

Ageing in a Modern Era: Evidence from South African Resort Spa Visitors

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Abstract

Distinguishing tourists based on their age and generational cohort has been applied widely as a useful market segmentation tool. However, to date, limited research has analysed the needs of the different generations, especially in a South African tourism context. Even fewer studies have attempted to analyse or segment the resort spa visitor. This quantitative research is one of the first to analyse the profile and needs of different generations, specifically at resort spas in South Africa. A distinction was made between baby boomers and Generation X at three selected resorts in the country. The research showed the value of the generational theory in understanding the travel behaviour of visitors but also highlighted the fact that regarding research on destinations it is recommended to analyse different generations rather than solely focusing on one, as this could lead to mismanagement of resources. This research contributes towards understanding the needs of different generations in a South African context. Based on the results, this research suggests that the country's history, and subsequent national events, may have played a significant role in shaping the travel needs, preferences and behaviour of the domestic market.

Keywords: generational cohorts; baby boomers; Generation X; South Africa; resort tourism; resort spas; segmentation

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Introduction

The generational theory posits that people in the same generational cohort share life experiences, which cause them to develop similar attitudes and beliefs (Meriac, Woehr and Banister 2010). These shared life experiences cause each generational cohort to develop different beliefs, expectations, and views regarding their lives and consequently different behaviours (Dries, Pepermans and De Kerpel 2008; Meriac et al. 2010; Pendergast 2010; Schewe and Meredith 2004). Consequently, these differences result in generational cohorts developing distinct characteristics that can be used by marketers to define cohorts (Kupperschmidt 2000). The idea of generation, derived from generational theory, has been popularised in the US by Strauss and Howe, who define a generation as an “aggregate of all people born over roughly the span of a phase of life who share a common location in history and, hence, a common collective persona” (Strauss and Howe 1997, 61). A generation is usually 20 to 25 years in length and is delineated by its years of birth (Schewe and Meredith 2004; Schewe and Noble 2000). Due to the same lifespan, each generation has lived through the same social events and external influences in their formative years, thus creating similar life experiences. These external events further help mould their core values, which usually do not change significantly during one’s life (Cleaver, Green and Muller 2000; Schewe and Noble 2000; Schewe and Meredith 2004). Strauss and Howe (1997) termed these generational values as “peer personality.” As a generation ages, its inner beliefs retain a certain amount of consistency over its life cycle, like that of an aging individual.

From an academic perspective, recent years have witnessed an increasing interest in generational analysis in the tourism literature (Beldona, Nusair and Demicco 2009; Li, Li and Hudson 2013; Pennington-Gray, Kerstetter and Warnick 2002; Vukic, Kuzmanovic and Kostic Stankovic 2015; Cooper 2016; Haydam, Purcarea, Edu and Negricea 2017). Concerning tourism research, insights gained through the lens of generational theory could provide critical practical implications for tourism destinations (Pendergast 2010). As a report by the Travel Industry Association (TIA 2006, 8) and World Economic Forum (WEF 2017, 25) points out, “one of the most common and useful ways to classify any population is by the ages of the individuals who comprise it or, more broadly, by generational groups that are distinct not only in terms of their ages, but by the common events that helped shape their lives.” Both tourism practitioners and academics have therefore acknowledged the validity of using generational analysis to study the travel behaviour of generations (Li et al. 2013). Moreover, understanding

generational changes have been investigated by industry leaders such as Visa (2016) and Expedia (2017) in anticipating consumer behaviour changes and trends. Even though age has long been recognised as a significant demographic variable, some authors have argued that it is essential to consider not only chronological age but also life cycles and generational cohorts (Stevens, Lathrop and Bradish 2005). Consequently, more theory-based research is needed to document travel attitudes and the behaviour of different generations, especially behaviour related to the four major generations, that is, the Silent Generation, baby boomers, Generation X and Generation Y (Pennington-Gray and Blair 2010).

South Africa has undergone profound political and social transformation since 1990 (Mosupyoe 2014; Petzer and Meyer 2013). This transformation has influenced the perceptions of consumers in the different generational cohorts in South Africa. Unfortunately, to date, only limited research has analysed the needs of the different generations, particularly in a tourism context, in the local environment. Considering the country's history, this research is especially important to gain a better understanding of the profile, needs, and preferences of the generations, as the research would aid in marketing and managing tourism products and destinations more effectively and efficiently. The purpose of this exploratory research is, therefore, to fill the gap in the current literature by analysing and comparing the profile, needs, and travel behaviour of the generation cohorts who visit three Forever Resorts in South Africa. Mill (2008) argues that families and friends mainly visit resorts while on holiday, while individuals travelling for business purposes travel to resorts to attend conventions and meetings. However, resorts need to gain a competitive advantage by anticipating the demand of consumers in terms of activities and experiences that are not bound to seasonality and to cater for all ages in an environment that offers village charm with big brands, offering business tourism with family ambience, while being environmentally sustainable with modern luxuries (Walker 2017). The researchers argue that analysing the resort market based on their age can assist in gaining a competitive advantage for the resort as well as in attracting potential visitors from all generations.

Literature Review

The literature review covers a discussion on generational theory, shedding light on the unique nature of generations in South Africa and the characteristics and travel behaviour of the different generations as well as an overview on resorts in the country.

Generational Theory

The profile of the tourism industry is characterised by multigenerational visitors and a multigenerational workforce (Pendergast 2010). The idea of “generation” and “generation gap” derived from generational theory is not a new concept (Mannheim 1952), nor is it uncontested (Donnison 2007; Huntley 2006). The generational theory seeks to understand and characterise cohorts of people according to their membership of a generation, which is assigned objectively according to the year of birth (Noble and Schewe 2003; Pendergast 2010). Regarding generational theory, a cohort refers to the aggregate of individuals born within a specified range of years who experience the same events, moods, and trends at a similar stage of their lives (Ryder 1965; Strauss and Howe 1991; Schewe and Meredith 2004). Hence, it features patterns and propensities across the generational group rather than an individual focus. Generations and generational cohorts are informally defined by demographers, the press and media, popular culture, market researchers and by members of the generation themselves (Fields, Wilder, Bunch and Newbold 2008; Pendergast 2007). While members of the generation are alive, it is known as a living generation and will continue to evolve and redefine itself, usually within the bounds that are broadly predictable from the traits of the generation (Pendergast 2010). Currently, a distinction is drawn between four generations as displayed in Table 1. Whilst there is a great deal of disagreement concerning the exact start and end dates of generational cohorts, Table 1 indicates the birth years of the generation cohorts as outlined by the majority of previous researchers (see Markert 2004; Pendergast 2010; Schiffman and Kanuk 2009; Strauss and Howe 1991; Van der Walt and Du Plessis 2010; Zemke, Raines and Filipczak 2013). Distinctions between Western societies and South African cohorts are drawn by generational differences.

Table 1: A summary of living birth generations

Western societies birth years				Global and national events	South Africa	
Age cohorts	USA	Europe/UK	Australia		Birth years	The age range in 2017
Silent/ traditionalists	1923–1942 1943–1945 1925–1942	1918–1945	1922–1943	Great Depression (1929–1939) World War 2 (1939–1945) Apartheid (1948–1991)	1930–1949	87–68
Baby boomer	1943–1962 1946–1959 1943–1960	1946–1965	1943–1960	South African Republic (1961) Border War (1966–1989) Sharpeville Massacre (1960) Rivonia trials (1963)	1950–1969	67–48
Generation X	1963–1983 1960–1978 1961–1980	1966–1984	1960–1980	SA removed from UN (1974) SA’s first TV broadcast (1976) Soweto uprising (1976) SA economic sanctions (1985)	1970–1989	47–28
Generation Y (Millennials)	1984–2001 1979–1984 1981–2000 1982+	1985–2001	1980–2000	Apartheid negotiations (1990) Personal Internet (1992) SA democracy (1994) Rugby World Cup (1995)	1990–2005	27–12

Sources: Authors’ compilation based on the previous literature

Table 1 outlines the differences between the generational cohorts and the influence of specific global and national events. While global events shape the formation of cohorts, national events also contribute to generational consciousness. Examples of global events such as the Great Depression and World War 2 influenced the formation of generational cohorts. The impact of global events also influenced South Africa, that is, approximately 300,000 South African Army volunteers enlisted for World War 2. Additionally, national events such as Apartheid, the Border War, the Sharpeville Massacre, the Rivonia trials, economic sanctions, Internet connectivity, and democracy influenced the ideas, thoughts, beliefs, and behaviour of people during those times. This resulted in a different set of generational cohorts compared to those identified in Western societies (Bevan-Dye 2016; Mosupyou 2014). According to Erickson (2011), geography significantly influences generational beliefs and behaviour due to unique

social, political, and economic events. From a tourism perspective, this disseminates into travel behaviour, travel preferences, and travel motivation, indicating that age cohorts are not homogenous regarding travel experiences or as a consumer group (Gardiner, King and Grace 2013). While it is evident that South Africa's generation cohorts are different, the "periodisation" of generations put forward in Table 1 helps to encapsulate the unique challenges and opportunities associated with specific generational cohorts, thereby allowing for intergenerational comparisons (Eyerman and Turner 1998) and facilitating market segmentation efforts (Schewe and Meredith 2004; Schewe and Noble 2000). Additionally, this is supported by Duh and Struwig (2015) stating that generational difference requires an investigation into *coming-of-age events, mass communication, literacy, and social consequence* and hence the use of cohort segmentation. Moreover, each countries' cohorts will differ due to dates, time lengths, labels and resultant values, depending on the global and country-specific defining events (Duh and Struwig 2015).

Generations and Their Travel Behaviour

Due to external influences prevalent in their formative years, each generation is expected to display behavioural and consumption patterns that differentiate it from the previous as well as the subsequent generation (Schewe and Noble 2000). Huang and Petrick (2010) explain that because each generation has its characteristics, it is essential to consider how each generation behaves regarding information search behaviour, preferred activities and perception of leisure activities. Table 2 provides a summary of the travel and leisure behaviour of the different generations. For the present study, only the baby boomers (BB) and Generation X (Gen X) and Generation Y (Gen Y) were included.

Table 2: Travel and leisure behaviour of generation cohorts

Generation under investigation		Main findings	Author(s)
Characteristics	BB	They are the most lucrative cohort due to their sheer size, more discretionary income and higher disposable income. Baby boomers tend to travel greater distances and stay away longer than any other age cohort.	Gardiner, Grace and King (2015); Huang and Petrick (2010); Lehto, Jang, Achana and O’Leary (2006); Li et al. (2013); Patterson, Balderas-Cejudo and Rivera-Hernaez (2017)
	Gen X	More likely to travel with children than other generations. The freest spending of leisure travellers and outspends Baby boomers on trips, especially involving hotel stays.	TIA (2006)
	Gen Y	One of the most coveted segments because of its spending powers, ability to be trendsetters, receptivity to new products and tremendous potential for becoming lifetime customers.	Belleau, Summers, Xu and Pinel (2007); Kueh and Voon (2007)
		The most independent decision-makers since they were raised on the premise of choice and are equipped with the expertise regarding information access.	Stevens et al. (2005)
		Travel more often, explore more destinations, spend more on travel, book over the Internet more often, they are hungry for experience, hungry for information, intrepid travellers, and want to obtain much from their travel.	Harrington, Ottenbacher, Staggs and Powell (2012); Kruger and Saayman (2015); Pendergast (2010)
		Generally, they have no financial commitments. Thus, over 70 per cent of their income is spent arbitrarily, with the majority spent on entertainment, travel and food.	McCrinkle (2002)
Travel behaviour and preferences	BB	Often look for a wide range of different and exotic experiences and are not prepared to merely visit the same destination every year.	Patterson et al. (2017)
		Although travelling to warmer climates is still popular with baby boomers, there has been increased spending on holiday experiences that specifically focus on such niche markets as adventure, education, and cultural tourism.	Levine (2008); Patterson et al. (2017)
	Gen X	Greater intention to take domestic trips.	Gardiner et al. (2015)
		More inclined to take international trips.	Li et al. (2013)
	Gen Y	Overseas travel regarded as a “rite of passage.” Prefer short breaks to destinations that are accessible by car. More extended holidays among singles and couples with children.	Glover (2010)

Generation under investigation	Main findings	Author(s)	Generation under investigation
Motives and preferred recreational pursuits	BB	A shift in their motivations can be observed away from vacations that focus on relaxation and being entertained, to travelling more independently for “real-life” experiences.	Conceição and Skibba (2008); Patterson and Pegg (2009); Patterson et al. (2017); Ritchie, Carr and Cooper. (2003)
		Prefer to participate in holiday activities that include long-haul adventure trips, discovery and cultural trips, and volunteering holidays.	Lehto et al. (2008); Patterson et al. (2017)
	Gen X	Look for activities that suggest comfort and relaxation.	Beverland (2001)
		Enjoy environmental/ecological excursions and shopping and are more likely than other generations to seek entertainment while on vacation.	Huang and Petrick (2010); Li et al. (2013)
		More likely to engage in visiting museums/art galleries and visiting national parks/hiking/trekking.	Mohamed, Omar and Tay (2016)
	Gen Y	Have different recreational pursuits to other generations with their top spare time activities being attending parties, listening to the radio, and going to the cinema. Additionally, they value diversity and equity, love music, movies, television shows, friends and dining out.	Brooks (2005); Noble, Haytko and Philips (2009); Paul (2001)
		Participate in active leisure pursuits such as tennis and motorcycling. Most of them are pragmatic, like the convenience and are value orientated. They are brand- and fashion conscious and prefer brands with a core identity based on core values.	Huang and Petrick (2010); Morton (2002)
Information search behaviour and marketing messages	BB	Most common sources used to help plan holidays are from word-of-mouth such as friends and relatives, their own experiences, and sourcing the expertise of travel agents.	Levine (2008); Patterson et al. (2017)
		Are becoming more confident in using social networking activities on the Internet such as Facebook.	Li et al. (2013); Patterson et al. (2017)
		Good value is the most important factor for this generation when they make a purchase and they value brand names.	Wolf, Carpenter and Qenani-Petrela (2005)
	Gen X	Prefer phone access to travel consultants and travel packages including transportation and lodging.	Huang and Petrick (2010)
		Is more media savvy; although television is the primary source of advertising to this group, only suitable advertising that is right for their tastes and preferences can best reach this target market.	Freeman (1995)
		This generation prefers marketing messages to be blunt, straight to the point but informative, and to stress safety, security and self-sufficiency.	Francese (1993); Roberts and Manolis (2000)
		Prefer online sources of travel information.	Li et al. (2013)
	Gen Y	Word of mouth is the best marketing method to target them since they value friends’ opinions enormously and like to have friends around them wherever they go. Radio is also a significant marketing medium for this generation.	Morton (2002); Rowe (2008)
		This generation responds to humorous and emotional advertising the best when it uses real people in real-life situations. Advertising aimed at Gen Y should focus on lifestyle and fun rather than product features and specifications.	Kumar and Lim (2008); Morton (2002)
		Curious about new destinations which present opportunities to market emerging destinations and product innovation.	Glover (2010)

Source: Compiled from literature

Baby boomers have been the focus of most generational travel research, principally because of the cohort’s size, economic influence and potential impact on the future of the tourism industry, especially as its members retire from the paid workforce over the next decade (Lehto et al.

2008; Gardiner et al. 2015). More recently, research attention has shifted towards understanding travel behaviour and preferences of Generation Y. This is so mainly because of the sheer size of the generation and their spending power (Belleau, Summers, Xu and Pinel 2007; Kueh and Voon 2007). However, the literature seems to contain no single-generation studies of Generation X tourism, and the broader consumer behaviour literature reflects light attention to this cohort (Li et al. 2013). This group is often referred to as the “lost generation” (Heaney 2007, 198), since there has been a limited application in the tourism context, and specifically, very little in the areas of travel motivation, tourism preferences and travel behaviour of this generation (Cooper 2017). This research attempts to fill this gap in the literature by also analysing the profile and needs of Generation X.

Generational Research in a South African Context

Concerning generational research in the South Africa literature, studies focused on *consumer behaviour, consumption and purchasing* (Anvar and Venter 2014; Charters et al. 2011; Kreutzer 2009; Mandhlazi, Dhurup and Mafini 2013; Van Deventer, De Klerk and Dey 2017), *branding, loyalty and consumer satisfaction* (Mostert, Petzer and Weideman 2016; Musson 2014; Musson, Bick and Abratt 2015), *employment, management, gender and cultural differences* (Ebrahim 2017; Hoole and Bonnema 2015; Koloba 2017; Lynton 2012; Strauss 2010;) as well as *student work and entrepreneurial orientation* (Funde 2017; Koloba 2017; Maluwa 2017). Generational research on tourism includes: *music event preferences of Generation Y* (Kruger and Saayman 2015), *business tourist retention/travel application use* (Douglas, Lubbe and Van Rooyen 2018; Swart and Roodt 2015), and *tourism destination satisfaction* (Haydam et al. 2017). The aforementioned studies investigated generational differences, yet, similar to the international studies included in Table 1, the majority has focused on Generation Y. This could be due to the disproportionate demographic characteristic of South Africa, with a much larger young aged cohort compared to countries with similar population sizes (Central Intelligence Agency 2016). Beyond the scope of this research, the majority of South African youth (Generation Y) face many challenges such as unemployment, poverty, skill shortages, and social inequality, however, the remaining older cohorts are neglected. Moreover, understanding what the neglected age cohorts desire regarding tourism destinations, products and service offerings, is not well documented in a South African context.

Contextualising Resorts

Resorts are defined as “physical locations offering a number of tourism-related elements creating a cluster of activities, often within attractive locations such as coastal areas, but also mountain, rural, city and other locations” (Page and Connell 2011, 647). However, this definition does not provide clarity. Butler (1980) devised the destination lifecycle model, which gained popularity in tourism research, yet, this model was based on British seaside resorts from 1750–1911 (Page and Connell 2011, 35). Figure 1 clarifies the complexity of resorts, based on the work by Gee (2012). As depicted, resort classification can be based on seasonality, size, location, designation, and other attributes.

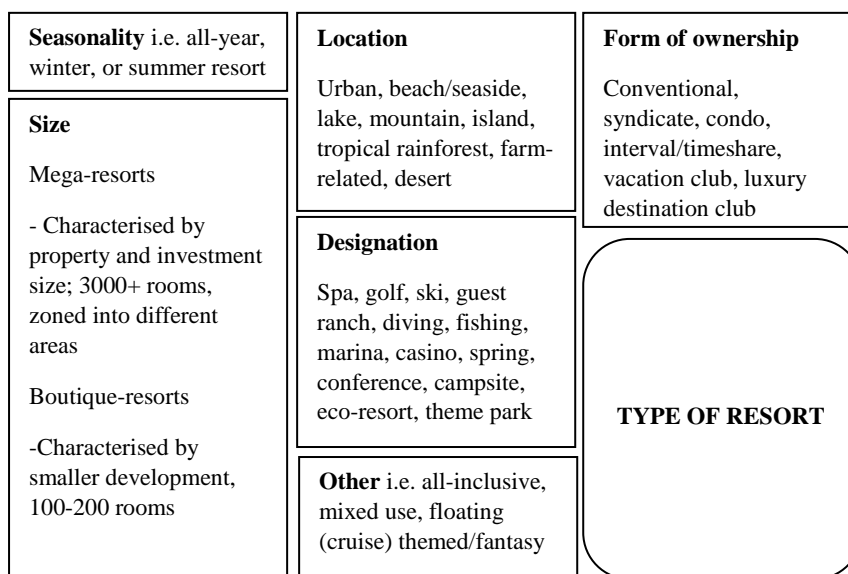


Figure 1: Classifying resorts
 Source: Adapted from Gee (2012)

Since no universally clarifying definition of a resort is available, the use of resort classification provides some insights into the nature, scope and product/service offerings provided. Since this research was performed at three spa (thermal spring) resorts in South Africa, the use of designation provides some insight into a descriptive definition. “Spa” is a Latin acronym “salus per aquae” meaning “health through water” (Brown 2018). Spa resorts have been visited since the Greek and Roman periods (Page and Connell 2011, 648) and were especially popular destinations in Victorian England to “take the waters” for the wealthy (Steen 1981). According to Large (2015, 5) the great spa towns of Europe were “equivalent of today’s major medical centres, rehab retreats, golf resorts, conference complexes, fashion shows and music festivals rolled up in one.” Two terms are used interchangeable namely *spa resorts* and *resort spas*, yet a clear distinction can be made. Spa resorts are destination resorts where the spa is the primary

attraction with amenities related to a variety of health and wellness activities, while resort spas are spas located in resort or hotel as a guest amenity and not the sole or primary attraction (Erfurt-Cooper and Cooper 2009). For this research, the term resort spa is applicable.

Resort Spas in South Africa

In South Africa thermal springs are plentiful, and while the exact number of thermal springs is unknown, the developed thermal springs are located in: the Eastern Cape (9); the Western Cape and Limpopo Provinces respectively (8); Free State (4); Mpumalanga (3); and KwaZulu-Natal (2), totalling to 34 (Olivier, Van Niekerk and Van der Walt 2008, 165). Forever Resorts is one of the largest resort groups in South Africa, and the resorts owned and operated have a deep history. The initial acquisition of Badplaas mineral springs in 1893, and proclaimed as a holiday resort, was owned by the South African Republic and later (1910) the Union of South Africa (Fourie 2014). By 1933, more resorts were government owned and managed by the Board of Curators for Mineral Springs. Up until 1971, the number of resorts grew rapidly in the Transvaal region (present-day Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga) resulting in a reshaping of the cabinet to the Transvaal Board of Public Resorts in 1975, and consequently, Overvaal Resorts (Forever Resorts 2017a). In 1983, the central government retained Overvaal Resorts, along with other resorts nationwide, and established the Aventura group of resorts.

The privatisation of the resorts was attempted on numerous occasions, with the management authority of the resorts being relocated to the Protea Hotel group (present-day Protea Marriot) in 1999 (Forever Resorts 2017a). Privatisation of the resorts was officially established in 2003 when American entrepreneur Rex Maughan of Forever Resorts International purchased the ownership for R101 million, or approximately \$13 million (Department of Public Enterprises 2003). Today, Forever Resorts SA manages 20 properties in South Africa, of which nine are classified as a resort, of which eight are found in the Gauteng, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga provinces (Forever Resorts 2017b).

According to the Global Wellness Institute (GWI 2017), the global wellness economy in 2015 was estimated at \$3.7 trillion with the spa (\$99 billion) and thermal (\$51 billion) sectors being very lucrative. The growth in Africa, and especially Sub-Saharan Africa, was the most rapid region with a 57 per cent growth rate from 2012–2013 (Slate 2016). This indicates the lucrative opportunity of the spa and wellness sectors. In South Africa 29 thermal/mineral spring spas had an estimated \$48.6 million revenue mainly in hotel and resort spas (GWI 2017). Moreover,

South Africa is the only country in the region with a well-developed thermal spring sector that incorporates resort-style facilities and complimentary spa services—although South Africa’s thermal facilities generally tend to be more rustic, i.e. thermal camping resorts (GWI 2017).

The profile and needs of visitors to resort spas in South Africa remain under-researched. Little to no empirical research has focused on this market in the country except the well-known casino resort, Sun City which has gained much scholarly attention (e.g., Botha, Crompton and Kim 1999; Ezeuduji, Lete, Correia and Taylor 2014; Kim, Crompton and Botha 2000). These studies have however focused on the competitiveness and brand value of the resort and not the needs of the visitors it attracts. A few studies have identified the motives of resort visitors. Botha et al. (1999) found that visitors to Sun City (casino resort) were motivated by escape, socialisation, and knowledge and learning. In another study on visitors to holiday resorts, Van Vuuren and Slabbert (2011) identified rest and relaxation, socialisation, partaking in recreational activities, and knowledge and learning as main motivations. Visitors to resort spas have yet to be analysed—another gap that the present research attempts to fill.

The Problem under Investigation and Research Objectives

Evident from the literature review, resorts and resort spas form a significant part of South Africa’s tourism and leisure industry. Unfortunately, to date, limited research has focused on analysing this particular resort market. This research will, therefore, contribute to the body of knowledge regarding the profile, needs, and preferences of this undervalued market. Thus, this research will address these following gaps evident from the literature. Firstly, due to the increased interest in spa and wellness tourism, as well as the lack of research in resort spas in South Africa, this research aims to identify the profile of the resort spa visitors. Secondly, due to the limited research available on the application of generational theory in a South African tourism context, this research aims to segment resort spa visitors based on generational cohorts. Since the majority of the previous studies on generational theory neglect Generation X, this research will also contribute by analysing this generational cohort within a resort spa context. Hence, this research has the following objectives:

1. To profile the resort spa market regarding their profile, needs, and preferences.
2. To apply generational theory and segment resort spa visitors to distinguish whether different generational cohorts differ regarding their needs and preferences.

For resort spas to survive in an increasingly competitive environment, it is crucial to understand the needs of the market.

Methodology

A quantitative research approach drawing on the survey method was used and was considered the most appropriate method to adopt because systematic, standardised comparisons were needed. This section describes the sampling method and survey, questionnaire, as well as the statistical analysis and the results.

Population, Sampling Method and Survey

The population for this study is all the resorts in South Africa. However, this research focused on three of the nine classified Forever Resorts, for the sake of convenience and easy reach. Using convenience sampling, self-administered questionnaires were distributed at Warmbaths (Limpopo), Loskopdam and Badplaas (Mpumalanga). The resorts were chosen due to their proximity to Gauteng, which is the commercial and economic hub of South Africa. Badplaas is the oldest of the Forever Resorts dating back to the early 1890s, followed by Warmbaths in the early 1930s and Loskopdam in the early 1970s. Moreover, the resorts offer similar facilities and services, and it can, therefore, be assumed that they attract a similar market. These three resorts thus provided the ideal research opportunity to determine the market(s) attracted to the resorts, as well as the influence of generational cohorts. Over a period of four days (December 8–11, 2016), three separate teams conducted a visitor survey, one team at each of the respective resorts. A total of 90 questionnaires were distributed at Warmbaths, 70 questionnaires at Loskopdam and 90 questionnaires at Badplaas. A total of 233 fully completed questionnaires were included in the analysis (84 from Warmbaths, 64 from Loskopdam and 85 from Badplaas). Adult visitors (18+ years) were selected as they were sitting down and relaxing in the various areas. To limit bias, a simple random sampling method was employed within a stratified method where the fieldworkers followed specific guidelines as questionnaires were distributed to both day and overnight visitors of different, and non-homogeneous age and gender groups. The fieldworkers were trained to ensure that they understood the aim of the study and the questionnaire and could brief respondents about the purpose of the research.

Questionnaire

Questionnaire design and validation is a process recommended in quantitative research. This process is based on steps and guidelines outlined by Hair, Bush and Ortinau (2009) and involves three validation techniques: namely, content validity, face validity, and construct validity. Content validity is a systematic assessment measuring how well the measurable components of the construct are represented. Face validity is the subjective assessment of the constructs to ensure that the constructs are measurable. Construct validity includes identifying the proper independent and dependent variables as well as the degree to which that which is intended to be measured is indeed measured.

The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Section A captured the sociodemographic details pertaining to gender, age, home language, marital status, travel group size, province of residence, the number of previous visits to the resort, level of education, gross annual income, the frequency of resort facility use, and expenditure. Section B captured economic considerations such as travel group composition, number of nights at the resort, media exposure to resort marketing, age exposed to the resort, type of accommodation preference, and joining the resort group loyalty programme. Section C captured the degree of satisfaction with resort amenities, measuring 30 statements on a five-point Likert scale of agreement (2 = “Totally disagree” / 5 = “Totally agree”, while 1 = “not applicable”) Section D captured the travel motives of visitors to the resort spa, measured by 16 statements on a five-point Likert scale of agreement (1= “Totally disagree” / 5 = “Totally Agree”). The items included in Sections C were based on research conducted by Boekstein (2015), Brey and Choi (2010), Choi, Lehto and Brey (2010), and Wen, Lehto, Sydnor and Tang (2014). These studies identified the resort amenities that visitors regard as important when selecting resorts. Statements related to the infrastructure, business services, entertainment, food and beverages, size and accessibility, recreation, fitness and spa facilities, being children and family centred, service quality and staffing, general management, natural setting, and activities offered by the resort spas were included. The motives included in Section D were based on adapted from the work by Botha et al. (1999) and Van Vuuren and Slabbert (2011) and statements related to relaxation, family holidays, escape, and socialisation were included. However, based on the resort spa offerings, the researchers added statements such as event and conference attendance and value-for-money. Moreover, the researchers wanted to determine whether early exposure played a role in visitors’ decision and hence statements related to growing up visiting the resorts were added. Finally, the researchers wanted to know whether visiting resort spas can be considered as part

of visitors' lifestyle and contributes towards their well-being. The questionnaire was also sent to the resort managers for approval. All the sections, therefore, satisfy the criteria for content validity. Regarding face validity, the Statistical Consultation Services at the North-West University advised on the formulation of the statements and the measuring scales used. The construct validity is satisfied by utilising two exploratory principal component factor analyses, respectively on the 30 resort amenity items and the 16 travel motive items to explain the variance-covariance structure of a set of variables through a few linear combinations of these variables.

Statistical Analysis and Results

The data from the three resorts were captured and pooled in Microsoft Excel[®] and analysed by using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 24 (IBM Corp. 2017). The analysis was performed in four stages: identification of the age cohorts; an analysis of significant differences between the different age cohorts attracted to the respective resorts; two exploratory factor analyses (motives to travel to the resorts and resort amenities); and the differences between the cohorts based on the identified factors.

Identification of Age Cohorts

Based on the year of birth of the respondents, a distinction was drawn between three age cohorts as shown in Table 3. The cohorts were based on the guidelines by Knipe and du Plessis (2005) as well as Bevan-Dye (2016) in a South African context. As shown in Table 3, the majority of the respondents fell in the Generation X category that accounted for 54 per cent of the population surveyed. This was followed by baby boomers, which represented 32 per cent of the respondents. Only 14 per cent of the respondents fell in the Generation Y category and since this segment was too small and yielded little to no statistically significant differences, it was excluded from further analysis. Therefore, for this research, only the baby boomers and Generation X were included. The distribution of these two cohorts amongst the three surveyed resorts was as follows: baby boomers at Badplaas (38%), Warmbaths (44%) and Loskopdam (18%), and Generation X-ers at Badplaas (32%), Warmbaths (39%) and Loskopdam (29%).

Table 3: Age cohorts at surveyed resorts

Age cohort	Generation	Number of respondents	Percentage of surveyed population (%)
1950–1970	Baby boomers	65	32
1971–1990	Generation X	108	54
1991–2011	Generation Y	28	14
2012–present	Generation Z	0	0

Significant Socio-Demographic and Behavioural Differences

Independent sample *t*-tests were performed to compare the mean scores on the continuous variables for the two different groups of respondents (Pallant 2016). The *t*-tests, therefore, show whether there is a statistically significant difference in the mean scores for the two groups (Pallant 2016). Effect sizes (*d*) were used as another measure to identify any significant differences. Cohen (1988) offers the following guidelines for interpreting effect sizes: small effect: $d = 0.2$; medium effect: $d = 0.5$; and large effect: $d = 0.8$. Based on the information reflected in Table 4, there were statistically significant differences between the baby boomers and Generation X resort-goers based on their average age, spending on food, the average length of stay and the average age first exposed to resorts ($p < 0.05$). At a 10% level of significance, there were differences based on spending on accommodation and total spending ($p < 0.10$). The baby boomers were on average 55 years old while the Generation X-ers were 36 years old. Generation X-ers had the highest average spending on accommodation and food and consequently had the highest average total spending (R8,470) compared to the baby boomers (R6,251). Even though it does not reflect in their spending, the baby boomers had the longest average length of stay (an average of 5 nights) compared to the Generation X-ers who only stayed an average of 3 nights at the resorts. Interestingly, the baby boomers were exposed to resorts at an older age (an average of 34 years) while the Generation X-ers were exposed to resorts at an average age of 24 years.

Table 4: Results from the t-test comparisons between age cohorts

Sociodemographic characteristics	Baby boomers N = 64	Generation X N = 108	t-value	Sig. level	Effect size (d)
Av. age	54.63	35.60	17.432	0.001*	2.24
Av. no. of people in travel group	10.00	8.45	1.150	0.331	0.14
Av. no. of previous visits	2.25	2.28	-0.065	0.946	0.01
Av. no. of children in travel party	2.51	2.28	1.051	0.285	0.21
Av. length of stay (nights)	5.07	3.18	2.472	0.043*	0.28
Av. age first exposed to resorts	33.95	23.56	4.747	0.001*	0.65
Spending categories (ZAR)					
Accommodation	4786.85	6567.90	-1.764	0.055**	0.29
Food	1518.89	2390.36	-2.634	0.007*	0.47
Beverages	661.70	688.75	-0.170	0.868	0.03
Clothing and footwear	487.23	342.77	0.946	0.372	0.15
Return transport	682.78	668.17	0.102	0.911	0.02
Facilities	253.26	252.93	0.004	0.996	0.00
Activities	207.83	160.73	0.871	0.383	0.16
Souvenirs and jewellery	95.83	56.27	0.791	0.474	0.12
Other	21.28	25.00	-0.211	0.831	0.04
Total spending	6251.25	8470.09	-1.823	0.054**	0.27
Spending per person	1370.17	1754.15	-0.820	0.367	0.12

* Statistically significant difference: $p \leq 0.05$

** Statistically significant difference: $p \leq 0.10$

Effect sizes: Small effect: $d=0.2$; medium effect: $d=0.5$ and large effect: $d=0.8$

Chi-square tests with phi-values (ϕ) were further used to identify any further significant differences between the age cohorts based on the categorical variables measured in the questionnaire. Cohen (1988) gives the following criteria as a means to interpret phi-values: 0.1 for a small effect, 0.3 for a medium effect and 0.5 for a large effect. There were statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$) between the two age cohorts based on marital status ($p = 0.032$; $\phi = 0.252$), province of residence ($p = 0.012$; $\phi = 0.356$) and previous visits as influencer on the decision to travel to the resort ($p = 0.023$; $\phi = 0.182$). The majority of baby boomers were married (75%). While a significant percentage of Generation X-ers were also married (60%), more of this segment was also single (27%). Both age cohorts mainly travelled from Gauteng (53% and 47% respectively). However, more Generation X-ers also travelled from Mpumalanga (38% compared to 22%). More baby boomers indicated that they based their decision to travel to the resorts on their experience of previous visits (32% compared to 18%).

Results of the Exploratory Factor Analyses

Since possible correlations between the different resort amenities and the travel motive factors can be expected, an Oblimin rotation with Kaiser normalisation for both factors was completed

to improve the interpretability of the factor structure. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was used to determine whether the covariance matrix was suitable for factor analysis. Kaiser's criteria for the extraction of all factors with eigenvalues larger than one were used because they were considered to explain a significant amount of variation in the data. All items with a factor loading greater than 0.4 were considered to be contributing to a factor and all items with loadings less than 0.4 were regarded as not correlating significantly with this factor (Dancey and Reidy 2017; Stevens 2009). Any item that cross-loaded onto two factors with a factor loading greater than 0.4 was categorised in the factor where interpretability was best. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) and inter-item correlations were calculated to test the reliability of the identified factors. A reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha) was computed for each factor to estimate its internal consistency. All the factors with a reliability coefficient above 0.6 were considered acceptable in this study. The average inter-item correlations were also computed as another measure of reliability: these, according to Cohen (1988), should lie between 0.15 and 0.55. Factor scores were calculated as the average of all items contributing to a particular factor to interpret them on the original five-point Likert scale (1 = "Totally disagree" to 5 = "Totally agree").

Two exploratory principal component factor analyses were respectively performed on the 16 motivational items and the 30 resort amenities to be included in further analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was respectively 0.90 for the four motivational factors and 0.87 for the five resort amenities, above the commonly recommended value of 0.6. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant in both cases [respectively $\chi^2(120) = 1185.53, p < 0.05$ and $\chi^2(435) = 2663.49, p < 0.05$]. All items loaded on a factor with a loading greater than 0.4 and all the factors had a reliability coefficient above 0.6 and were thus considered acceptable in this study. The average inter-item correlations also fell within the recommended range of 0.15 and 0.55. The identified factors accounted for 72 per cent and 69 per cent of the total variance respectively. As shown in Table 5, in order of importance, the four motivational factors were based on the mean values: *resort* (3.97), *family* (3.91), *corporate* (2.37) and *nostalgia* (2.31).

Table 5: Results of the factor analysis on resort motives

Travel Motives	Resort	Family	Corporate	Nostalgia
The resort offers a memorable experience	0,795			
The resort is a must-see destination	0,774			
The resort is a value-for-money-destination	0,748			
The resort is an all-inclusive holiday destination	0,744			
The resort offers a relaxing environment and an escape from normal routine	0,695			
The resort offers a variety of products and services	0,680			
The resort is child-friendly		0,722		
The resort offers various activities to entertain my children		0,707		
The resort is located in a pristine area of South Africa		0,587		
I/we usually stay at the resort		0,578		
The resort is an ideal family holiday destination		0,533		
A visit to the resort contributes to my well-being		0,456		
I stay at the resort because I attend events in the region			0,927	
I attended conferences at the resort			0,890	
I grew up visiting the resort				0,844
Visits to the resort form part of my lifestyle				0,682
Cronbach alpha	0.88	0.87	0.86	0.62
Inter-item correlation	0.56	0.54	0.75	0.46
Mean values	3.97	3.91	2.37	2.31

Regarding the resort amenities, Table 6 shows that the *quality services* (4.11) were the factor with which the respondents at the resort amenity were most satisfied. This was followed by *activity variety and accessibility* (4.04), *marketing and hospitality* (3.91), *maintenance and value* (3.89) and *campsite management* (3.82).

Table 6: Results of the factor analysis on resort amenities

Resort amenities	Quality services	Marketing and hospitality services	Activity variety and accessibility	Campsite management	Maintenance and value
Accommodation is clean and tidy	0,811				
The physical facilities are visually appealing	0,745				
The reception staff are neat and professional	0,740				
Quality accommodation is provided	0,726				
Bookings are hassle-free and easy to do	0,706				
Staff, in general, are professional and courteous	0,620				
Efficient check in procedure	0,587				
General maintenance is good	0,552				
In general, the resort is neat and clean	0,551				
The resort offers modern looking equipment	0,545				
Safety at the resort is good	0,514				
Visually appealing materials (pamphlets, website)		0,773			
Menu variety at restaurant (e.g. vegan/vegetarian , Halal, Kosher)		0,757			
The website is user friendly and easily navigable		0,600			
High level of service at		0,598			

Resort amenities	Quality services	Marketing and hospitality services	Activity variety and accessibility	Campsite management	Maintenance and value
restaurants and shops					
Efficient check out procedure		0,589			
Services are delivered promptly and on time		0,582			
A variety of facilities are available		0,488			
The variety of activities on offer			0,705		
Directions and signage at the resort are sufficient			0,665		
Activities for children are sufficient			0,663		
Sufficient parking is provided			0,654		
Well-maintained swimming pools			0,461		
The variety of accommodation on offer			0,452		
Campsites are well serviced				0,756	
Camp and caravan sites are well positioned				0,733	
Ablution facilities are clean and tidy				0,637	
In general, the resort is neat and clean					0,667
The resort offers value-for-money regarding service					0,652
The resort offers value-for-money regarding price					0,605
Cronbach alpha	0.93	0.88	0.83	0.81	0.71
Inter-item correlation	0.55	0.52	0.47	0.60	0.51
Mean values	4.11	3.91	4.04	3.82	3.89

Significant Differences between Age Cohorts and Identified Factors

Independent sample *t*-tests were also performed to identify any statistically significant differences between the age cohorts and the identified motives and resort amenity factors. Table 7 indicates no statistically significant differences between the baby boomers and Generation X-ers based on the motivational factors ($p > 0.05$). Both generational cohorts rated the motives similarly. However, the motives resort and corporate yielded small effect size differences indicating that Generation X-ers were motivated more by the motive resort while the motive corporate influenced the baby boomers more. The resort amenity factors, quality services, marketing and hospitality services and campsite management ($p < 0.05$) showed statistically significant differences while maintenance and value were significant at a 10% level of significance ($p < 0.10$). Generation X-ers were satisfied more with the amenities, rating all the factors higher compared to the baby boomers.

Table 7: Results from the t-test comparisons between age cohorts

Identified factors	Baby boomers N = 64	Generation X N = 108	t- value	Sig. level	Effect size (<i>d</i>)
Motives					
Resort	3.83	4.03	-1.513	0.131	0.25
Family	3.92	3.96	-0.288	0.768	0.05
Corporate	2.51	2.17	1.530	0.134	0.25
Nostalgia	3.27	3.27	-0.011	0.991	0.00
Resort amenities					
Quality services	3.97	4.20	-2.018	0.042*	0.33
Marketing and hospitality services	3.71	4.07	-2.490	0.017*	0.39
Activity variety and accessibility	3.96	4.13	-1.232	0.205	1.19
Campsite management	3.58	3.96	-2.034	0.044*	0.35
Maintenance and value	3.75	4.00	-1.758	0.084**	0.29

* Statistically significant difference: $p \leq 0.05$

** Statistically significant difference: $p \leq 0.10$

Effect sizes: Small effect: $d=0.2$; medium effect: $d=0.5$ and large effect: $d=0.8$

Findings and Implications

This research has the following findings and implications.

First, the results confirm the notion by Schewe and Noble (2000), Stevens et al. (2005), Pendergast (2010) and Li et al. (2013) that distinguishing tourists based on their age and generational cohort is a useful market segmentation tool, thereby confirming that applying generational theory provides relevant and practical information for tourism destinations, in this

case, resorts in South Africa. Since resorts aim to cater for all ages (Walker 2017), this approach proved to be especially useful in identifying the profile and needs of the different generations attracted to these tourism products and destinations. Additionally, resorts are transgenerational destinations encouraged by parents to their children, supported by the fact that baby boomers and Generation X-ers valued nostalgia equally.

Second, the results confirm the findings from previous research (see Table 2) that the characteristics and consequent travel behaviour of different generational cohorts cannot be regarded as being homogenous regarding their needs and preferences. The present research distinguished baby boomers from Generation X resort visitors based on their sociodemographic and behavioural characteristics as well as their travel motives and evaluation of resort amenities. The results showed statistically significant differences between the two generations sociodemographics and evaluation of the resort amenities. This finding, therefore, revealed the needs of the two generation cohorts that ought to be considered when marketing and managing resorts in South Africa. Unfortunately, due to the small size of the cohort, Generation Y could not be thoroughly analysed which is an aspect that should be addressed in future research.

Third, the research contradicts previous authors who singled out the baby boomers and Generation Y due to the size and spending power of the cohorts (Belleau et al. 2007; Gardiner et al. 2015; Kueh and Voon 2007; Lehto et al. 2008). Instead, this research distinguished three generational cohorts at resorts, although only two cohorts are large enough for statistical analysis, namely, the baby boomers and Generation X. This finding emphasises that focusing one's research on only one age cohort could lead to wrong decisions regarding how resources should be allocated. It also supports the first finding of the research, which noted that comparing different cohorts yield the best results. When research focusses on one cohort, the results should be used with caution.

Fourth, this research contributes to the current literature as indicated by Heaney (2007), Cooper (2017) and Li et al. (2013) regarding the needs and travel behaviour of Generation X. This research found that the majority of respondents were in the Generation X cohort (54%), indicating that this generation is the primary market of resorts in South Africa. Therefore, the results shed light on the needs and preferences of this neglected generational cohort. This generation moreover had the highest spending, which supports the findings by the TIA (2006) that Generation X outspends baby boomers on trips. From an economic perspective, this cohort

is, therefore, a lucrative market to attract and retain. The generation cohort was furthermore satisfied more with the resort amenities and prepared to travel further. Since the Generation X-ers rated the *resort* motive the highest, which correlates well with literature regarding the travel preferences. About the *resort* motive, Generation X-ers, in general, prefers packaged destinations (*variety of products and services*), and comfort and relaxation (*relaxing environment and escape*) which is offered by the resorts. This implies that marketing messages aimed at Generation X-ers should focus on the comfort and all-inclusive attributes of Forever Resorts using television, in prime airing slots such as before, during or after the news. Since *nostalgia* is essential for both the baby boomers and Generation X-ers, this highly advantageous marketing message should reinforce family values and family time, especially since Generation X-ers tend to travel with children. Therefore, Forever Resorts should specifically market the all-inclusive, relaxing, family holiday to Generation X-ers by packaging different combinations of accommodation, length of stay and even family discounts. A simple slogan could be “Forever Resorts: Forever Near and Dear.” This is a play on word since the Generation X-ers are mostly domestic travellers and since family is important (dear) to them. This is also an effective way to attract the baby boomers since they rated the *family* motives as being the most important.

Fifth, the appeal of resorts seems to be dwindling for the baby boomers who comprise a large percentage of resort visitors. Further research is however required to validate this observation. They also tend to have a longer length of stay, which supports the findings by Lehto et al. (2008), Huang and Petrick (2010), Li et al. (2013), Gardiner et al. (2015) and Patterson et al. (2017). This finding nonetheless implies and emphasises the importance of continuing research of this nature. Supporting the findings by Levine (2008) and Patterson et al. (2017), baby boomers rely on their previous experience when making decisions to travel to the resorts. This implies that resort managers should ensure that this generation is satisfied with their resort experiences. Compared to Generation X, this generation accorded a lower rating to the resort amenities which indicated room for improvement regarding the amenities on offer especially regarding *campsite management, maintenance and value* as well as *marketing and hospitality services*.

Finally, corresponding with the notion by Erickson (2011), the overall results show that national events, due to the country geography, may exert a significant influence on generations and that the unique South African social, political and economic events have shaped the travel

behaviour of the generation cohorts. In particular, the results obtained for the age at which they were first exposed to resorts support this. It is noteworthy that baby boomers, although older, were exposed to resorts only in their early thirties, compared to Generation X who was exposed in their early twenties. The average age of baby boomers is 55 years of age, indicating that on average this cohort was born in 1961. Since the baby boomers were exposed to resorts only 34 years later in 1995, national events such as the Border war, which ended in 1989, could have influenced this result. The average age of the Generation X-ers is 35 years, indicating that this cohort was born in 1981, and was subsequently exposed to resorts by 2005, at an average age of 24 years. Since Forever Resorts was officially established in 2003, a relaunch a few years later may have attributed to this result. The history of resorts, specifically the past of Forever Resorts, could also be a factor here. Although home language did not yield any statistically significant differences, the chi-square tests showed that the majority of baby boomers were English-speaking (43%), while 35 per cent of respondents in this cohort spoke other African languages and 22 per cent Afrikaans. The majority of respondents in the Generation X cohort spoke African languages (42%), while 35 per cent indicated English to be their home language and 23 per cent Afrikaans. The language distribution between the two cohorts indicates a growth in the black domestic market, in particular, travelling to resorts. During the apartheid era, racial segregation resulted in whites-only resorts, which assists in explaining the later exposure of black South Africans to resorts. Since a large percentage of Generation X-ers speak an African home language, this indicates that the segregation policies during the apartheid era rendered resorts inaccessible to black South Africans.

Coupled with this finding are the results of repeat visits. Even though both generations were respectively exposed to resorts as holiday destinations more than 20 and 10 years ago, they had visited the particular resorts only an average of 2–3 times previously. Since only three resorts were included in the research, more research is required to determine the link between early exposure and repeat visits. It appears that in the case of South African resort visits, exposure does not necessarily have to occur at a younger age, which is positive regarding expanding markets to resorts. However, there appears to be a challenge to attract younger visitors (Generation Y) as well as to encourage the older generations to become and remain repeat visitors.

Generation Y is a mainly independent cohort, which creates challenges; however, the Generation Y characteristics and general preferences do offer some guidelines. Since

Generation Y is trendy and enjoys music, movies, dining and friends, as well as being extremely brand conscious, marketing messages can be creative. Internet and social media campaigns are highly essential and should focus on the excitement, lifestyle, and fun offered by Forever Resorts in a humorous manner. Additionally, word-of-mouth recommendations are important. Therefore, group discounts could be beneficial to ensure that friends travel together, thereby creating a trend. Again, the message should be clear and could involve a slogan such as “Forever Resorts: Friends Forever.” Moreover, the resorts possess the infrastructure to host events such as outdoor music festivals or craft beer and wine festivals, tapping into the preferences of Generation Y. Curiosity is another element to be incorporated into the marketing messages, especially when events are considered. Conceivably, something like “Foreverfest” could attract Generation Y to the resorts, especially if their various preferences are satisfied.

Conclusion

This research is, to the authors’ knowledge, one of the first to analyse the profile and needs of different generations, specifically at resort spas in South Africa. Resorts have played an important role in the South African tourism industry since the early 1900s. During the apartheid era in particular, the government and many other organisations invested heavily in developing resorts to create more destinations for South Africans, especially whites. This has changed significantly, and currently, black South Africans enjoy visiting resorts. In fact, resorts are to this day still considered an important attraction to both black and white visitors, thus emphasising the importance of this research. This research had the following contributions: first, the research not only showed the value of the generational theory in understanding the travel behaviour of visitors but also highlights the fact that when it comes to research on destinations, it is recommended to analyse different generations rather than solely focusing on one. Singling out one generation in destination management research could lead to resources being inefficiently allocated. Second, this research contributes towards the understanding of the needs of different generations, more specifically baby boomers and Generation X in a South African context. Third, the research appears to indicate that the history of the country and national events contributes to the composition of generational cohorts and therefore play a significant role in shaping the domestic markets’ travel needs, preferences and behaviour—an initial attempt within resorts spas. However, more research is needed to validate this observation. Finally, while the older generational cohorts still constitute a valuable segment, resorts need to investigate strategies to attract and retain the Generation Y segment as this

generational cohort appear to be less attracted to resort spas. This is vital since this cohort represents the most significant socioeconomic group in South Africa. Further research is however required to provide a more holistic view of the resort preferences of the different generations as well as to establish the extent to which the history of the country influences the travel behaviour and preferences of the domestic market.

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