments (Uca *et al.*, 2017). The choice of hotel depends on the level of education, which is used to assess service quality and delivery as factors considered in deciding where to stay (Bor, Kieti & Rotich, 2018), thus suggesting that education allows travellers to analyse service and cost against the experience value of accommodation establishment, which motivates this investigation at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.6.4 Occupation

In the literature, occupational status, occupational prestige and professional status are used interchangeably to refer to occupation (Lasonen, 2010). Occupation is a rank used to divide employment based on the degree of skill set and area of specialisation in the context of a specific profession or socioeconomic position (Fujishiro *et al.*, 2010). For this study, occupation refers to the status or position attached to guests at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Occupation substantially influences the consumer decision-making of tourists when choosing accommodation establishments (Uca *et al.*, 2017). Employment status determines time and money as two factors that influence the decision to choose a hotel and the period of stay during a holiday (Mody and Hanks 2018), which will be further investigated in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.6.5 Times Visited at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village

The times visited can be better understood from the contexts of first-time tourists and repeat (revisit) tourists. Oppermann (1997) refers to first-time tourists as travellers who visit an establishment for the first time. Leh, Mokhtar, and Rambeli (2020) refer to repeat (revisit) visits as tourists who visit a particular place for the second time or more. For this study, the number of visits refers to the number of times tourists visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Demographic characteristics have an important role not only in influencing a tourist's arrival at a destination but also in the arrival of the first time and the intention to revisit the destination in the future (Leh *et al.*, 2020). Oppermann (1997) compared first-time and repeat tourists and found that first-time guests spend much more money and that their holiday is much shorter than that of repeat guests at a destination. This may also apply to accommodation establishments, which are further investigated at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

The next section describes the contextualisation of safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as a proposed theoretical framework under investigation.

2.7 HISTORICAL CONTEXT ON SERVICE EXPERIENCE

Since the late 1970s, many scientific studies have been conducted to investigate service quality at destinations (Boro, 2022; Shyju *et al.*, 2022), aviation (Hapsari *et al.*, 2016; Lippitt *et al.*, 2023), the hotel and hospitality sector (Bahadur & Ali, 2023; Ali *et al.*, 2021; Hussain *et al.*, 2023; Mutinda, 2020; Nyagadza *et al.*, 2022; Wong & Chan, 2023), financial institutions (Fida *et al.*, 2020; Wang *et al.*, 2023), media studies (Yum & Yoo, 2023) and health institutions (Endeshaw, 2021; Shie *et al.*, 2022).

Many studies (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, 1994; Grönroos, 1984, 1988; Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985, 1988, 1991, 1994) have developed and tested different models to measure service quality. However, the main focus of the SERVPERF model was on the actual performance of the service and did not consider tourists' expectations. Following the SERVPERF model, many different models were created to measure service quality in the tourism industry; these models include LODGSERV (Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert, Patton & Yokoyama, 1990), LOGQUAL (Getty & Thompson, 1994), HOTELQUAL (Falces, Sierra, Becerra & Briñol, 1999) and SQSC (Swart, 2013). The rural tourist experience model at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village stems from the development of a Tourism Experience Model as a result of these preceding investigations related to services (Chen, Wang & Morrison, 2021; Gnoth, 2014), which is now refined to meet the outcomes of this current study.

2.8 DISCUSSION OF THE CONSTRUCTS OF THE THEORETICAL MODEL FOR RURAL TOURIST EXPERIENCE

This study investigates safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience with a unique combination of dimensions at an accommodation establishment in Lesotho. The investigations of these constructs were not found as far as research could determine from the theoretical or practical perspective before. This section reviews the literature on constructs and their respective dimensions in the context of the tourism industry and accommodation establishments.

The next section reviews the literature on the tourist safety construct.

2.8.1 Tourist safety in tourism

Keating (2018) described safety as a situation in which one feels free from either harm or risk. Amundrud, Aven and Flage (2017) stated that safety is the threat of possible unplanned incidence. Meng (2019) posited that safety is described as guests' safety and the safety of their belongings. Khan, Hassan, Fahad and Naushad (2020) indicated that safety is a complicated phenomenon that has consistently been identified as a threat to the success of the tourism industry globally. The literature underlines crimes such as house break-ins and gun pointing as factors threatening tourists' safety and increasing panic about visiting a certain destination (Government

of the United Kingdom, 2022; Smartraveller, 2021; Varna University of Management, 2021).

Authors (McGee, 2017; Popescu, 2011; & Zou, 2022) highlight that modern tourists are more knowledgeable about aspects of safety, which means that tourists' need for safety has constantly increased; hence, there is a need to improve tourists' safety to guarantee safe holidays. Scholars indicate that safety is one of the crucial aspects considered during the selection of a specific country for a holiday over the other (Mastroianni, 2013; Starmer-Smith, 2008; Tegar & Gurning, 2018).

Scholars (Said & Maryono, 2018; Orden-Mejía, Carvache-Franco, Huertas, Carvache-Franco, Landeta-Bejarano & Carvache-Franco, 2022; Yousaf, Amin & Santos, 2018) have indicated that tourists search for relaxation and comfort, and most importantly, they seek safety. Hence, Mohamad, Jaafar and Ismail (2020) and Zou and Yu (2022) identify safety as one of the aspects of holiday quality assurance that needs to be prioritised as a tourist destination objective, and failure to do so may lead to negative reviews by tourists. For this study, as stated earlier (see section 1.6.1), safety refers to tourists' perceived freedom from (i) the risk of lack of medical assistance and (ii) exposure to any harm or crime at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

In the study conducted by Lisowska (2017) on crime in tourism destinations, tourists' safety is identified as a less investigated terminology and hence inadequate. To fill this gap, Chili (2018) conducted a study to determine the impact of safety and security on tourists' behaviour and tourism demand. In addition, Linda and Nzama (2020) conducted research to determine whether methods have been established to control crime and improve tourist safety. Without discrediting the contributions of these studies, evidence is not available on whether safety can be an antecedent of the tourist experience. This motivates the current study to use *tourist safety* to investigate the tourist experience for accommodation establishments in Lesotho.

2.8.1.1 Tourist safety at the accommodation establishment

Safety in the context of hotels refers to measures intended to lower crime activities, acts of terrorism attacks, natural disasters and man-made threats and significantly contributes to higher profit margins and the national economy (Chauhan, Shukla & Negi, 2018; Matakovic & Matakovic, 2019). Jones, Walker and Jefferis (2019) and

Kannan (2013) indicate that hotels well known to be of high prestige are mostly targeted for attack. Scholars have stated that safety is one of the major aspects with which tourists are concerned about and request information related to safety prior to booking and during their stay at hotels to guarantee the safety of their lives and that of their belongings (Anichiti, Dragolea, Tacu Hârsan, Haller & Butnaru, 2021; Binns & Kempt, 2021; Cebekhulu, 2016; Chauhan *et al.*, 2018).

In 1945, the Board of Directors of the Hotel Association of New York City (HANYC) was advised to formulate a safety department to mainly focus on preventing and cutting threats to safety in member hotels and increasing the positive experience of guests (United States Bureau of Labour Standards (USBLS), 1962). Gursoy, Sarıışık, Nunkoo and Bogan (2021) noted that Hyatt hotel employees have prioritised guests' safety by implementing new safety measures and standards to improve the hotel experience. Lashley (2017) and Schimanovich (2021) reported that tourists' feelings of safety are appreciated as a fundamental factor for women guests and that they become increasingly happy when their stay at a hotel is safe. Anichiti *et al.*, (2021) state that managers of accommodation establishments need to assess safety needs frequently to ensure that safety standards match guests' needs. Clifton (2019) claimed that the successful management of safety at accommodation establishments creates a positive experience and reduces potential threats that confront the hospitality sector.

In the study of safety and security methods in Egyptian hotels by Ghazi (2015), it is highlighted that there is an urgent need to study safety measures in developing countries. This is because safety has been investigated in developed countries, while there is relatively little written on safety in the least developing countries. Ghazi (2015) investigated safety and security measures in Egyptian hotels, but no study has used tourist safety to measure accommodation establishment experiences in Lesotho. This motivates the present study to use tourist safety to investigate the tourist experience at accommodation establishments (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

The presence of security personnel (Amir, Ismail & See, 2015; Wickens, 2002), feelings of safety (Amir *et al.*, 2015; UNWTO, 1996) and the presence of emergency medical services personnel (Skjeie *et al.*, 2008; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012) are three items used to investigate safety.

Against this literature, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Tourist safety can be reliably and validly measured.

Figure 2.3 shows the proposed tourist safety construct and exemplary items.

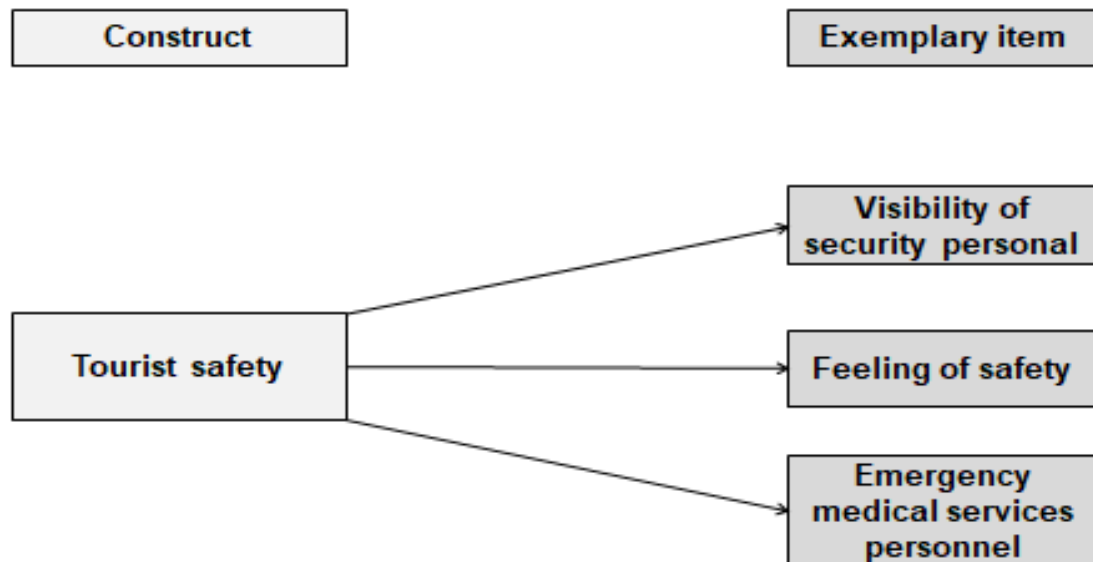


Figure 2.3: Proposed tourist safety construct and exemplary items

Source: Amir, Ismail and See (2015), Skjeie *et al.* (2008), UNWTO (1996), Rittichainuwat and Chakraborty (2012), and Wickens (2002).

Based on the discussions of the reviewed literature (see sections 2.7.1, 2.7.1.1) on tourist safety, it can then be decided that TRO1 was achieved.

The next section is a literature review on authenticity as an antecedent of the tourist experience and its dimensions: involvement in tourism and the establishment of accommodations.

2.8.2 Authenticity in tourism

Authenticity is defined as “experiencing one’s authentic self” (Cohen, 2010:5, as cited in Golomb, 1995). Ahlin (2018) and Rickly, Vidon and Jafari (2018) contend that authenticity is special, true and realistic because it cannot be reproduced. Gilmore (2007) revealed that authenticity refers to the quality of experience based on the needs of those who want it.

Wang (1999) discloses that in the tourism industry, authenticity emanates from existential philosophy and hence is presented as existential authenticity. Cohen (2010:7) defines existential authenticity as "... being in touch with one's inner self, knowing one's self, having a sense of one's own identity and then living in accord with one's sense of oneself". Kim, Chang and Huh (2011) and Wang (2000) define objective authenticity as the authenticity of archetypes. Elisa and Moulik (2019) and Xu, Le, Kwek and Wang (2022) posit that guests are not too conscious about the authenticity objective when they have significant and pleasant experiences, while certain guests prefer existential and postmodern authenticity, especially within tourist townships. Kim *et al.* (2011) define constructive authenticity as the authenticity imagined by tourists when visiting an object using their perceptions. For this study, as highlighted earlier (see section 1.6.2), authenticity refers to the availability of unique displays of Lesotho's original local cultural heritage at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Involvement is used to investigate authenticity.

According to Hu (2018) and Li (2023), diverse types of tourists prefer and select a variety of types of authenticity for diverse types of souvenirs. Chen, Fang, Chang and Kuo (2023) posit that for distracting tourists, regardless of whether they are authentic, their main motivation is to have fun, attractive and lovely experiences. According to Cohen (2010), the tourism literature includes three critical hypotheses: commodification, staged authenticity and tourists' failure to have authentic experiences. Boorstin (1961) contends that there is no known authenticity, as guests have only experienced imitations, simulations and fabrications. Reisinger (2009) indicated that it is debatable whether tourists experience authenticity while visiting countries abroad because tourists often experience pseudo experience. MacCannell (1973) showed that guests like to travel to heritage sites in visited areas because they believe such facilities possess authenticity.

Scholars (Clark, 2023; Nicolaidis, 2014, 2018; Singh & Nazki, 2019) assert that tourists overall search for authentic experiences and might go further than what Maslow called self-actualisation and learn a real feeling of being. Juul (2015) noted that many tourists use technology such as the internet, smartphones and tablets to organise or buy travel packages because they value green tourism services that are aligned with unique and authentic tourism experiences.

Local culture and involvement are two dimensions used to investigate authenticity. Authenticity is investigated through involvement. The following is the authenticity at the accommodation establishment.

2.8.2.1 Authenticity at the accommodation establishment

Cornelisse (2014) and Manfreda, Presbury and Richardson (2019) acknowledge that tourists are becoming more discerning and hedonistic, seeking luxury, not based on products and services but on authentic experiences, which impacts how the accommodation sector responds to new customer needs. Scholars have revealed that in the context of accommodation establishment, guests of heritage hotels have the opportunity to experience the history, tradition and culture of countries (Lee & Chhabra, 2015; Mendiratta, 2013; Timothy & Teye, 2009). At the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (the investigated accommodation establishment), there is an opportunity for guests to sleep in the chalets and to have an authentic Lesotho cultural experience (Lesotho Review, 2019).

Lamb (2011) and Nicolaidis (2014, 2018) indicate that one of the primary motives for people to travel overseas is to have an authentic experience, and in so doing, people envisage travelling overseas and living in different lodging, tasting distinctive cuisines and engaging actively in local activities to realise different cultures. Kumbukage and Gunawardana (2016) assert that boutique hotel guests seek authenticity and that their selection of accommodations stimulates the general authentic experience they have in the visited country. Scholars have shown that guests feel a greater degree of existential authenticity in the Airbnb experience than in the hotel experience and that, again, guests feel a greater degree of intrapersonal authenticity in the Airbnb experience than in the conventional hotel experience (Lamb, 2011; Mody & Hanks, 2020; Souza, Kastenholz, Barbosa & Carvalho, 2019). Scholars have shown that Airbnb is a type of accommodation that is becoming attractive and is regarded as an alternative, with the authenticity of the consumption experience being a serious differentiating factor (Lee, Low & Low, 2019; Mody & Hanks, 2020; Song & Feng, 2021). Angela and Tim (2017) noted that a vast number of tourists have been lodged in offshore buildings and islands because the Dubai desert environment provides a way for hotels and man-made attractions to widen the authentic tourist experience.

Lee and Chhabra (2015) show that heritage accommodation establishments possess the capacity to produce a sustainable tourism product in different ways, as they demonstrate a societal indigenous culture, identity and pride. Foster (2017) asserts that historic hotels can not only be attractions but also boost community development and serve as agents to communicate the history of the host society. Marti-Parreno, Gomez-Calvet and Prat (2020) reported that for a further complete model of guests' assessment of authentic experience to cogenerate and design accommodations, parallel studies should be carried out in other countries. Pongsermpol and Upala (2018:92) conducted their study in the context of heritage buildings used as accommodation establishments and recommended that future research use their study as a basis for investigating the changes and effects of refurbishment. As Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, as a heritage attraction, also offers accommodation, it can be interesting to conduct a study to measure the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment. As highlighted against the background of the problem (see section 1.6.2), inadequate scientific research has been conducted to assess the position of service providers towards the tourist experience. This motivates the current study to use authenticity to investigate the tourist experience for accommodation establishments (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

Local culture is a dimension used to investigate authenticity. The following is a discussion of the reviewed literature on local culture in tourism and accommodation establishments.

2.8.2.2 Local culture in tourism

Vilet (2011) referred to local culture as something studied and immersed at the early age of a child, protected by literature, history, faith, educators, and adults. Dingwall, Labrie, McLennon and Underwood (2018) and Miguel and Diana (2020) argued that local culture is described as the perception of people of how they understand, respond and assess the world and either verbal or nonverbal communication among people. Guleria (2019) and Said and Maryono (2018) indicated that culture is one of the attraction aspects that inspires people to travel to a specific destination. Kanagasapapathy (2017) and Tsai (2016) highlighted that local culture is considered an ingredient of memorable tourist experiences and that guests who connect to local culture create unique holiday experiences.

The literature indicates that culture generates authenticity and uniqueness within the tourism marketplace worldwide (Kempiak, Hollywood, Bolan & McMahon-Beattie, 2017; McNulty & Koff, 2014; OECD, 2020; Van Zyl, 2005); therefore, tourism experiences that link people and guests with local culture are increasingly crucial. According to this study, local culture suggests that tourists are exposed to the Basotho tradition in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.8.2.3 Local culture at the accommodation establishment

Local culture is described as dining in cuisine and traditional restaurants in a particular local area (Cinjarevic & Almir, 2014; Ivanova, Terziyska & Trifonova, 2014). Frumkin (2012) stated that in the context of a hotel, local culture can be demonstrated using local art on furniture to give it a local and unique flavour and experience.

Guttentag, Smith, Potwarka, and Havitz (2017) stipulated that from the perspective of the accommodation sector, guests gain happiness from the unique characteristics and natural atmosphere of the establishment, its personalised service and extraordinary interaction with host staff and the opportunity to obtain indigenous knowledge. At Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, visitors can experience local culture (see 2.5.1.1) in the form of historic and cultural attractions that make it an authentic Basotho nation's cultural flagship. However, no study has used local culture to investigate accommodation establishment experiences in Lesotho. This motivates the present study to use local culture to investigate the tourist experience at accommodation establishments in Lesotho.

Involvement is a dimension used to investigate authenticity. The following is a discussion of the reviewed literature on involvement in tourism and accommodation establishments.

2.8.2.4 Involvement in tourism

Involvement is a condition of inspiration, stimulation, or curiosity (Elrehail, Alzghoul, Alnajdawi & Ibrahim, 2020; Cheng, 2020). Scholars (Ayazlar & Arslan, 2017; Pathirana, 2020; Paulauskaite *et al.*, 2017) have argued that involvement is an exceptional and appropriate experience. Yu, Chang and Ramanpong (2019) emphasised that tourists often remember experiences that match their expectations; hence, involvement

increases during different vacation activities. For this study, involvement is defined as tourists' participation in recreational activities at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Involvement is a dimension used to investigate authenticity. The following are discussions of the reviewed literature on involvement in an accommodation establishment.

2.8.2.5 Involvement in the accommodation establishment

In the lodging industry, Cevik and Simskek (2017) suggest that guests often demand recreation opportunities to have fun. Scholars (Arikan, 2023; Costa, Glinia, Goudas & Antoniou, 2004; Vovk & Vovk, 2017) have found that in the context of the accommodation sector, tourists take part in leisure and recreational activities such as sports, fitness and live entertainment.

Giddy (2018) and Kiatkawsin, Bui, Hrankai and Jeong (2021) stated that tourists seek experiences that incorporate outdoor activities; hence, they are particularly interested in adventure tours instead of lodging in luxurious rooms. Chen, Hsu, Yan, Lee and Zhang (2023) and Hemsworth (2018) emphasised that recreational activities offered by lodging facilities present tourists with memorable experiences that can turn into marketing tool to attract new market segments and ultimately maintain loyalty for present-day customers. At Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, tourists can be offered an opportunity for an adventure tour and education about King Moshoeshoe 1st and Thaba-Bosiu (mountain at night) as a stronghold used by the King to defend his Basotho nation (Lesotho Review, 2019). Thus, such a tour suggests that tourists become involved in mini-hiking during their visit to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. However, no study has investigated accommodation establishment experiences in Lesotho. This motivates the present study to use involvement to investigate the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

Exposure to Basotho tradition (Tian, Wang, Law & Zhang, 2020), Basotho traditional clothing (Koç & Koca, 2012) and speaking Sesotho (e.g., Sesotho idioms, greetings in Sesotho) (Lonardi, 2022) are three items used to investigate local culture as dimensions of authenticity in this study. Additionally, participation in recreational activities (Cevik & Simskek, 2017), making new friends (Chen, Cheng & Kim, 2020;

Wei, Zhao, Zhang & Huang, 2019) and conversing with staff (Chen *et al.*, 2020; Han, Praet & Wang, 2019; Wei *et al.*, 2019) are three items used to investigate involvement as dimensions of authenticity in this study. Based on the literature on authenticity and involvement in accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village), the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: *Authenticity can be reliably and validly measured*

Figure 2.4 shows the proposed dimensions for the authenticity construct and the exemplary items.

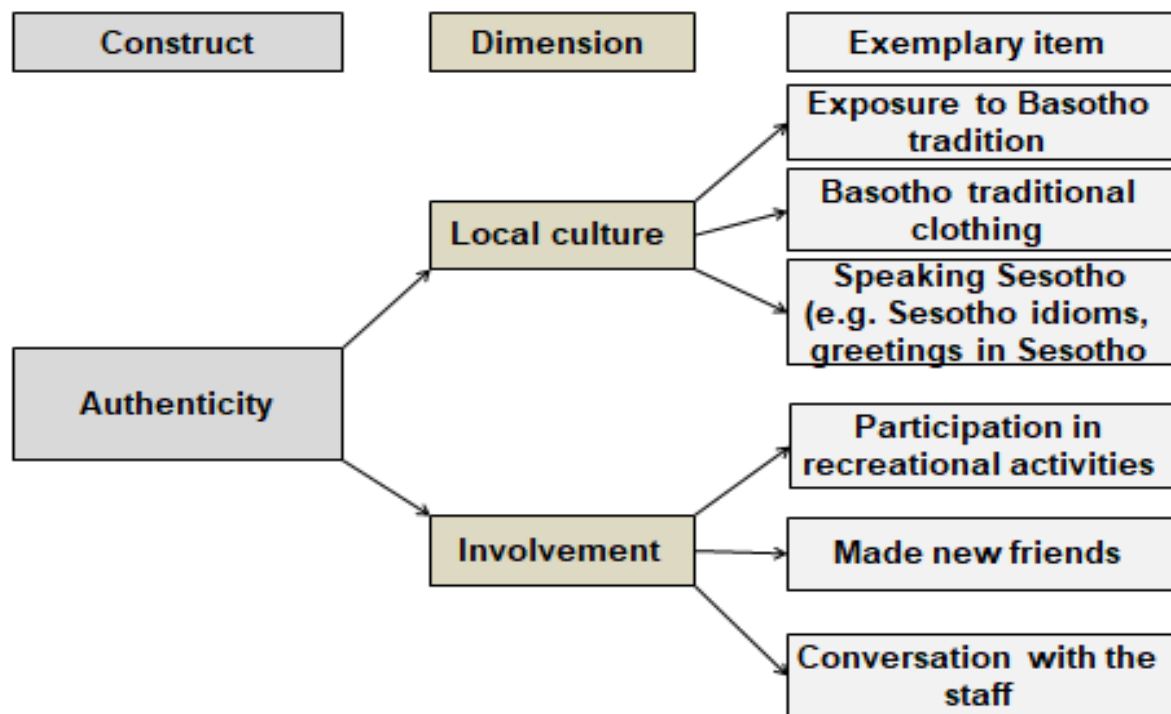


Figure 2.4: Proposed dimensions for the authenticity construct and exemplary items

Source: (Cevik & Simskek, 2017; Chen, Cheng & Kim, 2020; Han, Praet & Wang, 2019; Koç & Koca, 2012; Lonardi, 2022; Tian, Wang, Law & Zhang, 2020; Wei *et al.*, 2019)

Based on the discussions of the reviewed literature (see sections 2.7.2, 2.7.2.1, 2.7.2.2, 2.7.2.3, 2.7.2.4, and 2.7.2.5) on authenticity, it can be decided that TRO2 was achieved.

Sincerity and competence are two dimensions used to investigate brand personality. The following are discussions of brand personality in tourism and accommodation establishments.

2.8.3 Brand personality in tourism

The study of brand personality dates to the 1950s when scholars and executives realised its applicability as a differentiation strategy between the different brands and the creation of personal meaningfulness of a brand with customers (Ferrandi, Merunka, Valette-Florence & De Barnier, 2002; Martineau, 1958). Keller (1993) asserted that brand personality functions as a symbol or expression of one's ideas. Scholars (Changchenkit, 2018; Kim, Malek, Kim & Kim, 2018; Tran, Daunchez & Szemik, 2013) described a brand as the selling of a promise, set of qualities or characteristics, values and services reliable to customers. Brand personality shows how consumers (tourists) connect to a specific brand (Malek *et al.*, 2018; Ranjbar, 2010; Robertson *et al.*, 2019) and has a strong affiliation with it (Malek *et al.*, 2018).

Scholars from different industries, such as sports event management and marketing (Sertkan, Neidhardt & Werthner, 2019; Walsh, Clavio, Lovell & Blaszkka, 2013), tourist destination and marketing (Huong & Huy, 2014; Kim & Lee, 2018; Sharma, 2013), the automobile industry (Ranjbar, 2010), consumer behaviour and marketing (Kumar, 2018; Robertson, Ferguson, Eriksson & Nappa, 2019; Shyle & Panajoti, 2013), contemporary management (Keng, Tran & Thi, 2013; Muller & Zancan, 2012), the hospitality industry (Mohi, Zaireen & Sulaiman, 2014) and communication (Changchenkit, 2018), have referred to brand personality as the bundle of brand features attributed to a brand. In this study (see section 1.6.3), brand personality is defined as tourists' opportunity to experience human (staff) characteristics attributed to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village to which tourists can relate.

2.8.3.1 Brand personality at the accommodation establishment

The rapid increase in competition with different brand substitutions calls for lodging businesses to build a very strong brand personality to achieve a large market share (Åberg, 2015). Li, Yen and Liu (2020) and Sadik (2020) found that personality traits significantly stimulate hotel guests' service experience. Garg, Chhikara, Panda and Kataria (2018) and Wisetsri (2018) established that personality traits can be used as

a word-of-mouth marketing strategy to create unique characteristics of hotel and brand emotional bonding. Mohi *et al.* (2014:38) contended that an accommodation brand designed with an exceptional brand personality not only increases positive views from visitors but also yields greater customer satisfaction and loyalty to the accommodation business itself. Skift (2018) posited that many hotel brands intend to fill the gap between personality and customer experiences to increase brand equity by measuring brands centred on customer experience.

Baladi (2011) stated that Asian hotel brands offer customers unique experiences, including intimacy and romance, where the Asian brand personality further reflects Asian ambiances. Hulten (2015) revealed that Westin hotels utilise an autograph scent in the hotels found on white tea, as it is believed that the scent experience embraces brand personality and a sense of life that the brand desires to communicate to visitors. Gerhard and Nadrowski (2010), as cited in Maurer and Siller (2019), stressed that when guests select accommodation brands, they avoid brands that would make them feel insecure during their stay in a foreign country, and a prestigious brand name assists in overcoming such worry and guarantees that visitors feel self-confident regarding their buying choices. In Lesotho, receptionists at accommodation establishments are the most welcoming people; hence, Lesotho's brand personality can be regarded as friendly and warm (Aaker, 1999; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015).

Ismail, Zahari, Suhartanto, Kutut and Hadi (2021) investigated brand personality in the lodging industry following the recent concern that brand personality is a concept that has received little attention in the lodging industry. Since then, Tran *et al.* (2013) carried out a study on brand personality to investigate the relationship between hotel brand quality and hotel brand personality to increase brand value and loyalty. Mohi *et al.* (2014) carried out a study to determine the impact of brand personality on customer satisfaction in the lodging industry. Li, Yen and Uysa (2014) conducted a study to apply brand personality as a source of differentiation strategy between hotels. To determine the impact of brand personality on hotel brand loyalty, Sop and Kozak (2019) conducted a study on brand personality in the lodging industry.

Sincerity and competence are two dimensions used to investigate brand personality in this study. The following is the decision of the reviewed literature on sincerity in tourism and accommodation establishment.

2.8.3.2 Sincerity in tourism

From a multidisciplinary approach, sincerity is explained through a conceptualisation of diverse sub dimensions, such as domestic, down-to-earth, real, friendly, cheerful, trustworthy, and accountable (see Alusa, 2018: 17; Sumarjan, Mohd, Mohd, Zurinawati, Mohd, Saiful, Artinah, Bakhtiar, Hafiz & Hanafiah, 2014: 213-214; Taheri, Gannon, Cordina & Lochrie, 2018: 2756). Lee and Back (2010) contend that these sub dimensions of sincerity represent employees' attitudes. Alusa (2018) and Gil and Hellgren (2011) underline that with a brand linked to sincerity and its traits such as uniqueness, customers can repeat purchases because the brand is regarded as distinctive compared to other brands. In this study, sincerity is defined as the availability of genuine staff traits that can create a tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Kucuk (2018) insisted that insincere service leads to customer dissatisfaction, which results in negative reviews and brand hate messages. The LTDC promotes Lesotho as "real people; real culture". This slogan defines Lesotho's brand personality as real and friendly (LTDC, 2016). Chen and Chen (2014) stipulated that while guest satisfaction differs greatly depending on one's culture, employee attitudes are crucial for better service as well as a high degree of satisfaction. The authors continue to emphasise that travellers from Taiwan have expressed the significance of employees taking care of guests and politely responding to their needs irrespective of how they are dressed.

2.8.3.3 Sincerity at the accommodation establishment

Mohi *et al.*, (2014) highlighted that brand sincerity leads to customer satisfaction; henceforth, it is vital for lodging businesses to offer their employees suitable training to instil a good sincere attitude during their engagement with visitors. Cardoso, Paulauskaite, Hachki, Figueiredo, Oliveira, Rego, Silva, and Meirinhos (2022) and Tran *et al.*, (2013) renounced that to create thriving brand value and loyalty, accommodation brand superiors must improve their empathy for accommodation

brands to gain sincerity. A study conducted on hotel brand personality by Mohi *et al.* (2014) revealed that sincerity is one of the dimensions with the highest score, proving the applicability of brand personality to accommodation brands. Fullen and Brown (2016) indicated that the availability of host staff and their presence during visitor arrival are sincere practices (snacks, umbrellas during the rainfall) that guests regard as extraordinary and creative. Thus, guests are increasingly looking for opportunities to connect with other people during their stay at bed and breakfast establishments. At Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, visitors can experience sincerity when staff are present to relate with guests (Aaker, 1999; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015). Scholars (Kim, 2023; Sop & Kozak, 2019; Paiva Neto, Lopes da Silva, Ferreira & Araujo, 2020) have conducted studies in the lodging sector and used sincerity as a dimension to investigate brand personality. In these studies, there is no evidence on whether brand personality can be used to investigate tourists' experiences at accommodation establishments. However, no study has used sincerity to measure accommodation establishment experiences in Lesotho. This motivates the present study to use sincerity to measure tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

Competence is a dimension used to investigate brand personality. The following are discussions of the reviewed literature on competence in tourism and accommodation establishment.

2.8.3.4 Competence in tourism

Alusa (2018) describes competence as the brand's ability to understand consumers' problems and strive to offer them solutions to satisfy their needs. The scholar continues to add that brand competence has a significant role in increasing the customer's trustworthiness in the brand. Robertson *et al.*, (2019) argued that businesses with high prestige are found to be more incompetent than businesses of the lower class. In this study, competence is defined as the ability of the staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village to provide good service to guests.

2.8.3.5 Competence at the accommodation establishment

From an interdisciplinary approach (see Abele, Hauke, Peters, Louvet, Szymkow & Duan, 2016: 3; Alusa, 2018: 21; Sumarjan *et al.*, 2014: 214), there is consensus that

elements such as reliable, intelligent, responsive, corporate, dependable, leader, secure, efficient, confident, strong, ambitious, and self-confident, among others, portray the features of brand competence, which can all be applied to the structures and technology of accommodation facilities. Researchers have clearly shown that the aforementioned sub dimensions of brand competence are relevant in the context of ordinary employees as well as those who are at the executive rank of the accommodation establishment (Attor, Jibril, Amoah, Chovancova, 2022; Dulgaroglu, Atay & Avcikurt, 2019; Li *et al.*, 2020).

Scholars have suggested that to foster popular brand value and loyalty, managers of accommodation brands must ensure greater augmentation and guarantee performance in ensuring a competent accommodation brand (Mody, 2018; Thottoli & Al Harthi, 2022; Tran *et al.*, 2013). Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village staff are efficient at serving guests and are able to provide solutions to satisfy the needs of guests; hence, they can be classified as unique, reliable and competent (Aaker, 1999; Alusa, 2018). In the lodging industry, scholars (Kim, 2023; Sop & Kozak, 2019; Paiva Neto *et al.*, 2020) have conducted studies using brand personality and competence as sub dimensions. However, no study has used competence to investigate accommodation experiences in Lesotho. This motivates the present study to use competence to investigate the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

Serving guests in a polite and genuine (open) manner (Aaker, 1999) and responding to the needs of the guests (Aaker, 1999; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015) are three items used to investigate sincerity as dimensions of brand personality in this study. Similarly, providing a solution that satisfies guests (Alusa, 2018), being efficient in serving guests (Alusa, 2018) and trying to understand a guest's grievance when it is lodged (Aaker, 1999) are three items used to investigate competence as dimensions of brand personality in this study.

Based on the literature on brand personality, sincerity and competence in accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village), the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3: Brand personality can be reliably and validly measured

Figure 2.5 demonstrates the proposed dimensions for the brand personality construct and exemplary items.

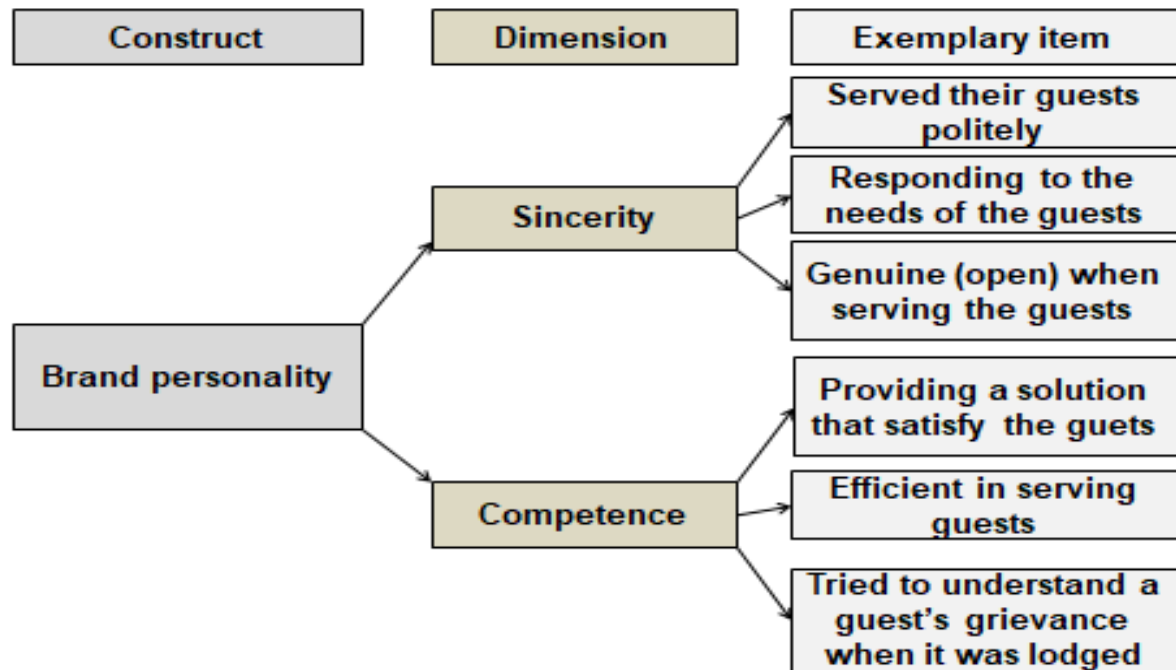


Figure 2.5: Proposed dimensions for the brand personality construct and exemplary items

Source: (Aaker, 1999; Alusa, 2018; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015)

Based on the discussions of the reviewed literature (see sections 2.7.3, 2.7.3.1, 2.7.3.2, 2.7.3.3, 2.7.3.4, and 2.7.3.5) on brand personality, it can be decided that TRO3 was achieved.

The next section is a review of the literature on brand attributes.

2.8.4 Brand attributes in tourism

Jokinen (2016) and Keller (1993) described attributes as characteristics that are linked with either a product or service. Many scholars (Franzen & Moriarty, 2015; Ionica, 2016; Stephens, 2017) have postulated that product and brand attributes are believed to possess a bundle of benefits that customers accrue when they consume the brand (product).

Baloglu and Uysal (1996) emphasised that travellers are not only inspired by distinct destination qualities but also by a search for an experience of more than a single attribute. Many scholars (Chan, Zhang, Wang & Li, 2022; Eom, Han & Song, 2020; Nergui, Myagmarsuren, Ulaankhuu & Sereeter, 2023) have indicated that combinations of brand benefits are intended to increase traveller satisfaction with the holiday experience. Reyes-Mercado (2021) suggested that when relating to a brand, customers depend largely on the perception of brand attributes to find its benefits and (Jokinen, 2016) to develop brand relationships in their minds. In this study (as mentioned in section 1.6.4), brand attributes are defined as the opportunity for tourists to eat and taste different Basotho foods at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.8.4.1 Brand attributes at the accommodation facility

Johann and Anastassova (2014: 100) revealed that tourists choose a certain hotel based on a combination of aspects such as "... price/quality relationship, the standard of room, location of the hotel, customer service, entertainment in hotels, meals served in hotels, beaches nearby, and attractions nearby..." and that these factors are product attributes. Hotels possess many attributes that provide a stable vacation as a positioning strategy and promise unforgettable experiences (Belhaj, M., 2022; Paula & Borges, 2020; Xiao, 2020). When assessing brand benefits, guests use brand attitudes to judge the beliefs they have about hotel brand attributes (Bashir, Khwaja, Rashid, Turi & Waheed, 2020; Rather & Camilleri, 2019; Permatasari, Murwani & Suharto, 2017). At Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, guests can experience a display of Basotho's rich cultural life comprising lodging, performing, paintings, artistries, and home-grown flowers (see, 2.5.1.1).

Food is a dimension used to investigate brand attributes in this study. The following is a discussion of food in tourism and accommodation establishments.

2.8.4.2 Food in tourism

According to Minasse (2020) and UNWTO (2017), as cited in Tendani (2021), food tourism refers to travel intended to experience leisure, tasting quality food, attending food festivals and fairs, farmers markets and any tourism activity related to food. Many scholars (Hall & Mitchell, 2001, 2003; Hall & Gössling, 2016; Hannam & Knox, 2010) have referred to food as travelling motivated by food production, attending food

festivals and restaurants mainly for food testing. According to the UNWTO (2012:6), "... the cuisine of the destination is an aspect of the utmost importance in the quality of the holiday experience". For this study, food is defined as the availability of different traditional Basotho food/dishes at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

In the previous decade, food has increasingly attracted increasing attention because it is considered to possess social and cultural importance because it reflects the regional culture and environment (Chang & Yuan, 2011). Scholars (Disegna & Osti, 2016; Knollenberg, Duffy, Kline & Kim, 2021; WTO, 2012) have shown that the share of tourist expenditure in a certain destination is based on food; hence, scholars (Piramanayagam, Sud & Seal, 2020; Stone, Soulard, Migacz & Wolf, 2018; Widyanta, 2019) have acknowledged that the consumption of food is an essential part of the tourist experience and a fundamental factor of tourism. Piramanayagam *et al.*, (2020) mentioned that food is used as a distinctive and important strategy to offer tourists a differentiated tourist experience.

Chang, Kim and Kim (2018) and Yun, Edward, Hennessey and Macdonald (2011) noted that local food is identified as a significant cultural tourist supply that tourists can easily access within the visited location, hence allowing tourists to experience the extended tradition and values of the location. According to the literature (Ozdemir & Seyitoglu, 2017; Tlili & Amara, 2016; WTO, 2012), food has an important influence on the tourist experience within a given destination. Additionally, food is regarded as a key part of the region's identity in specific tourist destinations. Finally, food sparks an increase in the number of tourists seeking authentic food that provides them with an opportunity to experience the colours and tastes of the visited destination. Shenaar, Schänzel and Berno (2022) expressed that research on food tourism, especially in regard to eating and drinking, remains limited.

2.8.4.3 Food at the accommodation establishment

According to the study of Johann and Anastassova (2014), empirical findings indicated that three-star hotels received a mean score of 4.13, four-star hotels received a mean score of 4.54, and overall, all hotels received a mean score of 4.39, confirming meals as a product attribute of hotels. Sengel, Karagoz, Cetin, Dincer, Ertugral and Balik (2015) indicated that guests who visited 4- and 5-star hotels paid relatively less attention to the consumption of local food than did guests who visited 3-star hotels.

Scholars (Bhaian, 2021; Boto-Garcia, Escalonilla, Zapico & Banos, 2021; Vogel, Wouters, dos Anjos & Limberger, 2021) have posited that accommodation and food providers are a fundamental part of visitors' satisfaction. Ismail, Muhammad, Yusoff and Shariff (2018) and Namkung and Jang (2007) indicated that there is a positive correlation between hotel brand identity and food.

In a study on Maldives guesthouses by Shenaan, Schänzel and Berno (2022), guests linked their experiences with eating different (unfamiliar) cuisines by remembering past memorable experiences. Davis, Lockwood, Pantelidis and Alcott (2008: 25) asserted that groups of hotels in the United States are changing their business models to create a memorable experience by designing a personalised environment that utilises "... sound, food, smell, décor, toys and gadgets". At the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, guests can obtain a food experience at Shoeshoe Restaurant, which claims to be the only cultural cuisine in a fine dining experience offering guests an opportunity to sample some of Lesotho staples, namely, Basotho traditional food (e.g., *papa*, *potele*, *nyekoe*, *seketsa*) (Chang & Mak, 2018; Shenaan, Schänzel & Berno, 2022). No study has investigated the use of food to support brand attributes in relation to accommodation experiences in Lesotho. This motivates the present study to use food as a dimension of brand attributes to investigate the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment in Lesotho.

The variety of Basotho dishes (Chang & Mak, 2018), tasty Sesotho traditional food (Chang & Mak, 2018) and food served in Sesotho traditional dishes (e.g., Lekuka, Lefisoane, Seroto, etc.) (Shenaan *et al.*, 2022) are three items used to investigate food as a dimension of brand personality in this study.

Based on the literature discussion on brand attributes and food at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village), the following hypothesis is formulated:

H4: *Brand attributes can be reliably and validly measured.*

Figure 2.6 illustrates the proposed dimension for the brand attributes and exemplary items.

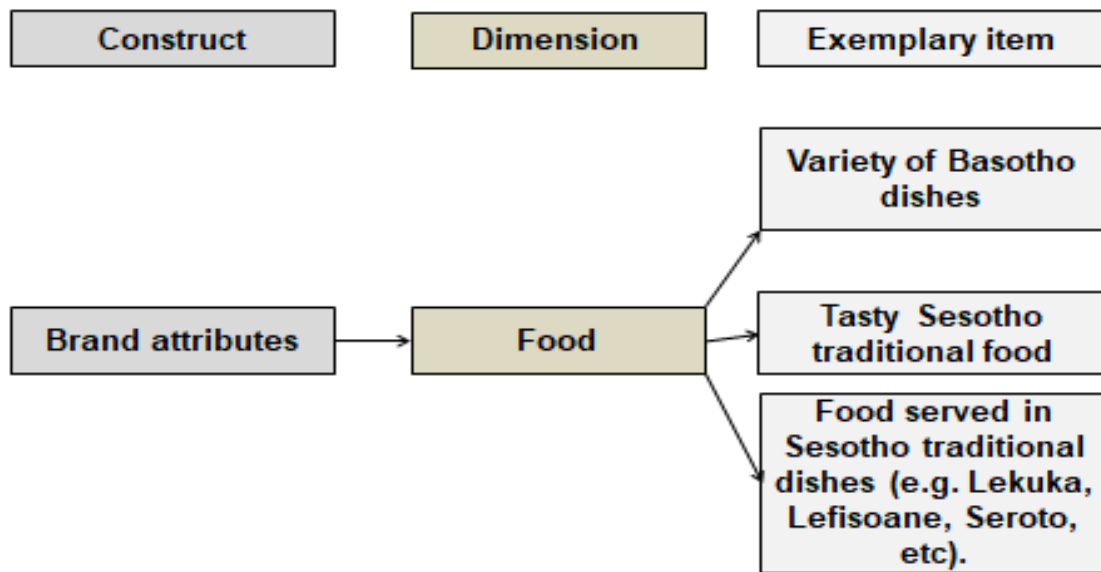


Figure 2.6: Proposed dimension for the brand attributes and exemplary items

Source: (Chang & Mak, 2018; Shenaan, Schänzel & Berno, 2022)

Based on the discussions of the reviewed literature (see sections 2.7.4, 2.7.4.1, 2.7.4.2, 2.7.4.3) on brand attributes, it can then be decided that TRO4 was achieved.

The following is a literature review on the tourist experience and its dimensions: education and escapism in tourism and accommodation establishments.

2.8.5 Tourist experience in tourism

Tourist experience can be traced back five decades, when pioneers (Boorstin, 1962; MacCannell, 1976; Pine & Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Yamashita, 2001, 2015) developed an experience economy and four realms of experience. According to the theory created by Boorstin (1962), an authentic tourist experience is not possible in the modern world because, as opposed to travel seeking authenticity, travel is gradually built on fabricated images. According to the theory of MacCannell (1976), tourism includes the pursuit of authenticity. According to the theory of MacCannell (1976), people travel purposely to escape from real mandated daily lives in the same environment, to immerse them in a different world and to encounter authenticity. Given

the history and important role of experiences for both tourists and experience providers, an array of definitions of tourist experiences has been proposed, a few of which follow in the paragraphs below.

Vergopoulos (2016) provided three explanations for the tourist experience, namely, (a) the tourist experience may be assumed to occur in the tourist environment, (b) the tourist experience may be regarded as education acquired in different geographical areas and strangeness, and (c) the tourist experience is greatly predisposed by management sciences; thus, it is a package for the consumption of tourist activity. Scholars (Agapito, 2021; Sotiriadis, 2017; Sotiriadis & Gursoy, 2016) concisely refer to the tourist experience as anything people experience as travellers.

Scholars (Al-Ansi & Han, 2019; Rahman, Moghavvemi, Thirumoorthi & Rahman, 2020; Suhartanto, Dean, Wibisono & Astor, 2020) have stressed that tourist experiences are a continuous process that constantly fluctuates and changes in three phases (before, during and after a trip). For this study, tourist experience is defined as tourists' opportunity to learn about the heritage of the Basotho people when staying at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (see section 1.6.5).

A number of scholars (Ceti & Atay, 2017; la Cuadra, Vila-Lopez & Hernandez-Fernandez, 2020; Strijbosch, Mitas, Blaricum, Vugts, Govers, Hover, Gelissen & Bastiaansen, 2021) state that unique and memorable experiences are the foundation of the tourist sector and are well acknowledged as the differences among rivalries (Al-Azzam, Mohamed & Chiu, 2022; Kuiper & Smit, 2014; Pettersson & Getz 2009). Larsen, Wolff, Doran and Øgaard (2019) postulated that the main existence of academics over time has been the mission to understand the tourist experience.

The tourist experience is investigated through dimensions such as education and escapism. The following are discussions of education and escapism in tourism.

2.8.5.1 Tourist experience at the accommodation establishment

In seeking a tourist experience, tourists not only purchase a package that comprises hotel rooms, food, entrance tickets, souvenirs and travel tours but also, currently, purchase experiences that make them more tentative, modern and creative (Agbi, 2019). Scholars (Brochado, Troilo, Rodrigues & Oliveira-Brochado, 2020; Khaokhrueamuang, Kachendechea & Srichamnong, 2022; Io & Wan, 2018) posit that

accommodation establishments that offer guests the opportunity for fun are sources of tourists' satisfaction and memorable experience. Souza, Kastenholtz, Barbosa and Carvalho (2020) state that accommodation establishments' experiences result in customer loyalty. Scholars (Ding, Choo, Ng & Zhang, 2023; Ozanne, Prayag & Martin-Neuning, 2022; Priporas, Stylos, Rahimi & Vedanthachari, 2017) have indicated that the use of strengths and efficient business resources may increasingly improve tourists' positive experiences within the accommodation sector.

Ceti and Atay (2017) and Moliner-Tena, Monferrer-Tirado, Ferreres-Bonfill and Rodríguez-Artola (2021) stated that providing unforgettable experiences is a key strategic tool for differentiating hospitality businesses from one another. Thus, hoteliers and other related hospitality businesses must reimagine changing ordinary services into unforgettable experiences to avoid being seen as a commodity. Tourists can experience the history and culture of Basotho and gain knowledge of cultural diversity (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Ledford, 2015; Xu *et al.*, 2022).

Education and escapism are two dimensions used to investigate tourist experience in this study. The following is a discussion of education as a dimension of tourist experience.

2.8.5.2 Education in tourism

Travel creates new opportunities for people to learn new places to increase their level of knowledge (Bennett, 2019). Lim (2022) disputes whether a school is the best knowledge hub; for real-life knowledge, no one can enrich one more than travelling. Goldberg (2016) maintained that education is identified as a great reason for people to embark on travel because they would be engaging and experiencing anything different and returning with a pool of new skills and knowledge sets. Rahmat, Abdullah and Kashiwazaki (2020) and Van Winkle and Lagay (2012) stated that lifetime knowledge acquisition occurs in different settings; hence, travel provides an exceptional environment for organised and unorganised learning opportunities. Pine and Gilmore (1998) declared that educational experience means actively participating and acquiring new knowledge. For this study, education means the opportunity for tourists to acquire knowledge relating to the heritage of the Basotho people through their experiences at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.8.5.3 Education at the accommodation establishment

Oh, Fiore and Jeoung (2007) and Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2013) asserted that accommodation establishments such as resort hotels provide various opportunities for visitors to significantly augment their expertise (for example, skills to perform massage, cooking sessions, go-in swimming and diving, etc.). These experiences are viewed significantly in creating memories and positive behaviour. Jurowski (2016) indicated that education experiences fall under the active absorption quadrant, which is referred to as the kind of experience that guests actively participate in learning activities to grasp knowledge. Jurowski (2016) emphasises that educational experiences refer to when guests travel to see other facilities, galleries, wineries and attractions such as resorts. In the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, visitors can obtain an educational experience by learning about culture and history, Basotho traditional beer, and how Basotho built their houses (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Xu *et al.*, 2022). However, no study has used education to measure accommodation establishment experiences in Lesotho. This motivates the present study to use education to investigate the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho. Three items related to education, specifically, learning about the history of Basotho (Ali *et al.*, 2014), learning about the culture of Basotho (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Xu *et al.*, 2022) and enhancing my knowledge of cultural diversity (Ledford, 2015), are used to investigate tourist experience in this study.

The dimension of escapism is used to investigate the tourist experience in this study. The following is a discussion of escapism used in this study.

2.8.5.4 Escapism in tourism

Scholars (Hallmann, Zehrer & Rietz, 2021; Jurowski, 2016; Rosado-Pinto, Loureiro & Bilro, 2020) have indicated that escapist experiences require more active participation and customer immersion. Authors (Chang, 2022; Jurowski, 2016; Radder & Han, 2015) stated that in escapism experiences, tourists do not normally have any form of effect on the produced performances. Authors (Bodnar, 2019; Radder & Han, 2015; Rosado-Pinto *et al.*, 2020) agree that escapist experiences can teach experiences such as education or entertainment. This is the case, for instance, of acting in a play. For this study, escapism refers to the opportunity for tourists to take a break from their day-to-

day lives by experiencing the unique life of the Basotho people at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

2.8.5.5 Escapism at the accommodation establishment

Ali and Amin (2014) noted that escaping from one's usual daily life is regarded as an inspiration to visit a resort hotel. Ali, Amin and Ryu (2015) and Ali, Hussain, and Omar (2016) showed that visitors who travel to accommodation establishments such as resort hotels and built-in geographical exotic places do so necessarily to escape from their day-to-day mundane life. Souza *et al.*, (2020) reported that visitors' experiences with accommodation establishments such as Airbnb are significantly affected by escape. At Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, guests can obtain escapism experiences by staying at an unusual accommodation establishment that was built within the rural village, where its compound has components and features of Basotho village (hence called a cultural village). However, no study has used escapism to investigate accommodation establishment experiences in Lesotho. This motivates the present study to use escapism to investigate the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

Breaking from repetitive life (Campon-Cerro, Di-Clemente, Hernandez-Mogollon & Folgado-Fernandez, 2020), being in a different place (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2020) and forgetting about daily routine life (Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2020; Cornelisse, 2018) are three items used to investigate escapism as a dimension of tourist experience in this study. Based on the literature on tourist experience, education and escapism at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village), the following hypothesis is formulated:

H5: Tourist experience can be reliably and validly measured

Figure 2.7 depicts the proposed dimensions for the tourist experience and exemplary items.

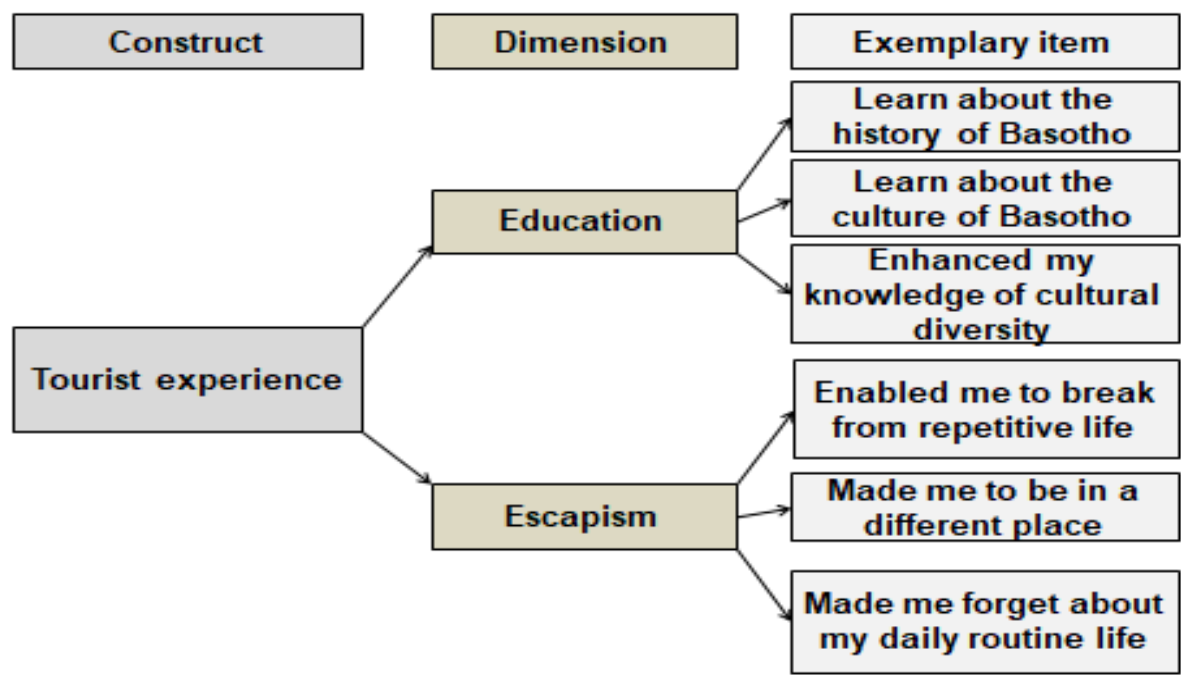


Figure 2.7: Proposed dimensions for the tourist experience and exemplary items

Source: (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2020; Cornelisse, 2018; Ledford, 2015; Xu *et al.*, 2022)

Based on the discussions of the reviewed literature (see sections 2.7.5, 2.7.5.1, 2.7.5.2, 2.7.5.3, 2.7.5.4, and 2.7.5.5) on the tourist experience, it can be decided that TRO5 was achieved.

According to Ellis, Freeman and Jiang (2017), considering the increasing significance of designing memorable and important tourist experiences, future research could further evaluate the structure of tourist experiences. This motivates the current study to use *tourist safety*, *authenticity*, *brand personality*, and *brand attributes* (as independent variables) to investigate *tourist experience* at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in Lesotho.

The next section discusses the reviewed literature on the relationship between the proposed constructs in the study.

2.9 SYNTHESIS

Chapter 2 commenced with an introduction to the previous literature by reinstating the purpose of the study as first introduced in chapter 1 to set a baseline for chapter 2. This was followed by the statement of TROs guided by their respective ROs as stated in section 1.4.1. In addition, the context of tourism from a worldwide scale and from an African point of view was discussed. Moreover, this chapter discussed tourism in the context of Lesotho by emphasising the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment) as part of Lesotho's tourism heritage facilities. The study presented a synopsis of the study's relevance to Lesotho, the demographic variables and the historical content on service experience as embedded theory. Furthermore, a detailed discussion of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes, and tourist experience as the constructs of the proposed framework of the study was provided in the context of the tourism industry and accommodation establishments. These theoretical discussions supported the proposed hypothesis for each construct. Chapter 3 discusses the relationships between the selected constructs.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW: DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL TOURIST EXPERIENCE PREDICTION MODEL

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 presented the TROs (see section 2.2) of this study guided by ROs (see section 1.4.1). The literature review included an overview of the tourism industry and its relevance to Africa and Lesotho. This was followed by a discussion on the historical content of service experience as an embedded theory guiding the development of the theoretical framework of rural tourist experience, as shown in Figure 1.1. A comprehensive discussion on the five selected constructs provided theoretical justification for the first five stated hypotheses. Chapter 3 discusses the relationships among tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (dependent/endogenous variable) for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Chapter 3 concludes by stating hypothesis 6.

3.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL TOURIST EXPERIENCE PREDICTION MODEL

This section reviews the literature on the different relationships between constructs that will be used to inform the development of the rural tourist experience prediction model.

The following are discussions of the reviewed literature on the relationships between the different constructs in the tourism and accommodation context.

3.2.1 The relationship between tourist safety and the tourist experience

Safety is one of the important aspects of the tourist experience and is considered when tourists select a destination (Hamm & Su, 2021; Hanafiah, Jasmi, Razali & Sulaiman, 2019; Han, Zuo, Law, Chen & Zhang, 2021; Khan, Hassan, Fahad & Naushad, 2020). In the studies conducted by Buning and Gibson (2016) and Hallmann, Feiler, Müller and Breuer (2012), the findings corroborated the conclusions of prior studies on the fundamental role of safety and security in tourism experiences. Tourists (guests) regard safety as a crucial aspect when selecting a hotel (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012). Tostovrsnik, Maier, Huppertz, Roux, Leoni, Pruangkarn, Hardy and Bollrich

(2015) indicated that when making comparisons, visitors of mid-priced hotels demand safety in the same manner as visitors seeking to stay at luxury hotels. An investigation of this relationship between tourist safety and tourist experience is supported by the reviewed literature on tourism-related studies that were referenced in this study. Therefore, this study sought to determine whether there is a relationship between tourist safety and the tourist experience in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Table 3.1 below displays studies showing the relationship between tourist safety and the tourist experience in the tourism industry.

Table 3.1: Studies showing the relationship between tourist safety and the tourist experience in the tourism industry

Researcher(s)	Sub sector	Findings	Results
General tourism-related studies			
Xie, Zhang & Morrison (2021)	Travel Research	Tourists' safety is an important aspect at places of visits especially safety is crucial for tourists' satisfaction and general experience.	$N = 1,830$ $p < 0.362$
Wan (2017)	Travel Safety	Sometimes tourists' feeling unsafe during travel diminishes tourists' positive spirit and hunger to partake in activities and ultimately ends the anticipated travel experience.	$N = 535$ ($p > 0.001$)
Tourism marketing studies			
Vitouladiti (2014)	Destination image marketing in tourism and tour operating	Improvement in safety measures catalyses the overall tourist experience.	$N = 376$; mean = 3.80 ($p < 0,05$)
Studies on accommodation			
Anichiti <i>et al.</i> , (2021)	Safety and Security in Hotels:	Hotel room safety has an impact on the tourist experience.	$P = 0.0610$

Researcher(s)	Sub sector	Findings	Results
Nunkoo, Teeroovengadum, Ringle, & Sunnassee (2020)	Hospitality Management	Safety and security influence customer satisfaction positively.	V = 0.56

n = number of respondents, *p* = significance; *v* = Cramer's V (strength of correlation)

Table 3.1 contains information supporting the relationship between tourist safety and the tourist experience. Based on these results, Xie *et al.*, (2021) assert that tourists' safety is an important aspect at places of visit, especially since safety is crucial for tourists' satisfaction and general experience. Wan (2017) showed that tourists sometimes feel unsafe during travel, which diminishes their positive spirit and interest in taking part in activities, which often leads to an abrupt end of the anticipated travel experience. In tourism marketing, Vitouladiti (2014) emphasises that improvement in the management of the natural environment and safety has a significant impact on increasing the general experience that could be gained. Anichiti *et al.*, (2021) postulated that hotels adopt reliable safety methods for guests by engaging with communities on safety measures in areas where these hotels are located. Therefore, guests may be assured of safety and a memorable experience during a holiday in such a location. Nunkoo *et al.*, (2020) found that safety and security contribute significantly to customer satisfaction, while Torres (2014) contends that customers (guests) assess satisfaction based on the general experience of service provision.

Based on these findings, this study aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between *tourist safety* and the *tourist experience* when researching an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

3.2.2 The relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience

The aspiration for novel, authentic experiences has become an important norm in the tourism fraternity that aligns well with the growing demand of tourists who seek authentic experiences in the current experience economy (Cornelisse, 2014). The concept of authenticity emanates from tourism research in two ways: in theory as a debatable variable and empirically as a repeated premise in justifications of tourist experiences of either a place or culture and, ultimately, as tourist experience quality (Moore, Buchmann, Mansson & Fisher, 2021; Kim *et al.*, 2011; Wang, 2000). Matos

and Barbosa (2018) assert that the tourist destination stimulates the awareness of authenticity in tourist experiences. This study intends to determine whether there is a relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience for Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment). Agarwal and Singh (2022) stated that authentic experiences originate from different sectors of tourism and the hospitality sector, such as food and accommodation. Kuhzady, Seyfi and Beal (2020) indicate that the provision of authentic experiences is a fundamental premise in P2P accommodation research. Mody and Hanks (2020) indicate that Airbnb has gained popularity and is a preferred substitute accommodation to conventional hotels because it permits visitors to indulge themselves with an authentic experience as the only point of differentiation. An investigation of this relationship between authenticity and tourist experience is supported by the reviewed literature on tourism-related studies that were referenced in this study. This study seeks to determine whether there is a relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience for Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment). Table 3.2 presents studies showing the relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience of accommodation establishments.

Table 3.2: Studies showing the relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience in tourism.

Researcher (s)	Sub sector	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
General tourism-related studies				
Derre, L. 2010	Budget travellers		Even though authenticity is not identified to be a travel stimulus for budget travellers, the terminology does not necessarily influence the tourist experience.	
Domínguez-Quintero, González-Rodríguez & Paddison, (2018)	Heritage tourism	The affirmative and important influence of objective authenticity		Objective Authenticity > Experience Quality = p< 0.351 Existential Authenticity >

Researcher (s)	Sub sector	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
		and existential authenticity are spotted in experience quality.		Experience Quality = $p < 0.410$
Dominguez Quintero, González-Rodríguez & Roldán (2019).	Heritage tourism	Objective authenticity and existential authenticity have a direct and positive effect on the quality of the experience.		Objective Authenticity > Experience Quality = $p < 0.292$ Existential Authenticity > Experience Quality = $p < 0.414$
Tourism marketing-related studies				
Lee <i>et al.</i> , (2019)	Marketing/business research		Initial findings suggest that both elements of authenticity and commodification are present in the host listing and thus blurring differentiation between the peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation experience and that of the conventional hotel industry.	
Antón, Camarero-Izquierdo, Laguna-García & Buhalis (2019)	Marketing	The real authenticity of the food experience increases the experienced reality.		($\beta = 0.300, p < 0.01$)
Hospitality and accommodation-related studies				
Juric (2019)	Historic hotels		Individual opinions about accommodation have a slight	

Researcher (s)	Sub sector	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
			influence on the cogeneration of authentic experiences as opposed to travel motives.	
Paulauskaitė <i>et al.</i> , (2017: 17)	Sharing economy/Tourism Research		Socialisation aspects such as familiarity and friendly experience mediate the relationship between guests' attachment to local culture and authentic experience.	
Taheri, Gannon, Cordina & Lochrie (2018)	Contemporary Hospitality Management	Authenticity (object-based authenticity and existential authenticity) has positive and significant effects on the memorable tourist experience.		$p < 0.001$

β = Standardised coefficient, p = significance; for some studies, the findings were incorporated under either the qualitative or quantitative results and therefore not indicated again under the "Findings" column.

Table 3.2 contains concise information on the relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience. Based on the results, Derre (2010) revealed that even though authenticity is not precisely identified as a travel stimulus for budget travellers, the terminology does necessarily influence the tourist experience. Robinson and Clifford (2012) disclosed that tourists choose stallholders because of unforgettable experiences related to taste-proving revisit intentions and the ability to obtain authenticity. Several scholars (Dominguez-Quintero *et al.*, 2018; Dominguez-Quintero

et al., 2019) have revealed that there is a universal consensus that authenticity and its types (object-based and existential) have a positive and significant influence on the quality of experience. Lee *et al.*, (2019) postulated that initial findings suggest that both authenticity and commodification are present in the host listing, thus blurring the differentiation between the peer-to-peer (P2P) accommodation experience and that of the conventional hotel industry.

Anton *et al.*, (2019) found that the real authenticity of the food experience increases the experience of reality. Juric (2019) found that individual opinions about accommodations have a slight influence on the co-generation of authentic experiences as opposed to travel motives. Paulauskaite *et al.*, (2017) indicated that socialisation aspects such as familiarity and friendly experience mediate the relationship between guests' attachment to local culture and authentic experience. Taheri *et al.*, (2018) found that authenticity (object-based authenticity and existential authenticity) has positive and significant effects on a memorable tourist experience.

Based on these findings, this study aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience when researching an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

3.2.3 The relationship between brand personality and tourist experience

Previous research (Dennis, Brakus, Gupta & Alamanos, 2014; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Lin, 2015) has indicated that brands significantly offer visitors experiences. Authors such as Manhasa, Manrai and Manrai (2016), Muhammad, Prasuri and Masdiana (2020), and Prayag (2007) assert that brand personality is an attribute of a novel experience attached to a place or destination image. Scholars have indicated that brand personality has a significant impact on experiences (Peric, Tanko-Vic & Urkin, 2017; Soares, Rosenzweig & Marcus, 2021). Aly, Elaref and Yacout (2017) and Uecharoenkit and Cohen (2011, 2013) stated that brand experience has a positive impact on brand personality. Şahin, Zehir and Kitapci (2011) argued that brand experience is theoretically and empirically different from personality. Chiang and Yang (2018) and Neto, da Silva, Ferreira and Araújo (2020) indicate that TripAdvisor hotel reviews are an avenue wherein guests share their brand experience with a hotel and brand personality created through guest brand experience. Ismail, Zahari, Hanafiah and Balasubramaniam (2022) suggested that there is a significant relationship

between hotel dining experience and brand personality that is mediated by customer satisfaction. An investigation of this relationship between brand personality and tourist experience is supported by the reviewed literature on tourism-related studies that were referenced in this study. The current study seeks to determine whether there is a relationship between brand personality and tourist experience for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment). Table 3.3 below shows studies showing the relationship between brand personality and tourist experience in tourism.

Table 3.3: Studies showing the relationship between brand personality and tourist experience in tourism

Researcher (s)	Sub-Segment	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
General management-related studies				
Cleff, Dörr, Vicknair & Walter (2013).	Management research	Brand experience has a direct and important relationship with brand personality, guest satisfaction and guest loyalty.		$p < .69$
Walter, Cleff & Chu, (2013)	Management research and business strategy	Brand experience has a significant impact on brand personality		$p < 0.674$
Kwong & Candinegara (2014)	Business management	Brand experience has an important impact on brand personality.		$p < 0.509$
Japutraa & Molinillo, (2019)	Business research	Brand experience (Sensory, affective, intellectual) has a significant		$p < 0.001$

Researcher (s)	Sub-Segment	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
		positive impact on response brand personality while on the other hand, brand experience (sensory, intellectual) also has a positive meaningful effect on active brand personality.		
General tourism-related studies				
Keng, Tran & Thi, (2013)	Management research	Brand personality is certainly impacted by customer experiential value while brand experience is positively influencing brand personality.		Brand experience < Brand Personality = ($p < 0.001$) Brand Personality < Customer Experience Value = ($p < 0.001$).
Luciano, Luiz Rodrigo & Nina Rosa (2019)	Consumer behaviour	Brand experience has a significantly positive effect on brand personality.		($p < 0.01$ and $\beta = 0.35$)
Tourism marketing studies				
Brakus, Schmitt & Zarantonello (2009)	Marketing	Brand experience has a positive and direct effect on brand personality.		$p < 0.69$
Hospitality-related studies				

Researcher (s)	Sub-Segment	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
Harwani (2021)	Hotel brand personality		Customers had exceptional service experiences influenced by hotel brands' personality traits such as sincerity and sophistication	
Choi, Ok & Hyun (2017)	Hospitality management	The high correlation between brand experience and brand personality means that customers experience the brand and make a distinctive brand identity which all have a significant impact on the improvement of positive attitudes and behaviour allied to the brand.		$p < 0.79^{***}$
Mohi, Zaireen & Sulaiman (2014)	Hospitality and culinary arts	Hotel brand personality (sincerity dimension) has a strong positive significant impact on customer satisfaction [satisfaction		$(r=0.54^{**}; p<.001)$

Researcher (s)	Sub-Segment	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
		is defined as a general assessment of performance grounded on all previous experiences with an organisation]		

r = correlation coefficient, β = Standardised coefficient, *p* = significance; for some studies, the findings were incorporated under either the qualitative or quantitative results and therefore not indicated again under the "Findings" column.

Table 3.3 contains information supporting the relationship between brand personality and tourist experience. Kwong and Candinegara (2014) suggested that brand experience has an important impact on brand personality. Japutra and Molinillo (2019) indicated that brand experience (sensory, affective, intellectual) has a significant positive impact on response brand personality, while brand experience (sensory, intellectual) also has a positive meaningful effect on active brand personality. Cleff *et al.*, (2013) and Walter *et al.*, (2013) found that brand experience has a direct and important relationship with brand personality, guest satisfaction and guest loyalty. Keng *et al.*, (2013) maintained that brand personality is certainly impacted by customer experiential value, with several scholars (Japutra & Molinillo, 2019; Keng *et al.*, 2013; Luciano *et al.*, 2019; Nysveen *et al.*, 2013) reaching the universal consensus that brand experience positively influences brand personality. Although Japutra and Molinillo (2019: 464) confirmed the relationship between brand experience and brand personality, caution is given because not all the dimensions of brand experience (sensory, affective, behavioural, and intellectual) forecast brand personality. Brakus *et al.* (2009) found that brand experience has a positive and direct effect on brand personality.

Harwani (2021) revealed that customers have exceptional service experiences influenced by hotel brands' personality traits such as sincerity and sophistication. As such, a qualitative study was conducted, and evidence of a correlation (positive or negative) between brand personality and tourist experience was not found. Mohi *et al.*,

(2014) found that hotel brand personality (sincerity dimension) has a strong positive significant impact on customer satisfaction [satisfaction, defined as a general assessment of performance grounded on all previous experiences with an organisation (Jones, Mothersbaugh & Beatty, 2000; Oliver, 1980)]. Choi *et al.*, (2017) stated that the strong correlation between brand experience and brand personality is an indication that customers experience a brand (event) and that they have a distinctive brand identity, which has a considerable impact on their attitudes and behaviour related to the brand (event).

Based on these findings, this study aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between *brand personality* and *tourist experience* when researching an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

3.2.4 The relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience

Sahin *et al.*, (2011) posit that brand experience is the response of a customer brand strategy coming from brand attributes such as identity and design. De Rooij (2015) and Mahdzar, Shuib, Ramachandran and Afandi (2015) stress that attributes have a memorable experience that can enhance tourists' revisit behavioural intentions. Gentile, Spiller and Noci (2007), Kavoura, Kefallonitis and Theodoridi (2019), Kim (2014), Moon and Kim (2001) Schmitt (1999) show that attributes positively and directly have an impact on customer experience. Tangible attributes (food and beverages, ambiance and layout) (Almohaimmeed, 2017; Heung and Gu, 2012; Khan, Yasir & Khan, 2021; Yang & Mattila, 2016; Ying, Siti, Ahmad, Khalil & Khairiah, 2018) and intangible attributes (e.g., food taste, service effectiveness and staff kindness) (Dong & Siu, 2013; Hanks, Line & Kim, 2017; Hanks & Line, 2018) not only stimulate tourists' intentions to buy but also create positive customer experiences (Dong & Siu, 2013; Hanks, Line & Kim, 2017; Hanks & Line, 2018). A single hotel can use importance-performance analysis to determine certain aspects of the development of hotel visitors' experience attributes (Lo & Yeung, 2020). The hotel restaurant brands that are responsible for providing food, services and other attributes are packages that stimulate guests' dining experience (Ismail, Zahari, Suhartanto, Kutut & Hadi, 2021). An investigation of this relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience is supported by the literature reviewed on tourism-related studies that were referenced in this study. This study seeks to determine whether there is a relationship between

brand attributes and tourist experience for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment). Table 3.4 below shows studies on the relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience in tourism.

Table 3.4: Studies showing the relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience in tourism.

Researcher (s)	Sub-Segment	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
General tourism-related studies				
Sheng & Teo (2012)	Information management	Product attributes (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, entertainment and aesthetics) have positive and significant effects on customer experience.		($p < .01$) ($p < .01$) ($p < .001$) ($p < .001$)
Mahdzar, Shuib, Ramachandran & Afandi (2015)	Destination	Destination attributes have a positive significant impact on a memorable tourism experience.		$p < 0.001$
Anggraeni, Hidayah, Zulfikar, Julianti, Yuningsih & Rezgaditya, (2022)	Destination	Destination attribute has a positive significant effect on experience quality.		$p < 0.860$
Mikulic, Prebezac, Seric & Kresic (2017)	Tourism management	Campsite attributes (sanitary facilities, electricity, water provision) are considered by camping guests as most relevant for their holidays and the most compelling stimulus of the tourist's general experience.		Mean 4.79 $p < 0.471$ ($r = 0.518$)
Tourism marketing studies				

Researcher (s)	Sub-Segment	Findings	Qualitative results	Quantitative results
Setiadi, Puspitasari & Ekawati (2015)	Marketing	Product attributes (quality and design) have a positive and important impact on customer experience.		(a = 0,462, $p>.05$) (b = 0,430 $p>.05$)
Hospitality-related studies				
Xiao (2020: 53)	International hotel brands		Attributes (room, service, staff performance, hotel facilities, food and beverages, and location) are identified as the key attributes positively impacting visitors' experience of global hotel brands in Auckland and Shenzhen.	
Deri, Bozic & Seker (2018)	Hotel attributes	Customer experience has a considerable effect on the value of hotel attributes (food and recreation, rooms and reception, and employee service quality).		performance mean = $p<4.78$ importance mean = $p<4.84$

r = correlation coefficient, β = Standardised coefficient, p = significance, a = quality, b = design; for some studies, the findings were incorporated under either the qualitative or quantitative results and therefore not indicated again under the "Findings" column.

Table 3.4 contains information supporting the relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience. Sheng and Teo (2012) found that product attributes (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, entertainment and aesthetics) have positive and

significant effects on customer experience. Mahdzar *et al.*, (2015) found that tourists with greater awareness of the destination attributes of Mulu National Park are likely to have a positive memorable tourism experience, hence boosting re-visit behavioural intentions. Anggraeni *et al.*, (2022) revealed that destination attributes have a positive significant effect on experience quality. Mikulic *et al.*, (2017) found that campsite attributes (sanitary facilities, electricity, water provision) are considered by camping guests to be most relevant for their holidays and the most compelling stimulus of the general tourist experience.

Xiao (2020: 53) revealed that room, service, staff performance, hotel facilities, food and beverages, and location are the key attributes that positively impact visitors' experience with global hotel brands. As such, a qualitative research study was carried out whose empirical findings did not show a correlation (positive or negative) between brand attributes and tourist experience. Deri *et al.*, (2018) discovered that customer experience has a considerable effect on the value of hotel attributes (food and recreation, rooms and reception and employee service quality).

Based on these findings, this study aims to investigate whether there is a relationship between *brand attributes* and *tourist experience* when researching an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) in Lesotho.

3.2.5 The theoretical justification for the development of the rural tourist experience prediction model

Against the backdrop of the literature on the different relationships, there is sufficient theoretical justification to propose the following hypothesis:

H₆: The theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Figure 3.8 depicts the proposed rural tourist experience prediction model for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

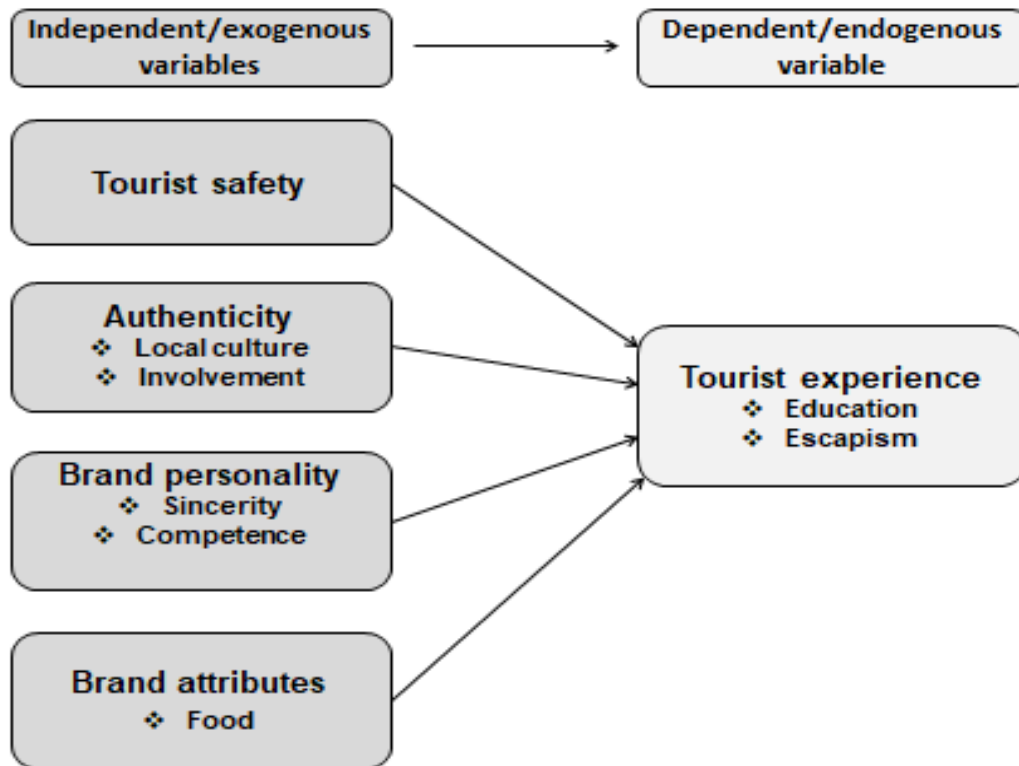


Figure 3.8: The proposed rural tourist experience prediction model for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Source: author's contribution

Based on the discussion of the reviewed literature on the relationships among tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (dependent/endogenous variables), it can be concluded that TRO6 was achieved.

3.3 SYNTHESIS

Chapter 3 discusses the rural tourist experience prediction model through an investigation of the relationships among safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in Lesotho. The statement of H_6 , namely, that *the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village*, concluded this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As highlighted in sections 1.2.1–1.2.5 and 1.6, there is an urgent need to mitigate challenges related to tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes that confront the Lesotho Tourism industry to increase the quality of the tourist experience. Furthermore, the TROs and theoretical discussion in Chapter 2 validated the need to investigate the tourist experience at accommodation establishments such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village through tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes. Furthermore, Chapter 3 provides a theoretical motivation for investigating the relationships among tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable) to determine the most parsimonious rural tourist experience prediction model.

The current chapter provides a detailed discussion of the study's research design, research paradigm, and research approach and research method. The research design is described by scholars (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri, 2021; Weyant, 2022) as a plan dedicated to addressing the research hypotheses. The current study's research design was used to test the articulated research hypotheses presented in Chapters 2 and 3.

Figure 4.9 shows aspects of this study's research design and research methodology.

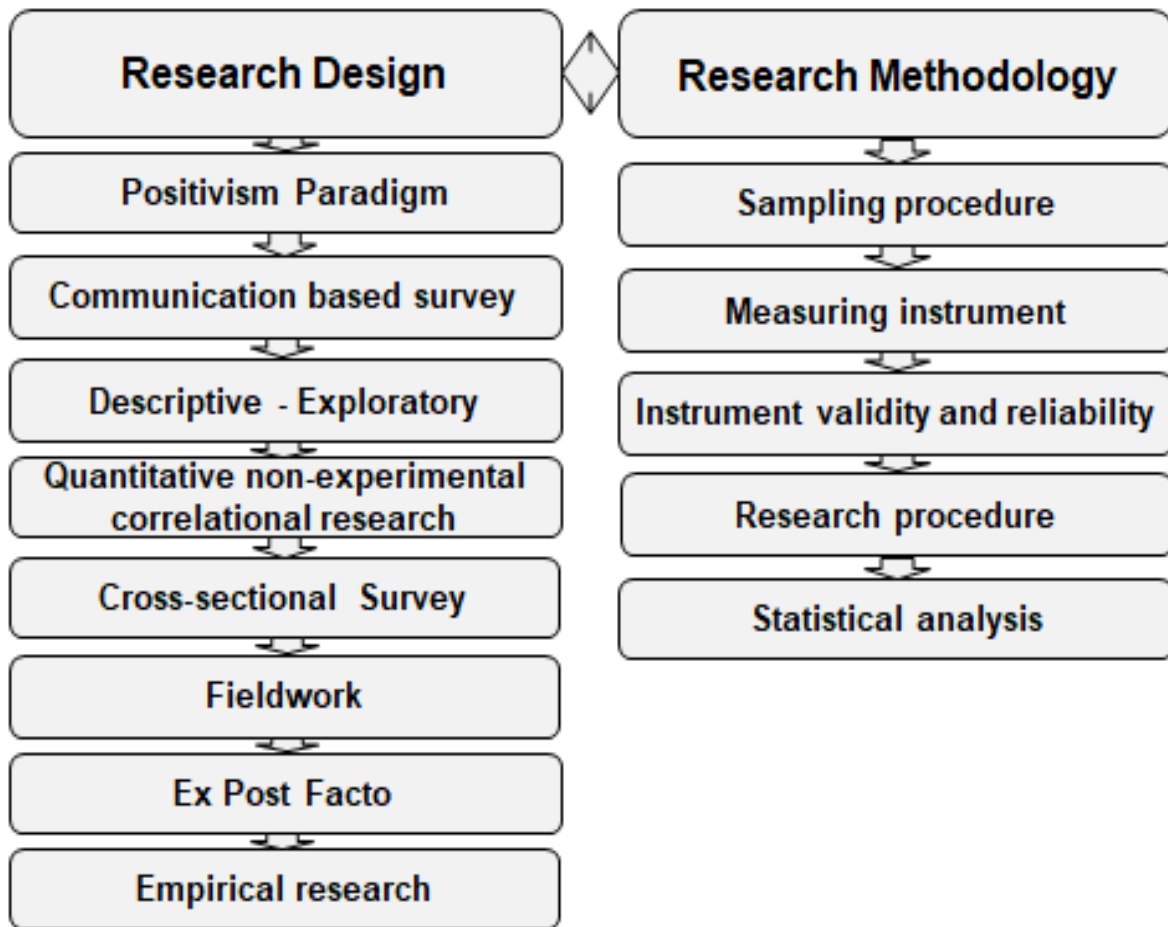


Figure 4.9: Aspects of the study’s research design and methodology

Source: Author’s contribution

4.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Many scholars define positivism as a theoretical philosophy that holds the belief that scientific knowledge can be attained using objectives where quantitative data can be used to measure hypotheses and create new models (Handema, Lungu, Chabala & Shikaputo, 2023; Su, 2018; Zukauskas, Vveinhardt & Andriukaitiene, 2018). Durkheim (1982) emphasises that positivist researchers use quantitative research methods to gather datasets from large sample sizes to track patterns and trends and find relationships using statistical analysis. Many tourism studies (Abdelhakim & Badr, 2021; Hasan, Abdullah, Lew & Islam, 2018; Jebbouri, Zhang, Imran, Iqbal & Bouchiba, 2022) have adopted a positivist research philosophy, which provides support for the application of this research paradigm in this study.

Therefore, this study uses a quantitative research design based on a positivist philosophical worldview to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Finally, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used to find the best relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable) to support or not support the hypotheses.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Scholars such as Boru (2018), Creswell and Creswell (2018), and Zukauskas *et al.*, (2018) state that a research design is a plan that is followed by study to answer either the research question or hypotheses. Yuliono, Sarwanto and Rintayati (2018) note that the importance of a research design is informed by the type of specific research conducted. The present study's research design was informed by the main research objective, as stated in section 4.2.

According to this research objective, the previous literature was widely consulted to develop a questionnaire on *tourist safety* (Anichiti *et al.*, 2021; Binns & Kempt, 2021; Gursoy, Sarıışık, Nunkoo and Bogan, 2021), *authenticity* (Chen *et al.*, 2023; Li, 2023; Xu *et al.*, 2022), *brand personality* (Ismail *et al.* 2021; Kim, 2023; Thottoli & Al Harthi, 2022), *brand attributes* (Belhaj, 2022; Chan *et al.*, 2022; Nergui *et al.*, 2023) and *tourist experience* (Al-Azzam *et al.*, 2022; Khaokhrueamuang *et al.*, 2022; Strijbosch *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, this study was conducted as a communication-based survey, as it adopted an online self-administered questionnaire (see de Rada, 2019; Kim, Dykema, Stevenson, Black & Moberg, 2019) and in-person interviews to collect raw data from guests of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in a field setting.

A cross-sectional survey was used (see Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019; Wang & Cheng, 2020; Hudson, Thieken, & Bubeck, 2020) to collect primary data (see Seric & Ljubica, 2018; Prada-Ramallal, Roque & Herdeiro, 2018; Sileyew, 2020). This quantitative (see Curtis & Allen, 2018; Apuke, 2017; Boeren, 2018) and non-experimental study (see Govindan, 2013; Van Zyl, 2014) sought to determine the correlation (see Curtis, Comiskey & Dempsey, 2016; Hall, 2018) between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience to determine

the strength and direction of the relationships. Supported by this purpose, the study adopted Ex Post Facto (see Busk, 2014; Bayyan, 2016; Sharma, 2019) to report empirical findings (see Blackham, 2019; Toh, Farzaneh, Kaiser & Lindemann, 2014; Vamsi Krishna Jasti & Kodali, 2014) of the relationships between the constructs as obtained by using SEM.

4.3.1 Limitations of the chosen research design

This study adopted quantitative research methods in which in-person and self-administered online questionnaires were used as primary data collection instruments. The collected raw data were analysed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and SEM to explore and confirm the correlations between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience. These statistical tests were conducted to determine the most parsimonious rural tourist experience prediction model.

4.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is described as approaches or methods applied for collecting, coordinating and evaluating data (Mamabolo, 2009; Polit & Hungler, 2004; McGregor, 2018). The following subsections detail the different methods used in this study. Figure 4.10 reveals how the research methodology was adopted and applied to the sampling procedure.

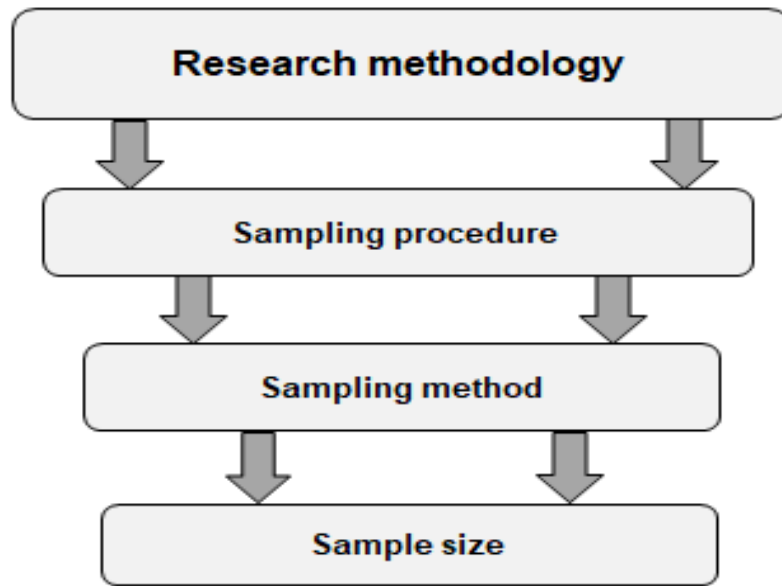


Figure 4.10: Application of the research methodology to the sampling procedure

Source: Author's contribution

4.4.1 Sampling procedure

Several scholars (Lavrakas, 2008; Martínez-Mesa, González-Chica, Duquia, Bonamigo & Bastos, 2016) have described sampling as the method used to select a subgroup from the population. Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010), Polit and Hungler (2004), and de Vetten, Schoonenboom and Keijzer (2018) describe the population as the whole group from which data can be obtained, and such a group must satisfy a specific standard to be incorporated into a scientific study. For this study, the discussion of the sampling size is preceded by a discussion of an adopted sampling method. A discussion of the target population for the guests at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village concludes the sampling procedure.

4.4.1.1 Sampling method

Brewerton and Millward (2001) and Taherdoost (2016) note uncertainty in collecting data from the entire study's target population, hence the need to draw a sample. Moreover, the sample refers to a subgroup of the population (Lavrakas, 2008; van Zyl, 2014; Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetz, 2016). Two sampling methods were employed

to collect the data: snowball nonprobability sampling and convenience sampling. These two methods comply with the UNISA ethics requirements as well as the changes to the lockdown regulations as prescribed during the COVID-19 pandemic (see section 4.4.4). Using nonprobability sampling in quantitative studies has recently become standard practice (Asiamah, Mensah & Oteng-Abayie, 2022). Scholars cautioned against generalising the results whenever nonprobability sampling was adopted in quantitative studies (Asiamah *et al.*, 2022; Vehovar, Toepoel & Steinmetzs, 2016). Transferability is synonymous with the generalisation of the results in quantitative design and can be used to indicate the applicability of the findings of a specific study to other similar contexts (Munthe-Kaas, Nokleby, Glenton & Lewin, S. 2020; Schloemer & Schroder-Back, 2018).

Snowball nonprobability sampling (see Breweton & Millward, 2001; Weisberg, 2005; Taherdoost, 2016) was used to collect data from the self-administered online questionnaire. Snowball sampling is the most appropriate method used when the population is relatively small and complex to access (Breweton & Millward, 2001; Weisberg, 2005; Taherdoost, 2016). The probability that all guests had visited Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past was unknown, and it could be difficult to access the target population. For this reason, the researcher found snowball sampling to be a suitable method for online data collection from 15 December 2022 until 16 March 2023. A URL link was distributed by the management of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village to guests on their database. Once the guests (respondents) had completed the questionnaire, they were requested to share the link with their counterparts (see Ayhan, 2011; Das, Tripathi, Chitrapu, Parveen, Showkat & Satapathy, 2017; Taherdoost, 2016) who had also stayed at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (an accommodation establishment) to participate in the study to increase the sample size.

A convenient nonprobability sampling method was deemed to be the most appropriate for drawing a sample from the target population and selecting respondents from the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The convenience sampling method was adopted for in-person data collection. Scholars defined convenience sampling as the method used for gathering data from respondents who are accessible at the location of interest at the time of data collection (Edgar & Manz, 2017; Galloway, 2005; Baxter, Courage & Caine, 2015). Therefore, a convenience sample was suitable for this study's in-person

data collection, where fieldworkers conducted interviews with respondents who were staying at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village between 7 March 2023 and 16 March 2023.

The rapid data were collected on 8–11 March 2023 during the Moshoeshoe Walk and at the closing ceremony at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village until 16 March 2023. Therefore, the sample for this study was guests of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village who had experienced heritage sites in the past. On 24 October 2023, the researcher applied for amended ethical clearance for title change, and on 3 November 2013, ethical approval was granted for the 3rd time to accommodate the change in the title (see Appendix 9).

4.4.1.2 Sample size

For this study, the sample-to-item ratio rule of thumb (Forsberg & Rantala, 2020; Memon, Ting, Cheah, Thurasamy, Chuah & Cham, 2020; Nthebe, 2016; Yeoh, Ibrahim, Oxley, Hamid & Rashid, 2016) was used to determine the sample size for the CFA. The sample-to-item ratio mainly calculates sample size using the number of items (questions) multiplied by 5-to-10 (Memon *et al.*, 2020). For this study, the questionnaire consisted of 48 total items (questions) multiplied by 5 to reach the minimum sample size of 240. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) indicate that factor analysis requires a large sample size because it is a technique based on the correlation matrix between the constructs; therefore, correlations require a large sample for consistency. For this study, the sample size was 334.

4.4.2 Measuring instrument

A research instrument is a tool used for data collection (Kabir, 2016; Ponto, 2015; Sileyew, 2020). A study that follows a positivism paradigm in the quantitative research tradition requires a questionnaire as a data collection instrument (Vosloo, 2014), as in the case of this study. Figure 4.11 demonstrates the measuring instrument design process.

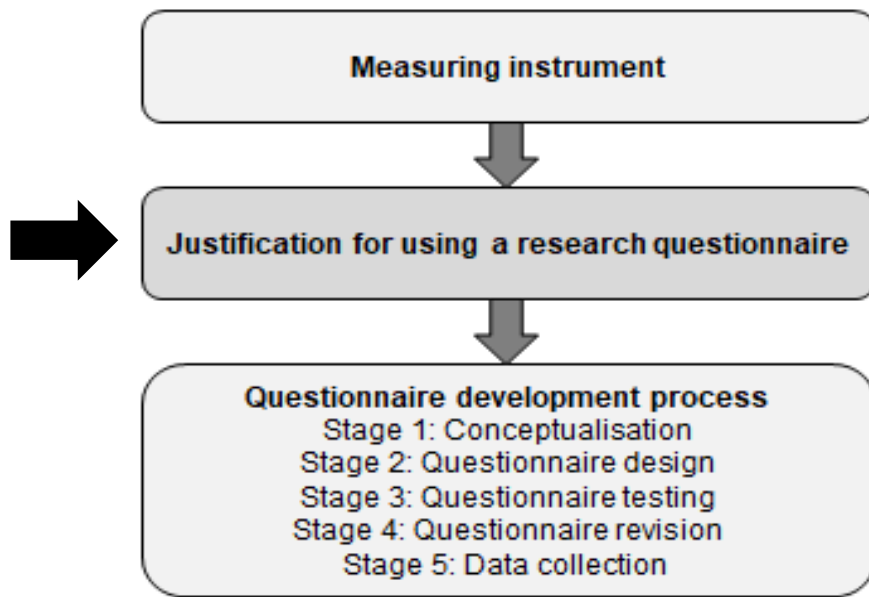


Figure 4.11: Research measurement instrument design process

Source: Author's contribution

As depicted in Figure 4.11, a questionnaire was used as a measurement instrument. A questionnaire is an effective approach commonly used for the gathering of quantitative data on one or more variables from a large sample (Abawi, 2017; Albudaiwi, 2017; Pozzo, Borgobello & Pierella, 2019). Therefore, a questionnaire was used to collect primary data (Curtis & Allen, 2018; Kabir, 2016; Seric & Ljubica, 2018). For a quantitative study, scholars (Kabir, 2016; Ponto, 2015; Zohrabi, 2013) advocate for the utilisation of self-administered online questionnaires for primary data collection. As no study has used constructs such as those mentioned in section 4.11 to investigate this objective (as introduced in section 4.2), the development of a new and suitable questionnaire (see Aithal & Aithal, 2020; Harlacher, 2016; Kishore, Jaswal, Kulkarni & De, 2021) consisting of distinctive constructs and dimensions (see Appendix 10) is needed to collect data from the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

4.4.2.1 Justification for using research questionnaire

The questionnaire has been consistently used as a research instrument in the hospitality and tourism industry around the globe (see Hue, Loc & Hong, 2022; Saravanan, 2019; Swart & Roodt, 2020; Tovmasyan, 2020). There is empirical evidence that the correlation between variables can be measured utilising quantitative research methods (Abdou, Mohamed, Khalil, Albakhit & Alarjani, 2022; Bayih & Singh, 2020; Nguyen, 2020; Niu & Chen, 2022).

An array of scholars recommends the use of instrument validity and reliability analysis for exploratory research (Dwivedi & Pandey, 2021; Hamann, Hernani-Merino & Vargas, 2023; Icen, 2020; Muslim, Habidin & Latip, 2019). The Cronbach's alpha (see Surucu & Maslakci, 2020; Surucu *et al.*, 2020; Taber, 2018) and the composite reliability (ρ_A) (see Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2018; Taber, 2018) were used to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the constructs. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) (see Ab Hamid, Sami & Mohmad Sidek, 2017; Hair *et al.*, 2018) was used to determine the validity of the constructs. Scholars refer to validity as an assessment of whether the instrument measures the intended purpose and refer to reliability as the degree to which an instrument offers consistent results (Ghazali, 2016; Mohajan, 2017; Price, Jhangiani & Chiang, 2015). For this study, the questionnaire was reviewed for face validity, content validity, and construct validity, and a pilot study in which tourism experts validated the content of the questionnaire was conducted.

Scholars emphasise the importance of validity and reliability tests to confirm that the results are accurate; hence, these tests are the basis for the integrity and quality of the questionnaire (Ahmed & Ishtiaq, 2021; Cheung, Cooper-Thomas, Lau & Wang, 2023; Futrell, 2023). Many hospitality and tourism studies have used validity and reliability tests to conduct exploratory studies to investigate the relationships between constructs in SEM (Afthanorhan, Awang, Salleh, Ghazali & Rashid 2018; Alown, Mohamad & Karim, 2020; Trentin, Espig, Tontini & da Silva, 2022). For this study, validity and reliability tests were used to confirm that the questionnaire was free from errors. For full details of validity, refer to section 4.4.3.1. For further details regarding reliability, see section 4.4.3.2.

4.4.2.2 Questionnaire development process

According to Mathers, Fox and Hunn (2007), unless researchers use an existing questionnaire, they must develop their own questionnaire. However, a suitable questionnaire for this study was not found, which necessitated the development of a questionnaire to address these objectives. Lavrakas (2008), El-Gohary and Alwasel (2009) and Kabir (2016) highlighted that designing a questionnaire is the first and most important step before undertaking any study. Nieuwenhuijsen (2005) suggested that questionnaire development should be guided by well-defined research objectives and diverse chosen items that should be turned into questions in a reasonable order. For the present study, the researcher developed a new suitable questionnaire following an extensive review of the literature on the constructs indicated in section 4.3, which guided the formulation of the study's objectives (see SROs 1.4.1; TROs 2.2) and questions (see SRQs 1.5.1). Malhotra (2006) and Mathers *et al.*, (2007) indicated that the questionnaire consists of a series of closed-ended questions with predetermined answers. According to Malhotra (2006), the overriding objective is to translate the researcher's information needs into a set of specific questions that respondents are willing and able to answer. For this study, unique constructs (as shown in section 4.3) were used to develop a questionnaire with closed-ended questions and predetermined items using a 7-point Likert scale (see Pinkus, Moore, Taplin & Pearce, 2016; Markovic, Raspor, Ivankovic & Planinc, 2013; Nthebe, 2016). This Likert intensity scale anchored the scale at the extreme ends; for instance, 7 were noted as "Strongly Agree", and 1 was "Strongly Disagree" (see Appendix 10). The following sections show the stages the researcher adopted from Brancato, Macchia, Murgia, Signore, Simeoni, Blanke, Körner, Nimmergut, Lima, Paulino and Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik (2006) to design a questionnaire for this study, as indicated in Figure 4.12.

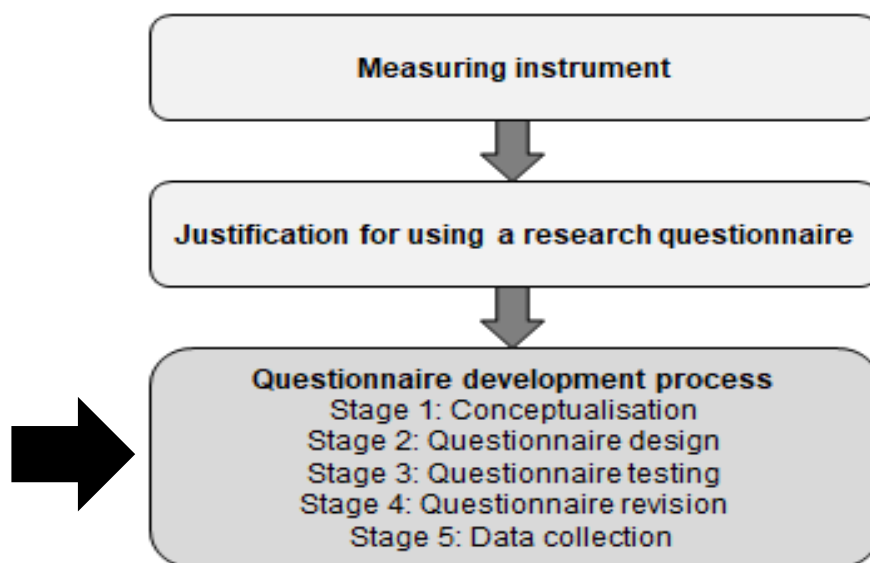


Figure 4.12: Questionnaire development process

Source: Author's contribution

Stage 1: Conceptualisation

Artino, Rochelle, Dezee, and Gehlbach (2014) stipulate that the first and most important step in questionnaire design is to consult and synthesise literature mainly to define the construct under investigation and to ascertain its connection with previous research. Furthermore, items need to be identified and adapted for the respective constructs. For this study, the questionnaire was developed through an extensive literature review on constructs, as indicated in section 4.3 and Appendix 10.

Mathers *et al.*, (2007) posit that questionnaire design and content depend solely on the research question and objectives. The present study's objectives (see SROs 1.4.1 & TROs 2.2) and questions (see SRQs 1.5.1) guided the entire process of questionnaire development.

Stage 2: Questionnaire design

Artino *et al.*, (2014) asserted that it is crucial to develop items to confirm that they are very well defined, logical and well written according to recent best practices in

questionnaire design. For this study, items, constructs and dimensions were selected as guided by the research objective and were included in the questionnaire development. As shown in Appendix 10, literature on each construct and related dimension was consulted to identify an original item. The original items and their scales were revised to new items and scales to meet the requirements and context of the present study. The first column shows authenticity as the construct. The first row shows involvement as a dimension of authenticity. The second column shows an original item and its scale taken from the consulted literature. The third column shows the revised item to fit the context of the present study. Finally, the last column shows the source from which an original item was taken in the literature.

Having revised the items and scales to fit the context of this study, the format of the final questionnaire (see Appendix 12) was developed. Briefly, the first column shows the definition of the construct followed by its definition of dimensions and questions. In the third and fourth columns, items are included in the form of statements. The questionnaire consisted of seven sections, namely, section A: screening question, section B: demographic information, section C: tourist safety, section D: authenticity, section E: brand personality, section F: brand attributes and section G: tourist experience (see Appendix 12).

Stage 3: Questionnaire testing

Taherdoost (2016) stated that the primary objective of running a pilot test is to confirm whether respondents clearly understand and answer all the questions. Nieuwenhuijsen (2005) and Stats (2019) acknowledge pilot testing as a fundamental part of the questionnaire development process to obtain written feedback and to eliminate unwanted errors before the questionnaires are completed. As part of the pilot tests (see section 4.4.3.1 for more details), the URL link for the questionnaire (Lime Survey) was distributed via email on 25 October 2022 to a sample size of 7. The respondents were requested to indicate whether they understood and were able to answer all the questions and recommended changes to improve the clarity of the questions, as shown in Appendix 11.

Stage 4: Questionnaire revision

A report with a sample size of 7 (2 Tourism experts, 3 Higher Education Officers, 1 Language Editor and 1 Statistician) was compiled after pilot testing the study (as shown in Appendix 11). The questionnaire was revised based on the provided recommendations to streamline the data collection process. Then, the corrected and final versions of the cover letter (consent form) (see Appendixes 12 and 13) and questionnaire, as indicated in step 2, were computed in The University of South Africa (UNISA) Lime Survey, which was accessed by respondents via URL Link: <http://survey.unisa.ac.za/index.php/417734?lang=en>.

Stage 5: Data collection

Before the questionnaire was distributed, it was sent to Mr. Khaile (social and communication specialist) for English language editing. Upon the receipt of feedback and recommendations (see Appendix 11), changes were adopted to make the questionnaire readable and flow well.

After the questionnaire was revised, the final version was ready for data collection. The researcher sent the URL Link <http://survey.unisa.ac.za/index.php/417734?lang=en> to the management of the village so that they could send it to their previous guests. Additionally, the final version of the questionnaire was used by fieldworkers, as indicated in section 4.4.4.2.1, to conduct interviews for in-person data collection during the closing of the Moshoeshoe Walk held at the Thaba-Boisu Cultural Village.

4.4.3 Instrument validity and reliability

The primary purpose of the questionnaire is to obtain appropriate information to support the reliability and validity of the collected data. Scholars refer to validity as the examination to establish whether an instrument measures what it is intended to measure, while reliability is the instrument's ability to produce consistent results (Ghazali, 2016; Mohajan, 2017; Price *et al.*, 2015). For this study, validation and reliability (as highlighted in section 4.4.2.1) were used for instrument fit purposes. For more details regarding the instrument validation, see section 4.4.3.1., and for the instrument reliability, see section 4.4.3.2.

Figure 4.13 shows the flow of content for instrument validation and reliability for this study, which will be discussed in the sections below.

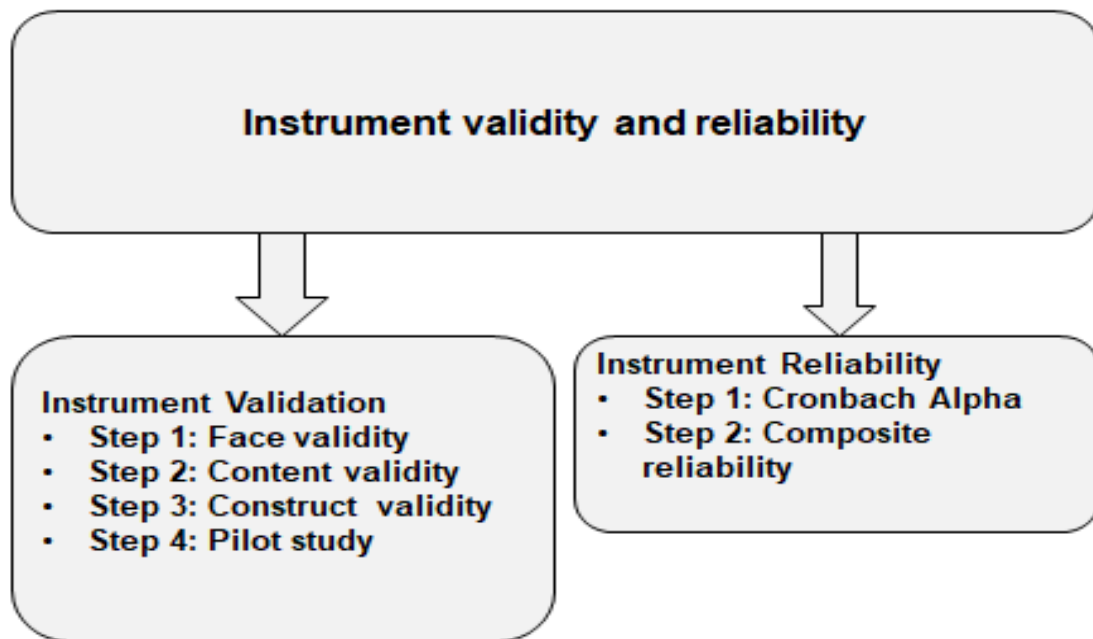


Figure 4.13: Instrument validity and reliability

Source: Author's contribution

4.4.3.1 Instrument validation

In this study, face validity, content validity, construct validity and a pilot study (as introduced in section 4.4.2.1) were used to validate the research instrument, as reflected below.

Step 1: Face validity

Face validity was used to assess the instrument's (questionnaire) relevance and the appropriateness of its items to measure the objectives (see Holden, 2010). Previous literature on the selected constructs and their items was reviewed (section 4.3) to ensure that the designed questionnaire fit the purpose of the study. Thus, a questionnaire was created to be meaningful to the study's selected respondents.

Step 2: Content validity

The researcher used content validity in the development of the research instrument by selecting appropriate constructs (section 4.3). To ensure that the instrument's group of items fit the subject under study (see Sekaran & Bougie, 2010), the researcher submitted the designed instrument to the supervisor and co-supervisor, who are experts in the tourism management community, and a statistician (Mrs. Venter) for expert validation (see Artino *et al.*, 2014; Mohajan, 2017). This quality assurance process ensured that the developed instrument truly reflected the instrument's validity and eliminated errors that may threaten the content validity.

Step 3: Construct validity

The study used the average variance extracted (AVE) to assess convergent validity (Ates & Altuner Coban, 2022). Hair *et al.*, (2018) recommended the use of the AVE to validate the scale using a cut-off value ≥ 0.50 . Ab Hamid, Sami and Sidek (2017) posit that AVE values greater than ≥ 0.40 are still acceptable. Surucu *et al.*, (2020) stressed that convergent validity is acceptable if the AVE values are less than the composite reliability values. For this study, the AVE cut-off value was used to investigate the validity of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as constructs (see section 4.4.2.1).

Step 4: Pilot study

Several scholars (Artino *et al.*, 2014; Fraser, Fahlman, Arscott & Guillot, 2018; Sileyew, 2020) have reached the universal consensus that a pilot study can also be referred to as a feasibility study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001; Orsmond & Cohn, 2015). Pilot studies are one of the priority phases in a scientific study that assesses the item consistency of a measurement scale to validate the data collection instrument and sample selection and to detect and eliminate errors. As part of the pilot test (as indicated in section 4.4.2.2), the Lime Survey link was distributed to a smaller subsample (see Anthony, 2012; In, 2017; Bell, Whitehead & Julious, 2018) of 8 people to test the questionnaire's accuracy and eliminate errors to enhance its correctness (see Appendix 11).

4.4.3.2 Instrument reliability

Reliability (as introduced in section 4.4.2.1) is known as the uniformity of the measure of an instrument as well as the internal consistency. This statistical test assesses the

consistency of respondents' scores among the many items measured (Barchard, 2010; Price *et al.*, 2015). This study adopted Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (ρ_A) to ensure the internal consistency and reliability of the instrument, as indicated in steps 1 and 2 below.

Step 1: Cronbach's alpha

The internal consistency of this instrument was established using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α) (see Surucu & Maslakci, 2020; Surucu *et al.*, 2020; Taber, 2018), which was computed for each construct and dimension. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient above 0.60 is considered acceptable for the instrument's internal consistency (see Surucu *et al.*, 2020). For this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were computed by deploying the IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) V29 to determine the internal consistency and reliability of the scale for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience (see section 4.4.2.1).

Step 2: Composite Reliability

Scholars (Hair *et al.*, 2018; Taber, 2018; Yusof, 2017) contend that the α value is often unsuitable for use as a basis to confirm the reliability of constructs. Therefore, Hair *et al.* (2018) recommend that composite reliability (ρ_A) be used as a strong and appropriate measure of instrument reliability. Hair *et al.* (2018) and Taber (2018) proposed cut-off values between 0.60 and 0.70 for acceptable ρ_A , while greater values confirmed greater ρ_A . Surucu *et al.*, (2020) assert that values of composite reliability need to be greater than values of AVE if an instrument is to be deemed valid and reliable. This study adopted ρ_A to establish the internal consistency and reliability of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience with the recommended cut-off values (see section 4.4.2.1).

4.4.4 Research procedure

Figure 4.14 depicts the research procedure adopted to conduct this study.

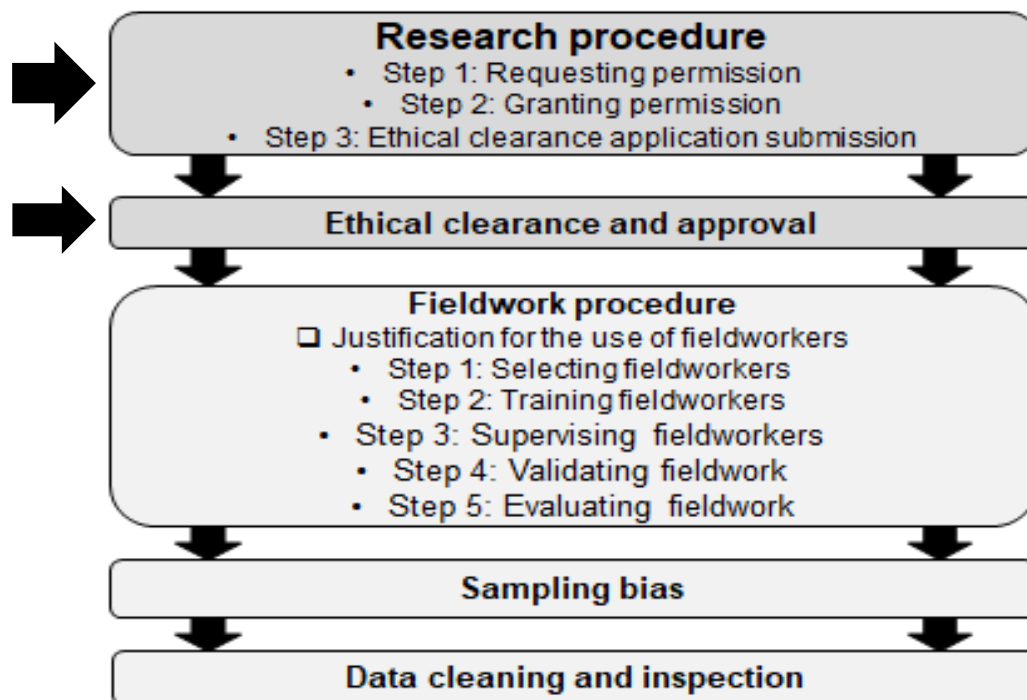


Figure 4.14: Research procedure and subheadings

Source: Author's contribution

Step 1: Requesting Permission

Lavrakas (2008) stressed that a gatekeeper is an intermediary between the investigator and research respondents. Gatekeeper permission is described by Homan (2002) and Singh and Wassenaar (2016) as granting investigator access to research participation by people within a certain authority of specific entities to be used as a case study. To gain access to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village for data collection, the researcher sent letters to the management of the establishment on 26 January 2022 (see Appendixes 1 & 2). These letters requested permission to collect data using an online survey to adhere to UNISA COVID-19 safety measures as an ethical requirement. As the response rate of the online survey was very low, the researcher wrote letters to the management of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village to request permission (see Appendixes 5 & 6) for in-person data collection.

On February 23, 2022, the researcher received gatekeeper letters (see Appendixes 3 & 4) from the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (accommodation establishment), granting permission for online data collection. To obtain additional permission for the in-person

data collection, the researcher received gatekeeper permission letters from the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village on 6 September 2022 (see Appendixes 7 and 8).

Step 3: Ethical clearance application submission

On 15 July 2022, the researcher completed the ethical clearance application form and embedded all the necessary documents (such as the research proposal, gatekeeper letters, and questionnaire, researcher and supervisor curriculum vitae). These were required to apply to the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC) for ethical clearance for online data collection.

On 27 July 2022, the researcher received feedback on the ethical clearance application from UNISA URERC. In addressing the reviewer's comments, the researcher embedded letters requesting permission (see step 1) and letters granting permission for in-person data collection (see step 2), a confidentiality agreement signed by the statistician (see Appendix 16), a fieldwork information sheet (see Appendix 14) and the respondents' signature sheet (see Appendix 15) signed by fieldworkers and respondents for in-person data collection. Thereafter, the amended ethical clearance application was resubmitted, and ethical approval was granted on 12 October 2022 for in-person data collection.

On 24 October 2023, the researcher submitted the amended ethical clearance to request a change in the title of the study to focus only on the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, as indicated in section 4.4.1.1.

4.4.4.1 Ethical clearance and approval

Scholars stress that research that includes human studies requires consent from the research review committee before it can commence (Cleaton-Jones & Curzon, 2012; Rossi, Cerquetella, Gavazza, Galosi, Berardi, Mangiaterra, Mari, Suchodolski, Lidbury, Steiner & Pengo, 2020). Williams (2000) asserts that not only does a study involving human subjects require ethical clearance approval from the research ethics committee but also that all kinds of research involving animals, living things and dangerous material are obliged to go under the review process by an autonomous committee to assess whether the proposed study poses threats or risks to either the research subjects or researchers. The review process is the primary responsibility of the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of the entities hosting the scientific inquiry. The

UNISA Department of Applied Management Ethics Review Committee (ERC) granted the researcher an ethical clearance certificate (ECC) with the reference 2022_CEMS_DAM_006 on 13 October 2022 as approval to conduct the study. Thus, this has adhered to the UNISA Research Ethics Policy (Towards the African University Shaping Futures in the Service of Humanity) (UNISA, 2016). This study observed the National Health Research Ethics Council, and compliance with Section 73 of the National Health Act (NHA) 61 of 2003, which seeks to ensure research is undertaken in accordance with ethical research standards.

On 3 December 2023, ethical approval was granted (see Appendix 9) with the reference (Ref #2022_CEMS_DAM_006) for changing the title for the study to only focus on the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

4.4.4.2 Fieldwork procedure

Fieldwork is described as a data collection process that uses diverse methods, such as observation and unstructured interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Fieldwork is in most cases used in qualitative research, but it is still suitable for quantitative research (Nunkoo, 2018). For this study, data collection commenced on 15 December 2022 and ended on 16 March 2023. The primary data were collected in two ways. First, data collection was based on a self-administered online questionnaire (Lime Survey) that was made accessible to respondents (guests of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) through the URL link.

Second, field workers were deployed at the property for in-person data collection from 7 March 2023 to 16 March 2023. Permission was granted to collect data during the Moshoeshoe Walk. The rapid data collection occurred during the four days (8-11 March 2023) when the Moshoeshoe Walk (116 km historical event organised annually to commemorate the founder of Basotho nation-King Moshoeshoe 1st) attendees departed to Monkhoaneng and during the closing ceremony held at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, as indicated in section 4.4.2.2.

4.4.4.2.1 Justification for the use of fieldworkers

The use of fieldworkers for data collection in the research domain is well documented (Griffiths, Babalola, Brown, Kadt, Malatji, Thorogood, Tseng & Goudge, 2019; Kingori & Gerrets, 2019; Moyo, Francis & Bessong, 2017). Many studies (Acha-Anyi, Ndolose

& Khunou, 2021; Bob, Swart, Perry, & Gounden, 2020; Drita, 2018; Nunkoo, 2018) support the appropriateness of fieldworkers for data collection in the tourism industry. It is advantageous for researchers to train fieldworkers to manage in-person questionnaires because face-to-face data collection provides control over the selection of respondents (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010), particularly based on screening questions.

Figure 4.15 demonstrates the steps deployed during the fieldwork procedure, sampling bias and data cleaning and inspection.

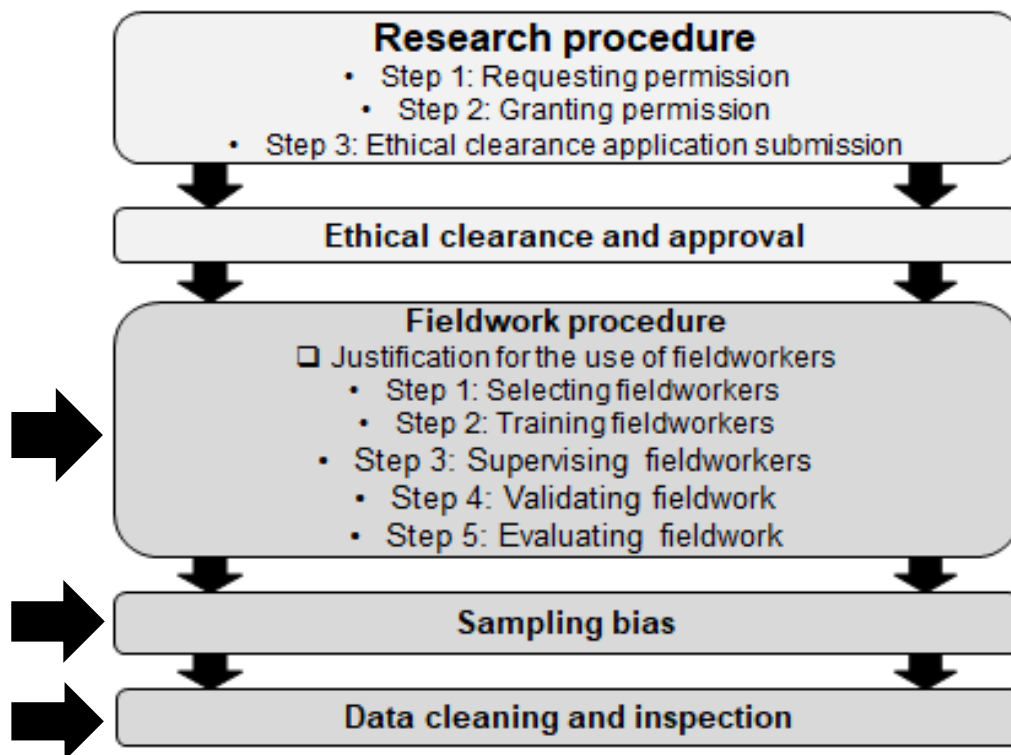


Figure 4.15 Research procedure and fieldwork procedure

Source: adapted from (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004)

Figure 4.15 depicts the study’s research process and fieldwork process. These include steps deployed during the fieldwork procedure, which will be discussed first in the preceding headings, followed by discussions of sampling bias (see section 4.4.4.3) and data cleaning and inspection (see section 4.4.4.4).

Step 1: Selecting field workers

Data collection includes the utilisation of fieldworkers, who should be healthy, friendly, people, talkative, have a good personality, knowledgeable and well-experienced (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010). In preparation for in-person data collection, the researcher recruited 20 field workers at the beginning of February 2023. The researcher created a WhatsApp group for all fieldworkers to make logistic arrangements to convene physically at Sefikeng sa Moshoeshoe Park. This was the place where fieldworkers convened for fieldwork training, as indicated in the fieldwork information sheet (see Appendix 14), and to sign the code of conduct (see Appendix 17).

Step 2: Training fieldworkers

Extremely determined, highly trained fieldworkers are critical for the collection of credible data (ICF Macro, 2009). The field workers were trained to select the right respondents based on screening questions (see Appendix 13) and were encouraged to participate in the research and record answers accurately (see Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010). Moreover, the following aspects were considered for conducting training for fieldworkers (also see Appendix 14):

- The field workers were trained to make the initial contact (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010), which is an introduction and opening remark. Prospective respondents were requested to participate and answer questions to the best of their knowledge.
- The field workers were trained on how to ask the questions (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010). The participants were informed about the objective of the study and the importance of being familiar with the questionnaire structure when asked questions. Fieldworkers had to use the exact wording as it appears on the questionnaire.
- Fieldworkers were trained in probing (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010). This process entails the use of strategic techniques to repeat questions and answers to assist respondents in understanding and concentrating on particular content.
- Fieldworkers were trained on how to record the answers (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010) when using a mobile device. Once

the online questionnaire was completed by the field workers, he/she had to select their name as evidence of the collected data and then click the submission button for the recording of the answers.

- Fieldworkers were trained to terminate the interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010) and on how to thank respondents for their participation and completion of the questionnaire.

Step 3: Supervising fieldworkers

The principal researcher supervised fieldworkers to ensure quality and sample control (see Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010) during fieldwork. This task was the responsibility of the main researcher.

Step 4: Validating the fieldwork

The researcher was physically present before the departure of the Moshoeshoe Walk attendees and during the closing ceremony at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village to validate the fieldwork. The researcher randomly identified certain respondents and asked whether they indeed participated in the study (see Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010) as a way of validating fieldwork.

Step 5: Evaluating the fieldwork

Many scholars (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Hall & Oppenheim, 2004; Malhotra, 2010) indicate that fieldworkers must be assessed based on cost, time, number of responses, and value of the interview and data collection. For this study, the field workers were paid per completed questionnaire, which was quality controlled against the signatures on the participant signature sheets (see Appendix 15). By employing these control measures, the researcher could manage the number of responses and cost and ensure that the minimum required number of responses was collected.

4.4.4.3 Sampling bias

Sampling bias refers to ascertainment bias, which occurs when certain members of a population have a high possibility of being included in the sample compared to others (Bhandari, 2022; Krotki, 2008; Panzeri, Magri & Carraro, 2008). This study used a purposive sample (Breweton and Millward, 2001; Das *et al.*, 2017; Taherdoost, 2016) to select the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village as the target population. Thus, the study was strictly limited to people who had previously lived at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural

Village. As indicated in section 4.4.1.1, the study used snowball nonprobability sampling and convenience sampling as two sampling methods for online and in-person data collection, respectively. Freedman (2005: 23) cautions that “statistical inference with convenience samples is a risky business.” As a result, this study was subjected to biases because members of the population might not have had an equal opportunity to be selected in the sample.

People who had never lived at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village were excluded from the sample. Hence, the results of this study were not generalisable to the whole population.

4.4.4.4 Data cleaning and inspection

In preparation for statistical analysis, the collected data were extracted from the UNISA Lime Survey website and imported into a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet (a product of the Microsoft Office software package) (Barowy, 2017; Condon, Buckley & Exline, 2021; Rose, Spinks & Isabel-Canhoto, 2015). The imported primary data were subjected to cleaning or scrubbing to ensure quality before analysis (Barowy, 2017; Davis, 2010; Snyder, 2019). For this study, the collected data were cleaned based on one important screening question (see Appendix 2):

Have you stayed at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past? (Yes/NO)

The questionnaire was strictly meant for people who had previously stayed at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The respondents who answered **no** to the screening question were directed to the last page of the survey and thanked for their participation because they did not meet the survey criterion and because their responses were not useful; hence, they were deleted.

Ultimately, the respondents who answered “**yes**” to the screening question were eligible to participate in the survey and were directed to all the sections to complete this survey. These respondents fulfilled the study screening question criteria and were allowed to complete the entire questionnaire. These responses were considered useful for the study’s data analysis.

4.4.5 Statistical data analysis

For data analysis (see Burns & Grove, 2003), Kremelberg (2011), George and Mallery (2016) and Ho (2017) suggested the use of IBM SPSS V29 software because it is capable of performing statistical tests. The main objective of statistics is to define and summarise data and condense it into a smaller but more significant size to enable predictions of the relationship (Munro, 2005). For this study, the data analysis was performed by the researcher using IBM SPSS V28 to run univariate, bivariate and multivariate tests. Guetterman (2019) contends that to perform correct analysis, the use of software applications requires competent researchers; therefore, it is important to choose the best statistical method for the collected data. For this study, Mrs. Dina Venter (a statistician) conducted quality assurance on the initially analysed data.

4.4.5.1 Univariate, bivariate and multivariate analyses

Univariate analysis was used in this study to perform descriptive statistical analysis of market segmentation (demographic details) variables and latent constructs: tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as separate constructs. Bivariate analysis was used to determine the relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent variables) and tourist experience (as the dependent variable). Multivariate analysis was used in this study to run CFA for the structural model, supported by the Pearson product moment correlation, as illustrated in Figure 4.16.

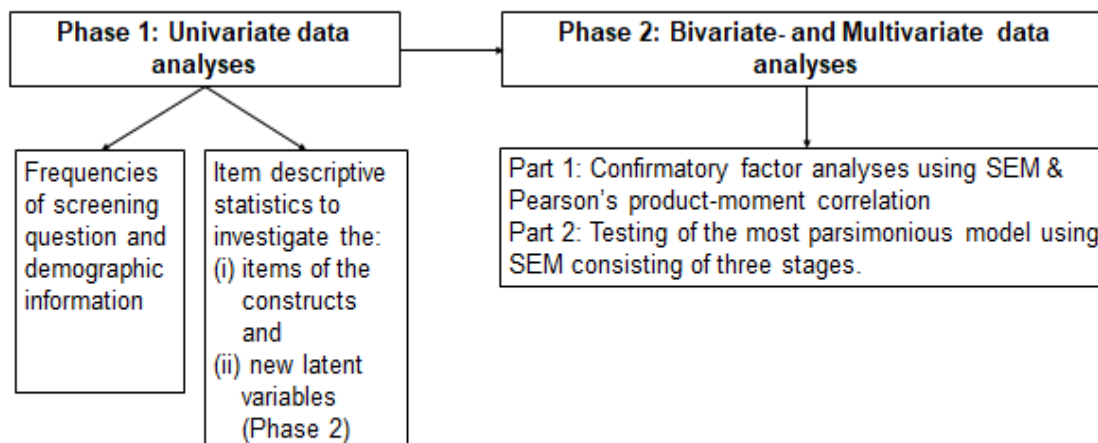


Figure 4.16: Phases in the statistical analyses

Source: Author's contribution

The data analysis involved two phases (phase 1 and phase 2), as illustrated in Figure 4.16. Phase 1 presented univariate data analysis based on the frequencies of screening questions, demographic information and item descriptive statistics to investigate items of the constructs and new latent variables. Phase 2 involved bivariate and multivariate data analysis based on two parts (part 1 and part 2). Part 1 presented CFA using SEM and Pearson's product-moment correlation, and part 2 presented data based on testing the most parsimonious model using SEM consisting of the three stages.

4.4.5.1.1 Univariate analysis

Scholars define the univariate statistical test as the analysis of a statistical dataset to differentiate either one item from another or one construct from another construct (Ho, 2006; Ramirez-Valverde, Hernandez-Alvarez, Nunez-Dominguez, Ruiz-Flores & Garcia-Muniz, 2007; Reinhart, 2017; Sandilands, 2014; Zumbo, 2014). Therefore, univariate analysis was used in this study to investigate tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience separately. Moreover, scholars recommend measurements of central tendency to find the centre of the dataset through the mean, median and mode and dispersion of how spread values are

in the dataset through the range, interquartile range, standard deviation, and variance when performing univariate analysis (Campbell, Machin & Walters, 2016; Dempster & Hanna, 2012; McDonald, 2014; Verzani, 2005). For this study, the mean was used as a measure of central tendency, and the standard deviation was used as a measure of dispersion.

The study used measures of frequency to report data for sections A (screening question) and B (demographic information). Mishra, Pandey, Singh, Gupta, Sahu and Keshri (2019) state that frequency analysis is a fundamental part of statistics because it shows the number of occurrences in terms of frequency and percentage. For this study, Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS V28 were used to produce percentages and graphs to report the dataset for screening questions and demographic information (see section 4.4.3.2).

For the datasets of sections C (tourist safety), D (authenticity), E (brand personality), F (brand attributes) and G (tourist experience), the study used measures of central tendency and dispersion for normality distribution. Elliott and Woodward (2007) highlighted the importance of running normality tests to establish if the dataset deviates from normality to ensure the accuracy of results for any further analysis. Scholars (Campbell, Machin & Walters, 2016; Dempster & Hanna, 2012; McDonald, 2014; Verzani, 2005) recommend measurements of central tendency to determine the centre of a dataset through the mean and dispersion to determine how to spread values in the dataset through the range, interquartile range, standard deviation, and variance when performing univariate analysis. First, the central tendency was used in this study to find the centre of the dataset of the items for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience using means. Second, dispersion was used to establish how to spread values in the dataset of the items for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience individually by means of standard deviation and variance. The same analyses were conducted for the new latent variables, as indicated in Table 4.6.

Gardner, Kline and Ludvik (2014) indicate that central tendency and dispersion can measure data distribution, but they are not adequate for determining the nature of distribution. Hence, skewness and kurtosis should be adapted to determine the shape of the data distribution. Field (2009) stipulates that when using skewness and kurtosis,

the recommended range of a normal distribution is between -2 and +2. Therefore, skewness and kurtosis were used in the present study to establish the shape of the data distribution for the items related to tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as well as for the new latent variables (constructs), as indicated in Table 4.6.

Avram and Marușteri (2022) stated that using graphical methods for normality distribution is important for ensuring the accuracy of the results. Orcan (2020) recommends the use of histograms concurrently with other normality test methods for inspecting the shape of the distribution because it is very informative. The present study used symmetric bell-curve histograms to show the sample size, mean and standard deviation of the new latent variables for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience in response to the test for normality. More details on this discussion are presented under step 1 (model specification) of the SEM (see section 5.4.2.1.1).

Kass, Friedman, Leserman, Caudill, Zuttermeister and Benson (1991) recommended the use of mean scores ranging from 1 to 7 to interpret possible mean scores in research where very low mean ranges between 1.00 and 2.49, medium-low mean ranges between 2.50 and 3.99, medium-high mean ranges between 4.00 and 5.49 and finally very high mean ranges between 5.50 and 7.00. For this study, the mean scores ranged from 1 to 7 (see section 5.4.2.1.4).

4.4.5.1.2 Bivariate analysis (Pearson product moment correlation)

Bivariate analysis is defined as the analysis intended to find the relationships between two constructs, the level of association if there is any and if one construct is predicted from another (Sandilands, 2014). Perinetti (2019) highlighted that the Pearson product moment (r), Kendall (τ), Spearman (ρ) and point-biserial (r_{pb}) coefficients are the most commonly used correlation coefficients for bivariate analysis. For this study, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to conduct bivariate analysis because it assesses the linear relationships between the new latent variables (Pallant, 2016).

The Pearson moment is named after mathematician and biostatistician Kaarl Pearson, and it is known as the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient, which is the

method that defines the level of linear correlation between latent variables (Okwonu, Asaju & Arunaye, 2020; Profillidis & Botzoris, 2019). The correlation coefficient enables the researcher to explain the strength of the relationship and can be utilised as descriptive or inferential statistics (Hahs-Vaughn, 2023). Empirical research supports the use of a Pearson correlation coefficient to determine the level of relationship between two latent constructs (Josefsson & Sandstrom, 2022; Liu, Yang, Liu, Bao, Ciu, Ho & Li, 2023; Selvanathan, Jayabalan, Saini, Supramaniam & Hussin, 2020).

Mahdzar (2022) proposed that the coefficient value be used to interpret the correlation between two variables, where 0.10–0.29 indicates a low correlation strength, 0.30–0.49 reveals a moderate correlation and 0.50–1.00 shows a high correlation. For this study, a scale of the r coefficient was used to determine the degree of the linear relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes (as exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as an endogenous variable), as discussed in SEM Step 4 (see sections 4.4.5.1.3.1 and 5.4.2.1.4).

4.4.5.1.3 Multivariate analysis (CFA)

The bivariate analysis was supported by multivariate analyses. Scholars define multivariate analysis as the measurement of the effect of multiple independent (or exogenous) variables on a dependent (or endogenous) variable (Chatfield & Collins, 1980; Gauch, 2012; Russell, 2019; Venables & Ripley, 1999). The measurement of multiple variables on a complex tentative component requires concurrent analysis of constructs as opposed to analysing them separately; hence, multivariate analysis permits researchers to explore and combine multiple constructs and establish the impact of each construct on the existence of other constructs (Rencher, 2003).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and Pearson product moment correlation were used in this study to confirm the correlations between items and factors in the theoretical model. When comparing the advantages of CFA to those of exploratory factor analysis (EFA), scholars (Arifin & Yusoff, 2016; Gallagher & Brown 2013; Goni, Naing, Hasan, Wan-Arfah, Deris, Arifin, Baaba & Njaka, 2020) have revealed that CFA is more powerful than EFA for identifying internal consistency and reliability.

Multivariate analysis was used in this study to test hypotheses **H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, H₅, and H₆** using SEM to conduct CFA and test the final structural (most parsimonious) model. The inferential analysis of this study was guided by the research hypotheses. The data analysis for this study involved two parts (CFA and SEM). The first part of the data analysis was derived using CFA in SEM to test the following hypotheses:

H₁: *Tourist safety can be reliably and validly measured.*

H₂: *Authenticity can be reliably and validly measured.*

H₃: *Brand personality can be reliably and validly measured.*

H₄: *Brand attributes can be reliably and validly measured.*

H₅: *Tourist experience can be reliably and validly measured.*

The second part of the data analysis was achieved using SEM to test the most parsimonious model:

H₆: *The theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.*

4.4.5.1.3.1 SEM to conduct the CFA and test the most parsimonious model

SEM was used to conduct the CFA, and **H₁, H₂, H₃, H₄, and H₅** were tested. CFA is a form of SEM that is mainly used for measurement models (Coulacoglou & Saklofske, 2018). CFA is the technique used to confirm all baseline models' latent variables for one-dimensionality, validity and reliability prior to the estimation of the structural (most parsimonious) model (Baistaman, Awang, Afthanorhan & Rahim, 2020; Ehido, Awang, Ibeabuchi, Afthanorhan, Fawehinmi, Aigbogum & Abdullahi, 2022; Rahlin, Awang Afthanorhan & Aimran, 2019). Collier (2020) and Crede and Harms (2019) indicate that CFA is used to test how well items measure different observed and unobserved items of constructs in the measurement model. CFA allows the test of how well items measure different unobserved constructs through regression coefficients and covariance between constructs in the SEM (Collier, 2020; Crede & Harms, 2019; Ehido *et al.* 2022).

Scholars stipulate that in a measurement model, convergent validity, construct validity and discriminant validity are needed for latent constructs (Asnawi, Sukoco & Fanani, 2019; Mohamad, Afthanorhan, Awang & Mohammad, 2019; Awang, Lim & Zainudin, 2018; Yusof, Awang, Jusoff & Ibrahim, 2017). CFA is more powerful than EFA for assessing reliability (Goni, Naing, Hasan, Wan-Arfah, Deris, Arifin, Baaba & Njaka, 2020). CFA is considered a fundamental technique used for validation in social and behavioural sciences (Ababneh, Ong, Alsaloumi & Hussain, 2023). CFA allows model fit to be interpreted by providing threshold values (Goretzko, Siemund & Sterner, 2023). CFA is conducted using five SEM steps adapted from scholars (Byrne, 2013, 2016; Hoyle, 2011; Kline, 2010), as indicated in Figure 4.17. The final step is used to test the most parsimonious model.

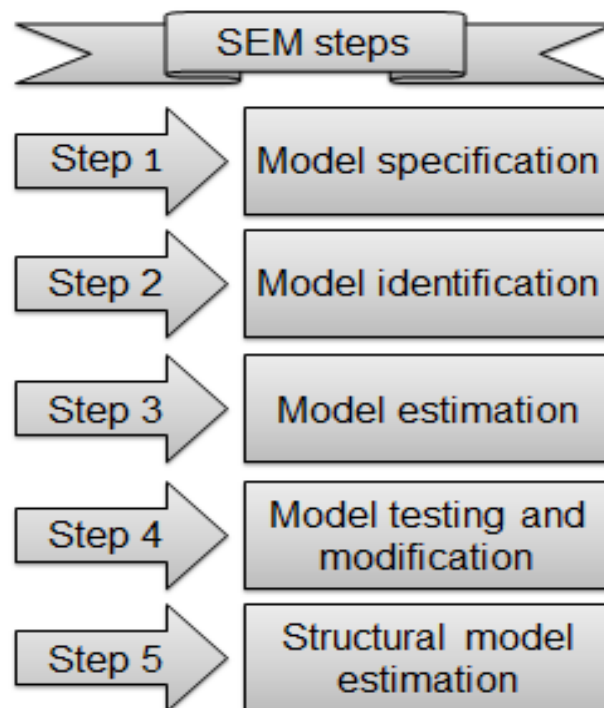


Figure 4.17: The SEM steps for CFA

Source: adapted from (Byrne, 2013, 2016; Hoyle, 2011; Kline, 2010)

Figure 4.9 illustrates the SEM steps used to conduct CFA and test the most parsimonious model. The SEM steps are used as a procedure to present the results in chapter 4. The next section provides a discussion of the SEM steps.

STEP 1: Model specification

The model specification describes the hypothesised correlation between latent constructs using SEM based on the theoretical framework (Fan, Chen, Shirkey, John, Wu, Park & Shao, 2016). The basis for establishing correlations between latent variables and their respective indicators is measurement theory, which is the necessary condition to achieve useful results using SEM (Hair *et al.*, 2022). Following measurement theory, hypotheses were tested to determine the reliability and validity of the measured constructs (Sarstedt, Hair, Cheah, Becker & Ringle, 2019, 2020). In the model specification, the researchers commonly demonstrate hypotheses in graphical theoretical models to show a visual depiction of the theoretical constructs under investigation and the intended relationships between them (Kline, 2016). For this study, the proposed theoretical framework (using tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience) (see section 1.3) and the motivation of hypotheses from the reviewed literature in chapter 2 were used as the basis for specifying the measurement model for the development of a rural tourist experience prediction model (see section 5.4.2.1). As indicated earlier in section 4.4.1.2, the sample size for this study was 334, which is a sample size larger than $n = 200$, as recommended for small and medium-sized models (see Murti, 2016); therefore, it is suitable for SEM.

STEP 2: Model identification (baseline measurement model)

Model identification is the assessment of whether the theoretical model is over-distinguished, just distinguished, or under-distinguished (Fan *et al.*, 2016). Kline (2016) indicated that although it is good to use a graphical theoretical model, identification requires a statistical presentation of model parameters such as the number of observed and unobserved variables. The measurement model can only be distinguished if the number of parameters that need to be estimated is less than or equal to the number of parameters from the dataset, which is also referred to as a negative degree of freedom (Davvetas, Diamantopoulos, Zaefarian & Sichtmann, 2020). The models that are not identified are taken back for respecification; otherwise, their analysis would be unrewarding (Kline, 2016).

For parameter estimation, it can only be possible to estimate model coefficients when the model is either just-identified or over-identified (Fan *et al.*, 2016). Davvetas *et al.*,

(2020) indicated that parameters, also referred to as measurement model parameters, are crucial because they provide a basis for determining whether theoretically proposed constructs are valid and reliable for the intended model. The proposed theoretical framework is used as a scale for computers to estimate parameters using both unstandardised and standardised regressions of residuals from endogenous and exogenous variables (Kline, 2016). Models should be examined for nonnormality by deploying standard errors, critical ratios and p-value of significance metrics for parameter estimation (Gao, Mokhtarian & Johnston, 2008). Byrne (2013) showed that the standard error does not have a consensus cut-off; therefore, lower values of standard error are regarded as accurate estimates and for the critical ratio, the recommended cut-off is ≥ 1.96 . Gao, Mokhtarian and Johnston (2008) recommend the cut-off ≤ 0.05 for a significant p value. For this study, parameter estimates were obtained by assessing the standard error; critical ratios and p value (see section 5.4.2.1.2).

STEP 3: Model estimation (measurement model)

The measurement model should be assessed for convergent validity which is defined as the level at which a formatively specified variable relates to its corresponding measured items (Hair *et al.*, 2022). Chin (1998) proposed that redundancy analysis be used, which requires the researcher to plan the research design and incorporate alternative measures of variables in the questionnaire. Cheah, Sarstedt, Ringle, Ramayah and Ting (2018) indicate that one measuring item for a construct is deemed adequate as an alternative measure. However, Diamantopoulos, Sarstedt, Fuchs, Wilczynski and Kaiser (2012) and Sarstedt, Diamantopoulos, Salzberger and Baumgartner (2016) contend that a single item as an alternative measure of the construct has limitations compared to criterion validity.

The formative model should be evaluated for indicator collinearity, which precisely means that two or more factors (indicators) are strongly associated with the formative model. A greater association of indicators leads to standard errors in the weights of the indicators, which in turn results in type II errors. Hair *et al.*, (2022) suggested the variance inflation factor (VIF) as the standard metric used to examine indicator collinearity, where a VIF ≥ 5 indicates that the degree of collinearity is greater; hence, collinearity problems occur. In this case, indicators can be reduced or merged or high-

order constructs can be deployed as a technique for reducing collinearity problems (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2022). Hair *et al.*, (2022) indicated that a VIF value between ≥ 3 and < 5 indicates that critical collinearity may occur, and Hair *et al.*, (2022) stated that a VIF value of < 3 indicates that collinearity is not a problem. For this study, the VIF was used to assess collinearity for indicators measuring tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as latent constructs of the measurement model (see section 5.4.2.1.3).

In the evaluation process, the reflective model should be assessed for statistical significance and relevance of the indicator weights to establish whether indicators correlate with the respective measured constructs for the theoretical model (Hair *et al.*, 2022). Cenfetelli and Bassellier (2009) recommended the use of the absolute contribution with cut-off loading of ≥ 0.50 as an effective method to establish whether the indicator contributes significantly to the intended construct, and greater factor (indicator) loading assumes that there is sufficient contribution of the indicator to the construct. For this study, statistical significance and relevance were assessed using the recommended cut-off values to show indicators' contributions to their respective constructs (see section 5.4.2.1.3).

Model evaluation is the process of examining model fit using general model fit indices (Fan *et al.*, 2016). Model fit is used to assess the construct validity of the measurement model (Ehido *et al.*, 2022). Model fit considers the covariance matrix of variables by comparing the theoretically proposed measurement with the empirically manifested model (Davvetas *et al.*, 2020). Model evaluation allows researchers to use model fit indices cut-offs to judge how the theoretically proposed framework can reproduce the observed dataset (West *et al.*, 2009, 2012). Table 4.5 reveals the types of indices for model fit and acceptable thresholds.

Table 4.5: Types of indices for model fit and acceptable values

Index type	Index name and abbreviation	Acceptable value
Parsimonious Fit index	Chi-Square/Degree of Freedom (Chisq/df)	≥ 2.0 and ≤ 5.0
Absolute fit index	<i>p</i> value	$< .05$
	Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI)	$\geq .90$
	Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI)	$\geq .90$
	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	≤ 0.8

Index type	Index name and abbreviation	Acceptable value
	Root Mean Square Residual (RMR) or Standardised Root Mean Residual (SRMR)	≤ 0.08
Incremental fit index	Normed Fit Index (NFI)	≥ 0.90
	Normed Fit Index (NNFI) or Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)	≥ 0.80
	Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	≥ 0.90

Source: (Ehido *et al.*, 2022; Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum, 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin & Summers, 1977).

Table 4.1 indicates the parsimonious, absolute and incremental fit indices and their thresholds, and the model with fit indices above the indicated cut-off values is deemed valid. For this study, parsimonious, absolute and incremental fit indices were used to validate tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as constructs (see section 5.4.2.1.3).

The AVE cut-off value (as introduced in section 4.4.3.1) was used to assess the convergent validity to explain the variance of the dataset between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as constructs and their respective items (see section 5.4.2.1.3).

STEP 4: Model testing and modification

Model modification aims to adjust and improve model fit and can be achieved through validation, which in turn increases model reliability and stability (Fan *et al.*, 2016). Modification permits the elimination of parameters that ultimately improve model fit (Davvetas *et al.*, 2020). For this study, the measurement model was modified using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to determine the relationships between the new latent variables (see section 5.4.2.1.4). The modification was conducted prior to estimation of the structural model to eliminate constructs that did not correlate with either one or more constructs.

STEP 5: Structural model estimation (most parsimonious model)

The study adopted both Cronbach's alpha (α) and the ρ_A test (as introduced in section 4.4.3.2) to confirm the reliability of the findings for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience. As indicated in section

4.4.5.1.1, this study used the mean score scale to explain scores ranging from 1 to 7 (see section 5.4.2.1.3).

To test hypothesis H_6 , the study used SEM. SEM is a strong multivariate method used in empirical surveys to test and assess multivariate causal relationships between latent variables (Coulacoglou & Saklofske, 2017; Fan, Chen, Shirkey, John, Wu, Park & Shao, 2016; Hancock, Stapleton and Mueller, 2018). SEM is a unique universal technique for several systematic statistical investigations (Syafiq, Badaruddin & Purwoko, 2022). SEM has become a popular data analysis technique chosen by researchers in various disciplines and is of increasing interest for researchers in the behavioural and social sciences (Dash & Paul, 2021; Hooper, Coughlan & Mullen, 2008). One unique feature of SEM is the capacity to test models that resemble a set of theoretical hypotheses, and a set of hypothesised correlations is stated and usually shown in a graphical form using a path figure (West, Taylor & Wu, 2009, 2012). SEM is unique and advantageous over other quantitative methods because it can explore the correlations between multiple exogenous and endogenous constructs while being responsible for measurement error from indicators (Hair, Hult, Ringle, Sarstedt, Danks & Ray, 2022).

The testing of the most parsimonious rural tourist experience prediction model consisted of three stages, namely, model specification (the same methodology applied as discussed in step 1), model identification (the same methodology applied as discussed in step 2) and identification of the final rural tourist experience predictive (structural) model. More details on the application of these stages are discussed in sections 5.4.2.1.5, 5.4.2.1.5.1 and 5.4.2.1.5.2.

SEM allows researchers to use different fit indices to assess model goodness of fit to validate the structural model (Barrett, 2007; Hooper, 2008; Peugh & Feldon, 2020). SEM does not measure reliability and validity; however, it requires good scores of validity and reliability from CFA to work effectively to confirm the structural (most parsimonious) model (Hair *et al.*, 2022; Kline, 2016). For this study, the cut-off values for parsimony, absolute and incremental fit indices indicated in Table 4.1 were used to validate the *Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village* (see section 5.4.2.1.5.3), which was also used as a regression model.

4.5 SYNTHESIS

This chapter commenced with a discussion of positivism as a research paradigm, research approach and research design for this study. A detailed discussion of the research methodology included the sampling procedure, measuring instrument, instrument validity and reliability, research procedure, sampling bias, and data capture and inspection. A comprehensive discussion of the statistical data analysis, as shown in Figure 4.7, included univariate and bivariate analyses using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient and multivariate analysis using CFA in SEM (see Figure 4.8) to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in Lesotho.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 presented the study’s research design. This included the research approach and research method. In this chapter, the findings of this scientific study are organised based on the PRQs in section 1.5.1 and the research hypotheses proposed in chapters 2 and 3. As depicted in Figure 5.18, this chapter will adhere to the research methods phase as a boundary for the statistical analysis of this study.

Figure 5.18 shows the phases included in the statistical analysis.

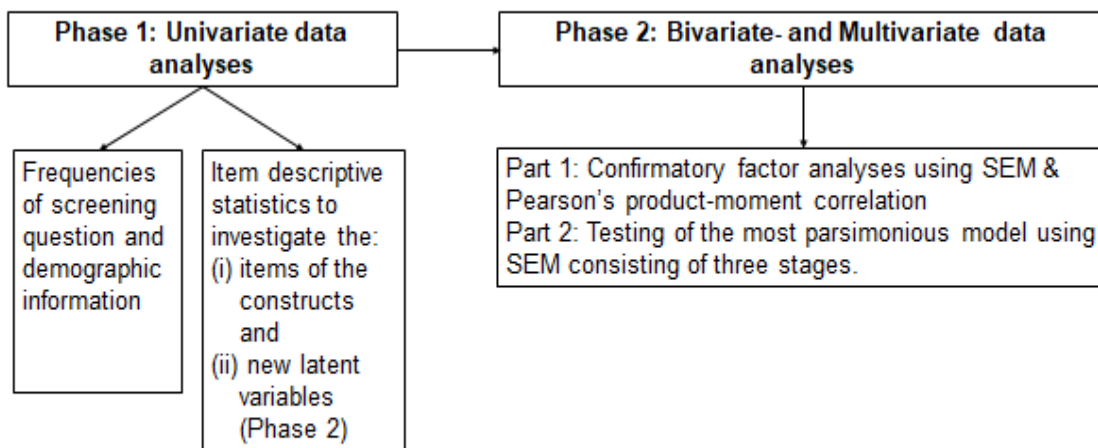


Figure 5.18: Phases in the statistical analyses

Source: Author’s contribution

Data analysis will be performed based on two phases, namely, phase 1 and phase 2, as indicated in Figure 5.18. Phase 1 will present univariate data analysis based on the frequencies of screening questions and demographic information and item descriptive statistics to investigate items of the constructs and new latent variables. Phase 2 will present bivariate and multivariate data analysis based on two parts (part 1 and part 2). Part 1 will present CFA using SEM and Pearson’s product–moment correlation, and

part 2 will present data based on testing of the most parsimonious model using SEM consisting of the three stages.

5.2 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The empirical research objectives were derived from the theoretical framework presented in chapter 1 (see Figure 1.1). The relationship between constructs in the theoretical framework is grounded by the hypotheses in the reviewed literature (chapters 2 and 3) and is the foundation for formulating the empirical objectives of this study. Descriptive statistics in the form of percentages were utilised to determine the demographic details of the visitors. CFA and SEM were utilised to establish whether tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience can serve in the rural tourist experience prediction model and have a good fit.

5.2.1 Descriptive statistical analysis of the screening and demographic information

Sections A and B of the questionnaire asked respondents to answer screening questions and indicate their demographic information, respectively (as indicated in section 4.4.2.2). The item descriptive statistics for the screening questions are presented first, followed by the item descriptive statistics of the visitors' demographic information.

5.2.1.1 Frequency of screening questions

This study was restricted to people who previously lived at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and attended the Moshoeshoe Walk, as the data were collected during this event. Therefore, section A (screening question) had to be completed by respondents to ensure that only people who have lived at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past participated in the study. Figure 5.19 illustrates the phase and statistical analyses used in the research process.

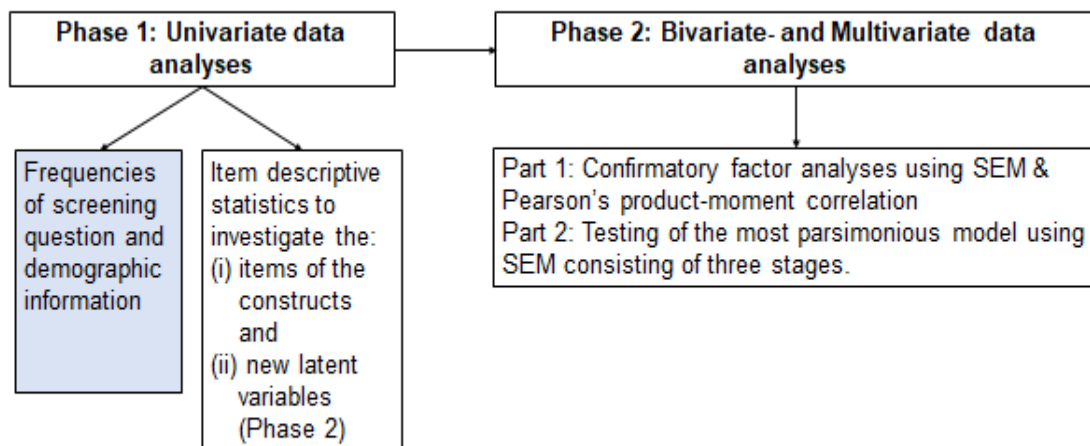


Figure 5.19: Phases in the statistical analyses: the frequencies of the screening questions and demographic information

Source: Author's contribution

Figure 5.19 shows the frequencies of the screening questions and demographic information according to the univariate data analysis.

5.2.1.2.1 Respondents' staying at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village

Section A of the questionnaire included screening question 1. Have you lived at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past? Only respondents who answered yes to the aforesaid question were allowed to complete the rest of the questionnaire. A total of 334 respondents ($n = 334$ (100%)) answered "yes" to the screening question as a confirmation that they had previously lived at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

5.2.2 Frequency of demographic detail for visitors

Section B contains the demographic information of the respondents. In this section, respondents were asked to indicate their demographic aspects on age, gender, qualifications, occupation and visit to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (TBCV). The next subsections present descriptive statistics of demographic information.

5.2.2.1 Age

The respondents were asked to indicate their age categories. The age categories were Generation Z (Gen Next), Millennials (Generation Y) and Generation X (Baby Bust). Generation Z included respondents born between 1995 and 2013, aged 18 to 27 years; Millennials (Generation Y) included respondents born between 1980 and 1994, aged 28 to 42 years; and Generation X included respondents born between 1965 and 1979, aged 43 to 57 years. UNISA ethics requires not collecting data from respondents older than 65 years. Figure 5.20 shows the respondents' age categories.

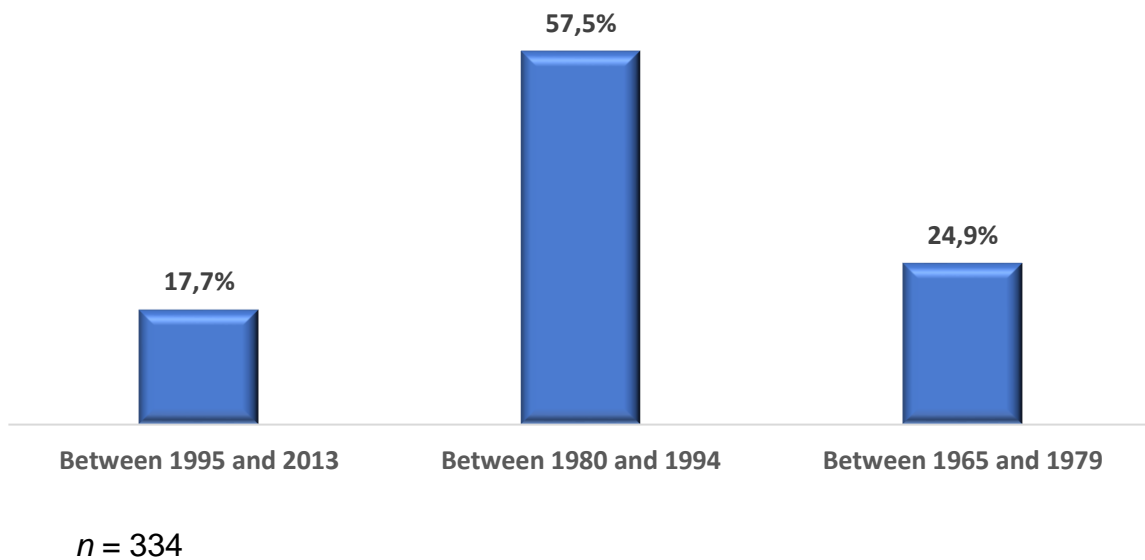


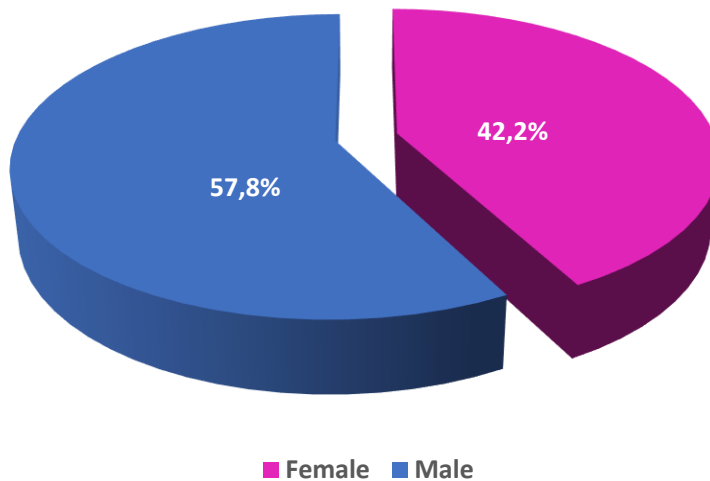
Figure 5.20: Respondent age categories

Source: Author's contribution

Of the 334 respondents, 192 (57.5%) were between 28 and 42 years old, while 83 (24.9%) were between 43 and 57 years old. On the other hand, 59 (17.7%) respondents were between the ages of 18 and 27 years. The following are the item descriptive statistics on gender.

5.2.2.2 Gender

The respondents were requested to show their gender by either choosing to be male or female. There was no non binary result. Figure 5.21 shows the respondents' gender.



$n = 334$

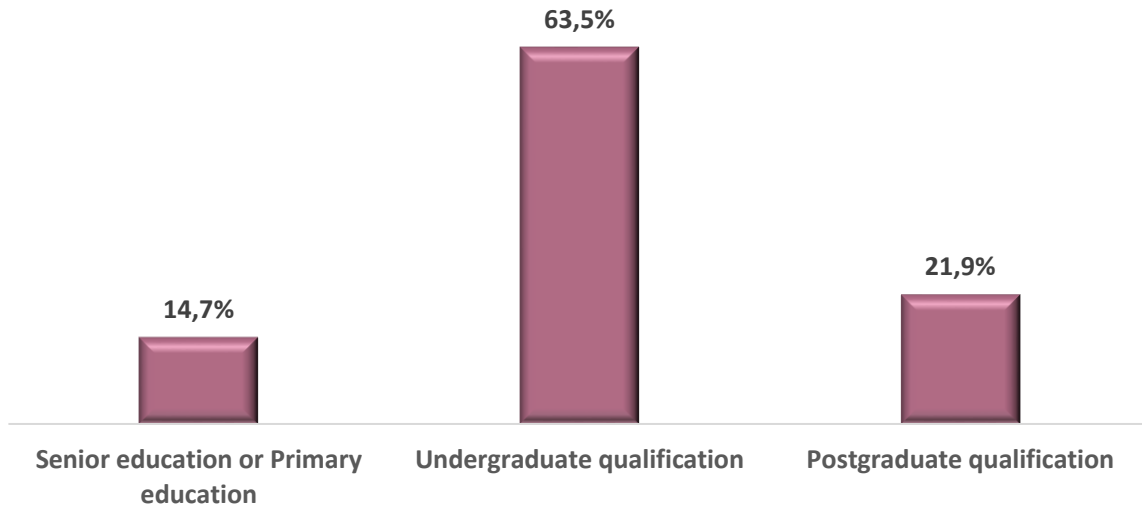
Figure 5.21: Gender categories

Source: Author's contribution

Out of the 334 respondents, 193 (57.8%) were male, while 141 (42.2%) were female.

5.2.2.3 Highest qualifications

The respondents were requested to indicate their highest educational qualifications. The sample educational qualifications were based on three categories, namely, secondary education (Junior Certificate, O' level, A' level, matric, etc.) or primary education, undergraduate qualifications (Higher Certificate/Diploma/Bachelor's degree) and postgraduate qualifications (Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate/Honours/Master's degree/Doctorate). Figure 5.22 shows the respondents' highest qualifications.



$n = 334$

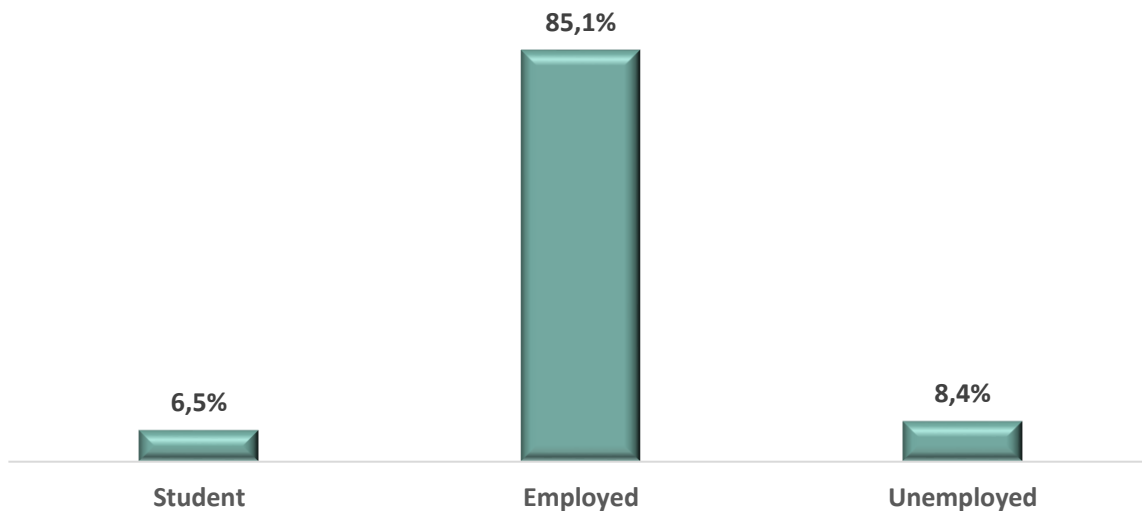
Figure 5.22: Respondents with the highest qualification

Source: Author's contribution

Of the 334 respondents, 212 (63.5%) had an undergraduate qualification, while 73 (21.9%) reported having a postgraduate qualification. Finally, the remaining 49 (14.7%) were holders of secondary education or primary education.

5.2.2.4 Occupation

The respondents were requested to indicate their occupation. The respondents' occupations were measured in terms of student/scholar, employed, unemployed and retired. Figure 5.23 depicts the respondents' occupations.



$n = 334$

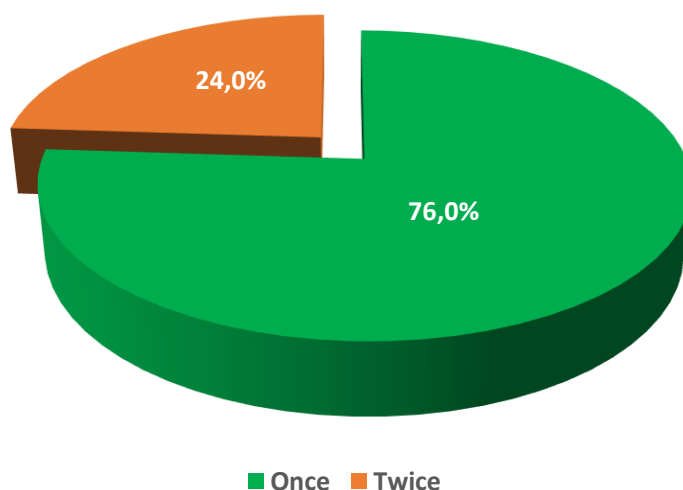
Figure 5.23: The respondents' occupations

Source: Author's contribution

Out of the 334 respondents, 274 (85.1) were employed, 27 (8.4%) were unemployed, and 21 (6.5%) were students. There were 12 missing cases, and none of the respondents indicated that they had retired.

5.2.2.5 Visit to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (TBCV)

The respondents were requested to indicate the number of times they had visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past. The respondents had to select on the categories namely: once, twice, and thrice or more. Figure 5.24 shows the number of times respondents visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past.



$n = 334$

Figure 5.24: The number of times respondents visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past

Source: Author's contribution

Of the 334 respondents, 254 (76.0%) visited Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village once, while 80 (24.0%) visited the same establishment twice. From a sample size of 334, none of the respondents visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village more than twice.

The inferential statistical analysis will be discussed next.

5.3 UNIVARIATE, BIVARIATE AND MULTIVARIATE ANALYSES

This section provides detailed discussions on how CFA and SEM were used to find their corresponding results (using SEM to test CFA for H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 , H_5 and H_6), as mentioned in section 4.4.4.5.1.3.

5.3.1. Formulation of the research hypothesis

The quantitative research objectives in chapter 1 and the theoretical objectives in chapters 2 and 3 were used as the basis for developing the research hypotheses for this study. The proposed theoretical model in Figure 1.1 (chapter 1) demonstrates the relationships between the constructs used to develop the rural tourist experience prediction model, using tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as constructs. To achieve the primary research objective, Table 5.6 indicates how the different research objectives, theoretical research objectives, and research hypotheses are investigated through different statistical procedures.

Table 5.6: Formulation of the research hypothesis

Primary research objectives	Secondary research objectives	Theoretical research objectives	Research hypothesis	Statistical procedure
To determine if the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village	RO1: Whether tourist safety can be validly and reliably measured?	TRO1: Describe the tourist safety construct.	H1: <i>Tourist safety can be reliably and validly measured</i>	Item descriptive statistics CFA
	RO2: Whether authenticity can be validly and reliably measured?	TRO2: Describe the authenticity construct and its theoretical dimension.	H2: <i>Authenticity can be reliably and validly measured</i>	Item descriptive statistics CFA
	RO3: Whether brand personality can be validly and reliably measured?	TRO3: Describe the brand personality construct and its theoretical dimensions.	H3: <i>Brand personality can be reliably and validly measured</i>	Item descriptive statistics CFA
	RO4: Whether brand attributes can be validly and reliably measured?	TRO4: Describe brand attributes construct and its theoretical dimension.	H4: <i>Brand attributes can be reliably and validly measured</i>	Item descriptive statistics CFA
	RO5: Whether tourist experience can be validly and reliably measured?	TRO5: Describe the tourist experience construct and its theoretical dimensions.	H5: <i>Tourist experience can be reliably and validly measured</i>	Item descriptive statistics CFA
	RO6: Whether the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	TRO6: Investigate if the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	H6: <i>The theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village</i>	SEM Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Table 5.6 shows how the primary research objective is supported by the secondary research objectives, theoretical research objectives, research hypotheses and related statistical procedures. The details of the results are discussed in the following sections, as illustrated in Figure 5.25. Next is a discussion of the item's descriptive statistics.

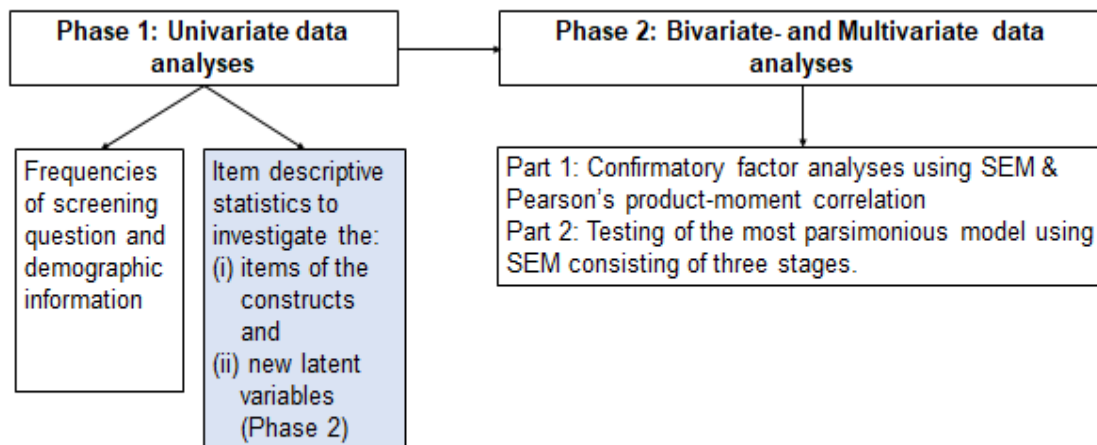


Figure 5.25: Phases to conduct the statistical analyses: item descriptive statistics

Source: Author's contribution

5.3.1.1. Item descriptive statistics

The dataset for items measuring tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience was inspected for normality through the scores of mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis. As indicated in Table 5.6 (see section 5.4.2.1.3.1 and Appendix 19, for the skewness and kurtosis tests, the scores of distribution for items of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience were between -2 and +2, which is the recommended scale of normal distribution (Field, 2009). The results suggested that the item dataset could be considered to have assumed normality and was hence suitable for CFA and SEM, as illustrated in Figure 5.26.

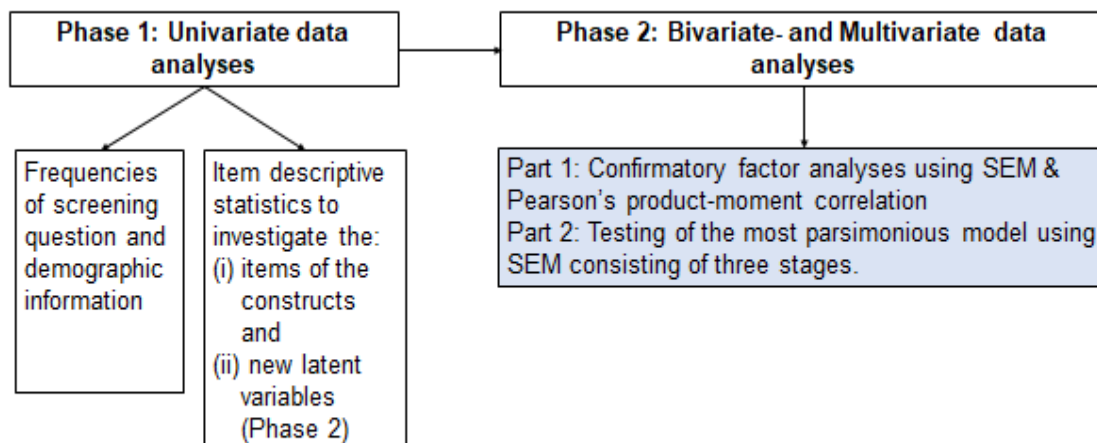


Figure 5.26: Phases used to conduct the statistical analyses; the bivariate and multivariate data analyses

Source: Author's contribution

5.3.2 Bivariate and multivariate data analyses

CFA and Pearson product moment correlation (r) were used in this study to confirm the correlations between items and factors in the theoretical model, as indicated in Figure 5.9. Brown (2006, 2014) indicated that CFA is the type of SEM that is primarily used for measurement models. Brown (2006) and Stevens (2009, 2012) argued that it is valuable to deploy CFA to confirm the correlations between items and their corresponding factors, as it permits the resolving of these correlations in the measurement model and allows assessment of model fit for the proposed theoretical model of the dataset. Goretzko, Siemund and Sterner (2023) indicated that CFA allows model fit to be interpreted by providing threshold values. Brown (2006, 2014) indicated that CFA is regarded as a vital tool used for validation, especially in the behavioural and social sciences. Given that the merits of CFA supersede those of EFA, this study adopted CFA to confirm the correlation of items and factors and to examine the theoretical model fit for the constructs. Pearson's product moment correlation was also performed to investigate the relationships between the new latent variables. The 5 SEM steps were used to conduct the CFA and to test the most parsimonious model, as indicated in section 4.4.5.1.3.1.

5.3.2.1 The five (5) SEM steps in conducting CFA and testing the most parsimonious model

The study used five SEM steps to conduct CFA, and these steps are as follows: Step 1: Model specification; Step 2: Model identification; Step 3: Model estimation; Step 4: Model testing and modification; and Step 5: Structural model estimation.

5.3.2.1.1 Step 1: Model specification

Ajzen (1991) indicated that the first step before conducting SEM (which is the combination of CFA and path analysis) is to specify a model based on theory. The measurement model for this study is based on the theoretical framework for the development of a rural tourist experience prediction model. The theoretical framework for this study informed the development of a questionnaire (using a 7-point Likert scale to test the identified items of the five constructs: tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience) (see chapters 1 & 2). The sample size for this study was 334 ($n \geq 200$), and the sample was suitable for SEM. Figure 5.27 shows the measurement model for the rural tourist experience prediction model.

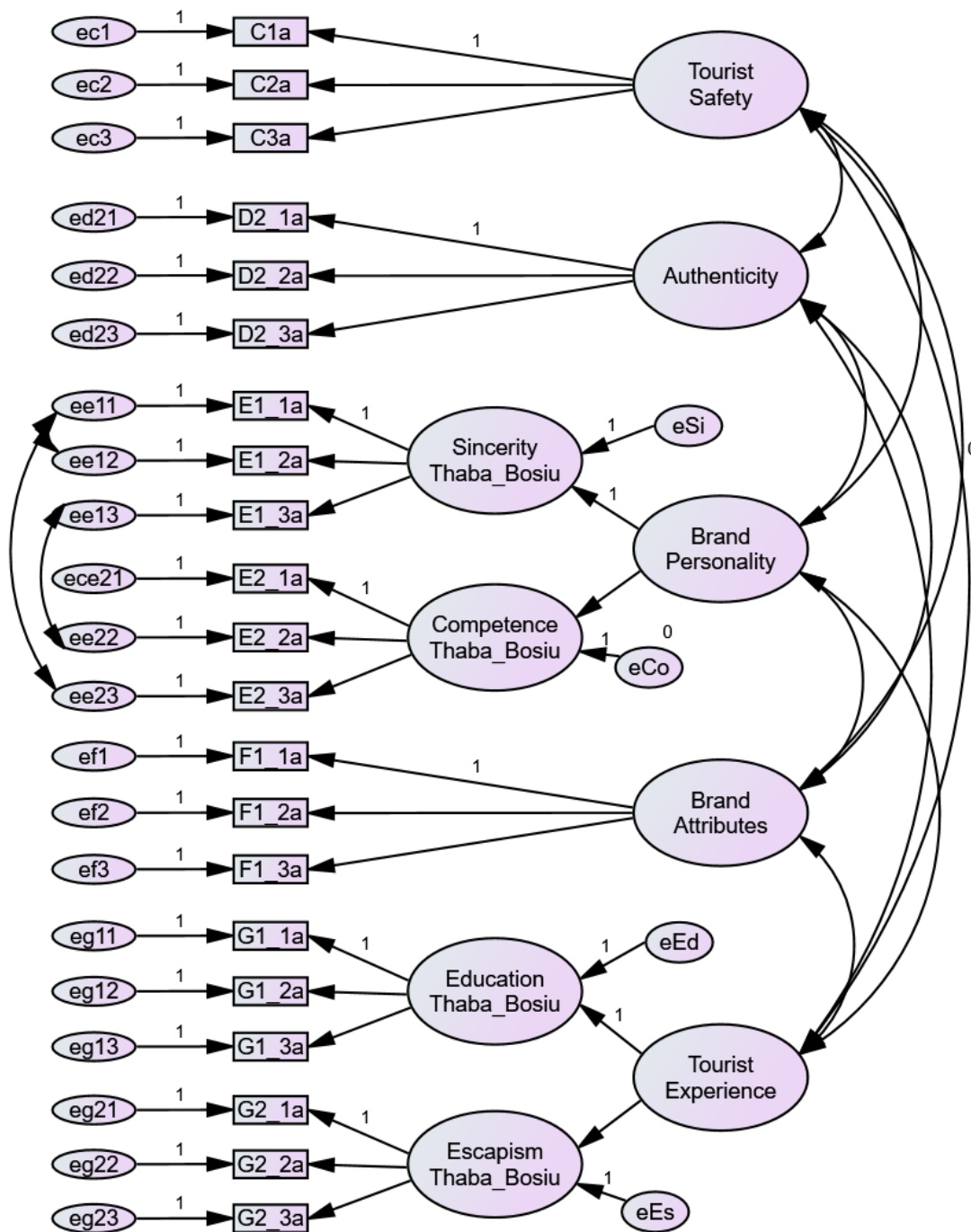


Figure 5.27: Theoretical rural tourist experience prediction model (T^{rtepm})

Source: Author's contribution

As shown in Figure 5.27, the theoretical rural tourist experience prediction model (T^{rtepm}) is recursive as paths between latent variables run in similar directions (Hair, Ringle, Gudergan, Fischer, Nitzl & Menictas, 2018; Hair, Risher, Sarstedt & Ringle, 2019). Figure 5.27 shows that the theoretical rural tourist experience prediction model

(T^{rtepm}) model is classified as having both first-order and second-order latent constructs (see Cavicchia & Vichi, 2022; Li, Pan, Peng, Feng, Liu, Cai, Zhong, Yin & Lia, 2020; van Riel, Henseler, Kemeeny & Sasovova, 2017), where tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience are first-order latent constructs, and dimensions such as sincerity, competence, education and escapism are second-order latent constructs. Therefore, observed and unobserved endogenous and exogenous variables were ascertained.

5.3.2.1.2 Step 2: Model identification

The identification of the model for this study is based on the observed and unobserved variables. Murti (2016) indicated that in SEM identification, observation should be based on the number of constructs as opposed to sample size. In this study, model identification is based solely on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as the constructs. Table 5.7 provides a summary of the observed and unobserved endogenous and exogenous variables for this study.

Table 5.7: Observed and unobserved endogenous and exogenous variables

Observed endogenous and exogenous variables	
Endogenous variables	Exogenous variable
Safety (C1a, C2a and C3a)	Tourist experience-Education (G1_1a, G1_2a and G1_3a) Tourist experience-Escapism (G2_1a, G2_2a and G2_3a)
Authenticity (D2_1a, D2_2a and D2_3a)	
Brand personality-Sincerity (E1_1a, E1_2a, and E1_3a)	
Brand personality-Competence (E2_1a, E2_2a and E2_3a)	
Brand attributes (F1_1a, F1_2a and F1_3a)	
Unobserved endogenous and exogenous variables	
Endogenous variables	Exogenous variable
Safety (ec1, ec2 and ec3)	Tourist experience-Education (eg11, eg12 and eg13) Tourist experience-Escapism (eg21, eg22 and eg23)
Authenticity (ed21, ed22 and ed23)	
Brand personality-Sincerity (ee11, ee12 and ee13)	
Brand personality-Competence (ee21, ee22 and ee23)	
Brand attributes (ef1, ef2 and ef3)	

Table 5.7 shows that the identified measurement theoretical rural tourist experience prediction model (T^{rtepm}) consist of 15 observed endogenous variables and six exogenous variables. On the other hand, the model has 15 unobserved endogenous and six exogenous variables. The theoretical rural tourist experience prediction model

(T^{repm}) has tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as the first-order latent constructs and the dimensions of sincerity, competence, education and escapism as the second-order latent constructs.

Table 5.8: Unstandardised and standardised regression weights for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience

Parameters	Unstandardised regression weights				Standardised regression weights			
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	<i>p</i>	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	<i>p</i>
C1a <--- Tourist Safety	0,85	0,11	7,69	***	1,00			
C2a <--- Tourist Safety	0,81	0,08	10,21	***	0,71	0,07	9,75	***
C3a <--- Tourist Safety	2,22	0,20	10,86	***	1,02	0,11	9,13	***
D2_1a <--- Authenticity	2,04	0,25	8,25	***	1,00			
D2_2a <--- Authenticity	2,65	0,24	10,90	***	0,78	0,08	9,61	***
D2_3a <--- Authenticity	2,25	0,19	11,73	***	0,56	0,07	8,17	***
E1_1a <--- Brand personality-Sincerity	0,37	0,09	3,97	***	1,00			
E1_2a <--- Brand personality-Sincerity	0,47	0,16	2,98	0,003	1,40	0,15	9,51	***
E1_3a <--- Brand personality-Sincerity	0,79	0,08	10,26	***	0,83	0,13	6,18	***
E2_1a <--- Brand personality-Competence	1,35	0,13	10,39	***	1,00			
E2_2a <--- Brand personality-Competence	1,25	0,11	11,05	***	0,83	0,11	7,93	***
E2_3a <--- Brand personality-Competence	1,02	0,11	9,74	***	0,91	0,11	8,34	***
F1_1a <--- Brand Attributes	0,88	0,12	7,59	***	1,00			
F1_2a <--- Brand Attributes	1,55	0,16	9,68	***	1,04	0,05	19,66	***
F1_3a <--- Brand Attributes	1,36	0,16	8,59	***	1,11	0,05	20,78	***
G1_1a <--- Tourist Experience-Education	0,71	0,09	8,33	***	1,00			
G1_2a <--- Tourist Experience-Education	0,56	0,07	7,85	***	0,94	0,04	21,31	***
G1_3a <--- Tourist Experience-Education	0,92	0,09	10,25	***	0,88	0,05	18,79	***
G2_1a <--- Tourist Experience-Escapism	0,61	0,14	4,36	***	1,00			
G2_2a <--- Tourist Experience-Escapism	1,76	0,16	10,91	***	0,76	0,07	11,62	***
G2_3a <--- Tourist Experience-Escapism	1,81	0,18	10,27	***	0,86	0,07	12,29	***

SE = standard error, CR = critical ratio, bootstrapping $p = p$ -value

Gao *et al.*, (2008) indicated that datasets for models should be assessed for nonnormality using standard errors, critical ratios and p-value of significance. Byrne (2013) highlighted that for standard error, there is no proposed threshold; however, small values are assumed to provide accurate estimation, and for critical ratios, the recommended cut-off is greater than 1.96. Gao *et al.*, (2008) indicated that the cut-off for the p value should be less than 0.05. For this study, the standard error scores, as indicated in Table 5.8, were small (less than 1); hence, accurate estimation was assumed. The critical ratio scores were greater than the threshold of 1.96. Finally, the scores of p -values for the standardised regression weights obtained with bootstrapping were 0.001, within the cut-off of less than 0.05.

5.3.2.1.2.1 Standardised regression weights for factor loading estimates

The identified measurement rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (S^{rtepm1}) has standardised regression weights between items and variables. Figure 5.28 illustrates rural tourist experience prediction Model 1 (S^{rtepm1}) for five constructs: tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience.

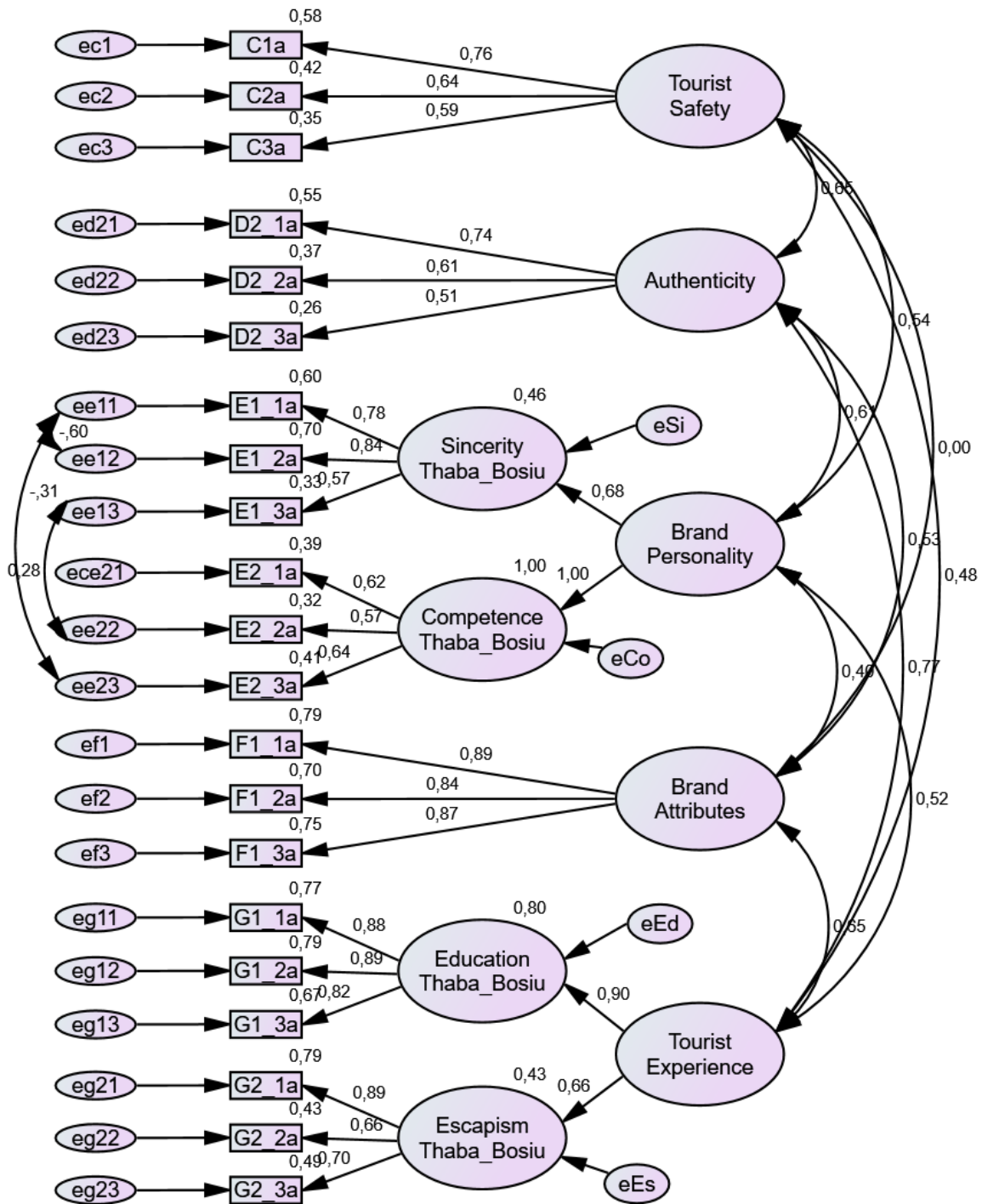


Figure 5.28: Standardised rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (S^{rtepm1})

Source: Author's contribution

The standardised loadings for five constructs (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience) were above the threshold of 0.5 (see Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2009). As illustrated in Figure 5.28, the items have correlation values and therefore support the tourist safety, authenticity, brand

personality, brand attributes and tourist experience constructs. Table 5.9 contains standardised regression weights for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience factor loadings.

Table 5.9: Table standardised regression weights for items for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience

Items		Constructs	Standardised Estimate (β)
C1a_ The security personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Tourist safety	0.76
C2a_ I felt safe at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Tourist safety	0.64
C3a_ The emergency medical services personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Tourist safety	0.59
D2_1a_ My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to participate in recreational activities.	<---	Authenticity	0.75
D2_2a_ I made new friends during my stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Authenticity	0.61
D2_3a_ My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to have a conversation with the staff.	<---	Authenticity	0.51
E1_1a_ The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village served their guests politely.	<---	Brand Personality	0.78
E1_2a_ The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village responded to the needs of the guests.	<---	Brand Personality	0.84
E1_3a_ The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village is genuine (open) when serving the guests.	<---	Brand Personality	0.57
E2_1a_ When there was a problem; the staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village provided a solution that satisfied the guests.	<---	Brand Personality	0.62
E2_2a_ The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was efficient in serving guests.	<---	Brand Personality	0.57
E2_3a_ The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village tried to understand a guest's grievance when it was lodged.	<---	Brand Personality	0.64
F1_1a_ There was a variety of Basotho dishes at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Brand Attributes	0.89
F1_2a_ I ate tasty Sesotho traditional food at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Brand Attributes	0.84
F1_3a_ The food I ate at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was Sesotho traditional dishes (e.g. Lekuka, Lefisoane, Seroto, etc.).	<---	Brand Attributes	0.87
G1_1a_ My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the history of Basotho.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.8
G1_2a_ My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the culture of Basotho.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.89

Items		Constructs	Standardised Estimate (β)
G1_3a_My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enhanced my knowledge of cultural diversity.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.82
G2_1a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enabled me to break from repetitive life.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.89
G2_2a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me to be in a different place.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.66
G2_3a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me forget about my daily routine life.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.70

Table 5.9 indicates the standardised regression weights for all items loaded greater than 0.6, which is a value above a recommended standardised regression weight threshold of 0.5 and is retained for the CFA/SEM structural model test.

5.3.2.1.3 Step 3: Model estimation

Hair *et al.*, (2022) and Hair *et al.*, (2022) recommend that the formative model be an indicator of collinearity to avoid type II errors caused by a high degree of correlation between two or more indicators. The effective standard metric used to determine indicator collinearity is the VIF, and a VIF ≥ 5 indicates a high level of collinearity, which is a collinearity problem (Hair *et al.*, 2022). In such instances, indicators should be reduced or combined with high-order constructs to reduce collinearity problems (Hair *et al.*, 2022). A VIF ranging between ≥ 3 and < 5 indicates that critical collinearity can exist (Hair *et al.*, 2022), and a VIF of < 3 suggests that collinearity does not exist (Hair *et al.*, 2022). For this study, the rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (S^{rtepm1}) was examined for indicator collinearity to avoid type II errors in further analysis.

First, the collinearity results show that the unobserved item (ee11) correlates with the unobserved item (ee12) with a value of -.25 for sincerity under the brand personality latent construct. Second, the collinearity results that show that the unobserved item (ee11) of sincerity correlates with the unobserved item (ee23) of competence with a value of -.19 under the brand personality latent construct. Finally, the collinearity results that show that the unobserved item (ee13) of sincerity correlates with the unobserved item (ee22) of competence, with a value of .27 under the brand personality latent construct. According to these results, 5 unmeasured items were correlated with brand personality; however, the correlations were less than the VIF < 3 , which is not considered a collinearity problem, as indicated in section 4.4.4.4.

Yuan (2005) recommends the use of SEM to determine if the measurement model has a goodness of fit by running different fit indices. The goodness of fit of the constructs (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience) was tested using $RFI/X^2/df \geq 2.0$ and ≤ 5.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Wheaton, Muthen, Alwin, & Summers, 1977), p value < 0.05 , GFI $> .90$ and AGFI $> .90$ (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), RMSEA $\leq .08$ (MacCallum, 1996), RMR or SRMR $\leq .08$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999), NFI $> .90$ to $\geq .95$ and NNFI or TLI $> .80$ to $\geq .95$ (Hun & Bentler, 1999) and CFI $> .90$ to $\geq .95$ (Hun & Bentler, 1999). Barrett (2007) indicated that the

sample size cut-off for the application of SEM should be 200 or above, and SEM results for any lower sample size should decrease. Table 5.10 indicates the goodness-of-fit results of the rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (S^{rtepm1}) benchmarked against the recommended fit indices (see Appendix 22).

Table 5.10: CFA goodness-of-fit statistics for rural tourist experience prediction Model 1 (S^{rtepm1})

Fit Index	Recommended values	Measurement model value
Chisq/df	≥ 2.0 and ≤ 5.0	>2.65
p value	<0.05	<0.001
GFI	>.90	<0.88
AGFI	>.90	<0.85
RMSEA	$\leq .08$	<0.07
RMR (SRMR)	≤ 0.08	>0.23
NFI	.90 to $\geq .95$	<0.87
NNFI (TLI)	.80 to $\geq .95$	>0.89
CFI	.90 to $\geq .95$	>0.91

After conducting SEM on the constructs (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience), the rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (S^{rtepm1}) produced goodness of fit results RFI (χ^2/df) = 2.65 (≥ 2.0 and ≤ 5.0), with p-value < 0.000, GFI = 0.88 (<0.90), AGFI = 0.85 (<0.90), RMSEA = 0.07 (<0.08), RMR/SRMR = 0.23 (>0.08), NFI = 0.865 (>0.90), NNFI/TLI = 0.89 (<0.80) and CFI = 0.91 (>0.90), as shown in Table 5.10 and in Appendix 22. The values of the RFI, RMSEA, NNFI/TLI and CFI show an acceptable fit, suggesting that the dataset is appropriate for the proposed theoretical rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (S^{rtepm1}). The sample size for this study was 334 ($n \geq 200$, as discussed in section 4.4.1.2).

Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to test the internal consistency and reliability of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience and their dimensions and items (Shemwell, Chase & Schwartz, 2015). Surucu *et al.* (2020) indicated that a scale with α values greater than 0.6 is deemed acceptable and assumed to have internal consistency. For this study, the α values for tourist safety $\alpha = 0.67$, authenticity $\alpha = 0.66$, brand personality $\alpha = 0.76$, brand attributes $\alpha = 0.90$ and tourist experience $\alpha = >0.86$ are above the acceptable threshold of 0.60, as shown in Table 5.11 and Appendix 21. These results suggest that the scales of tourist safety,

authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience and their items have internal consistency and are thus reliable. However, Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt (2014) and Taber (2018) argued that α values are sometimes inappropriate for declaring the reliability of constructs and items; hence, Hair *et al.* (2014) recommended the use of **rho_A** as a robust effective measure of scale reliability.

The **rho_A** was used to assess the **internal consistency and reliability** of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as the study's constructs. Hair *et al.*, (2014) proposed values between 0.60 and 0.70 as acceptable, while any greater value means greater composite reliability. For this study, the **rho_A** values for safety = ≥ 0.70 , authenticity = ≥ 0.70 , brand personality = > 0.83 , brand attributes = > 0.83 and tourist experience = > 0.92 are above the acceptable cut-off value of 0.70, as shown in Table 5.11 and Appendix 21. Hence, these results reveal that tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience have internal consistency and are therefore reliable constructs.

The AVE was used to examine the average variance extracted to assess the **convergent validity** of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience. Hair *et al.*, (2014) suggested that the AVE threshold of 0.50 or greater is acceptable and shows construct satisfactory convergent validity. For this study, the AVE values for tourist safety = ≥ 0.50 , authenticity = < 0.40 , less than the cut-off of 0.50 and the AVE values of brand personality = ≥ 0.50 , brand attributes = > 0.62 and tourist experience = > 0.68 are greater than the acceptable minimum value of 0.50, as shown in Table 5.11 and Appendix 21. Therefore, these results indicate that tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience explain more than half of the variance of their items and are confirmed to be reliable and valid constructs.

5.3.2.1.3.1 Construct descriptions for the baseline model

Descriptive statistical analysis was performed to determine the mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis scores for the datasets on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience, as shown in Appendix 20. The main focus was on organising and interpreting each construct's descriptive statistics, as the items' descriptive statistics were analysed earlier in section 5.4.1.1.

Table 5.11 provides a descriptive summary of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience.

Table 5.11: Summary of the descriptive statistics for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience

Construct	Dimension	Items	Item descriptive				Construct descriptive				rho _A	AVE	β-values	CA (α)
			Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis				
Tourist safety	-	C1a	5.40	1.42	-0.53	-0.28	5.16	1.17	-0.09	-0.77	0.70	0.50	0.76	0.67
		C2a	5.88	1.18	-0.84	0.12							0.64	
		C3a	4.19	1.85	-0.08	-0.85							0.59	
Authenticity	Involvement	D2_1a	3.94	2.16	0.04	-1.38	4.54	1.54	-0.17	-0.81	0.70	0.40	0.75	0.66
		D2_2a	4.77	2.07	-0.50	-1.05							0.61	
		D2_3a	4.92	1.75	-0.51	-0.62							0.51	
Brand personality	Sincerity	E1_1a	6.28	0.97	-1.36	2.16	5.76	0.86	-0.37	-0.65	0.83	0.50	0.78	0.76
		E1_2a	5.81	1.26	-0.73	-0.37							0.84	
		E1_3a	6.13	1.10	-1.21	0.91							0.57	
	Competence	E2_1a	5.29	1.49	-0.54	-0.30							0.62	
		E2_2a	5.82	1.36	-1.05	0.56							0.57	
		E2_3a	5.22	1.33	-0.23	-0.64							0.64	
Brand attributes	Food	F1_1a	4.81	2.07	-0.52	-1.05	4.39	2.04	-0.27	-1.28	0.82	0.62	0.89	0.90
		F1_2a	4.44	2.28	-0.35	-1.36							0.84	
		F1_3a	3.93	2.36	0.00	-1.56							0.87	
Tourist experience	Education	G1_1a	5.60	1.78	-1.265	0.66	5.44	1.34	-1.07	0.55	0.92	0.68	0.88	0.86
		G1_2a	5.65	1.65	-1.25	0.74							0.89	
		G1_3a	5.32	1.69	-0.88	0.06							0.82	
	Escapism	G2_1a	5.32	1.73	-0.88	-0.15							0.89	
		G2_2a	5.44	1.77	-1.00	-0.03							0.66	
		G2_3a	5.29	1.89	-0.84	-0.48							0.70	

SD = standard deviation; CR = composite reliability; AVE = average variance extracted; CA (α) = Cronbach's alpha

The mean score for tourist safety was 5.16. This score implies that tourists consider tourist safety to be an important aspect when they visit accommodation establishments; hence, tourists rated it as medium-high, with a mean score ranging between 4.00 and 5.49 (see Kass *et al.*, 1991). As shown in Table 5.11, the descriptive results for tourist safety were $M = 5.16$, $n = 334$; $SD = 1.17$; skewness = -0.09; and kurtosis = -0.77, revealing that the scores of distribution could be regarded as normal because they range between -2 and +2, which is the recommended scale for accepting normality (Field, 2009). These results thus confirm the justification from a theoretical standpoint and CFA, accepting that tourist safety can be reliably and validly measured, confirming H_1 .

The mean score for authenticity was 4.54. This score suggests that tourists seek authenticity when they visit accommodation establishments even though they rated it medium-high, with a mean score ranging between 4.00 and 5.49 (see Kass *et al.*, 1991). As shown in Table 5.11, the descriptive results for authenticity were $M = 4.54$, $n = 334$; $SD = 1.54$; skewness = -0.17; and kurtosis = -0.81, indicating that the scores of the distribution could be deemed normal when the scale was between -2 and +2, which is the preferred range for suggesting normality (Field, 2009). These results, therefore, substantiate the basis from a theoretical position and CFA, confirming that authenticity can be reliably and validly measured, supporting H_2 .

The mean score for brand personality was 5.76. This score suggests that tourists are attracted to accommodation establishments by brand personality, and they rated it very high, with a mean score ranging between 5.50 and 7.00 (see Kass *et al.*, 1991). As shown in Table 5.116, the descriptive results for brand personality were ($M = 5.76$, $n = 334$; $SD = 0.86$, skewness = -0.37, kurtosis = -0.65), indicating that the scores of distribution could be viewed as normal as they range between -2 and +2, which is the desired value for assuming normality (Field, 2009). These results, therefore, support the logical view from a theoretical standpoint and CAF, validating that brand personality can be reliably and validly measured and confirming H_3 .

The mean score for brand attributes was 4.39. This score suggests that guests regard brand attributes as a fundamental factor when visiting an accommodation establishment; hence, it was rated as medium-high, with a mean score ranging between 4.00 and 5.49 (see Kass *et al.*, 1991). As shown in Table 5.11, the descriptive

results for brand attributes were $M = 4.39$, $n = 334$; $SD = 2.04$; skewness = -0.27 ; and kurtosis = -1.28 , suggesting that the scores of distribution could be considered normal because they vary between -2 and $+2$, which is the recommended scale for assuming normality (Field, 2009). These results therefore support the basis from a theoretical viewpoint and CFA, confirming that brand attributes can be reliably and validly measured, supporting H_4 .

The mean score for tourist experience was 5.44 . This score implies that guests consider experiences to be a critical aspect of their visit to an accommodation establishment; hence, they rated it medium-high, with a mean score ranging between 4.00 and 5.49 (see Kass *et al.*, 1991). As shown in Table 5.11, the descriptive findings for tourist experience were ($M = 5.44$, $n = 334$; $SD = 1.34$, skewness = -1.07 , kurtosis = 0.55), showing that the scores of distribution could be believed to be normal, as they range between -2 and $+2$, which is the recommended value for suggesting normality (Field, 2009). These results henceforth substantiate the grounds from a theoretical position and CFA, verifying that tourist experience can be reliably and validly measured to confirm H_5 .

As indicated in Appendix 20, for normality, probability histograms show that the scores of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience have a left-skewed (negative skewness) distribution with a bell-shaped curve (see Kiernan, 2014).

5.3.2.1.4 Step 4: Model testing and modification

The identified baseline rural tourist experience prediction model 1 ($S^{\text{step}1}$) was subjected to modification. The Pearson product moment correlation (r) was used to test the relationships between the constructs (new latent variables) to modify the baseline model before the estimation of the structural model. The relationships between the constructs were measured based on a correlation value of 0.10 – 0.29 , which indicates a low correlation strength of 0.30 – 0.49 and a moderate correlation strength of 0.50 – 1.00 , revealing that the correlation is high (see Mahdzar, 2022). Table 5.12 shows the correlation coefficients between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience.

Table 5.12: The coefficient correlations between the new latent variables

Constructs	Tourist safety	Authenticity	Brand personality	Brand attributes	Tourist experience
Tourist safety	1	.52	.39	.10	.46
Authenticity	.52	1	.41	.41	.57
Brand personality	.39	.41	1	.33	.35
Brand attributes	.10	.41	.33	1	.48
Tourist experience	.46	.57	.35	.48	1

** . The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For this study, the Pearson product-moment correlation (r) results, as indicated in Table 5.12 and Appendix 23, show a strong correlation between tourist safety and authenticity ($r = .521, n = 334, p < .001$), a moderate correlation between tourist safety and brand personality ($r = .385, n = 334, p < .001$), a nonsignificant correlation between tourist safety and brand attributes ($r = .104, n = 334, p > .057$) and a moderate correlation between tourist safety and tourist experience ($r = .464, n = 334, p < .001$) (see Mahdzar, 2022).

Additionally, the Pearson product-moment correlation (r) results, as indicated in Table 5.12 and Appendix 23, show a moderate correlation between authenticity and brand personality ($r = .405, n = 334, p < .001$). There was a moderate correlation between authenticity and brand attributes ($r = .412, n = 334, p < .001$) and a strong correlation between authenticity and tourist experience ($r = .565, n = 334, p < .001$) (see Mahdzar, 2022).

Furthermore, the Pearson product-moment correlation (r) results, as indicated in Table 5.12 and Appendix 23, show a moderate correlation between brand personality and brand attributes ($r = .332, n = 334, p < .001$) and a moderate correlation between brand personality and tourist experience ($r = .345, n = 334, p < .001$). Finally, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (r) results show a moderate correlation between brand attributes and tourist experience ($r = .476, n = 334, p < .001$) (see Mahdzar, 2022).

The Pearson product-moment correlation (r) results revealed that all the constructs were correlated except for tourist safety and brand attributes. Therefore, against the

nonsignificant correlation between tourist safety and brand attributes, the identified baseline model was modified before the estimation of the structural model. Model modification resulted in the elimination of 3 observed (F1_1a, F1_2a and F1_3a) and 3 unobserved (ef1, ef2, ef3) items for brand attributes, as a construct did not fit the structural model in the SEM. Additionally, the model modification included 1 observed (C2a) item and 1 unobserved (ec2) item for tourist safety and 1 observed (D2_3a) item and 1 unobserved (ed23) item for authenticity, as the constructs were dropped because they did not fit the structural model.

5.3.2.1.5 Step 5: Structural model estimation

Step 5 encapsulates part 2 in phase 2, as outlined in Figure 5.12. The estimation of the structural model section entails three stages: 1) specification of the structural model, 2) identification of the structural model, and 3) good fit of the structural model. First, the model estimation starts with the specification of the structural model in SEM.

5.3.2.1.5.1 Stage 1: Model specification

As mentioned in section 4.4.5.1 and Figure 4.7 in chapter 4, the final step of the research results will be presented using SEM based on the studys' suggested theoretical framework. SEM enables testing hypotheses to confirm structural theory and presents pictorial structural model correlations to allow conceptualisation of the theoretical framework under study (see Byrne, 2013). The correlations between endogenous constructs (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality) and exogenous constructs (tourist experience) manifested in CFA were the basis for the development of the structural model (rural tourist experience prediction model). The model was inspected for good fit using SEM. The structural model in SEM was used to test the following research hypotheses:

H₆: The theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

The findings from CFA assumed that the model, which comprised tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience, was a construct. The structural model was tested using IBM SPSS V28 and AMOS Version V28 (see Arbuckle 2017).

The specified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}) for this study was based on the theoretical framework in chapter 1 (see Figure 1.1); the motivation for the theoretical objectives and hypotheses in chapters 2 and 3; and the measurement model of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience. Figure 5.29 shows the specified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}) for the constructs.

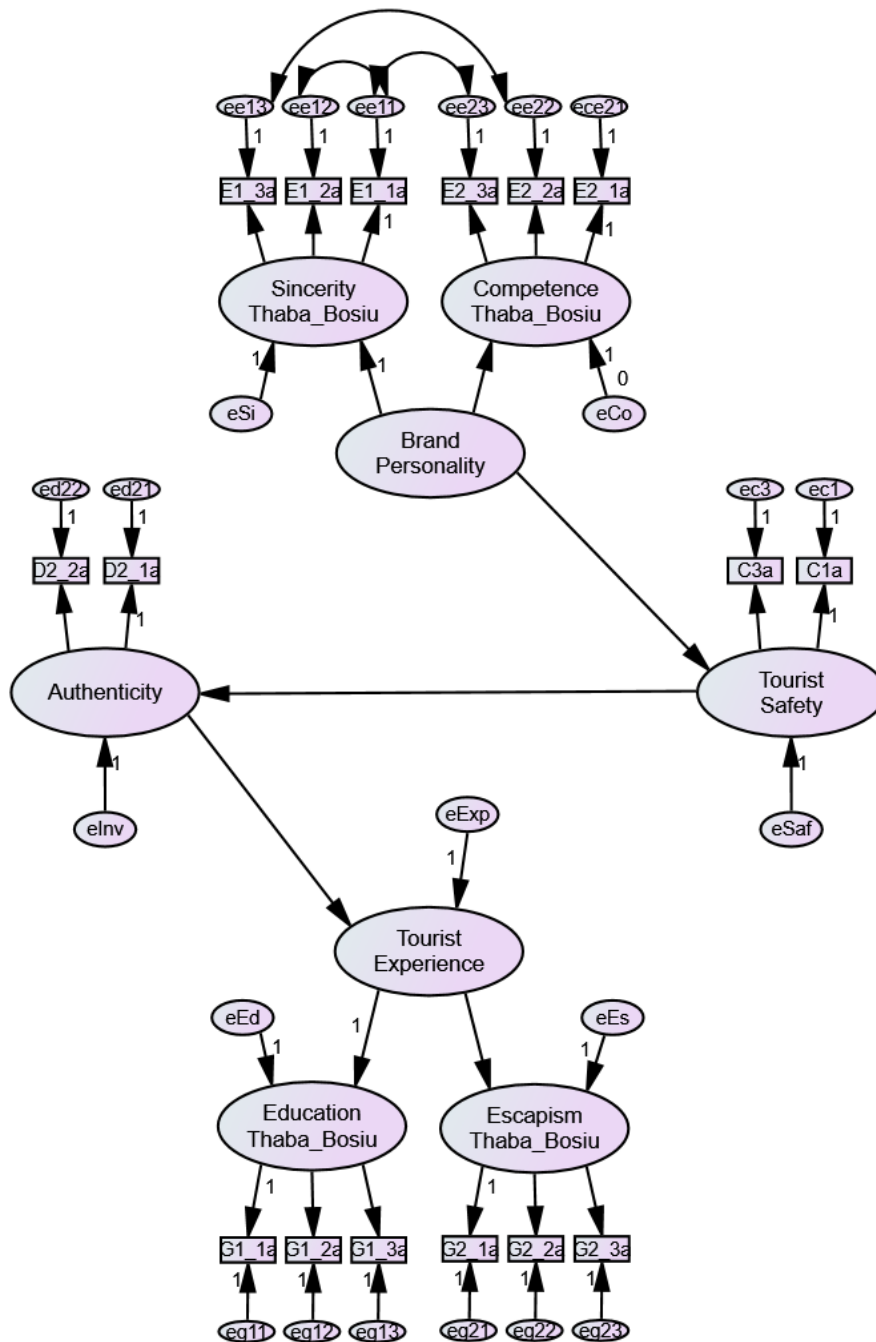


Figure 5.29: Unstandardised structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a})

Source: Author’s contribution

Figure 5.29 indicates that the unstandardised specified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}) is recursive as paths between latent constructs move in the same direction (Hair *et al.*, 2018; Hair *et al.*, 2019). The observed and unobserved endogenous and exogenous constructs were identified in the specified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}).

5.3.2.1.5.2 Stage 2: Model identification

The specified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}) model was identified based on the number of observed and unobserved endogenous and exogenous constructs. Murti (2016) stated that in SEM, the identification of the model is based on the number of variables rather than the sample size. For this study, the specified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}) was identified based on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience as the observed variables. Table 5.13 shows the number of observed and unobserved endogenous and exogenous variables in the specified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}).

Table 5.13: The observed and unobserved endogenous and exogenous variables in structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a})

Observed endogenous and exogenous variables	
Endogenous variables	Exogenous variable
Tourist safety (C1a and C3a)	Tourist experience- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (G1_1a, G1_2a and G1_3a) • Escapism (G2_1a, G2_2a and G2_3a)
Authenticity (D2_1a and D2_2a)	
Brand personality: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sincerity (E1_1a, E1_2a, and E1_3a) • Competence (E2_1a, E2_2a and E2_3a) 	
Unobserved endogenous and exogenous variables	
Endogenous variables	Exogenous variable
Tourist safety (ec1 and ec3)	Tourist experience- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education (eg11, eg12 and eg13) • Escapism (eg21, eg22 and eg23)
Authenticity (ed21 and ed22)	
Brand personality- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sincerity (ee11, ee12 and ee13) • Competence (ece21, ee22 and ee23) 	

As depicted in Figure 5.29 and Table 5.13, structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}) has 10 observed endogenous variables and six endogenous variables. Similarly, the rural tourist experience prediction (structural) model has 10

unobserved endogenous variables and six exogenous variables. The identified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}) has tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience as the first-order latent constructs and dimensions: sincerity, competence, education and escapism as second-order latent constructs.

5.3.2.1.5.2.1 Unstandardised and standardised regression weights for the structural model

The study used both unstandardised and standardised regression weights to determine the standard error, critical ratio and p-values for the dataset of all items. Gao *et al.*, (2008) revealed that the dataset must be examined for nonnormality in all models using standard errors, critical ratios and p-value of significance. Byrne (2013) stated that there is no consensus cut-off for standard error; however, the lower the values are, the better the accurate estimation of SE, and ≥ 1.96 is the recommended threshold for the critical ratio. According to Gao *et al.*, (2008), the threshold for the p -value should be less than 0.05. Table 5.14 indicates both unstandardised and standardised regression weights for structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1a}).

Table 5.14: Unstandardised and standardised regression weights for the structural model of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience

Parameters	Unstandardised regression weights				Standardised regression weights			
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	<i>p</i>	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	<i>p</i>
C1a <--- Tourist Safety	1,00				1,38	0,13	1,02	***
C3a <--- Tourist Safety	1,63	0,20	8,26	***	1,76	0,20	8,69	***
D2_1a <--- Authenticity	1,00				2,32	0,24	9,53	***
D2_2a <--- Authenticity	0,87	0,09	9,86	***	2,49	0,24	10,55	***
E1_1a <--- Brand personality-Sincerity	1,00				0,37	0,10	3,65	***
E1_2a <--- Brand personality-Sincerity	1,41	0,15	9,40	***	0,44	0,17	2,63	0,009
E1_3a <--- Brand personality-Sincerity	0,82	0,14	5,87	***	0,80	0,08	10,11	***
E2_1a <--- Brand personality-Competence	1,00				1,36	0,13	10,25	***
E2_2a <--- Brand personality-Competence	0,84	0,11	7,87	***	1,25	0,12	10,88	***
E2_3a <--- Brand personality-Competence	0,94	0,11	8,28	***	0,99	0,11	9,18	***
G1_1a <--- Tourist Experience-Education	1,00				0,70	0,09	7,91	***
G1_2a <--- Tourist Experience-Education	0,94	0,04	21,53	***	0,52	0,07	7,11	***
G1_3a <--- Tourist Experience-Education	0,87	0,05	18,59	***	0,97	0,09	10,36	***
G2_1a <--- Tourist Experience-Escapism	1,00				0,69	0,13	5,34	***
G2_2a <--- Tourist Experience-Escapism	0,78	0,06	12,20	***	1,71	0,16	10,91	***
G2_3a <--- Tourist Experience-Escapism	0,89	0,07	12,90	***	1,78	0,17	10,37	***

S.E. = standard error; C.R. = critical ratio; *p* = *p* value

For this study, as shown in Table 5.14, the SE scores were found to be lower than 0, which suggests that the lower the SE is, the better the accurate estimation of the SE. The CR scores were above cut-off values of ≥ 1.96 . Finally, the scores of p-values for the standardised regression weights obtained with bootstrapping were all less than the cut-off value of 0.05.

5.3.2.1.5.2.2 Standardised regressions for the structural model in SEM

The identified structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 ($R^{\text{tepm}1a}$) has standardised regression weights between items and constructs. Figure 5.30 demonstrates the standardised structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 ($R^{\text{tepm}1b}$) using tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience.

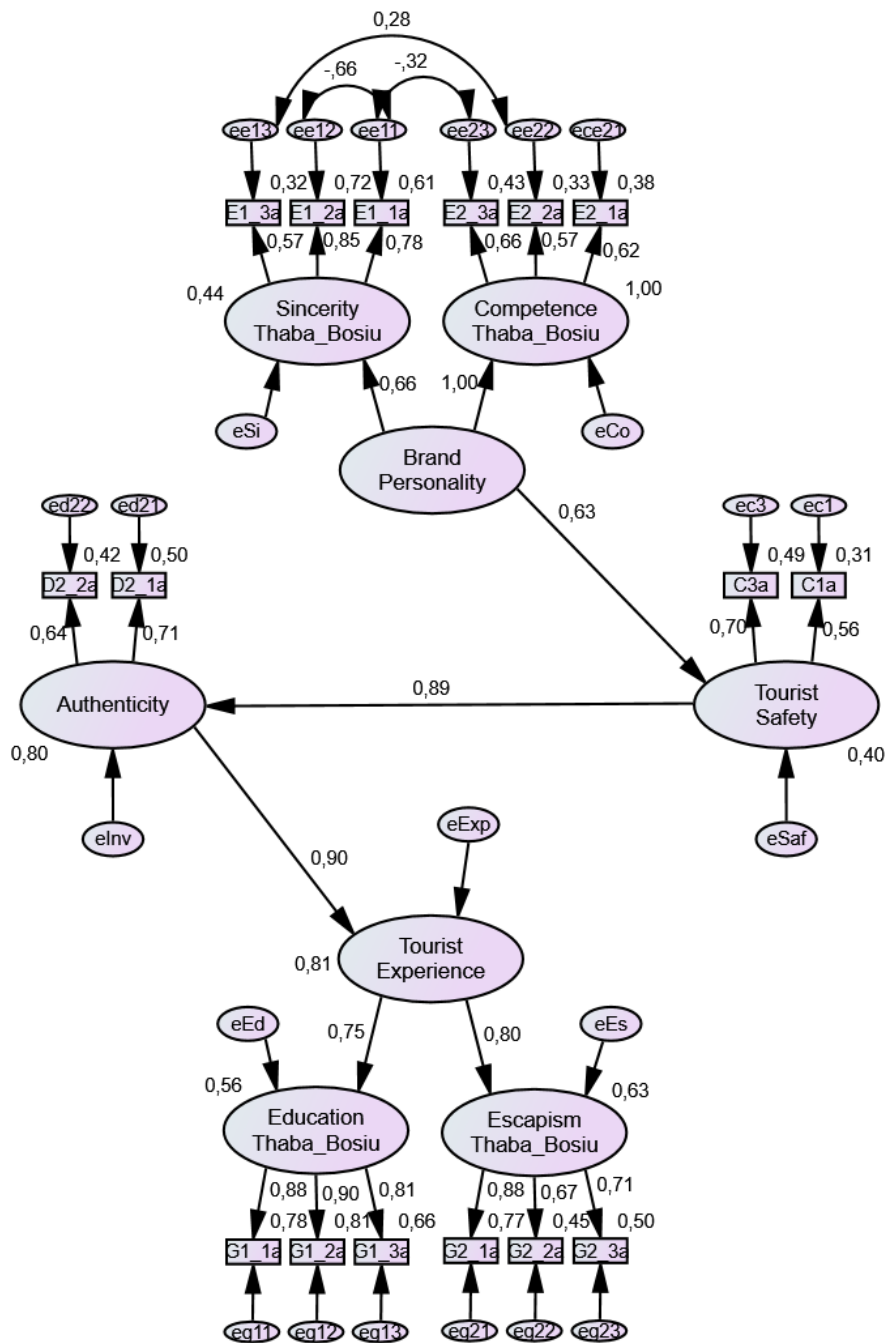


Figure 5.30: Standardised structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b})

Source: Author's contribution

Scholars have highlighted that standardised regression weights for each factor (item) should be ≥ 0.50 to indicate acceptable reliability (Chau, 1997; Chin, 1998; Hair *et al.*, 2018). For this study, standardised loadings for all items measuring tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience as constructs were above the

threshold of 0.50. As indicated in Figure 5.30, items with significant correlation values support tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience as constructs. In addition to Figure 5.30, Table 5.15 summarises the standardised regression weights for the item (factor) loadings for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience.

Table 5.15: Standardised regression weights for structural rural tourist experience prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b})

Items		Constructs	Standardised Estimate (β)
C1a_The security personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Tourist Safety	0.56
C3a_The emergency medical services personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Tourist Safety	0.70
D2_1a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to participate in recreational activities.	<---	Authenticity	0.71
D2_2a_I made new friends during my stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	<---	Authenticity	0.64
E1_1a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village served their guests politely.	<---	Brand Personality	0.78
E1_2a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village responded to the needs of the guests.	<---	Brand Personality	0.85
E1_3a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village is genuine (open) when serving the guests.	<---	Brand Personality	0.57
E2_1a_When there was a problem; the staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village provided a solution that satisfied the guests.	<---	Brand Personality	0.62
E2_2a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was efficient in serving guests.	<---	Brand Personality	0.57
E2_3a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village tried to understand a guest's grievance when it was lodged.	<---	Brand Personality	0.66
G1_1a_My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the history of Basotho.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.88
G1_2a_My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the culture of Basotho.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.90
G1_3a_My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enhanced my knowledge of cultural diversity.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.81
G2_1a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enabled me to break from repetitive life	<---	Tourist Experience	0.88
G2_2a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me to be in a different place.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.67
G2_3a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me forget about my daily routine life.	<---	Tourist Experience	0.71

For structural modelling, as indicated in Table 5.15 standardised regression weights for all factors (16) loaded well to tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience as their specific constructs with values above the commended threshold of 0.50 and hence were useful in the SEM.

5.3.2.1.5.3 Stage 3: Model estimation

The study assessed a sample size suitable for SEM fit using the rule of thumb that recommends a sample size greater than $n = 200$ as a realistic standard for SEM (see Bentler & Chou, 1987), as indicated in 4.4.5.1.3.1. The study used absolute fit indices to examine acceptable model fit. For example, chi-square with values ≥ 2.0 to ≤ 5.0 (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007; Wheaton *et al.*, 1977), p value (≤ 0.05), GFI ($\geq .90$), AGFI ($\geq .90$) (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007), RMR or SRMR (≤ 0.08) (see Hu & Bentler, 1999) and RMSEA (≤ 0.8) (see MacCallum, 1996) are absolute fit indices used in this study. On the other hand, the study used incremental fit indices to assess the goodness of fit of the structural model. For example, NFI (≥ 0.90), CFI (≥ 0.90) (see Bentler & Bonett, 1980) and NNFI/TLI (≥ 0.80) (see Hun & Bentler, 1999) are incremental fit indices used for this study. Table 5.16 shows the goodness-of-fit results for the structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b}).

Table 5.16: Goodness-of-fit statistics for structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b})

Fit Index	Recommended values	Fit of the Measurement model	Fit of the Structural model
Chisq/df)	Between 2.0 and 5.0	2.65	2.38
p value	0.05	> 0.001	>0.001
GFI	>.90	0.88	>0.92
AGFI	>.90	0.85	<0.89
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.07	<0.06
RMR (SRMR)	≤ 0.08	0.23	>0.16
NFI	.90 to $\geq .95$	0.87	>0.90
NNFI (TLI)	.80 to $\geq .95$	0.89	>0.92
CFI	.90 to $\geq .95$	0.91	>0.94

After conducting SEM on variables (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience), as indicated in Table 5.16, the structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) produced good fit indices: for example, $X^2/df = 2.38$ (> 2.0 and < 5.0), with p value < 0.000 ($< .05$), GFI = 0.92 (> 0.90), AGFI = 0.89 (< 0.90), RMSEA = 0.06 (< 0.08), RMR/SRMR = 0.16 (> 0.08), NFI = 0.90 (≥ 0.90), NNFI/TLI =

0.92 (>0.80) and CFI = 0.94 (>0.90), as shown in Table 5.16. These goodness-of-fit results suggest that structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) has an absolute fit of ($\chi^2 = 2.38$, p value > 0.001 , RMSEA = 0.6, GFI = 0.92), indicating acceptable model fit, as indicated in Appendix 24. Finally, these goodness-of-fit results assume that the structural model has an incremental fit (NFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.94, NNFI/TLI = 0.92), which shows an improvement in fit when structural rural tourist experience prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) is compared with the hypothesised measurement model, as indicated in Appendix 24. Therefore, the hypothesised model (H_6) fits the dataset adequately, confirming that the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

5.4 SYNTHESIS

This chapter has indicated that a total of 334 respondents have stayed at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past. The majority of visitors were millennials (Generation Y), aged 28 to 42 years, and Generation X, aged 43 and 57 years, were employed males with postgraduate education who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village once in the past.

Moreover, this chapter indicated that the scores of distribution for items of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience were considered to have assumed normality. This chapter confirmed the validity and reliability of the instruments of the constructs and conducted CFA using SEM to confirm tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as latent constructs in the measurement model, as confirmed by the following hypotheses:

- Tourist safety ($\alpha = 0.67$) can be reliably and validly measured, confirming H_1 .
- Authenticity ($\alpha = 0.66$) can be reliably and validly measured, supporting H_2 .
- Brand personality ($\alpha = 0.76$) can be reliably and validly measured, confirming H_3 .
- Brand attributes ($\alpha = 0.90$) can be reliably and validly measured, supporting H_4 .
- Tourist experience ($\alpha = 0.86$) can be reliably and validly measured to confirm H_5 .

Additionally, this chapter used Pearson's product moment correlation to confirm the relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent variables) and tourist experience (as the dependent variable), as evident from the following results:

- There is a strong correlation between authenticity and tourist experience ($r = .57$, $n = 334$, $p < .001$).
- There are moderate correlations between (i) tourist safety and tourist experience ($r = .46$, $n = 334$, $p < .001$) and between (ii) brand attributes and tourist experience ($r = .48$, $n = 334$, $p < .001$); and
- There is a small correlation between brand personality and tourist experience ($r = .104$, $n = 334$, $p > .057$).

This chapter concludes by showing that SEM was used to test the most parsimonious rural tourist experience model. The hypothesised model (H_6) fits the dataset adequately with ($\chi^2 = 2.38$, p -value > 0.001 , RMSEA = 0.6, GFI = 0.92) goodness of fit results, confirming that the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

CHAPTER 6: RESULTS DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 presented the statistical methods followed to achieve the study's main objective. Demographic variables and five constructs (*tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience*) were analysed by performing univariate, bivariate and multivariate tests. This chapter presents the discussion and interpretation of the results informed by the guidance on TROs stated in chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 6 concludes with a discussion of the empirical results based on the hypotheses summarised in Table 5.6 (see section 5.4.1).

6.2 REVIEW OF THE STUDY

As revealed in chapter 1, the main objective of this study was to determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The reviewed literature presented in chapter 2 has led to the adoption of service quality (SERVQUAL) as an embedded theory to inform the Rural Tourist Experience Model. The main objective of the study was to develop five constructs (*tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience*).

The TROs identified in chapter 2 were articulated and directed by the proposed theoretical framework, as depicted in Figure 1.1. The discussion of the variables and the respective relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (a dependent/endogenous variable) were carried out in Chapters 2 and 3, respectively. The TROs and hypotheses as stated in the theoretical chapters were used to explore the variables and estimated regression model, as depicted in Figure 1.1. Next, a detailed discussion of the reviewed literature is provided.

6.3 RESULTS OF REVIEWED LITERATURE

Based on the discussion in sections 4.4.1 and 6.2, TRO1 is related to the tourist safety construct. TRO2 is associated with the authenticity construct and its theoretical dimension. TRO3 is connected to the brand personality construct and its theoretical dimensions. The TRO4 is related to the brand attribute construct and its theoretical

dimension. TRO5 is associated with the tourist experience construct and its theoretical dimensions. TRO6 is linked to the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework, where it is proposed to have a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

6.4 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

This section describes the empirical results for the ROs as revealed in section 4.4.1. The empirical results are presented in two parts, as demonstrated in Figure 4.16 (see section 4.4.5.1). Phase 1 entailed univariate data analysis based on the frequencies of the screening questions, demographic information and item descriptive statistics to investigate the items of the constructs and new latent variables. Phase 2 concentrated on the results of the bivariate and multivariate data analysis based on two parts (part 1 and part 2). Part 1 presented CFA using SEM and Pearson's product-moment correlation, and part 2 presented data based on testing the most parsimonious model using SEM consisting of the three stages. Next is the presentation of the univariate analysis findings (Phase 1).

6.4.1 Phase 1: Univariate data analysis

Phase 1 was intended to divide respondents based on the findings of the demographic variables. These findings presented the characteristics of the guests who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The demographic information in this study was examined using categorisation of age, gender, highest educational qualifications, occupation and number of visits, as revealed in chapter 2 (see section 2.6).

6.4.1.1 Age

Most of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village visitors (57.5%) were millennials (Generation Y) born between 1980 and 1994 and aged between 28 and 42 years, as depicted in Figure 5.20. These results support those of Hruian (2020), who found that more guests (39.5%) who visited accommodation establishments were millennials. According to Twumasi *et al.*, (2022) and Wong *et al.*, (2021), age, as a demographic variable, is benchmarked against the type of accommodation establishment by tourists, as individuals' age affects the tourist experience. Patuelli and Nijkamp (2016) found that age, as a demographic factor, influences tourists' behaviour when they visit a particular

tourist destination. These results contribute to the body of knowledge by confirming that most tourists who visit accommodation establishments such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village are millennials.

6.4.1.2 Gender

Most of the respondents were males (57.8%) who visited Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, as indicated in Figure 5.21. These results are consistent with those of Elshaer, Azazz and Fayyad (2022), who found that heritage accommodation establishments are visited by more male (82.5%) than female (17.5%) guests. According to Wijaya *et al.*, (2018), gender, as a demographic factor, assists in understanding the experience of inbound tourists, particularly for accommodation establishment and ancillary services. Bergantino and Catalano (2016) found that gender, as a demographic variable, informs executives of destinations about the travel information of inbound tourists, which is important for planning and strategy implementation, as in the case of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

6.4.1.3 Highest educational qualifications

The majority of respondents who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village were graduates (Higher Certificate/Diploma/Bachelor's degree) (63.5%), as indicated in Figure 5.22. This finding is consistent with the results of Elshaer *et al.*, (2022), who found that more guests with university degrees (86.5%) visited accommodation establishments. According to Bor *et al.*, (2018), the selection of accommodation establishments relies on the level of education as the demographic variable to examine the quality of service and delivery as the main aspects considered when choosing where to stay. These results contribute to the body of knowledge by confirming that most tourists who visit accommodation establishments such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village are graduates (Higher Certificate/Diploma/Bachelor's degree). The establishment of rural accommodations can categorise educational profiles and determine whether tourists are modern or not and determine the most suitable marketing strategies to attract and the quality of service that can match tourists' needs.

6.4.1.4 Occupation

Most of the respondents (85.1%) who visited Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village were employed, as shown in Figure 5.23. These results are consistent with those of Twumasi, Kruger and Amoah *et al.*, (2022), who found that most guests (63.6%) who travelled and selected accommodation establishments during their visit to South Africa were employed. According to several researchers (Cai, Hong, Xu, Gao, Wang & Chi, 2021; Mwale Luke & Pisa, 2022; Wong *et al.*, 2021), employment status influences travel demand and decision-making. Bama and Nyikana (2021) found that in the context of the tourism industry, it is likely that employed people travel to tourist destinations. According to Uca *et al.*, (2017), occupation, as a demographic variable, influences tourists' decision to choose accommodation establishments. Occupation can assist executives of rural accommodation establishments in classifying tourists according to their occupation status and determining the relevant marketing strategies and promotional tools to attract more visitors and improve the quality of service offered.

6.4.1.5 Time visit

Most respondents (76.0%) visited only the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village once, as indicated in Figure 5.24. In contrast, Hruian (2020) reported that most tourists (53%) visited accommodation establishments more than twice (2-5 times). Tavares, Ivanov and Cobanoglu (2019) state that time visits, as a demographic variable, assist in knowing tourists, especially with spending power, where first-time visitors have more spending power than repeat tourists when visiting a destination. These results contribute to the body of knowledge by revealing that most tourists visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village once in the past. A time visit can help the management of rural accommodation establishments to assess the effectiveness and relevance of their marketing strategies in attracting new tourists. In addition, time visits may help management decide whether to concentrate on retaining already existing tourists as per the profit margin based on spending power and to improve the service quality of the demands of already known (repeat) tourists.

Overall, the profile of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village visitors included employed millennials who were male graduates and had visited the rural accommodation establishment once.

6.4.2 Phase 2: Bivariate and multivariate data analysis

Phase 2 presents the findings and contributions that are associated with descriptive statistics, CFA, Cronbach's alpha, ρ_{OA} , internal consistency and reliability analysis. The factor analysis and item analysis will be presented based on their corresponding statistical hypotheses that are associated with ROs and TROs, as indicated in Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

6.4.2.1 Inferential statistics

According to the findings shown in Table 5.6 (see section 5.4.2.1.3.1) and Appendices 19 and 20, the scores of the dataset for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience as latent constructs showed asymmetric bell-shaped curves, which are assumed to have a moderate normal distribution. In chapter 6, the discussion and interpretation of the results will be presented by discussing each research objective jointly in parallel with the EO to assess whether the EO is approved or not approved by the data, as discussed in chapter 5.

6.4.2.1.1 Statistical hypothesis 1 (EO1)

H₁: Tourist safety can be reliably and validly measured.

This section discusses the proposed statistical hypothesis based on tourist safety as a latent construct to indicate its reliability and validity, as discussed below.

No study has used tourist safety to measure accommodation establishment experiences in Lesotho. Tourist safety information has been provided by various scholars (Lisowska, 2017; McGee, 2017; Mohamad *et al.*, 2020; Popescu, 2011; Zou & Yu, 2022, Anichiti *et al.*, 2021; Ghazi, 2015). The objective of these studies was first to address the need to investigate tourist safety in tourist destinations to guarantee safe tourist holidays. Second, to address the need to study safety measures in accommodation establishments, especially in developing countries, and finally, to address the need for managers of accommodation establishments to evaluate safety needs in a timely manner to maintain safety standards to match tourists' needs. After conducting a robust review of the literature on safety, as discussed in sections 2.7.1 and 2.7.1.1, three items were proposed to measure safety. All three items (explicitly

C1a, C2a and C3a) were retained following a CFA to inform the development of a new tourist safety latent construct.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for tourist safety (see section 5.4.2.1.3.1) was above the acceptable minimum cut-off of 0.6 at $\alpha = 0.67$ (see Surucu *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the ρ_{OA} score (0.70) for tourist safety was greater than the recommended minimum threshold of 0.60 to 0.70 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018; Taber, 2018). The results confirmed the internal consistency and reliability of tourist safety as a latent construct. The AVE (0.50) for tourist safety was greater than the recommended cut-value of ≥ 0.50 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018). This confirms the validity of tourist safety as a construct. Therefore, the results for tourist safety were supported by the following:

- (i) The presence of security personnel (Amir, Ismail & See, 2015; Wickens, 2002),
- (ii) The feeling of safety (Amir *et al.*, 2015; UNWTO, 1996), and
- (iii) The presence of emergency medical services personnel (Skjeie, Nygaard, Li, Gardasevic, Fetvei & Brekke, 2008; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012) was retained for the final measurement and structural models, as indicated in Figure 6.31.

These results confirm the justification of the construct from a theoretical and statistical (CFA) standpoint, accepting that tourist safety can be reliable and valid, supporting H_1 .

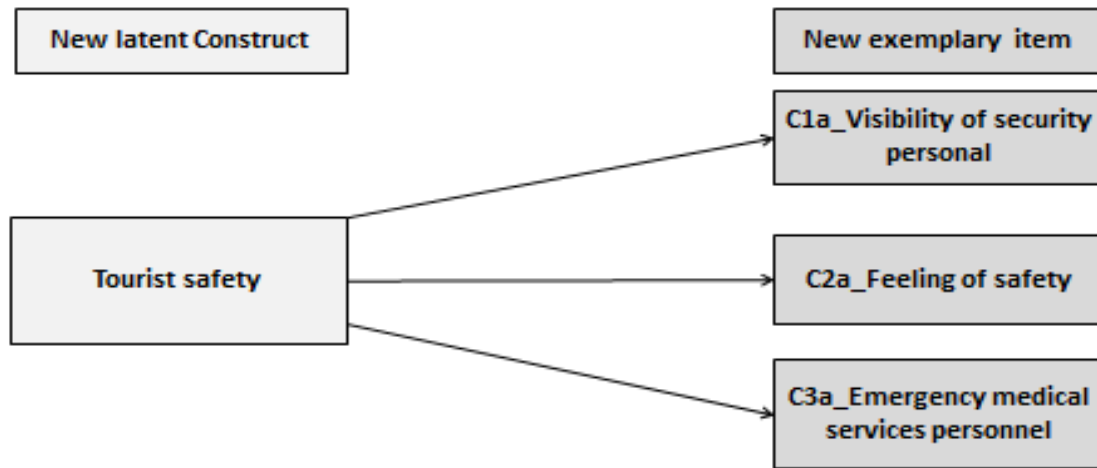


Figure 6.31: New latent construct and new items for tourist safety through CFA

Source: Author's contribution

The items obtained following the CFA confirmed the need to investigate tourist safety (Lisowska, 2017; McGee, 2017; Mohamad *et al.*, 2020; Popescu, 2011; Zou & Yu, 2022). More specifically, the findings of studies by Anichiti *et al.*, (2021) and Ghazi (2015) on tourism and hospitality management were confirmed by the items selected for this study. When respondents visit Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, they regard the presence of security personnel as significant in making them feel safe and should the need arise and be attended to by emergency medical services personnel. Therefore, CFA confirmed the items measuring the safety of tourists at an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and postulated tourist safety as a new latent construct, as represented in Figure 6.31. These results support the findings of previous studies on tourist safety (Amir *et al.*, 2015; Skjeie *et al.*, 2008; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012; UNWTO, 1996; Wickens, 2002) and contribute to the existing body of knowledge, as these findings are also relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in a rural tourism destination.

6.4.2.1.2 Statistical Hypothesis 2 (EO2)

H₂: Authenticity can be reliably and validly measured

This section presents the proposed statistical hypothesis based on two dimensions to indicate the reliability of authenticity as a construct, as presented in the next paragraphs.

Makwindi (2016) conducted a case study to investigate the role of authenticity in Lesotho cultural tourism using the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The study was conducted for purposes other than tourist experience. According to Makwindi (2016), there is inadequate research on the tourist experience. Moreover, no study has used local culture and involvement to measure the tourist experience at accommodation establishments in Lesotho. Authenticity was developed based on the recommendations made by Marti-Parreno *et al.*, (2020) and Pongsermpol and Upala (2018) in their respective studies. The purpose of this study was to address the need to design a model to assess guests' evaluation of authentic experience, as indicated by previous studies on accommodation establishments. Furthermore, this study addresses the need to investigate the changes and effects on the refurbishment of heritage buildings that are used as accommodation establishments. Having consulted the literature (see section 2.7.2), two dimensions (local culture and involvement) were deemed to be the most suitable for explicitly investigating authenticity in the context of this study. Three items from the local culture dimension, namely, D1_1a, D1_2a and D1_3a, were dropped following the CFA. Three items from the involvement dimension, explicitly D2_1a, D2_2a and D2_3a, were preserved for the measurement and structural models following the CFA.

The Cronbach's alpha for authenticity ($\alpha = 0.66$) (see section 5.4.2.1.3.1) was above the acceptable minimum cut-off value of $\alpha = 0.6$ (see Surucu *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the ρ_A score (0.70) was greater than the recommended minimum threshold of 0.60 to 0.70 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018; Taber, 2018). These results confirmed the internal consistency and reliability of authenticity as a latent construct. The AVE value (0.40) for authenticity was less than the cut-value of ≥ 0.50 recommended by Hair *et al.*, (2018). However, AVE scores greater than ≥ 0.40 are still acceptable, as advised by Ab Hamid *et al.*, (2017). This proves the validity of authenticity as a construct.

Therefore, the results for authenticity were supported by the following three items of the local culture dimension:

- (i) exposure to Basotho tradition (Tian, Wang, Law & Zhang, 2020),
- (ii) Basotho traditional clothing (Koç & Koca, 2012), and
- (iii) ability to speak Sesotho (e.g., Sesotho idioms, greetings in Sesotho) (Lonardi, 2022) was omitted from the measurement model following the CFA.

Three items in the involvement dimension, namely, participation in recreational activities (Cevik & Simskek, 2017), making new friends (Chen, Cheng & Kim, 2020; Wei, Zhao, Zhang & Huang, 2019) and conversation with staff (Chen *et al.*, 2020; Han, Praet & Wang, 2019; Wei *et al.*, 2019), were included in the measurement model, as indicated in Figure 6.32. These results confirm the justification of the construct from a theoretical and statistical (CFA) standpoint, accepting that authenticity through involvement can be reliably and validly measured, supporting H_2 .

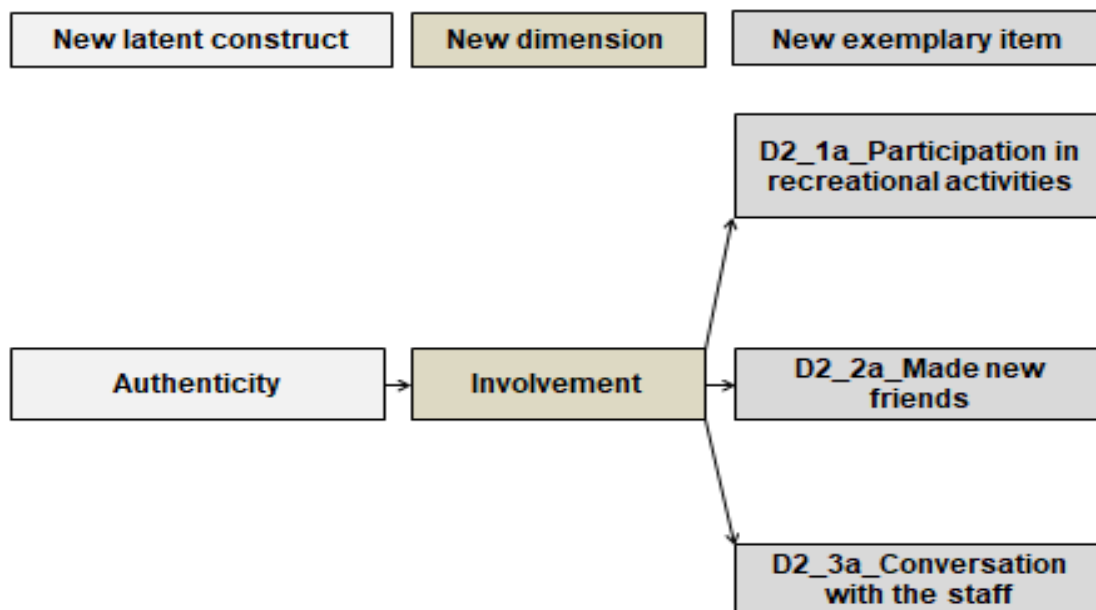


Figure 6.32: New latent construct, dimension and items for authenticity through CFA

Source: Author's contribution

The dimensions obtained following the CFA confirmed the need to investigate authenticity, as proposed by Marti-Parreno *et al.* (2020) and Pongsermpol and Upala (2018). This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by indicating that if

tourists are involved in recreational activities in a cultural village, they will have an authentic experience. Although the results show that the respondents do not regard the selected questions related specifically to local culture as significant enough to be included in the final CFA model, they still had an authentic experience when visiting the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. These results corroborate Makwindi's (2016) findings that guests who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village complained about a shortage of culture, attire and performances, as indicated in section 1.2.2.

Moreover, when guests visit the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, they value recreational activities related to the Basotho culture, making new friends and having conversations with staff. Therefore, the CFA confirmed that the initially selected items to investigate involvement in measuring authenticity (see Figure 6.32) at the accommodation can be confirmed as a new latent construct, as was motivated in section 1.6.2. These results support findings from previous studies related to authenticity and involvement (Cevik & Simskek, 2017; Chen *et al.*, 2020; Han, Praet & Wang, 2019; Wei *et al.*, 2019) and contribute to the existing body of knowledge, as these findings are also relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in a rural area.

6.4.2.1.3 Statistical hypothesis 3 (EO3)

H₃: Brand personality can be reliably and validly measured

This section discusses the proposed statistical hypothesis based on two dimensions to show the reliability and validity of brand personality as a construct, as outlined in the paragraphs below.

No study has used sincerity and competence as dimensions of brand personality when investigating accommodation experiences in Lesotho. Brand personality was created through recommendations by an array of scholars such as Aberg (2015), Chen and Chen (2014), Hachki *et al.*, (2022), Mody (2018), Mohi *et al.*, (2014), Skift (2018), Thottoli and Al Harthi (2022) and Tran *et al.*, (2013). These studies supported the following objectives:

- (i) To investigate how brand personality can support the development of a large market share and overcome intense competition in the accommodation sector of a rural destination.

- (ii) To provide insights into how tourism marketers can use brand personality to increase the brand equity of an accommodation establishment built in a rural cultural setting.
- (iii) To confirm whether employee attitudes (when they are taking care of guests and respond politely to guests' needs) are important attributes for investigating service quality and satisfaction.
- (iv) To inform accommodation establishment managers on how to build the brand of the establishment, especially when it is located in a rural area.
- (v) To assess whether brand personality leads to employee sincerity and competence when it is instilled as a value at an accommodation establishment.

These preceding objectives are informed after a vigorous review of the literature is conducted, as highlighted in section 2.7.3. Two dimensions, namely, sincerity and competence, were proposed as the most relevant dimensions for investigating brand personality in the context of this study. Six items – E1_1a, E1_2a, and E1_3a (for sincerity) and E2_1a, E2_2a and E2_3a (for competence) – were retained for the final measurement and structural models. There were no items dropped following the CFAI.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.76$) for brand personality (see section 5.4.2.1.3.1) was above the acceptable minimum cut-off value of $\alpha = 0.6$ (see Surucu *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the ρ_A score (0.83) was greater than the recommended minimum threshold of 0.60 to 0.70 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018; Taber, 2018). These results confirmed the internal consistency and reliability of brand personality as a latent construct. The AVE score (0.50) for brand personality was greater than the recommended cut-value of ≥ 0.50 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018). This confirms the validity of brand personality as a construct. Therefore, the results for brand personality were supported by the following three items of *sincerity*:

- (i) serving their guests politely (Aaker, 1999),
- (ii) responding to the needs of guests (Aaker, 1999; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015), and
- (iii) genuine (open) when serving guests (Aaker, 1999) were included in the measurement model following the CFA.

Three items of *competence*, namely, providing a solution that satisfies the guests (Alusa, 2018), being efficient in serving guests (Alusa, 2018) and trying to understand

a guest's grievance when it was lodged (Aaker, 1999), were included in the measurement model, following the CFA and as illustrated in Figure 6.33. These results confirm the justification of the construct from a theoretical and statistical (CFA) standpoint, accepting that brand personality can be reliably and validly measured, supporting H_3 .

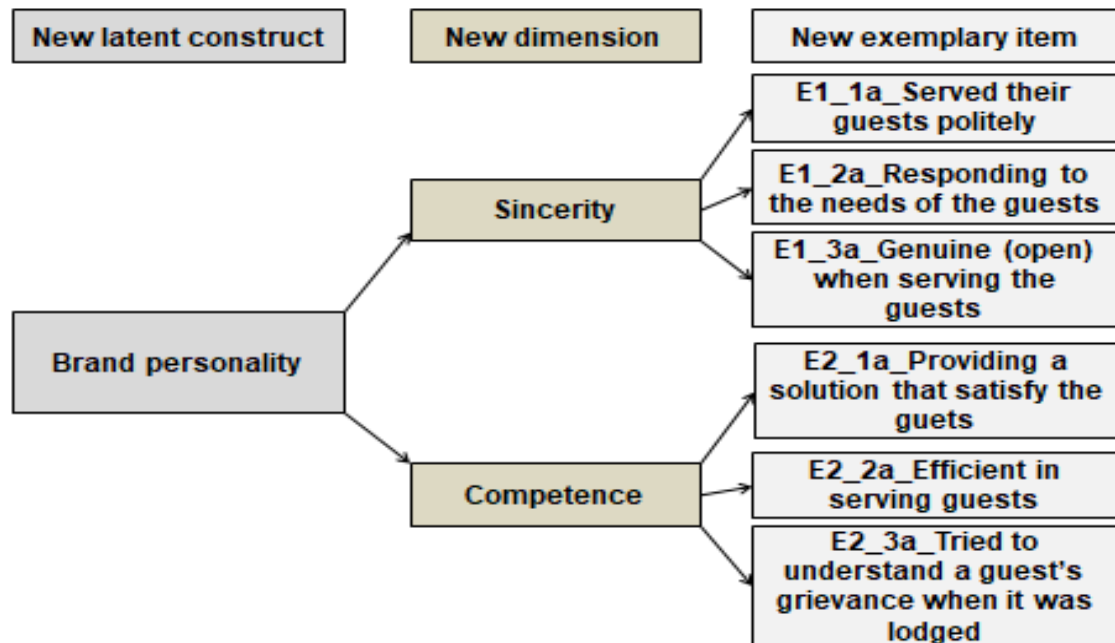


Figure 6.33: New latent construct, dimensions and items for brand personality through CFA

Source: Author's contribution

The new items obtained following the CFA confirmed the need to investigate brand personality (Aberg, 2015; Chen & Chen, 2014; Hachki *et al.*, 2022; Mody, 2018; Skift, 2018; Thottoli & Al Harthi, 2022; Tran *et al.*, 2013). More specifically, the following investigations were needed for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village to investigate whether:

- (i) tourists consider the staff as polite and genuine when they respond to the needs of the guests.
- (ii) tourists regard the provision of solutions to their inquiries, and the efficiency in which tourists are served as very important.
- (iii) tourists expect staff to understanding them when they lodge a grievance as all of this is indicative of the brand personality of the establishment.

Therefore, through CFA, the new dimensions and items measuring brand personality at an accommodation establishment (such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) were confirmed as a new latent construct (see Figure 6.33). These results support the findings of previous studies on brand personality (Aaker, 1999; Alusa, 2018; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015). A contribution is made to the existing body of knowledge, as these findings are also relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, which is located in a rural area of Lesotho.

6.4.2.1.4 Statistical Hypothesis 4 (EO4)

H₄: Brand attributes can be reliably and validly measured.

This section discusses the proposed statistical hypothesis that food (as a dimension) is used to support the reliability and validity of brand attributes as a construct.

Following a traditional literature review, no study was found to have used food to investigate the brand attributes at an accommodation establishment in Lesotho. The construct of brand attributes was designed according to the recommendations of Shenaar *et al.*, (2022). This stems from the need to simulate research in food tourism, particularly in the consumption of traditional food and drinks. After an intense review of the literature, as discussed in section 2.7.4, food was proposed as the most relevant dimension for investigating the brand attributes of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. All three items related to food (F1_1a, F1_2a and F1_3a) were retained for the measurement model following a CFA. There were no items dropped for the measurement model.

The Cronbach's alpha for brand attributes ($\alpha = 0.90$) (see section 5.4.2.1.3.1) was above the acceptable minimum cut-off value of $\alpha = 0.6$ (see Surucu *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the ρ_A score (0.82) was greater than the recommended minimum threshold of 0.60 to 0.70 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018; Taber, 2018). These results confirmed the internal consistency and reliability of brand attributes as a latent construct. The AVE score (0.62) for brand attributes was greater than the recommended cut-value of ≥ 0.50 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the validity of brand attributes as a construct is confirmed. Therefore, the results for brand attributes were supported by the following for all three items of *food*, namely,

- (i) a variety of Basotho dishes (Chang & Mak, 2018),

- (ii) tasty traditional Sesotho food (Chang & Mak, 2018), and
- (iii) food served in traditional Sesotho dishes (e.g., Lekuka, Lefisoane, and Seroto) (Shenaan, Schänzel & Berno, 2022) was included in the measurement model.

These results confirm the justification of the construct from a theoretical and statistical (CFA) standpoint, accepting that brand attributes (through food) can be reliably and validly measured, supporting H_4 .

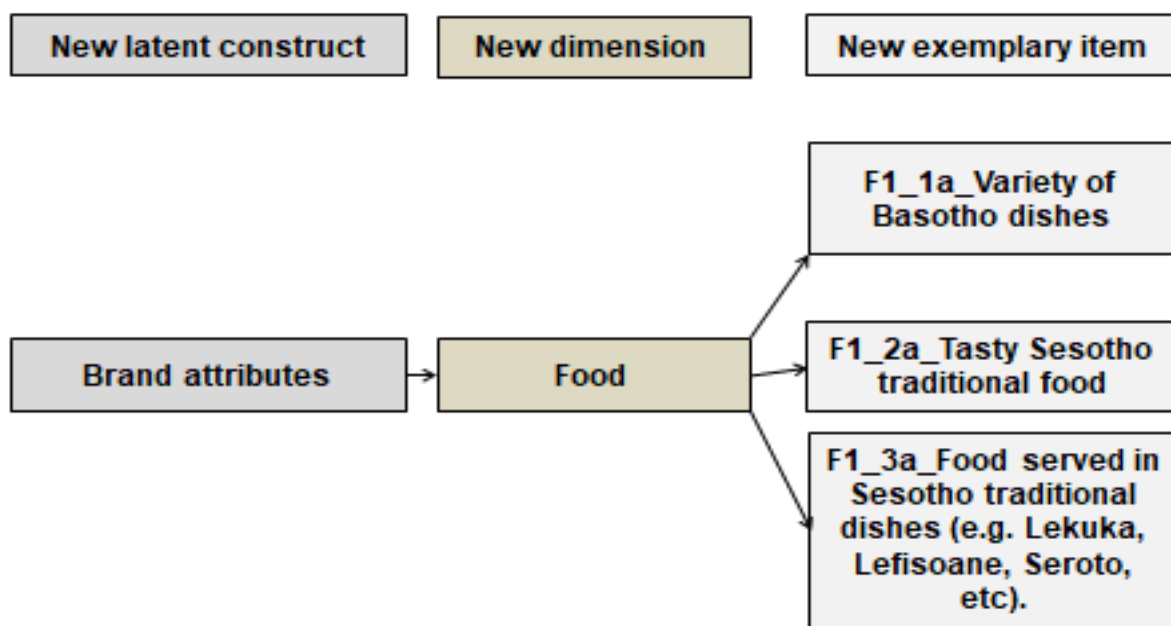


Figure 6.34: New latent construct, dimensions and items for brand attributes through CFA

Source: Author’s contribution

The new items obtained following the CFA confirmed the need to investigate brand attributes (Shenaan *et al.*, (2022)). When respondents (tourists) visit Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, they consider the consumption of traditional Sesotho food in a variety of traditional Basotho dishes (e.g., *lekuka*, *lefisoane*, and *seroto*) to be a significant experience. Therefore, following the CFA, brand attributes were confirmed as a new latent variable, as represented in Figure 6.34. These results support the findings of previous studies on brand attributes (Chang & Mak, 2018; Shenaan *et al.*, 2022). A unique contribution is made to the existing body of knowledge, as these findings indicate that food has a profound impact on how tourists perceive brand attributes at a rural accommodation establishment such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

6.4.2.1.5 Statistical hypothesis 5 (E05)

H₅: Tourist experience can be reliably and validly measured

This section presents the proposed statistical hypothesis that the tourist experience is informed by two dimensions (education and escapism) to investigate the reliability and validity of this construct, as proposed by hypothesis 5.

No study was found to have used education and escapism to investigate tourist experiences at accommodation establishments in Lesotho, following a traditional literature review. The design of the tourist experience as a construct was described by Larsen *et al.*, (2019) and Ellis *et al.*, (2017). The purpose of this study was first to address the need to understand the tourist experience from a rural accommodation perspective. Second, to respond to the research needs to expand on how the tourist experience can be investigated in a rural setting and to create memorable experiences. After conducting a robust review of the literature, as indicated in section 2.7.5, *education* and *escapism* were proposed as the most suitable dimensions for investigating the tourist experience. Six items, G1_1a, G1_2a, and G1_3a (for *education*) and G2_1a, G2_2a and G2_3a (for *escapism*), were retained for the measurement model following a CFA. There were no items dropped for the initial measurement model.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient ($\alpha = 0.86$) for tourist experience (see section 5.4.2.1.3.1) was above the acceptable minimum cut-off value of $\alpha = 0.60$ (see Surucu *et al.*, 2020). On the other hand, the ρ_A score (0.92) was greater than the recommended minimum threshold of 0.60 to 0.70 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018; Taber, 2018). The results confirmed the internal consistency and reliability of the tourist experience as a latent construct. The AVE (0.68) for tourist experience was greater than the recommended cut-off value of ≥ 0.50 (see Hair *et al.*, 2018). Thus, the validity of the tourist experience as a construct is confirmed.

Therefore, the results for tourist experience were supported by the following regarding all three items of *education*, specifically,

- (i) learning about the history of Basotho (Ali, Hussain & Ragavan, 2014),
- (ii) learning about the culture of Basotho (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Xu, Zhang & Nie, 2022), and

- (iii) enhancing my knowledge of cultural diversity (Ledford, 2015) were included in the measurement model following the CFA.

Three items of *escapism*, which explicitly enabled me to break from repetitive life (Campon-Cerro, Di-Clemente, Hernandez-Mogollon & Folgado-Fernandez, 2020), made me be in a different place (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2020) and made me forget about my daily routine life (Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2020; Cornelisse, 2018), were included in the measurement rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (S^{rtepm1}), following the CFA and as indicated in Figure 6.35. These results confirm the justification of the construct from a theoretical and statistical (CFA) standpoint, accepting that tourist experience can be reliably and validly measured, supporting H_5 .

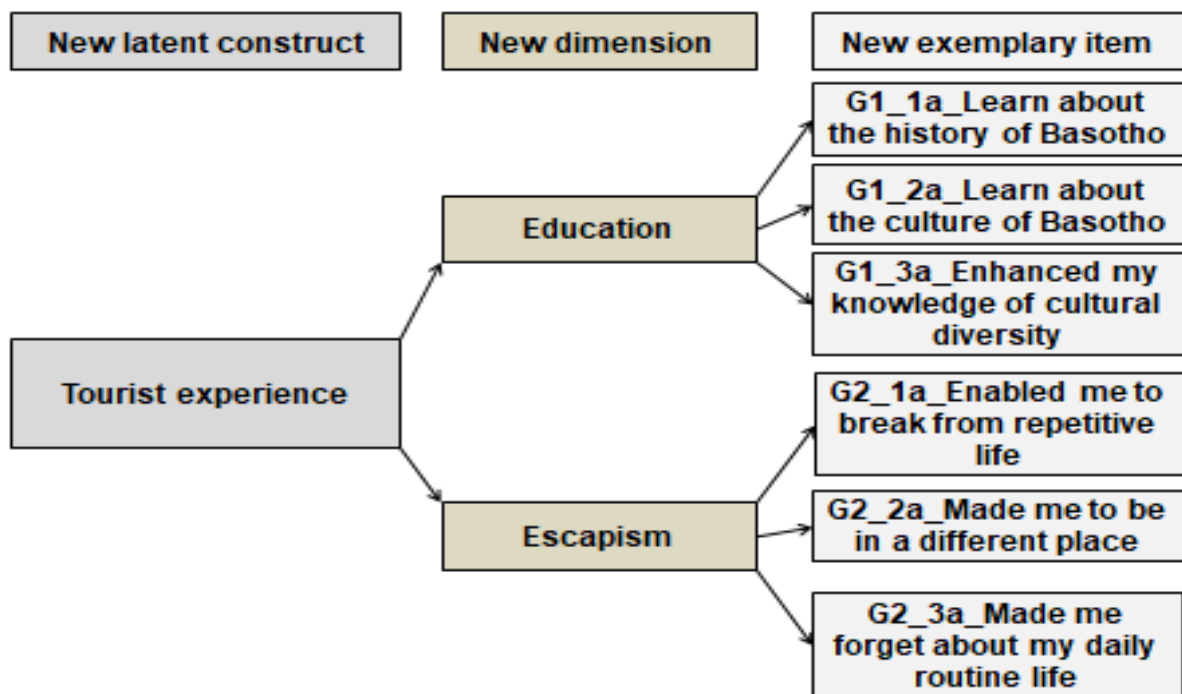


Figure 6.35: New latent construct, dimensions and items for tourist experience through CFA

Source: Author’s contribution

The new items obtained following the CFA confirmed the need to investigate tourist experience by employing education and escapism as new dimensions, as proposed by Larsen *et al.*, (2019) and Ellis *et al.*, (2017). When respondents visit the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, they prefer to learn about the history and culture of the Basotho people, as this enhances their knowledge of cultural diversity. In addition, during their visit, respondents (tourists) regarded the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village as a different

place that enabled them to break away from their repetitive life and allow them to forget about their daily routines. Consequently, through CFA, a new latent variable, tourist experience, was confirmed, as shown in Figure 6.5. These results support the findings of previous studies on tourist experience (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2020; Cornelisse, 2018; Ledford, 2015; Xu *et al.*, 2022). A unique contribution is made to the existing body of knowledge, as these findings indicate that education and the ability of tourists to escape from their daily lives are relevant when investigated at a rural establishment such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

6.4.2.1.6 Statistical Hypothesis 6 (EO6)

H₆: The theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

This section discusses the proposed statistical hypothesis based on the relationships among tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as an independent/exogenous variable) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable) and how this supports the development of the rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The discussion of the results for hypothesis 6 is divided into four subsections:

- (i) the results on the relationship between tourist safety and tourist experience
- (ii) the results on the relationship between authenticity and tourist experience
- (iii) the results on the relationship between brand personality and tourist experience, and
- (iv) the results on the relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience.

Next is the discussion of the results on the relationship between safety and the tourist experience.

6.4.2.1.6.1 The relationship between tourist safety and tourist experience

No study has investigated the relationship between tourist safety and the tourist experience at accommodation establishments in Lesotho. The relationship between tourist safety and tourist experience has been investigated following the motivations

of several scholars in the literature (Buning & Gibson, 2016; Hallmann *et al.*, 2012; Hamm & Su, 2021; Han *et al.*, 2021; Hanafiah *et al.*, 2019; Khan *et al.*, 2020; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012; Tostovrsnik *et al.*, 2015). These studies informed the intended purpose of determining why tourists at accommodation establishments demand safety and why safety is an essential factor of consideration when guests (tourists) select destinations and accommodation establishments. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate whether tourist safety has a role in tourists' experience when they visit a rural accommodation establishment such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Following a traditional literature review (see section 3.8.1), an investigation of the relationship between tourist safety and tourist experience was proposed. Although all items related to tourist safety were confirmed (see section 5.4.2.1.2.1), only two items (C1a and C3a) were retained, and 1 item (C2a) was dropped.

The relationship between tourist safety and tourist experience was assessed against the different coefficient values proposed by Mahdzar (2022). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient results revealed a moderate relationship ($r = .46$, $n = 334$, $p < .001$) between tourist safety and tourist experience in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

These results support the findings of previous studies (Buning & Gibson, 2016; Hallmann *et al.*, 2012; Hamm & Su, 2021; Han *et al.*, 2021; Hanafiah *et al.*, 2019; Khan *et al.*, 2020; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012; Tostovrsnik *et al.*, 2015) in which the relationship between safety and tourist experience was investigated. When respondents (tourists) visit the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, they consider safety to be an important part of their experiences. Consequently, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient confirmed the moderate relationship between tourist safety and tourist experience at this accommodation establishment. Therefore, this relationship supported the development of the structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) in SEM. These results support the findings of previous studies (Anichiti *et al.*, 2021; Nunkoo *et al.*, 2020). This study makes a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge, as it indicates that safety contributes to how tourists experience the product offerings that the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village provides.

6.4.2.1.6.2 The relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience

No study has investigated the relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience at accommodation establishments in Lesotho. The relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience was motivated by an array of scholars (Agarwal & Singh, 2022; Cornelisse, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2011; Matos and Barbosa, 2018; Mody & Hanks, 2020; Moore, Buchmann, Mansson & Fisher, 2021; Seyfi & Beal, 2020; Wang, 2000). Through these studies, the intended purpose of this investigation was first to determine whether authenticity has an impact on the tourist experience at a rural accommodation establishment. Second, to determine why an accommodation establishment operates, authenticity must be investigated in relation to tourists' experiences in rural areas. Finally, to determine if the authentic experience can be a differentiation strategy when marketing accommodation establishments. Having conducted a vigorous review of the literature (see section 3.8.2), an investigation of the relationship between authenticity and tourist experience was proposed. Although all items for authenticity were confirmed (see section 5.4.2.1.2.1), only two items (D2_1a and D2_2a) were retained, and 1 item, D2_3a, was dropped from the final model.

The relationship between authenticity and tourist experience was assessed against the coefficient values proposed by Mahdzar (2022). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient values ($r = .57$, $n = 334$, $p < .001$) revealed a high correlation between the latent variables for Thaba-Bosiu Cultura Village.

The results supported the need identified by previous studies (Agarwal & Singh, 2022; Cornelisse, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2011; Matos & Barbosa, 2018; Mody & Hanks, 2020, Moore, Buchmann, Mansson & Fisher, 2021; Seyfi & Beal, 2020; Wang, 2000) to determine whether a relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience exists. When respondents visit the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, they regard authenticity as a very significant aspect of their experiences. This is confirmed by the Pearson product-moment correlation results, which show a strong correlation between authenticity and the tourist experience. As a result, this relationship supported the development of the final structural rural tourist experience prediction model1 (R^{tepm1b}) via SEM. These results support the findings of previous research (Juric, 2019;

Paulauskaite *et al.*, 2017; Taheri *et al.*, 2018). A unique contribution is made to the existing body of knowledge, as these results indicate that when tourists visit an accommodation establishment in a rural area such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, their overall experience is enhanced through authenticity.

6.4.2.1.6.3 The relationship between brand personality and tourist experience

Studies that have investigated the relationship between brand personality and tourist experience at accommodation establishments were not found in Lesotho. The relationship between brand personality and tourist experience has been investigated by different scholars (Chiang & Yang, 2018; Dennis *et al.*, 2014; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Japutra & Molinillo, 2019; Keng *et al.*, 2013; Lin, 2015; Luciano *et al.*, 2019; Neto *et al.*, 2020; Nysveen *et al.*, 2013; Peric *et al.*, 2017; Soares *et al.*, 2021; Zahari *et al.*, 2022). Guided by these studies, the focus of this study was to determine whether brand personality significantly impacts tourists' experience when they visit an accommodation establishment in a rural area. After conducting a traditional literature review (see section 3.8.3), the relationship between brand personality and tourist experience was proposed. All items (E1_1a, E1_2a, E1_3a, E2_1a, E2_2a and E2_3a) for brand personality were retained for the final structural model (see section 5.4.2.1.5.2.2). This relationship also supported the development of the final structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b}).

The relationship between brand personality and tourist experience was assessed against the coefficient values proposed by Mahdzar (2022). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient value results ($r = .35$, $n = 334$, $p < .001$) revealed a moderate correlation between brand personality and tourist experience in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

The results supported the need identified by previous studies (Chiang & Yang, 2018; Dennis *et al.*, 2014; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Japutra & Molinillo, 2019; Keng *et al.*, 2013; Lin, 2015; Luciano *et al.*, 2019; Neto *et al.*, 2020; Nysveen *et al.*, 2013; Peric *et al.*, 2017; Soares *et al.*, 2021; Zahari *et al.*, 2022) to determine whether there is a relationship between brand personality and tourist experience when respondents (tourists) visit the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village; they consider brand personality (through sincerity and competence) to be an important component of their experiences.

This is confirmed by the Pearson product-moment correlation results showing a moderate correlation between brand personality and tourist experience. For that reason, this relationship supported the development of the final structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) in the SEM. These results are also consistent with the findings of previous studies (Choi *et al.*, 2017; Harwani, 2021; Mohi *et al.*, 2014). This study makes a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge, as the findings reveal that tourists who visit a rural accommodation establishment associate the sincerity and competence of staff as an important component of the establishment's brand personality to enhance their overall tourism experience, similar to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

6.4.2.1.6.4 The relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience

Scientific research investigating the relationship between brand attributes and the tourist experience at the rural accommodation establishment was not found in Lesotho. Many scholars have investigated the relationship between brand attributes and the tourist experience (Heung & Gu, 2012; Ismail *et al.*, 2021; Kavoura *et al.*, 2019; Khan *et al.*, 2021; Lo & Yeung, 2020; Mahdzar *et al.*, 2015; Ying *et al.*, 2018). The purpose of this investigation was to determine whether brand attributes (specifically food) significantly impact tourists' experience at a rural accommodation establishment. A traditional literature review (see section 3.8.4) provides support for exploring whether a relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience exists. All three items from brand attributes (F1_1a, F1_2a and F1_3a) (see section 5.4.2.1.5.2.2) were retained for the final structural model.

The relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience was assessed against the coefficient values proposed by Mahdzar (2022). The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient value results ($r = .48$, $n = 334$, $p < .001$) revealed a moderate correlation between brand attributes and tourist experience at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

The results supported the need identified by previous scholars (Heung & Gu, 2012; Ismail *et al.*, 2021; Kavoura *et al.*, 2019; Khan *et al.*, 2021; Lo & Yeung, 2020; Mahdzar *et al.*, 2015; Ying *et al.*, 2018) to determine whether there is a relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience. When respondents (tourists) visit the Thaba-

Bosiu Cultural Village, they consider brand attributes a fundamental part of their experiences. This is confirmed by the Pearson product-moment correlation results, which revealed a moderate correlation between brand attributes and tourist experience. Although brand attributes were confirmed as a new latent variable following the CFA, the relationship with tourist experience following the Pearson product-moment correlation test was supported, and brand attributes were not retained as a variable for the final structural rural tourist experience prediction Model 1. Despite these findings, the results of the Pearson product-moment correlation confirm the findings of previous studies (Deri *et al.*, 2018; Xiao, 2020). Because tourists who visit rural accommodation establishments consider food to be a crucial element of establishing brand attributes to increase their general tourism experience, a unique contribution is made to the existing body of knowledge, as these findings are also relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Following the extensive discussion of the results in the preceding sections, Figure 6.36 shows the structural model for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience, which was investigated as the final rural tourist experience prediction model for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

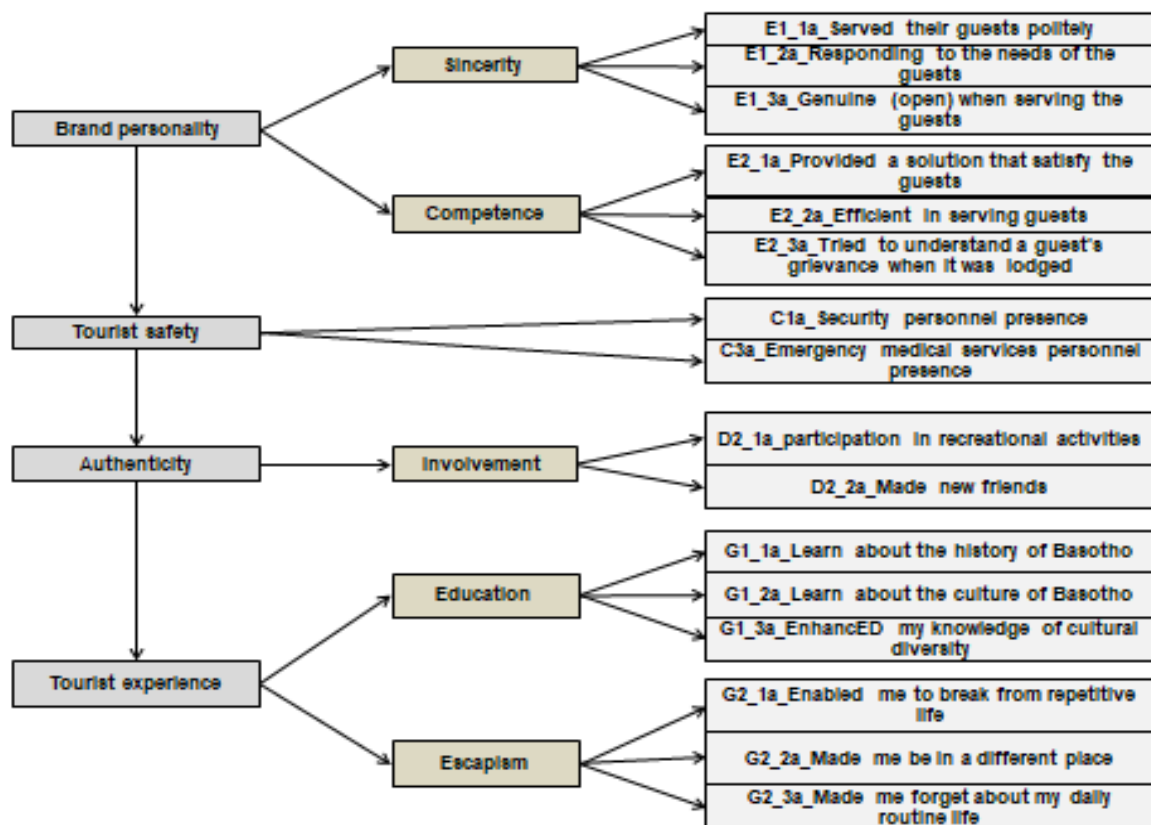


Figure 6.36: Structural model for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience to inform the Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village

Source: Author's contribution

Figure 6.36 shows the SEM images of the four new latent variables selected for the rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) model for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Two items (C1a and C3a) measuring tourist safety as a latent variable were retained (see section 6.4.2.1.6.1), and two items (D2_1a and D2_2a) for authenticity as latent variables were retained (see section 6.4.2.1.6.2). All items (E1_1a, E1_2a, E1_3a, E2_1a, E2_2a and E2_3a) for brand personality (see section 6.4.2.1.6.3) and all three items (F1_1a, F1_2a and F1_3a) for brand attributes (see section 6.4.2.1.6.4) as latent variables were retained for the structural model, as latent constructs were not retained for the structural model. Finally, all items (G1_1a, G1_2a, G1_3a, G2_1a, G2_2a and G2_3a) for a tourist experience as a latent variable were retained for the final structural model, as indicated in section 6.4.2.1.6.5.

Through the estimation of the structural model, three stages – specification of the structural model, identification of the structural model, and structural good fit model – were applied. After conducting SEM on the identified variables (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience), structural rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) produced good fit indices, where $\chi^2 = 2.38$, p value > 0.001 , RMSEA = 0.6, GFI = 0.92, indicating acceptable model fit. Therefore, the hypothesised model (H_6) fits the dataset adequately, confirming that the theoretically hypothesised tourist experience framework has a good fit with the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

This unique combination of items, under the new latent variables, contributes to the existing body of literature. This regression model clearly shows how brand personality (through sincerity and competence) in terms of staff politeness and genuine manners when responding to guests' needs, the provision of solutions and efficiency when serving guests are the components that enhance how safe tourists feel about the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Safety, in terms of the presence of security personnel and the viability of emergency medical services personnel at the rural accommodation establishment, contributes to how acceptable tourists are to having an authentic

experience, as they feel involved in recreational activities related to Basotho culture, enabling them to make new friends and talk to the staff. All of these factors, brand personality, tourist safety and authenticity, enhance the overall tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, as tourists prefer to learn the history and culture of the Basotho people because doing so enhances their knowledge of cultural diversity. Ultimately, these factors enabled tourists to break away from their mundane life and were a reprieve of their daily routines. Consequently, the Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) relates to SERQUAL as an embedded theory because experiences are assessed based on quality services such as tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and brand attributes and tourist experience.

6.5 SYNTHESIS

This chapter indicated that the general demographic profile of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village visitors included millennials who were male graduates and who had visited the rural accommodation establishment once. This chapter discussed the results of Cronbach's alpha and ρ_A to confirm the instrument reliability and internal consistency for variables (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience). In addition, this chapter presented the findings of the AVE that justified the instrument validity for (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience) H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5 . This chapter discussed the Pearson correlations between the constructs and how these relationships were used to support the SEM to confirm the variables (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality and tourist experience) in structural rural tourist experience prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}), which produced good fit indices indicating acceptable model fit for H_6 .

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 6, the main emphasis was on the discussion and interpretation of research results using the sequence of the ROs, TROs and empirical hypotheses, as stated in Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, respectively. Chapter 7 presents a summary of the entire research procedure, with the main emphasis placed on summarising all the chapters, conclusions, recommendations, contributions, possible limitations, suggestions for future studies and answers to the research question.

7.2 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

This section discusses a summation of all the preceding chapters.

7.2.1 Chapter 1

Chapter 1 presented the general overview of this dissertation based on the background of the study, the problem statement, the main objective, the research objectives and the research questions. The main research objective was as follows:

To determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

To achieve the above-stated objective, the following research question was developed to guide the reviewed literature on tourism and hospitality management:

How are the scores on tourist safety related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes used to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village?

The abovementioned research question motivated the formulation of the theoretical framework shown in Figure 1.1. The theoretical framework led to a model built on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable) as integrated constructs. Chapter 1 discusses the research motivation for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes

and tourist experience, guided by the research objectives and proposed theoretical framework.

7.2.2 Chapter 2

In chapter 2, the TROs based on ROs and the proposed theoretical framework are presented. The stated TROs were followed by a discussion of the reviewed literature in the context of the tourism and hospitality industry globally and on the African continent, with a specific focus on Lesotho as a country and Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village as a case study. This was followed by a discussion of demographic characteristics in terms of age, gender, highest educational qualifications, occupation and the number of times respondents (tourists) visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The reviewed literature on the proposed theoretical framework was divided into five sections and their respective subsequent sections according to the number of constructs. The definitions and discussions of each construct (tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience) were detailed to support the proposed theoretical framework. The discussion of each construct was concluded by stating the hypotheses guided by their corresponding TROs.

7.2.3 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 discussed a review of the literature on the relationships between the constructs, as indicated by the arrows in the proposed theoretical framework (see Figure 1.1). The discussion was based on the relationships among tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes, brand personality (as an independent/exogenous variable) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable), as informed by RO6. Hypothesis 6 included a discussion of the relationship between the constructs where the empirically manifested rural tourist experience prediction model at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was proposed.

7.2.4 Chapter 4

Chapter 4 described the suitable research methods used to conduct this study based on the proposed theoretical framework, as shown in Figure 1.1. The ROs, TROs and research hypotheses stated in chapters 1 and 2 determined the positivism research

paradigm and quantitative research design as the most suitable research methods to conduct this study and achieved the following primary research objective (PRO):

To determine whether the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

To achieve the above-stated PRO, the chapter discussed the research procedure for ethical approval, with in-person and self-administered online questionnaires as the techniques used to gather primary data, as indicated in Figure 4.14 (see section 4.4.4). IBM SPSS V28 was used to perform a CFA on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience. Furthermore, chapter 4 discussed the validity and reliability of measuring instruments of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience to test hypotheses H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5 and confirm ROs (RO1, RO2, RO3, RO4 and RO5). This chapter also provided a detailed discussion of the procedures used to investigate the relationships among tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable) and conducted SEM results to confirm the final structural model (rural tourist experience prediction model 1 (R^{tepm1b})) for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

7.2.5 Chapter 5

Chapter 5 presented an analysis of the data in two phases (phases 1 and 2). In phase 1, univariate data analysis was performed based on the frequencies of the screening questions, demographic information and item descriptive statistics to investigate the items of the constructs and new latent variables. Phase 2 involved bivariate and multivariate data analysis based on two parts (part 1 and part 2). Part 1 presented CFA using SEM and Pearson's product-moment correlation, and part 2 presented data based on testing the most parsimonious model using SEM consisting of the three stages. Furthermore, chapter 5 presents an inferential statistical analysis based on the empirical research objectives and hypotheses informed by the proposed theoretical framework in Figure 1.1. Furthermore, chapter 5 (as indicated in section 5.4.2.1.3.1) presented the results of the AVE, Cronbach's alpha and ρ_A to indicate the validity, reliability and internal consistency of the measurement instruments for tourist safety

(AVE = 0.40, α = 0.67, ρ_{A} = 0.70), authenticity (AVE = 0.40, α = 0.66, ρ_{A} = 0.70), brand personality (AVE = 0.50, α = 0.76, ρ_{A} = 0.83), brand attributes (AVE = 0.62, α = 0.90, ρ_{A} = 0.82) and tourist experience (AVE = 0.68, α = 0.86, ρ_{A} = 0.92) to test hypotheses (H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5) and confirm ROs (RO1, RO2, RO3, RO4 and RO5), following a CFA.

Moreover, the empirical H_6 , as informed by RO6, presented results of Pearson product moment correlation to indicate the respective correlations between tourist safety (r = .46, n = 334, p < 0.001), authenticity (r = .57, n = 334, p < 0.001), brand personality (r = .33, n = 334, p < 0.001), and brand attributes (r = .48, n = 334, p < 0.001) (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as dependent/endogenous variable). Finally, this chapter concludes with the results of SEM (χ^2 = 2.38, p value > 0.001, RMSEA = 0.6, GFI = 0.92) to confirm the goodness of fit for rural tourist experience prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village (as a structural model) to support H_6 .

7.2.6 Chapter 6

Chapter 6 presented a discussion and interpretation of the results. This chapter was divided into two phases. Phase 1 discussed the results based on descriptive statistics on the demographic characteristics of respondents who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Phase 2 discussed the CFA based on the empirical hypotheses (H_1 , H_2 , H_3 , H_4 and H_5) guided by their corresponding ROs (RO1, RO2, RO3, RO4 and RO5) and confirmed measurement models of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience, as summarised below:

- The results of tourist safety support the findings of previous studies on tourist safety (Amir *et al.*, 2015; Skjeie *et al.*, 2008; Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012; UNWTO, 1996; Wickens, 2002) and contribute to the existing body of literature, as these findings are also relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in a rural tourism destination.
- The results on authenticity confirm the findings of previous studies related to authenticity and involvement (Cevik & Simskek, 2017; Chen *et al.*, 2020; Han, Praet & Wang, 2019; Wei *et al.*, 2019) and contribute to the existing body of literature, as these findings are also relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in a rural area.

- The results for brand personality endorse the findings of previous studies on brand personality (Aaker, 1999; Alusa, 2018; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015) and contribute to the existing body of literature, as these findings are also relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, which is located in a rural area of Lesotho.
- The results of the brand attributes support the results of previous studies on brand attributes (Chang & Mak, 2018; Shenaan *et al.*, 2022) and make a unique contribution to the existing body of literature, as these findings indicate that food has a profound impact on how tourists perceive brand attributes at a rural accommodation establishment such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.
- The results of the tourist experience support the results of previous studies on tourist experience (Ali *et al.*, 2014; Campon-Cerro *et al.*, 2020; Cornelisse, 2018; Ledford, 2015; Xu *et al.*, 2022), making a unique contribution to the existing body of literature, as these findings indicate that education and the ability of tourists to escape from their daily lives are relevant when investigated at a rural establishment such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

Furthermore, phase 2 also presented a discussion of the results of the empirically manifested H_6 and RO6 based on the positive correlations between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes (as an independent variable) and tourist experience (as a dependent variable) following the Pearson product–moment correlation coefficient test.

- The relationship between tourist safety and the tourist experience at this accommodation establishment was confirmed. These results support the findings of previous studies (Anichiti *et al.*, 2021; Nunkoo *et al.*, 2020) and make a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge, as they indicate that safety contributes to how tourists experience the product offerings that the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village presents.
- The relationship between authenticity and the tourist experience at this accommodation establishment was supported. These findings support the findings of previous research (Juric, 2019; Paulauskaite *et al.*, 2017; Taheri *et al.*, 2018) and make unique contributions to the existing body of literature, as these results indicate that when tourists visit an accommodation establishment

in a rural area such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, their overall experience is enhanced through authenticity.

- The relationship between brand personality and tourist experience was limited. These results corroborate previous studies (Choi *et al.*, 2017; Harwani, 2021; Mohi *et al.*, 2014) and make unique contributions to the existing body of literature, as tourists who visit a rural accommodation establishment such as the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village associate the sincerity and competence of staff as an important component of the establishment's brand personality to enhance their overall tourism experience.
- The relationship between brand attributes and tourist experience was confirmed. These findings support previous studies (Deri *et al.*, 2018; Xiao, 2020) and make a unique contribution to the existing body of literature, as tourists who visit rural accommodation establishments such as Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village consider food to be a crucial element of establishing brand attributes to increase their general tourism experience.

This unique combination of items, under the new latent variables, contributes to the existing body of literature. This regression model clearly shows how brand personality (through sincerity and competence), how the politeness and genuine manners of staff play an important role in responding to the needs of guests and how the provision of solutions leads to efficiency when serving guests to enhance how safe tourists feel about the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. The safety in terms of the presence of security personnel and the availability of emergency medical services personnel that tourists feel at the rural accommodation establishment contribute to how acceptable they are to have an authentic experience. Additionally, tourists feel involved in recreational activities related to Basotho culture, enabling them to make new friends and talk to the staff.

All of these new latent variables, brand personality, tourist safety and authenticity enhance the overall tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. It is evident that tourists prefer to learn about the history and culture of the Basotho people, as this enhances their knowledge of cultural diversity. Ultimately, tourists break away from their mundane lives and forget about their daily routines. Consequently, the Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model relates to SERQUAL as an embedded theory

because experiences are assessed based on the quality service on tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience.

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the theoretical, methodological and practical recommendations for this current study.

7.3.1 Theoretical recommendations

This study developed a practical framework for the measurement of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. More research is needed to investigate these measurement models in follow-up contemporary tourism and hospitality studies. Additional literature can be consulted to expand on the items and dimensions for each confirmed construct to improve its validity and reliability.

The current study proposed *local culture* as a dimension of authenticity. However, local culture as a dimension was not confirmed in the measurement model. Therefore, it is recommended that additional research be conducted on *local culture* as an antecedent for authenticity to determine whether the consulted literature still holds or whether this dimension no longer impacts authenticity.

The current study used CFA in SEM to confirm all the items (security personnel presence, feeling of safety and emergency medical services personnel presence) in the measurement of tourist safety. However, one item (feeling of safety) was not confirmed in the structural model. Therefore, more research should be conducted on “feeling of safety”, an item that measures tourist safety across all tourism and hospitality sectors, to determine whether this item is necessary in future studies investigating tourist safety.

This study used CFA in SEM to confirm all the items (participation in recreational activities, making new friends and conversation with the staff) in the measurement of involvement as a dimension of authenticity. In contrast, one item (conversation with the staff) of involvement was not confirmed in the structural model. Therefore, it is recommended that more studies be conducted to use “conversation with the staff” as

an item to measure involvement in future tourism and hospitality-related studies to determine whether it is still relevant.

This study used CFA in SEM to confirm brand attributes as a new latent variable in the measurement model. Despite the confirmation of the new latent variable, brand attributes did not support the most parsimonious fit to the structural model for Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and were omitted. More research is needed to determine whether brand attributes are relevant variables in tourism and hospitality-related studies.

7.3.2 Methodological recommendations

In the present study, snowball sampling was used to collect data from respondents who visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village via an online self-administered questionnaire. Therefore, it is recommended that snowball sampling be used in different studies of tourism and hospitality to assess its effectiveness.

The current study used convenience sampling to collect data from respondents who were available at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village during the period of data collection. Consequently, it is recommended that convenience sampling be used by other studies to assess its applicability.

This study used CFA as a statistical technique to confirm tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience in the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village measurement model. For that reason, it is recommended that CFA be used in a different case study of the tourism industry to assess its appropriateness, as this is more robust than using EFA.

The current study used Pearson product moment correlation to determine the relationships between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes (as independent/exogenous variables) and tourist experience (as dependent/endogenous variables). Therefore, it is recommended that Pearson product moment correlation be used across the different sectors of tourism and hospitality to confirm the correlation of the constructs.

7.3.3 Practical recommendations

The practical recommendations are presented as implications of the findings that can be transferred from the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village community to a similar context, such as the leadership of Lesotho Tourism and Hospitality (the MTEC and LTDC), executives of hospitality establishments (managers) and tourism and hospitality associations (such as the LTA, LCT, LHHA, and the TOAL), tourism teachers, consultants and researchers.

The results of this study may benefit the community at the Thaba-Boisu Cultural Village and be transferred to the leadership of the Lesotho tourism and hospitality industry in several ways, such as to the following:

- inform national strategic planning and implementation. Tourism associations could benefit from the study's findings when members develop an itinerary for guests visiting Lesotho.
- solve poor tourism development and poor tourism product development as challenges stated in section 1.2 by developing tourist safety measures, developing training programmes based on brand personality aimed at increasing employee efficiency during service and providing solutions to guests' needs. These could assist holiday package makers in offering high-quality holiday packages and increase tourists' visiting experience.
- help in solving a shortage of entrepreneurial skills as a challenge, as stated in section 1.2, to design and develop tourism and hospitality curricula to match tourism graduates' skill sets with contemporary issues and standards of tourism careers. This could be accomplished by training employees to be open when serving guests politely and responding to their needs. In addition, the results of the study can inform training programmes for employees to be efficient during service encounters and provide solutions to satisfy guests and the need to understand guests' grievances when they are lodged.
- solve the shortage of policy and regulations, as specified in section 1.2, to adapt the current measurement model to other sectors of tourism to gain an in-depth understanding of guests' experiences and inform general tourism policy. Thus, they ultimately inform service quality and service excellence.

- assist executives of the Lesotho tourism industry in solving the challenges of crimes committed against tourists by some Basotho residents, as indicated in section 1.2.1. This can be done by creating safety measures aimed at protecting tourists against any type of crime and providing security. As tourist safety is informed by the embedded SERQUAL theory, the results can be used to contribute to the quality experience visitors could enjoy during their holiday in Lesotho, as promised by the Lesotho Tourism website and logo.
- help Lesotho tourism product developers design authentic experiences by developing high-quality cultural products and attire and performances in the tourism industry. This could assist in attracting both local and international visitors as a strategy to solve the challenges indicated in section 1.2.3.
- assist managers of accommodation establishments to commit resources to increasing tourism training and customer care so that staff can contribute to the strong personalities of accommodation brands to solve challenges, as shown in section 1.2.4.
- support managers of accommodation establishments in increasing the availability of local food and Basotho cuisine (brand attributes), as highlighted in section 1.2.4. This could increase the quality of service, especially to improve room and food service scores, when assessed by tourists against services offered by developed countries. Through these experiences, tourists may also become more aware of the local culture and may appreciate this in future studies.
- help Lesotho Tourism officials include recent trends relating to safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes when creating or updating the Lesotho National Tourism Master Plan. This plan can inform officials on how to position Lesotho in the marketplace as a potential tourist destination capable of offering quality tourist experiences, as highlighted in section 1.2.6.

7.4 CONTRIBUTIONS

This section discusses the contributions of the study in the form of theoretical, methodological and practical contributions.

7.4.1 Theoretical contributions

The main theoretical contribution is that the selected constructs, with selected dimensions and items, were assessed in the unique relationship from the theoretical perspective through the TROs to support the investigation of the PRO.

- Tourist safety as a construct and its items were confirmed to be valid and reliable. As indicated in section 7.2.6, tourist safety as a construct makes a theoretical contribution to the existing body of knowledge, as a unique combination of items of tourist safety is applied in different contexts at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.
- With regard to authenticity as a construct, its dimensions and items were confirmed to be valid and reliable. As indicated in section 7.2.6, authenticity makes a theoretical contribution to the existing body of knowledge as only one of its kind in a combination of items, and the dimension (involvement) of authenticity is applied in a different context at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, although local culture and its dimensions were not confirmed.
- Using brand personality as a construct, its dimensions and items were confirmed to be valid and reliable. As indicated in section 7.2.6, brand personality as a construct makes a theoretical contribution to the existing body of knowledge, as the combination of dimensions and items for brand personality as a construct was used to investigate the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.
- Using brand attributes as a construct, its dimensions and items were confirmed to be valid and reliable. As indicated in section 7.2.6, brand attribute as a construct makes a theoretical contribution to the existing body of knowledge, as the combination of dimensions and items for brand attributes as constructs were used to investigate tourist experience because this is also relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.
- With tourist experience as a construct, its dimensions and items were confirmed to be valid and reliable. As indicated in section 7.2.6, tourist experience as a construct makes a theoretical contribution to the existing body of knowledge, as the combination of dimensions and items for tourist

experience as constructs were used to investigate tourist experience relevant to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

7.4.2 Methodological contributions

This study created and adapted the in-person and self-administered research instrument of tourist safety (3 items), authenticity (6 items), brand personality (6 items), brand attributes (3 items) and tourist experience (6 items) for data collection. To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on how a CFA can be applied to confirm tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience in the measurement model (in Lesotho). The AVE, Cronbach's alpha and ρ_A were used to confirm the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Therefore, this study makes a methodological contribution by confirming the validity and reliability of adapted instruments for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by using Pearson product moment correlation to confirm the relationships among tourist safety, authenticity, brand attributes, brand personality (as an independent/exogenous variable) and tourist experience (as a dependent/endogenous variable). These relationships support the development of the final structural model (Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) by using SEM.

7.4.3 Practical contributions

The results of this study can contribute to Lesotho tourism practices by helping the executives and managers of accommodation establishments to do the following:

- design holiday packages that comprise aspects of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes as a way to ensure guests get satisfying experiences when they visit accommodation establishments.
- guide policy-makers develop a policy on safety measures to protect guests who visit Lesotho to maximise their holiday experiences.
- formulate strategic marketing and promotional activities that include brand attributes to attract new tourists or maintain the already existing target market to gain a competitive advantage.

7.5 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

7.5.1 Theoretical limitations

The following are the theoretical limitations that the researcher faced in undertaking this study:

- There was a lack of previous research undertaken in the context of tourist experience in Lesotho, limiting the literature to support the current study.
- The use of evergreen authors could be a limiting effect because some recent trends from recent references may be disregarded.
- There was a shortage of previous studies on embedded theories, thus limiting the ability of these studies to investigate the tourist experience in Lesotho.

7.5.2 Methodological limitations

As highlighted in section 4.3.1, this study had a number of methodological limitations. For instance:

- It was limited to quantitative research methods using in-person and self-administered online questionnaires to collect primary data. Therefore, the in-depth aspects related to the investigated constructs could have been missed as a qualitative research approach was not employed in this study.
- This study was limited to convenience sampling by collecting data from people who were present during the Moshoeshoe Walk closing ceremony held at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.
- This study was limited to snowballing sampling, as respondents recommended that their counterparts match the criteria, which resulted in bias from an inability to select respondents with diverse perspectives.
- The data collection was limited to only guests of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village as a rural accommodation establishment. As a result, the results cannot be generalised to other guests who visited other rural accommodation establishments, especially those who were not heritage related.

7.5.3 Practical limitations

The following points highlight the practical limitations of the current study:

- This study was completed within a specific timeframe; therefore, the scope was limited to ensuring that all objectives were achieved within the stipulated timeframe.
- This study was conducted using a constrained budget, which limited the collection of data from a specific sample size to represent the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village population.
- This study started in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and was completed post-COVID-19 at the time of the recovery of the tourism industry. These issues have brought about changes in tourism and hospitality since the time the study was conducted.

7.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Several suggestions for future studies are listed below:

- As revealed in section 4.4.1.1, this study used snowball and convenience nonprobability sampling in the quantitative design, restricting the generalisation of the findings to the entire population. Future research can replicate this study by using probability sampling techniques.
- As indicated in section 6.4.2.1.2, local culture as a dimension of authenticity was not confirmed when the CFA was conducted. These results are consistent with those of Makwindi (2016), who found that local culture was not supported by findings when investigating the role of authenticity in Lesotho. This motivates future studies to replicate this study in other countries to confirm whether local culture is a dimension of authenticity, as indicated by previous theoretical studies (Lonardi & Unterperinger, 2022). This could be very interesting, as most people travel to other countries to experience cultures different from their own.
- As shown in section 6.4.2.1.6.4, brand attributes, as a latent construct, were not retained for the final structural model to predict the rural tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. This encourages future studies to establish why brand attributes are confirmed in CFA and not regarded as important for the structural model in a rural tourism context. This could be very interesting,

as local cuisine and traditional food served at destinations are an important part of the tourist dining experience, as Tendani (2021) found in Zimbabwe.

This study was limited to investigating the experiences of tourists after they visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. It could be interesting for future studies to assess tourist satisfaction and intentions to revisit the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. This could be of paramount importance to the Department of Service Design and Product Development in Lesotho to evaluate the quality of tourism services and products when designing strategies to enhance tourist experiences. Furthermore, this could also inform the marketing department at local accommodation establishments when resources are allocated for marketing activities to attract new markets or to retain tourists.

Future studies can use this study as a basis for investigating the brand personality (through image and identity) of an accommodation establishment. This could inform product developers and relevant marketing and promotional campaigns needed to attract many visitors, gain a large market share and gain a competitive advantage over rivalries. This can attract and increase the number of tourists visiting Lesotho as a tourist destination, leading to an increase in foreign currency exchange.

This study used tourist safety as a construct without any use of dimensions to investigate the tourist experience at an accommodation establishment in Lesotho. Future studies should use other safety dimensions, such as “security” (Ghaderi, Saboori & Khoshkam, 2017) and “first aid” (Ranse, Lenson, Keene, Luther, Burke, Hutton, Johnston & Crilly, 2018), to investigate tourist experiences in other sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry. Such investigations can assist authorities in the development of safety measures that are tailored for the Lesotho tourism fraternity.

This study used local culture and involvement as dimensions of authenticity to investigate the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Further studies can use “social interaction” (Mele, 2017) and “meaningfulness” (Chen, Cheng & Kim, 2020) as dimensions of authenticity to investigate tourists' experiences at multiple accommodation establishments and in other tourism and hospitality sectors. These additional dimensions can provide insights into comprehensive tourism product development.

This study used *sincerity* and *competence* as dimensions of brand personality to investigate the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in Lesotho. Future studies can consider “ruggedness” (Robertson, Ferguson, Eriksson & Nappa, 2019) and “excitement” (Alusa, 2018) as dimensions of brand personality to investigate tourists’ experiences across the tourism and hospitality industry to build a strong personality for the Lesotho tourism industry.

This study used *food* as the dimension of brand attributes to investigate the tourist experience at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in Lesotho. As this study concentrated on only one accommodation establishment, future research is recommended to utilise “place attachment” (Nyamekye, Adam, Boateng & Kosiba, 2023) as a dimension of brand attributes to investigate tourist experiences across the tourism and hospitality value chain in Lesotho.

This study used *education* and *escapism* as dimensions for measuring the tourist experience at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in Lesotho. Future research may use “entertainment” (Xue, Zhou, Majeed, Chen & Zhou, 2022) and “aesthetics” (Şeker & Unur, 2022) as dimensions for measuring tourist experience across the tourism sector in Lesotho.

7.7 FINAL CONCLUSION AND ANSWERING OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The general overview of the study supported the development of the proposed theoretical framework, as stated in chapter 1. This theoretical framework was tested by undertaking a survey using a measuring instrument with 7-point Likert scale questions. The results of the CFA confirmed the measurement model of tourist safety (H_1), authenticity (H_2), brand personality (H_3), brand attributes (H_4) and tourist experience (H_5). Therefore, RO1, RO2, RO3, RO4 and RO5 were supported and achieved.

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to test the respective correlations between tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience, followed by a confirmation of the structural model through SEM, to support RO6. H_6 was supported by the data as the theoretically hypothesised framework, which had a good fit with the empirically manifested model known as the Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model 1 (R^{tepm1b}) at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Therefore, the primary objective of this study was to determine whether the

scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity and brand personality (excluding brand attributes) to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village, as illustrated in Figure 7.37.

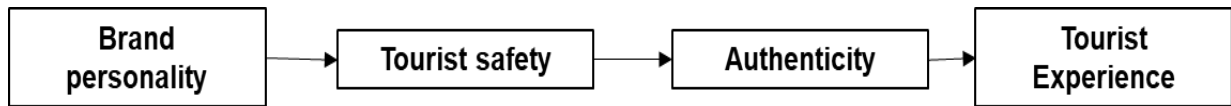


Figure 7.37: The Rural Tourist Experience Prediction Model for the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village

Source: Author's contribution

Based on these results, the PRO – to determine if the scores on tourist safety are related to authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes to predict the tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village – has been obtained.

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Appendix 1: Letter to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village requesting permission for online data collection

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Request for permission from researcher to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

My name is Shale Johannes Shale (student number: 579 951 76) and I am currently a registered student for a Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa. As part of the research project, I am conducting a study on *Tourist experience gaps between accommodation establishment and tourist attraction*. The study aims to investigate service quality gaps between accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and tourist attraction (Moshoeshoe Walk) through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes, and tourist experience.

The research design will be quantitative in nature. The data collection is anticipated to commence from 01 May 2022 until 30 April 2023. For the data collection process, questionnaires will be administered electronically and it will take guests approximately 30 minutes to complete. A QR code will be designed for questionnaires and hence you are requested to support the study by distributing the link through your database and encourage guests to participate in the survey. Guests will also be encouraged to share the link with other guests. The questionnaires will be distributed immediately after the Moshoeshoe Walk event.

The participants will be kept anonymous. The participants will be requested to tick the box to provide their informed consent and voluntary participation in the survey. However, names will not be recorded anywhere hence participant's answers will not be connected to anyone.

I would like to request permission to conduct research amongst guests' visiting Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.

The research study will involve the following:

1. Electronically administered questionnaire
2. The purpose of the questionnaire is to enquire about guests' assessments of tourist experience through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes in the context of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
3. The questionnaire is to be completed by guests who have experienced both the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
4. Data gathered will only be used for this study and kept confidentially and anonymously.

By agreeing you grant permission for this questionnaire to be disseminated, you agree that the information provided by your guests may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.


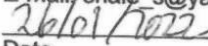
It is anticipated that the information we gain from this questionnaire will help us to get guests' reviews and create a tourist experience gaps model.

We do not foresee that your organisation will experience any negative consequences by allowing guests to complete the questionnaires. The researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of our possession, and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual. Upon the completion of the study, a report with descriptive statistics will be given to you to provide you with insights into the views of the guests to inform strategic decisions.

The participants' responses will be kept for five years for audit purposes thereafter it will be permanently destroyed and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Respondents will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the survey.

The research will be reviewed and approved by the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC), statistician, and study supervisors. The primary researcher, Shale Johannes Shale, can be contacted during office hours at +266 57019529 or E-mails: shale_s@yahoo.com or 57995176@mylife.unisa.ac.za I am researching with Mr. Sello Nthebe, Lecturer, contactable at Tel: +27 (0) 12 433 4699 or E-mail: Enthebss@unisa.ac.za and Prof. M. P. Swart, Associate Professor, in the Department of Applied Management contactable at Tel: +27 (0) 12 433 4678 or E-mail address: swartmp@unisa.ac.za.

Kind Regards
Shale J. Shale (Mr.)

Names and Surname	Position	I hereby request permission for Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk to participate in the aforesaid study
Mr. Shale Johannes Shale	Student	 Signature E-mail: shale_s@yahoo.com  Date

Appendix 2: Letter to the Moshoeshoe Walk requesting permission online data collection

UNISA



Request for permission from researcher to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

My name is Shale Johannes Shale (student number: 579 951 76) and I am currently a registered student for a Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa. As part of the research project, I am conducting the study on *Tourist experience gaps between accommodation establishment and tourist attraction*. The study aims to investigate service quality gaps between accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and tourist attraction (Moshoeshoe Walk) through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes and tourist experience.

The research design will be quantitative in nature. The data collection is anticipated to commence from 01 May 2022 until 30 April 2023. For the data collection process, questionnaires will be administered electronically and it will take guests approximately 30 minutes to complete. A QR code will be designed for questionnaires and hence you are requested to support the study by distributing the link through your database and encourage guests to participate in the survey. Guests will also be encouraged to share the link with other guests. The questionnaires will be distributed immediately after the Moshoeshoe Walk event.

The participants will be kept anonymous. The participants will be requested to tick the box to provide their informed consent and voluntary participation in the survey. However, names will not be recorded anywhere hence participant's answers will not be connected to anyone.

I would like to request permission to conduct research amongst guests' visiting Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.

The research study will involve the following:

1. Electronically administered questionnaire
2. The purpose of the questionnaire is to enquire about guests' assessments of tourist experience through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes in the context of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
3. The questionnaire is to be completed by guests who have experienced both the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
4. Data gathered will only be used for this study and kept confidentially and anonymously.

By agreeing you grant permission for this questionnaire to be disseminated, you agree that the information provided by your guests may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.


It is anticipated that the information we gain from this questionnaire will help us to get guests' reviews and create a tourist experience gaps model.

We do not foresee that your organisation will experience any negative consequences by allowing guests to complete the questionnaires. The researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of our possession and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual. Upon the completion of the study, report with descriptive statistics will be given to you to provide you with insights in the views of the guests to inform strategic decisions.

The participants responses will be kept for five years for audit purposes thereafter it will be permanently destroyed and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Respondents will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the survey.

The research will be reviewed and approved by the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC), statistician and study supervisors. The primary researcher, Shale Johannes Shale, can be contacted during office hours at +266 57019529 or E-mails: shale_s@yahoo.com or 57995176@mylife.unisa.ac.za I am researching with Mr. Sello Nthebe, Lecturer, contactable at Tel: +27 (0) 12 433 4699 or E-mail: Enthebss@unisa.ac.za and Prof. M. P. Swart, Associate Professor, in the Department of Applied Management contactable at Tel: +27 (0) 12 433 4678 or E-mail address: swartmp@unisa.ac.za.

Kind Regards
Shale J. Shale (Mr.)

Names and Surname	Position	I hereby request permission for Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk to participate in the aforesaid study
Mr. Shale Johannes Shale	Student	 Signature E-mail: shale_s@yahoo.com 26/01/2022 Date

Appendix 3: Letter from the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village granting permission for online data collection



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e: thababosiuivil@gmail.com
w: www.thevillage.co.ls

Thursday, February 17, 2022

Granting permission to research Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village

Dear Mr. Shale Johannes Shale

I, [REDACTED] Director at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village hereby grants Mr. Shale Johannes Shale (student number 57995176) permission to get access to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk visitors as a means to conduct the research, as he is enrolled for a Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa. The proposed study is titled: Tourist experience gaps between accommodation establishment and tourist attraction. The study aims to investigate service quality gaps between accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and tourist attraction (Moshoeshoe Walk) through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes, and tourist experience.

We, Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk, and our members would like to confirm that we will be part of the research survey and will, therefore, distribute the survey and URL link once it is shared by Mr. Shale to our members as well as encourage participation.

We understand that the research design will be quantitative in nature and that data collection is anticipated to commence from 01 May 2022 until 30 April 2023. We also understand that data will be collected using an electronically administered questionnaire that takes guests approximately 30 minutes to complete. We, therefore, agree to distribute the QR code link in our database and encourage guests to participate in the survey and; we also understand that the questionnaires will be distributed immediately after the event.

We understand that our guests' (participants) identities will be kept anonymous and that participants will be requested to tick a box to provide their informed consent and voluntary participation in the online survey.

We also understand and agree that the study involves the following:

1. Electronically administered questionnaire
2. The purpose of the questionnaire is to get guests' assessments of tourist experience through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes in the context of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk
3. The questionnaire is to be completed by guests who have experienced both Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
4. Data gathered will only be used for this study and kept confidentially and anonymously.

We understand that the study will receive ethical clearance from the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC), statistician, and supervisors, following which we will be approached for the quantitative questionnaires. By agreeing to grant permission for this questionnaire to be distributed, we agree that the information provided by our guests

may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

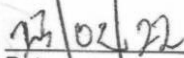
We do not foresee that our organization will experience any negative consequences by allowing guests to complete the questionnaires. We understand that the researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of his possession, and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual.

We understand that the participants' responses will be kept for five years for audit purposes thereafter it will be permanently destroyed and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Also, we understand that we will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for our participation in the survey.

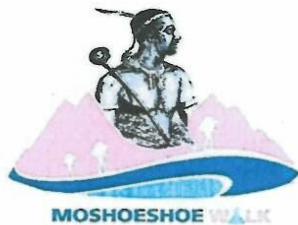
You are welcome to contact me anytime.

Kind Regards

Mr. [REDACTED]

Name and Surname	Position	I hereby agree that Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk can form part of the aforementioned study
[REDACTED]	Managing Director	[REDACTED]
		Signature
		
		Date
		17/02/22

Appendix 4: Letter from the Moshoeshoe Walk granting permission for online data collection



P.O. BOX 946
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+266 58866304
Tax: +266 22 314 646
Email: moshoeshoe.walk@gmail.com

Granting permission to research Moshoeshoe Walk

Dear Mr. Shale Johannes Shale

I, [REDACTED] Director at Moshoeshoe Walk hereby grants Mr. Shale Johannes Shale (student number 57995176) permission to get access to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk visitors as a means to conduct the research, as he is enrolled for a Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa. The proposed study is titled: Tourist experience gaps between accommodation establishment and tourist attraction. The study aims to investigate service quality gaps between accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and tourist attraction (Moshoeshoe Walk) through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes, and tourist experience.

We, Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk, and our members would like to confirm that we will be part of the research survey and will, therefore, distribute the survey and URL link once it is shared by Mr. Shale to our members as well as encourage participation.

We understand that the research design will be quantitative in nature and that data collection is anticipated to commence from 01 May 2022 until 30 April 2023. We also understand that data will be collected using an electronically administered questionnaire that takes guests approximately 30 minutes to complete. We, therefore, agree to distribute the QR code link in our database and encourage guests to participate in the survey and; we also understand that the questionnaires will be distributed immediately after the event.

We understand that our guests' (participants) identities will be kept anonymous and that participants will be requested to tick a box to provide their informed consent and voluntary participation in the online survey.

We also understand and agree that the study involves the following:

1. Electronically administered questionnaire
2. The purpose of the questionnaire is to get guests' assessments of tourist experience through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes in the context of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk
3. The questionnaire is to be completed by guests who have experienced both Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.

4. Data gathered will only be used for this study and kept confidentially and anonymously.

We understand that the study will receive ethical clearance from the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC), statistician, and supervisors, following which we will be approached for the quantitative questionnaires. By agreeing to grant permission for this questionnaire to be distributed, we agree that the information provided by our guests may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

We do not foresee that our organization will experience any negative consequences by allowing guests to complete the questionnaires. We understand that the researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of his possession, and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual.

We understand that the participants' responses will be kept for five years for audit purposes thereafter it will be permanently destroyed and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Also, we understand that we will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for our participation in the survey.

You are welcome to contact me anytime.

Kind Regards

Mr. [REDACTED]

Name and Surname	Position	I hereby agree that Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk can form part of the aforementioned study
Mr. [REDACTED]	Director	[REDACTED] Signature
		13/02/22 Date

Appendix 5: Letter to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village requesting permission for in-person data collection



Request for permission from researcher to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

My name is Shale Johannes Shale (student number: 579 951 76) and I am currently a registered student for a Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa. As part of the research project, I have already been granted permission to conduct an online survey for the study on *tourist experience gaps between accommodation establishments and tourist attractions*. As the study aims to investigate tourist experience gaps between an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and a tourist attraction (Moshoeshoe Walk) through safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes, and tourist experience, additional permission is requested for in-person data collection.

The research design will be quantitative in nature. The data collection is anticipated to commence from 01 September 2022 until 30 April 2023. The researcher will collect data in-person and also using an electronically administered questionnaire that takes guests approximately 30 minutes to complete. A QR code will be designed for questionnaires and hence you are requested to support the study by distributing the link through your database and encouraging guests to participate in the survey. Guests will also be encouraged to share the link with other guests. The questionnaires will be distributed immediately after the Moshoeshoe Walk event.

The participants will be kept anonymous. The participants will be requested to tick the box to provide their informed consent and voluntary participation in the survey. However, names will not be recorded anywhere hence participants' answers will not be connected to anyone.

The research study will involve the following:

1. Electronically administered questionnaire
2. Data to be collected in-person by Mr. Shale and trained fieldworkers
3. The purpose of the questionnaire is to enquire about guests' assessments of tourist experience through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes in the context of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
4. The questionnaire is to be completed by guests who have experienced both the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
5. Data gathered will only be used for this study and kept confidential and anonymous.

By agreeing you grant permission for this questionnaire to be disseminated, you agree that the information provided by your guests may be used for research

purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.


It is anticipated that the information we gain from this questionnaire will help us to get guests' reviews and create a tourist experience gaps model.

We do not foresee that your organisation will experience any negative consequences by allowing guests to complete the questionnaires. The researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of our possession, and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual. Upon the completion of the study, a report with descriptive statistics will be given to you to provide you with insights into the views of the guests to inform strategic decisions.

The participants' responses will be kept for five years for audit purposes thereafter it will be permanently destroyed and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Respondents will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the survey.

The research will be reviewed and approved by the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC), statistician, and study supervisors. The primary researcher, Shale Johannes Shale, can be contacted during office hours at +266 57019529 or by E-mails: shale_s@yahoo.com or 57995176@mylife.unisa.ac.za I am researching with Mr. Sello Nthebe, Lecturer, contactable at Tel: +27 (0) 12 433 4699 or E-mail: Enthebss@unisa.ac.za and Prof. M. P. Swart, Associate Professor, in the Department of Applied Management contactable at Tel: +27 (0) 12 433 4678 or E-mail address: swartmp@unisa.ac.za.

Kind Regards
Shale J. Shale (Mr.)

Names and Surname	Position	I hereby request permission for Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk to participate in the aforesaid study
Mr. Shale Johannes Shale	Student	 <hr/> Signature E-mail: shale_s@yahoo.com <u>22 August 2022</u> Date

Appendix 6: Letter to the Moshoeshoe Walk requesting permission for in-person data collection



Request for permission from researcher to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk

Dear Mr. [REDACTED]

My name is Shale Johannes Shale (student number: 579 951 76) and I am currently a registered student for a Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa. As part of the research project, I have already been granted permission to conduct an online survey for the study on *tourist experience gaps between accommodation establishments and tourist attractions*. As the study aims to investigate tourist experience gaps between an accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and a tourist attraction (Moshoeshoe Walk) through safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes, and tourist experience, additional permission is requested for in-person data collection.

The research design will be quantitative in nature. The data collection is anticipated to commence from 01 September 2022 until 30 April 2023. The researcher will collect data in-person and also using an electronically administered questionnaire that takes guests approximately 30 minutes to complete. A QR code will be designed for questionnaires and hence you are requested to support the study by distributing the link through your database and encouraging guests to participate in the survey. Guests will also be encouraged to share the link with other guests. The questionnaires will be distributed immediately after the Moshoeshoe Walk event.

The participants will be kept anonymous. The participants will be requested to tick the box to provide their informed consent and voluntary participation in the survey. However, names will not be recorded anywhere hence participants' answers will not be connected to anyone.

The research study will involve the following:

1. Electronically administered questionnaire
2. Data to be collected in-person by Mr. Shale and trained fieldworkers
3. The purpose of the questionnaire is to enquire about guests' assessments of tourist experience through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes in the context of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
4. The questionnaire is to be completed by guests who have experienced both the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
5. Data gathered will only be used for this study and kept confidential and anonymous.

By agreeing you grant permission for this questionnaire to be disseminated, you agree that the information provided by your guests may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.


It is anticipated that the information we gain from this questionnaire will help us to get guests' reviews and create a tourist experience gaps model.

We do not foresee that your organisation will experience any negative consequences by allowing guests to complete the questionnaires. The researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of our possession, and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual. Upon the completion of the study, a report with descriptive statistics will be given to you to provide you with insights into the views of the guests to inform strategic decisions.

The participants' responses will be kept for five years for audit purposes thereafter it will be permanently destroyed and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Respondents will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for your participation in the survey.

The research will be reviewed and approved by the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC), statistician, and study supervisors. The primary researcher, Shale Johannes Shale, can be contacted during office hours at +266 57019529 or by E-mails: shale_s@yahoo.com or 57995176@mylife.unisa.ac.za I am researching with Mr. Sello Nthebe, Lecturer, contactable at Tel: +27 (0) 12 433 4699 or E-mail: Enthebss@unisa.ac.za and Prof. M. P. Swart, Associate Professor, in the Department of Applied Management contactable at Tel: +27 (0) 12 433 4678 or E-mail address: swartmp@unisa.ac.za.

Kind Regards
Shale J. Shale (Mr.)

Names and Surname	Position	I hereby request permission for Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk to participate in the aforesaid study
Mr. Shale Johannes Shale	Student	 <hr/> Signature E-mail: shale_s@yahoo.com <u>22 August 2022</u> Date

Appendix 7: Letter from Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village granting permission for in-person data collection



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t: +266-5022-1962
m: +266-6286-1361
e: thababosiuclvil@gmail.com
w: www.thevillage.co.ls

Monday, August 29th, 2022

Granting permission to research Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village

Dear Mr. Shale Johannes Shale

I, [REDACTED] Managing Director at Moshoeshoe Walk have already granted Mr. Shale Johannes Shale (student number 57995176) permission to get access to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk visitors to collect data online for his Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa. As the study aims to investigate tourist experience gaps between accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and tourist attraction (Moshoeshoe Walk) through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes and tourist experience, additional permission is granted to collect the data in-person.

We, Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk and our members would like to confirm that we will be part of the research survey and will, therefore, distribute the survey and URL link once it is shared by Mr. Shale to our members as well as encourage participation. Mr Shale will also be granted access to the premises to collect data in-person from our guests.

We understand that the research design will be quantitative in nature and that data collection is anticipated to commence from 01 September 2021 until 30 April 2022. We also understand that data will be collected in-person and also using an electronically administered questionnaire that takes guests approximately 30 minutes to complete. We, therefore, agree to distribute the QR code link in our database and social media accounts (such as Facebook and Twitter). We will encourage guests to participate in the survey and we also understand that the questionnaires will be distributed immediately after the event. We understand that our guests' (participants) identities will be kept anonymous and that participants will be requested to tick a box to provide their informed consent and voluntary participation in the online survey.

We also understand and agree that the study involves the following:

1. Electronically administered questionnaire
2. Data to be collected in-person by Mr Shale and trained fieldworkers
3. The purpose of the questionnaire is to get guests' assessments of tourist experience through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes in the context of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk
4. The questionnaire is to be completed by guests who have experienced both Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.
5. Data gathered will only be used for this study and kept confidentially and anonymously.

We understand that the study will receive ethical clearance from the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC), statistician and supervisors, following which we will be approached for the quantitative questionnaires. By agreeing to grant permission for this questionnaire to be distributed, we agree that the information provided by our guests may

be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

We do not foresee that our organisation will experience any negative consequences by allowing guests to complete the questionnaires. We understand that the researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of his possession, and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual.

We understand that the participants responses will be kept for five years for audit purposes thereafter it will be permanently destroyed and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Also, we understand that we will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for our participation in the survey.

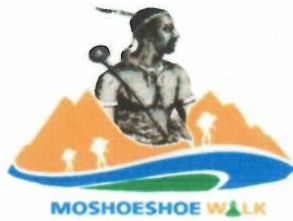
You are welcome to contact me anytime.

Kind Regards

Mr.

Name and Surname	Position	I hereby agree that Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk can form part of the aforementioned study
Mr. [REDACTED]	Managing Director	[REDACTED] Signature
		06/04/22 Date

Appendix 8: Letter from the Moshoeshoe Walk granting permission for in-person data collection



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Oblate house
Behind Maseru Book Centre
Tel: +266 22314646/62861361
+266 58866304
Tax: +266 22 314 646
Email: moshoeshoe.walk@gmail.com

Monday, August 29th, 2022

Granting permission to research Moshoeshoe Walk

Dear Mr. Shale Johannes Shale

I, [REDACTED] Managing Director at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village have already granted Mr. Shale Johannes Shale (student number 57995176) permission to get access to Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk visitors to collect data online for his Master of Commerce in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa. As the study aims to investigate service quality gaps between accommodation establishment (Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village) and tourist attraction (Moshoeshoe Walk) through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes and tourist experience, additional permission is granted to collect the data in-person.

We, Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk and our members would like to confirm that we will be part of the research survey and will, therefore, distribute the survey and URL link once it is shared by Mr. Shale to our members as well as encourage participation. Mr Shale will also be granted access to the premises to collect data in-person from our guests.

We understand that the research design will be quantitative in nature and that data collection is anticipated to commence from 01 September 2021 until 30 April 2022. We also understand that data will be collected in-person and also using an electronically administered questionnaire that takes guests approximately 30 minutes to complete. We, therefore, agree to distribute the QR code link in our database and social media accounts (such as Facebook and Twitter). We will encourage guests to participate in the survey and we also understand that the questionnaires will be distributed immediately after the event.

We understand that our guests' (participants) identities will be kept anonymous and that participants will be requested to tick a box to provide their informed consent and voluntary participation in the online survey.

We also understand and agree that the study involves the following:

1. Electronically administered questionnaire
2. Data to be collected in-person by Mr Shale and trained fieldworkers
3. The purpose of the questionnaire is to get guests' assessments of tourist experience through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes in the context of Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk

4. The questionnaire is to be completed by guests who have experienced both Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.

5. Data gathered will only be used for this study and kept confidentially and anonymously.

We understand that the study will receive ethical clearance from the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC), statistician and supervisors, following which we will be approached for the quantitative questionnaires. By agreeing to grant permission for this questionnaire to be distributed, we agree that the information provided by our guests may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

We do not foresee that our organisation will experience any negative consequences by allowing guests to complete the questionnaires. We understand that the researcher undertakes to keep any information provided herein confidential, not to let it out of his possession, and to report on the findings from the perspective of the participating group and not from the perspective of an individual.

We understand that the participants responses will be kept for five years for audit purposes thereafter it will be permanently destroyed and electronic versions will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of the computer. Also, we understand that we will not be reimbursed or receive any incentives for our participation in the survey.

You are welcome to contact me anytime.

Kind Regards

Mr.

Name and Surname	Position	I hereby agree that Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk can form part of the aforementioned study
Mr. [REDACTED]	Managing Director	[REDACTED] Signature 06/09/22 Date

Appendix 9: Ethical Clearance Approval



UNISA COLLEGE OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

13 October 2022 (Date of issue)

03 December 2023 (Date of amendment)

Ref #: 2022_CEMS_DAM_006

Name: Mr Shale Johannes Shale

Staff/Student Number #: 57995176

Dear Mr Shale Johannes Shale

Decision: Ethics Amendment Approval and Approval Extended to October 2025

**"The prediction of Rural Tourist Experience: Investigation at a Cultural Village in
Lesotho"**

Researcher(s): Mr Shale Johannes Shale, 57995176@mylife.unisa.ac.za; 082 225 2576
College of Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Applied Management
University of South Africa

Supervisor(s): Prof MP Swart, swartmp@unisa.ac.za; 082 771 0270
Mr SS Nthebe, Enthebss@unisa.ac.za; 078 756 6433 / 083 272 4944
College of Economic and Management Sciences
Department of Business Management
University of South Africa

Qualification: MCom in Tourism Management

Thank you for the application requesting **amendments** to the original research ethics certificate issued by the Unisa Department of Applied Management Research Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research on the 13th of October 2022. The approval of the requested amendment is granted.



University of South Africa
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www.unisa.ac.za

The low-risk application was reviewed by the College Research Ethics Review Committee (CRERC) in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment, using the expedited method.

The proposed research may now continue with the proviso that:

- 1. The researcher/s will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.*
- 2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.*
- 3. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.*

Kind regards,



Mr Nhlamulo Baloyi

Chairperson: CRERC, Acting

E-mail: ebaloynd@unisa.ac.za

Tel: 012 429 6181



University of South Africa
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
PO Box 392 UNISA 0003 South Africa
Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150
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Appendix 10: Questionnaire design

Question number	Original item	Revised item	Source
Section A: Screening questions			
1.1	<p>Have you stayed at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past? (Yes / NO) Have you participated in the Moshoeshoe Walk? (Yes / No) If your answer is No to the both questions, please do not continue with the completion of this survey. If your answer is Yes to the both questions, please continue with the completion of this survey.</p>		
Section B: Demographics			
2.1	Age categories (under 18 years old, aged 18–24 years, aged 25–35 years, aged 36–49 years, above the age of 50 years.)	What is your age? (Select the most appropriate category) Generational cords: Age Generation / Gen next (1995-2012) = 18-27 Millennials, Generation Y (1980-1994) = 28-42 Generation X (baby Bust) (1965-1979) = 43-57	Jeong & Shin, 2019:6; George & Booyens, 2014:459; Robinson, 2021.
2.2	Gender “Male, Female”	What is your gender? Female Male Non-binary	Richards <i>et al.</i> , 2016:98; Jeong & Shin, 2019:6
2.3	Educational level “high school, associate degree in college, Bachelor’s degree in college, Postgraduate degree”	What is your highest qualification? Undergraduate (high school/secondary school, Diploma/Higher certificate Bachelor degree) Postgraduate (Master’s degree Doctorate degree)	Atiq & Sharif, 2018:920 Jeong & Shin, 2019:6
2.4	Number of previous visit “first time, second time and more”	How many times have you visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village? How many times have you participated in the Moshoeshoe Walk Event?	Amir <i>et al.</i> , 2015:131 George 2003:582

		Once Twice More than twice	
2.6	Occupancy “ student, employed, unemployed, retiree”	What is your occupation? Student /scholar Employed Unemployed Retiree Other (if you have selected “other” please specify your occupation status).	Djeri <i>et al.</i> , 2018:85
Section C: Tourist Safety			
Tourists’ perceived freedom from (i) the risk of lack of medical assistance and (ii) exposure to any harm or crime at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk (Author’s own compilation).			
3.1	“Number of police and security” “...feelings of security”	3.1.1 The security personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. 3.1.3 The security personnel were present at the Moshoeshoe Walk. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Amir <i>et al.</i> , 2015:130; Wickens, 2002:844
3.4	“Protection of guests” (UNWTO, 1996 as cited in Amir, Ismail & See, 2015: 123).	3.4.1 I felt safe at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. 3.4.2 I felt safe at the Moshoeshoe Walk. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Amir <i>et al.</i> , 2015: 123; UNWTO, 1996
3.6	“First aid kit in hotel room” “...Health personnel...”	3.6.1 The emergency medical services personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. 3.6.2 The emergency medical services personnel were present at the Moshoeshoe Walk.	Skjeie <i>et al.</i> , 2008:3 Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2012:45

		7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	
Section D: Authenticity			
The availability of unique displays of Lesotho's original local cultural heritage at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk. Local culture and involvement are used to investigate authenticity.			
Local culture			
Local culture refers to the tourists' exposure to the tradition of Basotho at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk. (Authors own compilation).			
4.2	"I think the traditional culture is rich in content"	4.2.1 My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village exposed me to Basotho tradition. 4.2.2 My attendance at the Moshoeshoe Walk exposed me to Basotho tradition. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Tian <i>et al.</i> , 2020:17
	Clothing culture	1. I saw traditional clothing of Basotho at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. 2. I saw traditional clothing of Basotho at the Moshoeshoe Walk. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Koç & Koca, 2012:1
4.3	"... languages are a fundamental aspect of the living heritage of a population..."	4.3.1 I spoke Sesotho during my stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. 4.3.2 I spoke Sesotho when attending Moshoeshoe Walk. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Lonardi, 2022:353
Involvement			
The tourists' participation in the recreational activities at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and the Moshoeshoe Walk. (Authors own compilation).			

4.8	Guests often demand opportunities for recreational purposes and fun	4.8.1 My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to participate in recreational activities 4.8.2 My attendance at the Moshoeshoe Walk offered me an opportunity to participate in recreational activities. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Cevik & Simskek, 2017
4.9	“SI2 I made new friends in a strange place”	4.9.1 I made new friends during my stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. 4.9.2 I made new friends during my attendance at the Moshoeshoe Walk. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Chen <i>et al.</i> , 2020:12; Wei <i>et al.</i> , 2019:626;
4.10	“ Sociable interaction: to learn new things, to express personal comments, to exchange comments, and to enjoy talking.” “I have integrated into the group” exchange comments	4.10.1 My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to give feedback to the staff. 4.10.2 My attendance at the Moshoeshoe Walk offered me an opportunity to give feedback to the staff. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Chen <i>et al.</i> , 2020:12; Han, Praet & Wang, 2019:8; Wei <i>et al.</i> , 2019:626
Section E: Brand personality			
The tourist’s opportunity to experience human (staff) characteristics attributed to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk that the tourists can relate to. Sincerity and competence are used to investigate brand personality. (Authors own compilation).			
Sincerity			
The availability of genuine staff traits that can create a tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and the Moshoeshoe Walk. (Authors own compilation).			
5.1	“down-to-earth”	5.1.1 The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village served their guests politely.	Aaker, 1999:352

		5.1.2 The staff of the Moshoeshoe Walk served attendees politely. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	
5.2	“accountable”	5.2.1 The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village responded to the needs of the guests. 5.2.2 The staff of the Moshoeshoe Walk responded to the needs of the attendees. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Aaker, 1999:352; Toldos-Romero & Orozco-Gómez, 2015:467
5.3	“Genuine”	5.3.1 The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village are genuine (open) when serving the guests. 5.3.2 The staff of the Moshoeshoe Walk are genuine (open) when serving the attendees. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Aaker, 1999:352
Competence			
The ability of the Thaba-Bosiu’s staff and Moshoeshoe Walk Event’s staff to provide a good service to guests. (Authors own compilation).			
5.11	“offer solutions to satisfy their customers’ personal needs ”	5.11.1 When there was a problem, the staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village provided a solution that satisfied the guests. 5.11.2 When there was a problem, the staff of the Moshoeshoe Walk provided a solution that satisfied the attendees. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Alusa, 2018:21-68
5.13	“understand consumers’ problems”	5.13.1 The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village tried to understand a guest’s grievance when it was lodged.	Alusa, 2018:21-68)

		5.13.2 The staff of the Moshoeshoe Walk tried to understand an attendee's grievance when it was lodged. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	
5.14	"Efficient"	5.14.1 The staff at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was efficient in serving guests. 5.14.2 The staff at the Moshoeshoe Walk was efficient in serving attendees. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Aaker, 1999:352;
Section F: Brand attributes			
The opportunity for tourists must eat and taste different Basotho food at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and the Moshoeshoe Walk. (Authors own compilation).			
Food			
The availability of different traditional Basotho food/dishes at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and the Moshoeshoe Walk. (Authors own compilation).			
6.1	"Distinctiveness: Taiwans' unique food"	6.1.1 There was a variety of Basotho dishes at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. 6.1.2 There was a variety of Basotho dishes at the Moshoeshoe Walk. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Chang & Mak, 2018:25
6.2	"Distinctiveness: represent local flavour" "Distinctiveness: Taiwan traditional food"	6.2.1 I ate tasty Sesotho traditional food at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. 6.2.2 I ate tasty Sesotho traditional food at the Moshoeshoe Walk. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Chang & Mak, 2018:25

6.5	Many guests believed that visiting local island guesthouses would present the chance to experience local cuisine.	<p>6.5.1 I ate in well-presented and hygienically prepared Sesotho traditional dishes at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.</p> <p>6.5.2 I ate in well-presented and hygienically prepared Sesotho traditional dishes at the Moshoeshoe Walk.</p> <p>7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree</p>	Shenaan <i>et al.</i> , 2022
Section G: Tourist experience			
The tourists' opportunity to learn about the heritage of the Basotho people when staying at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and attending the Moshoeshoe Walk. Education and escapism will be used to investigate the tourist experience. (Authors own compilation).			
Education			
The opportunity for tourists to acquire knowledge related to the heritage of the Basotho people through their experiences at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and the Moshoeshoe Walk. (Authors own compilation).			
7.1	"Ed1 The experience has made me more knowledgeable"	<p>7.1.1 My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enhanced my knowledge of cultural diversity.</p> <p>7.1.2 My attendance at the Moshoeshoe Walk enhanced my knowledge of cultural diversity.</p> <p>7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree</p>	Ali <i>et al.</i> , 2014:276
7.3	"Ed3 It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things" "I learned something new from visiting the Mogao Caves."	<p>7.3.1 My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the culture of Basotho.</p> <p>7.3.2 My attendance at the Moshoeshoe Walk helped me learn about the culture of Basotho.</p> <p>7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree</p>	Ali <i>et al.</i> , 2014:276; Xu, Zhang & Nie, 2022:8;
7.4	"The experience really enhanced my skills"	7.4.1 My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enabled me to learn about the history of the Basotho people.	Ledford, 2015: 42

	7-Likert Scale: Strongly Agree, Disagree, Slightly Disagree, Neutral, Slightly Agree, Agree, Strongly Agree	7.4.2 Attending the Moshoeshoe Walk enabled me to learn about the history of the Basotho people. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	
Escapism			
The opportunity for tourists to take a break from their day-to-day lives by experiencing the unique life of the Basotho people at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and the Moshoeshoe Walk. (Authors own compilation).			
7.13	“Escapism allows me to have a break from the routine”. 5-point Likert scale: totally disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, totally agree	7.13.1 My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enabled me to break from repetitive life. 7.13.2 Attending Moshoeshoe Walk enabled me to break from repetitive life. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Campón-Cerro <i>et al.</i> , 2020:7
7.14	“Ec2 I felt like I was living in a different time or place” “Escapism gives me a chance to see myself in a new way” 5-point Likert scale: totally disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, totally agree	7.14.1 My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me to in a different place. 7.14.2 Attending Moshoeshoe Walk made me to be in a different place. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Campón-Cerro <i>et al.</i> , 2020:7; Ali <i>et al.</i> , 2014:276
7.16	“Escape daily life temporarily” “Escapism allows me to forget my daily routine” 5-point Likert scale: totally disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, totally agree	7.16.1 My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me forget about my daily routine life. 7.16.2 Attending the Moshoeshoe Walk made me forget about my daily routine life. 7-Likert Scale: Strongly Disagree 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 Strongly Agree	Campón-Cerro <i>et al.</i> , 2020:7; Cornelisse, 2018:97

Appendix 11: Pilot test feedback

Respondents	Comments
<p>Respondent 1 (Higher Education Quality Assurance Officer)</p>	<p>The questions seem very relevant nonetheless some key words should be reconsidered to back up on the specificity of the questions. In case of Moshoeshoe Walk, it needs more elaboration to accommodate even non-local respondents. For the word staff used, for Moshoeshoe Walk use organisers, It must give the understanding that one is place/organisation while the other is the annual event.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section C</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The security officers were visible at T. Cultural Village entrance/premises • I felt protected against criminal risks at T. Cultural Village • I felt protected against criminal risks at Moshoe... Walk • The paramedics' services/emergency preparedness were visible at T. Cultural village/Moshoeshoe Walk. <p style="text-align: center;">Section D</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My attendance at the Moshoeshoe Walk allowed me an opportunity to participate in recreational activities • My stay at T. Cultural Village allowed me an opportunity..... • My stay at T. Cultural village/Moshoeshoe Walk allowed chance to interrogate/interact/exchange views with the staff <p style="text-align: center;">Section E</p> <p>** Do you mean sincerity or wanted to say <i>customer-centric/focus</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff/organizers responded to the needs of the guest/attendees <p style="text-align: center;">Competence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff /organizers were <u>efficient</u> in serving guests – does <i>efficient</i> mean punctual, consistent, proper meals? • Staff/organisers sought to attend the guests' problems/issues when reported

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There was a variety of traditional Basotho food- the word <i>traditional</i> is enough explain it was food specific from Basotho tradition.
Respondent 2 (Business Studies Lecturer)	<p>I did participate in your study and these are my views;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) On the Section of Competence...there is a question about the 'problem encountered' and I don't think it accommodates someone who did not encounter any problem of any kind at her/his stay at the two tourism centres. b) Section about Sincerity...I really don't understand the 'genuine part of a person' if you say someone is genuine what does it mean?
Respondent 2 (Higher Education IT practitioner)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) The manner in which statements: 7.2.2 are structured, they do not accommodate local people. Is this study only intended for international guests? b) The statements: 7.2.1 and 7.2.3 are similar but phrased differently. c) Why don't you separate questions about Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village from that of Moshoeshoe Walk to avoid respondents tendency to rate them similarly?
Respondent 4 (Tourism practitioner)	<p>I have responded to your questions Sir and here are my recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the heading of your questionnaire to: The questionnaire on Tourist experience • Please consider explaining the numbers of Likert scale for respondents to be able to know what numbers stands for. <p style="text-align: center;">Section G</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions 7.2.1 and 7.2.3 are similar but phrased differently. • Generally, your questionnaire presentation is very good but I suggest you take it to the language editor to correct grammar and enhance its reading. • I understand that the questionnaire targets people who have visited both Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk. It is going to be challenging to get people satisfying your screening questions to reach your target sample. This calls for your time commitment and dedication for data collection. Good luck!!!
Respondent 5 (Tourism Lecturer)	<p>I have participated in your study till the last question. But I have noted two important things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Question 2.2 does not have "never" as one of the options respondents can choose. This is because there are people who had neither participated at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village nor Moshoeshoe Walk unless you are only targeting people who have participated in both sites. If that is the case, how are going to know that all people have participated in both sites?

	<p>2. Your questionnaire contains too many questions and I don't know how you are doing to achieve satisfactory response rate as other respondents might be restricted to complete long survey due to data limitation.</p> <p>All the best and good luck</p>
Respondent 6 (Language editor)	<p style="text-align: center;">Participant information sheet</p> <p>The section is clear with minor grammatical and spelling mistakes. However, there were some noted semantics concerns which were addressed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section A</p> <p>The researcher should specify a period.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section B</p> <p>Some age ranges do not fall within the stipulated age for participating in the survey; a concept of gender has been confused with sex for the purpose of the study and context of Lesotho; educational qualifications do not fit in the context of the education system of Lesotho if a participant would be a Mosotho; some syntax challenges were noted.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section C</p> <p>Some inappropriate vocabulary was used.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section D</p> <p>There are syntax errors which impede clarity of questions.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section E</p> <p>Similar to Section D; however, 5.2 has grammatical errors.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section F</p> <p>There are some semantics concerns.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Section G</p> <p>Similar to Section F.</p>
Respondent 7 (statistician)	<p>The statistician supported the amendment to the final questionnaire and that the instrument is conducive to conduct statistical analyses.</p>

Appendix 12: Questionnaire Cover Letter CONSENT FORM

Dear prospective participant,

You are invited to participate in a survey conducted by Mr. S Shale under the supervision of Mr. SS Nthebe and Prof. MP Swart, in the Department of Applied Management. This survey is conducted to meet the requirements for an M.Com in Tourism Management at the University of South Africa.

The survey aims to make a valued impact by investigating gaps in tourist experience between the experiences at an accommodation establishment and a tourist attraction, through safety, authenticity, brand personality, and brand attributes and tourist experience. The results of the study will provide a solution to Lesotho's tourism recovery plan post-COVID-19 in order to have a resilient and sustainable economy. The study is also undertaken to improve the quality of service delivery and experience offered by the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.

You must be between the ages of 18 years and 65 years and have visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and attended Moshoeshoe Walk in order to participate in the survey. By completing this survey, you agree that the information you provide may be used for research purposes, including dissemination through peer-reviewed publications and conference proceedings.

Your participation in the survey shall be based on the following principles:

- Anonymity: We shall not link any provided information to you. All information shall remain anonymous.
- You will not be able to withdraw from the survey once you have clicked the 'send button' based on the anonymous nature of the survey.
- Confidentiality: Any information provided herein will be confidential and we shall report the findings from the perspective of the participating individuals, not of the researcher.

The data will be kept for a minimum period of five years for audit purposes, and thereafter, it will be permanently destroyed. You will not be reimbursed or incentivised for your participation in the survey. This research was assessed and accepted by the National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) and UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC). The primary researcher, Mr. Shale, may be contacted during office hours at +266 63300322/57019529 for further details. The supervisors may also be phoned at (Mr. SS Nthebe) +27 (0) 12 433 4678 and (Prof. MP Swart) +27 (0) 12 433 4699 during office hours respectively. If you have any concerns relating to the ethical views of the study, you are welcome to contact the chairperson of the UNISA Research Ethics Review Committee (URERC). Otherwise, you may report any unethical behaviour at the University's Toll-Free Hotline +27 (0) 800 86 96 93.

It is expected that the findings of the study will be used to:

- Identify the need for research ethics training in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region.

- Not directly benefit you as an individual, but to identify gaps of tourist experiences between the experiences at accommodation establishments and tourist attractions.
- Develop a sustainable tourism recovery plan post-COVID-19 in Lesotho.

Instructions for participating in the survey:

Example of lime survey questions

Security									
<i>Availability of security for the protection of guests and attendees at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and Moshoeshoe Walk.</i>									
1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?									
1.1	Critical life was saved at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 Strongly Agree
	Critical life was saved at Moshoeshoe Walk.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

The questionnaire is structured in values ranging from 1 to 7 as shown in above-mentioned table. Sample question: **To what extent do you agree with the following statements?**

- **Critical life was saved at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural village.**
- **Critical life was saved at Moshoeshoe Walk.**

If you *strongly disagree*, you must select **1**. If you *disagree*, you must select **2**. If you *slightly disagree*, you must select **3**. If you neither disagree nor agree, you must select **4**. If you *slightly agree*, you must select **5**. If you *agree*, you must select **6**. If you *strongly agree*, you must select **7**.

Likert Scale description

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please take note that each question (from Sections C to G) entails two categories and must be answered based on your experiences at both the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village and the Moshoeshoe Walk. You are urged to carefully read and understand the questions before you answer.

The questionnaire is structured according to the following:

- Section A: Screening questions
- Section B: Demographic information
- Section C: Safety
- Section D: Authenticity
- Section E: Brand personality
- Section F: Brand attributes

Section G: Tourist experience

You are at liberty to withdraw from participating in this survey before clicking a 'send' button. If you choose to participate in this survey, you will not spend more than 30 minutes.

Your cooperation and support in this regard are highly appreciated. Thank you in advance.

Yours Faithfully
Shale J. Shale (Mr.)
57995176@mylife.unisa.ac.za

Appendix 13 : Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE : TOURIST EXPERIENCE GAPS IN LESOTHO

Section A: Screening Questions			
1.1	<p>Have you stayed at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village in the past? (Yes / NO).</p> <p>Have you participated in the Moshoeshoe Walk event in the past? (Yes / No).</p> <p>Note for the online survey: If the answers are No to both questions or No to one question, the respondents will be directed to the last page of the survey and thanked for their participation.</p> <p>Note for the online survey: If the answers are Yes to both questions, the respondents will be directed to the next section to complete this survey.</p>		
Section B: Demographic Information			
	Questions	Values	Answer options
2.1	In which period were you born? (Select the most appropriate period)	1	Between 1995 and 2013
		2	Between 1980 and 1994
		3	Between 1965 and 1979
		4	Between 1946 and 1964
2.2	What is your gender?	1	Female
		2	Male
		3	Non-Binary
2.3	What is your highest educational qualification?	1	Secondary education (Junior Certificate, O' level, A' level, matric, etc) or Primary education
		2	Undergraduate qualifications (Higher Certificate/ Diploma/Bachelor's degree)
		3	Postgraduate qualifications (Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate/ Honours/ Master's degree/ Doctorate degree)
2.4	How many times have you visited the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village?	1	Once
		2	Twice
		3	Thrice or more
2.5	How many times have you participated in the Moshoeshoe Walk Event?	1	Once
		2	Twice
		3	Thrice or more

2.6	What is your occupation?	1	Student / Scholar
		2	Employed
		3	Unemployed
		4	Retiree
		5	Other (if you have selected "other", please specify your occupation status).

Section C: Safety

Tourists' perceived freedom from (i) the risk of lack of medical assistance and (ii) exposure to any harm or crime at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

3.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
3.1.1	The security personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.1.2	I felt safe at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.1.3	The emergency medical services personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section D: Authenticity

The availability of unique displays of Lesotho's original local cultural heritage at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Local culture and involvement are used to investigate authenticity.

Local culture

Local culture refers to tourists' exposure to the tradition of Basotho at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

4.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
4.1.1	My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village exposed me to Basotho tradition.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.1.2	I saw traditional clothing of Basotho at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.1.3	My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village exposed me to Basotho culture.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Involvement

The tourists' participation in the recreational activities at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

4.2 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
4.2.1	My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to participate in recreational activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4.2.2	I made new friends during my stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4.2.3	My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to give feedback to the staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Section E: Brand Personality								
<i>The tourist's opportunity to experience human (staff) characteristics attributed to the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village that the tourists can relate to. Sincerity and competence are used to investigate brand personality.</i>								
Sincerity								
<i>The availability of genuine staff traits that can create a tourist experience at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.</i>								
5.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?								
		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
5.1.1	The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village served their guests politely.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.1.2	The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village responded to the needs of the guests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.1.3	The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village are genuine (open) when serving the guests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Competence								
<i>The ability of the Thaba Bosiu's Cultural Village staff to provide a good service to guests.</i>								
5.2 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?								
		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		
5.2.1	When there was a problem, the staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village provided a solution that satisfied the guests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.2.2	The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was efficient in serving guests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5.2.3	The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village tried to understand a guest's grievance when it was lodged.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Section F: Brand attributes								
<i>The opportunity for tourists must eat and taste different types of Basotho food at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Food will be used to investigate brand attributes.</i>								
Food								
<i>The availability of different traditional Basotho dishes at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.</i>								
6.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?								
		Strongly Disagree				Strongly Agree		

6.1.1	There was a variety of Basotho dishes at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.1.2	I ate tasty Sesotho traditional food at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6.1.3	The food I ate at Thaba Bosiu Cultural Village was served Sesotho traditional dishes (e.g. <i>Lekuka, Lefisoane, Seroto</i> , etc).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section G: Tourist experience

The tourists' opportunity to learn about the heritage of the Basotho when staying at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village. Education and escapism will be used to investigate the tourist experience.

Education

The opportunity for tourists to acquire knowledge related to the heritage of Basotho through their experiences at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

7.1 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
7.1.1	My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the history of Basotho.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.1.2	My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the culture of Basotho.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.1.3	My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enhanced my knowledge of cultural diversity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Escapism

The opportunity for tourists to take a break from their day-to-day lives by experiencing the unique life of Basotho at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

7.2 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
7.2.1	My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enabled me to break from repetitive life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.2.2	My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me to in a different place.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7.2.3	My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me forget about my daily routine life.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Thank you for your participation and you are beseechingly requested to share the URL link with other people who have stayed at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.

3. Dear fieldworker

Thank you very much for your enthusiasm to assist with the fieldwork for the **tourist experience gap between accommodation establishment and tourist attraction – 2023** research project.

This research requires a total of 315 questionnaires. You are expected to be paid R20.00 per a completed questionnaire. However, you will not either be paid daily or weekly but, a total of money per the number of completed questionnaires will be paid in a one-off once a total of 315 questionnaires are reached. The fieldwork will start Tuesday, the 7th March 2023 and end on Friday, the 31st of March 2023. Mr. Shale Shale, the principal researcher, will supervise you.

We will meet at 10:00 on 4th-5th March 2023 at **Sefikeng sa Moshoeshoe** for fieldwork training. We will meet Wednesday 8th March 2023 for rapid data collection before the departure of Moshoeshoe Walk attendees to Menkhoaneng and during the closing ceremony to be held at **Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village** where the fieldwork will be conducted. Please, dress professionally.

The fieldworkers are edged to meet following are requirements:

1. Bring your own clipboard, two black pens (for respondents to sign consent sheet).
2. Be present at **Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village** during the closing ceremony of **Moshoeshoe Walk**.
3. Introduce yourself and request them to participate in the study
4. Explain the purpose of the study and the importance of respondents' participation.
5. Request research respondent to sign respondents consent sheet.
6. Encourage and beg respondents to answer all the questions.
7. Need an own power bank and smartphone with you to be able to access online Lime Survey.
8. Login into online Lime Survey and ask questions and record and save responses on behalf of the respondents.
9. Don't rush respondents through questions, be patient and give respondents reasonable time to respond to the questions.
10. For supervision purposes, I (**Mr. Shale J. Shale**) shall also be available to oversee your work during the three days of data collection.

Best wishes and enjoy the day

Mr. Shale Shale

Principal Fieldworker

Appendix 15: Respodent Signature Sheet
Respondent Signature Sheet

Name of the fieldworker: _____

Signature of the fieldworker: _____

LIST OF RESEARCH RESPONDENT SIGNATURES

Number	Respondent signature
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Appendix 16: 3rd Party Confidentiality Agreement

1

UNISA



UNISA RESEARCH ETHICS 3rd Party Confidentiality Agreement (Transcriber, Co-coder, Statistician and/or Fieldworkers)

A. INSTRUCTIONS

Please read through the entirety of this form carefully before signing.

After completing the required fields, please sign the form. After this form has been signed by the transcriber, co-coder, statistician or fieldworker, it should be given to the principal researcher for submission to the relevant UNISA Research Ethics Committee.

The transcriber, co-coder, statistician and/or fieldworker should keep a copy of the *Confidentiality Agreement* for their records.

B. CONFIDENTIALITY OF A RESEARCH STUDY

Confidentiality is the treatment and maintenance of information that an individual has disclosed in a relationship of trust and with the expectation that it will not be divulged to others in ways that are inconsistent with the understanding of the original disclosure (the informed consent documentation) without permission. Confidential information relating to human participants in a research study may include, but is not limited to the personal information listed below:

- a) information relating to the race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, national, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental health, well-being, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth of the person;
- b) information relating to the education or the medical, financial, criminal or employment history of the person;
- c) any identifying number, symbol, e-mail address, physical address, telephone number, location information, online identifier or other assignment to the person;
- d) the biometric information of the person;
- e) the personal opinions, views or preferences of the person;
- f) correspondence sent by the person that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature or further correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence;
- g) the views or opinions of another individual about the person; and
- h) the name of the person if it appears with other personal information relating to the person or if the disclosure of the name itself would reveal information about the person.

Form adapted from the confidentiality agreement developed by the University of St Thomas IRB, retrieved from <https://www.stthomas.edu>

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "S. A. W.", is located in the bottom right corner of the document.

As a third party you will have access to research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) that include confidential information. Participants have revealed information to the researcher(s) since they have been assured by the researcher(s) that every effort will be made to maintain their privacy throughout the study. That is why it is of the utmost importance to maintain confidentiality when conducting your duties as a transcriber, statistician, co-coder and/or fieldworker during the research study. *Below is a list of expectations you will be required to adhere to in your role as a third party in this study. Review these expectations carefully before signing this form.*

C. THIRD PARTY EXPECTATIONS

To maintain confidentiality, I agree to:

1. Keep all research information that I collect or that is shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing this information verbally or in any format with anyone other than the principal researcher of this study;
2. Ensure the security of research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) while it is in my possession. This includes:
 - Keeping all data and/or transcript documents and digitized interviews on a password protected computer with password-protected files;
 - Closing any programs and documents when temporarily away from the computer;
 - Keeping any printed transcripts or data in a secure location such as a locked file cabinet;
 - Permanently deleting any digital communication containing the data.
3. Not make copies of research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) unless specifically instructed to do so by the principal researcher;
4. Give all research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) and research participant information, back to the principal researcher upon completion of my duties as a transcriber;
5. After discussing it with the principal researcher, erase or destroy all research information (e.g. audio or video recordings, DVDs/CDs, transcripts, data, etc.) that cannot be returned to the principal researcher upon completion of my duties in this study.

Name of 3rd party involved in research activities: Mrs. Dina Venter

Research activity responsible for (transcribing interviews, co-coding of data, statistical analysis, collecting data, etc.): Statistical analysis

Title of Research Study: The tourist experience gap between accommodation establishment and tourist attraction in Lesotho.

Name of Principal Researcher: Mr. Shale Johannes Shale, Student #: 579-951-76

By signing this form, I acknowledge that I have reviewed, understand, and agree to adhere to the expectations described above. I agree to maintain confidentiality while performing my duties as acquired
 Form adapted from the confidentiality agreement developed by the University of St Thomas IRB, retrieved from <https://www.stthomas.edu>

Appendix 17: Code of conduct

Code of conduct TOURIST EXPERIENCE IN LESOTHO 2023

Fieldworkers and co-researchers attending the **MOSHOESHOE WALK AND THABABOSIU CULTURAL VILLAGE 2023** are representatives of the researcher and the organizers of **TOURIST EXPERIENCE IN LESOTHO 2023**, and will therefore adhere to the following Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is intended to support and encourage fieldworkers and co-researchers to meet the following standards of ethical and responsible behavior:

- Respect
- Honesty
- Compassion
- Responsibility
- Ethics
- Confidentiality

Fieldworkers and co-researchers will:

- Behave ethical and responsible at all times
- Behave professional and accountable at all times
- Respect all parties involved (organizers, hosts, etc.) at the Expo
- Act with respect, courtesy and consideration towards fellow fieldworkers and organizers
- Be on time for all activities as stipulated in the programme
- Attend all activities as stipulated in the programme
- Respect the property of others
- Refrain from vulgarity, profanity, obscenity, lewdness and indecency
- Refrain from dangerous activities in own leisure time
- Act ethically and respect the intellectual property of the research
- Respect the confidentiality of all information shared during the course of the research project and beyond

Disciplinary consequences depend upon the seriousness of the violation.

I _____ herewith understand
Full Name & Surname & Student Number / ID number
and accept the Code of Conduct as stipulated above. I agree to adhere to the Code of Conduct.

Signature

Date

Appendix 18: Factor score weights

	G2_3 a	G2_2 a	G2_1 a	G1_3 a	G1_2 a	G1_1 a	F1_3a	F1_2a	F1_1a	E2_3 a	E2_2a	E2_1 a	E1_3a	E1_2 a	E1_1 a	D2_3 a	D2_2 a	D2_1 a	C3a	C2a	C1a
Tourist_Experience	,02 8	,02 5	,09 4	,11 3	,19 8	,16 7	,04 5	,03 7	,06 2	,01 3	,00 8	,00 9	-,0 03	,00 7	,01 2	,02 8	,03 4	,05 6	,02 5	,04 7	,06 3
Brand_Personality	,00 1	,00 0	,00 2	,00 2	,00 4	,00 3	,00 7	,00 6	,01 0	,11 5	,07 6	,07 8	-,0 24	,06 7	,11 1	,00 6	,00 7	,01 1	,01 0	,01 9	,02 6
Brand_Attributes	,00 5	,00 4	,01 5	,01 9	,03 3	,02 7	,25 0	,20 5	,34 6	,01 7	,01 1	,01 2	-,0 04	,01 0	,01 6	,01 1	,01 4	,02 3	-,0 17	-,0 33	-,0 45
Authenticity	,00 9	,00 9	,03 2	,03 9	,06 8	,05 7	,03 8	,03 1	,05 2	,04 5	,03 0	,03 1	-,0 09	,02 6	,04 3	,12 6	,14 9	,24 8	,05 3	,10 0	,13 6
Tourist_Safety	,00 4	,00 4	,01 5	,01 8	,03 2	,02 7	-,0 31	-,0 25	-,0 43	,04 3	,02 9	,03 0	-,0 09	,02 5	,04 2	,02 9	,03 4	,05 7	,11 6	,21 9	,29 7
Escapism_Thaba_Bosiu	,15 8	,14 3	,53 8	,02 0	,03 4	,02 9	,00 8	,00 6	,01 1	,00 2	,00 1	,00 2	,00 0	,00 1	,00 2	,00 5	,00 6	,01 0	,00 4	,00 8	,01 1
Education_Thaba_Bosiu	,01 0	,00 9	,03 3	,20 2	,35 3	,29 7	,01 6	,01 3	,02 2	,00 5	,00 3	,00 3	-,0 01	,00 3	,00 4	,01 0	,01 2	,02 0	,00 9	,01 7	,02 2
Competence_Thaba_Bosiu	,00 1	,00 1	,00 3	,00 4	,00 7	,00 6	,01 3	,01 0	,01 8	,20 9	,13 7	,14 2	-,0 43	,12 1	,20 2	,01 0	,01 2	,02 0	,01 8	,03 5	,04 7

	G2_3 a	G2_2 a	G2_1 a	G1_3 a	G1_2 a	G1_1 a	F1_3a	F1_2a	F1_1a	E2_3 a	E2_2a	E2_1 a	E1_3a	E1_2 a	E1_1 a	D2_3 a	D2_2 a	D2_1 a	C3a	C2a	C1a
Sincerity_Thaba_B osiu	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,07 4	-,0 07	,00 3	,04 7	,32 7	,37 2	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,00 0	,00 1	,00 1

The respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire where items (factors) of tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience were measured in a 7-point Likert scale. The table above indicates the items scores from 334 respondents.

Appendix 19: Items and constructs descriptive statistics

Items descriptive statistics for all constructs

Items	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	statistics	Statistics	Std. error	Statistics	Std. error
Construct		Tourist safety							
C1a_The security personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	334	1	7	5.40	1.419	-0.531	0.133	-0.284	0.266
C2a_I felt safe at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	334	1	7	5.88	1.181	-0.840	0.133	0.124	0.266
C3a_The emergency medical services personnel were present at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	334	1	7	4.19	1.853	-0.078	0.133	-0.845	0.266
Construct		Authenticity							
D2_1a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to participate in recreational activities.	334	1	7	3.94	2.162	0.040	0.133	-1.376	0.266
D2_2a_I made new friends during my stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	334	1	7	4.77	2.066	-0.498	0.133	-1.045	0.266
D2_3a_My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village offered me an opportunity to have a conversation with the staff.	334	1	7	4.92	1.753	-0.514	0.133	-0.615	0.266

Items	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	statistics	Statistics	Std. error	Statistics	Std. error
Construct		Brand personality							
E1_1a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village served their guests politely.	334	1	7	6.28	0.970	-1.358	0.133	2.160	0.266
E1_2a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village responded to the needs of the guests.	334	1	7	5.81	1.256	-0.730	0.133	-0.370	0.266
E1_3a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village are genuine (open) when serving the guests.	334	2	7	6.13	1.102	-1.212	0.133	0.913	0.266
E2_1a_When there was a problem, the staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village provided a solution that satisfied the guests.	334	1	7	5.29	1.492	-0.540	0.133	-0.299	0.266
E2_2a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village was efficient in serving guests.	334	1	7	5.82	1.361	-1.050	0.133	0.559	0.266
E2_3a_The staff of the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village tried to understand a guest's grievance when it was lodged.	334	1	7	5.22	1.327	-0.225	0.133	-0.642	0.266
Construct		Brand attributes							

Items	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	statistics	Statistics	Std. error	Statistics	Std. error
F1_1a_There was a variety of Basotho dishes at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	334	1	7	4.81	2.069	-0.523	0.133	-1.046	0.266
F1_2a_I ate tasty Sesotho traditional food at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village.	334	1	7	4.44	2.280	-0.350	0.133	-1.364	0.266
F1_3a_The food I ate at Thaba Bosiu Cultural Village was served Sesotho traditional dishes (e.g. <i>Lekuka, Lefisoane, Seroto</i> , etc).	334	1	7	3.93	2.361	0.004	0.133	-1.560	0.266
Construct	Tourist experience								
G1_1a_My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the history of Basotho.	334	1	7	5.60	1.783	-1.265	0.133	0.658	0.266
G1_2a_My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village helped me learn about the culture of Basotho.	334	1	7	5.65	1.651	-1.248	0.133	0.742	0.266
G1_3a_My stay at the Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village enhanced my knowledge of cultural diversity.	334	1	7	5.32	1.686	-0.880	0.133	0.064	0.266
G2_1a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village	334	1	7	5.32	1.729	-0.876	0.133	-0.151	0.266

Items	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	statistics	Statistics	Std. error	Statistics	Std. error
enabled me to break from repetitive life.									
G2_2a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me to be in a different place.	334	1	7	5.44	1.769	-1.004	0.133	-0.027	0.266
G2_3a_My stay at Thaba-Bosiu Cultural Village made me forget about my daily routine life.	334	1	7	5.29	1.893	-0.842	0.133	-0.478	0.266

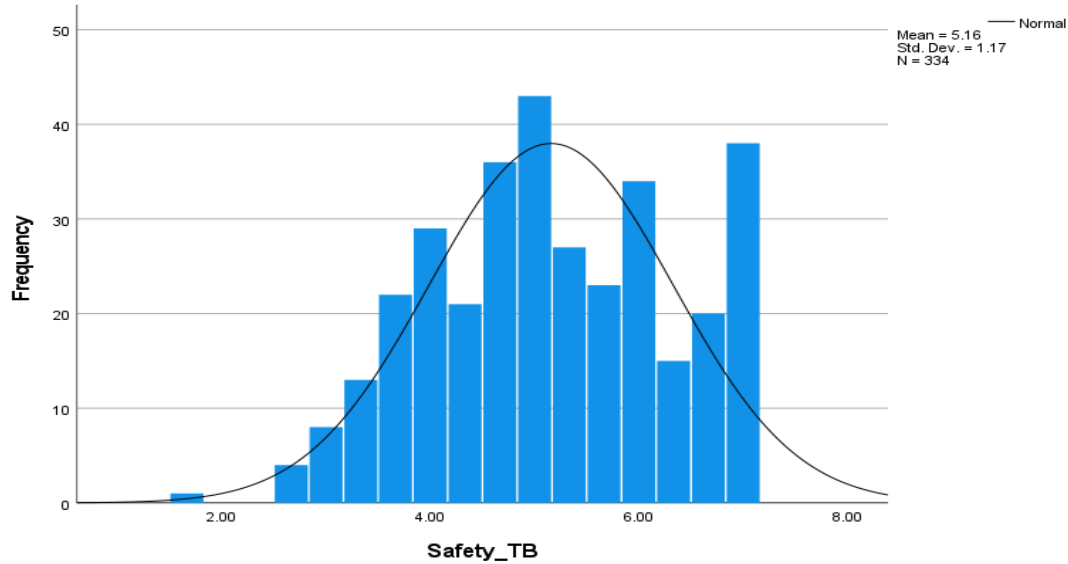
Constructs descriptive statistics

Constructs	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Statistics	Std. error	Statistics	Std. error
Tourist safety	334	1.67	7.00	5.1587	1.16953	-0.085	0.133	-0.769	0.266
Authenticity	334	1.00	7.00	4.5429	1.54133	-0.171	0.133	-0.806	0.266
Brand personality	334	3.33	7.00	5.7590	0.85505	-0.370	0.133	-0.647	0.266
Brand attributes	334	1.00	7.00	4.3932	2.04089	-0.270	0.133	-1.277	0.266
Tourist experience	334	1.50	7.00	5.4376	1.34114	-1.070	0.133	0.546	0.266

Appendix 20: Normality graphs for constructs

Normality histogram for tourist safety

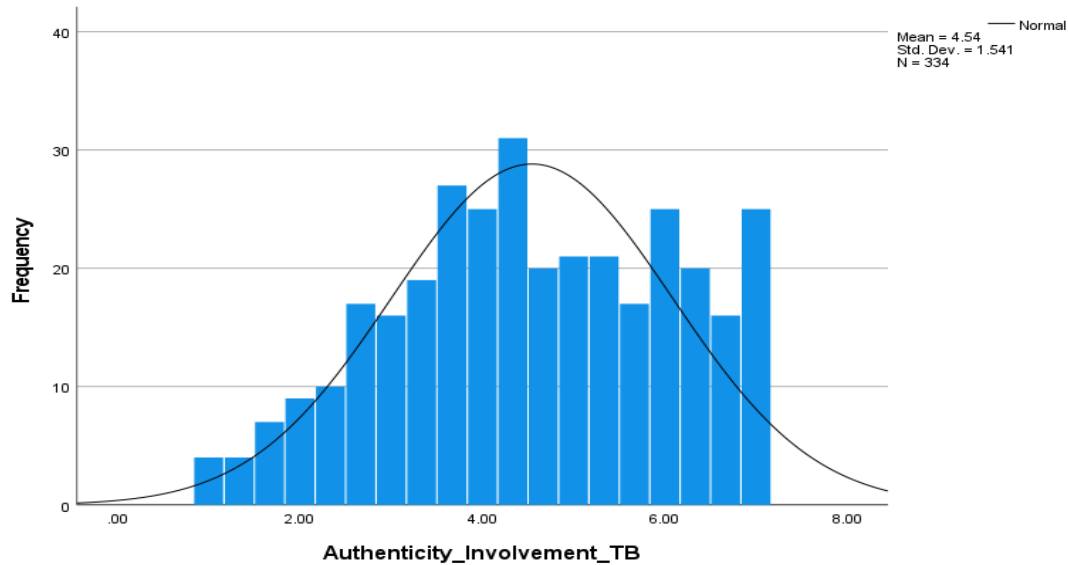
The study used a histogram to display the distribution scores of the tourist safety dataset.



The probability histogram reveals that tourist safety scores have a slight left-skewed (negative skewness) distribution with a bell-shaped curve (Kiernan, 2014).

Normality graph for authenticity

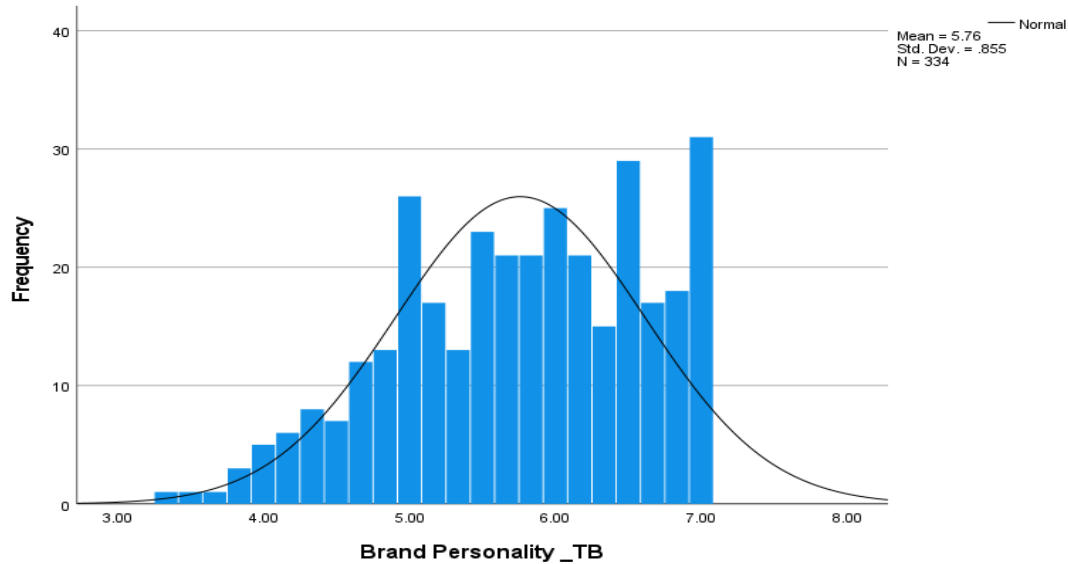
The study used a histogram to display the distribution scores of the authenticity dataset.



The probability histogram implies that authenticity scores have a slight left-skewed (negative skewness) distribution with a bell-shaped curve (Kiernan, 2014).

Normality graph for brand personality

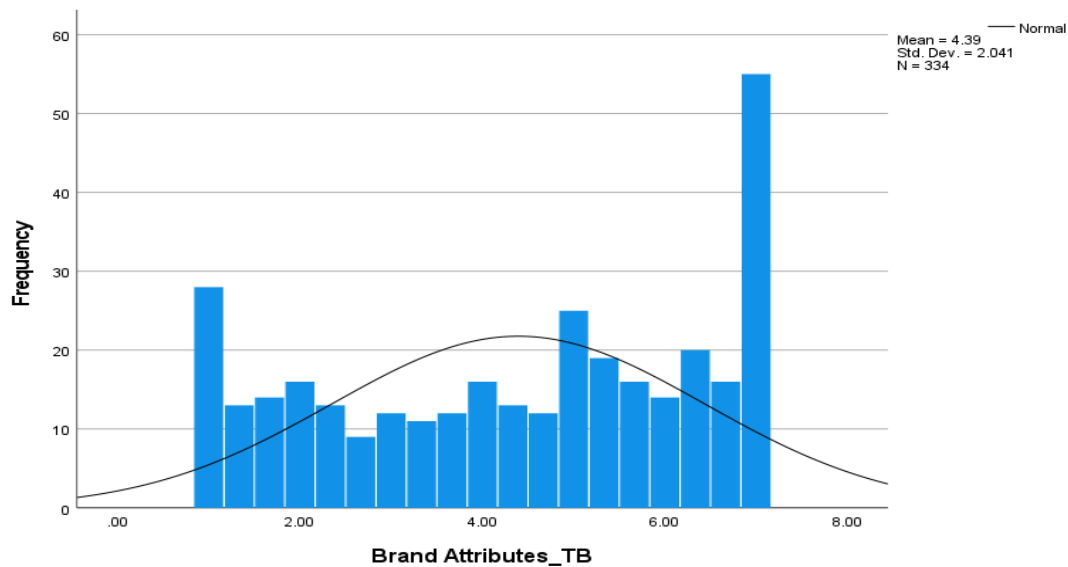
The study used a histogram to display the distribution scores of the brand personality dataset.



The probability histogram indicates that brand personality scores have a left-skewed (negative skewness) distribution with a bell-shaped curve (Kiernan, 2014).

Normality graph for brand attributes

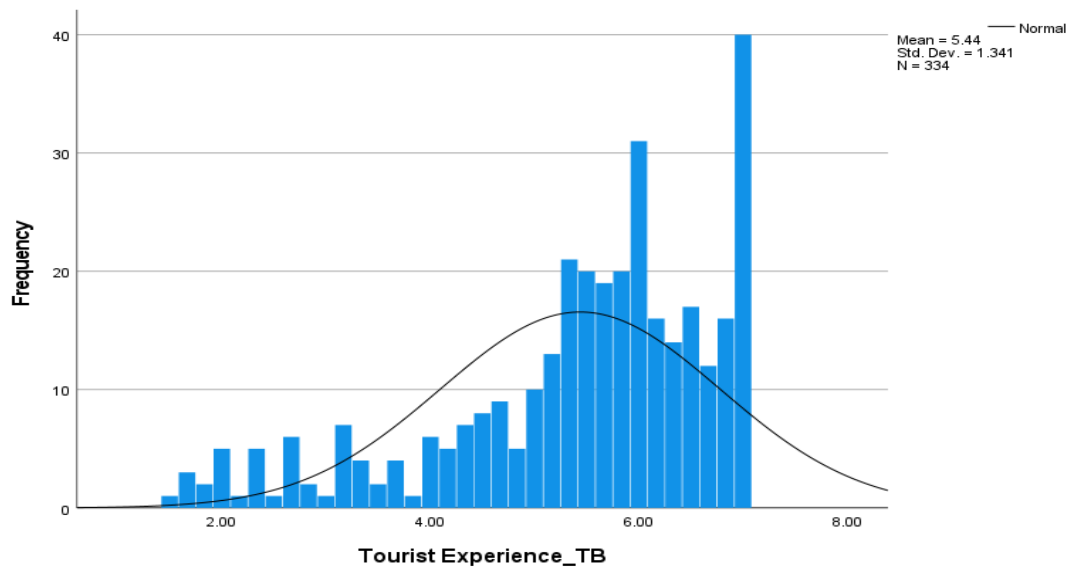
The study used a histogram to display the distribution scores of the brand attributes dataset.



The probability histogram reveals that brand attributes scores have a slight left-skewed (negative skewness) distribution with a flat bell-shaped curve (Kiernan, 2014).

Normality graph for the tourist experience

The study used a histogram to display the distribution scores of the tourist experience dataset.



The probability histogram shows that tourist experience scores have a left-skewed (negative skewness) distribution with a bell-shaped curve (Kiernan, 2014).

Appendix 21: Composite Reliability (CR) Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Cronbach Alpha (α) for constructs

CR, AVE and α for tourist safety

Composite reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

λ	λ^2	$1-\lambda^2$
0.76	0.5776	0.4224
0.64	0.4096	0.5904
0.59	0.3481	0.6519

COUNT	3	3	3
SUM	1.99	1.3353	1.6647
SQUARE	3.9601		
AVE	0.445100	More than 0,5	
CR	0.704043	More than 0,7	

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.666	3

The tourist safety as a construct has composite reliability (CR) = 0.70, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.45 and α = 0.67.

CR, AVE and α for authenticity

Composite reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

λ	λ^2	$1-\lambda^2$
0.75	0.5625	0.4375
0.61	0.3721	0.6279
0.51	0.2601	0.7399

COUNT	3	3	3
SUM	1.87	1.1947	1.8053
SQUARE	3.4969		
AVE	0.40	More than 0,5	
CR	0.7	More than 0,7	

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.657	3

The authenticity as a construct has composite reliability (CR) = 0.70, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.40 and $\alpha = 0.66$.

CR, AVE and α for Brand Personality

Composite reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

λ	λ^2	$1-\lambda^2$
0.78	0.6084	0.3916
0.84	0.7056	0.2944
0.57	0.3249	0.6751
0.62	0.3844	0.6156
0.57	0.3249	0.6751
0.64	0.4096	0.5904

COUNT	6	6	6
SUM	4.02	2.7578	3.2422
SQUARE	16.1604		
AVE	0.5	More than 0,5	
CR	0.832899	More than 0,7	

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.764	6

The brand personality as a construct has composite reliability (CR) = 0.83, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.50 and $\alpha = 0.76$.

CR, AVE and α for Brand attributes

Composite reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

λ	λ^2	$1-\lambda^2$
-----------	-------------	---------------

0.882	0.777924	0.222076
0.888	0.788544	0.211456
0.545	0.297025	0.702975

COUNT	3	3	3
SUM	2.315	1.863493	1.136507
SQUARE	5.359225		
AVE	0.621164	More than 0,5	
CR	0.825038	More than 0,7	

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.898	3

The brand attributes as a construct has composite reliability (CR) = 0.83, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.62 and $\alpha = 0.90$.

CR, AVE and α for Tourist experience

Composite reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	λ	λ^2	$1-\lambda^2$
	0.91024	0.828536	0.171464
	0.88	0.7744	0.2256
	0.89	0.7921	0.2079
	0.82	0.6724	0.3276
	0.89	0.7921	0.2079
	0.66	0.4356	0.5644
	0.7	0.49	0.51
COUNT	6	7	7
SUM	5.05024	4.785136	2.214864
SQUARE	25.50492		
AVE	0.683591	More than 0,5	
CR	0.920098	More than 0,7	

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.858	6

The tourist experience as a construct has composite reliability (CR) = 0.92, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) = 0.68 and $\alpha = 0.86$.

Appendix 22: The model fit summary for the measurement model

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	57	460,569	174	,000	2,647
Saturated model	231	,000	0		
Independence model	21	3403,811	210	,000	16,209

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	,234	,883	,845	,665
Saturated model	,000	1,000		
Independence model	,984	,335	,268	,304

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	,865	,837	,911	,892	,910
Saturated model	1,000		1,000		1,000
Independence model	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	,829	,716	,754
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	1,000	,000	,000

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	286,569	226,780	354,026
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	3193,811	3008,459	3386,485

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	1,383	,861	,681	1,063
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	10,222	9,591	9,034	10,170

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	,070	,063	,078	,000
Independence model	,214	,207	,220	,000

AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
Default model	574,569	582,634	791,804	848,804
Saturated model	462,000	494,682	1342,374	1573,374
Independence model	3445,811	3448,782	3525,845	3546,845

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	1,725	1,546	1,928	1,750
Saturated model	1,387	1,387	1,387	1,486
Independence model	10,348	9,791	10,926	10,357

HOELTER

Model	HOELTER ,05	HOELTER ,01
Default model	149	160
Independence model	24	26

Execution time summary

Minimization: ,024

Miscellaneous: ,366

Bootstrap: ,000

Total: ,390

Appendix 23: The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient for tourist safety, authenticity, brand personality, brand attributes and tourist experience

Constructs		Safety	Authenticity	Brand personality	Brand attributes	Tourist experience
Safety	(2-tailed)	1	.521**	.385**	.104	.464**
	p <value		<.001	<.001	.057	<.001
	<i>n</i>	334	334	334	334	334
Authenticity	(2-tailed)	.521**	1	.405**	.412**	.565**
	p <value	<.001		<.001	<.001	<.001
	<i>n</i>	334	334	334	334	334
Brand personality	(2-tailed)	.385**	.405**	1	.332**	.345**
	p <value	<.001	<.001		<.001	<.001
	<i>n</i>	334	334	334	334	334
Brand attributes	(2-tailed)	.104	.412**	.332**	1	.476
	p <value	.057	<.001	<.001		<.001
	<i>n</i>	334	334	334	334	334
Tourist experience	(2-tailed)	.464**	.565**	.345**	.476**	1
	p <value	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	
	<i>n</i>	334	334	334	334	334

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Appendix 24: The model fit summary for the Structural model

CMIN

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	41	226,308	95	,000	2,382
Saturated model	136	,000	0		
Independence model	16	2226,240	120	,000	18,552

RMR, GFI

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	,155	,921	,887	,644
Saturated model	,000	1,000		
Independence model	,888	,383	,301	,338

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	,898	,872	,938	,921	,938
Saturated model	1,000		1,000		1,000
Independence model	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000

Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Default model	,792	,711	,742
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	1,000	,000	,000

NCP

Model	NCP	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	131,308	91,119	179,204
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	2106,240	1956,758	2263,085

FMIN

Model	FMIN	F0	LO 90	HI 90
Default model	,680	,394	,274	,538
Saturated model	,000	,000	,000	,000
Independence model	6,685	6,325	5,876	6,796

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	,064	,054	,075	,015
Independence model	,230	,221	,238	,000

AIC

Model	AIC	BCC	BIC	CAIC
Default model	308,308	312,719	464,564	505,564
Saturated model	272,000	286,633	790,315	926,315
Independence model	2258,240	2259,961	2319,218	2335,218

ECVI

Model	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI
Default model	,926	,805	1,070	,939
Saturated model	,817	,817	,817	,861
Independence model	6,782	6,333	7,253	6,787

HOELTER

Model	HOELTER HOELTER	
	,05	,01
Default model	175	192
Independence model	22	24

Execution time summary

Minimization: ,011

Miscellaneous: ,454

Bootstrap: ,000

Total: ,465

Appendix 25: Similarity Report

The screenshot displays the Turnitin interface for a final dissertation. The main text area shows the title 'THE PREDICTION OF RURAL TOURIST EXPERIENCE: INVESTIGATION AT THE CULTURAL VILLAGE IN LESOTHO' by 'SHALE JOHANNES SHALE'. A red box highlights a match: 'submitted in accordance with the requirements for degree of MASTER OF COMMERCE'. The right-hand 'Match Overview' panel shows a total similarity score of 33% and a list of matches:

Match Number	Source	Similarity Percentage
1	uir.unisa.ac.za Internet Source	2%
2	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	2%
3	link.springer.com Internet Source	1%
4	Shale Johannes Shale, ... Publication	1%
5	vital.seals.ac.za:8080 Internet Source	1%
6	Submitted to University...	1%

Page: 1 of 347 | Word Count: 82249 | Text-Only Report | High Resolution

The dissertation in its entirety has been submitted through Turnitin and has an overall similarity score of 33%, with all the fields being under 5%. The high similarity score is due to the following:

- Affidavit,
- Standard Dissertation Headings,
- Statistical terms and conventions in Chapters 4, 5 and 6,
- Intext referencing of statistical authors, and
- The quoting of definitions in support of the formulation of new definitions for the different constructs.

Appendix 26: Abstracts submitted and presented at the International conference on IACuDiT 2022

Exploring the Relationship Between Tourist Safety and Tourist Experience: Theories from Accommodation Establishments and Attractions

Abstract

Accommodation and lodging together with attraction management have a significant role in ensuring that tourists are offered quality experiences. In the world of contemporary tourism, it is well-known globally that tourism markets are neither relying on products nor services but rather experiences to make tourists loyal prescribers. Therefore, experience is an important aspect of tourism development and evaluation. This means that providing safe experiences is of the greatest value for the attractiveness and competitive advantage of the tourism fraternity. The purpose of this paper is to determine if there is a relationship between tourist safety and tourist experiences supported by the literature, specifically to investigate the gap between these concepts at accommodation establishments and attractions in Lesotho. To achieve the objective of this paper, the researchers followed the qualitative directed-summative content analysis technique to interpret meaning from the content of text data published in 62 research reports from Scopus. This method adhered to the interpretive and applied content analysis as an analytical approach to produce results and put them into context. The literature shows that the relationship between tourist safety and tourist experience can be supported especially to investigate the gap between these concepts at accommodation establishments and attractions in Lesotho.

Authenticity as an Antecedent of the Tourist Experience in Measuring the Gap Between Tourist Experiences at an Accommodation Establishment and a Tourist Attraction in Lesotho

Abstract

Authenticity has been a key concept in the description of the genuineness and realness of various cultural heritages, making it very important for the success of cultural festivals and events. Tourists seek authentic experience through engaging in

meaningful conversation with indigenous people, thus experiencing the real lives of other people in a geographic area different from their own. Tourists seek out authentic and unique experiences that motivate them to explore cultural events that are new to them, and authenticity is usually a measure of their perception of the genuineness of tourism attractions and experiences. Authenticity refers to the quality of the experience relevant to those who seek it. The purpose of this paper is to explore whether authenticity can be applied as an antecedent of the tourist experience in measuring the gap between tourist experiences at an accommodation establishment and a tourist attraction in Lesotho. The researchers adopted qualitative content analysis, following content-logical guidelines and step-by-step paradigms before providing qualification in the form of tables. By utilising qualitative content analysis as a methodological approach the researchers followed a positivist epistemology, as it is considered to be objective in its utilisation to reveal true findings. The findings from 96 peer-reviewed published research reports (ScienceDirect Elsevier and Scopus, but excluding research methodology reports) show the dimensions local culture, involvement, meaningfulness, and social interaction to be the most appropriate for measuring authenticity. Furthermore, authenticity can be applied as an antecedent of the tourist experience in measuring the gap between tourist experiences at accommodation establishments and tourist attractions in Lesotho.