

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal

By

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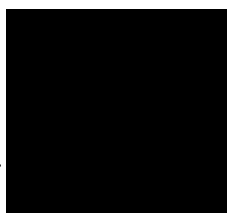
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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research study to

- My beloved **MOTHER**. This study was going to be surprise for you mum. Sadly, by the will of ALLAH, fate intervened. I am most certain that your endless encouragement has given me the drive and strength to climb to greater heights, and I do hope that I made your proud MA!
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“Many of life’s failures are people who did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up.”

Thomas Edison

ABSTRACT

Countries on the African continent, most notably South Africa, have not been immune to global economic issues with the present bout of change globally, which is accelerating at an unprecedented rate. The creation of jobs for the unemployed remains South Africa's biggest challenge. Over the last few years, South Africa has experienced a sharp decline in growth and a significant increase in unemployment. Tourism in South Africa is a key enabler in supporting Local Economic Development (LED), job creation and improved living standards, and this sector requires a joint effort within it to address any concerns that may impede the economy's progress. Design thinking, a problem-solving tool, is an important technique around which organisations may build their strategy to solve problems and challenges. The main aim of the study was to identify the role of design thinking in the tourism sector by first understanding the challenges experienced within this sector currently and in the recent past. The design thinking process was presented to understand how this technique could assist in resolving the challenges of the tourism sector. Focus groups and interviews were used to collect data. For this study, the sample population consisted of 21 participants who were specifically chosen for their experience in the tourism sector. The study outcome resulted in the identification of seven key factors that can influence design thinking in the tourism sector. In addition, nine contributing factors influenced design thinking in leadership. The study also revealed nine key initiatives to drive design thinking in the tourism sector. The main contributions of this study were that it established the presence of design thinking in the tourism sector, whilst also highlighting the role of collaboration. The results of the research also show how effectively leadership and design thinking combined, with the former being able to use the traits to develop a variety of tactics and strategic outcomes. The key recommendations emanating from this study indicate that design thinking should be implemented at all levels of tourism, while the role of leadership is critical in ensuring that proper strategies are developed to realise the objectives of the industry.

Keywords: Challenges, design thinking, economy, South Africa, tourism sector

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BARSA	Board of Airline Representatives of South Africa
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DT	Design thinking
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
iBCi	iLembe Business Confidence Index
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOL	Independent Online
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LED	Local Economic Development
MTBPS	Medium Term Budget Speech
NDP	National Development Plan
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SA	South Africa
SARB	South African Reserve Bank
SARS-Cov-2	Severe respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SMME	Small Micro and Medium Enterprises
SONA	State of the Nation Address
UKZN	University of Kwa-Zulu Natal
UN-HABITAT	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
WHO	World Health Organisation
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

The African continent, and particularly South Africa, has not been immune to the challenges of the global economy. The South African economy was 6% smaller in the third quarter of 2020 than it was in the fourth quarter of 2019 (State of the Nation Address, 2021). A variety of factors have been proposed to explain South Africa's current economic malaise, including unpredictable energy supply, low consumer and corporate confidence, departmental resources diverted to bail out state-owned firms, and a lack of fundamental improvements are only a few of the issues. (Asmal and Rooney, 2021). Equally crucial is the speed with which structural reforms are implemented in order to boost private-sector investment, creation of employment opportunities and economic development (Medium Term Budget Speech, 2021). For many years, South Africa's macroeconomic policy has been aimed at supporting stable and long-term growth. Nonetheless, structural issues in the real economy have contributed to persistently low economic performance and a decline in long-term growth potential. These flaws include declining productivity, lower investment levels, an unreliable and irregular electrical supply, and eroding global competitiveness (Medium Term Budget Speech, 2020). The South African economy recovered faster than projected in the first half of 2021 and was anticipated to rise by 5.1 percent in 2021, after contracting by 6.4 percent in 2020 (MTBPS 2021).

The greatest challenge for South Africa remains the creation of jobs for the unemployed, while at the same time ensuring that workers are prepared for the jobs of tomorrow, with President Cyril Ramapahosa indicating that the focus is on job-creation and re-igniting growth (SONA, 2019). According to official labour force statistics, there were around 2.2 million fewer people employed in the second quarter of 2020 than in the first, effectively reversing the economy's previous ten years of job growth. (Kohler, Bhorat, Hill and Stanwix, 2021). Inequality leads to a wide range of viewpoints, making compromise difficult, and the consequent deadlock and political uncertainty lead to financial weakness (National Treasury, 2019). The South African government is putting the finishing touches on measures to address the socio-

economic issues that the country faces, particularly the unemployment and poverty crises (MTBPS 2021).

South Africa is currently in its longest decline since records began in 1945, with growing unemployment, decreasing real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, and a bleak market outlook (PWC, 2020). Increased revenue collection will be achievable with a fast-growing economy, allowing for more comprehensive responses to the difficulties South Africa confronts (MTBPS 2021). In contrast to 2020, both the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecast 3.6 and 2.8 percent growth for the South African economy in 2021 (Asmal and Rooney, 2021). South Africa has seen a severe drop in growth and a considerable increase in unemployment over the last year, with poverty on the rise and the gap between rich and poor is widening (SONA, 2021). The rate of unemployment in South Africa is now at an astounding all-time high of 30.8% and rising (SONA, 2021). According to Statistics South Africa, youth unemployment in South Africa is at an alarming 56 percent for those aged 15 to 35 years. "To put it mildly, we're sitting on a ticking time bomb" (Bojanala, 2021). The sooner the country develops young people's capacity, offers them skills and provides chances for them, the better equipped they will be to move South Africa ahead (Bojanala, 2021).

A scarcity of published literature on this study's context has resulted in a reliance on the few available sources that are included in this study henceforth.

1.2. Study Background

South Africa is one of the continent's most popular tourist destinations, with 10.23 million international visitors in 2019, second only to Morocco's 12.93 million (Asmal and Rooney, 2021). Natural beauty, game parks, historical monuments, and value for money are all characteristics that contribute to South Africa's appeal to international visitors. Because of the large number of visitors, tourism has emerged as a powerful economic industry, accounting for over 7% of South Africa's GDP (Asmal and Rooney, 2021). South Africa has long relied on tourism to enhance the local economy, promote job creation and the improvement of community standards of living (Bama and Nyikana, 2021). President Ramaphosa emphasised that the South African economy has 18 sectors that are considered as the "holy grail" for their potential in job creation, one of which is the tourism sector, hence there must a

collaborative effort to remove and/or address any issues that can hinder the growth of the economy (Mahlakoana, 2019).

South Africa is geo-politically unique, with natural and cultural variety that contributes to an internationally appealing tourism offering. South Africa has extraordinary biological richness, ranking amongst the top six most bio-diverse countries in the world and by far the most diverse given its size. Within the country's borders, there are seven unique biomes which are highlighted at five world heritage sites, twenty-two national parks and hundreds of wildlife and nature reserves. South Africa is a popular tourist destination because of its diverse attractions (Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, 2021). Tourism is an important source of revenue for the South African economy (Bama and Nyikana (2021) and is critical to the country's overall success (Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, 2021). Due to its broad value chain and labour absorption capacities, it is acknowledged as a tool for economic development, playing a critical role in responding to the country's socio-economic challenges (van Huy, 2021). Providing employment to people with a wide range of skills, particularly women in rural areas, and ensuring geographic dispersion of tourism benefits are only a few of them (Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, 2021). This industry is critical to South Africa's economy, accounting for R425 billion (or 8%) of the country's gross domestic product in 2019 (Panashe, 2020). The indirect economic contribution from the tourism sector is significant because it is a tertiary sector with strong ties to transportation, consumer shopping, financial services and other network industries (Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, 2021).

In the period between 2014 and 2017, the tourism sector in South Africa created more direct employment than the Mining and Manufacturing sectors, thus making it a critical factor to ensure that the industry is protected from elements that could hinder its sustainability and growth (Tshivhengwa, 2019). Tourism directly and indirectly employs 1.5 million people, which is more than the agriculture, automotive, chemical, and mining industries combined (Panashe, 2020). Across the globe, South Africa has a positive tourism trade balance. Non-resident visitors to South Africa therefore spend more money in the country than South Africans who travel overseas. South Africa's total trade balance benefits from a good tourism trade balance. It also provides the government with much-needed foreign revenue (Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, 2021).

The global landscape is rapidly changing at a pace that is unparalleled in human history, with innovative advancements in technology enhancing the way in which people live, work and operate (SONA, 2019), transforming the manner in which people relate to one another, how they are governed and the way civilization's function. Globally, people are in desperate need of more choices that balance the needs of society and individuals with ideas that counter the challenges faced globally, such as inequality, poverty, health and education (Dam and Siang, 2019). President Ramaphosa highlighted that the task of building a better South Africa requires a collective effort from the people of South Africa (SONA, 2019). As technology and globalisation evolve, organisations are increasingly facing complex challenges (Camacho, 2015). The author further highlighted that a nation's competitiveness lies in its abilities to develop solutions to national problems. A focus on constructing a worldwide competitive economy must accompany the pursuit of financial transformation and inclusive growth and driving a financial transformation and inclusive growth agenda cannot compromise a small open economy's long-term competitiveness, which needs to sell products and services to the remainder of the globe and attract investment to finance its own economic prosperity (Budget Review, 2021). South Africa needs a solution to address these national challenges. Design thinking, a problem-solving tool (Gopinathan, Kaur, Ramasamy and Raman, 2021; Shahrabi, Jin and Zheng, 2021; Tariq, Syed, Waseem and Shah, 2021), is an important process around which organisations can devise their strategy to address problems and challenges. New strategies need to be developed by primarily engaging those who are directly affected by these challenges and giving them a proper sense of purpose. It is against this backdrop that the planned research will attempt to identify the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

1.3. Rationale of the study

The goal of this exploratory study is to determine the role of design thinking in the KwaZulu-Natal tourism industry. The study in particular focused on Tourism, Design Thinking and Leadership, with the specific aim of identifying the role that design thinking could contribute as a strategic lever in promoting Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal.

The blueprint for business success rarely exists nowadays. Humans are living in a time of great change globally and one can instantly understand why design thinking is on the rise (Vinni, 2021). The world is fast changing these days, so having the ability to envisage a better future is really valuable (Khan, Bibi, Lorenzo, Lyu and Babar, 2020), and working towards making it a reality, creating narratives around it, and confronting any hurdles that arise during the development phase. It now has a more positive vision, with collaboration (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021) and user involvement working together to create an advanced unified eco-system that was previously thought of as an industry. For the tourism industry to scale higher levels, there must be a greater collaboration between the private and public sectors (Van Huy, 2021) as this industry possesses the ability to rapidly deliver opportunities for employment and growth to the economy which is desperately needed (Bojanala, 2021).

As the largest economy on the African continent, South Africa is challenged by extraordinary levels of unemployment (SONA, 2021), astounding income inequality (SONA, 2021) and a rather poor education system. By effective implementation, the principles of design thinking can serve as a key driver to this process (Ramanujam, Ravichandran, Nilsson and Ivansen, 2021). This study therefore aims to explore role of design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal and to determine how this could contribute to addressing the current challenges in the local economy.

1.4. Research Gap

Taking these specific topics into account, i.e., Tourism, Design Thinking and Leadership, the following research is a pioneering work in connecting these subjects by discussing the following aspects pertaining to design thinking as a strategic lever in the tourism sector. Prior studies have examined design thinking and its viability, concentrating solely on the customer-centric value that enhances the process. Despite the fact that the researcher discovered important and related literature in the worldwide space (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021; Kwon, Choi and Hwang, 2021; Dam and Siang, 2021; Friedlander, Murphy and Noel, 2021; Qian, 2019; Hacker, 2019; McCarthy, 2018; Schallmo, Williams and Lang, 2018 and Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018), and in South Africa (Cassim, 2013 and le Roux, 2016), there still exists a gap

linking Tourism, Design Thinking and Leadership. The researcher noted that although an earlier study conducted by Tussyadiah (2017) focused on Technology and Behavioural Design in Tourism, in KwaZulu-Natal there hasn't been enough research done on the value of design thinking in the tourism industry. A more recent study by Tung (2021) shared similarities with the intent of this study, as did a study by Ribeiro and Souza (2021). However, neither were similar enough to be seen as a predecessor to this study. Nonetheless, as a result of their literature assessment on design thinking and tourism studies, they present precise information for this research study. Design thinking usage within tourism and hospitality is becoming more prevalent, although only a few publications currently exist that directly use design thinking within tourism (Jamal, Kircher and Donaldson, 2021). To fill this research gap, it became essential to conduct an explorative study on design thinking specifically in the tourism sector.

1.5. Problem Statement

South Africa has basically not kept pace with trends in the global tourism and travel sector (Bojanala, 2021), thus severely impacting on the international competitiveness for South Africa as a tourist destination. If the tourism sector is to realise its true potential and have a positive impact on the South African economy by creating more jobs, then hindering factors must be addressed in order to avoid sluggish growth (Tshivhengwa, 2019). Moreover, the South African government is intent on increasing tourism and attracting skilled workers (MTBPS 2021).

Globally, the tourism industry has been badly impacted by the Coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) (Sucheran 2022). Its effects left communities, organizations and tourist destinations in a distressed state, which prompted requests for new strategies to assure the survival, expansion and resilience of troubled tourism destinations in a crisis environment (Musavengane and Leonard, 2022). Most cities rely heavily on tourism for their economic growth, and Durban is no different given that it is the main tourist destination in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (Makhaola and Proches, 2017). Similarly, other cities in provinces across South Africa also rely heavily on tourism to boost their regional economies. The impact of COVID-19 has had a lasting impact on all regions within South Africa (Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, 2021). Due to persistent social, economic and political issues, the majority of South African tourist

destinations are in a precarious situation. These problems are manifested by high urbanization, environmental injustices, inequality, social ills, corruption and inappropriate development strategies. The situation was made worse by COVID-19 (Musavengane and Leonard, 2022). The long-term effects of COVID-19 on the hotel and accommodation industry were felt throughout South Africa, including fewer employment opportunities and possible guest house closures (Musavengane and Leonard, 2022). Restructuring business models and current products is absolutely necessary to create new business opportunities. The recovery phase for guest houses will take longer than it would for other pandemics or disasters because of the complexity of COVID-19. Since domestic tourism offers a consistent market throughout the year, more needs to be done to market the province more effectively to all tourists, but especially to domestic tourists in all provinces of South Africa (Makhaola and Proches, 2017). According to a survey on COVID-19 and the South African tourism industry, 98 percent of responding tourism businesses were impacted by the pandemic, with small and medium-sized enterprises feeling the effects more keenly in terms of revenue loss (Sucheran, 2022).

The problem that is facing the tourism sector currently is a severe lack of collaboration between all relevant stakeholders. To compete in the global market, it is critical to promote, improve, and expand collaboration with European nations in order to build shared tourist routes and promote tourism products (Kyrylov, Hranovska, Boiko, Kwilinski and Boiko, 2020). The issues amongst others surfaced during interactions with both the study sites. The other major issue identified at both study sites was that of leadership within this sector.

One of the most powerful trends making waves in business globally is design thinking (Friedlander et al., 2021; Jamal et al., 2021), which is a skill that equips organisations to develop their strategic thinking abilities in their attempt to address complex challenges. Marion, Cannon, Reid and McGowan (2021) mentioned that design thinking is centred on the transformation of businesses, promoting innovative abilities, discovering first-hand opportunities and needs, whilst creating new visions and scenarios for the organisation. Design thinking is a skill that can methodically support the tourism sector in South Africa to achieve its aspirational goals of increasing tourist arrivals, accelerating job creation and empowering entrepreneurship opportunities across sub-sectors that are directly linked to the tourism sector, thus incorporating all factors can lead to the desired economic growth

for South Africa. Shahrabi et al., (2021) asserted that design thinking is broadly accepted as a new paradigm that organisations can use for problem solving, as they address the increasing complexity of challenges that they are encountered with.

The tourism sector in South Africa has been impacted by historical challenges as well as current challenges brought about mainly by COVID-19. As a result, the researcher aimed to identify the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in enhancing tourism in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The myriad challenges and problems faced by the tourism sector gave impetus to the researcher extrapolating that more concerted efforts and creative intent were required from the tourism sector in order to develop and realise solutions for a sustainable future. Hence the researcher sought to determine how design thinking could improve Tourism and Leadership in this sector.

1.6. Study Context

The researcher explored two (2) study sites for this research study, namely:

1. iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism; and
2. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

The researcher selected these study sites as they were actively involved in tourism activities within the region, and the researcher felt that their contributions and experiences would actively support the objectives of this study. The initial study focused on iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. The first phase of data gathering for this project began with a focus group session at the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism. Following that a design thinking workshop was offered to participants from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism. The next phase required individual interview sessions with participants from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism to be conducted. However, due to difficulties in this sector and in the region, exacerbated in part by the COVID-19 pandemic that began in early 2020, only two (2) interviews from iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism were successfully completed. As a result of the pandemic's constraints on the tourism sector and tourism stakeholders within the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the researcher set out to find a new study location for this research study

and received consent from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to proceed with the study. Because of the country's COVID-19 legislation, it was decided that all interactions between the researcher and the research participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife would take place via virtual sessions.

1.6.1. Overview of the iLembe Region and iLembe Chamber of Commerce

The iLembe District Municipality is located on the East Coast of South Africa in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The iLembe District is surrounded on the south by the eThekweni Metro, and on the north by the coastal highway, which serves as a primary corridor in the area. It is also flanked on the west by the districts of Umgungundlovu and Umzinyathi. It is located between Richards Bay Harbour and Durban Harbour, two of the busiest ports in Africa, and is close to King Shaka International Airport and Dube Trade Terminal. It is the province's smallest District Municipality, with a total population of about 657 000. The municipality covers 3260 km² and is divided into four municipalities: KwaDukuza, Mandeni, Maphumulo and Ndwedwe, as illustrated in Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2

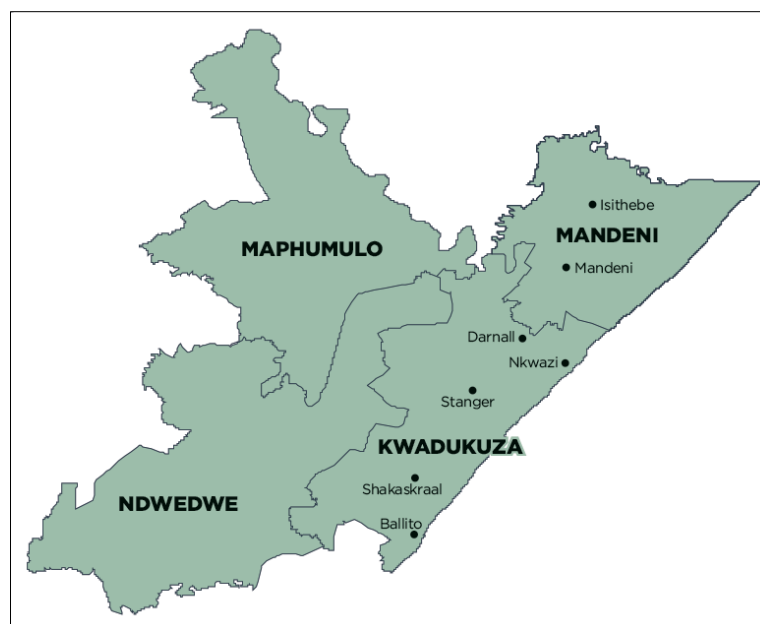


Figure 1.1: iLembe District Municipality Map

Source: iLembe District Municipality website (n.d)

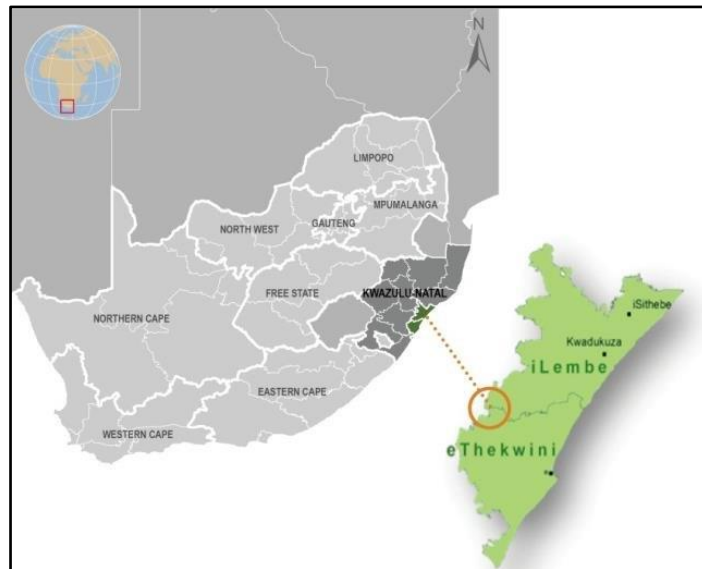


Figure 1.2: Map of iLembe district's location within KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Source: Beires and Lincoln (2017)

The iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism represents the interests of local businesses, as well as the interests of the district, provincial, and national governments, in order to make iLembe a better area to live, work, do business, and invest in. The iLembe Business Confidence Index (iBCI) is produced through collaboration between Enterprise iLembe and the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (iLembe Business Confidence Index (iBCI) 2018 Year-end review). The report details the state of businesses in the region (Abrahams, 2018) and highlights that the business confidence in the iLembe district has recorded a marginal improvement from the low levels recorded in the previous periods. The following were highlighted in this report:

- Business confidence in the iLembe district has recorded signs of minimal growth.
- The iBCI for the year ended 2018 was entrenched in negative territory at 43.7 index points, below the neutral level of 50 index points. There was a minor improvement recorded in the overall business confidence index and despite the positive movements, the confidence in business was well below the base point mark (Abrahams, 2018). Figure 1.2 provides a historical illustration of the iLembe Business Confidence Index since 2015; and

- The Tourism, Catering, Accommodation and Property management sectors were ranked only as the 3rd most confident economic sector within the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (Abrahams, 2018).

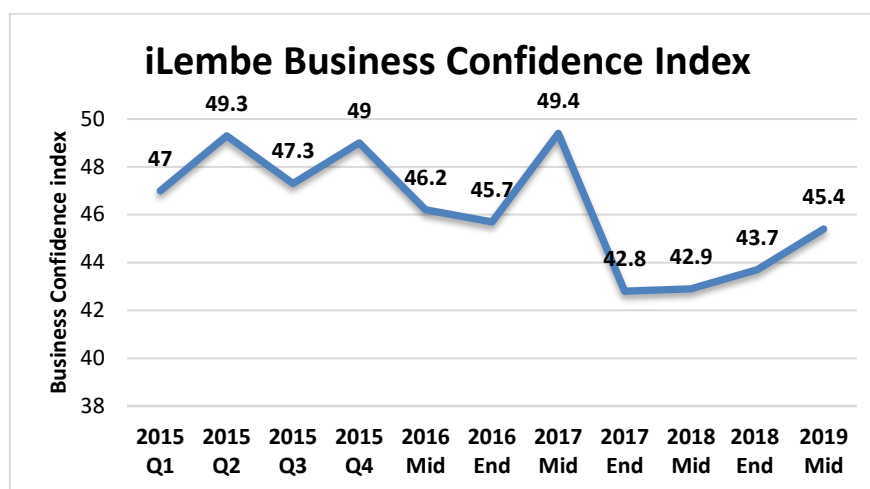


Figure 1.3: iLembe Business Confidence Index

Source: iLembe Business Confidence Index (iBCI) 2018 Mid-year review

The economic sectors that are the foundations of the economy of iLembe are as follows:

- **Agriculture**

There are two types of persons who operate in this sector: commercial farmers who grow cane along the coast, and sustainable farmers who cultivate in rural and inland places (Enterprise iLembe Annual Report 2016/17).

- **Manufacturing**

The primary sector includes heavy industries in Mandeni's Isithebe Industrial Estate, such as sugar production and paper mills; and the secondary sector includes light industries scattered throughout the district and concentrated in the district's rural areas as well as the coastal belt (Enterprise iLembe Annual Report 2016/17).

- **Tourism**

Due to its pleasant weather and superb beaches, iLembe is one of South Africa's most popular domestic tourist sites. This industry has been continuously expanding in iLembe, and it now provides a variety of tourism

services that may be divided into three categories: cultural and heritage tourism, beach tourism, and nature-based and adventure tourism (Enterprise iLembe Annual Report 2016/17).

- **Commerce and Services**

This sector includes the following sub-sectors and is located throughout the district in all major urban centres, with specific reference to the towns of KwaDukuza and Ballito and include, Wholesale, retail, transportation, financial, insurance, and communication; and real estate, community, social, personal, and government services (Enterprise iLembe Annual Report 2016/17).

1.6.2. Challenges in the tourism sector at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Confidence in all sectors had plunged to the lowest levels seen in iLembe since the publication of the inaugural confidence index in 2015. Covid-19, together with the civic instability of July, were the biggest drivers (Venter, 2021). The cancellation of the Comrades Marathon and the postponing of the Ballito Pro, both key drawcards for Tourism, has created enormous uncertainty in the region's economy, with the tourist, catering, accommodation and property management sectors reporting the most negative outlook (Venter, 2021). The most prominent issue facing the region is the urgent need to entice local and international tourists back to the North Coast, as well as re-assuring them that it is a safe place to visit (Venter, 2021).

1.6.3. Overview of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Ezemvelo's history is a source of great pride for all who have been a part of it. For decades, this organisation has been at the vanguard of South Africa's conservation efforts, and its reputation is well-known internationally. Ezemvelo's success may be ascribed to its pioneering background, as well as its continued commitment to international best-practice methods and plans (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021). The organisation is in charge of maintaining the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park World Heritage Site, as well as conservation and eco-tourism activities in the iSimangaliso Wetlands Park World Heritage Site; while Ndumo Game Reserve, Kosi Bay and Lake Sibaya are amongst the Ramsar sites (wetlands of international importance)

that are managed by the organisation (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021). Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife had around 740 130 total visitors in the year under review (2019/2020). When compared to the previous year, this is a decline of 5.3 percent, which equated to 41 778 less visitors (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021).

In addition, the organisation is in charge of around 114 protected spaces and close to 42 facilities that house over 6 500 people per night and continues to offer nature enthusiasts and the general public an unrivalled wildlife and eco-tourism experience. The fact that the province is home to two World Heritage Sites, game parks and vast expanses of breath-takingly beautiful countryside is one of God's greatest gifts to KwaZulu-Natal (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021). Ezemvelo oversees about 120 protected areas, which comprise terrestrial, coastal and marine reserves, and is devoted to meeting the government's aims, which include job creation. This is accomplished by the organisation going into partnerships and launching job-creation programs are in line with conservation efforts. (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021). Ezemvelo has prioritized community development since conservation must provide concrete benefits to people, particularly those who live in buffer zones near protected areas (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021). Figure 1.4. illustrates the KwaZulu-Natal province within South Africa, while Figure 1.5. illustrates Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife resorts and protected areas within KwaZulu-Natal.



Figure 1.4: Geographical location of KwaZulu-Natal within South Africa

Source: Find Trip Info website (n.d).

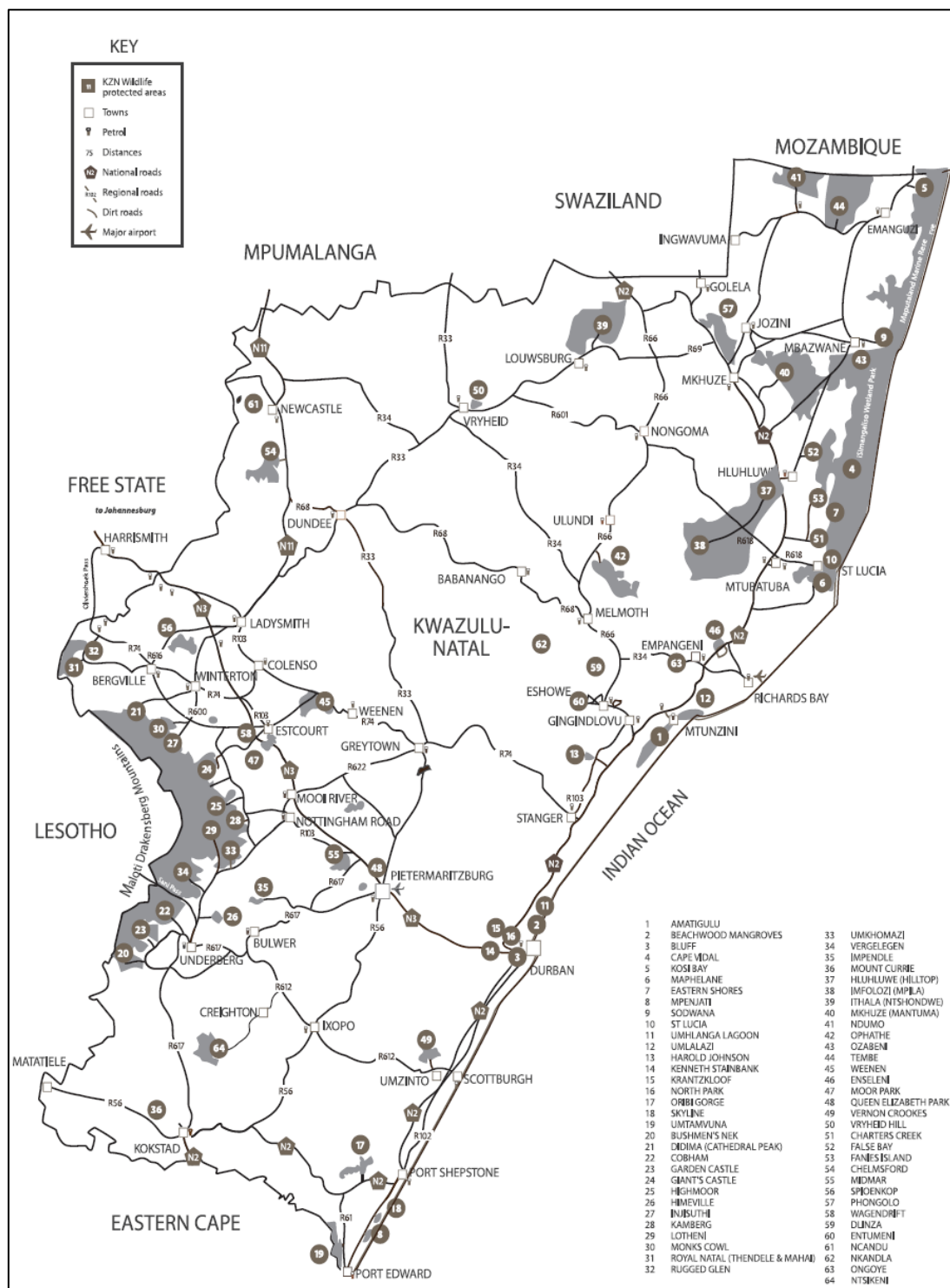


Figure 1.5: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife resorts and protected areas within KwaZulu-Natal

Source: Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021

1.6.4. Challenges in the tourism sector at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the whole tourism business, including Ezemvelo Eco-tourism, making planning difficult. Recent budget cuts, as well as rising inflation and tax rates, have required a re-evaluation of both the business model and future resort operations. The restrictions are expected to be modified in order to enable more tourism business to be conducted. This will boost Ezemvelo's Eco-tourism tourist numbers and revenue in the long-term (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021).

1.6.5. Study Context Summary in relation to study topic

The challenges are very much the same for the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and for Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, as it is for the South African economy at large, with unemployment, corruption and the lack of private investors serving as complex problems impacting the economic growth of South Africa. Albert Einstein mentioned that “No problem can be solved with the type of thinking that created it” (Cowan, 2012; Gould, Bratt, Mesquita and Broman, 2017; Dam and Siang, 2019), a statement which has greater significance at a time when contemporary problems are rapidly becoming complicated ones, especially as South Africa needs economic growth to facilitate job creation. As a result, the goal of this research was to look into the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal. This study will also examine the views of the tourism sector on how design thinking can improve leadership in the sector, with a view to creating sustainable economic growth for the region and the South African economy.

1.7. Research objectives / Research questions

The research aims to determine the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal, and how design thinking can improve leadership challenges within this sector.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Determine challenges facing the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal.
- Determine the role of leadership in driving design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal; and

- Identify initiatives on how design thinking can enhance the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

The research questions for this study are:

1. What are the challenges within the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal?
2. How can the role of leadership drive design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal?
3. What recommendations can be made through the use of design thinking to enhance tourism in KwaZulu-Natal?

1.8. Contribution of the study

This study aims to provide an in-depth examination of the use of design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Cities provide opportunities for people to gain knowledge and experience, which results in a gradual increase in individual productivity, leading to better living standards (Coetzee and Kleynhans, 2018). The authors further alluded that such improvement allows innovation and ideas to flourish, thus ensuring the continuity of a prospering city. The study's main contribution will be to explore the extent to which design thinking may be used to address present difficulties in the South African economy, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal tourism sector. As there appears to be a paucity of research on the implementation of such methodologies in the tourism industry, this work could indicate a significant link between design thinking and tourism.

A recent study by Tung (2021) shared similarities with the intent of this study, as does a study by Ribeiro and Souza (2021), while local studies have concentrated on the challenges of promoting Domestic Tourism (Makhaola, 2015) and the significance thereof in Durban (Makhaola and Proches, 2017). The use of design thinking in Tourism and Hospitality is becoming more common, albeit that there are currently just a few publications that do so directly (Jamal et al., 2021). This clearly proves a gap in the literature, making it essential for the researcher to explore the role of design thinking in promoting tourism, with no past studies focusing on design thinking in the tourism sector and leadership, either locally or globally. This study will therefore present new knowledge and contributions.

New insights may emerge and contribute significantly to design thinking and tourism. This research will therefore provide insight into the precise benefits of design thinking in promoting tourism and accelerating economic growth, not just within the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal but throughout all sectors across South Africa. Design thinking is augmented for innovation that yields breakthroughs rather than incremental solutions as the potential for delivering a real impact is much higher. Shahrashbi et al., (2021) indicated that the delivery of a functional solution to the needs of the user is essential when sustainable solutions are being designed.

It is envisaged that participants from iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, as well as from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, will be empowered by using design thinking to formulate solutions to their own problems and challenges through research that has the benefit of being practical to participants, whilst simultaneously advancing theory. Through improving the organisational culture of tourism organisations, competitive advantages in tourism through creativity can be achieved (Khan et al., 2020). The interventions applied in this research study could well promote further applications of design thinking by the tourism sector and perhaps be applied to other sectors within KwaZulu-Natal, ultimately creating such value that will be welcomed by the tourism sector, interdependent sectors and other role-players, as well as stakeholders from the economy at large.

The world is evolving, and social values are shifting, which is affecting how people act as individuals, businesses and governments (Li et al., 2021). The change in the global space is occurring at such a rapid pace that the previous methods used to solve problems are no longer effective. Dam and Siang (2019) highlighted that there is now an urgent need to create new ways of thinking so that better services, solutions and experiences can be designed to resolve current challenges or problems. The era of COVID-19 has necessitated that people do things differently and while many may not have succeeded on other fronts, people have most definitely made strides in many others (Bojanala, 2021). The Fourth Industrial Revolution is on the verge of making an entry into this generation, with automation and robotics potentially transforming many sectors whilst creating a risk and threatening labour markets (Conway, Masters and Thorold, 2017). Therefore, people need to deliberate on the social challenges encountered as a result, as additional innovation may be required to provide solutions for the needs of humans in the future. In regions such as KwaZulu-Natal, it is of vital importance that cities, towns,

urban and rural settlements play their part in facilitating development in their surrounding areas, particularly as the province is an indispensable part of the country-wide economic system and as such, towns and cities are very much relevant within the modern economic system (Coetzee and Kleynhans, 2018). A thorough understanding of design thinking and its application could enhance how the tourism sector within KwaZulu-Natal facilitates design thinking within their processes and structures whilst keeping abreast of global changes to the economic and landscape.

Every year, researchers try to come up with new ways to boost growth in under-developed countries (Khan et al., 2020). As a result, the primary goal of this research was to look into the role of design thinking in improving and addressing the tourism sector's challenges in KwaZulu-Natal. Ribeiro and Souza (2021) explained that around the world, tourism is benefitting local economies as the travel industry is creating employment, both directly and indirectly, for local people from communities in close proximity to the tourism destination, whilst also creating opportunities for other businesses in other sectors. The research findings and recommendations of the study could benefit the tourism sector such that they are able to apply design thinking to address the current challenges in their efforts to boost an ailing sector and the economy.

1.9. Delimitation of the study

This research work is conducted in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The scope of the study will be limited to two tourism organisations within KZN from which the sample population will be drawn. Due to the impact of the pandemic across and particularly on this sector, there were no face- to-face interactions between the researcher and participants. The majority of interactions, which included focus groups, a design thinking workshop and individual interview sessions, were conducted through virtual platforms. The sample size for this study met the minimal criteria for a qualitative approach in an academic study.

1.10. Overview of chapters

In this study, there is a convergence of three distinct but connected subject themes. These include Tourism, Design Thinking and Leadership. The standard doctorate dissertation format is used with adjustments to meet the increasing complexity of

combining the different theme areas described above, in order to make the readability of this work as simple as feasible.

Chapter One provided an introduction into the challenges faced by the South African economy including inequality, a lack of investor confidence and the rising rate of unemployment. Economic growth has been on the decline in South Africa for the vast majority since democracy was realised in 1994, and the current government is planning essential reforms to boost a stagnating economy. The tourism sector was earmarked by government as being a ray of hope for the South African economy due to its immense collaborative potential in igniting growth internally and amongst other sectors. The concept of design thinking was briefly introduced, and the chapter covered its potential to confront complex challenges. An overview of the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Tourism and Industry and an overview of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife was provided. The research gap, problem statement, research aims, predicted expected contribution to knowledge, and significance of this research study were presented.

The literature parts of the research are covered in Chapters Two, Three and Four. The second chapter will begin with a definition of tourism. Thereafter, an introduction to Tourism, Tourism in South Africa, the global space and some of its benefits to economic growth and its challenges will be discussed. Tourism is a key sector in global economies, as well as being a key driver to economic growth in emerging economies. The value chain attached to the tourism sector makes it a key industry that supports the growth initiatives of various governments across the globe.

Chapter Three will introduce design thinking, its history, processes, capabilities, characteristics, benefits and challenges, and will include a discussion on how design thinking confronts complex challenges and provides a modern way to innovation that is human-centric. Chapter Four will discuss the role of leadership globally, as well in chartering organisations through volatile changes in the global economy as a result of technology advancements and the Fourth Industrial Revolution. A discussion will follow on the role of leadership in developing strategies and this chapter will conclude with design thinking and the leadership role.

The research method that influenced this research study is detailed in Chapter Five. This will be followed by the outcomes of the primary data collection, which will be presented in Chapter Six. In Chapter Seven, the data is analyzed and findings are

prepared for feedback into the research design framework. All elements of this research study, including conclusions and recommendation are finalised in Chapter Eight.

1.11. Conclusion

Economic growth is major challenge for South Africa, leading to multiple issues for the South African government and public. While the South African government is developing reform plans to boost a stagnating economy (MTBPS 2021), there needs to be a more collaborative effort between government, civil society and the private sector (Bojanala, 2021).

Design thinking is making waves on a global level as a means to confront and overcome the most complex of challenges in the public space, as well as in private institutions. The tourism industry is considered a 'sunrise' sector for its economic and growth potential (SONA, 2019), but it is faced with its very own internal challenges which impact on its ability to yield much greater contribution to the South African economy. A thorough understanding of the real issues encountered within the tourism sector in the KwaZulu-Natal region and the application of the design thinking methodology and process could serve as a strategic mechanism to revive a declining South African economy by serving as a boost to addressing complex issues.

The fundamental literature that serves as a foundation for this research study will be discussed in the next three chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW - TOURISM

2.1. Introduction

The literature review on tourism was briefly introduced in Chapter 1 and will now focus on current research relating to tourism in the South African context, as well as attempt to gain a comprehensive understanding of such issues in the global context. The nature of the research will therefore focus on varying perspectives of tourism specifically at the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in the KwaZulu-Natal region, South Africa, where tourism-related organisations are facing an increasingly diverse and competitive environment characterised by constant and rapid change. Positive spill over effects from the relationship to growth through sectoral interlinkages extend the economic impact of tourism beyond economic growth. Just a few of the spill over effects include increased employment, additional income earnings, a source of government revenue, foreign exchange earnings, and balance of payment support (Scarlett, 2021).

A few recent studies on tourism focused on the importance of stakeholder collaboration in tourism destinations (van Huy, 2021), stakeholders' perception on the impacts of tourism on mass destinations (Aragu, García-Mestanza and Caballero-Galeote, 2021), tourism destination competitiveness (Woyo and Slabbert, 2021) and creating a tourism destination through local heritage (Beltramo, Peira and Bonadonna, 2021). The researcher also noted other previous studies that have examined and proven the relationship between tourism and economic growth, as affirmed by Simunidc and Kulis (2016) who highlighted that numerous empirical studies have focused on the relationship between tourism and economic growth. These include the relationship between economic growth and the tourism sector in Taiwan (Kim, Chen and Jan, 2006); the short and long-term casuality between economic expansion and tourism receipts in Pakistan (Khalil and Kakar 2007); and a study which utilised panel data from forty-two African countries to investigate the relationship between economic growth and the tourism sector (Tabash, 2017). The outcome of this study assured that tourism receipts had a significant impact on the economic growth of Sub-Saharan countries.

Another study examined how the economic development of seventeen Latin American countries was boosted by the impact of tourism and their results derived a positive relationship between tourism and the GDP of these countries (Tabash, 2017).

2.2. Definition of tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) defined tourism as the movement of people to places on a socio-economic level, which occurs outside of their normal environment for business, personal or professional purposes (Tabash, 2017). This was further supported by Makhaola (2015) with Shahraki (2018), who highlighted that the Oxford Dictionary defined tourism as 'travel for pleasure'. Tourism sets out the movement of people, for a time, to destinations outside their place of residence and to the activities carried out during the time spent in the places visited (Lepre, 2018). In addition, Viljoen and Henama (2017) defined tourism as a method of travelling for business, education or simply for pleasure.

2.3. Tourism in the Global space

In many countries around the world, tourism is a high-priority industry that contributes significantly to gross national income and serves as a key source of currency and tax revenue (Aragu et al., 2021). Because of the geographical dispersion of visitor flows and the rise of mass tourist exchanges, Europe currently has a firm grip on the global tourism business. Both domestic and foreign markets favour the region, and it is closely followed by America, particularly North America. These two regions are key players in the global tourism business, with the lion's share of the profits (Kyrylov et al., 2020). Travel and tourism contribute significantly to a leading sector for job generation, economic development, and cultural development all over the world. (Abbas et. al, 2021). International tourism has emerged as one of the primary determinants of economic growth, greater country competitiveness in global markets, and improved population welfare as part of the globalization and integration process. Tourism currently employs over 250 million people, or about 12 percent of the global workforce (Kyrylov et al., 2020).

At the turn of the twenty-first century, tourism became a significant component of economic development and a factor in shaping the image of many countries

throughout the world, and it has since grown into a global phenomenon (Kyrylov et al., 2020). Tourism delivers significant revenue for destinations and aids the economic development of many countries, particularly tourism-dependent countries. To put it another way, there is a strong link between tourism and economic growth, which in turn encourages the growth of other related industries in a country. (Huynh et al., 2021). Globally, 1.5 billion international tourist arrivals were recorded in 2019, up 4 percent from the previous year, and according to UNWTO, tourism had been "growing" for the eighth year in a row (Kyrylov et al., 2020).

As an open system, tourism is characterized by a high level of environmental networking (Aragu et al., 2021). Numerous contacts with various facets of the outside world have an impact on the tourist industry as well as the environment. There are five components to the environment, namely technological, sociological, political, economic and ecological (Ugur and Akbiyik, 2020). Globalization and technological advancement have aided in the significant expansion of international tourism, which now accounts for nearly a tenth of the worldwide economy. This industry has been termed the "international driver" because it has developed far faster than the global economy, with revenues greatly exceeding the cost of shipping fuels and raw materials (Kyrylov et al., 2020).

Tourism is an important economic industry that directly contributes to employment and GDP (Woyo and Slabbert, 2021) and has expanded over the last six decades to become one of the major economic industries globally (Scarlett, 2021; Shahraki, 2018). Travel and Tourism is a crucial sector throughout the world for economic development and job creation (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). Tourism has advanced into one of the largest and most rapid growing sectors in the world (Zuo and Huang, 2017) as a result of increasing globalisation (Zibani, 2018; Tabash, 2017). Mishra and Verma (2017) mentioned that tourism has progressed as a key sector in the global economy and is inspired by the human desire for new adventures, entertainment, socialising and adventure.

Tourism across the globe is a rapidly growing industry, particularly due to changes in its environment and the benefits it adds to the local economy (Scarlett, 2021). In 2018, Travel and Tourism added \$8.8 trillion to the global economy, which translates into 10.4% of global GDP (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). On a global level, countries have prioritised their focus on developing the tourism industry

(Mahakata, Tsokota, Mupfiga and Chikuta, 2017). Globally, tourism is a crucial component of the economy (Woyo and Slabbert, 2021) and although this may differ across various countries, there are some countries where the tourism industry is the spine of the economy. The travel and tourism industry are increasingly competitive, with global destinations and tourist attractions being challenged continually to embrace and modify their offerings to add more appeal and a quality experience for their visitors (Aragu et al., 2021). The sector expanded by 3.9% in 2018, which was higher than the 3.2% overall growth in the global economy. For the eighth consecutive year, it out-performed overall economic growth (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). The tourism sector on one hand is widely acknowledged as a significant driver of social change, while on the other its governance and management structures are rather complex (Chiodo, Adriani, Navarro and Salvatore, 2019).

Travel and Tourism is one of the largest economic sectors in the world, creating jobs, increasing exports and producing worldwide prosperity (Aragu et al., 2021). Tourism is a significant economic sector and makes a substantial contribution to economies across the globe (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017). Scarlett (2021) highlighted that the tourism industry is rapidly rising across the world and has an increased global importance. Moreover, the tourism industry has become one of the leading businesses globally and is a significant stakeholder in global commerce (Aragu et al., 2021). van Huy (2021) affirmed that tourism has risen to become the most progressive industry in the 21st century and in an ever-changing world, tourism has the unique ability to improve the economies of even the emerging and developing economies as it plays a significant role in the growth of those countries' economies. Furthermore, Kyrylov et al. (2020) explained that tourism represents a unique area of activity and holds an essential importance in the social life and economic growth of countries across the globe.

Tourism promotes job creation by establishing new businesses, developing infrastructure and protecting local heritage and values (Beltramo et al., 2021), whilst also playing a key role in the advancement of socio-economic and cultural agendas by achieving significant infrastructure development goals; the eradication of poverty; reducing unemployment; and enhancing skills development (Mishra and Verma, 2017). The Travel and Tourism industry employs more than 319 million people worldwide. This represents 10.0 percent of all jobs worldwide, or one in ten. The

sector has accounted for one out of five net new jobs created worldwide over the last five years (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). Tourism is an assembly of activities, industries and designated services that provide a unique travel experience that includes tourist attractions, accommodation, transportation and other hospitality services designed specifically for groups or individuals that are touring away from home (Aynalem, Birhanu and Tesebay, 2016). Industries large and small in sectors including hotel accommodation, recreation, retail, food and beverage and entertainment, all strive to create products and services that bring people together, empower communities and celebrate the wonders that the world has to offer (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). The barriers to entry in the tourism sector are low and consist of a multitude of industries that can provide opportunities for developing the local economy (Scarlett, 2021). Tourism is the focal point of many activities in a country's economy (Makhaola, 2015) as it has a direct impact on local communities who benefit from employment opportunities at tourism destinations.

The tourism sector has the ability to offer a wide range of employment opportunities, ranging from highly technical to soft skills, and it even accommodates the unskilled (Scarlett, 2021) and can generate employment from rural areas to semi-urban and major cities. The tourism sector is a combination of diverse service offerings and for innovation and management to be successful in this sector, it requires a well-orchestrated effort of all key elements and the perfect co-ordination of relevant stakeholders that offers a seamless tourist experience (Tussyadiah, 2017). In the developing countries globally, tourism features as a significant source of growth, revenue and employment, and is also considered as a viable and promising means for global development (Rout, Mishra and Pradhan, 2016). Bunghez (2016) indicated that by developing international tourism, many developing countries have increased their participation in the global economy. Simunidu and Kulis (2016) contended that in many countries, the role of tourism as a driver of economic development is indisputable as it has the potential to inspire opportunities for entrepreneurs in all sectors and sub-sectors of the country's economic value-chain (Ramawela, 2017).

The effective contribution by the tourism industry to the local economy is naturally influenced by several key factors that would create an appeal, including marketing abilities, the management of tourism destinations and infrastructure development (Bunghez, 2016). Woyo and Slabbert (2021) highlighted that in current times, tourism is considered a significant driver of economic growth and infrastructure

development. The tourism sector can help in eliminating poverty by creating employment and other opportunities for economic growth (Aragu et al., 2021). In addition, the tourism sector is potentially effective in strengthening the political economy and socio-cultural standing of a country and can improve inter-regional and international relationships (Rout, Mishra and Pradhan, 2016). The tourism and hospitality sectors have created employment opportunities for millions across the globe in a variety of areas, including hotels and other accommodation venues, food and beverages, airlines, airport operations, holiday cruises, transportation networks, heritage sites, exhibitions, conferences and festivals (Aynalem et al., 2016).

In the global space, tourism contributes 30 percent of the export of services in the world (Simunidu and Kulis, 2016). Globally, tourism has displayed significant growth over the past few decades, especially in light of the significant challenges encountered, in particular the global economic crisis, terrorist attacks, political uncertainty and natural disasters (OECD, 2017). Most countries give priority to tourism development based on numerous factors such as policies, climates, geopolitical positions and the popularity of historical heritage sites (Govdali and Direkci, 2017). Furthermore, it is quite a complex industry across the world as it serves as a unique component of modern civilisation (Bunghez, 2016) and has many important factors. As highlighted by Makhaola (2015), these include:

- **Government Revenues:**

A country's economy experiences growth when tourists spend money in local activities as tourism increases the number of people travelling, who spend in the local economy.

- **Development of Infrastructure:**

Local infrastructure such as water, electricity, health services and law enforcement are developed to improve tourist destinations, ultimately improving the infrastructure for locals.

- **Contribution to the local economy:**

The standards of local communities are improved to cater for tourist activities. Various businesses from different sectors combine to deliver enhanced and efficient tourist services. This gives rise to job creation and employment for locals.

- **Preservation of Local cultures:**

By preserving local cultures, heritages and communities, these in turn are established as tourist attractions and interests.

Stakeholders in the tourism sector are those individuals or groups who form a part of and express a shared interest in tourism goals and development and are highly influential in the overall process and progress of tourism development in the local tourism region (Pujiyono, Kismartini, Yuwono and Dwimawanti, 2019). In 2018, the UNWTO implemented a theme- Inclusive and Quality Growth of the Tourism Sector through Digital Transformation- which resonates with tourism growth, thus creating opportunities for stakeholders in the tourism sector in South Africa to benefit from new methods (Bojanala, 2019). It is essential for the development of the tourism sector to form partnerships with all key role-players (Pilving et al., 2019). It is expected over the next ten years that the tourism sector will grow on average by 4% annually (Zibanai, 2018). The tourism sector plays a key role in any economy, primarily for its ability to create jobs whilst also improving the cohesion between other stakeholders within the industry (Woyo and Slabbert, 2021; Makhaola, 2015; Ramawela, 2017 and Tabash, 2017), with Shahraki (2018) mentioning that the tourism sector has been highlighted as a key area for economic growth and development. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the tourism sector in South Africa is responsible for 1.5 million jobs and is forecasted to increase to approximately 2.5 million by the year 2027 (Viljoen and Henama, 2017). The tourism sector is flourishing on a global level, and in doing so is flexing its economic power through expansive yet complex global networks (Beltramo et al., 2021; Chung et. al., 2019).

2.4. Tourism in South Africa

Tourism is vital to the South African economy (Robbins, 2017). Rout, Mishra and Pradhan (2016) postulate that the government of a country needs to support, plan and be proactive in growing the tourism sector, whilst also exercising caution and applying strict controls to mitigate any risk factors that may affect the attraction of local and international tourists, thus signifying the importance of the tourism sector as key to long-term economic growth. The tourism sector is aligned closely to government initiatives and international organisations to promote job creation and

succeed in generating exports, whilst also being viewed as an accelerator of economic prosperity (Rout, Mishra and Pradhan, 2016).

According to StatsSA's Annual Tourism Satellite Account for South Africa, the tourism sector contributed 2.9% to South Africa's GDP, resulting in this sector making a more significant contribution than agriculture in the South African economy, but far inferior to smaller industries such as mining and construction (Stats SA, 2019). South Africa has long grasped the value of tourism and travel for economic growth, job creation and social development (Smith, 2019). The tourism sector, despite experiencing challenges, has over the last few years provided more jobs than other key industries, with more than 40 000 new jobs added to the economy over a five-year period from 2012 to 2016, in the process gaining more jobs than the manufacturing sector over the same period (Stats SA, 2019). Despite the tough economic climate, the tourism industry in South Africa is expected to be one of the few to boost growth and create jobs this year (Business Report, 2019). It outperformed other primary local industries in terms of job growth, adding just over 40 000 net new jobs to the economy between 2012 and 2016 (Independent Online, 2019). In employment terms, 1 in 25 of the total individuals employed in South Africa, considering both formal and informal sectors, is employed in the tourism sector (Robbins, 2017) who further alluded that in a rather passive context of national and local economic development, the expansion of and investment in the tourism sector is critical for economic growth and job creation.

South African Tourism CEO Sisa Ntshona was quoted at the March 2018 International Travel Trade Show held in Germany, stating that the tourism sector is a vital component of the South African economy and should be nurtured for sustainable and comprehensive growth of the economy (Stats SA, 2019). The tourism sector supports one in every twelve jobs in South Africa and at a time when job creation and economic development are at the forefront of government and private sector, the tourism industry has been identified by the government for high growth (IOL, 2019). Tourism has the ability to create permanent relationships amongst people and it is this value that is primarily more important before the economic benefits can be enjoyed. The growth of the tourism sector must be preferred by all patriotic citizens as its success is converted into benefits for all South Africans, including entrepreneurship opportunities, job creation and economic growth (Bojanala, 2019). Bojanala (2019) highlighted that apart from creating job

opportunities, tourism removes the artificial barriers and divisions between people as it crosses prejudice, stereotypes and boundaries (Bojanala, 2018).

Tourism numbers are rather low, but the Department of Tourism is confident that through economic recovery, there can be a positive turnaround, which will allow the tourism industry to make a significant contribution to economic growth and the medium-term recovery targets of South Africa (Bojanala, 2019). The Tourism Ministry, together with the Ministry of Home Affairs, is making great strides in improving the visa regime in South Africa, thus simplifying the process for visitors to the country (Bojanala, 2019). In 2016, both formal and informal employment in South Africa amounted to 15.8 million workers, 1 in every 23 or 4.4% of which was employed directly in the tourism sector (Stats SA, 2019). It was further highlighted that there is a growing number of people being employed in the tourism industry, supporting Ntshona's comments at the International Travel Trade Show, whereby he recommended that the tourism sector should be considered by youngsters when exploring career opportunities (Stats SA, 2019). The tourism sector currently has in excess of 1.5 million people employed, with the potential to create additional employment and entrepreneurship in this sector (Bojanala, 2018). According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the sector is the country's fastest growing, contributing nearly nine percent to gross domestic product and employing over 1.6 million people (Business Report, 2019). President Cyril Ramaphosa convened the October 2018 National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) Jobs Summit and its outcome revealed that it has become critically fundamental to focus on and review the tourism sector, which has the potential to contribute significantly to job creation in the country (Bojanala, 2018).

Governments are in key positions to provide strategy and support, although it has become increasingly evident for tourism strategies to be executed in a way that fosters cohesion amongst key stakeholders that influence the impact and performance of the tourism sector (OECD, 2017). Nthekele (2014) mentioned that local economic development originated in Europe and not in South Africa and has become a significant and vital practice across the globe. The development of tourism is a government priority since it can benefit from the creation of services for the populations of different regions (Lepre, 2018). In his maiden State of the Nation address, President Ramaphosa mentioned the prospects of a successful Tourism sector and how it can propel the economic growth so craved in current times. With

the increase in new entrants from international airlines, such prospects could well translate into the achievement of the President's goal of doubling the size of the tourism sector in South Africa (Bojanala, 2019).

Tourism has the potential to become the largest sector in world trade in the coming century, according to Makhaola (2015), who further indicated that if there is sufficient planning, development and promotion of the sector, this will further solidify this sector as a dynamic and major component of economies throughout the world. The prospects of a growing tourism sector are complemented by the local benefits that it derives, which include economic growth, infrastructure development (Bunghez, 2016) and the most important being an issue that South Africa really needs improvement in, which is job creation. The development of tourism in developing countries is constantly viewed as a key driver to the improvement of the economy (Mihalic, 2016). Tourism is linked to employment and growth opportunities and can serve as a strategy to promote community development in emerging economies and developing countries (Giampiccoli, Saayman and Jugmohan, 2014). Large numbers of travellers use South Africa as a hub every year to connect to other parts of the world. South Africa offers a convenient way to quickly access other regions in sub-Saharan Africa that would otherwise be difficult to reach for many travellers from the African continent (IOL, 2019). Ramawela (2017) believes that a vision needs to be created in order to ignite the tourism potential of South Africa, not simply as a core pillar for the South African economy but with the aim of becoming a "world in one country". This can be achieved by preparing the leadership of the tourism sector with the essential support required to contribute meaningfully and significantly to the South African economy, as well as to promoting the growth and development of South Africa (Bojanala, 2019).

2.5. Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal

Around the world, many governments are engaging in tourism development initiatives to promote the long-term growth and development of the economy (Alhowaish, 2016). To international travellers, South Africa is becoming an attractive destination (IOL, 2019). Eruotor (2014) explained that businesses operating in the tourism sector are dependent on each other as well as the local community, government and other industries because the economic benefits of tourism will be of

value to all stakeholders in the region. It is therefore critical that local communities understand the importance of a healthy tourism industry in their region and the significant contribution that tourism makes to their local economy. Over the past few years, the tourism industry has made a substantial contribution to the economic accomplishments of the eThekweni Municipality (Robbins, 2017).

Makhaola and Proches (2017) highlighted that the tourism sector is renowned for direct and indirect job creation, particularly for communities surrounding the tourism destination, as well as for collaborating with other sectors in generating business opportunities. The KwaZulu-Natal tourism sector, which is a significant contributor to the provincial and ultimately the national economy, has the potential and capacity to deliver on a large scale, but is dependent on viable, productive and constant long-term partnerships between the public and private sectors. The routing of flights from international airlines through Durban's King Shaka International Airport has lifted the profile of KwaZulu-Natal, with increased arrivals realised over the past year, whereby the tourism sector can utilise this increase to their benefit by developing attractive propositions to now increased tourism numbers (Bojanala, 2019). (According to Zibanai (2018), tourism development promotes economic growth as well as provides growth for the tourism sector. If applied regularly and correctly, this approach will lead to supreme growth for the tourism sector through increased numbers of tourists and the development of tourism-related businesses (KZN Tourism A-Report 2017). Zibanai (2018) asserted that countries can rely on tourism to create peace and tranquillity on a global level as it is essential for the prosperity of the economy.

The tourism sector is well known for the pivotal role that it plays in global economies, particularly in the area of job creation (OECD, 2017). The objectives set out by the KZN Provincial Government aim to create a province that is distinctly unique, fortified by exceptional economic growth that leads to job creation, viable employment and a revolution of the local economy (KZN Tourism A-Report, 2017). The sustainable development of the tourism sector is reliant on its ability to adapt to emerging trends such as technological, political, social, economic and environmental changes (OECD, 2017). The National government has prioritised tourism as a key sector for stimulating job creation and economic growth, and KwaZulu-Natal's energetic and mounting tourism sector has taken the lead from the national agenda to serve as a driving force in its quest to create a unique peculiarity for the province (KZN Tourism A-Report, 2017).

The province of KwaZulu-Natal is endowed with natural wonders that allow visitors to experience both a traditional and modern way of life. These wonders include the Big 5, the Indian Ocean, a marine paradise, the history and culture of the region, the Phezulu Safari Park, the Anglo-Zulu War battlefields, and the Drakensberg Mountains (Aina and Ezeuduji, 2021). In South Africa, KwaZulu-Natal has the second-largest provincial economy after Gauteng. Pietermaritzburg, Empangeni, Richards Bay and the Durban-Pinetown metropolis are the main centres for economic activity in KwaZulu-Natal (Musavengane and Leonard, 2022). The *Isimangaliso Wetlands Park*, which has a wilderness area, lakes, an ancient marine reserve and a coastal dune forest, and the *uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park*, which has a mountain range and caves with Khoisan paintings, are two of KwaZulu-Natal's World Heritage Sites (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021).

The KZN provincial government's economic development, tourism, and environmental affairs division, KZN Tourism, is committed to developing a robust and sustainable tourism industry that enhances the quality of life for all of its citizens (Tourism KZN Annual Report, 2021). In order to accomplish this, the accountable entity will try to:

- Improve the province's appeal by collaborating closely with the local governments to upgrade the infrastructure.
- Enhance their abilities and foster a culture of excellence in service.
- Encourage good relationships with the tour guides as they are the first to interact with tourists; and
- Strengthen the ability of tour operators to provide visitors with an unforgettable experience by implementing training programs, language instruction, and cultural exchanges (Tourism KZN Annual Report, 2021).

In order to assure the tourists' safety, the organization will utilize cutting-edge technology that is inspired by the fourth industrial revolution.

2.6. Role of the tourism sector in economic growth

The tourism industry has recently advanced into one of the most progressive economic sectors that is most capable and best suited to deal with the social issues of a nation, such as job creation, improving living standards and targeting

sustainable growth (Rout, Mishra and Pradhan, 2016). Travel and Tourism is a vital sector in the world for economic development and job creation (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). Tourism makes a significant contribution to social and economic development (Athanasopoulou, 2013) as it revives the growth of an economy by creating employment, investment opportunities and by generating income. Many countries have focused on the development of their tourism sectors due to the benefits of the sector to the economy (Gwenhure and Odhiambo, 2017). Moreover, Mishra and Verma (2017) highlight that the sector has developed into the most adept and viable option to achieve overall economic development and satisfaction from the various benefits that it generates, including raising living standards, preserving the natural environment and creating employment.

Simunidu and Kulis (2016) highlighted that tourism can play a key role in enhancing and promoting economic growth because many tourist destinations have boosted economic development as a result of their initiatives and creativity in utilising resources to promote their tourism sectors. When considering size, this sector has the ability to achieve an immense impact for economic growth, diversity goals and the structural transformation of economies (Tabash, 2017). In addition, Zuo and Huang (2017) highlighted that emerging and developing economies have strategically underlined tourism as an engine for economic growth that creates a holistic development of other industries to boost the overall economy by increasing job creation and foreign exchange. Due to its labour-intensive approach, the tourism sector is supported by a cross-sector collaboration of food, entertainment, hotels, transport and shopping role-players, amongst others, thus increasing the potential of improving living standards for those at the very bottom economically, eliminating poverty and generating revenue for the country (Rout, Mishra and Pradhan, 2016).

Tourism engages other sectors and is maximised through the collaboration and inclusion of diversified sectors in the local economy (Bunghez, 2016). The dynamics of the tourism industry and the benefits and opportunities that it provides for other business rejuvenates the economy, resulting in significant economic and social benefits for the country (Makhaola, 2015). Tourism sector activities are dynamic as the effects have a direct advantage for other sectors in an economy, with clear indications that any growth in the tourism sector is likely to reflect a growth in other sectors of the economy (Gwenhure and Odhiambo, 2017). By promoting the linkage with other sectors, Bunghez (2016) states that tourism creates a demand for local

goods and services, thus generating more opportunities for local businesses and ultimately the creation of employment for locals. In order to protect environmental resources for sustainable tourism, the local communities must adopt a favourable and positive attitude in support of tourism. At the rate at which tourism is developing globally, more countries are realising its benefits and developing tourism to serve as an advantage to their economies (Eruotor, 2014).

According to Alhowaish (2016), tourism development can also have a positive impact on economic growth. In any economy, the benefits of tourism growth are not only limited to economic development, but its effects have a positive impact on political, cultural and the social environment of the host country (Tabash, 2017). The author further explained that international tourism is in many ways considered to have a long-term impact on economic growth. A tourist benefits the economy in multiple ways. In their expenditure as a tourist, a portion goes to the tourism industry (accommodation, transport, food, etc.), while the other portion goes to the local authorities and the State in the form of taxes and fees (Bunghez, 2016). Consumption is the major component of GDP and is driven by the demand for services and goods, and the tourism sector influences GDP as it increases the demand for goods and services (Athanasopoulou, 2013). Tourism can serve as an engine for growth in an economy by boosting GDP, as well as increasing employment opportunities and the generation of foreign exchange (Alhowaish, 2016).

Tabash (2017) highlighted that only recently has tourism surfaced as the prime sector to have a substantial impact on the inclusive growth of an economy. Small, micro and medium enterprises (SMME) benefit from tourism as this sector creates opportunities; promotes awareness of cultures; preserves environments; and serves as a link between other sectors in the economy (Makhaola, 2015). The growth of an economy can be favourable to the tourism industry through the development of infrastructure, safety and security, transportation networks and services that are aligned to the tourism sector (Alhowaish, 2016). Indeed, the most immediate effect that people enjoy from this is the creation of employment opportunities. In this regard, tourism promotes local economic development through earnings from domestic visitors and foreign tourists (Bunghez, 2016). The author also mentioned that tourism is the key contributor of foreign exchange earnings for many countries (Zibanai, 2018). Bunghez (2016) mentioned that the major benefit of tourism in

growing an economy is represented by the direct and indirect job opportunities created by businesses that provide services to tourists. These include jobs in hotel administration, stores, transportation and restaurants and an increase in employment opportunities as a result of developing tourist destinations, which will assist in promoting the living standards amongst the local communities, leading to an increase in spending by consumers (Bunghez, 2016). The enormous impact that visitors bring to tourist attractions, including accommodation, shopping, entrance fees and food, is realised in the billions of dollars contributed annually to the global economy, as well as the direct and indirect employment opportunities that are created (Viljoen and Henama, 2017). June Crawford, CEO of the Board of Airline Representatives of South Africa (BARSA), highlighted that despite a downward spiral in economic growth, coupled with declining tourist arrivals in 2018 as compared to forecasted figures, there is continual investment by celebrated international airlines in South Africa (Bojanala, 2019), which serves as a real sweetener at a time when concerted efforts are being planned to lift a failing economy out of its gloom.

The development of tourism in a country is growing as an important driver in alleviating poverty and promoting economic growth (Bunghez, 2016). In addition, Gwenhure and Odhiambo (2017) mentioned that tourism also has the ability to encourage investment in infrastructure development; inspire healthy competition; and empower the transmission of technical knowledge to other sectors. Tourism not only provides an economic mainstay for some countries, but it also assists in improving the social life of the host communities (Eruotor, 2014) who further highlighted that even in developed countries such as Spain and France, the impact of tourism has played a significant role in the growth of these countries. Bunghez (2016) explained that local products are also boosted by tourism, as an estimated 15-20% of the tourist expenditure is spent on souvenirs and gifts that are produced by local communities.

Another significant economic benefit that arises from tourist destinations is the revenue generated and the taxes paid to the state by businesses operating in the tourism industry, thus providing an ultimate boost to the local economy. Tourism allows countries to earn revenues from taxes collected from tourism activities (Zibanai, 2018) who further added that tourism is a key contributor of employment opportunities in the majority of countries across the globe for both semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Mihalic (2016) explained that there is a general assumption that

tourism can shrink the economic gap between the first-world countries and those in emergent developing nations, which contain the majority of the world's population and are living in poverty. Despite sizeable downward pressure on the finances of the public, tourism budgets have reflected strong growth, largely due to the awareness that is created on the importance of the sector's contribution to the economy (OECD, 2017).

In South Africa, the rural areas with their rich and vast natural landscapes, coupled with the diverse offerings of local cultures, make significant contributions to the tourism sector (Viljoen and Henama, 2017). The authors also contend that the development of tourism in rural areas has its own challenges. Pujiyono et al. (2019) highlighted that tourism is recognised as one of those growth sectors that plays a significant part in the socio-economic revolution and enhancement of the lives of communities in emerging economies. The National Development Plan (NDP) of South Africa plots a strategic path and provides insight into developing sustainability and acknowledges that growth in the Tourism sector in South Africa is central to the country's economic growth aspirations (Viljoen and Henama, 2017). Mihalic (2016) contended that while tourism has the ability to promote economic growth and contribute significantly to GDP, it is the subject of intense debate as evidence can be found on both sides to support the argument. Similarly, Du, Ng and Lew (2016) argued that the potential of whether tourism can actually lead to economic growth is a significant macro-economic debate for both investors and policymakers.

2.7. Stakeholder theory in tourism

The Stakeholder Theory was introduced in 1984 (Aragu et al., 2021) by Freeman, who further defined stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives" (Amoako, Darko and Marfo, 2021). According to this theory, an organization can be identified by the ties it has with other groups and people, such as its relationships with its clients, suppliers, employees, governments and community members (Aragu et al., 2021). A practical theory with roots in organizational management and ethics, the stakeholder-based theory stands out from others since it directly addresses morality and values as a key aspect of managing organizations (Woyo and Slabbert, 2021). The interest groups or parties associated with the ongoing and cooperative processes of tourist

governance make up the so-called agents or strategic actors, namely stakeholders (Scarlett, 2021). The relationships that exist between the participants in a location's development as a tourist attraction play a significant role in this (Aragu et al., 2021).

The success of a tourism setting is directly influenced by the harmony of the relationships amongst stakeholders (Wang et al., 2021). By creating jobs, the businesses in this sector not only support economic growth but also take an interest in the long-term viability of the destination since their operations rely on it (Wang, Feng, Zheng and Liu, 2021). Policies must, for their part, involve as many parties as possible because the decisions taken by this group may determine how a tourist region develops (van Huy, 2021). Stakeholders must take part in deciding how the organization in which they have a stake will be run (Amoako, Darko and Marfo, 2021). Since employees who feel they are being neglected will quit, managers of organizations should consciously work to involve all stakeholders, appreciate them, and understand their interests. This will help the organization to continue to grow (Kyrylov et al., 2020). The development of tourism is influenced by four main players, namely the tourist, the entrepreneur who sells goods and services to tourists, the host community's or region's government, and the locals who live there (Amoako, Darko and Marfo, 2021). Each of these parties is essential to the success of tourism-related activities (Aragu et al., 2021).

To create a thriving and sustainable tourist industry, all stakeholders must work on their companies to get a competitive edge (Amoako, Darko and Marfo, 2021). In this regard, it is essential to consider all of the interests of each group for an organization to work properly (Woyo and Slabbert, 2021).

2.8. Challenges for the tourism industry

Tourism plays a significant role in the evolution of an economy as it serves as a socio-economic phenomenon that is specifically tailored for modern civilisation, with a human and material component (Bunghez, 2016) and is linked to employment and growth opportunities. Gwenhure and Odhiambo (2017) affirm that tourism is a significant factor in eradicating poverty through the promotion of unskilled jobs; availability of seasonal employment which supports the development and integration into more permanent employment opportunities; and can serve as a strategy to promote community development in emerging economies and developing countries

(Giampiccoli et al., 2014). The tourism sector can be considered as a 'sunrise' sector (Ramawela, 2017), which the author further explained as a sector that not only has the potential for rapid innovation and swift growth but can also be immune to the issues and challenges faced locally, provided that there is no compromise to the visitors' experience. While the tourism sector is potentially beneficial for governments across the globe for its ability to promote social welfare, it also can have negative consequences such as the impact on environmental quality and exploiting natural heritage sites (Pujiyono et al., 2019).

Tourism promotes infrastructure development and generates foreign investment, which could make the local economy rather dependant on the arrival of tourists while alienating the traditional industries (Mihalic, 2014). Despite the positive outlook and interest in the South African market, it has now become rather essential for barriers that are restricting economic growth, particularly those affecting the tourism sector in South Africa such as immigration regulations, to be addressed urgently if there is to be change in the patterns of tourist arrivals (Bojanala, 2019). The flow of tourists in a globalised world fluctuates according to socio-economic and environmental factors, with supply and demand becoming difficult to predict, thus complicating matters for tourism management (Chung et. al., 2019). Some of the momentous challenges in developing tourism lies in the capability to gain support from locals to approve public and private sector investment; attracting talented and productive individuals as new residents; and more importantly, attracting new visitors whilst sustaining the advancement of a vibrant industry (Viljoen and Henama, 2017).

Ramawela (2017) highlighted the following critical success factors that are required to sustain and improve growth in the Tourism sector in South Africa:

- **Growth in Inbound Tourism:**

They should be a continual examination of the success factors to ensure sustainability in the growth of this sector.

- **Integrated Public Transport:**

Fully integrated, affordable, safe and convenient public transport systems are the norm of a successful tourism destination. South Africa needs to focus on this area to enable successful tourism activity within the country.

- **Personal Safety:**

South Africa has enjoyed a reputation of being a warm and welcoming country. However, with criminal activity on the rise, this severely dampens its reputation and must be an area of focus; and

- **An enabling environment:**

The authorities that perform gate-keeping functions need a clear and simplified change in mind-set. As a country, policies should shift from a red-tape to a green-tape environment, allowing the tourism experience to be simpler, better and faster.

The issues encountered by the tourism sector can be alleviated through the formation and process of collaborative governance, which includes key stakeholders such as the local community, private businesses and the government through the local municipalities of the tourist region (Pujiyono et al., 2019). The rural landscape in South Africa, with its healthy natural offerings, is equally affected by a lack of infrastructure development and investment, poverty, unemployment and particularly illiteracy, which makes their understanding of tourism-related matters a hindrance to economic growth opportunities in their communities (Viljoen and Henama, 2017). Singh (2007) cited in Makhaola (2015) asserted that successful tourism is beneficial to a country's economy if it is well planned and executed correctly. If there is no cohesion between all relevant stakeholders, this could then impact negatively on the tourism sector. Makhaola (2015) highlighted the following, which impacts tourism negatively:

- **Local cultures being exploited:**

The representation of local cultures degenerates as locals use this for economic gain.

- **Pricing of Social Comforts:**

An economic disparity is created as a result of high accommodation costs, whereby the poor are unable to access these attractions; and

- **International tourists:**

Foreign tourists who consider themselves as elite bring along egocentrism and local communities are disrespected for their dress code, attitudes and behaviour.

Depending on planning and management, tourism can have a positive or negative impact on an economy (Scarlett, 2021). The most critical element will be to obliterate violent crime in South Africa, thus improving the safety for primarily the South African public and for guests, the tourists. Ramawela (2017) argued that despite all the positives that the tourism sector can provide to the economy, there is insufficient leveraging of this potential due to a lack of cohesion, planning and policy implementation, resulting in the creation of unwanted barriers that suppress the growth of the tourism sector. In addition, Makhaola (2015) argued that the contribution of tourism to economic success cannot be achieved by tourism authorities alone. Du et al. (2016) asserted that the tourism sector does not flourish in isolation, as it is highly dependent on infrastructure development, a skilled workforce and support from government to promote tourist attractions. It is therefore essential to create a broad and diversified tourism strategy that promotes the local economy on a grander level, rather than a narrow strategy that focuses solely tourism. The continued relaxation of visas and currency depreciation would drive future growth for the sector, with both helping to draw more international visitors (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019).

These responsibilities must be shared by all stakeholders, as indicated by Ramawela (2017) who contended that a complete change in mind-set is required, whereby the public sector, communities and the private sector can all work towards a common vision for the benefit of the tourism sector in South Africa. As some nations look more and more internally to stimulate growth, Travel and tourism becomes even more important as an engine of economic development and as a tool for exchanging cultures and building understanding between them (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019). To fulfil the potential of the sector as a driver of inclusive and sustainable growth, this will require the governance of the tourism sector to develop sound policies and structures in collaboration with key stakeholders and the private sector (OECD, 2017). In the coming year, factors that influence the movement of travellers around the world, such as the attractiveness of a destination and its currency power, will continue to affect traveller behaviour (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019).

2.8.1. Challenges in tourism: KwaZulu-Natal and South Africa

The tourism sector in South Africa is considered the leading potential driver (out of all industry classifications) of economic growth and job-creation in South Africa and focuses on the broader economic benefits that tourism spending has on economic activity, investment and job creation opportunities (PWC, 2020). The tourism sector is a broad sector that can provide an economic boost for primary and interdependent stakeholders from this industry. This notion was shared by Stark (2019), who explained that the tourism sector has a wide-ranging value chain and due to this, not only has the potential for job-creation, but also to generate entrepreneurship opportunities as the sector crosses over to other stakeholders and industries. The tourism sector needs to develop modern initiatives if it is to contribute significantly to economic growth in South Africa and help the sector to return to its glory days (Bojanala, 2021). If South Africa is to benefit from these rising tourist numbers and get a substantial slice of this market share, the country will need to work together to achieve this. President Ramaphosa proclaimed that 'we must do more' (SONA, 2019). Although tourism is a rising industry in KwaZulu-Natal, there are still a number of obstacles to overcome in order to regain investor trust and achieve national and international travel and tourism expectations (Phili, 2021). There is a strong belief that more may be done through collaborative private-public sector projects to improve the city's tourism position so that it will continue to be known as "South Africa's playground" (Phili, 2021).

2.8.2. The COVID-19 Pandemic

In January 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) originally labelled COVID-19 as a global health emergency (Jackson, Weiss, Schwarzenberg and Nelson, 2020). In February 2020, the severe respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-Cov-2) was labeled a pandemic by the WHO, making it one of the earliest biological threats to human civilisation in the twenty-first century (Marivate and Combrink, 2020). The current COVID-19 outbreak has caused global challenges, including economic and healthcare issues, as well as spillover impacts on global companies such as tourism and travel, which is a major contributor to the global service economy (Abbas, Mubeen, Iorember, Raza and Mamirkulova, 2021). In South Africa, the first diagnosed case was on 3rd March 2020 and with a huge, vulnerable and immuno-compromised population living in overcrowded conditions, the pandemic presented a

unique challenge for South Africa and for South Africans at large (Department of Health, 2020). Operations were interrupted during various phases of the lockdown, and tourism income were severely harmed. As a result, there were significant demand and supply shocks in the industry simultaneously (Tourism Sector Recovery Plan, 2021).

2.8.3. The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the tourism Sector in South Africa

The tourism and leisure business sector are vital for both environmental and customer satisfaction reasons, but it has also become the most vulnerable sector of the economy (Abbas et al., 2021). The hospitality industry's large enterprises are projected to be more resilient to the pandemic's consequences. This disadvantages small businesses, putting them at risk of closure or perhaps bankruptcy (Huynh, Truong, Duong, Nguyen, Huong Dao and Dao, 2021). The tourism business is always impacted the most by various diseases, epidemics, seasonal influenza and global pandemics (Abbas et al., 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has mostly damaged the global tourism industry, posing a threat to the recovery of destinations in developing countries, which are more vulnerable to the pandemic's increasingly severe waves (Huynh, 2021; Kim and Lee, 2021; Sucheran, 2022).

Tourism was one of the world's most important markets (Ugur and Akbiyik, 2020) until the world was struck by a pandemic in the twenty-first century, COVID-19, and the development of this fatal disease has caused major financial losses as well as global health and economic concerns (Abbas et al., 2021). The global catastrophe caused by the coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the global tourism industry. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a long-term negative influence on worldwide economic activity in all areas. International border closures and travel restrictions have had a huge negative impact on global travel and the tourism industry, with various negative effects on different nations (Scarlett, 2021). As a result, there was a need to re-evaluate how the tourism business did its typical operations (Kyrylov et al., 2020). The epidemic has had a huge impact on the hospitality industry in several parts of the world (Huynh et al., 2021) and international tourism is one of the most affected sectors of the economy as a result of the global COVID-19 outbreak (Kyrylov et al., 2020).

South Africa has suffered considerable damage because of this pandemic (Du Toit, 2020), particularly in the tourism sector. South Africa's economy is relatively open, and it has an economic structure that makes it more vulnerable to the type of shock that COVID-19 has brought, although the economy was already in difficulty before the outbreak (Naudé and Cameron, 2020). To curb the spread of the Coronavirus disease, the South African government-imposed travel restrictions on high-risk regions and border crossings were closed from one country to another (Marivate and Combrink, 2020). From the point of view of business continuity, having a clearly defined strategy in place to cope with such an unexpected crisis is a vital component of ensuring the continued survival and profitability of a company because when a crisis such as the coronavirus pandemic presents itself, business usually comes to a halt (PWC, 2020). The Travel and Tourism industry's contribution to South Africa's GDP declined from 6.9% in 2019 to 3.7 percent in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic (Smith, 2021).

To improve the city's tourism experience, the Durban Chamber of Commerce urged big corporations to collaborate with township tourism businesses (Phili, 2021). Phili (2021) asserted that when the cloud lifts and people are able to travel with few limitations again, businesses must have tailor-made attractive packages to sell to the market. It has become critical for the sector to rise above this obstacle and make every effort to contain the virus's spread, whilst also working to revitalize the industry (Bojanala, 2021). The rapid advancement of information technology will provide more reliable and faster methods of processing, transmitting, receiving and storing all types of information needed to effectively address the major challenges facing the tourism industry and international cooperation, especially during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Kyrylov et al., 2020). In essence, all parties involved in this sector must cooperate to lessen the effects of this unpredictable and dangerous epidemic and create short, mid and long-term plans to facilitate the recovery (Sucheran 2022).

2.9. Local economic development in South Africa

Local economic development is a major challenge in South Africa (Rogerson and Rogerson, 2012). South Africa has 278 municipalities, covering 8 metropolitans, 44 districts and 226 local municipalities, all of which are focused on developing their

local economies by providing infrastructure and services. Their objectives at a local level are initiated by collaborations of stakeholders to address socio-economic problems and to identify economic opportunities (Kamara, 2017). The author further argued that LED results in South Africa have been unsatisfactory, mainly attributed to capacity and resource constraints, as well as to limited experience of local government with regard to promoting economic development. The success of local economic development at a regional level is significantly influenced by imperatives of the Constitution in setting up local government development (du Plooy, 2017). Ariatti (2013) highlighted that the challenge at a local level is to minimise any mounting conflict and to enhance the local economy by profiting from co-operation and collaboration between local communities, civil society and public-private partnerships. Local economic development is an interactive engagement between local authorities and communities, aimed at creating sustainable development (Nthekeleng, 2014) through strategies that empower and support resident communities. Khambule and Proches (2016) stressed that it is essential for all stakeholders to emanate from a specific region as this enables a robust development of LED strategies, which are executed to promote the specific area.

LED in South Africa is highly influenced by economic development systems in Britain and the United States of America and is mandated by the Constitution to fulfil a developmental role by providing basic services, infrastructure development and to create initiatives to facilitate local economic growth (Ariatti, 2013). In South Africa and other developing countries, the economy is characterised by volatile markets, risks, inefficiency and a lack of corporate culture (Koma, 2013), thus placing the main responsibility on the government to facilitate job creation, reduce poverty and re-ignite economic growth. This makes it essential to implement innovative and effective strategies to address the pressing social problems of developing the local economy; reducing high levels of unemployment and poverty; and improving service delivery. Koma (2013) highlighted that the economy of South Africa has diversified over the years, with the mining and agricultural sectors dominating the economy at the end of the 19th century and then gradually developing into a manufacturing economy in the middle of the 20th century, wherein manufacturing exceeded other industries.

The tourism industry is acknowledged on a global level as a key driver of social and economic development (Mahakata et al., 2017). Fourie (2019) added that

government is cognisant of the disruptions to projects in the region and has pledged its full commitment to transformation and a willingness to get all relevant stakeholders to discuss these key matters and issues, which are constantly affecting the growth of this region. It is essential that governments play an influential role in creating an enabling environment that allows the tourism sector to flourish (Viljoen and Henama, 2017). The premier of KZN, Sihle Zikalala, delivered a key-note speech at the annual iLembe gala dinner, whereby he stressed that tackling youth unemployment is a key area of concern. Businesses should support initiatives to help alleviate this issue by partnering with government and the iLembe Chambers programme on entrepreneurial development to promote the entrepreneur skills of the youth and making contributions for the youth to participate meaningfully in the economy of the country (Fourie, 2019).

2.10. Importance of Local economic development

LED is about the economic development of a specific area or region. This specific area should be a functioning economic territory whereby there is a collaboration of common interests underpinned by co-operation, innovation and trust amongst all key stakeholders (Ariatti, 2013). Khambule and Proches (2016) indicated that LED has escalated to become one of the key drivers of economic growth for countries across the globe. Koma (2013) mentioned that communities around the world face varying levels of similar problems such as rising poverty, unemployment, inequality and limited basic provisions for the community. These challenges are compounded by new realities such as globalisation, technological advancements and urbanisation, leading to an increasingly competitive environment in the world and the impact of these factors on the economies of towns and cities, South Africa is no exception. The economic policy of government is focused on inclusive growth and the National Development plan has outlined three priorities that are required to sustain long-term economic growth (Budget review, 2018). These include:

- Raising the levels of employment through rapid economic growth.
- Improving skills development, innovation and the quality of education; and
- Building the capability of the state.

One of the most important initiatives of LED is to decrease poverty. The objective of LED is to create jobs, thus ensuring that there is growth in the local economy. Meyer

and Meyer (2017) explained that the ultimate goal of local economic development is the development of the economy in a specific region. The LED process includes entrepreneurship, business development and the alleviation of poverty in the economy. Meyer (2014) identified that local economic development is a prominent tool that can be utilised to facilitate the development of local regions, with the 'LED triangle' of business, government and communities being identified at a local level. The author further supported this by affirming that along with government, business chambers play an important role in facilitating economic development, a process that develops the local economy in terms of the development of small business, eradication of poverty and improving the quality of people's life in the community (Meyer (2014). Nthekeleng (2014) indicated that the United Nations Habitat (2009) on local economic development included the following four main indicators:

- LEDs are a common process in which locals and stakeholders from all sectors work closely together to inspire local businesses and create a sustainable economy.
- LED encourages communities, the private sector, academia and civil society to partner with each other and find joint solutions to address common economic problems.
- LEDs are focused on long-term sustainable development; and
- Developing LED strategies is a common effort that uses economic value (employment, income, company growth) and development (the role of structural change), indicating that LED does not represent a quick fix.

A collaboration of local government, civil society and the private sector in the quest for a fruitful LED formula engages the local community to build internally by promoting local assets first, instead of being reliant externally for growth (Kamara, 2017). The growth and economic welfare of people's livelihoods is driven by tourism development (Pujiyono et al., 2019), and it is critical for the government, local municipalities, local communities and the private sector to take the lead in improving skills levels and knowledge sharing within the tourism sub-sector as this will enhance the sustainability, success and growth of local communities. The tourism sector benefits the local economy in multiple ways, including creating employment opportunities for less skilled workers, particularly to the benefit of women and youth, whilst also generating foreign earnings that ultimately improves revenue income for the government (Mahakata et al., 2017).

2.11. Challenges of Local economic development

South African local government has a significant role to play in realising the ambitions of the country by ensuring that the economy is developed into a capable state which can address the challenges faced by the country (Khambule, 2018). Ariatti (2013) explained that LED is a technique used to create a competitive advantage in a specified area through engaging in social dialogue and participation, and with sound business and economic principles can help achieve the creation of employment, reduction in poverty and economic growth. Meyer (2014) mentioned that LED should be the concern of everybody, including government, local communities and local businesspeople as it is viewed as the solution to unemployment, poverty, inequality and an improved quality of life. Due to the failure of local municipalities, Khambule (2018) highlighted that South Africa is turning to LED strategies to assist in addressing development challenges such as poverty, inequality and unemployment. An improved local governance performance regarding LED requires collaboration and effective partnership building from the three essential LED partners, namely local communities, government and the private sector (Meyer, 2014). This is where the business chamber or Chamber of Commerce fits in, to help realise the local economies' objectives.

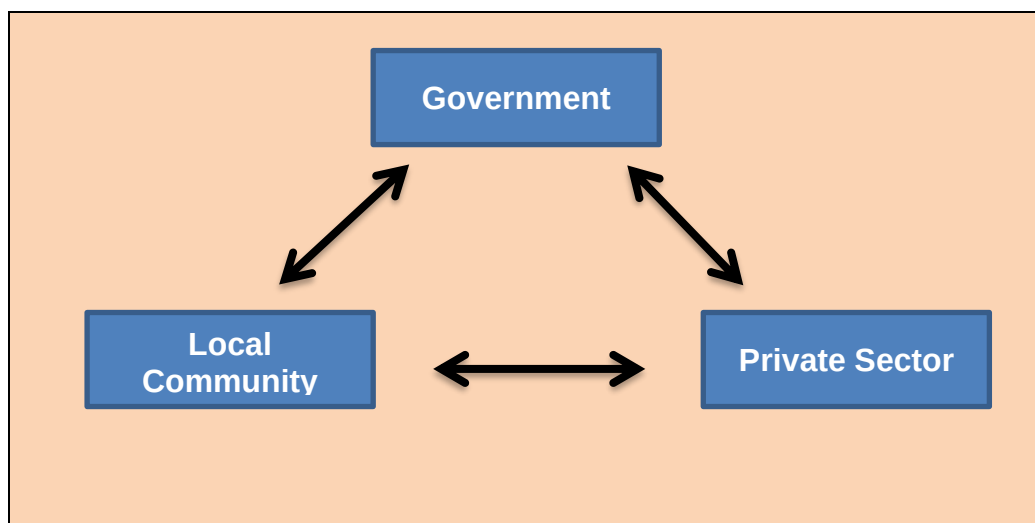


Figure 2.1: Collaboration between Government, Local communities and the Private Sector

Source: Meyer (2014)

Khambule and Proches (2016) highlighted that the most significant role of LEDs is to create an integrated economy based on the principles of participation in economic development. Nthekeleng (2014) mentioned that the process of regional economic development should pursue the following goals:

- Improving the quality of life in a sustainable community.
- Reducing poverty; and
- Creating greater growth in society by strengthening the economy, politics and cultural aspects of society, leading to more proficient productivity levels, and ultimately moving towards economic modernisation.

LED provides an opportunity for all key role players within the specific economic area to collaborate in improving the local economy and is inclusive of the local community, local government, civil society and the private sector, with the primary goal of accomplishing sustainable growth and competitiveness (Ariatti, 2013).

du Plooy (2017) indicated that the coastal regions have failed to deliver, particularly in creating jobs, despite the perceived advantage of the region as the manufacturing sector has been unsuccessful in gaining momentum. Ariatti (2013) indicated that as a result of increasing globalisation and its effects on markets across the globe, LED is now a prominent feature in international development planning. There has been a passionate drive to attract major companies to be a part of the economic zone in the iLembe region. However, the region will continue to be plagued by a lack of investment and will encounter other challenges without the support of government (Fourie, 2019).

2.12. Conclusion

This chapter focused on providing a comprehensive view on tourism and local economic development at both a local and global level. The next chapter will focus on design thinking and its related processes, benefits, challenges and its role in leadership and strategy.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW – DESIGN THINKING

3.1. Introduction

The literature review in this chapter will focus on extant research relating to design thinking in the South African context, as well as attempting to gain a comprehensive understanding of such issues in the global context. The nature of the research will therefore focus on varying perspectives of design thinking, particularly at the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in the region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Previous studies have explored design thinking and its applicability and solely focused on the customer-centric value adding benefit to the process. There is considerable and related literature in the global space, according to the researcher (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021, Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018; Hatchuel, Le Masson, Reich and Subrahmanian, 2017 and Liedtka, 2015). In South African academia, the researcher detected literature on design thinking in Education (Cassim, 2013), design thinking in South Africa amongst design agencies in Johannesburg (le Roux, 2016), design thinking in Higher education (Munyai, 2016); the role of creativity in South Africa (Tselepis, Mastamet-Mason and Antonites, 2016), the role of design thinking in brand strategy (de Beer, 2015) and developing eLearning champions: a design thinking approach (Gachago, Morkel, Hitge, van Zyl and Ivala, 2017). It was also noted by the researcher that there is not sufficient research conducted in relation to the use of design thinking in tourism, particularly in the South African space.

The development of technology is advancing at a rapid pace, coupled with greater access on a global level to unlimited markets, allowing consumers endless options and choices to satisfy their needs. These diverse offerings make it fundamental for organisations to develop more value and appeal to their customers' desires and needs in order to sustain their future business objectives and maintain a competitive advantage (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021). The level of challenges faced by the business sector, engineers and designers in current times is much more complex than those confronted in the past decade (Dam and Siang, 2019), largely compounded by globalisation. The impact from natural resources and changes in the economic climate are felt across the globe, thereby resulting in common

challenges arising from the intertwined global network to which we belong. Naiman (2019) asserted that the immense advancement of technology is the biggest contributor of the fast pace of change that is experienced by business and society in current times.

Design thinking has been widely accepted and adopted, whilst also being advanced by renowned institutions globally (Friedlander et al., 2021), not simply limited to the field of design, but extensively in enhancing business, leadership and management literature, whilst additionally providing a more creative method of teaching and equipping managers with a pivotal tool for innovation (Rocco, 2015).

3.2. What is Design thinking and why is it important

In the quest for innovative solutions, design has generally been widely accepted and its development has seen an upward spike in recent years, with notable concepts such as design thinking, strategic design and design management rising to the fore (Rocco, 2015). Design thinking is described as an ideology and a method that is used to address complicated issues that put individuals at the heart of it (Qian, 2019). Design thinking is ultimately about improving the livelihood of people, enhancing the planet and the quality of life (Naiman, 2019). In the most simplified explanation, it is a process that practises creating new and innovative solutions to address key problems for organisations and business; is applicable to all human specific matters in life; and is not limited to any specific area or industry (Turnali, 2013). Design thinking is solely focused on the user and is a process of constant, iterative innovation (Sarrazin and Yeon, 2015). Design thinking utilises objective thinking in focusing on the intimate needs of the user and is an iterative process to solve problems (Gould et al., 2017). Moreover, it is frequently raised as “out-the-box” thinking as its practices attempt to create new methods of thinking that are not guided by traditional problem-solving methods (Dam and Siang, 2019). Instead of concentrating on developing new services and products alone, the focus is on closely considering the requirements of people in finding desirable alternatives (Qian, 2019).

At the core of design thinking lies the ability to challenge assumptions and to pose significant questions (Kwon et al., 2021). The understanding of the customer involves deep qualitative analysis, as the stark reality or truth is that it is quite

complex to resolve a matter without first fully understanding what the real problem is, thus making it essential to be able to empathise before attempting to design for a group of humans (Hacker, 2019). It is therefore critically important for an organisation to invest in creating a strong design culture (McCarthy, 2018). Hacker (2019) indicated that research, design and business objectives are intimately linked and their synergy is essential for success, further highlighting the following:

- Products and services do not exist just for the sake of it but serve a much more profound purpose in moving the measurement of the key objectives of business.
- Products are designed for the end-user so that they are consumed, not just by any person, but by the right ones – the customer; and
- The research component in business is significant as it clarifies who the user is, prioritises their expectations and strategizes a clear path for delivering on this anticipation.

Shum (2018) indicated that if the culture of design is the strategy used at Microsoft, then design thinking is the exhibition of that culture, seeking meaning in their work to realise a desired outcome and by instilling a design spirit within the organisation. Design thinking, as an essential aspect of service design, has the capacity to generate usable and desirable user-friendly ideas, solutions and future service experiences that are effective and unique for service providers (Miettinen, Rontti, Kuure and Antti, 2012). Design thinking is a process and a philosophy that pursues solutions to problems in a human-centric manner (Stevens, 2019) and focuses on practical solutions that are:

- *Technically feasible*: It can be developed into products or processes that are functional.
- *Economically viable*: It is affordable for organisations or businesses to implement; and
- *Desirable for the user*: The solution that is developed meets the real needs of people (Stevens, 2019).

The user is central to the design thinking process as it involves becoming deeply interested in understanding those that one is designing for (Dam and Siang, 2021). Jamal et al. (2021) indicated that design thinking offers a solution-based method to problem-solving and is practical in its approach as it provides a way of thinking whilst

working towards a solution and serves as an ideal hands-on method. Friedlander et al. (2021) explained that design thinking has two dimensions, one being the practice of operating as a designer, while the other serves as a human-centric problem-solving method to deal with complex problems. Design thinking has its own unique objectives (Diethelm, 2019), with its signature conclusion being a cultural revolution and advancements aimed at a determined change to sub-standard settings and presenting a fresh, viable and practical solution.

Organisations in current times encounter multi-dimensional problems as a result of complex business models, coupled by increased globalised partnership that operate in large ecosystems, leading to unique challenges and opportunities for organisations (Marion et al., 2021). This further indicates that such challenges require multi-layered solutions that precede the usual product and service offerings, which is where design thinking becomes effective, as its application permits organisations to address current challenges for business and to develop a competitive advantage. The key challenge in Design is to ease the pace and think about who is at the end of the creation or development first. When the dependence of one's products ranks as millions of consumers, then it becomes clear that one is assuming that a single development could work for everyone, which is contrary to the design thinking method (Shum, 2018). The struggles that humans encounter is often those whereby the simplest of solutions do not easily surface due to the self-imposed constraints that consume one's space (Dam and Siang, 2019). Shum (2019) argued that organisations should not be debating about whether to be design-led but should rather be rather building partnerships to become more solution-led by practising the key aspects of design thinking, which essentially is about listening carefully, learning more and then experimenting to develop a solution that has real meaning and a lasting impact.

The ground-breaking and smart innovations currently available globally include Uber, Apple and Airbnb, which are all products of innovation (Stevens, 2019). The author further indicated that these companies are all facing similar challenges, familiar to most organisations, which is to maintain their innovation capabilities to further their market dominance as innovation cannot be an isolated event, but rather the core of every organisation. The world's leading brands, such as Samsung, GE, Google and Apple, have swiftly embraced design thinking, which is currently being taught at some of the leading academic institutions in the world, namely Harvard, MIT and

Stanford universities (Dam and Siang, 2019). Major global companies that create design for the global population, such as Facebook, Apple, Google, Amazon and Microsoft, are aligned to the fundamental features of design thinking (Shum, 2019). Dam and Siang (2019) argued that great individuals who innovated in the fields of music, engineering, science and literature have all practised design thinking, thus, design thinking cannot be considered as the exclusive domain of a designer. Design thinking workshops assist in educating non-design professionals to innovate and develop creative solutions, which in current times is an essential skill for any business to possess (Stevens, 2019). Design thinking allows one to mine deeper, conduct the right depth of research required and build prototypes, test products and services as people explore new methods of improvement (Dam and Siang, 2019). Design thinking is an innovative structure and strategy. While innovation creates value, design thinking applies a set of procedures and principles to innovate in a human-centred, insight-driven and swift manner (Qian, 2019).

3.3. Definition of Design thinking

Design thinking has been defined by many authors as being unique in solving complex problems (Bull and Jeruchimowitz, 2016; Camacho, 2015; Cowan, 2012; Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018 and Namdarian, 2018). Recently, Lambdin (2019) explained that design thinking is not focused on creating things or developing products but is more keenly involved in making key decisions to solve problems. Phillimore (2019) affirmed that design thinking is a problem-solving mechanism previously utilised solely by designers. Design thinking can be defined as a practice that requires the combination of thinking and execution into a state of coherency, while adding creativity to transform an existing solution into a much more preferable one (Tselepis et al., 2016). Ordóñez, Lema, Miño Puga, Lema and Vega (2017) indicated that many scholars and theorists have made attempts to define design thinking. However, in its simplest description, it is a process underpinned by using the skills and intellect of a designer. It has been argued that the term design thinking has only recently been recognised in management literature (Micheli, Wilner, Bhatti, Mura and Beverland, 2018), predominantly featuring as a method for problem-solving and innovation that is based on the practices and processes of a designer (Brown, 2008,2018; Liedtka, 2015, 2019).

Brown (2008) defined the practice of design thinking as a method that makes use of a designer's thought process to meet the needs of people in a manner that is viable for business and is technologically feasible. Ivanova and Vodenova (2018) mentioned that Tim Brown defined the objective of design thinking as translating the feelings and understanding of the services and products that add true value to people's lives. Design thinking was earlier defined as a process that is creative and analytical (Razzouk and Shute, 2012), which encourages a user to partake in the experiment and creation of prototypes and later reviewing their feedback and re-designing to fine-tune to user expectations. Matthes and Wrigley (2017) defined design thinking as the application of a designer's awareness and practices in the solving of problems, irrespective of what the actual problem is.

Design thinking can be defined as exploratory, whereby solutions are developed through an iterative process of prototyping, testing and providing regular feedback which is non-committal in providing a solution from the forefront. Instead, it encourages ideas to be generated, eventually leading to a breakthrough in a beneficial and satisfying process or service (Conway et al., 2017). Romslo (n.d) defined design thinking as a user-centric, creative and analytical process that focuses on problem-solving and the use of various methods to innovate. Brown (2009) defined design thinking as using a designer's tools and techniques as a means of problem-solving. Likewise, Ivanova and Vodenova (2018) agreed with this definition by adding that it provides a prospect for gaining a better market supremacy, while Shahrabi et al., (2021) viewed design thinking as a creative and analytical process that encourages synergy between various disciplines (Ordonez et al., 2017).

Thomas Lockwood, formerly of the Design Management Institute, defined design thinking as a human-centred process to innovation through the use of observation, prototyping and analysis of problems and challenges (Hasso Plattner, n.d) and as an innovation process that is human-centric, which integrates various role-players towards delivering a problem-solving solution (Ordonez et al., 2017). Design thinking is a human-centred innovation process that focuses on observation, cooperation, quick learning, visualization of concepts, rapid prototyping of concepts, and concurrent business analysis, eventually influencing development and business strategy (Miettinen et al., 2012). It can be measured as a mentality as well as a

process that is viewed as a holistic method to confront complex problems and challenges (Bayle, 2018), while mentioning that design thinking has attracted widespread interest over the past decade, moving from an initial buzzword on innovation to a compact and broadly spread practice (Micheli et al., 2018), while Schallmo et al. (2018) argued that currently there is no generally accepted definition of design thinking.

Micheli et al. (2018) indicated that despite there being increased optimism in adopting design thinking, a refined and acceptable term or definition that is generally accepted is still lacking. Dunne (2018) contended that design and the process of design thinking is quite challenging to define. Schallmo et al. (2018) proposed the following definition of design thinking:

The process of design thinking pursues the development of creating innovative solutions to current problems, and such solutions are in favour of the needs of users and provide a positive influence.

Design thinking is a theme that emerged from management literature, claiming to deliver substantial innovative capabilities through the use of an improvised user-centric focus and has led to the suggestion that the implementation of design thinking can benefit all companies (Tomlinson, 2018). Design thinking, in simplified terms, is the manner in which businesses can move into more enhanced state than previously, beginning with heartened consideration and concluding with a focused determination, making the prospects of a successful effort highly likely (Clarke, 2016). The term design thinking was made popular by IDEO, an international design company and progressed from an epistemological study on design and what makes it different from traditional methods of science (Pugliese, Girone and Jefferson, 2018).

In the recent past, theorists have made concerted efforts to define design thinking, with the simplest definition being the ability to think like a designer. As Brown (2009) indicated, design thinking is the utilisation of the awareness and practices of a designer to meet human needs and makes use of the immediate financial and technological resources available (Ordonez et al., 2017). The development of technology across the globe is gaining momentum at such a swift pace that it has become difficult for job descriptions to keep abreast of such developments, let alone

industries, with users now fanatically sharing content across their social networks as they are always informed and frequently switched on (Dam and Siang, 2019). The definition of design thinking is fairly contentious as there are diverse views and opinions resulting from the techniques being developed simultaneously by different organisations (Tomlinson, 2018; Matthews and Wrigley, 2017).

3.4. History of design thinking

The advent of design thinking has sought to unsettle traditional business methods, nurture innovation through cultivating creativity and to confront the challenges of business by applying a designer's mind-set and has been connected to product design and delivery; whilst in modern times, knowledge-based service delivery has created a platform for design thinking to enhance its scope (Kummitha, 2019). The practice of design thinking may be viewed as fundamental and as a new phenomenon, but its history can be traced back to Participatory Design of the 1960s (Wyman, 2017), which incorporated customer input into the development of software prototypes in their development phase. During the 1970s, participatory design was supplanted by User-created design. This process focused on the interests and needs of the end-user. Design thinking in the 1980s was viewed as an alternative to solving problems. In 1987, a book by Peter Rowe was published, design thinking, thus coining the phrase. Camacho (2015) has agreed with the term and added that design thinking is a unique problem-solving approach that is designed to generate value and achieve innovation. Design thinking was first introduced at Stanford University, by educating students from various disciplines to collaborate effectively in resolving problems in a human-centric manner (Ordonez et al., 2017).

Design as a method of thinking in social sciences traces back to the field of architecture and urban planning from the likes of Simon (1969) and McKim (1973) and then introduced to the business world in 1991, when David M. Kelley established IDEO, a name that became synonymous with design thinking (Qian, 2019). The proficiency of design thinking in the business sector is unquestioned and its popularity has increased through institutions such as Stanford University and corporates such as IDEO and Apple (Tomlinson, 2018). Stanford University is a pioneer in design thinking, despite not having any traditional design-based programmes (Camacho, 2015). In the 1950s, Professor John Arnold prioritised

creativity for engineering education at Stanford University, whereby he highlighted that design engineering should be human-centred. Professor Arnold created a Mechanical Engineering Design group which to this day teaches amongst others, innovation, design theory and creativity, resulting in embedding the seed of all subsequent design activity at Stanford University (Camacho, 2015). Brown (2009) mentioned that design thinking practices originated in the field of design in the professional training of designers, yet its principles can be embraced by everyone and adopted by all sectors. Design thinking has risen from behaviours that were used by 'industrial designers' that followed a well organised and thought-out process in the development of new products (Zieliński and Studzińska, 2015). Design thinking originated in industrial and other practices of design and is viewed as a powerful method for innovation and developing customer solutions (De Smet, Lurie and St George, 2018).

Design thinking pioneers such as Brown (2009) and Kelly (2005) conceptualised *design* and *design thinking*, which are certainly key processes that have originated in the design research field, which coined the method of designing products as '*design thinking*' a phrase that was used first by Archer in 1979 (Kleinsmann, Valkenburg and Sluijs, 2017). During the mid-1980s, scholars commenced with applying design thinking to business management practices, regularly espousing its advantages in scholarly publications such as Design Management Review and non-scholarly business publications such as the Harvard Business Review (Clarke and Craft, 2018). Gözde, Gökhan and Demirbağ-Kaplan (2017) highlighted that although the idea has been around since the 1960s, the term design thinking only surfaced through Peter Rowe's 1987 book, titled *Design Thinking*, and has only recently become a buzzword in the global space.

The term 'design thinking' originally gained momentum in the 1960s when design research explored the design practices of teams operating outside of the design sphere and since the 2000s, design thinking has been active in the business arena (Augsten, Geuy, Hollowgrass, Jylkäs and Klippi, 2018). It was argued by Camacho (2015) argued that the term 'design thinking', has for over 25 years been viewed diversely, although it has gained popularity and a new meaning in the early 1990s by design researchers to study various aspects of designing. Stanford University and IDEO enforced the term in the 2000s when presenting their specific design thinking methods (Camacho, 2015). Dam and Siang (2019) highlighted that Nobel Peace

laureate, Herbert Simon, in his seminal text on design methods, 'The Sciences of the Artificial' released in 1969, outlined the first formal model of the design thinking process. This model consisted of seven major stages, inclusive of components and activities for each stage, and played a significant role in forming some of the design thinking models in practice today.

While the concept of design thinking can be traced back to 1969, with many companies making an effort to embrace its principles, only a few reflected positive growth and profitability through the use of the design thinking principles (Sheppard, Edson and Kouyoumjian, 2017). Dunne (2018) explained that design thinking is viewed as a means of confronting complex challenges in business and in society due to its iterative method of addressing problems and challenges. Over the last decade, the business world has increasingly embraced design thinking. Matthews and Wrigley (2017) indicated that design thinking in recent times has transitioned from process and product design to now being a pivotal component in the strategy of a company as this is seen as a positive development, especially in times of intense change. This process moves beyond the basic analysis; helps to give companies the courage and confidence to develop; use their profession wisely and helps to promote synthesis throughout the organisation by committing to building something that is bold and interesting, rather than seeking better marketing tactics (Keeley, 2015).

Over the past few decades, the design thinking methodology has been a common feature in design related journals like Design Issues (Liedtka, 2018). Design thinking needs to be incorporated into all processes of an organisation and not just selected projects, as the need to view matters from the viewpoint of the customer needs to be ingrained in all functions of the organisation, which can be achieved by establishing a foundation that supports cultural change in all organisational initiatives (Sarrazin and Yeon, 2015). The design thinking models will be discussed in detail further on in this chapter.

3.5. Characteristics of design thinking

One of the most powerful trends making waves in business globally is design thinking (Gözde, Gökhan and Demirbağ-Kaplan, 2017). Faced with an unstable, uncertain and time-consuming global landscape, design thinking requires the bravery and determination needed as adopted by the mindset of an adventurer (Qian, 2019).

Munyai (2016) states that design thinking coaxes social connection by using common terminology which can be related to by diverse groups and can be effective when collaborating on projects and challenges in developing solutions which people can relate to, since through interaction with diverse people, there is always something new to learn. The values, interests and concerns of humans are deliberately incorporated into the design thinking process as it strives to eliminate complex problems by creating innovative solutions through an iterative process of efficiently developing, prototyping and testing several potential solutions until an optimal one that is most value adding is uncovered (Geissdoerfer, Bocken and Hultink, 2016). Smith (2013) identified three core characteristics of design:

- Using local knowledge to identify stakeholders with a human-centric focus based on empathy.
- Thinking creatively through experimenting, exploring and idea generation; and
- Collusion through diversity.

Design thinking, which a process of applying creativity and innovative solutions, is essential in navigating any unpredictability in the ever-changing business landscape (City Press, 2016), with Dunne (2018) describing design thinking as an attitude and a process which is distinct from traditional methods in confronting problems in an organisation. Design that is human-centric is a philosophy, not a type of method that requires observing user needs. Such an approach signifies a shift in viewpoint from one that is technical to one that considers human belief, values, attitudes and cultural settings when developing a solution (Munyai, 2016). More recently, Shahrashbi, Jin and Zheng (2021) argued that design thinking is ambidextrous, as it considers experimentation as part of its process. Warner (2017) mentioned that a strategy that has gained significant attentions recently is design thinking, which is an intersection between what is humanly viable for business and from a technology perspective, whether it is feasible. In understanding the human or ethnographic needs, it is then possible to incorporate the human element, the customer's desire, as well as to record accurate data on these behaviours (City Press, 2016). Design thinking has also created awareness amongst practitioners for its inclination to make a significant connection between users and organisations (Kummitha, 2019).

The fundamental principle of design thinking paves a path that is considerate and deliberate in solving problems, that has an involved process of refining ideas or

rejecting them and proceeding to a new plan of action (Clarke, 2016). Design thinking's foremost feature is the element of always balancing human-centred strategies with company viability and feasibility (Qian, 2019). Design thinking is a user-centred focus area of innovation that draws ideas from the toolkit of the designer to combine the needs of people, the potential of technology and the essential factors for business success (Hubbard, 2017). Design thinking focuses on the end-user, centralising their role in the design process and permitting teams to work efficiently and to collaborate effectively (Brown, 2019). Over the past few years, organisations have implemented design thinking at a strategic level by using design thinking practices as a tool to address key challenges encountered, rather than as a practice for the innovation of products and services (van Reine, 2017). The author who further highlighted that managers began expressing an interest in design thinking as complex challenges in their organisations increased and there was a critical need to develop strategies that could address such challenges (van Reine, 2017).

Design thinking is being increasingly practiced in organisations as it is an integrative process that permits designers, business representatives and even the customer to provide insight into service and product offerings (Robbins, Devitt, Millar and King, 2014). While management is a process of choice, design thinking is one of creativity and innovation (Dunne, 2018) and through the use of reflection and iteration, the theory explores new, modern and more valuable possibilities rather than rely on existing well-established norms. Design thinking has been widely promoted over the past decade as an effective method to confront all types of challenges and problems (Hernández-Ramírez, 2018). In addition, Design thinking has been embraced by universities and companies alike as a method for developing progressive solutions to complex problems (Iskander, 2018).

On the contrary, Carlgren (2013) argued that although design thinking has been getting attention from practitioners, it is surprising that there is very little academic awareness on the application thereof. Design thinking is focused on developing ideas for new products and service offerings (Hernández-Ramírez, 2018). An organisation that embeds design thinking across their operations is integral in setting them apart from their competitors. Warner (2017) mentioned that a design mentality is focused primarily on a solution and is driven towards developing an improved and prosperous future that goes beyond the basic or current need. Dunne (2018)

explained that design thinking has been embraced by all sectors in an economy as businesses should identify which principles can be applied to their projects and at the same time provide all employees within their organisation with the basic knowledge of design thinking (City Press, 2016).

Organisations that have enthusiastically adopted design thinking include governments, non-profit organisations and businesses in their attempts to develop a competitive edge while keeping pace with rapid social, technological and global changes and the subsequent problems that arise.

Keeley (2015) and Naiman (2019) explained that the Design Management Institute selected 15 design-centric companies that used design as a strategy in their process and found that these companies grew much faster and reflected much higher margins than their competitors, with these companies achieving returns that were 2.28 times larger than their competitors over the past decade. Warner (2017) highlighted that Steve Jobs, formerly of Apple, was undoubtedly a pioneer of the design thinking practice, but design thinking has also been embraced by other major global role players such as Apple, Nike, Pepsi IBM and SAP, which have prioritized design as part of their strategies. According to the Design Value Index 2015 produced by the Design Management Institute, these companies have outperformed the S&P500 by 211% over a 10-year period (Naiman, 2019). Unsurprisingly over the years, professionals and scientists have been operating as design thinkers over the course of their careers without ever realising that they were actually performing a design thinking function (Bhatnagar and Badke-Schaub, 2017).

Ivanova and Vodenova (2018) iterated that design thinking as a methodology provides a different approach to solving problems that are complex in nature, dealing with vaguely defined problems. The practice of design is surpassed by design thinking, advancing from merely being a skill to being a well-informed process of understanding, reflection and execution, which supports the desire to resolve complex problems or challenges (Bhatnagar and Badke-Schaub, 2017). Qian (2019) highlighted that the four design thinking principles developed by Meinel and Leifer at Stanford University's Hasso-Plattner-Institute of Design are:

- **Human rule** – All the exercise of design is social inherently. Projects are increasingly becoming collaborative, which has seen the development mentality of the designer increase.

- **Ambiguity rule** – Inevitably, problems are ambiguous. Through over-simplification, designers should resist removing ambiguity as it limits creativity.
- **The re-design rule** – almost all designs are re-design. To fix old issues, people are always looking for novel variants.
- **Tangibility rule** – making prototyping thoughts tangible enables developers to communicate their thoughts more efficiently (Qian, 2019).

At the very end of the process, design was introduced, adding a decorative purpose and helping to create a message in part. Nowadays, the concept of design goes much further than that. It has evolved into the strategic thinking field, integrating all potential external factors into the process of development (Tourism ID, 2017).

Dam and Siang (2019) indicated that design thinking is not necessarily a problem-solving method or process, but moreover a mind-set that can be practiced in each circumstance where innovation or applied thinking is required. Design thinking was in the past embedded in product design, while recently its application has been adopted in system design and is not limited to companies in the private sector, with the public sector now exploring the use of design thinking as a method to develop solutions for the intricate problems and challenges encountered (Matthews and Wrigley, 2017). The feature of creativity is a central component of the design thinking process, particularly focusing on the unmet needs of the consumer, but also incorporating a test segment and refining ideas towards a possible solution that is appealing and must be practical (Warner, 2017).

Design thinking has broadly speaking advanced outside the sector of policy studies, originating within the discipline of design itself, which progressed from the late 1960s through journals such as *Design Issues* and *Design Studies*, where there are disciplines centred on the conventional goals of design thinking, which included architecture, products and eventually processes and service offerings (Clarke and Craft, 2018). Although design thinking is relatively new to management literature, it has been preceded by product design, which was a topic of interest for research over a lengthy period of time (Hasso Plattner, n.d), while the design process was examined by theorists from schools of architecture and design. Dam and Siang (2019) mentioned that design thinking plays a significant part in the new approach towards innovation that is required to resolve current and future problems due to its

ability to permit organisations to adopt a human-centric and scientific focus in resolving problems. Kummitha (2019) suggested that while design thinking literature predominantly focuses on profit for organisations, civil societies have also used design thinking to create social value.

The Design thinking method is best suited for confronting human needs and challenges and making sense of human aspects, regardless of the magnitude of the task at hand (Dam and Siang, 2019). There is a significant benefit measured to organisations, services and products due to its robust methodology in problem-solving and the adaptability of design thinking (Tomlinson, 2018). The creative services leader at Apple, Tim Bresnan, indicated that design is akin to magic, whereby mysterious inputs are channelled through an undefined process and profits are accrued at the end (Tomlinson, 2018). Design thinking comprises co-dependent tools, which build empathy with clients through the use of empathy, understanding the why before answering the what, encouraging different perspectives through the involvement of others in the process by sharing ideas through creativity and experimentation (Shum, 2018). Design thinking pursues the constructing of ideas that is linked to creating an enhanced future state and is unlike critical thinking, which is more deconstructive of ideas (Naiman, 2019).

Design thinking is leading a paradigm shift as it has the potential to guide consumer and business habits and the consumption thereof by developing increased value in product offerings and in the life of the product (Andrews, 2015). As an activity of business, Volkova and Jakobsone (2016) indicated that design thinking does not only modify the form or functionality of a product, but additionally has a direct influence on constraints in the commercial space such as safety, marketability and manufacturing. Design thinking also plays a key role in developing new concepts, transforming business processes, potentially creating new markets and ultimately and essentially adding value to end users.

Shum (2018) explains that inclusive design is a portion of design thinking, whereby people are encouraged to walk together in the journey of experimentation and this step signifies the core of responsible development and creation. This means keeping the client in mind throughout the process by always keeping in mind the interests of the consumer, but at the same time keeping an eye on all external factors: designing a program, a product, a procedure, a system that meets the needs of both customers

and service providers as closely as possible (Tourism ID, 2017) and should be done in a way that is as effective and efficient as possible for the company. Rocco (2015) highlighted that design thinking is reliant on one's intuitive abilities to identify patterns and to create concepts that are not only emotional, but essentially functional and to be more explicit in expressing oneself rather than being reliant in words or symbols.

3.6. The design thinking process

The process of design thinking emanates from well-developed research and practices (Everson, 2014). Ayala (2019) describes the design thinking process as very practical and engaging, with users encouraged to be in the mix from an early stage in the process, thus helping to inform the characteristics of the solution in a real-time setting. Design thinking is a process that is used to identify and solve problems through a user-centric method (Everson, 2014) and leads to efficient decision-making and innovative driven solutions that appeal to customers. Saggia (2017) indicated that the design thinking process creates a mind-set that incorporates human experiences, viability of the business and technological feasibility. Moreover, this process demands a high degree of broad-mindedness, being non-judgemental about the problem and being prepared to experiment repeatedly until a solution is derived (Dunne, 2018).

The essence of design thinking is the placement of users at its heart and is effectively a human-centric method to problem-solving, with its main advantage being the efficient testing on whether a solution can bring real value to its customers by integrating different techniques from the fields of design, business, marketing and psychology (Ayala, 2019). It is vital to involve the user in the design process. The role of customers can differ from proactive involvement, where users help solve and frame design problems to an inactive role where developers interpret customer information without direct involvement with the user group (Miettinen et al., 2012). Understanding what the business is like from the inside and predicting what the end-user really needs can result in truly innovative solutions (City Press, 2016).

When the customer and end-user are involved in the design process, fresh thoughts, service needs and various methods of using technology are met (Miettinen et al., 2012). There has been increased interest in the recent past from scholars who are enquiring about design thinking, as they look to embrace design as an agent of

change and also develop skills using the strategies of a designer (Kleinsmann et. al., 2017). Design thinking is a process that includes users and their inputs in the development of products and services (Kummitha, 2019). The fundamentals of the design thinking process are assembled on being an explorative, iterative and at times a chaotic process (Razzouk and Shute, 2012). Design thinking is a human-centric passage to innovation (Saggia, 2017), a process that supports companies in being empathic around customer and business needs by collaborating to bring functions and observations closer together, with the aim of being highly iterative so that the market can be better embraced and understood. Carlgren (2013) explained that there has been a compounded prominence in developing innovative solutions that result in creating value for the end-user. Design thinking is a process used to address and find solutions to problems that are specifically focused on the needs of the end-users (Warner, 2017). This process has five key attributes:

- A human-centric perspective.
- A robust incorporation of experimenting with artefacts.
- Combining multi-disciplinary teams.
- A comprehensive view of complex problems; and
- A featured 5-step process as depicted in Figure 3.1. (Tourism ID, 2017).

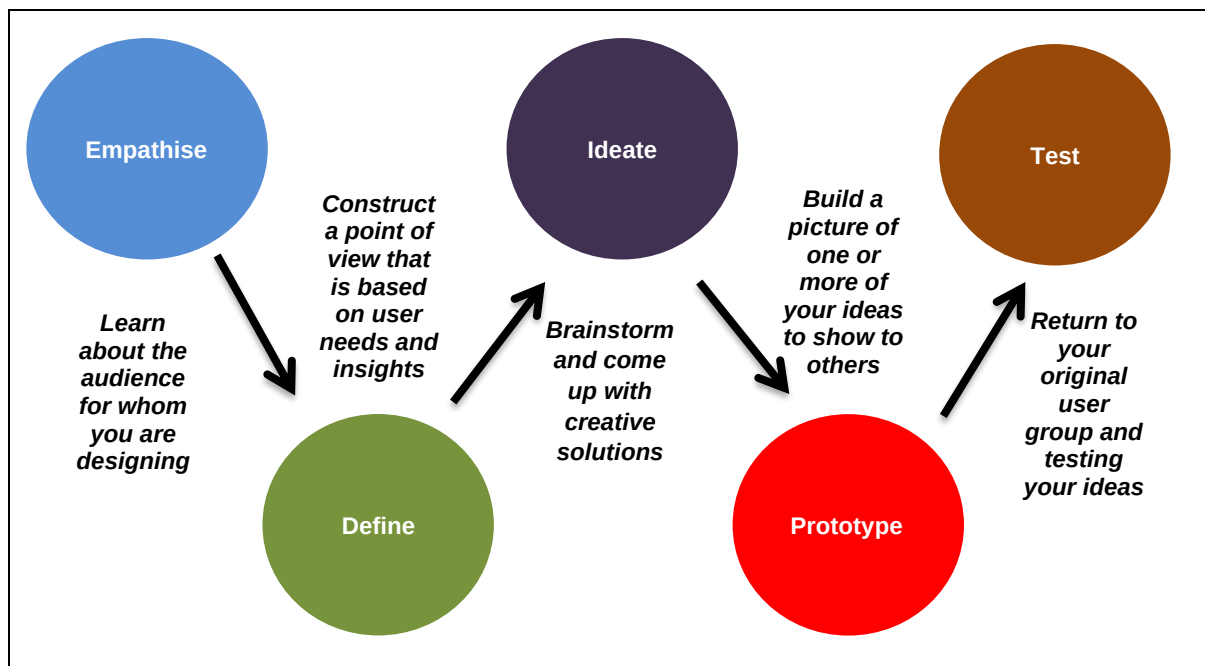


Figure 3.1: Design thinking process

Source: Adapted from Tourism ID (2017)

As a process, design thinking has similarities with service design (Gloppen, 2009). One of the distinguished functions of the service industry is that the role of the customer has evolved (Järf-Wartiovaara, 2017). Businesses operating in the tourism sector are considered as service providers. Warner (2017) explained that design thinking is a meticulous process that drives innovation in small and large companies and is not confined to product and service development, but to other features in an organisation such as procedures, systems and end-user experiences. A design thinking process that is indeed effective will ideally reduce wastage in resources including costs, material and time, and allows the individual to concentrate solely on producing at a high level of quality that is expected (Smith, 2013). Design thinking as a process shapes how solutions can be developed for complex problems encountered by business (Groeger and Schweitzer, 2015). To fully understand these problems and to consequently develop a solution, it is important for organisations to combine business research with user research. Such research can be conducted by organisations speaking to their users and by identifying their latest needs, rather than only dealing with their problems (City Press, 2016).

Brown (2008) indicated that design thinking practices have the capacity to fast-track the needs of people by applying empathy and further using observation to inspire solutions to problems or challenges. Phillimore (2019) mentioned that design thinking begins with the deeper understanding of users' needs and without this significant input, the process can never really unfold into meaningful activity. Primarily, design thinking is a process of innovation, focusing on problem-solving and then applying techniques that explore the unarticulated needs and demands that help create new service and product offerings, ultimately transforming businesses by resolving complex challenges (Robbins et al., 2014). In exploring new paths to engage more effectively with customers and to really feel and understand their needs, the process of design thinking was created (Vianna, Vianna, Adler, Lucena and Russo, 2011). It was further highlighted that it is a process which focuses on the human-being through a deeper understanding of their challenges, developing different perspectives that lead to creative solutions in the problem-solving process.

Similarly, Dunne (2018) explained that it is a trial process as the design thinking method is iterative and involves understanding the user's needs and exploring potential ideas as a possible solution. Conway et al. (2017) contended that design

thinking does not always produce an instant or great impression due to barriers of change, resulting in the idea being catapulted back to the beginning stage. The design thinking method entices more companies that see its true value in supporting their efforts as they seek to break out of their traditional process and find more valuable alternatives (Bayle, 2018). In addition, Kaur (2018) mentioned that design thinking creates new solutions that are underpinned by a well-structured and iterative process.

Design thinking is similar to a healthy and deep conversation which gets better as it progresses. Likewise, testing alongside the user allows for learning from the failures experienced along the way (Munyai, 2016). The design thinking process is collective, in which the designer's methodology is adopted to develop the needs of people in a manner that serves a feasible and viable strategy for the business (Andrews, 2015). In essence, design thinking translates individual needs into demand (Brown, 2009). Design thinking brings to the fore abilities that are possessed by most people but is under-utilised due to more conventional methods being sought for solving problems (Brown and Wyatt, 2010). The authors further contended that the process of design is popular in its methods of overlapping steps as developed by Stanford University's d-school (Figure 3.2.)

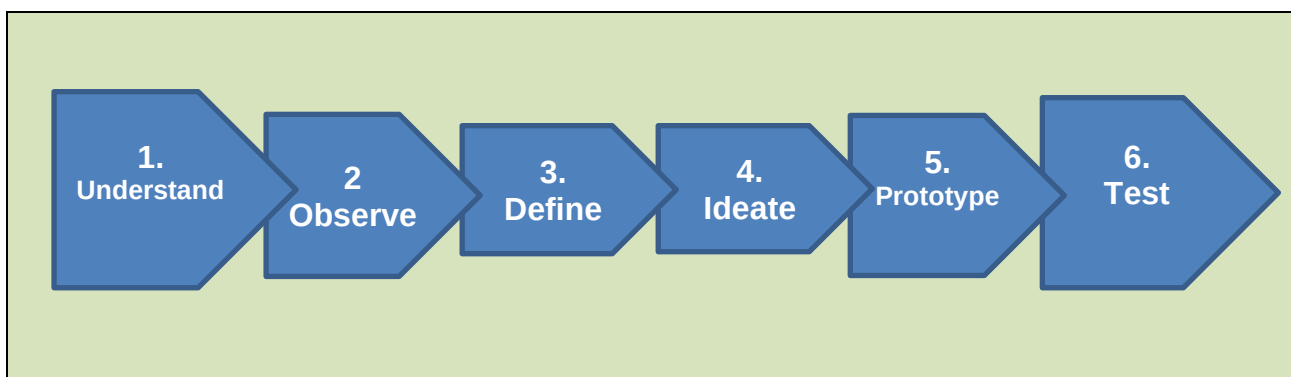


Figure 3.2: Generic design thinking procedure model

Source: Adapted from Geissdoerfer et al. (2016)

The process undertakes the testing of prototypes and involves constant user feedback to further understand the problem and develop a relevant and reliable solution that is underpinned by an active mind-set, which is fundamentally essential when developing solutions for ill-defined problems (Munyai, 2016). Schweitzer, Groeger and Sobel (2015) mentioned that the design thinking process commences

with the definition of the problem, proceeding to exploring the user and their environment, generating potential solutions through idea sharing discussions, then building a prototype that is repeatedly tested with a view to refining the prototype until a best solution is developed. The design thinking process is structured in a manner that removes counterproductive habits that stagnate innovation and in a similar style to quality management, it combines practicality with insights into human behaviour (Liedtka, 2018). The design thinking process in most organisations involves a sequence of steps that creates a clear output at each level until the organisation achieves an implementable stage of innovation. However, Liedtka (2018) mentions that there is further progress in the quest to fully understand customer needs that is unnoticed by executives as each step creates profound experiences for the innovators themselves. The design thinking process consists of five stages: Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test. The process was elaborated on by Tu, Liu and Wu (2018) and is illustrated in Figure 3.3.

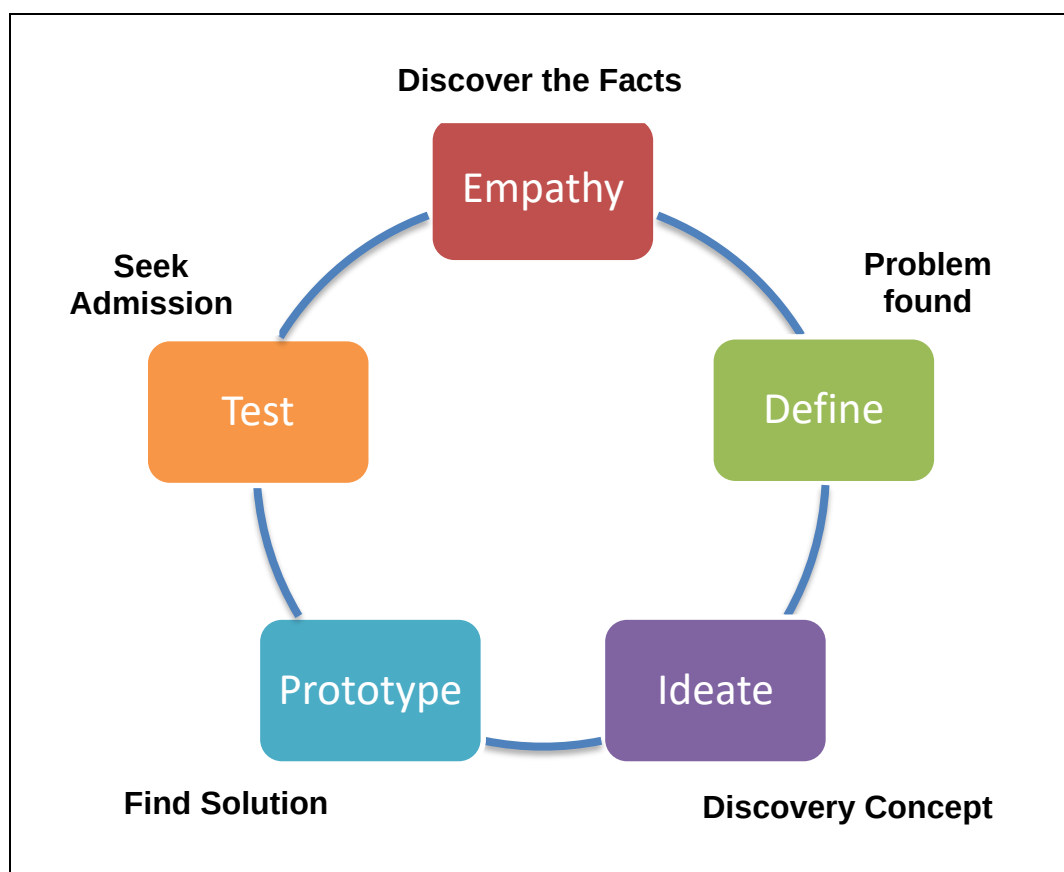


Figure 3.3: Relationship between creative problem-solving and design thinking
Source: Tu et al. (2018)

The process of design thinking allows the user to confront complex problems with ease (Tomlinson, 2018). While design thinking has been trending as a new paradigm, its principles do not vary from other problem-solving models and techniques (Bhatnagar and Badke-Schaub, 2017). The most important question that is asked in the business world: “Why?” is repeatedly asked in the design thinking process when resolving problems (Clarke, 2016). Dam and Siang (2019) indicated that the focus of satisfying human needs and experiences is the primary inspiring aspect when innovative alternatives are sought on a social and business level to replace old models with modern, value-adding methods for the user. The design thinking framework allows for the comprehension and the pursuit of innovation that is value-adding to the end-user (Warner, 2017). The process of design thinking induces thoughts, reasoning and instinct to explore and create potential solutions that adds value and benefits for the end-user, as the priority of this process is more action-oriented and solution-focused rather than problem-focused, involving the use of imagination and analysis (Naiman, 2019). The design thinking process is iterative by seeking to understand the user and their intimate needs; challenging existing assumptions; re-defining problems so that alternative strategies can be identified and implemented, while creating solutions that may not be instantly obvious within one’s immediate level of knowledge (Dam and Siang, 2019).

3.7. Design thinking models

Design thinking is a methodology that has a solution-driven approach to solving problems (Dam and Siang, 2019). Furthermore, Dunne (2018) mentioned that design thinking involves multiple steps that are executed in solving a problem. Dunne (2018) further added that design thinking is extremely practical in confronting complex problems that are unclear and vague by focusing on the distinct needs and addressing these problems in a human-centric manner through creative brainstorming sessions and by being hands-on in developing a prototype and conducting the necessary tests, if required. Ayala (2019) posited that the objectives of design thinking was developed at IDEO, Stanford University, with the aim of identifying the user first and defining their intimate needs and once established, proceeds to developing a suitable solution that adds value and is truly beneficial.

A solution is derived from a series of options generated from the prototype stage, which examines problems with the design and explores alternate solutions (Munyai, 2016). The design thinking method allows interim outputs to be tested with the user, creating an understanding of the problems in design and generating alternate solutions (Munyai, 2016). The understanding of users' needs, and demands is the core objective of design thinking, and is achieved in a procedural manner (Tu et al., 2018), who further described design thinking as a series of creative steps that develops solutions for social and commercial problems and challenges, which advocates for humans being central to the design and thinking functions.

Design thinking is an iterative process which is entrenched and embodied by developing ideas without bias or being judgemental, eliminating any concerns of failure, whilst maximising participation and encouraging valuable inputs. Design thinking differs from critical thinking, which is a contrasting process that is founded on the deconstruction of ideas (Rocco, 2015). Stanford University and IDEO are the forerunners in developing design thinking models (Camacho, 2015) and the practices at Stanford University's d. school focuses on gaining a deep understanding of the needs of people through observation and conversation (Groeger and Schweitzer, 2015). Although the design thinking process is displayed as a linear stage model, the reality in practice is that there may be scenarios whereby different groups within a design team work in a non-linear fashion and concurrently deal with different stages of the design thinking process in order to bring their ideas to life and to visualize any pertinent problems (Dam and Siang, 2019).

Design thinking is an exploratory process, highlighting that there is no single method that is considered the best (Brown, 2009). The insecurity and risk of innovation is minimised through the design thinking process as there is constant engagement with the customer in refining concepts through prototyping, learning, improving and testing (Naiman, 2019). London (2018) states that design thinking is founded on iteration, with emphasis being placed on testing from the strategy phase up until the launch phase and optimising and testing solutions with the user must be a repetitive one. London (2018) further mentioned that organisations that adopt a single design phase and do not proceed further with design-related activities are more likely to find no success in their solutions, as compared to those who optimise design thinking in their strategies. The design thinking practice requires all employees to experience failure repeatedly (Bason and Austin, 2019). By being able to accept failure, Sarrazin

and Yeon (2015) aver that learning as the journey unfolds and applying iteration are essential features of the design thinking process. The design thinking process consists of five key stages, namely empathise, define, ideate, prototype and testing, and it is non-linear, with each step not having to follow any particular order (Ayala, 2019).

Several models of design thinking are being used currently, which range from three to seven stages (Ordonez et al., 2017). These include:

- The **3-phase model** developed by Tim Brown, CEO of IDEO, which includes the following sequence: 'Inspiration' which identifies and ignites action for a specific problem; 'Ideation' which develops potential solutions; and 'Implementation' which involves the testing of ideas
- The **d-school model** developed by the Hasso-Plattner Institute at Stanford University has five stages: Empathise, Define, Ideate, Prototype and testing.
- The **Double Diamond model** developed by the UK's Design Council has the following four step process: Discover, Define, Develop and Delivery.

It is evident that all models have common features that define, develop, prototype and test scenarios, which are ready for implementation at the end of the process (Ordonez et al., 2017).

3.7.1. Brown's model of design thinking – IDEO

Brown's Model of design thinking (2008), presented through IDEO and highlighted in Harvard Business Review, proposed three phases as highlighted in **Figure 3.4** below:

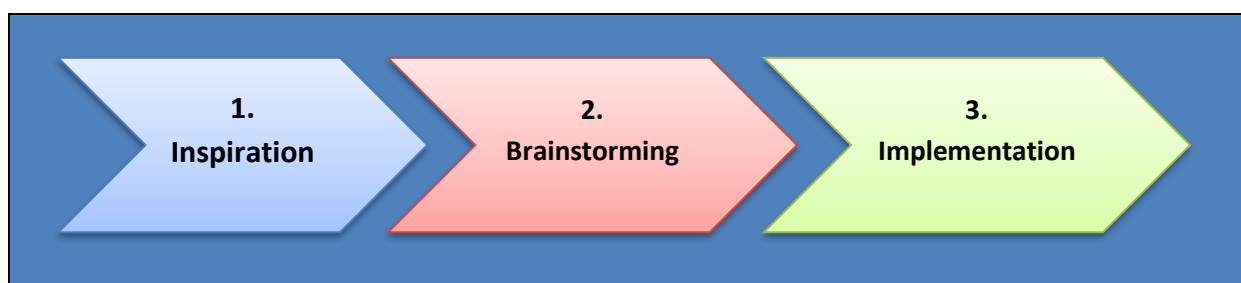


Figure 3.4: IDEO's procedure model of design thinking (Brown, 2008)

Source: Adapted from Schallmo et al. (2018)

1. Inspiration

Brown (2008) indicated that this phase involves comprehending the problem and the environment that it exists in. In this phase, the problem is defined whilst identifying the user's needs and making an observation of the environment (Schallmo et al., 2018). Moreover, phases of this model are interconnected and not linear (Schallmo et al., 2018).

2. Brainstorming

In this phase, ideas are developed and tested (Brown, 2008). In the process of generating ideas, brainstorming sessions are facilitated, user involvement is frequent and testing and re-development takes place (Schallmo et al., 2018).

3. Implementation

The final stage of Brown's model is the implementation of the prototype (Brown, 2008, whereby a business case is developed through a communication strategy that details the implementation (Schallmo et al., 2018).

3.7.2. d.School's approach to design thinking – Stanford University

Schallmo et al. (2018) indicated that the d. school model is grounded in a mind-set theory and its principles are outlined below:

1. Activity

The activity takes precedence over an official meeting.

2. Experiment

This process makes use of prototypes to gain experience.

3. Empathy

It is important to develop solutions based on empathy for users.

4. Visualisation

Ideas are created through visualisation.

5. Transparency

Different problems are identified and displayed to create a common vision.

6. Procedure

There must be a clear position within the process on the goal and techniques.

7. Diversification

Team members from different backgrounds collaborate on a common goal.

The procedure model has five phases and is illustrated in Figure 3.4.

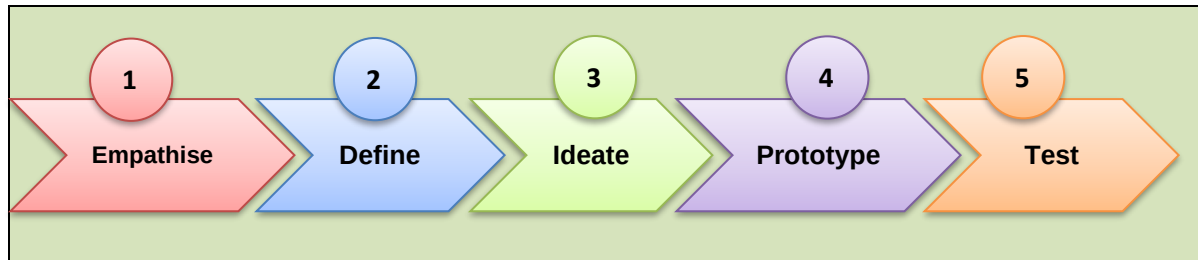


Figure 3.5: Procedure model of design thinking (d. School)

Source: Adapted from Schallmo et al. (2018)

The five (5) stages of this design thinking model are explained in detail below:

3.7.2.1. Empathise

One of the main objectives of design thinking is empathising or applying empathy (Ayala, 2019). In this phase, the behaviour of users is observed, then drawing from their experience, further information is gathered, leading to a better understanding of the problems and essentially the users themselves (Schallmo et al., 2018). By applying empathy, one becomes more sensitive, aware of the challenges and the need to provide a solution to the problem (Allio, 2014). Work to fully understand the user that one is designing for. Do this by observing, interacting and immersing oneself in their experiences (Tourism ID, 2017). The application of empathy or empathising with the user's problem is a key trait which does not necessarily translate into analytics or data as design thinking incorporates empathy into the process of solving problems, making it qualitatively intangible (London, 2018).

Design thinking uncovers the unarticulated needs of the customer by allowing the innovator to live the experience first-hand (Liedtka, 2018). When applying design thinking principles, the problem that is being solved is not always one's own problem or challenge. Therefore, it becomes essential to apply empathy and gain insight for those individuals so that one can design for them. However, learning or mastering these insights is not necessarily easy as people's minds habitually clear out a whole

lot of facts before they are able to realise it. One needs a 'fresh set of eyes' to learn to see things and by applying empathy, it literally gives one a new set of eyes, visualising a different perspective. Directly engaging with people reveals a considerable amount about their values and thought processes, and a solid understanding of these values and beliefs is what good designs are constructed upon (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021).

Empathy is the central element of a human-centred design process as it involves the understanding of people's needs within the design context. The human-centric approach is the heart of design thinking (Schweitzer, Groeger and Sobel, 2015) and the benefit of this approach is the creation of innovations that are rich in emotion-based solutions. Applying empathy in this process allows for the problem to be viewed and felt through the eyes of others, particularly those affected by the problem and in doing so, understanding their preceding actions. This phase of the design thinking process is a significant attribute of those applying and practicing design thinking. This phase involves making a resolute effort in understanding the behaviour of individuals - the way things are done, why they are conducted in such a particular manner and also to understand their physical and emotional needs (Hasso Plattner, n.d). To gain an empathic understanding of the problem at hand typifies the first stage of the design thinking process. This would involve more engagement from the consulting experts to observe and identify the deeper lying causes or challenges that the end-user faces. Schweitzer et al. (2015) indicated that by applying empathy, observation and by engaging with the user, this practice enables a fresh view of the problem to interpret and understand their physical behaviour, thus creating a virtual view and feel of the problem, which triggers a mind-set that produces an appropriate solution that satisfies the desire of people.

In a process such as design thinking, which is human-centric, empathy is significant and moreover crucial, as empathy allows a designer's own assumptions to be set aside and the prime focus is on the user and their needs (Dam and Siang, 2019).

3.7.2.2. Define

The provisions made available by the design thinking methodology is ideal for use, as the primary focus is on empathising deeper with customers and then developing solutions to cater for these needs, unlike dreaming up technological advancements

and subsequently proposing technological solutions simply for the sake of technology (Sarrazin and Yeon, 2015). The Define stage uses information gathered from the previous stage to identify firm needs and formulate a strong position to address the challenge or problem (Schallmo et al., 2018). Tourism ID (2017) advises one to process the results from the empathy research and synthesize them to shape a consumer point of view that will be tackled with the project. All information accumulated during the empathic stage is combined, observations are analysed, and the problem is defined in a human-centred manner (Dam and Siang, 2019).

The Define mode of the layout process is all approximately bringing readability and attention to the layout space. In this stage, once the designers are alerted to the exact problem, they establish elements that can serve as the solution to the problem, or more preferably engage the end-user to provide a resolution to the problem. Once this is established, the process then begins leading towards the 'ideate' phase and commences with asking questions such as "How might we?" or "How could we?", in an attempt to find ideas for the desired solutions (Dam and Siang, 2019).

3.7.2.3. Ideate

This phase generates ideas on the problems or challenges identified in the Define stage, with the aim of presenting a range of assorted ideas that can be used in the next phase (Schallmo et al., 2018). The process of ideating is required for the transition from problem identification to the creation of solutions for those experiencing the problem or challenge as the collaborative nature of design thinking enables ideation sessions to be held with stakeholders from diverse backgrounds but joined by a common interest (Stevens, 2019). This phase allows the designer to combine their understanding of the problem and those that they are designing for, while additionally using their own imagination to generate a concept or a solution. (Hasso Plattner, n.d). Tourism ID (2017) advises one to explore a wide range of possible solutions by creating a wide range of possible solutions, enabling one to go beyond the obvious and explore a variety of ideas (Tourism ID, 2017).

In applying the design thinking process, the designer would by now have empathised with the user's needs as well as clearly defined the problem. In this stage, ideas are now brainstormed and generated in an attempt to identify new solutions to the problem. It is encouraged that as many ideas as possible are generated in order for

a variety of possible solutions to be investigated and tested. (Dam and Siang, 2019). The Ideate mode in the process concentrates on the generation of ideas, basically a method of going broad in terms of ideas and concepts. This phase sets in motion the foundations for building prototypes and developing creative solutions to the problems and issues faced by users (Schallmo et al., 2018).

3.7.2.4. Prototype

By developing prototypes, it gives rise to tangible solutions which are useful in gaining experience for the team and users to review (Schallmo et al., 2018). Prototyping allows for cooperative work with stakeholders to design multi-channel and consumer service systems. The participation of stakeholders helps to identify methods of realizing thoughts in the concept design stage (Miettinen et al., 2012). In this stage, the design team will create numerous versions (prototypes) to experiment with and to investigate the problem and develop solutions for the products concerned and is focused on examining and enriching potential solutions through an iterative process that discards prototypes from earlier concepts (Geissdoerfer et al., 2016). This stage is referred to as the 'experimental phase' whereby each prototype is investigated, accepted, improved and re-examined or rejected by the end-user. A prototype's objective is not to finish the design. It is about learning about the idea's strengths and weaknesses and identifying innovative directions (Miettinen et al., 2012). London (2018) suggested that if organisations prototype early and cheaply, then the chance of avoiding a major and costly error further on in the process is much higher. Towards the end of this process and stage, the designers will have a better understanding of any evident problems or constraints within the product and how the end-user will behave or react towards the end-product (Dam and Siang, 2019). Tourism ID (2017) advises one to turn one's ideas into a tangible form that allows one to witness and connect with them, learning and gaining more empathy in the process (Tourism ID, 2017).

Prototypes should be product, technological, social interactions and can communicate a service proposal rapidly and cost-effectively and prompt questions about technical feasibility, customer desirability and company viability (Miettinen et al., 2012). A prototype should be a creation or solution that a user can interact with or experience. A storyboard can help someone walk through a scenario – which is

good. However, it will be great and more beneficial to have them partake in a role-play of a physical environment that one has created, as this involvement will bring out real responses and emotions from the individual one is assisting. The reasons for prototyping include:

- **Problem-solving and creating of ideas:** Build ideas by thinking
- **Communication is critical:** If a picture speaks a thousand words, then a prototype is worthy of a thousand pictures to the end-user.
- **Begin a conversation:** By engaging with users regularly, a rich perspective is created and there is more direct dialogue with the end-user.
- **Testing the possibilities:** it allows the designer to test various possible solutions without committing too much, too early in the process.
- **Effectively managing the process of problem-solving:** larger problems can be systematically broken down into smaller and more testable parts. (Hasso Plattner, n.d).

3.7.2.5. Test

The Test phase involves the testing of the prototypes that have been created, making enhancements, gaining additional information on the user and re-formulating the problem or challenge if required (Schallmo et al., 2018). In the test phase of the design thinking process, designers rigorously test the complete end-products that were identified from the best solutions put forward in the prototype stage. Although it is the last phase in the 5-stage model, Testing is a rather monotonous process, as results from this stage are often used to re-define multiple problems. This stage is used to better understand the users in order to empathise with their issues; and to acquire a deeper level of understanding of the product and those that make use of it (Dam and Siang, 2021). Using observations and feedback to refine ideas, understand more about the user, and improve the initial point of view (Tourism ID, 2017).

The Test stage in the design thinking process is when one requests a response on the prototype that one has created, which serves as another opportunity to express empathy for those that you are developing a solution for. The reasons for testing include:

- **Refining the prototype:** Testing means that one has to go back to the drawing board sometimes to refine one's thought process.
- **Deeper understanding of your User.** This phase increases engagement and observation through building empathy again and can often yield insights that were initially unexpected.
- **Re-framing the Problem.** The Testing phase may also reveal that not only was the solution incorrect, but there was also failure in framing the problem (Hasso Plattner, n.d).

3.8. Design thinking as a capability

The soul of design thinking does not lie in design, but effectively in thinking (Tu et al., 2018). Design thinking is a mechanism that has strategic values and must be used in contributing value by providing proper solutions to the end-user (Docherty, 2017). Design thinking is not only a profound method in advancing innovation but is also very much aligned and responsive to the deeper needs of humans (Hernández-Ramírez, 2018). The design thinking blueprint enables participants to fully understand how any system operates by linking with all elements in its environments (Munyai, 2016). The emergence of design thinking is progressively being used to enable employees to view matters; challenges or problems from the perspective of the customer; and has created a paradigm shift from being product-centric to customer-centric (Smith, 2013). Gözde, Gökhan and Demirbağ-Kaplan (2017) explained that the emergent culture of design thinking combines the experiences and views of people with innovative and creative methods that are participative and visual, leading to advanced empathy and communication in attempting to solve complex problems.

Munyai (2016) highlighted that design thinking combines the sensibility of a designer with problem-solving techniques to satisfy the needs of people in a viable and feasible manner, using a process that develops sustainable services, products and systems. International companies such as Philips, Sony and General Electric (Matthews and Wrigley (2017), and in addition, Apple, Nike Disney, Proctor and Gamble (Schweitzer et al., 2015) have adopted design thinking as a problem-solving mechanism within their organisation. The rationale is that it is important for customers to identify opportunities in the market and to have the knowledge of how

to respond to these accordingly. Conway et al. (2017) argued that design thinking can be a rather enthralling process in the development of ideas and solutions, but it fails to acknowledge that without considering power dynamics and systematic complexity, the best of ideas can be left unused on the shelf and thus have absolutely no impact. In the pursuit of identifying design thinking as an alternative to scientific thinking in a professional and academic context, it is extremely important for designers to truly interpret the nature of the design process (Cassim, 2013).

The design thinking approach allows organisations to listen differently and in so doing, organisations are able to build the correct products that solve the problems of customers (City Press, 2016). Few would dispute that the efforts of design thinking are to create value for customers. As Dunne (2018) suggested, design thinking can be adopted in any problem-solving circumstance to build loyalty to the organisation. Wyman (2017) further explained that design thinking is a methodology used to solve problems and as a tool that organisations use for innovation. Alawad, Bettaieb, Alothmany and Alghamdi (2017) indicated that business strategies have blended with design thinking, with the focus being on the comprehension of the design thinking process, a tool that places the solution as the focal point of the innovation process. Aside from prioritizing the development of solutions to problems, this model firstly considers the feasibility, questioning whether one can do it in the current technological landscape, and secondly, the viability factor, which examines its endurance in the commercial market (Wyman, 2017).

Zielinski and Studzinska (2015) highlight that in service and manufacturing industries, improvement activities will adopt diverse characteristics which are influenced by industry specifics, the organisation itself and the conditions in which it operates. Wyman (2017) highlighted that earlier literature established the link between design thinking and the performances of companies. There are often both underlying and visible causes when organisations experience customer-related problems. When applying design thinking in a service environment, it is critical for the process to create value for the customer by creating a marketing appeal, thus making it essential for the customer to be involved in the development process (Patrício, Gustafsson and Fisk, 2018). The Design Management Institute's Design Value Index stated that during the period 2005 to 2015, design-led companies had achieved significant market advantage, out-performing the S&P500 by 211 percent (Sheppard et al., 2017).

The term design thinking evolved from an attitude that was previously developed by industrial engineers (Zielinski and Studzinska, 2015). This attitude was a well-thought out and structured process from a primary concept to the formation of a new product. The goal of this process was to fulfil the functional, constructive and effective requirements, ensuring that the solution met the specific needs of the problem at hand. The organisation's business model requires empathy, which is focused on the daily challenges (Wyman, 2017). This should be a key factor in building the business strategy of these organisations as it is important to understand the drivers of the business needs and in using this approach, organisations can focus on what business really needs, not what they say they need, and why they need it (i.e., the deeper needs of the challenges or problems) (Zielinski and Studzinska, 2015). Design thinking functions in a creative, systematic and analytical manner that allows an individual an opportunity to engage in the experimental and creation phase to developing solutions, to provide constant feedback until satisfaction is realised, whilst also providing enhancements to the solution (Bhatnagar and Badke-Schaub, 2017).

Organisations must first understand these behaviours and then develop their business models to sustain new competitive advantages and identify new sources of growth and when developing a new product or solution, business should begin with the required outcomes as this helps frame the rest of the dialogue (City Press, 2016). Turner (2013) explained that the most critical factor in making design thinking effective in an organisation is the ability to ensure that those performing the function can envisage "the success" before even commencing with the task. As companies increasingly encounter complex challenges, personnel in such organisations are being drawn to methods that provide effective solutions to problems, with recent literature becoming vocal around social organisations making use of design thinking (Kummitha, 2019) in their attempts to develop social value. Boztepe (2016) contended that the attraction of design thinking has broadened its scope from the formation of products to now playing a key role in the development of an organisation's corporate strategy.

With the dynamics of the global business environment facing constant change, it has become essential for organisations to find a balance between efficiency and flexibility, resulting in the need to solve problems in a more spontaneous manner, rather than with past predictability (Hasso Plattner, n.d). Design thinking

implementation in large organisations has surpassed their research initiatives (Dunne, 2018) and this is a testament of their desire for fresh solutions to overcome complex problems. Tu et al. (2018) explained that creativity is generated from thinking. The rise in complex problems globally led to organisations seeking new approaches in confronting these challenges and modern methods to enhance innovative capabilities (Tomlinson, 2018).

Docherty (2017) highlighted that design thinking can serve as an enabler to problem-solving, whereby diversified solutions are presented, resulting in the emergence of new insights to address complex problems and challenges. Implementing a design thinking model could lead to failure if the necessary mind-set and culture is not established. It has become essential to foster a design thinking state of mind which realises true value for the organisation (Groeger and Schweitzer, 2015). Design Thinking incorporates the tools that are used traditionally by designers as an approach to solving problems and challenges (Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018), while its practices allow innovative ideas to be attempted without being in the profession as a designer (van Reine, 2017). The design thinking process plays a key role in service design as solutions are designed around customers through development and prototyping (Patri'cio, Gustafsson and Fisk, 2018). Design thinking has received enormous popularity across many sectors and divisions, particularly in human resources, marketing and business development (Augsten et al., 2018).

Due to its potential to enhance innovation across wide-ranging issues and to diverse organisations, design thinking has attracted growing interest from business scholars (Liedtka, 2018). The increasing reputation of design thinking is mirrored by the emerging number of published and unpublished articles detailing the prospects of design thinking and its ability to promote new ways of thinking (Matthews and Wrigley, 2017). Design thinking aspires to create value-added solutions to consumers by optimising its framework for understanding and seeking creativity (Warner, 2017), which is a key factor in the design thinking process, particularly in pioneering new solutions, whilst at the same time ensuring practicality. Design thinking is rooted in innovation that is human-centric and commences with the understanding of the unarticulated needs of the user (Naiman, 2019). If different divisions within an organisation or different stakeholders from the same industry struggle to agree or to work together, then a few design thinking-led brainstorming sessions could be the key to bringing more synergy to common objectives (Stevens,

2019). Applying the mind-set of a designer combines the desirable aspect from a human viewpoint to what is viable economically and what is technologically feasible as it allows those not equipped as skilled designers the use of creative applications to address various and diverse challenges (Naiman, 2019).

3.9. Design thinking and problem-solving

Design thinking can be described as a methodology for problem-solving that is refined through working experience (Galli, Pino and Suteu, 2017) and is basically a human-centric method for solving problems and challenges (Namdarian, 2018). The design thinking practice explores a range of views aimed at problem-solving and reveals the best possible solution, while gaining a deeper understanding of the user's behaviours, leading to better results in the future (Ivanova and Vodenova, 2018). The state of the design thinking process is similar to any other problem-solving technique, whereby discontentment with the current method or service offering leads to a determined effort to resolve the problem or challenge (Bhatnagar and Badke-Schaub, 2017). Clarke (2016) highlighted that organisations that embrace design thinking as a method to solving problems move beyond ideas that simply sound good and delve into places where progress can really make an impact that offers a lasting solution. This process is confronted with two actualisations. These include:

- ***Problems don't always have a first-time resolution***

There is a strong inclination in finding a quick fix. However, this does not result in a permanent solution to the problem.

- ***Design defines a process, rather than describe the ending***

The core essence of design thinking follows a process of problem-solving, a process that eliminates the quick-fix mentality which stagnates real progress and replaces it with more significant engagement around the problem.

In recent times, design thinking has gained substantial coverage for its potential in addressing major problems across the globe (Kummitha, 2019). Many agree that design thinking is one of the ideal new ways of operating to successfully address complex issues as it produces progressive solutions. Cowan (2012) posited that

each complex problem is precise and new thus requiring solutions that have not been realised as yet. It is therefore a user-centred focus area of problem-solving that draws ideas from the toolkit of the designer to combine the needs of people, the potential of technology and the essential factors for business success. Moreover, Keeley (2015) explains that design thinking uses a different approach in solving a problem when compared to the direction that is typically used by analysts. Gözde, Gökhan and Demirbağ-Kaplan (2017) highlighted that design thinking has the ability to be multifocal and empathic in dealing with complex problems, thus making the methods of design thinking a potential solution to handling challenges in the business world. It begins with the imagination of a solution which does not exist and gradually creates a path to realising this solution.

Saggia (2017) posited that design thinking is a human-centric passage to innovation that supports companies in being empathic around customer and business needs by collaborating to bring functions and observations closer together, with the aim of being highly iterative so that the market can be better embraced and understood. Design thinking makes use of innovative methods in its practice of problem solving, with researchers from varied disciplines adopting design thinking methodologies to resolve problems (Pusca and Northwood, 2018). Design thinking is a process that confronts problems using the strategies and sensibilities of a designer in order to meet the requirements of people (Cowan, 2012).

Vianna et al. (2011) explained that although design has traditionally been associated with specifically developing products, the main objective of design is to create value in the lives of people. Pusca and Northwood (2018) highlighted that businesses are realising the value that design contributes towards innovative thinking that supports problem-solving in the corporate sphere. In current times, a customer expects an efficient encounter that is personalised, quick and most importantly engaging to the extent that their involvement in providing solutions to problems that they are experiencing has become fundamental to the process (Bull and Jeruchimowitz, 2016).

However, taking note of the customer's voice only takes one to the half-way point. Through the application of design thinking, one journeys through a human-centric approach to gain a deeper insight into the user's problems or challenges and then commences with idea generation, developing prototypes, testing and then finally

applying an appropriate solution for the end-user (Bull and Jeruchimowitz, 2016). User-centred practices contain the perspectives of those stricken by a given problem in the decision-making process (Cowan, 2012). This process is beneficial when addressing complex issues as it discloses how the problem really affects people's lives and highlights the gap between desired experiences and reality. In design thinking, this simply means placing people first. Cowan (2012) explained that when the customer is at the centre of the design process, decisions are made with a prime focus on the individual rather than the system, thus the primary motive of design thinking is to make a meaningful contribution to people's lives.

Elsbach and Stigliani (2018) suggested that in order to solve complex problems, the ability to think like a designer will be best suited if design thinking is infused into the culture of an organisation. It is essential to seek in-depth knowledge of the problem and to then develop an effective solution by approaching the problem from a different perspective. As Vianna et al. (2011) indicated, design thinking favours collaborative efforts of diverse ideas that lead to creative solutions for the challenges or problems experienced. Design thinking is unique as it generates progressive solutions to problems and is purpose-driven (Cowan, 2012); is fundamentally concerned with gaining a deeper understanding of the problems faced by customers; and through observation and iteration, works closely with the customer to develop an ideal solution that is preferred by the customer (Fintechnews, 2016). It is essentially a robust method of problem-solving in a human-centric manner and is widely accepted as a human-centric approach to addressing human, technological and business-related challenges and problems (Camacho, 2015).

Design thinking is an approach used at some point in the process of designing and a method for solving problems comprising of firstly identifying the problem, then developing solutions based on the needs of the user (Fintechnews, 2016). It is a process that is initiated to solve complex problems and is channelled to generate practical and positive solutions for end-users (Warner, 2017) while focusing on creating a prospective future by going beyond the current requirements. The creative and business sectors use the design thinking methodology to provide solutions to diverse and complex problems (Tomlinson, 2018). The motive of design thinking is to plan and conceive what does not currently exist (Cowan, 2012). Cowan (2012) further explained that designers consider new realities by focusing on a problem and deciphering connections amongst reputedly unrelated things, consequently creating

progressive solutions. This manner in solving problems, referred to as design thinking, can be applied to nearly any problem, as highlighted by Çeviker-Çınar, Mura and Demirbağ-Kaplan (2017). The authors state that design thinking has the ability to be multifocal and empathic in dealing with complex problems, thus making the methods of design thinking a potential solution to handling challenges in the business world. However, Patrićio, Gustafsson and Fisk (2018) critically explained that requesting solutions from customers as a participant to the design process may lead to minimal improvements to the existing services, thus an expert mind-set is required to develop thorough solutions for customers.

Design thinking is a central application in problem-solving circumstances (Matthes and Wrigley, 2017) and the authors additionally mentioned that the design thinking end-goal seeks desirable outcomes that are viable for users, while still being feasible despite design and technical constraints. Vianna et al. (2011) mentioned that design thinking challenges behaviour, feelings and thought patterns, ideally developing solutions that create new significance and trigger distinct elements such as sensory, cognitive and emotional, which are central within the human experience. Design thinking methods enable organisations to identify the parts or patterns of a complex problem, gain a wider perspective and then develop a solution based on the acquired knowledge of the problem being solved (Hasso Plattner, n.d). In current times, the marketplace is more global than ever before, resulting in companies facing a heightened level of competition and diminishing the chance of standing above the rest (London, 2018). Innovative and creative abilities allow an organisation to sustain its competitive advantage (Hughes, Lee, Tian, Newman and Legood, 2018).

In contrast to the past when traditional methods were used, whereby organisations would address a problem by assuming the needs of the consumer and then expedite the development of a solution, whereas in current times, the consumer is constantly engaged in a participatory capacity in a process that is iterative, with failure and learning serving as a key part of the process (Sarrazin and Yeon, 2015). The kind of problems that design thinking confronts makes it unique (Stevens, 2019) as it deals with the highly complex and 'wicked problems', the kind of problems that cannot be resolved using standard problem-solving techniques as these methods will likely lead to even more problems. By virtue of their professional abilities, designers have become experts at applying their skills to a much broader area of problem-solving. Schweitzer et al. (2015) highlighted that globally, organisations are adopting design

thinking practices to resolve complex problems and organisational management issues, whilst also exploring innovation in service offerings and the development of business strategies. Wicked problems are existent globally and include poverty, climate change as well as those affecting businesses and organisations such as keeping hold of market share and dominance, competitive advantage and the achievement of sustainable growth (Stevens, 2019).

Schweitzer et al. (2015) indicated that design thinking is an attempt at being creative in problem-solving and can be utilised at a much broader level. Design thinking as a process connects with the needs of individuals in a manner that is viable as a strategy for business and is feasible on a technical level, which ultimately translates into a valuable commodity for the customer.

3.10. Design thinking as a strategy

In the highly competitive global context of 21st century organisations, innovation is now not a mere luxury but has become more of a necessity (Kremer, Villamor and Aguinis, 2019) as organisations that implement creativity as a culture within their organisations to transform concepts into new commodities move significantly ahead of the competition. In current times, the business world is quick and implacable. Blink, and one is going to miss the recent technology wave. Rest, and all over the globe one will fall behind one's rivals (Qian, 2019).

Innovation is essential to success for companies and when individuals think about innovation, they believe about design (Qian, 2019). The impact of the Industrial revolution on human development has resulted in analysts re-strategizing economic, production and business processes aimed at extracting more value in terms of time and resources (Dam and Siang, 2021), whilst searching earnestly for innovative capabilities (Kwon et al., 2021), highlighting that it is at this stage where design thinking gains prominence by drastically altering tactics to resolving problems and challenges by removing the shackles of the old methods that one was accustomed to and breathing a fresh look into global space and challenges. An economy is basically based on innovation, with the development and implementation of new knowledge. Competitiveness in all industries is increasingly dependent on how people gather, organize and market their know-how (Draskovic, 2015). Unlike conventional management theory, a design process is not aimed at preventing errors, but at

recognizing them as soon as possible and finding solutions to them under the motto “fail early, fail cheap, fail safe” (Ribeiro and Souza, 2021).

The concept of design thinking attracted attention particularly from management scholars and managers as they seek new methods to strategise, and they keep pace with competition globally (Kleinsmann et. al., 2017). In recent years, design thinking has been the subject of debate for its role in the business world. Furthermore, the increasing interest in its methods is due to its potential in developing new insights into transforming businesses and organisational culture through new design methods, which has seen famous global brands experimenting with design thinking to enhance organisational effectiveness (Ivanova and Vodenova, 2018). Usually, when individuals think about design, they think about the end-product or outcome, but design has developed into an ideology of organisation (Qian, 2019). The features of design thinking could possibly be utilised in enhancing sustainable business models by incorporating these traits into the value-mapping stages (Geissdoerfer et al., 2016). For organisations, the significance of design thinking has never been higher. By embracing design thinking, Qian (2019) states that leaders can gain a much deeper understanding of sector trends and consumer behaviours and generate alternatives that lead to more company development and competitive edge. Innovation that is design-led has displayed a positive return in customer-centric organisations, with the application of design thinking not confined to product development, but expanded to developing governance strategies, innovative and modern concepts and service solutions that can also be used to devise new strategies and services across all sectors (Conway et al., 2017). Many individuals believe that this is about the concepts, but it is about executing ideas, especially when a concept is not useful if it does not satisfy customers' requirements or suited to the business strategy (Qian, 2019). Such ideas are effectively not good for business if it takes 10 years to execute. The design thinking approach involves the integration of the entire system from product development, service and then proceeding to communication strategies upon which a company can then market itself in society, giving rise to its strategy (Matthews and Wrigley, 2017).

Past studies (Simon 1993, 1996 cited in Boztepe, 2016) have suggested that a component of an organisation's strategy is designing. The objective of management is to create a new state for the company within the market it operates in. Therefore, by practicing design thinking, an organisation is strategizing to move into or create a

new future state. Innovation and the development of new ideas to address challenges and problems are being viewed widely as the basis of competitive advantage in a highly fierce environment (Carlgren, 2013). It has become imperative that forming the correct mind-sets, selecting a proficient team and creating a culture which supports innovations are the essential aspects of escalating successful innovative abilities within organisations, companies and in society (Dam and Siang, 2019). this is elaborated upon below:

- ***Forming the correct mind-sets for Innovation***

Albert Einstein mentioned that “logic can take you from point A to point B, whilst imagination can take you everywhere (Dam and Siang, 2019), who further indicated that it is essential to create cultures within the organisation that are open, collaborative and explorative mind-sets that combine logic and imagination, resulting in innovative solutions, symbolising the precise traits of design thinking

- ***Developing a Proficient team***

In design thinking ~~design thinking~~, the collaboration of cross-disciplined teams plays a significant role by combining designers’, business analysts’ and the strategists’ input to develop ideas that are truly revolutionary. Thus, in order to facilitate innovation through design thinking, organisations must move away from the silo model approach and move into more cross-disciplined teamwork.

- ***Creating a culture that supports Innovation***

Thinking patterns are highly influenced by the environments one inhabits, thus impacting on one’s ability or inability to innovate. Dam and Siang (2019) indicated that companies such as Google invest in developing workspaces formed with recreational and unconventional equipment not simply for creating a fun working environment, but intentionally to allow employees to tap into their imaginative thinking that develops breakthrough innovation through exploration in an unconventional and relaxed environment.

The application of design and design thinking on a broader level, as explained by Volkova and Jakobsone (2016), is the uncharted area of earlier management literature into developing needs and strategies for businesses that provide real value

for the end-user and for improving the value of the organisation. Many organisations globally have realised the increasing importance in utilising the capacity to innovate as a key strategic opportunity (Schweitzer et al., 2015). The values and the practicality of the design methodology, particularly design thinking is viewed as a prized technique for a variety of areas in the decision-making process for management (Rocco, 2015). Over the past few decades, scholars in management academia globally have stressed that the most significant outcome of design thinking should be the creation of value-adding products that leverage into a competitive advantage (Volkova and Jakobsone, 2016). The era of innovation has since moved on from being manufacturer-centric to being more user-focused, signifying that the most secure method of developing a competitive advantage is by satisfying the unarticulated needs of the customer, thus making it essential for organisations to strategise innovation based on human-centric techniques (Conway et al., 2017). It is essential for organisations to identify users' problems and then, through the use of design, develop solutions that are effective in resolving these by giving priority to and investing in creative processes to develop a superior competitive advantage, enhance customer satisfaction, improve employee morale and eliminate mistakes that lead to costly delays (Brown, 2009). In Figure 3.6, Wyman (2017) highlights that at the junction between design thinking and business modelling, an 'upstream' motion is noted, whereby reference is made to understand consumer needs, behaviours from a leadership viewpoint and then working back to design new products and services. On the contrary, the junction between Agile execution and design thinking in Figure 3.7 reflects a 'downstream' application of the design thinking method (Wyman, 2017), which necessitates the swift building and testing of prototypes according to the identified needs of the customer.

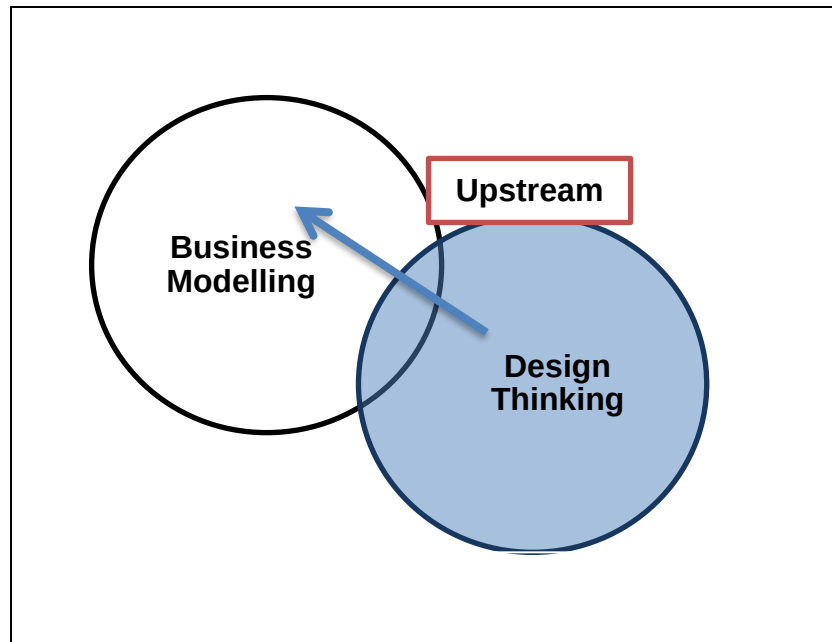


Figure 3.6: Upstream of design thinking
Source: Wyman (2017)

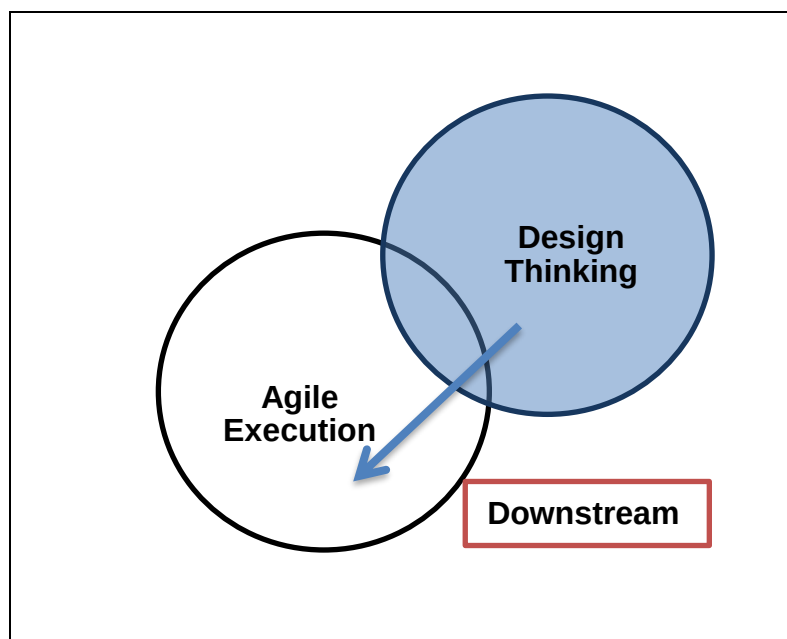


Figure 3.7: Downstream of design thinking
Source: Wyman (2017)

The design thinking approach involves the integration of the entire system from product development and service and then proceeding to communication strategies upon which a company can then market itself in society, giving rise to its strategy

(Matthews and Wrigley, 2017). Design thinking is evolving organisational strategy and has transformed the manner in which leading companies create real value for their consumers, as it surpasses merely creating a commodity and can be used for procedures, systems, protocols and user experiences (Naiman, 2019). Design thinking practice is more than being confined to a single department, as companies that apply a silo mentality for their design departments do not perform well financially, and by not allowing design thinkers to integrate into the rest of the organisation, this can lead to a decline in business performance (London, 2018). It is crucial for the strategy that is formulated and implemented by the organisation to be aligned to its operational surroundings and it should be developed to survive and compete in a volatile environment (Abdul Rahman, Othman, Yajid, Abdul Rahman, Yaakob, Masri, Ramli Suriana and Ibrahim, 2018).

The success of innovation improves dramatically when design thinking methodologies are applied to innovation and strategy (Naiman, 2019). Organisations that apply design thinking stand apart from their competitors for their willingness to re-design their businesses continuously and advancing innovation and efficiency, both of which combined creates a powerful competitive advantage (Naiman, 2019). It is all about the understanding of the customer. It can be an effective strategy if consumer development is well-designed. The outcomes are quality solutions that meet the needs of consumers, even those needs that are not yet understood by customers, the unarticulated needs (Tourism ID, 2017). Figure 3.8 illustrates the design thinking journey as a strategy.

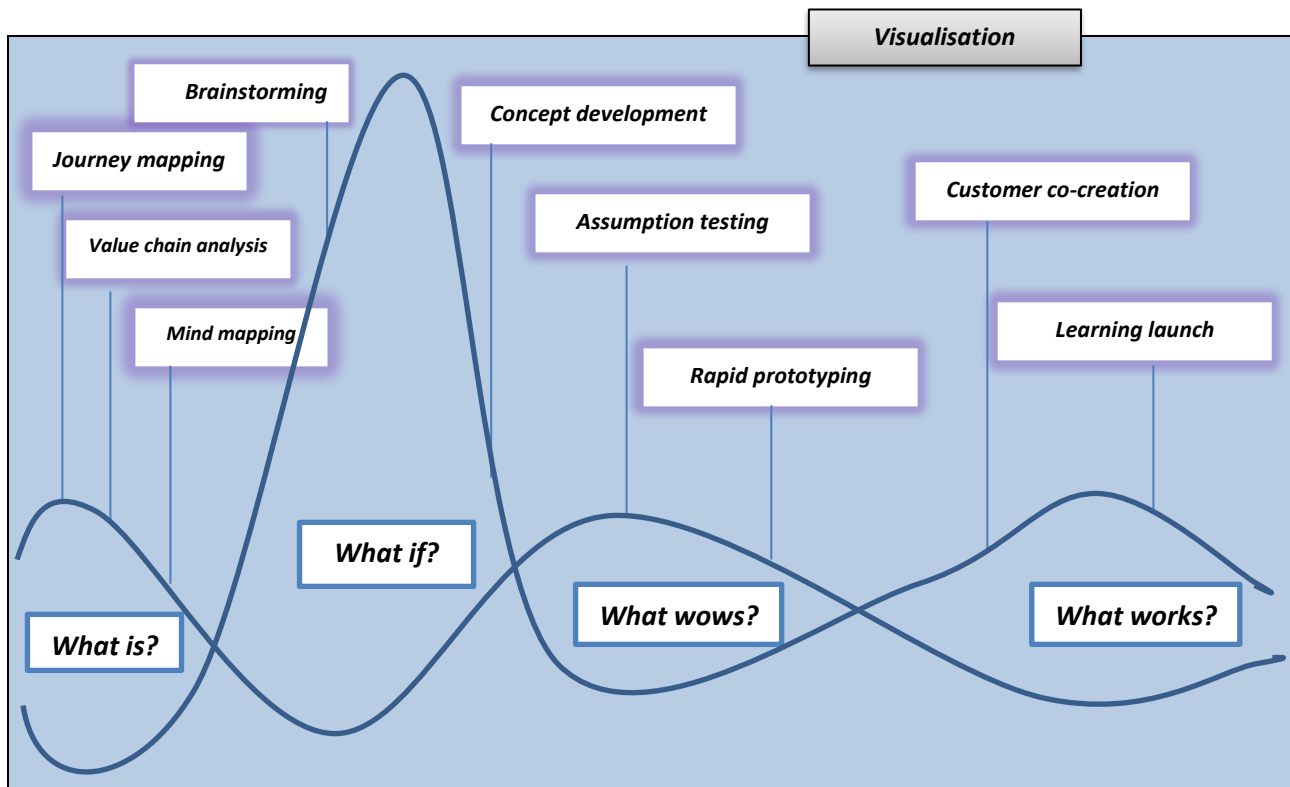


Figure 3.8: Design as a strategy
Source: Tomlinson (2018)

3.11. Benefits of design thinking

Organisations and management scholars are showing an increased interest in the methodology of design thinking (Liedtka, 2018). Hatchuel et al. (2017) aver that the true essence of design in modern times is signified by its current display of design thinking. The problem-solving techniques of design thinking have made noteworthy contributions to management and business over the past few years (Tomlinson, 2018). The components of design thinking assert that organisations can no longer rely on strategies that fail to acknowledge ever-changing consumer trends. Dunne (2018) mentioned that design thinking provides organisations in both the public and private sectors with a method for developing products and services that provide a latent need, and in doing so serves as a means of competitive advantage, innovation and addressing complex problems for an organisation.

Design thinking helps promote abilities that are useful in developing innovative contributions in the workplace by encouraging problem-solving and creativity, whilst also improving social and cognitive skills (Ordonez et al., 2017). This is due to consumers now being more knowledgeable and empowered than they were a few

years back, resulting in business leaders shifting their focus and strategies to becoming more reliant on the insights and inputs of their customers (Hubbard, 2017). Through the use of design thinking, innovative proposals are developed to resolve real-life challenges (Ordonez et al., 2017). Sheppard et al. (2017) are of the belief that design thinking is increasing in importance. A decision-making process that is underlined by design thinking principles is more likely to be successful if design is applied in the early stages as ideas are refined and engaging with the end-user further ensures a smooth process (Allio, 2014). If used correctly and effectively, design thinking has the power to transform a diverse range of industries. Keeley (2015) believes that there is a solid reason why design is enjoying a warranted renaissance. This is particularly due to the designer's ability to:

- Design and make things.
- Perceive objects, locations and communications.
- Empathize with people in situations.
- Stand in the future and design a better world; and
- Simplify and explain knowledge.

A large number of individuals are now electing for the limited options that are in direct connection with their needs and experiences as a human and are seeking out organisations, products and services that they can connect with on a level that is meaningful and value-adding to them (Dam and Siang, 2019). Singh cited in Hubbard (2017) stated that companies were used to assuming that they knew and understood what customers wanted and then designed products and services based around this. However, this does not work any longer. Organisations have recently been trying increasingly to incorporate design thinking as means to solve complex problems, foster innovation and develop problem-solving solutions particularly by those who are not considered as designers (Groeger and Schweitzer, 2015). Companies need to first empathise with their clients, understand and feel their pain and include them during the design phase; and in focusing on and prioritising value for the customer, design thinking can translate into a competitive advantage for an organisation by becoming more innovative (Dunne, 2018). It is important that companies adapt to the new playing fields and implement design thinking if they do not want to be overtaken by their forward-thinking rivals (Singh cited in Hubbard, 2017). Allio (2014) states that design thinking links problem solving with creativity by refining ideas into attractive and practical propositions for the end-user.

Simon Dingle of Phantom Design, cited in Hubbard (2017), asserted that more companies are indeed paying more attention to new approaches and strategies such as design thinking. Warner (2017) mentioned that an effective design thinking practice will explore and envision what a future state could possibly be through the effective use of a creative and structured thought process, with the ultimate aim of adding value to the end-user. However, this is not only an imaginary process, but must be viably possible to execute within the current available methods and knowledge boundaries. Organisations are able to create a competitive advantage and new market opportunities by using design thinking (Groeger and Schweitzer, 2015). A decision-making process whose core process is embedded in design thinking principles is stimulated by creative thinking abilities (Allio, 2014).

Design thinking is not only associated with the design of products, but its methods are also implemented in multiple sectors that focus on governance, policy and service (Conway et al., 2017). Similarly, van Reine (2017) highlighted that design thinking has been implemented by governments, tertiary education institutes and companies as an approach to the problem-solving of key challenges and innovating to counter these issues, resulting in design thinking being dubbed ‘the secret weapon in innovation’. Design thinking is gradually permeating government agendas, organisations and processes as they seek creative solutions to overcoming challenges for their communities (Kaur, 2018). For those that apply design thinking, their expertise will allow new outcomes to surface in their attempts at problem-solving (Docherty, 2017).

Initially, design thinking was introduced by earlier studies to focus on the practices and tools that could be used to address problems faced by businesses (Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018). More recently, the focus has shifted to how design thinking relates to organisational culture (Ribeiro and Souza, 2021), while Antle (2017) argued that design thinking can be viewed figuratively as a means to change the world. Elsbach and Stigliani (2018) reviewed that the effective use of design thinking has an instinctive effect on the culture of an organisation. Gözde, Gökhan and Demirbağ-Kaplan (2017) explained that the emergent culture of design thinking combines the experiences and views of people with innovative and creative methods that are participative and visual, leading to advanced empathy and communication in

attempting to solve complex problems. Over the past two decades, design thinking has emerged as a key driver in the problem-solving of critical challenges in organisations (Camacho, 2015). who additionally explained that it is widely accepted as a key tool in addressing these challenges (Camacho, 2015).

Design thinking can engage and empower local communities by equipping them with practices and processes to combat changing circumstances in their environment (Docherty, 2017). Design thinking involves catering for the needs of people by environment, organisations, products or services that are required on a daily basis (Alawad et al., 2017). However, Volkova and Jakobsone (2016) indicated there has been increased attention in past literature revealing that when design and design thinking is applied based on a rigorous research process, it leads to product transformation and the renewal of business concepts which transform conceptual chaos in organisations into meaningful order. Design thinking has recently been considered as a significant process that is assisting companies achieve a competitive advantage in their respective industries (Alawad et al., 2017). The authors further mentioned that design thinking improves customer satisfaction and has a positive impact on a company's profitability. Design thinking provides a competitive advantage as organisations that are creatively inclined develop an edge locally and internationally (Everson, 2014). The ability of design thinking to develop a competitive advantage for organisations has gained traction amongst scholars of management recently (Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018).

Romslo (n.d) highlighted that design thinking in organisations has shifted from a project level to be included as a corporate strategy, while further indicating that design thinking has gained acknowledgement from design professionals and through publications like *Harvard Business Review* and *Business Week*, that have unanimously agreed that design thinking is now considered as a valuable process used for problem-solving in businesses and strategy formulation in an organisation. Design thinking is beneficial in confronting problems that are not well defined by re-evaluating such problems in a human-centred manner; encouraging diverse ideas through the use of brainstorming sessions; and becoming practical by applying a hands-on method in developing prototypes and the testing thereafter (Dam and Siang, 2019). Allio (2014) mentioned that if implemented effectively, design thinking principles can provide progressive benefits to a decision-making process. These include:

- a perspective that is people centred.
- resilient solutions to critical challenges; and
- increased synergy and innovative abilities.

Some additional benefits include:

- The increasing enthusiasm in design thinking has resulted in organisations leaning towards a design approach in developing strategies that lead to a key competitive advantage for their industries (Boztepe, 2016).
- Design thinking encourages innovation and growth in and has gained significant attention for its ability as a unique problem-solving practice for challenges faced by business and organisations (Hasso Plattner, n.d).
- Quayle (2018) viewed design thinking as a key factor in strategic design, a process which focuses on transforming and change, leading to the design of something that puts immense value into a society or organisation.
- To yield a preferred goal, designers' approach problem-solving by imagining methods that have not been conceived previously and prefer this tactic, rather than analysing or making a choice from existing solutions (Cowan, 2012); and
- There is robust encouragement to use design thinking to improve policymaking, governance and the improvement of public service delivery (Cowan, 2012).

There appears to be much dispute over the benefits and features of design thinking (Micheli et al., 2018) with what design thinking actually is and what it can do (Brown, 2009 and Liedtka, 2015) and the tools of design thinking (Sidel and Fixson, 2011), while others have focused on design thinking as a culture within an organisation. It has been argued by Romslo (n.d) that while skilled professionals have seen the benefits of design thinking, it is difficult to convince companies regarding the design thinking process as these professionals themselves have not yet realised exactly how beneficial design thinking really is. Design thinking can be applied to innovation, creativity management and leadership (Naiman, 2019). Each individual can be considered as a designer and the process of design thinking and its methodologies can be applied to any diverse situation in life (Rocco, 2015)

3.12. Design thinking challenges

For design thinking to be effective, it requires a pivotal balance of creative and rational thought processes aimed at exploring possibilities of the future state, whilst generating beneficial outcomes that are desired by end-users (Warner, 2017). Many organisations across the globe have failed to realise the true value of design, yet Design Thinking is approaching its 5th decade of existence (Sheppard et al., 2017). Boztepe (2016) contended that there is a debate on whether design thinking should be incorporated by management into their own practice. On a positive note, there is currently a large number of businesses embracing design thinking, while conversely it is a concept that is least grasped by industries globally (Gözde, Gökhan and Demirbağ-Kaplan, 2017). Smith (2013) contended that design thinking empowers the development of pertinent solutions for a user or customer, which has a major impact on offering value-adding outcomes that are sustainable, allowing for a sincere brand relationship to commence with the targeted end-user. Managers of more conventional businesses regularly downplay the visual and emotional part, as design thinking is tolerant of failure and managers are keen to avoid any resulting risks (van Reine, 2017).

The use of design thinking at a strategic level cannot be executed in isolation, but rather the objective should be to develop a culture within the organisation that allows a constant state of design to be maintained (van Reine, 2017). Patri'cio, Gustafsson and Fisk (2018) argued that although design thinking is human-centric, the development of solutions to existing problems should not solely use input from the customer but from a wider network, such as technology advancements to create a much more diverse and beneficial solution for the customer. However, Keeley (2015) cautioned that often, supporters of design regard it as a potion that can remarkably transform companies that are conservative into creative ones. In the most extraordinary cases, these supporters think that design thinking can replace planning, strategy and analysis, while Namdarian (2018) explained that although design thinking is not a new concept, there are many companies that are yet to embrace this methodology and modern-day mind-set. Despite design thinking receiving its share of criticism, it is not a craze and if not managed properly, it could spell disaster for an organisation (Naiman, 2019). Kummitha (2019) mentioned that a specific gap which exists is the role of users in a community in stimulating organisations to adopt design thinking.

Saggia (2017) postulated that design thinking is not applicable to just the corporate sector, but rather as a tool that can equip innovators with the framework and a thought process to deal with the most pressing of challenges. However, Dingle cited in Hubbard (2017) alluded that when companies are looking to incorporate design thinking into their business processes, ego will most likely prove to be a considerable hindrance to this process. Dunne (2018) argued that while many organisations are assembled for efficiency, design thinking is a repetitive process with a specific outlook and may challenge existing standards within an organisation. The successful implementation of design thinking requires humility and a pure focus on what the customer really wants. This approach may be incompatible in the corporate environment as business executives are used to simply getting their way due to what is printed on their business cards. He further affirms that those who are aligned to design thinking principles will always be successful as they focus on what they do rather than who they are. Namdarian (2018) explained that a major problem exists with design thinking, which is a management hunger for immediate results; their unwillingness to invest further until they can see results with design thinking; and a lack in implementing a design thinking culture which ultimately leads to the slow demise of the design thinking expedition.

However, Iskander (2018) argued that in unknown circumstances, design thinking favours the designer above the individuals they serve and in doing so limits their participation within the process of design. In particular, it limits the scope for sincerely innovative thoughts, making it difficult to find solutions to challenges that contain a high degree of uncertainty, such as climate change. It was further highlighted by Iskander (2018) that in such instances, applying the same methods to resolve such problems is certainly a disaster in the making. van Reine (2017) contended that while the practice of design thinking promotes empathy as a key factor in providing solutions to problems encountered, there is uncertainty about what the prerequisites are for becoming a design thinker. Although the value of design thinking is being appreciated by diverse sectors in an economy, implementation without fully understanding its demands, limitations and capabilities can lead to failure and may not be a right fit for all organisations (Dunne, 2018), with Namdarian (2018) suggesting 8 ways to build a design thinking culture within an organisation, namely:

1. Create Design Sprint

Set up a team to spend a week solving a real business problem using design thinking methodology such as Empathise, define, Ideate, Prototype and Test (Namdarian, 2018). This initiative will enable employees to absorb the functionality of design thinking while empowering them to present solutions to the leadership of the organisation.

2. Advance into a Lean Start-up

Ideation is a key step in the design thinking process, and by developing ideas, it sets the framework to comprehend for successful business models (Namdarian. 2018).

3. Measurement

A critical pitfall for many organisations is their failure to measure success and design thinking will be destined for failure if it is solely linked to revenue generation (Namdarian, 2018). The author further highlighted that design thinking could be measured as a return on investment on the following key elements:

- **Training:** number of people developed on design thinking methodology and practices
- **Projects:** number of projects that have a design thinking foundation
- **Employee Engagement:** through the use of surveys and feedback sessions, measure the impact of design thinking on employee satisfaction

4. Revising Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

In order to drive change, it is imperative to hold employees accountable. Namdarian (2018) contended that KPIs should be implemented to prioritize creativity and innovation as this creates a platform of support for innovative ideas from leadership.

5. Relevance to Processes

Often, there are comfort zones created as a result of failure to re-formulate processes (Namdarian, 2018), as doing the same thing does not necessarily

make it correct or the right way. Hence there needs to be a reflection and subsequent review of current processes.

6. Design thinking Challenges

Similar to the design thinking Sprint mentioned earlier, these challenges are spread over a longer period, possibly over 2 months, addressing a problem in business, using design thinking (Namdarian, 2018).

7. Promoting Design Thinking

By promoting design thinking throughout the organisation, it helps eliminate any misconceptions about this process, such as risks (Namdarian, 2018). Success stories on design thinking, big or small, can also be shared and promoted.

8. Become Proactive with Design Thinking

Be proactive by applying design thinking as an initiative for the organisation, rather than waiting for support from leadership.

Pusca and Northwood (2018) mentioned that people are currently living in times of wicked problems and increasing change. For global challenges to be resolved, it is suggested that society should move on from established paths and appreciate the courage and risk-bearing of humans to explore new methods of creativity, rather than completing given tasks (Augsten et al., 2018). Wicked problems are defined as those challenges that are complex in nature and that cannot be resolved through a simple solution (Pugliese, Girone and Jefferson, 2018). The critics of design thinking viewed this process as merely a condensation of corporate jargon and buzzwords that is packaged for non-designers who are predominantly located in the management field, while it is further suggested that design thinking is more suited for business than it is for social change (Hernández-Ramírez, 2018).

3.13. Conclusion

This chapter provided a review on the related literature pertaining to design thinking; the process and models used for design thinking; whilst also detailing the challenges and benefits of design thinking in current times. Design thinking is trending as a

global phenomenon in dealing with wicked problems for organisations, governments and communities and may be a useful strategy in addressing the complex problems experienced globally. The next chapter will focus on leadership, organisational development and the link between leadership and design thinking in developing strategies for dealing with complex problems, as well as creating a culture of design thinking and innovation within their respective organisations.

CHAPTER FOUR: LITERATURE REVIEW - LEADERSHIP

4.1. Introduction

The literature reviewed in this chapter focuses on current research relating to leadership in the South African context, while also attempting to gain a comprehensive understanding of such issues in the global context, as well as linking design thinking as a strategic lever within the relevant characteristics of leadership. The nature of the literature review will therefore focus on varying perspectives of leadership, particularly at the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in the region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

4.2. Definition of leadership

Leadership is the ability to influence an individual, or a group of individuals, towards the achievement of specific goals and objectives (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). Gardner, Karam, Alvesson and Einola (2021) described leadership as the art of correctly influencing and guiding supporters to attain common objectives to accomplish the mission and vision of the organisation. The author further explained that such a leader continually reflects a professional attitude, is enthusiastic and motivating, whilst simultaneously keeping the momentum moving towards the accomplishment of the desired objectives. In addition, Benmira and Agboola (2021) pronounced that a leader possesses the unique ability to influence others, or delegate a task, so that specific objectives can be accomplished. Leadership is a collection of behaviours that forces individuals to formulate the objectives of the organisation and then motivates them to work together to attain them (Hastyar, Durmaz and Demir, 2021). Leadership, in essence, is the ability to articulate a roadmap explicitly and motivate others to concentrate their efforts on attaining the required objectives (Khoshahal and Guraya, 2016).

4.3. Leadership

Organisations across the globe are modernising all facets of their operations through the infusion of technology as they seek to develop and improve on their innovative capabilities to meet the demands of the evolving business landscape. The success

of design thinking is highly reliant on human capital. Each human group such as communities, countries and organisations need leadership (Xu, Zhang and Tian, 2017). Leaders must be direct, general and strategic (Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). It is therefore essential that strategic leadership develops a culture of design, creativity and innovation amongst all employees of the organisation. Although it is hard to generalize leadership, it is fundamentally a connection through which one individual affect other people's behaviors or actions (Gardner et. al, 2021). Colleagues want to have a sound sense of purpose; be compensated fairly; and ideally be a part of a high-performing team. These essential motivators should be applied consistently through co-ordinated leadership (Govender et al., 2018). Leadership is a process of social interaction that engages peers and subordinates collectively, or as individuals, to confront demanding situations, and then uniting to achieve goals that are defined by the mission of the organisation (Swensen, Gorringer, Caviness and Peters, 2016).

De Smet et al., (2018) advise that it is essential for leaders who wish to transform their organisations to start changing from within first, beginning with their own thought processes. A leader is an individual who has a clear vision, who also has the authority to manage a team of individuals who can assist in translating a vision into practice (Azhar, Ikram, Rashid, and Saqib, 2012). De Smet et al., (2018) explained that leaders need the ability to filter a compelling purpose through the core of an organisation by engaging with all employees, as it is vital for a deep commitment and meaning to the shared aspirations of the organisation that resonates with all. A dynamic, essential organisation that is highly competitive and driven to excellence is, of course, the legacy of a vibrant leader (Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). Leadership is most required in instances of change conditions, which can be associated with most service providers (Hastyar et al, 2021).

Leadership has for some time been recognised as a driving force for business development and innovation, particularly aimed at addressing complex challenges (Gardner et. al, 2021). Leadership's most significant function is to identify the objectives and formulate strategies that are associated with those objectives (Hastyar et al., 2021). In order for change to be affected, leaders and followers must exhibit a high sense of belief in their efforts (Govender, Proches and Kader, 2018). Bull and Jeruchimowitz (2016) posit that leadership is essential and critical to the success of the organisation and importantly, the right culture and talents are required

in the mix, which will develop over time. Leaders take constructive action to achieve long-term objectives and give clear favourable reasons for their actions, objectives and achievements. Essentially, rulers are in the role of adding clarity and direction to life and making life more meaningful in the organisation (Munawaroh, Santoso, Gumilang, Hidayatullah, Hermawan, Marhanah, Gunawan, Sunarsi and Purwanto, 2021).

Leaders in today's workplace must be knowledgeable and flexible people. The workforce is rapidly changing, and team members' aspirations are rising just as quickly (Spence, 2019). As much as ways of operating are disrupted by volatile economies, demographic shifts and the preference of customers, so too is leadership facing comparable disruptions (Press and Goh, 2018). Organisations can attain an essential competitive advantage by having responsive and flexible leaders at all levels, as these abilities will certainly assist in leading an organisation through a distressing business environment. In addition, Järf-Wartiovaara (2017) avers that leaders in a service environment need to be constantly creative in order to provide an enhanced service experience for the customer. Moreover, Gardner et al. (2021) state that successful leadership requires capitalizing on strengths and managing around weaknesses. The key difference between a leader and their followers lies in their innovation capabilities (Akay and Demirel, 2018). The authors further explained that Steve Jobs changed the way in which millions of people live and communicate. The products of Apple are a great example of innovation and Steve Jobs was an extraordinary transformational leader. However, it should be noted that Apple had a fierce competitor for decades in Microsoft, a rivalry based on competition and market share. Therefore, Apple, through Steve Jobs, had to be creative, innovative and be able to provide a solution to this challenge. It would be unlikely that Apple or Microsoft would have grown into the giants they are today had it not been for each other.

Gloppen (2009) argued that the reliance on leadership for success in the present market and in the future is based heavily on their ability to use design thinking. The CEO of an organisation these days should focus on analysing how a customer can be managed as an asset to improve profits and generate revenue for the organisation (Järf-Wartiovaara, 2017). Organisations rely on capable leadership in guiding them through unprecedented aspects of change that have an impact on their

organisation (Pasmore, 2014). Business leaders are required to develop competitive advantage strategies for their companies through the effective use of design. In this aspect, the concept of design leadership would greatly contribute to organisations realising a full return on investments on their design (Muenjohn, Chhetri, Hoare, As-Saber, and Suzumura, 2013).

The main determinant of success or failure in society, organisations or globally is leadership (Manzoor, Wei, Nurunnabi, Abdul Subhan, Shah and Fallatah, 2019). It is required of a leader to be straightforward, strategic and forward-thinking. In circumstances when there is a void in an organisation's leadership, which may result from any reason, the effects are felt internally and externally (Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). It is therefore essential for organisations to have robust leadership that is strategically inclined and can translate into successful operations and delivering superior performances (Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). Leadership is about exerting power and influence over another individual to reform their behaviour, attitude, beliefs and values (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015). The leadership role is accountable for formulating strategies and a leader is able to make significant contributions on how an organisation operates, regardless of time or position (Gardner et. al, 2021).

Swensen et al. (2016) indicated that leadership is a process that factors on social capability through engagement with colleagues, individually and collectively, to confront challenges and then collaborate to achieve the objectives of the organisation. High-energy leadership and boundless passion motivate others and create a feeling of purpose (Khoshahal and Guraya, 2016). Leaders in diverse organisations across all sectors are making earnest efforts in navigating and directing their organisations towards achieving their anticipated innovation levels (Kang, Solomon and Choi, 2015). The study of leadership and related literature has identified behaviours that drive innovation as a significant skill (Munawaroh et. al, 2021). Leaders create a bond with their followers by combining values, ethics and righteous levels of judgement (Reid and Dold, 2018). Leaders view people and followers as a direct route to achieving organisational goals, hence exceptional leaders will thus seek to enhance the performance outputs in their subordinates (Alnelind and Alvéén, 2014). Therefore, the leadership role in any organisation has a significant impact on innovation and creativity (Akay and Demirel, 2018).

4.3.1. Leadership and organisational development

Leadership and Management skills are strengthened by acquiring or developing the right capability to accomplish leadership effectiveness, and one of those key skills is strategic thinking (Muriithi, Louw and Radloff, 2018). In today's economy, the success of business is driven by creativity and is highly dependent on improving leadership skills (Everson, 2014). Gardner et. al, (2021) assert that managers in organisations have become so analytical that they have become 'un-cognitive' and do not realise that the most beneficial data in unknown circumstances is derived from real-time experiments, rather than an extrapolation of history. Internal fragmentation in a company can undermine both favourable client experience and innovation, so leaders need the ability to build a collaborative culture within and across teams (Spence, 2019).

To embrace change and to move into a new space, it is suggested that companies develop a strong culture of innovation to alleviate the current problem and challenges they face. Business leaders are facing extensive tension between power and responsibility these days, as all it takes is a few errors in decision-making or too much complacency for disaster to befall (Saggia, 2017). The pressure is more agonising than ever as change is occurring at break-neck speed. With such uncertainty, the lifespans of companies are becoming much shorter. According to Spence (2019), this means being able to communicate with individuals in a productive and constructive manner; connecting the job with a common purpose; being open to feedback; and sharing knowledge and experiences. Professional service organisations want a rare combination of leadership abilities to gain fulfilment these days. In order to conceptualise service offerings which can be perceived as precious for the customers, close collaboration between design thinking principles and business management is required (Järf-Wartiovaara, 2017).

The increasing recognition of design thinking in the corporate world is allowing organisations to develop a competitive edge through the use of this practice (Boztepe, 2016). The leadership task of managing and engaging employees is heightened when changes in the global space are combined with cultural and logistical challenges (Gardner et. al, 2021). Leaders using design thinking envision the future of the organisation and execute strategy through the effective use of design (Alnelind and Alvéén, 2014). Design thinking is not applicable to just the

corporate sector, but rather as a tool that can equip innovators with the framework and a thought process to deal with the most pressing of challenges (Saggia, 2017). Creativity surfaces when useful and novel ideas are generated as a solution to problems (Kremer et al., 2019). The ability to embrace change is a difficult one and the worry, concern and anxiety is likely to increase if there is clear uncertainty on whether the changes have the full support of the leadership of the organisation (Sarrazin and Yeon, 2015). The impact of the radical transformation faced by organisations in the 21st century is quite frankly a modern industrial revolution (Kremer et al., 2019), whereby innovation and creativity serve as an essential strategy in determining the success of the organisation.

Effective leadership is required for innovation and due to the complexity and uncertainty surfacing as key factors in the global business landscape, the ability to prioritize innovation has risen as an essential element in organisations today (Schweitzer et al., 2015). The significance of creativity has been solidly entrenched, thus making organisations that do not prioritise the need to innovate or apply creativity encounter the risk of eliminating sustainability in their organisations and becoming less competitive (Suifan and Al-Janini, 2017). A leader as an innovator ensures that innovation is alive and active throughout the organisation. (Azhar, Ikram, Rashid and Saqib, 2012) maintain that is the responsibility of leadership to take innovation from strategic thinking to performance evaluation in order to guarantee a competitive edge in the strategic management process.

Most companies place the cart before the horse (Keeley, 2015) by focusing on theoretical training rather than the emerging realities in industry or the business world currently and there is growing fear that leaders of today are greatly equipped to deal with challenges of the past but lack the competencies for dealing with current global challenges (Gardner et. al, 2021). Organisational leadership is a dual focused management approach that works towards what is best for individuals as well as what is best for a group as a whole simultaneously (Hastyar et al., 2021). Companies seek solutions for leadership development without considering their future outlook as an organisation Keeley (2015) or envisioning the abilities of their leaders in the future. Leaders in organisations currently operate in the hope that innovation and creativity will flourish within their teams (Warner, 2017), further indicating that such hope is more an aspiration, rather than an actual practice without a robust strategy. A particular strategy that fosters a culture of creativity and innovation in an

organisation is design thinking, which has been gaining energetic devotion in recent times. Innovation is an essential element in any organisation as its methodology supports the organisation to counter and adjust to global, technological and environmental changes (Akay and Demirel, 2018).

Leaders need to stimulate intellect in their followers by arousing creativity through developing their innovative thinking abilities (Fathurrahim, Umar, Zainul and Musadieq, 2018). Leaders who are equipped are capable of delivering results (Swensen et al., 2016). Employees who encounter a positive experience will feel valued for their work contributions and will be encouraged to employ more creative behaviours, apply creativity in problem-solving and suggest new ideas for improvement (Suifan and Al-Janini, 2017). Leaders are directly involved in organisational behaviour through promoting recognition; elevating growth and development prospects; stimulating commitment; and through habitual commitment (Swensen et al., 2016). The process of innovation is an enhancement or exploration of new ideas in the pursuit of novel ideas in developments for customer needs and for improvement initiatives (Fathurrahim et al., 2018).

Leaders are required to have an adaptive mind-set that is flexible and quite alert to their surroundings, which supports leaders in guiding their organisations through continuous change by utilising a combination of vision, resilience, creativity and empathy (Darino, Ogeah and Srinivasan, 2018). A challenge that exists in an organisation is when the workforce does not embrace change instantly or from the beginning and, despite increased efforts, the leadership must learn to accept that when traction is lacking, patience must be exercised (Sarrazin and Yeon, 2015). In times where change in the global economy is increasing at such a precipitous pace, it has become imperative that leaders transform their mind-sets by exploring diversity in thought; becoming more competitive; displaying bravery by being willing to take risks and fostering a creative culture within their organisations. Leaders must support innovation and creative experimentation broadly. They should not be confined to a micro part of the organisation, whilst the focus of the majority of the organisation is in the execution. Rather, it should be about developing innovation abilities as the core of the organisation, incorporating it into the mode of operations, for all levels of leadership throughout the organisation (De Smet et al., 2018).

Leaders who possess a responsive manner in which they conduct their work are likely to have a substantial impact on the business (Gardner et. al, 2021). Leaders must take the perspective of every individual into consideration, as this will create and foster a culture of innovation and inclusiveness (De Smet et al., 2018). Leaders must also develop teams in a manner that is diverse, empowering and able to connect effectively (De Smet et al., 2018). Solomon and Steyn (2017) indicated that the effectiveness of a leader characterises their ability to influence their followers by mobilising their workforces towards achieving the shared goals of the organisation. Leaders need to understand that a unity of purpose must be visible throughout the organisation, as it is now a source of competitive advantage and is as viable as technology, capital, resources and intellectual property (De Smet et al., 2018).

Jabbar and Hussein (2017) aver that the role of a leader is a pivotal one in making decisions that anticipate organisational effectiveness and success, and their values and behaviours inspire and necessitate the workforce to collaborate in their efforts towards achieving the organisation's goals. Organisations aim to improve the performance levels of employees so that their competitive levels can be maintained or enhanced (Manzoor et al., 2019). A leader should be a strong supporter of their own vision for the organisation, but it is more crucial that they should be promoters who can make inquiries into others' visions so that it can evolve into a larger vision that is shared and accepted by all (Reid and Dold, 2018). Jabbar and Hussein (2017) highlighted that leadership plays a key role in forming strategies for an organisation and serves as the link between the process of strategy management and the objectives of the organisation. The performance of the organisation can be predicted by the leadership style as it influences organisational development and the performance of employees (Manzoor et al., 2019).

It is important for leaders to create a distinct culture within an organisation as this essentially leads to the building of trust between employees and the leadership of the organisation. Moreover, creating a positive culture will ideally lead to improvements in performance, stimulated by an enriched and more committed attitude and behaviour from employees in the organisation. Munawaroh et. al, (2021) further indicated that a healthy organisational culture is devoid of any form of discrimination and reduces any internal conflict whilst promoting collaboration and discussion, which neutralises any issues that may surface. Design thinking for an increasing number of CEOs has become the core element in executing

organisational change and effective strategy developments as the focus in the global space has now shifted to a more design-driven state than engineering-driven, from marketing-focused to more focus on the user-experience and product-centric to customer-centric (Naiman, 2019).

The problems caused by the proliferation of the global economy have highlighted the need for effective leadership, as it is an essential component of an organisation's sustainability (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015). It is critically important for an organisation to invest in creating a strong design culture (McCarthy, 2018). Importantly, leaders must monitor progress as the design thinking practice unfolds. They must not simply commission a project and move behind the scenes, as their role is integral in supporting their team members to handle the emotions that may arise in such situations, as well as to encourage team members to be able to express themselves in exploring infinitely, as this boosts confidence in moving forward (Bason and Austin, 2019). The need for developing leadership capabilities has never been so high, with companies from diverse backgrounds realising that surviving in the current uncertain and volatile global arena requires leadership and organisational abilities that are modernised and developed for current demands and challenges, rather than those that aided success in the past (Moldoveanu and Narayandas, 2019). Leadership is needed to develop versatile infrastructure to not only to adapt to the traveller's demands of new and customized products and services but also more critically, to establish business models, products and services or marketing strategies that are not yet in demand in modern tourism (Draskovic, 2015).

4.3.2. Transformational leadership

Innovation has recently been recognized as the buzzword in all organisations (Hastyar et al., 2021). To successfully transform and adapt to the evolving modern economy, leaders need more advanced methods as the skills and mind-sets that have been developed and which they have become accustomed to, although necessary, are becoming increasingly insufficient to navigate 21st century organisations (De Smet et al., 2018). Learning is crucial for organisations because it provides a chance to adapt, re-align and attain greater efficiency in an unstable business setting (Gardner et. al, 2021). Leadership style is the most significant factor

affecting the organisation as being innovative. Furthermore, as a type of leadership style, Transformational Leadership is suggested to highlight the need for change and encourage creativity and innovation within the organisation (Hastyar et al., 2021). Transformational leadership is fundamentally about change (Govender et al., 2018) and can be linked to organisational innovation and job satisfaction. Transformational leadership is recommended to emphasize the need for change and encourage organisational creativity and innovation (Alsalamy, 2012).

Leaders who embrace and promote innovation are considered change agents as they create a supportive environment that fosters a creative culture throughout the organisation (Kremer et al., 2019). Leaders in successful businesses with intellectual stimulus behaviour have the capacity to stimulate and inspire staff to find innovative and advanced ideas that challenge the use of other options, as they always promote creativity and innovation (Alsalamy, 2012). Hughes et al. (2018) mention that the role of leadership is a key driver of creativity of innovation and creativity for individuals, teams and the organisation at large. This implies that innovation in organisations is affected by managers' opinions that concentrate on innovation (Alsalamy, 2012). It is essential for leaders to empower and create a level of trust, as this allows their members to operate without the need for constant briefings, updates and approvals, which translates more as micro-management and can be viewed as a rather costly oversight (De Smet et al., 2018).

Leadership is a mechanism through which a person controls a group of people towards achieving a common (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). This mechanism is a complex interaction between individuals (leaders and followers) and their social and organisational settings (Xu et al., 2017), as leaders have an instantaneous effect on engagement by way of inspiring dedication, providing reputation and providing opportunities to develop and grow within the organisation (Swensen et al., 2016). For change to be implemented successfully, effective leadership is essential as it requires proper organising, planning and control (Govender et al., 2018). Moreover, Munawaroh et. al, (2021) states that Transformational leaders also promote innovation indirectly by influencing the obligations of their employees and creating an organisational atmosphere that motivates them to produce fresh thoughts and maintain the organisation's long-term survival. For organisations to remain competitive, most managers need their employees to be proactive in their work by

generating ideas that contribute to appropriate products and service (Suifan and Al-Janini, 2017).

Leaders who adopt the design thinking approach use it at a strategic level to envision how design can influence the achievement of organisational goals (Alnelind and Alvén, 2014). Transformational leadership is amongst the most common leadership styles used in current times (Fathurrahim et al., 2018). It was affirmed by Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) that when an organisation's core is developed on a strong culture it is very likely that this will positively stimulate the overall performance and provide employees with a sense of pride and commitment, which contributes towards a sense of belonging and attachment to the organisation. The impact of transformational leadership on successful businesses is more positive than that of ineffective businesses (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). A leader has the ability to stimulate the success of their organisation as they are in full control in steering the organisation in the right direction, whilst also influencing and motivating their workforce to strive for greater levels of achievement (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015). Some of the key management features that can affect a transformational leader's effectiveness and efficiency include creativity, team orientation and appreciation, learning power, accountability and appreciation (Alsalam, 2012). An individual with resilient leadership abilities will be viewed as an ideal role model because a leader who inspires the achievement of great results will earn the admiration and trust of employees. In addition, as impression is the frankest form of flattery, this will inadvertently support the change in behaviour and values of their workforce and influence them/the employees to strive towards attaining the goals of the organisation (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015).

Transformational leaders are regarded as a source of inspiration to their employees as they can motivate them to promote the advantages of the organisation, assist their employees to achieve the highest performance and thus have a positive impact on the organisation (Alsalam, 2012). A good leader can influence and motivate their employees by implementing a positive culture across the organisation, as well as through employee benefits that are richly appealing (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015). Transformational leaders always strive to verify their followers' inherent aspirations and are energised to develop their character (Alsalam, 2012). A leader who has a good relationship with subordinates is likely to achieve greater effectiveness in task achievement from employees (Benmira and Agboola, 2021), while Fathurrahim et al.

(2018) mentioned that transformational leaders attract followers by creating an awareness of practising ideals and values such as peace, equality and fairness. People need to feel supported and recognized in order to continue to thrive in the workplace of tomorrow (Spence, 2019). Those leaders who adopt a transformational leadership style are constantly looking to improve the organisation (Fathurrahim et al., 2018). Transformational leadership relates to the type of management in which the leader is charismatic and offers the employees inspiring motivation, intellectual stimulation and private consideration (Karimi and Morshedi, 2015). The authors further indicated that such leaders generate a vibrant insight into the organisations that mostly shifts cultural values that represent greater innovations. Such positive changes allow employees to readily accept any tasks given without hesitation and are satisfied in executing their responsibilities, thus improving the productivity and efficiency of the organisation.

The objective or goal of transformational leadership is to achieve transformation in people and organisations (Harper, 2012). This transformation involves stimulating the hearts and minds of their followers to bring about positive change in employees. Transformational leaders are extremely charismatic people who can be trusted to do the correct thing to attract and inspire supporters (Gardner et. al, 2021), who further mentioned that employees become more innovative over time, which improves the level of organisational innovation and occurs when a leader increases their support and concern for employees to such an extent that they place the employee's needs ahead of their own self-interests. Transformational leaders generate a vibrant organisational view that mostly requires a transformation in cultural values to reflect further innovation (Karimi and Morshedi, 2015). Innovative behaviours are favourably affected by transformational leadership (Fathurrahim et al. 2018). Transformational leaders generate distinct methods of thinking through intellectual stimulation and individual consideration, seeking fresh possibilities as well as fresh solutions to the exploration of creative and adaptive thinking problems and procedures (Hastyar et al., 2021). Innovation implies the adoption of an organisation's ideas and behaviours (Alsalam, 2012).

Transformational leadership can be linked to organisational innovation through multiple characteristics, including interactive vision, efficient communication and an environment that promotes innovative teams (Mokhber, Wan Ismail and Vakilbashi, 2015). Akay and Demirel (2018) affirmed that transformational leadership is linked to

problem solving and innovation, while Suifan and Al-Janini (2017) highlighted that Anna and Caldwell (1987) mentioned that transformational leadership endorses and supports innovation and creativity. It encourages organisations through continuous efficiency and effectiveness in their operations in order to enhance the quality of their products and services (Alsalami, 2012). This in turn provides assurances for the long-term survival of the organisation. It was further established that transformational leadership develops a focus on innovation within organisations by keeping their employees motivated and encouraging them to be creative and to perform at their best. When employees are motivated by the leadership of their organisation to share their thoughts, express their opinions and communicate transparently, it is likely that innovative ideas will rise to the fore (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015). The transformational leader embraces an effective blend of broad-ranging and individual methods to achieve the shared goals, ambitions and desires of a group and to assess the motivation of their followers (Shafique and Kalyar, 2018).

Transformational leadership acknowledges superior performance and effort in organisations and demands self-sacrifice for the benefit of the organisation (Manzoor et al., 2019). The style of leadership applied is a significant factor that enhances the performance of the organisation; the job performance of employees; the objectives that are pursued; and the social and economic contributions (Manzoor et al., 2019). The transformational style of leadership is defined as the method in which the leader collaborates with their workforce to identify a required change, formulating a vision that uses inspiration to guide the change process and working closely with dedicated members to execute the change (Manzoor et al., 2019). Jabbar and Hussein (2017) mentioned that when great strategies are not endorsed with perfection, they become relatively insignificant, as strategies that are formulated below 50% reflect a scarcity of leadership skills. Transformational leadership focuses on a collective objective that engages employees in delivering on the vision and mission of the organisation and is planned to transform colleagues in a positive and deliberate manner, utilising the culture, process, structure and strategies of the organisation (Swensen et al., 2016). The transformational leadership style has been linked to creativity and innovation by Schweitzer et al. (2015) and is characterised by behaviours such as being inspirational, charismatic, considerate and stimulating on an intellectual level, which are all key and instrumental in increasing creativity and motivation in an organisation. Innovation is a key factor for achievement in any organisation and for

obtaining competitive advantage (Alsalam, 2012). Transformational leaders assist followers or employees with developing growth and self-actualisation, whilst also displaying a high level of awareness to their requirements and needs (Shafique and Kalyar, 2018).

Transformational leaders challenge their employees to raise the bar and progress by inspiring them to step-up their capabilities and developing innovative problem-solving skills (Suifan and Al-Janini, 2017). Furthermore, this process develops people who in turn support the organisation in accomplishing its targets and objectives. Ultimately, a transformational leader's role involves creating phenomenal performances out of developing the abilities and outputs of ordinary people. Fathurrahim et al. (2018) highlight Bass and Avolio's (2003) findings that authentic transformational leaders:

- Are aware of what is good and satisfying.
- Support their followers in achieving fulfilment.
- Assist in attaining higher levels of maturity; and
- Motivate followers to focus on the collective needs of the organisation rather than individual interests.

The transformational leadership style encourages followers or employees to strive towards achieving organisational goals (Shafique and Kalyar, 2018). Akay and Demirel (2018) aver that transformational leadership results in commitment from subordinates while encouraging larger quantities of work output, as well as increased abilities in problem solving. Transformational leadership is acknowledged as being quite influential upon followers by widening and inspiring their goals and giving them the confidence to exceed their expectations (Kang et al., 2015). The four distinctive elements of transformational leaders, namely charisma, intellectual stimulation, consideration and inspiration, motivate staff to contribute and attain their organisational objectives (Alsalam, 2012). Similarly, Suifan and Al-Janini (2017) indicated that the transformational leadership style has four dimensions that can be used as a measurement. These include inspirational motivation, Idealized influence, intellectual stimulation and intellectual stimulation. Additionally, Karimi and Morshedi (2015) similarly indicated that the transformational leadership method requires four parts or elements for execution that are recognized as the theory's constituent elements, including:

- ***Idealized influence***: relates to leaders with high moral and spiritual norms and a high degree of regard who generate allegiance amongst their followers. Through such leaders, followers are recognized and thus want to emulate them (Karimi and Morshedi, 2015).
- ***Inspirational motivation***: relates to leaders who, based on their values and ambitions, have a wide vision for the future. Behaviours included in this dimension inspire passion, excitement and trust in supporters through symbolic behaviour and persuasive language (Karimi and Morshedi, 2015).
- ***Intellectual stimulation***: the third aspect of Transformational Leadership is intellectual stimulation, referring to leaders who challenge organisational standards, promote divergent thinking and force their supporters to create creative strategies (Karimi and Morshedi, 2015); and
- ***Personal consideration***: the fourth aspect of transformational leadership relates to management activities directed at recognizing the growth requirements of supporters, as well as coaching and consulting them (Karimi and Morshedi, 2015).

Fathurrahim et al. (2018) indicated that transformational leadership can be considered as breakthrough leadership because leaders with this attribute stimulate change in organisations and individuals by transforming the culture and character of individuals and the organisation; encouraging a process of innovation and creativity; improving the values of the organisation; and making the organisation more relevant in its efforts to attain organisational goals that were previously thought of as impossible to implement. A transformational leader actions change by encouraging individuals to reflect on their profound needs and values, which are then merged into a unified purpose that gratifies the individuals' and organisations' objectives and sets them in motion (Reid and Dold, 2018). However, transformational leadership does not always result in followers displaying innovative abilities (Kang et al., 2015). Hence, Bason and Austin (2019) state that the design thinking process can be supported by leaders by encouraging and inducing empathy in employees to enquire how their approach will affect customers.

4.4. Leadership and strategy

The global economy and trends around the world are bringing fresh difficulties to corporate life. The political and economic uncertainty, together with the evolving

economic paradigm, brings about an enhanced demand for visionary and authoritative corporate leaders (Gardner et. al, 2021). Leaders must therefore follow a pioneering strategy. In reality, innovation-pioneering activities are an inevitable part of every top position of leadership (Draskovic, 2015). Leadership has everything to do with accountability. Responsible leadership guarantees the efficiency of the strategic management process (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). It offers the basis for strategic thinking and guides the organisation towards the implementation of strategies by offering a vision (Groysbrg, Lee, Price and Cheng, 2018). Solomon and Steyn (2017) state that organisational success is highly dependent on the role of leadership and it is therefore essential that the leader is effective. Additionally, leadership has a major effect on the process of strategic management (Azhar et al., 2012). The sustainability of an organisation in the business environment is managed through change, which is an essential trait of an effective leader (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015). Being a leader implies that the organisation needs to create a strategic choice that would have a positive long-term impact on the organisation (Daud and Wan Hanafi, 2018). The importance of a well-defined business strategy must be known to every leader (Pasmore, 2014).

The role of leadership is crucial in forming strategies and operates as a link between the heart and body of the organisation, driving the organisation to becoming successful, with such success realised through the effective formulation of strategies and their execution (Jabbar and Hussein, 2017). It is the duty of leadership to predict the needs of the organisation through a careful analysis of reality, and to try to make effective plans to meet the need for change (Azhar et al., 2012). Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) mentioned that intelligent leaders are required to use their knowledge and skills to steer their businesses effectively and efficiently in uncertain times, as well as being required to calm any anxiety amongst their organisations that may arise from such uncertainty. Strategic leadership can be described as "the capacity of the leader to predict and retain flexibility and to empower others to bring about strategic change as required (Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). The strategic management process is significantly impacted by the leadership of an organisation as it helps to develop the mission and vision of the organisation and forms the fundamental basis of effective organisational strategies (Jabbar and Hussein, 2017). Even the best and boldest strategies die on the vine without proper leadership, whereby their potential has never been realized (Hastyar et al., 2021).

Leadership is responsible for motivating and inspiring individuals in organisations to work together so that the vision of the organisation can be translated into practice (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). It is essential to create an inclusive environment supported by the right dynamics for a team because when diversity is prominent with different backgrounds complimenting different viewpoints, great work surfaces as people will then feel comfortable to share and challenge each other (McCarthy, 2018). A leader is one who understands the path, takes the path and demonstrates the path (Azhar et al., 2012). Generally, leaders introduce the need for organisational change through inner and external environmental evaluations of the organisations (Benmira and Agboola, 2021).

Leadership is a key component in formulating and implementing an organisation's strategy. It is a connection of the organisation's soul to its body. It is the leader's commitment that drives the organisation to achievement by creating strategic decision-making and execution strategies that are highly effective (Gardner et. al, 2021). In addition, Abdul Rahman et al. (2018) aver that good business leaders are capable of identifying and overcoming practical barriers, as an effective leadership strategy allows organisations to improve performance while providing the flexibility to complete effectively in the turbulent and unpredictable situations occurring globally (Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). Strategic leadership also requires skills in handling the inner and external business environments and to become engaged in the complicated processing of information (Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). McCarthy (2018) mentioned that good design occurs in open and collaborative settings that are free from petty issues, power struggles and personal agendas. Therefore, creating a culture of collaboration and knowledge sharing must be given priority in organisations. Strategy makes collective action and decision-making clear and focused (Groysbrg et al., 2018).

A key trait of an effective leader is their ability to be clear and precise in the direction given to employees, which leads to job commitment and advances synergy by enhancing a collaborative effort in achieving organisational goals (Munawaroh et. al, 2021). An organisation prioritises focus on its leadership, as it is an essential technique that improves organisational performance and controls spontaneous circumstances (Manzoor et al., 2019). The decision-making process is the core element of strategic management and is influenced by the essential leadership contribution, which adopts strategies that enable the organisation to be responsive to

the rapidly changing global business environment and requires leaders to embrace flexible strategies (Jabbar and Hussein, 2017). Great policies are nothing unless they can be completely applied. Due to the absence of leadership abilities, less than 50 percent of formulated policies are applied (Azhar et al., 2012).

The ultimate responsibility of strategic leaders is to create vision and value congruence across individual, divisional and organisational levels, as well as to develop efficient interactions between the organisation and environmental stakeholders (Slavik, Putnova and Cebakova, 2015). Although innovation has always been critical for leadership and business success, innovation in the modern global economy has spread to lower organisational levels (Draskovic, 2015). One can say that strategic leadership is a method that converts organisations into productive and effective organisations through appropriate policies (Azhar et al., 2012). Strategic leadership converts normal organisations into successful ones through using suitable strategies (Jabbar and Hussein, 2017). A leader's vision and execution chart an organisation's advancement, with superior leaders possessing the ability to be optimistic in setting demanding goals whilst navigating the organisation's operational capacity through effective strategies in attaining these goals (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015).

Innovation and imagination could create value for the various stakeholders by re-inventing the techniques and systems to create greater value for all stakeholders (Hastyar et al., 2021). While it has become prevalent in current times for leaders to be agile in their approach to modern day complexities in organisations, two new disciplines have become an important tool for leaders, namely business model innovation and design thinking (De Smet et al., 2018). Leadership goes hand-in-hand with the creation of strategies, and most leaders comprehend the basics required. However, culture is a more elusive lever as much of it is anchored in unspoken behaviours, mentalities and social patterns (Groysbrg et al., 2018). Modern organisations need to be ambidextrous, i.e., capable of both innovating and executing if they are to be considered effective, due to the many environmental pressures they face and because they need to organize a diverse workforce to do this job (Benmira and Agboola, 2021).

4.5. Leadership and design thinking

The world is currently changing at quite a rapid pace (Keeley, 2015). Therefore, it is to a great degree valuable to have such skills to envision a better world; work towards making it tangible; develop narratives about it; and deal with all obstacles throughout its development phase. It has an increasingly positive outlook whereby collaboration and user engagement collaborate to develop an advanced unified ecosystem, which was formerly thought of as an industry. Today, workplaces are facing change at a steady, yet high-velocity pace, which implies that teams must become more agile and innovate aggressively to exceed the expectations of the client (Spence, 2019).

According to Dam and Siang (2021), the rapid change to the current climate makes it rather complex to predict the future, with the inability to forecast unforeseen challenges just around the corner, let alone upcoming months. Hence the need for a dynamic style to promote strategic planning and innovation: a method that is simple to adapt to in the diverse challenging situations that lie just a few steps ahead. Leadership style has been accentuated as one of the most critical individual influences on the problem-solving process in an organisation because leaders can elect to present new ideas, set specific goals and inspire followers to be more solution driven, as mentioned by Keeley (2015). Moreover, design thinking has the power to change industries and is becoming increasingly important, with Turner (2013) describing design thinking as an essential element of social and commercial cohesion, while its leadership and management abilities are fundamental fragments, which enable success in businesses, an effective government and a safer society. Innovative design in business can assist a company to boost long-term competitive sustainability, which will likely lead to the superior performance of organisations (Muenjohn et al., 2013). Due to the phenomenal strategic advantage that design thinking provides, organisations in both the public and private sectors have invested significantly in design thinking using research and development (Dam and Siang, 2021).

Organisations are now challenged to change their thought processes on strategic matters due to the complex problems, dynamic environments and intense change, as well as the dilemma of how to equip their employees to deal with complex

situations on a daily basis (Benmira and Agboola, 2021). Design leadership could be defined as a framework for leadership that generates and sustains innovative designs (Muenjohn et al., 2013). In order to thrive and survive, many organisations are currently making the fundamental transition from traditional models whose methods are more suited for the industrial economy, to more flexible models that relate to the current day digital economy. This shift in pattern is an indication of the need to form new organisations that are fundamentally focused on innovation and value creation at a speed, magnitude and impact that is unprecedented (De Smet et al., 2018). Cousins (2018) mentioned that the executive management of organisations should possess energetic strategic management abilities to sense opportunities in the market and to implement strategies to gain a competitive advantage. A recently proposed vibrant competency that can be useful for managers is design thinking. A significant aspect of leadership is espousing novelty within the organisation and this can proceed with developing innovation strategies, which culminate in gaining a competitive edge in the market (Jabbar and Hussein, 2017). Professional service organisations want a rare combination of leadership abilities in order to gain fulfilment these days.

To conceptualise service offerings that can be perceived as precious for the customers, close collaboration between design thinking principles and business management is required (Järf-Wartiovaara, 2017). It is important for managers and leaders to create a culture of collaboration that is underpinned by design thinking principles, which can facilitate completing the end goal successfully (Tomlinson, 2018). The process of creativity involves employees using diverse skills, knowledge, experience and perceptions to create new ideas which can improve efficiency in tasks, problem solving and decision-making (Suifan and Al-Janini, 2017). Turner (2013) cited in Alnelind and Alven (2014) explained that for leadership to optimise design thinking within their roles in organisations, the following are key attributes:

- Envision the future.
- Create diversity that can sustain a competitive edge and advantage.
- Develop appropriate design strategies.
- Be clear in the direction of the organisation; and
- Implement a culture of design leadership through the effective training of managers.

However, design needs to be balanced and complemented with other capabilities. Gardner et al. (2021) highlighted that before hurtling into solutions, there should be some profound insights produced, which can serve as the basis of an innovative team to advance in developing a new invention for the organisation. Cekmecelioglu and Gunsel (2013) cited in Suifan and Al-Janini (2017) affirmed that creativity is one of the critical competencies required for 21st century organisations to be able to lead and adapt to turbulent, changing environments. Additionally, design has surfaced as a new strategy for an organisation's success and its survival is highly dependent on its ability to innovate. Muenjohn et al. (2013) asserted that design in leadership could be defined as a framework for leadership that generates and sustains innovative designs.

Hubbard (2017) postulated that it is becoming increasingly apparent and important for business executives to adopt a more creative mind-set, possibly more important than an ability in managing existing processes and people. If the ability to think creatively about providing solutions for the business becomes an increasing challenge, then this should be seen as a signal that the time may well be opportune to employ a multitude of creative mind-sets to accomplish the design objectives of the business (Hubbard, 2017). By unifying the leadership and design processes, organisations develop the ability to apply the mind-sets of their workforce coherently in providing solutions to challenges faced by the organisation (Muenjohn et al., 2013). Gardner et al. (2021) highlighted that the responsibility of management is to develop a new state, which is a strategy for their company, industry and markets. Design thinking is considered as a strategy that is primarily concerned with creating future new states for an organisation. Managers find themselves empowered in making key decisions and developing solutions to their problems when design thinking is applied (Kleinsmann et al., 2017).

Saggia (2017) expounded that humans are key to innovations as the thoughts of humans create new ideas and tests new opportunities. Real innovation means venturing into uncharted territories and for that, humans are crucial in navigating this realisation. The Chief Executive Officer of an organisation these days should focus on analysing how a customer can be managed as an asset to improve profits and generate revenue for the organisation (Järf-Wartiovaara, 2017). Furthermore, there appears to be a significant breakdown in the connective tissue between

leadership strategy and business strategy Keeley (2015), particularly in clarifying the role of leadership governance, aligning talent processes and leadership development programmes that add significant value. Leaders who embrace design thinking have clear problem-solving abilities that can influence organisations, businesses, family member and communities. Quayle (2018) states that they envision the future with a broad scope in mind, catering for perspectives on a broad scale. A leader's ability to apply innovative thinking is the starting point in addressing challenges and responses to change, while their efforts to develop a culture of innovation that is focused on solving problems will require a concerted drive and effort (Horth and Buchner, 2014). By inspiring leaders to share their own experiences, design thinking improves creativity and problem-solving challenges in organisations (Everson, 2014).

Warner (2017) highlighted that a large number of leaders are hopeful that creativity will flourish in their organisations. However, there needs to be strategies to fulfil this hope, as without one, these expectations will unlikely become a reality, but would rather be a mere aspiration. Leaders that use design thinking promote awareness on the use of and the positive outcomes that design generates, including customer satisfaction, an improved image and competitive advantage (Alnelind and Alvé, 2014). The importance of design is widely accepted. However, when the leadership does not understand design principles properly, it can affect the organisation at large, particularly the investment in design, which requires a combination of leadership and design thinking as both features are required for the desired results to be effective (Gardner et. al, 2021).

The leadership role has a dual dimension, with the leading and learning aspirations always intertwined. Design thinking can therefore be incorporated as one of the superior competencies in organisations, with designers feeling empowered and laying claims to leadership levels in the organisation (Galli et al., 2017). Everson (2014) posited that leaders who embrace design thinking enquire first about their client's needs and then develop a solution on how such requirements can be fulfilled. At the starting point of this process, which is the generation of ideas, leadership should be involved in expediting the generation of ideas so that solutions to customer preferences can be derived (Muenjohn et al., 2013). By inspiring leaders to share their own experiences, design thinking improves creativity and problem-solving challenges in organisations (Everson, 2014). Alnelind and Alvé (2014) mentioned that design leadership is used at a strategic level, as well as a means to effectively

run an organisation. It is indispensable for leaders to be skilled in complex problem-solving, social judgement and creative thinking as these are important strategic issues that leaders encounter, which are also required for design thinking, which is integral to the leadership function in the organisation (Benmira and Agboola, 2021).

Managers find empowerment when applying design thinking as this approach enables them to explore various solutions to their problems in the organisation (Kleinsmann et. al., 2017). It is essential for leaders to educate their members on the effects of the design thinking stages as this will equip them with a methodical approach to innovate on a much-advanced level (Warner, 2017). The design thinking process equips managers with a relevant philosophy that enhances creativity and is unlike a typical case study method, which is limited to a linear rationality. Rather, it provides methods such as observation, experimenting and a repetition of tests until a solution is realised (Rocco, 2015).

For change to be implemented successfully, effective leadership is essential as it requires proper organising, planning and control (Govender et al., 2018). In leadership, the ability of the leader should be to envision the future. Design leaders are compelled to develop a design vision for the organisation, promoting the vision and advocating this process with the key decision-makers and stakeholders of the organisation (Munawaroh et. al, 2021). The authors further asserted that it is imperative for organisations to consistently develop products that are from a high quality and effective design process. To ensure that this is realised, leaders should inculcate a responsibility and self-admiration for design standards amongst all levels of employees within the organisation (Gardner et. al, 2021). An organisation's success and survival are highly significant; thus, scholars have over the years studied the relationship between transformational leadership and the creativity of employees, with many proving the existence of a positive relationship (Suifan and Al-Janini, 2017).

The lessons documented from design thinking applications globally reveal that when design thinking is applied to management, it subsequently has a strong potential in making leaders more creative, deliberate, collaborative and more accountable visionaries (Naimam, 2019). Design thinking as a successful tool for innovation has repeatedly been kept at a lower priority level, as managers are not certain on its true

value (Volkova and Jakobsone, 2016). However, London (2018) posits that design thinking is more than just a feeling and the leadership of an organisation must treat design thinking with the same energy and priority as it does for revenue and costing at a boardroom level. Design thinking is a natural process for a leader, with creative heads in organisations practicing design thinking without realising it (Tomlinson, 2018). In projects that are design thinking inspired, leaders must inspire teams in achieving success by coaching where required to ensure that the team is performing at the level required, as design thinking practice is quite challenging and quite fundamental as it is about more than merely managing change, but really about discovering the type of change that is essentially required (Bason and Austin, 2019).

4.6. Conclusion

This chapter provided a review on the related literature pertaining to leadership, the leadership style conducive to design thinking, innovation and culture, whilst also detailing leadership in developing a culture and formulating strategies in current times. Leadership and the use of design thinking in leadership was also discussed, detailing how both design thinking and leadership can contribute to strategizing against current global challenges and executing a process to deal with such complex problems in organisations today.

This chapter additionally concluded the conceptual framework of this study, whereby the literature review encompassed three distinct and synthesized areas that serve as the foundation of this study, namely Tourism, Design Thinking and Leadership. The conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 4.1. below:

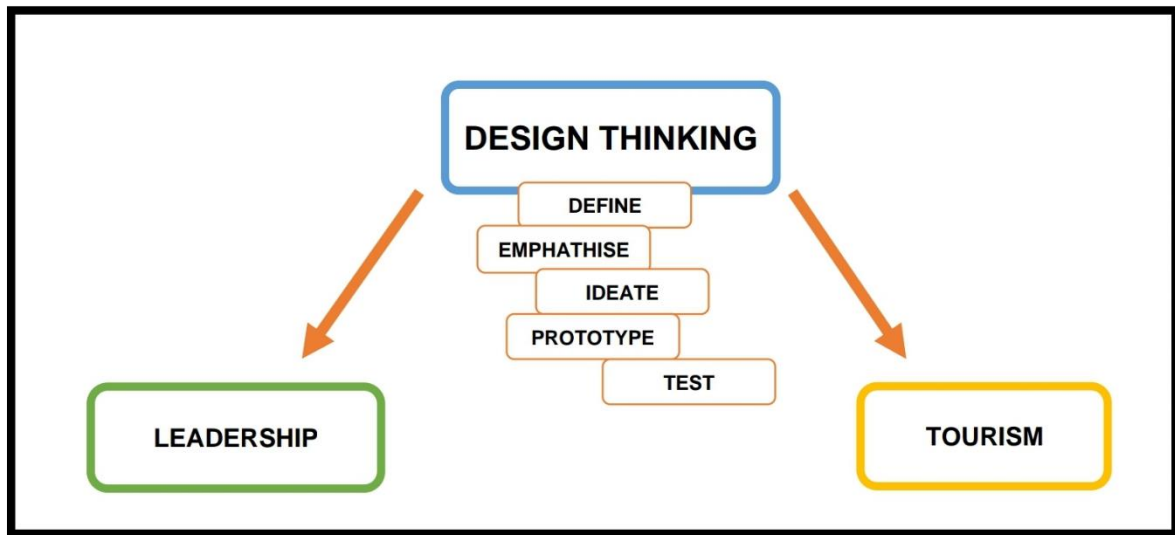


Figure 4.1: Conceptual framework of this study

Source: Constructed by the researcher (2021)

The next chapter will discuss the research methodology employed in this research study.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1. Introduction

The study commenced by analysing related literature including tourism, design thinking and leadership. Once the theoretical framework was established, the study then proceeded to conducting the empirical research. This chapter reflects on the methodological approach applied in this research study. The chapter will discuss the qualitative research methodology and why this approach was considered as a suitable method for this study. Thereafter, the method of sampling and the data collection descriptions are provided, with specific reference to focus groups and the design thinking workshop. The manner in which the data was analysed is presented and credibility and reliability matters pertaining to this research study then concludes this chapter. Figure 5.1 illustrates the process followed in this study.

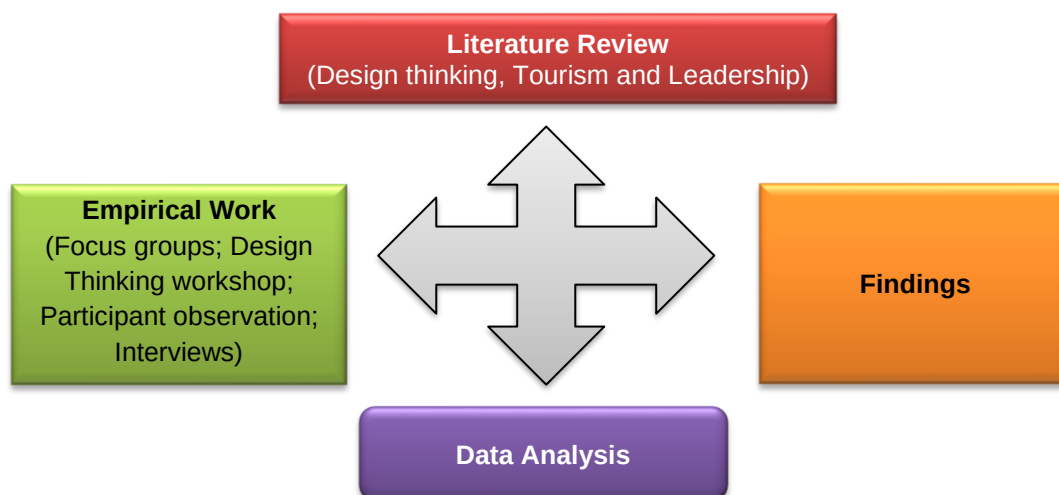


Figure 5.1: Methodological approach of the study

Source: Constructed by the researcher (2021)

The researcher followed an iterative approach rather than a linear method, which is consistent in a qualitative research study, whilst simultaneously engaging in various stages of scientific research, which included studying appropriate literature that was conducive for this study (Design thinking, Tourism and Leadership). The researcher then proceeded to empirical methods (focus groups, design thinking workshop interviews and participant observation), followed by an analysis of the data collected

and then drawing findings from this data. With the goal of acquiring a deeper knowledge of the use of design thinking in enhancing tourism in KwaZulu-Natal, an exploratory study technique was used. To arrive at a conclusion on an issue, researchers use data as the raw material.

Qualitative research provides a unique and compelling lens on the subtleties, processes, and idiosyncracies of social life, yet qualitative researchers face complicated problems and difficult decisions at every step of their research study (Humphreys, Lewis Jr., Sender and Won, 2021). It depends on what data needs to be collected to investigate the issue (Busetto, Wick and Gumbinger, 2021). This study utilised a qualitative research methodology. In cases where the researcher's objective is to source a general overview from the subjects, qualitative research would be a useful method (Niebauer, 2020), who further highlighted that qualitative research uses descriptive measures to source definitions and to comprehend the phenomenon that is being studied. This research is inductive and, as highlighted by Humphreys et. al, (2021), the objective of a qualitative research study is the interpretation of an individual's understanding of phenomena, concepts or issues with a view to generating new theories and insights. Each paradigm expresses a different perspective on the nature of truth and knowledge. The researcher's methodology, methodological explanations, and how they interpret their data are all influenced by their epistemological viewpoint (Niebauer, 2020).

5.2. Research paradigm

The term 'paradigm' refers to a research culture with a set of shared views, attitudes and presumptions about the purpose and methods of research that a community of researchers adheres to (Singh, 2019). Therefore, a paradigm denotes a pattern, structure, framework or system of theories, beliefs and presumptions in science and academia. To a research paradigm, ontology, epistemology and methodology are fundamentally linked (Matta, 2021).

The worldview of a person, which is generally referred to as having ontological and epistemological implications, greatly affects how they see the relative importance of the many parts of reality (Matta, 2021). The constructivist and objectivist worldviews are the two options. Most academic disciplines are affected by these several

worldviews, but none of them is thought to be superior to the others. Both might be suitable for some uses while being insufficient or unduly complicated for others. Additionally, a person may alter their viewpoint in response to circumstances (Kamal, 2019).

The study of ontology focuses on the nature of reality. Ontology is examined in the context of qualitative research in terms of convictions on the existence of some sort of "universal truth" and objectivity (Kamal, 2019). The study of epistemology, or "how we know what we know", examines the nature of knowledge (Matta, 2021). It is concerned with how one comes to know what the knower is real and how—in this example, the researcher—relates to the outside world. It is possible to view the researcher and research subject as autonomous parties. According to this theory, researchers can examine people objectively or without their own prejudice using rigorous, methodical methods (Singh, 2019). Epistemology has been defined as the method through which the researcher learns the reality and the truth (Kamal, 2019). The term "methodology" refers to "the approach taken in the research study" (Singh, 2019). Another way to define methodology is "How should we investigate the world?" (Kamal, 2019). A research's ontological and epistemological views must be consistent with its methodological approach.

The research paradigm has thus guided the research design of this study and is outlined in the section below.

5.3. Research design

Research is data collection, organisation and evaluation (Busetto et al., 2021). Additionally, Mohajan (2018) states that a research study must be a planned, systematic and disciplined approach if the most suitable results are to be realised. A research method is an essential part as it ascertains the credibility, reliability and the success of a research study (Humphreys et al., 2021). A research design helps to choose the issue which occurs in the study, such as when, how, where, etc., which are important research inquiries (Mukherjee, 2017). There are three types of research designs, according to Creswell (2009), namely quantitative research, qualitative research and mixed methods research (Kowalczyk, 2016). The author emphasized that when conducting business research, a researcher has a choice of

these three basic research methods and further supported these methods. The decision on which method a researcher may choose (Mohajan, 2018) depends on:

- The researcher's experience.
- The research problem.
- The researcher must decide whether to be clear about the type of information to be collected or to let the information emerge naturally from the data gathering procedure; and
- The data to be collected being in text or numeric form.

Data is classified into two types based on its proximity to the reported case. Primary data is data that has been witnessed, experienced, and recorded in the area of an incident. It is the closest thing to reality that can be found. Secondary sources are written sources that classify or document primary information (Niebauer, 2020). The research design is the perception of situations in which facts are gathered and scrutinized in a framework that aims to separate importance with the economy in the process to the investigation purpose (Mukherjee, 2017). Design thinking has moved from focusing on process and product design to now being placed as a critical element in the strategy formulation of companies (Matthews and Wrigley, 2017) and is gaining traction in the global space and particularly in South Africa (Munyai, 2016). Therefore, a qualitative study was used to gather the data required to address the research objectives of this study, as the researcher intends to obtain data on numerous characteristics that are related to the study topic in order to create an all-encompassing picture of the situation. High-quality evidence and sound logic are required to present a good argument.

As Berman (2017) indicated, qualitative research is conducted to explore the origins and functionality of a phenomenon. The qualitative methodology employed in this study is intended to acquire an in-depth understanding through permitting everyone with an interest in and within the targeted sample population an opportunity to share their views. This research method empowers the researcher, through high involvement, to create a detailed understanding from their experience (Mohajan, 2018), particularly with the aim of extracting in-depth data on contemporary design thinking capabilities in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal. In a qualitative study, Creswell (2009) posited that a specific human or social problem is explored by understanding the connotation of how individuals or groups relate to such a problem.

The three most common analytical methodologies are participant observation, in-depth interviews, and focus groups, all of which are explored in full in their respective modules (Mohammed, 2021). In this study, problems and challenges occur in a critical sector of the economy, particularly within the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

5.3.1. Qualitative research

Methodology is influenced by epistemology and gives a justification for the data collection methods used. Collecting data generates a slew of problems about the researcher's interaction with participants, highlighting the importance of epistemology and methodology in both ethical and practical aspects of method choices. (Niebauer, 2020). Qualitative research is considered a social science that is associated with non-numerical data, deciphering meaning from the data and enabling the researcher to grasp a social understanding of the targeted population in its natural setting (Mohajan, 2018). Busetto et al. (2021) explained that qualitative research makes use of data that is in the form of words such as views, descriptions or feelings, rather than utilising numbers. Similarly, Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson and Suárez-Orozco (2018) explained that a qualitative research study analyses data that is expressed in the form of words (natural language) and from the experiences of participants' social interactions and engagements. Qualitative data can't be precisely measured or counted, so it's usually expressed in words rather than numbers. Human actions and traits such as ideas, conventions, morality, and beliefs, which are studied in the study of human beings and their civilizations and cultures, cannot be pinpointed and measured in any precise way (Humphreys et al., 2021).

Intangible elements such as societal standards, socioeconomic status, gender roles, ethnicity, and religion, the importance of which may not be easily apparent in the study problem, can also be identified using qualitative methodologies (Niebauer, 2020). Jameel, Shaheen and Majid (2018) explained that for centuries, qualitative research has been used in the social sciences to explore the perceptions and perspectives of society and individuals. A qualitative research study allows the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of policies and regulations, whilst also learning from shareholder experiences (Squires, 2018). In addition, Mohammed (2021) mentioned that a qualitative researcher is keen on understanding the perspectives of individuals by drawing from their experiences and belief systems.

The narrative of individuals and communities are generated in a qualitative research study through the observation of their behaviour; interacting with them; and by giving due consideration to what influences their experiences, perspectives and behaviours (Jameel et al., 2018).

Any sort of study that yields conclusions that are not gained by quantitative techniques or other means of quantification is referred to as qualitative research. Instead, it is the kind of study that yields results from real-world situations where the phenomenon of interest occurs spontaneously (Mohammed, 2021). A qualitative research study explores the “why” and the “how” of a phenomenon, rather than the “what” and “how much” (Jameel et al., 2018). This method also emphasises people’s interpretation and deducing their experiences to understand the social reality amongst individuals and comprises of different methods, including open-ended interviews, case studies, participant observation, ethnography, comparative method and focus groups, amongst others (Mohajan, 2018). A researcher that uses a qualitative research method is highly conscious of whether their assumptions and expectations will influence their research study (Levitt et al., 2018).

In order to completely comprehend and appreciate a wide range of phenomena, a qualitative approach to science places human thinking and behavior in a social framework. Apart from traditional academic social sciences, qualitative research methods have gained popularity in other fields of research (Busetto et al., 2021). Human actions, including communication, perception, thinking, structure and norms, are analysed holistically as a result of in-depth phenomena analysis. The strong relationship that develops between the researcher and the participant in this approach makes it simple for the participant to contribute to the study's design. Nevertheless, it accounts for a large interpretation of interactions as the participants perceive themselves and feel as integrated as well (Daniel, 2016). The researcher made use of open-ended interviews, focus groups and participant observation as part of this research study.

Qualitative research is used to better understand complex situations by examining phenomena in the real world. It employs a naturalistic approach to understanding phenomena in context-specific settings, such as a real-world setting, in which the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the researcher's interest in the phenomenon (Mohammed, 2021). This form of research is based on data that is

often expressed in words rather than figures - explanations, accounts, thoughts and feelings (Walliman, 2011). In contrast to quantitative research, which seeks causal prediction and generalization, qualitative researchers seek illumination, interpretation, and extrapolation to similar situations rather than cause and effect analysis (Humphreys et al., 2021). This is a viable research method that focuses on multi-methods and requires an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject, implying that empirical researchers are researching events in their natural surroundings, attempting to make sense of or explain phenomena in terms of their meanings (Aspers and Corte, 2019).

The subjective nature of such research and the limitations afforded to the researcher have been the target of critics of qualitative research (Jameel et al., 2018). However, this method of research is rapidly becoming quite popular in social and behavioural studies (Aspers and Corte, 2019). While it is quite valuable in the larger context of the research study, it is also quite time-consuming (Humphreys et al., 2021; Daniel, 2016; Walliman, 2011). Qualitative research is effective for acquiring culturally specific data regarding individual populations' ideas, views, attitudes, and social circumstances in general (Busetto et al., 2021). It is important to note that qualitative research is less prescriptive, does not follow a stipulated set of guidelines and consists of different approaches to data collection, which researchers can use to help provide cultural and contextual explanations and social phenomenon analysis (Levitt et al., 2018).

Qualitative research is defined as an iterative process in which the scientific community gains a better knowledge by generating new meaningful differences. This is accomplished by getting closer to the phenomenon being investigated; it is guided by a clear goal to solve a problem; and it employs open-ended questions that may arise or are posed from the start (Aspers and Corte, 2019). The research method employed in this study is chosen based on the need to investigate a particular problem (Jameel et al., 2018). Qualitative research was selected for this study as it was considered a suitable method due to its ability to expose people, settings, complex situations and its ability to disclose novel perceptions on a phenomenon (Daniel, 2016). In attempting to discover and comprehend a certain or specific phenomenon, this method is considered well suited, with the emphasis clearly on espousing the perceptions of the research participants within a prescribed social

context (Cropley, 2019). Qualitative research does not have a formal process and relies heavily on the perception and imagination of the researcher to collect, analyse and interpret the data. It is argued that it would not be possible at any other time and place to perform the same research and achieve the same result. In other words, qualitative analysis, rather than quantitative research, cannot be repeated (Daniel, 2016). The most valuable contribution of qualitative research is the culturally specific and contextually rich data it produces. It provides this researcher with the opportunity to gain a wide-ranging understanding of the perceptions of stakeholders in the tourism sector within the KwaZulu-Natal region by understanding their beliefs, values and interpretation of the phenomena (Mohammed, 2021).

Qualitative research is the use and selection of a variety of empirical methodologies, such as interviews, case studies, and observations, to characterize every day and challenging occurrences and concepts in people's lives (Aspers and Corte, 2019). Qualitative research does not place emphasis on striving for the ultimate truth or ensuring objectivity, but recognizes that multiple perspectives exist, thus implying that more than one truth can exist and not only focuses on the objective essence of behaviour, but also on its subjective meanings, which includes direct accounts of their behaviours, motives and attitudes (Aspers and Corte, 2019). This contrasts with research methods that maintain the perspective of an objective world, whereby perceptions and opinions are free from influences and the conviction that research and observation lead to a truth being confirmed (Cropley, 2019). When compared to quantitative inquiry, qualitative analysis produces different types of information because one group argues from the underlying theoretical essence of each methodology, benefiting from extensive interviews, while the other focuses on the apparent consistency of research methods, benefiting from the rewards of numbers and words. This shows that in the interpretive paradigm, procedures like interviews and observations are dominating, but in the optimistic paradigm, questionnaires are used in the reverse order (Busetto et al., 2021).

This research followed a phenomenological method, thus emphasizing the perceptions and understandings of people (Jameel et al., 2018; Mohajan, 2018). This study also appreciates the presence of a socially constructed world in which distinct individuals build their reality socially (Aspers and Corte, 2019). This worldview recognizes that individuals want to create sense of their world, which

means that the researcher can examine the various subjective meanings and opinions that exist, as well as the participants' relationships and historical and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2009). This was regarded as appropriate for the context of this research in which various stakeholders, each with their own worldviews, are involved.

The study also used qualitative research due to its resonance with design thinking. In any qualitative research, the goal is to participate in research that improves understanding rather than analyzing surface characteristics. Qualitative research examines local meanings of events and the relationships that produce these meanings and provides the opportunity to stimulate the growth of new understandings about the variety and depth with which organisational members experience significant organisational phenomena (Mohammed, 2021). Another reason for choosing qualitative research was that quantitative research is supposed to apply fixed variables in different situations likewise (Levitt et al., 2018). However, this was not the case in this research, where there were numerous meanings corresponding to the challenges of the tourism sector, requiring insight into local understandings, dynamics and an appreciation of the research site's distinctive nature (Daniel, 2016). In addition, the variables concerned were not previously known. The subject of the study was new and had not been previously implemented with respondents in the tourism sector (Creswell, 2009). A type of scientific research is qualitative research (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest and Namey, 2005).

The study followed inductive thinking, whereby the research did not begin with a pre-determined set of assumptions, but rather drew conclusions about objects or events on occurrences (Aspers and Corte, 2019). This contrasts with the deductive logic method in which the investigator begins with certain premises, which logically leads to findings (Jameel et al., 2018). Therefore, the inductive approach maintains the perspective that the meanings of respondents are interpreted, resulting in the theory being generated from information gathered (Creswell, 2009). This study was inductive and aimed at making the use of qualitative research more attractive (Cropley, 2019). This technique has also been chosen because it can add importance to leadership and organisational research (Aspers and Corte, 2019).

The qualitative researcher is focused on the participant's remarks and utilizes techniques such as focus groups to extract data (Jameel et al., 2018). Although

qualitative data can often be applied to people with similar characteristics to those in the study population, gaining a rich and complex understanding of a specific social background or phenomenon usually takes precedence over generalizing information to other geographic areas or populations (Mack et al., 2005). Focus groups, used in this research study to obtain information, are frequently used in the phenomenological method because they enable the researcher to obtain insight into the respondents' experiences (Cropley, 2019). Data is in word form, as can be seen in the writing of this research (Aspers and Corte, 2019). The qualitative researcher is the primary tool in the study because of their intense involvement in the field (Jameel et al., 2018). Qualitative techniques are more versatile in that they allow for more spontaneous and adaptable communication between the researcher and the study topic (Mohammed, 2021). For this research, the investigator personally gathered and analysed the information. This involved a 'close connection' between the respondents and the researcher (Daniel, 2016).

According to Aspers and Corte (2019), owing to the elevated level of effort and complexity engaged, qualitative research is not necessarily simpler than quantitative research. This is verified by Daniel (2016) and Jameel et al. (2018), who claimed that qualitative research could be demanding and inappropriate in the search for easy and rapid results. Qualitative techniques have become significant instruments in the broader approach to applied research, particularly because they provide unique insights into the sample populations' regional viewpoints (Aspers and Corte, 2019). This was consistent with the intention of this research study which used design thinking to understand and confront the challenges encountered within the tourism sector in the KwaZulu-Natal region. Qualitative research can aid in a better understanding and perception of the situation's dynamic reality (Busetto et al., 2021). In order to guarantee that the qualitative research study was sound, consideration was provided to the design, sampling, evaluation and collection of information (Cropley, 2019; Jameel et al., 2018).

5.4. Sampling

A sample is defined as the technique of selecting a sample of participants that are represented statistically from the study population (Jameel et al., 2018). A qualitative researcher selects selected persons or locations for their study on purpose in order

to acquire a thorough knowledge of the research problem and concerns (Creswell, 2009). To achieve a deep understanding of the research objectives and questions, various perspectives, diverse views and opinions are essential. Therefore, the targeted sample population of this study comprised of members from the tourist sector within the KwaZulu-Natal region. The study sites used in this research contain samples from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, as well as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. A sample is required to extract certain numbers from the entire population as it would be impossible to gather data from all in the targeted area (Busetto et al., 2021). Even if it was feasible, in order to obtain reliable results, it is not appropriate to collect data from everyone in a group (Mohammed, 2021). If it were possible to target the entire population, it would be an extremely time-consuming and costly process, hence the solution would be to select only a small group out of a larger population and this process is called **sampling** (Walliman, 2011). A population is a collective phrase used to indicate the overall number of subjects in a research study. It does not necessarily relate to the number of persons (Creswell, 2009). The author further explained that not everyone in a population would be of interest to the researcher and only a selected grouping was targeted for participation in the study. In qualitative research, only a sample, or a subset of a population, is chosen for each experiment. The research aims of the study and the sample population characteristics (such as size and diversity) decide how and how many people to choose from (Mack et al., 2005). A sampling frame is created from this selected group, and it is from here that a sample is chosen, as shown in Figure 5.2.

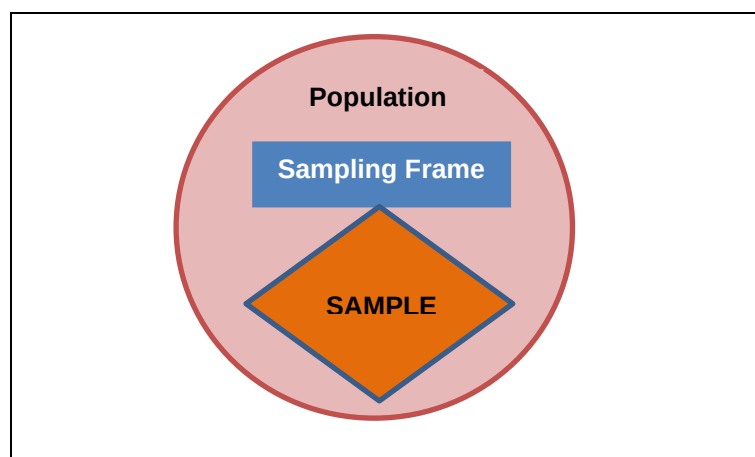


Figure 5.2: Sampling frame in relation to population and sample
Source: Walliman (2011)

Due to the relatively small population identified for this study, the entire population was adopted as the research sample. The initial population was solely from tourism stakeholders within the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. The original research study plan in this context was postponed and subsequently became non-existent due to constraints emerging from the global COVID-19 pandemic and its consequent impact on the local tourism business. Limited data and engagements were recorded. These included a focus group session, a design thinking workshop and two (2) open-ended interviews, which are recorded, included and presented later in this chapter as well as the results chapter.

The researcher then approached Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, along with multiple tourist organisations within KZN, and after providing in-depth context to this research study, approval was granted by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The reason for the researcher choosing Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife was due to this organisation's vast management of tourism sites across KwaZulu-Natal, consisting of around 42 facilities and 120 protected sites, including terrestrial, coastal and marine reserves; two World Heritage Sites; game parks; and extensive portions of the province's breathtakingly beautiful scenery (Ezemvelo Wildlife AR, 2021). This organisation was ideally suited and experienced in tourism operations and was perfect for the researcher to extract ideas, experiences and challenges from within this sector. The sample included management personnel from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, all of whom were able to provide insight into the challenges experienced by the tourist sector in the KwaZulu-Natal region. The researcher was provided with a database of tourism stakeholders involved in Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. These stakeholders were then sent emails directly, inviting them to take part in a design thinking workshop, an individual interview session and a focus group session. These participants were requested to confirm their availability. In both contexts, at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, as well as with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the researcher was notified of participants invited to these sessions as they were best suited to provide a valuable contribution to the research study context. This is verified by Busetto et al. (2021) and Cropley (2019), who observed how qualitative researchers seek out the opinions of particular individuals who may relate to the phenomenon instead of randomly choosing respondents. As with quantitative studies, the emphasis of this study was not on representativeness with the intention of inferring to the wider population (Levitt et al., 2018).

The researcher also followed the data saturation strategy, whereby the researcher ultimately identified information replication or redundancy, signaling that further engagement with respondents was not essential (Cropley, 2019). This was observed and more evident when the researcher conducted focus group sessions with industry stakeholders. Fieldwork in this research study came to an end when the new respondents echoed other participants' views. This is referred to as recurrent patterning and is another way to define the appropriate sample size (Jameel et al., 2018).

5.4.1. Purposive sampling

For the purpose of this research study, the qualitative method with purposive sampling was used. This study has purposefully chosen respondents in line with qualitative research in order to allow comprehension of the research problem and issues (Cresswell, 2009). Therefore, as Cropley (2019) argued, the researcher became involved in a thorough inquiry with a small group, as is characteristic of qualitative research. Qualitative research is less about sample size and more about getting a suitable sample. Therefore, the researcher chooses respondents who are familiar with the subject under inquiry (Levitt et al., 2018). This sampling method focuses on selecting a sample from a predetermined population of participants who have expressed their will to share their experiences candidly. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which people are chosen based on certain key knowledge, expertise, or roles they can play in the research (Mohajan, 2018). It has become quite popular to use purposeful sampling in qualitative research (Busetto et al., 2021; Jameel et al., 2018; Cropley, 2019). A qualitative research study is an inductive method that enables the researcher to inquire on new insights and meanings through the collection of data and analysis by using a purposive sampling technique and semi-structured interview schedules.

Sample sizes, which may or may not be established before data collection begins, are determined by available resources, time and research objectives. One of the most prevalent sampling strategies, purposeful sampling, brings participants together based on pre-determined criteria linked to a specific study subject (Busetto et al., 2021). As a result, purposive sampling works best when data is verified and evaluated concurrently with data gathering (Mohammed, 2021). The purposive

sampling method is the most frequently used sampling technique in a qualitative research study (Jameel et al., 2018) as the objective is to gain an in-depth understanding. Purposive sample sizes are frequently computed using the concept of conceptual saturation, which refers to the point in data collection when new data no longer adds to the understanding of the study topics (Mack et al., 2005).

Due to the small number of stakeholder participants directly involved in tourism-related activities in the KwaZulu-Natal Region, specifically from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, it was feasible and desirable to include the entire population as the sample.

5.5. Data collection

In a qualitative study, data collection is a method by which researchers record data (Levitt et al., 2018), which includes focus groups, interviews, observation, media searches, archival research and reflective note-taking. This was affirmed by Isaacs (2014), who asserted that in a qualitative research study, the most common method used for data collection are interviews and focus group discussions, sharing similarities with Busetto et al. (2021), who highlighted that qualitative research has been developed into many methods, with interviews and observations being the most commonly used methods.

In a qualitative research study, data comprises of themes, phrases, words and concepts (Jameel et al., 2018). Data should be collected and analyzed in a systematic and coordinated way such that another individual might be able to replicate it if that person wanted to do so (Cropley, 2019). One advantage of employing open-ended questions and probing in exploratory research is that it allows respondents to react in their own words rather than being forced to choose from pre-determined responses, as is the case with quantitative methods (Mack et al., 2005). As a result, these types of data are very descriptive. This does not negate the importance of qualitative data, since its expertise and nuance can lead to significant insights into human society (Walliman, 2011).

Qualitative research is carried out in many fields; hence a number of data collection methods have been developed to address the diverse needs of the various subjects, namely qualitative interviewing, focus groups, witnesses, analysis of discussion and

interaction, and analysis of texts and records (Walliman, 2011). In collecting data for this study, the researcher notes that qualitative research does not only rely on one source of data (Creswell, 2009) and firstly used observation to note the challenges experienced by the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal. Qualitative research instruments such as observation, open-ended questions, in-depth interviews (audio or video), and field notes are used to obtain data from respondents in their natural contexts. Open-ended inquiries can elicit responses that are meaningful and culturally significant to the responder, as well as answers that are unexpected by the researcher and rich and insightful in nature (Daniel, 2016). The data gathering approaches provide participants with a detailed explanation of the study. The qualitative research approach's participant assessment and focus group aspect aims to develop a broader understanding of behavior and hence provides enough data about individuals and conditions in real life (Mohammed, 2021).

The researcher obtained permission from iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism (Appendix 1) and the first phase of data collection in this study commenced with a focus group session at the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism on 29th August 2019. Thereafter, a design thinking workshop was presented to participants from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism on 30th August at a venue in the iLembe region. The researcher used both sessions to observe participant behaviour. The next stage was to conduct individual interview sessions with the sample participants from iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism during November and December 2019. However, due to constraints in this sector and in the region, fuelled largely by the COVID-19 pandemic early in 2020, only two (2) interviews were completed successfully: one in April 2020 and the other in December 2020. Due to the constraints affecting the tourism sector and the tourism stakeholders from within iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism as a result of the pandemic, the researcher then embarked on attaining a new study site for this research study and obtained approval from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in May 2021 (Appendix 2). Due to COVID-19 regulations within the country, it was agreed that all engagement between the researcher and the research participants would be conducted through virtual sessions. The first phase of data collection within the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife context was to conduct a design thinking workshop with the sample list of participants provided by Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. This session was conducted on 10th August

2021. The researcher followed this up with the scheduling of Individual Interview sessions as the next step in data collection. The Individual interview sessions were scheduled from 24 August to 26 August 2021, while some sessions were re-scheduled to 4 September 2021.

The aim of the researcher was to gain an in-depth understanding of design thinking at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. A broader scope into the study required the researcher to deviate from the core objectives of this study. Secondary data such as iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism management reports, policy, regulations, legislative, journal articles and conference papers are examined in this study. Similarly, the researcher additionally uses secondary data for Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The researcher also compiled field notes, detailing a written account of what is seen, heard and the thoughts of the researcher during the data collection process of this study.

As with qualitative research, the researcher spent a lot of time gathering information in the natural environment (Creswell, 2009). This is shown in Table 5.1. The study involved comprehensive site visits with the stakeholders of the tourism sector at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. The researcher had the opportunity to conduct a focus group session and a design thinking workshop at different venues in the iLembe region to understand the complexity and challenges faced by the tourism sector. This is compatible with qualitative research where respondents are not being researched or asked to finish questionnaires in a laboratory (Creswell, 2009).

In this research study, focus groups and a design thinking workshop were used to gather information. Due to their importance in qualitative research, focus group sessions were employed for their benefits in extracting data in a group setting and where common issues are discussed (Humphreys et al., 2021). The strategy adopted in the construction of the focus group questions consisted of basically building on the accumulated information from the focus group session at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism on 29 August 2019. The same approach was used after conducting the design thinking workshop with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife on 10 August 2021, and eventually shifting from a point of obtaining knowledge of the problems to involving stakeholders on their suggestions for

progress and action. In qualitative research, "open-ended" questions are frequently asked, which are not always asked in the same way to each respondent. Open-ended questions allow participants to react in their own terms, and these responses appear to be more complicated than just "yes" or "no" (Mohammed, 2021). The researcher also used the probing method, which is critical, but which may be difficult, according to Levitt et al. (2018). The actual probe used depends on the individual participant's response. Therefore, qualitative research demands that the moderator listen carefully to the participants and actively engage with what they say (Mack et al., 2005). Avoiding jargon and avoiding interrupting participants was essential (Jameel et al., 2018). This was especially important when the researcher engaged stakeholders in the focus group and design thinking workshop sessions. Probing in focus group analysis is probably the most important technique, but it is also the hardest to learn (Mack et al., 2005). During the focus group session interviews and the design thinking workshop, the researcher took field notes reflecting observations and feelings, as advised by Noble and Smith (2015). This ultimately facilitated the making of sense.

The researcher had previous experience in conducting qualitative research. Furthermore, the researcher was conscious of the tourism sector and was acquainted with the topic (Jameel et al., 2018). Much care was taken in compiling the open-ended questions for the focus group sessions, which allowed the researcher to maintain a flow during the session (Then, Rankin and Ali, 2014). The benefit of using focus groups was that the researcher was able to test, ask participants to elaborate on their answers, and enable natural discussions (Noble and Smith, 2015). This was especially important as the researcher was new to the challenges experienced in the tourism sector and participants were readily sharing their thoughts, opinions and experiences in both the focus group session and the design thinking workshop.

The design thinking workshop presented to the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism was held at one of the members of the iLembe Chamber of Commerce's venue in Ballito, with the workshop lasting about half a day. The design thinking workshop for Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife was conducted via a virtual Zoom meeting. The duration of each session lasted approximately 2 hours. Various stakeholders were encouraged to participate to allow for diverse inputs. In principle, the workshops were facilitated, with the researcher taking the lead in introducing and

engaging the attendees. A large part of the process was to have participants engage in groups. Similar to the focus group interviews, the design thinking workshops were also focused on building momentum to allow stakeholders to take action and solve problems in their region. As presented in Chapter 6, the design thinking workshop and focus group information were thus continually analysed collectively to ultimately build results. As with the focus group interviews, the achievement of stakeholder involvement was one of the primary challenges experienced with the design thinking workshop. Almost any aspect of life or the weather can be learned from primary data. Obtaining original data, on the other hand, requires time and is not always possible. Even while more information usually implies better accuracy, large surveys and other studies are expensive to coordinate. It is not always possible to have direct access to the research topic (Walliman, 2011).

The researcher also took secondary data into consideration. People are bombarded with secondary data, which is data that is analyzed and collected in the form of news bulletins, magazines, newspapers, films, advertisements, and the Internet, among other places (Walliman, 2011). This consisted primarily of the surveys and business confidence index reports compiled by the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, as well as the annual report compiled by Ezmevelo KZN Wildlife. These reports were then used to triangulate the information further. Newspaper papers, company annual reports and newsletters have also been analyzed and have been useful in obtaining knowledge on the context of the research.

5.5.1. Description of empirical work

The following section offers information on the focus group sessions and the design thinking workshop method. As well as confirming the opinion of Daniel (2016) that qualitative research fieldwork may take a long time to complete. Table 5.1 outlines the fieldwork conducted in this research.

Table 5.1: Details of empirical work

		Tourism Sub-Sectors									
Empirical Work	Date of Stakeholder engagement	Hotel and Accommodation	Media	Events Management	Food and Catering	Hospitality / Hospitality Management	Souvenir and Crafts	Chamber of Commerce	Municipal / Governments	Management / Executive Management	Total Participants
Focus group 1: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism	29 August 2019	3	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	-	11
Design thinking Workshop: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism	30 August 2019	2	1	-	1	-	1	3	-	-	8
Individual Interviews: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism	24 April 2020 and 14 December 2020	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2
Design thinking Workshop: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife	10 August 2021	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	3	10
Individual Interviews: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife	24 -26 August 2021; 4 September 2021	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	3	8
Focus group 2: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife	28 September 2021	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	3	6

5.5.1.1. Focus group 1: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

A focus group session was conducted on 29 August 2019 with multiple stakeholders from the tourism sector within the iLembe region. Table 6.1 in Chapter Six offers a breakdown of the focus group participants from within the tourism sector at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. The primary goal of this focus group was to have a better grasp of the challenges and issues (Then et al., 2014) affecting the tourism sector in the iLembe region. Focus group questions are mentioned in Appendix 3.

5.5.1.2. Design thinking workshop: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

To prepare for the design thinking workshop, the information from the focus group interviews held with participants from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism was analyzed. The workshop was held on August 30, 2019. This workshop consisted of participants being briefed on design thinking and its methodologies and involved group activities to present the problem-solving abilities of design thinking. Table 6.2. in Chapter Six offers a breakdown of the design thinking workshop participants from within the tourism sector at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism.

5.5.1.3. Design thinking workshop: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

The first step of engagement with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife was a design thinking workshop conducted on 10 August 2021 with all the participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. Table 6.4 in Chapter Six offers a breakdown of the workshop participants from within the tourism sector at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. All participants were taken through a virtual design thinking presentation and were briefed on the process of design thinking, its history, benefits and the iterative application of the design thinking process that makes it unique in solving problems.

5.5.1.4. Focus group 2: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

After conducting the workshop with participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the researcher then proceeded with individual interview sessions and finally concluded engagements with a focus group session on 28 September 2021. This session was conducted virtually, and participants were requested to give an account of their understanding of design thinking and its ability to address the problems and challenges encountered within the tourism sector. Participants were also asked to consider whether design thinking could be utilized to develop new tourism strategies. The questions for this focus group session are mentioned in Appendix 4. The breakdown of the focus group participants from within the tourism sector at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife is presented in Table 6.4. in Chapter Six.

This session concluded all empirical and data collection efforts by the researcher.

5.5.2. Focus groups

In a social setting, focus groups inspire a variety of opinions which either strengthens a viewpoint or challenges a new opinion to be formed by the participant (Then et al., 2014). Focus groups are relatively popular in qualitative social science research (Dilshad and Latiff, 2013) and are a commonly used method in a qualitative study, aiming to comprehensively understand social issues (Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee, 2018) from a group of participants that are purposely selected. These are conducted in a group setting with more than one respondent, as the name implies. All of the foregoing forms (organized, semi-structured, unstructured, and in-depth) are theoretically conceivable in groups (Cropley, 2019). Focus groups are similar to group interviews in that they are more in-depth and include an element of involvement on a certain theme or subject. People with direct experience or expertise of the research issue, as well as individuals with a specific interest in it, such as users or clients, make up the majority of the team (Walliman, 2011). A focus group, when compared to interviews, functions in more of a natural environment as the participants influence, and are influenced by, others, similar to a real-life natural setting (Dilshad and Latiff, 2013). Dilshad and Latiff (2013) explained that the

planning of a focus group session is a critical feature, particularly involving the following:

- The researcher needs to be clear and specific about the objectives of the focus group.
- The participants should be aware of the objective of the focus group session; and
- The participants should be contacted well in advance.

Some scholars postulate that the outcomes generated from a focus group session are likely to produce data that might not surface during an individual participant session (Guest, 2017). Focus groups are significantly beneficial to the researcher, who seeks to understand the experiences and concerns from a group of individuals on a specific issue or subject, and then proceeds to decipher these patterns of thought (Dilshad and Latiff, 2013). Focus groups are defined as group discussions that explore specific subject matters; involve a collective response; and a relatively key aspect of this method is the interaction between individuals in the group that serves as a means of gathering qualitative data which would not surface when using other qualitative research collection techniques (Flynn, Albrecht and Scott, 2018). A focus group is a way of acquiring qualitative data in which one or two investigators and a group of participants meet in a group to discuss a certain study topic, which is usually taped and occasionally videotaped (Mack et al., 2005).

Jameel et al. (2018) explained that focus groups in a qualitative research study are where multiple participants ranging between 6 and 12 are simultaneously interviewed together. Guest (2017) agreed that focus groups range from 6 to 12 in number and rely on group dynamics to encourage discussions amongst participants. Similarly, Dilshad and Latiff (2013) indicated that a focus group session creates a setting for a group of individuals to focus on the questions asked by the researcher and consists of a group of individuals comprising six to nine in number. The content of the focus group session should normally include five to six questions, but progressive and lengthy discussions should be expected due to the group process (Busetto et al., 2021). This method of data collection is more feasible than interviews as the experiences are shared by multiple participants in a shorter time period. This technique necessitates a researcher to gather a group of participants to converse on

a particular topic with the objective being to draw upon individual perceptions, attitudes, beliefs and experiences in a moderated engagement session (Nyumba et al., 2018). A focus group discussion is a data collection method in qualitative research that involves a select group that contributes towards a pre-determined and specific subject or issue that is facilitated by the researcher or an external moderator (Cropley, 2019). The qualitative research approach, according to van Eeuwijk and Angehrn (2017), is a process that is explorative, iterative, reflective, and flexible. Focus groups provide many benefits, which include the collection of rich and expressive data; the opportunity to have intense and direct contact with the participants; and to encourage regular interaction amongst the participant as the focus group session progresses (Then et al., 2014)

Focus group research is frequently employed in social research, market research and policy development (Then et al., 2014) and are at times viewed as tantamount with interviews, particularly as both methods possess the tendency to disclose a participant's morals and opinions (Nyumba et al., 2018). Focus groups are effective at gathering information about a group's cultural norms as well as general overviews of issues that are of relevance to specified cultural groups or sub-groups (Busetto et al., 2021). Focus groups or focus group interviews are a data collection technique used in qualitative research and comprises a group of individuals who congregate to discuss a specific topic (Dilshad and Latiff, 2013). One of the main advantages of focus groups is that they may deliver a lot of information in a short amount of time (Cropley, 2019). This method is generally used to gather information regarding the beliefs, perceptions, opinions and attitudes of individuals (Then et al., 2014). It is the responsibility of the researcher or facilitator of the group session to clarify concerns over the participants' confidentiality and request the participants to feel free to ask questions, should they wish (Dilshad and Latiff, 2013). The researcher recognizes that this strategy might be useful in eliciting new insights from the research participants in order to achieve the study's research objectives.

Focus groups target high-quality data in a social setting by attempting to understand specific issues or challenges from the perspective of the research participants (Dilshad and Latiff, 2013). Focus groups are one of several methods used to get a full picture of how a particular issue affects a group's culture. Focus groups help to this wide understanding by providing well-founded information about social and

cultural norms, their pervasiveness in society, and people's views on their own values (Humphreys et al., 2021). In qualitative research, focus groups are a common data collection tool (Flynn et al., 2018). Focus groups are similar in nature to interviews as both solicit similar data collection techniques using open-ended questions with regular probing of the responses from participants, but they differ in structure (Guest, 2017). Focus groups as a data collection technique are frequently administered in diverse areas such as policy development, market research, counselling and social research (Mohammed, 2021). The data collected in a focus group is not only focused on the actual words but additionally and significantly on the non-verbal responses as well, as the discussions amongst group members allow the researcher or facilitator to observe individual views and the manner in which they are put forth (Then et al., 2014). For focus groups, prompts are neutral questions, words, sounds and even movements, and moderators can use them to allow respondents to expand on their answers or explain why or how (Mack et al., 2005). It has just been said that verbalizations almost always consist of data. However, there is another type of data that is often missed - not language, but body language. Cropley (2019) claims that, particularly when taking the form of an interview, respondents' narratives are frequently accompanied by facial emotions such as smiles, sometimes even loud laughing, or the polar opposite, such as grimaces, scowls, and even tears.

As the focus group session progresses, the researcher or facilitator should stimulate interaction amongst the participants in the group, using probe and pause techniques, without expressing any value to the responses (Dilshad and Latiff, 2013). There could also be hand motions, finger pointing, fist balling, and other body movements and activities (e.g., muscle tension, refusal to look directly at the interviewer or sitting visibly uncomfortably in the chair). Interviewees may keep track of such things as they happen. Of course, observational data cannot be collected when there is no direct contact between the researcher and the respondent, such as when analyzing existing documents, because observational data necessitates face-to-face contact between the researcher and the respondent, as well as a researcher who isn't solely interested in recording the respondent's remarks (Cropley, 2019).

Focus groups are particularly effective at collecting data on social norms and the range of views or opinions within a community. The abundance of focus group information comes from the diverse team and the group's diversity (Mack et al.,

2005). Therefore, capturing the actions of respondents on an audio recorder or on videotape is particularly valuable as it enables non-verbal information to be gathered at the time of the interview without the need to take extensive notes. This data can significantly enrich qualitative data analysis explanations and interpretations (Cropley, 2019).

A focus group session produces rich and detailed information regarding the thoughts, impressions, feelings and perceptions of individuals in their own words (Dilshad and Latiff, 2013). Participants have an impact on one another through their participation and replies to what others say. Because participants did not all have the same ideas and experiences due to disparities in age, race, job, resource availability, and other characteristics, it was likely that they shared a variety of perspectives (Mack et al., 2005). Tape recordings, transcripts of those interviews, notes from the moderator and note-taker during the focus group, and notes from the debriefing session following the focus group make up the focus group data (Mohammed, 2021). The most used source of focus group information is typed transcripts (Mack et al., 2005). Focus groups are regularly used to extract in-depth information on individuals' beliefs, opinions, perspectives and attitudes on a specific issue or problem (Then et al., 2014). According to Cropley (2019), focus groups are used to establish co-created responses from several participants in a focus group. Because participants were often building on each other's answers and endorsing and disagreeing with each other, the focus groups yielded an in-depth response to the questions, giving the researcher a deeper understanding of the existing difficulties.

Requests for participation in the focus groups were made over email. An example of such an email can be found in Appendix 5. The researcher provided a brief introduction to the research study to all participants in attendance at the first focus group session held on the 29th of August 2019. The researcher additionally highlighted to the participants that the objective of this focus group session was to identify the challenges, problems and concerns that the tourism sector in the iLembe region were encountering prior to the design thinking workshop. The researcher made regular contact with the research participants via email to alert them of the second focus group that was scheduled for the 25th of November 2019, informing them to be available for this session, as well as providing useful information on design thinking. This email to participants was sent between the two focus group

meetings and can be found in Appendix 6. The response rate from participants at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism was rather dismal, particularly aided by growing concerns at that stage on business lockdown regulations as a result of the rapid spread of COVID-19 globally. Ultimately, support and interest for this research study faded and dwindled to the point that the researcher was forced to re-think the scope of this study. The researcher made contact with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and approval was granted. This email to participants was sent between the two focus group meetings and can be found in Appendix 7. The focus group with participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife was conducted after a design thinking workshop and individual interview sessions. This session was initially scheduled for 14th September 2021. However, due to participants being unavailable, this session was eventually scheduled and conducted on 28th September 2021.

A voice recorder was used to record the focus group responses. Because the procedure of verbatim transcription of focus groups is substantially more difficult than that of interviews, voice recording measures were used with the participants' permission. Table 5.2 details the length of the focus groups as well as the location and timing of the focus group interviews. A specific identification code has been assigned to each focus group. Information on individual focus group respondent's specific identification codes is presented in Chapter 6. Each participants specific details in the two focus groups', such as age, gender, and present roles, may be found in Table 6.1 and Table 6.6 of Chapter six respectively.

Table 5.2: Details of focus groups conducted

Focus	Date	Location	Duration
FG1	29 August 2019	iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Ballito	1h:41m:21s
FG2	28 September 2021	Zoom Session	1h:05m:44s

5.5.3. Interviews

The value in conducting interviews is not simply limited to just analysing words or building a holistic view, but it additionally empowers the research participants to express their inner thoughts and feelings by speaking in their own voice (Busetto et al., 2021). The author further explained that the adequacy of interviews has long

been acknowledged as it supports the researcher in extracting in-depth descriptions from participants in their natural settings and serves as a key factor in the research design. The interviewing methods of the researcher are motivated by the desire to know everything about the research topic that the respondent can share. Researchers engage with people by asking neutral questions, carefully listening to responses, then asking follow-up questions and samples depending on their responses (Mohammed, 2021). Although questionnaire surveys are simple to set up, they do have some drawbacks, particularly when there is little response flexibility. Interviews are more appropriate for issues that require investigation since they are employed as a data collecting strategy when little is known about the research topic or when a detailed understanding of the research topic is required. (Humphreys et al., 2021). A researcher conducts interviews as they attempt to gather information on participants' personal experiences and environment (Jameel et al., 2018) and when compared to a questionnaire, an interview is much more solid in extracting narrative data, which enables the researcher to scrutinize the views of the participant more intensively (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Interviews are also ideal for discussing delicate matters that might be difficult to discuss in a group environment (Mack et al., 2005).

With proper preparation, interviews can be utilized for issues of a general or specialised nature, as well as for very sensitive topics (Mohammed, 2021). In-depth interviews are ideal for gathering data on an individual's personal background, thoughts, and experiences, especially when discussing sensitive themes, because they allow you to learn from individual perspectives rather than, say, a community's norms, which is better served by focus groups. Face-to-face interviews can be conducted at home, at work, outdoors, or while on the go (for example, when traveling), and can be utilized for both individual and group interviews (Walliman, 2011). These are an active empirical way to get people to think about their personal feelings, beliefs and experiences (Mack et al., 2005). These also provide an opportunity to learn about people's perspectives on the world and how they organize it. This can be accomplished by paying close attention to the causal explanations offered by participants for what they have seen and believe, as well as actively researching the correlations and interactions that they see between specific events, occurrences, and beliefs (Mack et al., 2005). A semi-structured interview is a simplified presentation of topics and questions that are explored by the researcher

(Jamshed, 2014), and the use of semi-structured interviews enables the researcher to engage in an open-ended discussion with the participant (Jameel et al., 2018).

The in-depth interview is a methodology designed to provide a vivid picture of the perspective on the research topic of the respondent. The person being questioned is considered to be the expert during in-depth interviews and the interviewer is considered the participant (Niebauer, 2020). An interview is a progressive conversation with the objective being to extract in-depth information about a specific topic and how the phenomenon that is being studied can be interpreted from the participant's viewpoint (Busetto et al., 2021). Usually, in-depth interviews are performed face-to-face, including one interviewer and one participant (Mack et al., 2005). For the interview data to be effective and captured correctly, it is considered appropriate to record the interview responses. However, this may become a contentious matter between the researcher and the participant (Jamshed, 2014). The author went on to say that recording an interview allows the researcher to focus on the content of the interview and the verbal cues, resulting in a more accurate transcription of the interview response.

All requests for interviews were made via emails to participants. The email included a brief introduction and description of the work, an example of which is included in Appendix 8 and Appendix 9. The questions for the interview session can be found in Appendix 10. The interview questions were written in such a way that they directly related to the primary research objectives, starting with determining whether the person being questioned believes there are challenges in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal. Thereafter, questions were included that would lead to the recognition of design thinking and its subsequent characteristics and it could be used to address the current challenges identified. Additional probing questions that tried to determine how participants behave were included. Finally, it was critical to create acceptable measures for tracking design thinking's impact on tourism promotion in the region.

Specifically, semi-structured interviews were designed and initially, a face-to-face approach was planned. Due to the rapid spread of the COVID-19 pandemic and commercial instability in South Africa as a result of lockdown regulations, the researcher and research participants decided to hold these sessions virtually. All

interviews were recorded using the recording functionality on the virtual platform and then used for transcription and documenting purposes. The researcher conducted interview sessions with two (2) study sites using virtual platforms. No face-to-face interviews were conducted as originally planned. Table 5.3 provides information on when and where the interviews took place. Additionally, a unique identification code was issued to each interviewee. The length of each interview is also shown in Table 5.3. The only significant issue with the interviews was arranging actual meetings with some of the participants, owing to their hectic schedules as a result of their professions. Each interview respondent's business sector and role are included in Table 6.3 and Table 6.5 of Chapter Six respectively.

Table 5.3: Details of interviews conducted

Interview Respondent	Date	Location	Duration
<i>I1</i>	24/04/2020	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:38m:30s
<i>I2</i>	14/12/2020	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:49m:33s
<i>EI 1</i>	24/08/2021	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:50m:38s
<i>EI 2</i>	24/08/2021	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:57m:20s
<i>EI 3</i>	24/08/2021	Zoom Online Meeting	1h:14m:22s
<i>EI 4</i>	04/09/2021	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:32m:56s
<i>EI 5</i>	25/08/2021	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:52m:51s
<i>EI 6</i>	25/08/2021	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:49m:48s
<i>EI 9</i>	24/08/2021	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:59m:47s
<i>EI 10</i>	04/09/2021	Zoom Online Meeting	0h:36m:50s

5.5.4. Participant observation

Observation is a qualitative methodology whereby a researcher witnesses' people and their characteristics in a natural setting by becoming a part of the culture or setting that is being discovered (Jamshed, 2014). In qualitative research, observation, particularly participant observation, has been used to collect data about people, processes, and cultures in a range of fields (Kawulich, 2005). participant observation may also help students comprehend their physical, personal, cultural,

and economic settings, as well as the relationships between people, circumstances, concepts, conventions, and events, as well as their own behaviors and activities - what they do, how often, and with whom (Mack et al., 2005). Participant observation has been a staple method of anthropological as well as sociological research for many years (Humphreys et al, 2021). Participant observation is ideal in their normal settings to collect data on naturally occurring behaviours (Mack et al., 2005) and can be used to monitor event and behaviour information, as well as the existence or conditions of the object (Walliman, 2011).

Participant observation is a qualitative method based on ethnographic research that aids researchers in comprehending the experiences of study populations (Mack et al., 2005). In recent years, the phrase "ethnographic approaches" has encompassed empirical data gathering techniques such as interviewing, participant observation, and document analysis under the umbrella term (Kawulich, 2005). Participant observation is a standard method of data collecting in anthropological research, particularly ethnographic studies, and has been used for over a century (Mohammed, 2021). This is a method of gathering information rather than asking questions through analysis. The goal is to have a detached view of the events and to remain invisible in reality or in effect (Busetto et al., 2021). In general, the researcher engaged in participant observation seeks to discover what it is like to be an "insider" while staying an "outsider" in the end (Mack et al., 2005). Observations require the researcher to use their five senses to identify current situations and provide a "written picture" of the situation under study (Mohammed, 2021). The difference between participant observation and non-participant observation is that the researcher acquires information in a social setting by playing a role in it (Cropley, 2019). Except for a few people who are informed, it usually happens in such a way that it is not clear to the people who are watching that it is happening (i.e., the finding is hidden).

Participant observation is the process of forming a partnership within a group and learning to act in a way that blends in with the community so that its members act naturally, then withdrawing from the environment or culture to immerse themselves in the information in order to understand and write about what is going on (Busetto et al., 2021). This is accomplished by qualitative investigators who study alone or by witnessing and engaging in the daily activities of the study group in varying degrees.

Researchers can utilize observation methods to check for nonverbal expressions of feelings, determine who communicates with whom, understand how participants communicate, and see how much time is spent on different tasks, among other things (Kawulich, 2005). Participant observation often happens in community settings, where the study questions are assumed to have some significance (Mohammed, 2021).

Researchers can also discover factors important for a thorough understanding of the research problem through participant observation, but which were unknown when planning the experiment (Humphreys et al., 2021). Participant observation is used to boost the study's credibility by allowing the researcher to have a better understanding of the setting and phenomenon under investigation (Kawulich, 2005). A participant observation study chronicles activity as they see them in the presence of participants in their everyday life (Jameel et al., 2018). It is in this light that the researcher employed this method to seek and identify the current problems and challenges surfacing at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in order to analyse how the application of design thinking can address these challenges and promote tourism in the KwaZulu-Natal region. Although researchers make thoughtful, accurate notes about what they see in these community settings, they record all accounts and findings in a field notebook as field notes (Mohammed, 2021).

Participant observation was conducted at the focus group session on 29th August 2019 and design thinking workshop on 30th August 2019 with participants from iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. The researcher found it rather challenging to observe participants while engaging participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife as these sessions were conducted via a virtual platform and most participants were not visible during these sessions. The researcher did take note of the participants' interactions throughout these sessions, as well as their contributions to the design thinking workshop and the focus group sessions on August 10th and September 28th, 2021. During the workshops, focus group and interview sessions, the researcher gathered field-notes that highlighted observations and attitudes, which Mack e. al. (2005) suggested. This process aided the researcher to make sense of matters pertaining to the research study. Table 5.4 provides details on the participant observation sessions.

Table 5.4: Details of participant observation sessions

Participant observation Session	Date	Location
<i>FG1</i>	29 August 2019	<i>iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Ballito</i>
<i>DTW1</i>	30 August 2019	<i>Member Facility: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Ballito</i>
<i>DTW2</i>	10 August 2021	<i>Virtual Session: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife</i>
<i>FG2</i>	28 September 2021	<i>Virtual Session: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife</i>

5.5.5. Data collection and transcription process

This section discusses the data collection procedure in detail, as well as how it was transcribed.

5.5.5.1 Focus groups

Through an initial introductory email with a brief explanation of the research, the researcher made separate contact with the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism, as well as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. As a reminder, emails were sent to the organisations. Phone calls were made in addition to reminder emails. The researcher set up the area such that participants sat in a circle or around a table before the focus groups began, allowing for better interaction and video filming. Prior to the start of the focus groups, all participants were asked to sign consent papers, and a brief explanation of the research was given. The participants in the focus groups were also told that voice recorders were utilized to help with the transcribing of the interviews. It was also mentioned that the audio recording will be saved for future use. There were no objections from any of the participants. Each focus group participant was given a unique identification code. The unique identifying codes were utilized to link pertinent material to a specific participant when transcribing the focus groups. Following that, all focus groups were transcribed and processed for data analysis, usually within two days of their completion.

5.5.5.2. Interviews

Participants got an initial email with information about the study and an overview, followed by follow-up and reminder emails. To find a convenient time to schedule the interviews, we used a combination of phone calls and follow-up emails. Prior to the start of the interviews, all participants were asked to sign consent letters, and a brief explanation of the research was given. They were also informed about the importance of using a recorder to help with the transcribing of the interviews. There were no objections from any of the participants. All of the interviews in this study were performed via a virtual platform, with each session being recorded and the researcher taking notes during the sessions. In preparation for the analysis step, the interviews were transcribed verbatim onto a Word document after they were done, usually within one day.

5.6. Data analysis

It is essential for the researcher to analyze the information methodically and to be explicit in this critical phase by "recording, systematizing and disclosing" the manner in which the assessment was carried out (Jameel et al., 2018). However, it is essential to note that data analysis is strongly influenced by creativity, reasoning, inspiration and content (Levitt et al., 2018). A particularly complex phase of the research study tends to be the data analysis in qualitative studies, and it is important to conduct a comprehensive, detailed, microscopic examination of the data to illustrate the immense nature of what lies between, behind and beyond this data (Aspers and Corte, 2019). Data analysis in qualitative methodologies is significantly more subjective, and as a result, the researcher is the primary instrument for conducting the analysis. As a result, it is normal for a single researcher to handle the entire data collection and analysis process (Cropley, 2019).

According to Creswell (2014), qualitative data analysis can be thought of as a six-step process, as depicted in Figure 5.3 and discussed further below. There are several stages of qualitative analysis, but they may all be categorized as observation, transcribing, coding, and theme generation.

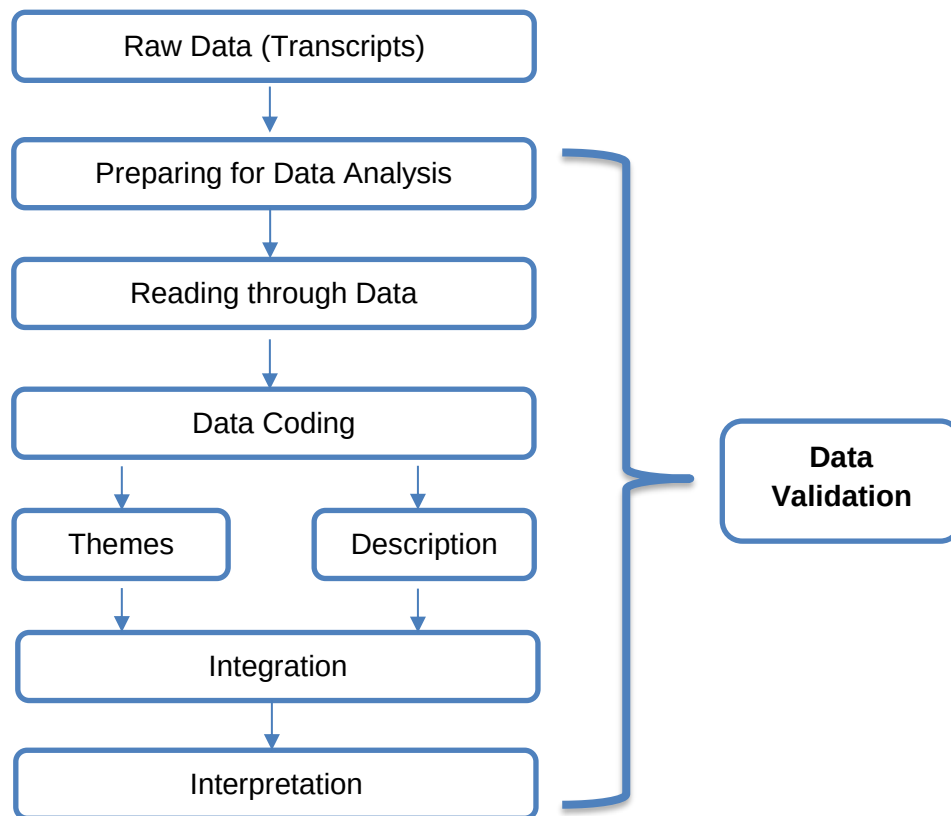


Figure 5.3: Qualitative data analysis process

Source: Creswell (2014)

While Creswell (2014) suggests that only a few themes be developed, this study did not include the maximum number of themes that can be identified. According to Creswell (2014), the intricacy of the themes does not have to be limited to simply identifying them, but can potentially move to more advanced levels, such as mapping themes. The fifth phase entails creating a story that expands on the descriptions and ideas. The procedure is completed with a final interpretation of the entire data set, highlighting the most important discovery. This narrative also revealed any gaps in the data collected that must be filled in order to generate a full outcome. The next step is to build a description of many linked features using codes as a foundation. The descriptions are then used to come up with themes. While Creswell (2014) recommends developing only a few themes, this study did not disclose the maximum number of themes that might be found. The complexity of the themes, according to Creswell (2014), does not have to be restricted to simply detecting them, but can possibly progress to more advanced levels, such as mapping themes. The fifth phase comprises developing a story that builds on the details and concepts

presented in the previous phases. The approach concludes with a final evaluation of the full data set, emphasizing the most significant finding. This narrative also indicated any data gaps that needed to be filled in order to get a complete result.

Inductive reasoning was used to sort and categorize data from the focus group, individual interviews and design thinking workshop sessions (Cropley, 2019). The focus was on analysing the information critically and organizing it systematically. An inductive analysis starts without any pre-existing assumptions. Initially, the data was viewed as a chaotic, disorganized collection of disparate bits of information, with each idea or expression deserving equal consideration. As a result, the researcher's goal was to unearth underlying themes or subjects in the data (Cropley, 2019). As described by Daniel (2016) and illustrated in Figure 5.1, data analysis and interpretation also took place with information collection, which is characteristic of qualitative research. The identification of themes was used to analyze the data. This is compatible with the approach to phenomenology (Busetto et al., 2021; Aspers and Corte, 2019; Jameel et al., 2018). Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019) see thematic identification as a key feature of qualitative research.

In order to generate results, data from the focus groups, individual interviews and the design thinking workshop were thoroughly analyzed. In order to enable thematic analysis, the transcripts from the focus group and interview sessions were examined along with data from the workshop. As experienced in this research and verified by Vaismoradi and Snelgrove (2019), qualitative data analysis tends to be time-consuming and complicated due to the large quantity of data confronted by the researcher. Transcriptions from interviews can be long and usually require the researcher to sift data from many pages to recognize problems, similarities, and differences (Cropley, 2019). This profound commitment to information is consistent with the need for the researcher to be immersed in the data (Humphreys et al., 2021; Mohajan, 2018; Levitt et. al, 2018). Therefore, it was required of the researcher to familiarise himself with the transcriptions and the information from the focus groups, individual interviews and the design thinking workshop. Although computer programs are accessible for this purpose, as Cropley (2019) argued, it is still the researcher who finally does the study. In qualitative studies, data analysis is subjective in nature as opposed to quantitative studies, which are aimed at objectivity throughout the study phase (Jameel et al., 2018). When respondents express themselves (in an

interview or focus group session), they are frequently, although not always, recorded in the form of paper notes taken by the researcher or digitally (e.g., tape-recorder, video). Before being analyzed, electronic records are nearly generally transcribed in written form, however tapes or other comparable material can supplement written information (Cropley, 2019). Transcripts are classified after data collection according to the respondents' responses to each question and/or the most common themes that surface throughout the focus group package during the research data processing process (Mack et al., 2005). Data was firstly organized. The subjective meaning and cultural-contextual message of data can be represented as a "theme" (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove, 2019). As thoughts about groups or interpretations arose, the researcher read and re-read the transcriptions and wrote remarks in the margins. Then, categories or themes were recognized, resulting in making sense through patterns. Themes or trends are defined in the thematic analysis method as the final product of data analysis (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove, 2019).

This stage of data analysis basically drew on the inductive method introduced by Creswell (2009), whereby the researcher looks for trends and begins to see connections with the theory. As suggested by Aspers and Corte (2019), there was data comparison, and the researcher continuously reviewed focus group and design thinking workshop transcriptions and data to find similarities and differences. In addition, the approach of 'comparison and contrast' defined by Levitt et al. (2018), by which the researcher examined how the text differed from other text and what similarities were found. The author also looked for metaphors and analogies, as suggested by Aspers and Corte (2019) in order to understand the underlying meanings. Themes have also been established by picking up transitions in content, identifying connectors such as 'as a result', 'since' or 'because' that may imply causal relationships, and terms such as 'if', 'then' or 'rather' which may signify conditional relationships (Jameel et al., 2018).

As Aspers and Corte (2019) point out, data analytic procedures in qualitative research often include assessing the theoretical scope, how to collect data and how the researcher chooses which meaningful data to use to address the research questions. The writing-up in this study should appear in line with qualitative research writing-up as interpretive narratives, rather than providing means, medians and other descriptive statistics (Cropley, 2019). It takes great skill to avoid providing simplistic

observations and short summaries that simply describe what has been experienced, interpreted or perceived, as opposed to interpreting the data (Mohajan, 2018). The researcher used a voice recorder to record each interview during the qualitative stage of this investigation. The data analysis procedure is founded on the foundation of interview transcripts (Busetto et al., 2021). Analysis is the process of examining the data collected (in the form of transcripts). The recordings were then transcribed to enable the researcher to identify the data in a much-simplified form, while paying distinct attentiveness to the research question. The researcher used the Nvivo software suite to analyze the qualitative data gathered throughout the investigation.

Nvivo is utilized by qualitative researchers, according to Bergin (2011), because it is designed to analyze large amounts of data. Computer-assisted data analysis procedures are dedicated to faster data coding, a more detailed description of internal data interactions, much more nuanced perspectives when constructing categories and concepts, a systematic framework for formulating rules that direct the various analytical measures, and more detailed and differentiated data interpretation (Cropley, 2019). In proceeding with that qualitative study, the researcher employed thematic analysis of the data as an analytical process, whereby different categories are linked to create a logical simplification of the phenomena under study and to connect it with existing literature (Mohammed, 2021). The researcher additionally used word clouds, tree maps, cluster analyses and hierarchy charts to further extract qualitative data and to present the results of this study. It is further asserted (Judger, 2016) that themes should not simply mirror the questions asked during the interview, but should rather be clear, consistent, distinct and refined as data emanates from its natural settings.

The data analysis stages were completed by the researcher with the assistance of a qualitative statistician to code the data. Inductive thematic analysis is the most applicable approach for this research in order to get an awareness of the problems and challenges faced by the tourism sector, as well as the implementation of design thinking within this sector.

5.7. Credibility and reliability

The application of transparency by a researcher in a qualitative research study enhances the trustworthiness and reputability of the study as it explicitly details how the perspectives of the researcher influenced the research by being open to the phenomenon being studied (Levitt et al., 2018). In order to assure accuracy in qualitative research, it is necessary to examine trustworthiness. The accuracy of a research report is at the heart of the concerns widely argued as credibility and reliability when it comes to establishing good quality studies through accuracy and credibility in qualitative research (Humphreys et al., 2021). Credibility is the precision with which the results represent the data accurately (Noble and Smith, 2015). Working with people to examine their subjective world constructions raises ethical difficulties, such as inflicting injury to the persons involved, not just physically, but mentally as well (Cropley, 2019). The accuracy and credibility of a research study and its findings are important elements for demonstrating the quality of research in the organisational field (Hayashi, Abib and Hoppen, 2019).

In the pursuit of credibility assurance, a sufficient effort is considered vital for a scientific community to have the work accepted. Furthermore, qualitative research should strive to clearly reveal its empirical existence in order to gain a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation without losing sight of the nuances of the researcher's subjectivity, which is immersed in a constantly changing and growing context (Hayashi et al., 2019). Reliability is the accuracy of the analytical methods used, which includes research methods and personal biases that could have influenced the results (Noble and Smith, 2015). Reliability involves a particular embedded notion of the reliability of the results, which ensures they can be replicated over time (Hayashi et al., 2019). Although the term "reliability" is most generally associated with quantitative research evaluation and testing, the definition is most widely applied to all types of research (Humphreys et al., 2021).

If research is viewed as a means of gathering data, then the quality of that data is the most crucial test of any qualitative analysis. A solid qualitative study can aid in the comprehension of a situation that would otherwise be vague or perplexing (Busetto et al., 2021). Rather than using statistical methods to establish the credibility and reliability of research findings, qualitative researchers aim to create

and implement methodological ways to ensure that the findings are reliable (Noble and Smith, 2015)

With less focus on conventional positivist conceptions of credibility and consistency (Noble and Smith, 2015), the priority in qualitative research moves to the study's trustworthiness. Credibility refers to the certainty with which the study's results may be drawn, while reliability refers to the consistency with which a research study tests a phenomenon in the same way throughout multiple efforts (Hayashi et al., 2019). The focus is on credibility and that the reader must be able to follow how the results are obtained by the researcher and how the information and conclusions were related (Busetto et al., 2021). Trustworthiness is critical in giving the reader trust in the study's findings (Hayashi et al., 2019).

The credibility in qualitative research varies from the validity in quantitative research (Creswell, 2009). When assessing the credibility of a qualitative research sample, Jameel et al. (2018) advised the researcher to consider whether the data was correctly obtained for analysis, whether applicable methodology is used to make the data meaningful, and that the researcher's pre-conceived ideas do not interfere with the data. The researcher used the following methods to ensure accuracy of the results, as suggested by Creswell (2009): Data was obtained from multiple sources, such as focus groups, individual interviews and design thinking workshops, in order to increase credibility with regard to theme recognition. Transcriptions were tested against audio recordings in order to identify errors that might have occurred during transcription. Member tests were used when the study results were presented to participants at the design thinking workshop for iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism participants and at the focus group session for Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife participants, thus testing for accuracy. This is in line with the view of Cropley (2019) that the goal of member verification is to engage participants to ensure consistency between the perceptions of the researcher and the actual reality.

Noble and Smith (2015) proposed that the report should be reviewed critically by making the analysis open to external review in order to be considered credible for a research study. Internal credibility could de-stabilize the analysis by faulty sampling of test materials (Mohammed, 2021). The author further postulated that external credibility could also be undermined by unnoticed intervening factors and faulty

sampling. This may make the study experiment impossible. Since people are the main source of the research, their behaviours can change during the study, if inauthenticity in the study is identified. Data credibility refers to information that is free of bias or error. According to Jameel et al. (2018), most written documents are selective of the facts, and the data comes from people with different agendas or desires, or those who want to make a particular impression. It is also suggested that caution should be exercised, and details should not be taken at face value, but should be contextualized with credible research material. The researcher must ensure that adequate measures are in place during the qualitative stage of the analysis to ensure that credibility, integrity and accuracy are preserved along with minimal bias in the sample. The researcher should promote voluntary participation, maintain privacy and enable an unrestricted collection of data from the interview process.

The continuous participation and frequent communication with stakeholders from the tourism sector in the KwaZulu-Natal region has made this work more credible. Therefore, Daniel (2016) argues that the presence of multiple researchers strengthens the design of the study by challenging and enriching the perspectives of each other. In addition, when writing the results, the researcher attempted to express the stakeholders' multiple meanings as defined by himself and ensured that the perspectives of the participants are enlightened (Aspers and Corte, 2019).

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research is not generalizable because it focuses on site-specific definitions and themes (Creswell, 2009). Nevertheless, the research may lead to insights that, as (Cropley, 2019) suggested, can be applied beyond the scope and focus of this study site. This research was conducted in the KwaZulu-Natal region, with specific focus on the tourism sector, but may be of interest to the broader business community within KwaZulu-Natal, as well as other circumstances where there are numerous stakeholders with divergent views facing complex problems, which as defined in the design thinking literature, are considered as 'wicked problems'.

5.7.1 Triangulation

Qualitative results are also based on human perception and analysis and cannot be evaluated in a generic manner with dispassion. Triangulation is a technique for ensuring the correctness and completeness of qualitative data by examining a range of data sources related to the same instance (Busetto et al., 2021). The researcher further tested the credibility of the research findings by applying triangulation, which verifies the outcomes by comparing the data collected from various sources such as secondary data, interview schedules and interviews. Triangulation is usually a technique or test that is used to enhance the study credibility and reliability or findings assessment (Humphreys et al., 2021). The triangulation technique is used in a qualitative study wherein multiple methods are employed in the study of a specific phenomenon to advance the precision of observation and serve as a validation for data collection (Ashour, 2018). The triangulation employed in quantitative studies to examine reliability and validity can also expose some ways of testing or increasing the credibility and reliability of a qualitative study, similar to how reliability and credibility are utilized in quantitative research (Humphreys et al, 2021).

A researcher who uses multiple data collection methods is likely to realise more logical conclusions than the outcome of a single method study, which serves as the basic concept of triangulation (Ashour, 2018). Researchers utilize triangulation to include other researchers' or peer researchers' interpretations of the same data at various periods and locations in order to improve the study and comprehension of the others (Busetto et al., 2021). Triangulation is the multi-method research style employed to study a specific question with the objective of increasing confidence in the research results (Heale and Forbes, 2013). Through integrating various techniques, triangulation improves the research data analysis (Mohammed, 2021). The objective of triangulation is to realise an eloquent image, broad understanding and comprehensive description of the phenomenon being studied and through all research stages, triangulation empowers the researcher to increase the credibility and validation the research findings (Ashour, 2018).

5.8. Ethical Considerations

A traditional, classic yet simplistic explanation of ethics is that ethics is about doing good and preventing harm (Mohammed, 2021), emphasizing the importance of following ethics in research and reflecting on participants' interests during the research process.

Due to the close interaction between respondents and the researcher during the study, qualitative research involves enhanced risks for respondents (Daniel, 2016). The ethics committee reviewing and authorizing the study procedure decides whether informed consent for each data collection operation needs to be obtained. Written informed consent is normally required for all qualitative research procedures, including participant evaluation, regardless of the sampling method used to identify possible participants or the techniques used to recruit them (Busetto et al., 2021). Therefore, following the research guidelines of the University was critical. The researcher engaged with both the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, as well as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and obtained a Gatekeeper's letter, detailing their permission and support for this study (Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). The researcher acquired the requisite consent from the ethics office at University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) before commencing with data collection for this study. The ethical code of UKZN guided the researcher to maintain considerations such as informed consent, the right to privacy, voluntary participation and confidentiality of the participants during the data collection phase of this study. Ethical clearance was originally obtained from the UKZN Research Office in July 2019 (Appendix 15). The researcher had to file for recertification in May 2020 due to delays to this research study caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying government lockdowns (Appendix 16). Because of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism industry, the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Tourism did not support this study. As a result, the researcher had to source a new study site, which resulted in a minor change in the title of this study (Appendix 17).

The significance of observing ethics in studies must focus on participants' freedoms during the research phase (Cropley, 2019). In addition, the researcher has an ethical obligation to the research process, as argued by Aspers and Corte (2019). The participants should be the people who are going to benefit from the experience

(Mohammed, 2021) and are entitled to assume that data obtained from them would not be released or otherwise revealed in a manner which allows individual respondents to be identified (Cropley, 2019). It is important to uphold the integrity of all study participants (Mack et al., 2005). Therefore, the researcher tried to treat participants with dignity; did not expose participants to physical or psychological harm; sought to protect their identities; did not force participants to be part of the study; and kept records safe.

Informed consent is a strategy for ensuring that people understand what it means to participate in a certain research project so that they may make an informed decision about whether or not to do so (Mack et al., 2005). Each research participant obtained an Informed Consent form (Appendix 11, Appendix 12 and Appendix 13) detailing the research study goal, confidentiality assurance, voluntary involvement, and at any point being able to withdraw from the research. Informed consent is critical to maintaining ethical norms in studies, especially when involving human topics. Obtaining informed consent for qualitative research allows the research plan and objectives to be clearly explained to prospective study participants (Mack et al., 2005). Great emphasis is nowadays placed on obtaining consent from research participants and unless it is informed, consent is considered meaningless, and it prevents deceit (Cropley, 2019).

The researcher obtained informed consent forms for all engagement sessions, i.e., focus groups, individual interviews and the design thinking workshop, from participants at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

Research ethics and integrity concerns should be specified in the ethical code of conduct of a professional organisation. Such a code of conduct sets moral standards in contemporary societies that guide professional behaviours in research activities across different disciplines. Creswell (2009) reported that researchers are creating informed consent forms so that participants can sign them before participating in the research process, which ensures that their rights are protected during data collection. Therefore, the researcher tried to treat participants with dignity, did not expose participants to physical or psychological harm, sought to protect their identities, did not force participants to be part of the study, and kept records safe

(Mohammed, 2021). Participants were assured that the author would strictly uphold their rights to privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, and that information from the study would not be disseminated to any person, community or organisation. The researcher also assured the respondents that during the research process, they would be shielded from any damage or threat and that their personal safety would be ensured in all situations.

Creswell (2009) cautioned that during data collection, various ethical issues exist, so it is important to respect the respondents and the study sites. During his contact with the research subjects, the researcher took into account the ethical considerations in this study and showed high levels of integrity and strict adherence to moral and ethical standards.

5.9. Conclusion

This chapter elaborated on the techniques used in this study to explain how the researcher responded to the issues of the study. It took a precise qualitative strategy to the research study that was appropriate for the nature of the research and the research questions that were posed to participants. The study methodology and development using the qualitative approach are outlined in this section. The target population, sampling procedures and data collection methods, as well as the various analytical techniques used were described. The qualitative data analysis was carried out using the Nvivo computer software which resulted in the thematic analysis for this study. A detailed explanation and analysis of the analysed data resulting from this qualitative research method review is presented in the following sections. The following chapters present the results of the study with an integrative discussion to draw together the findings and address the research questions that were set in Chapter One.

CHAPTER SIX: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

6.1. Introduction

The researcher presents the data gathered through the qualitative method in this chapter. A focus group session with stakeholders from the tourism sector in the iLembe region was held in the first part of this research study. The study's next step was to facilitate a design thinking workshop with a variety of stakeholders involved in tourism-related activities in the iLembe region. Thereafter, the researcher conducted Individual Interviews with participants from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. However, due to a dismal and low response rate, the researcher then approached and commenced with data collection at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, with a qualitative data methodology being used for data collection. This process involved design thinking workshops, individual interviews and a focus group session.

Tables, figures, and themes will be used to present the data derived from the analysis of the qualitative methodologies used in this study.

6.2. Data Analysis and presentation of the qualitative data

This research study's qualitative data was extracted from two (2) study settings. A focus group session, a design thinking workshop and only a few individual interviews were conducted with stakeholders of the tourism sector within the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. Due to challenges experienced with the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the researcher then arranged for the study to resume at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, whereby qualitative data was extracted from a design thinking workshop, individual interview sessions and a focus group as the last stage of direct engagement with participants.

The data from the focus group sessions was acquired through voice recordings for data analysis purposes (iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism) and in the case of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, the focus group session was recorded through the virtual platform used for this session. The raw data was then transcribed into textual format, which resulted in nine (9) pages of textual data. The researcher additionally extracted data from Interview sessions with two (2) participants from

iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and eight (8) participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The data from these sessions resulted in fifty (50) pages of textual data.

According to Busetto et al. (2021), a significant feature of qualitative research is the goal of understanding a specific phenomenon on a social level, with textual data generated rather than numbers as a result of the methodologies used. The Nvivo 12 software package was used to analyze the textual data generated by the qualitative methodologies used in this study. The researcher became familiar with the textual material by reading and re-reading each transcription several times to discover surfacing themes that were relevant to the study's goals.

6.3. Focus group session: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

A focus group session was held with participants from the tourism industry by the researcher. This session took place on 28th August 2019. The goal of this session was to learn about the problems and challenges that the tourism industry faces directly from industry players. The researcher was able to recognize and identify the individual feelings and expressions of the research participants during this session.

6.3.1. Demographic profiles of participants in the focus group session

Table 6.1 illustrates the demographic profiles of the participants in the first focus group session, comprising stakeholders with varying roles and characteristics from within the tourism sector at the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism.

Table 6.1: Demographic profiles of participants in the focus group session: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Focus group: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism				
Unique #	Age	Gender	Current Role	Business Sector
FG1	31-40	Female	Manager	Tourism - Hotel and Accommodation
FG2	50+	Female	Business Owner	Tourism - Hotel and Accommodation
FG3	20-30	Female	Staff Member	Tourism - Media
FG4	50+	Female	Business Owner	Tourism Events Management
FG5	41-50	Female	Business Owner	Tourism - Food and Catering
FG6	41-50	Female	Manager	Tourism Hospitality
FG7	50+	Male	Manager	Chamber of Commerce
FG8	20-30	Male	Manager	Chamber of Commerce
FG9	41-50	Female	Manager	Tourism - Hotel and Accommodation
FG10	20-30	Female	Staff Member	Municipal/Governments
FG11	41-50	Female	Business Owner	Tourism - Souvenir and Crafts

Figures 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 provide a graphical representation of the characteristics of the research participants in the focus group session conducted on 28 August 2019.

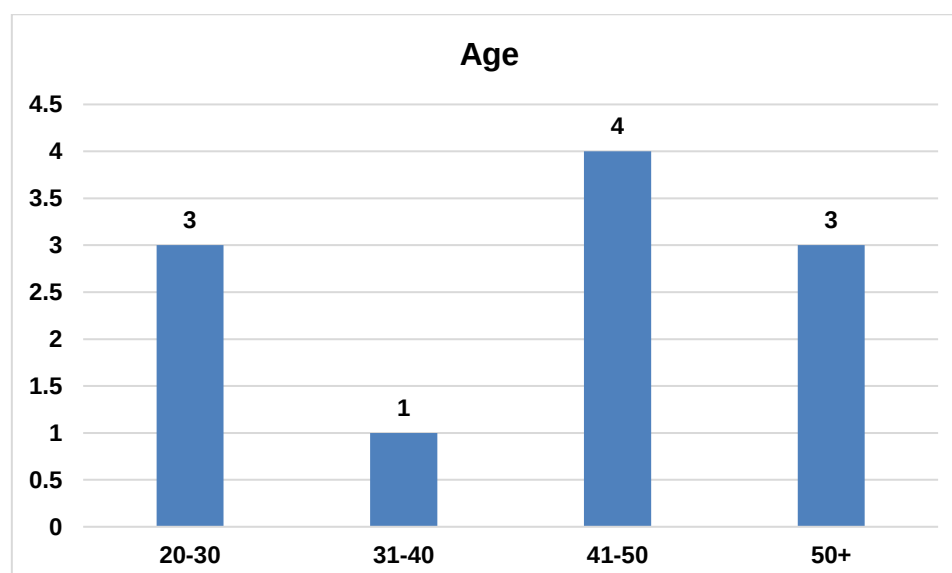


Figure 6.1: Age of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism focus group participants

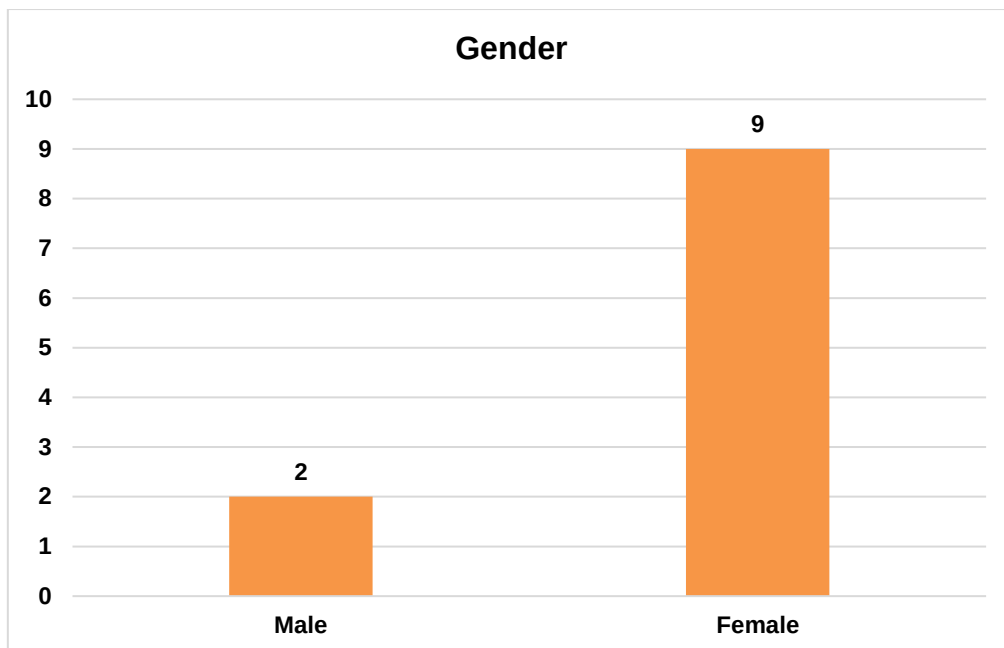


Figure 6.2: Gender breakdown of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism focus group participants

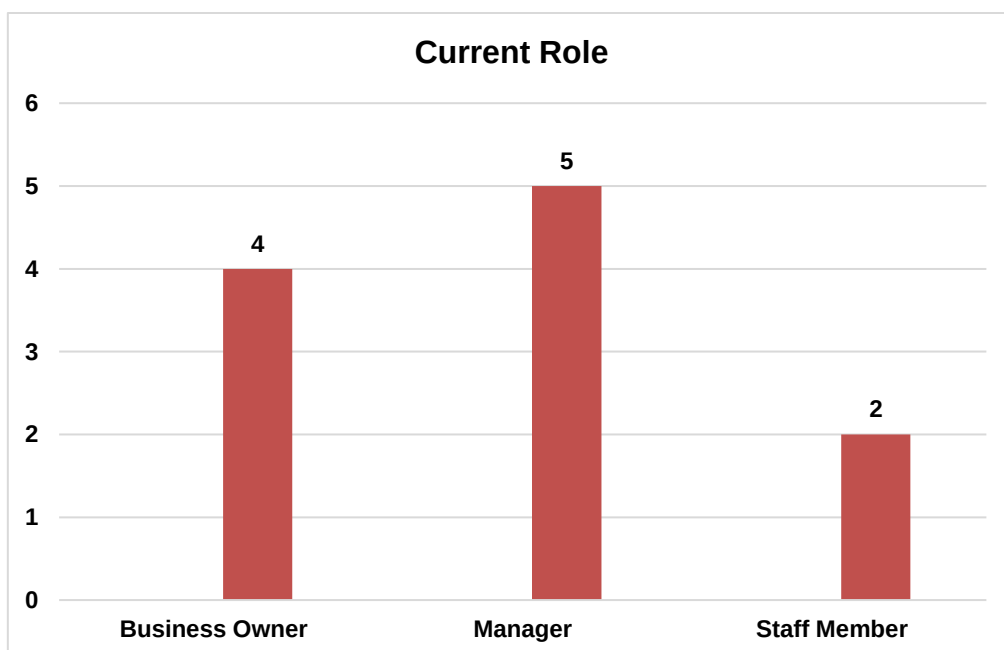


Figure 6.3: Current role of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism focus group participants



Figure 6.4: Work experience of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism focus group participants

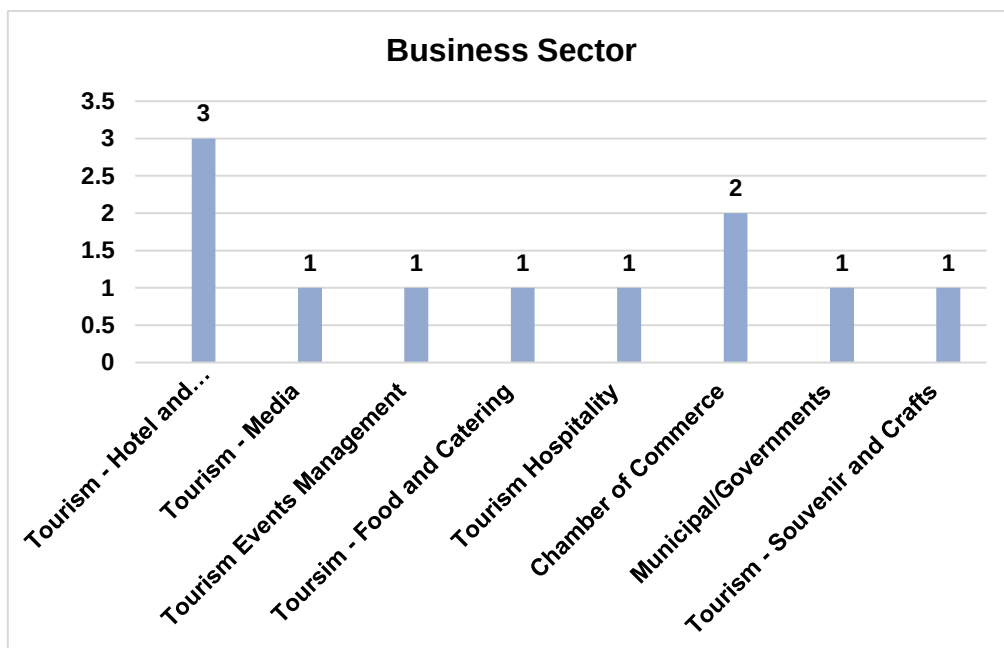


Figure 6.5: Business Sector representation of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism focus group participants within the tourism industry

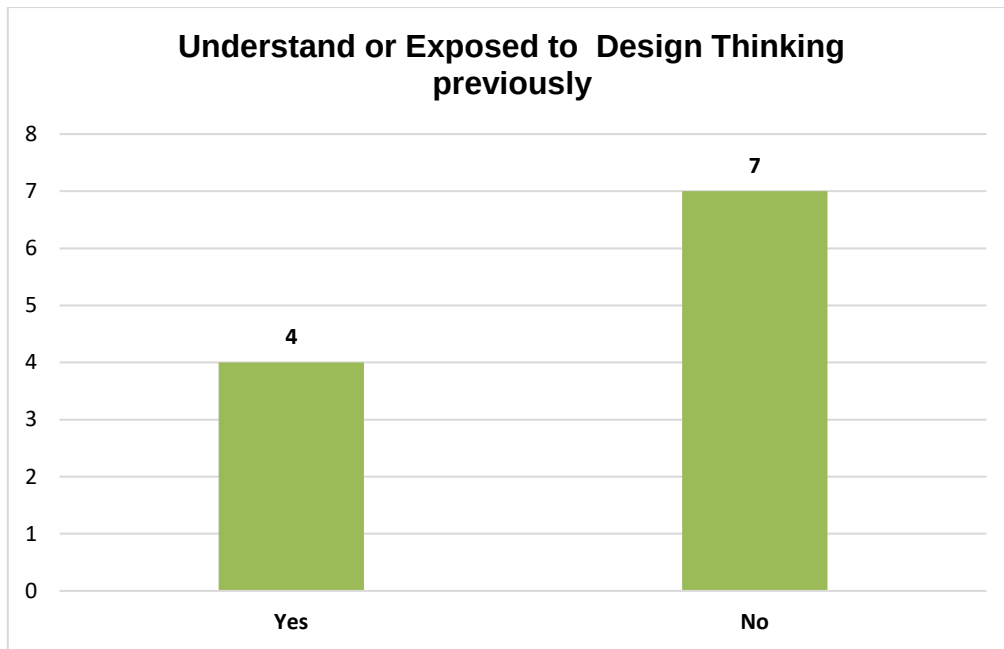


Figure 6.6: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism Focus group - Understand or exposed to design thinking previously

There were considerably more female (82%) than male participants (18%), as illustrated in Figure 6.2. In terms of their current roles, Figure 6.3. reflected that the majority of the participants were Managers (45%), followed by Business owners (36%) and Staff members (18%). Moreover, the majority of the participants were from the Hotel and Accommodation sub-sector within Tourism (27%), followed by the Chamber of Commerce members (18%), while the remainder of the participants (6) were from various other sub-sectors within the tourism sector in the iLembe region and comprised 9% each of the total participants. This is reflected in Figure 6.5. The rationale for the selection of participants directly involved in the tourism sector was to gain diverse views, opinions and perceptions regarding challenges experienced in the tourism sector, as well as leadership challenges within the sector. Figure 6.6 shows that only 36% of participants indicated that they understood design thinking, while the remaining 64% had not yet been exposed to design thinking.

6.4. Design thinking workshop: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

The participants in this study were privy to a workshop on design thinking facilitated by the researcher and a seasoned co-facilitator. This session was held on 30th August 2019. The objective of this workshop was to engage and facilitate a platform for the participants to understand design thinking, its application and process, particularly due to the increased change and challenges that are currently faced. It is this understanding that enabled the researcher to make a meaningful contribution to the study, which assisted in answering the research objectives set out in Chapter 1.

6.4.1. Demographic profiles of participants in the Design thinking workshop

Table 6.2 illustrates the demographic profiles of the participants in the design thinking workshop.

Table 6.2: Demographic profiles of participants in the Design thinking workshop: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Design thinking Workshop: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism				
Unique #	Age	Gender	Current Role	Business Sector
DTW1	31-40	Female	Manager	Tourism - Hotel and Accommodation
DTW2	50+	Female	Business Owner	Tourism - Hotel and Accommodation
DTW3	41-50	Female	Business Owner	Tourism- Food and Catering
DTW4	41-50	Female	Manager	Tourism Hospitality
DTW5	41-50	Female	Manager	Municipal/Governments
DTW6	20-30	Male	Manager	Chamber of Commerce
DTW7	41-50	Female	Manager	Tourism - Hotel and Accommodation
DTW8	20-30	Female	Staff Member	Municipal/Governments
DTW9	41-50	Female	Business Owner	Tourism - Souvenir and Crafts
DTW10	41-50	Male	Staff Member	Tourism - Tour Guide

Figures 6.7, 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10 provide a graphical representation of the characteristics of the research participants in the design thinking workshop conducted on 30th August 2019.

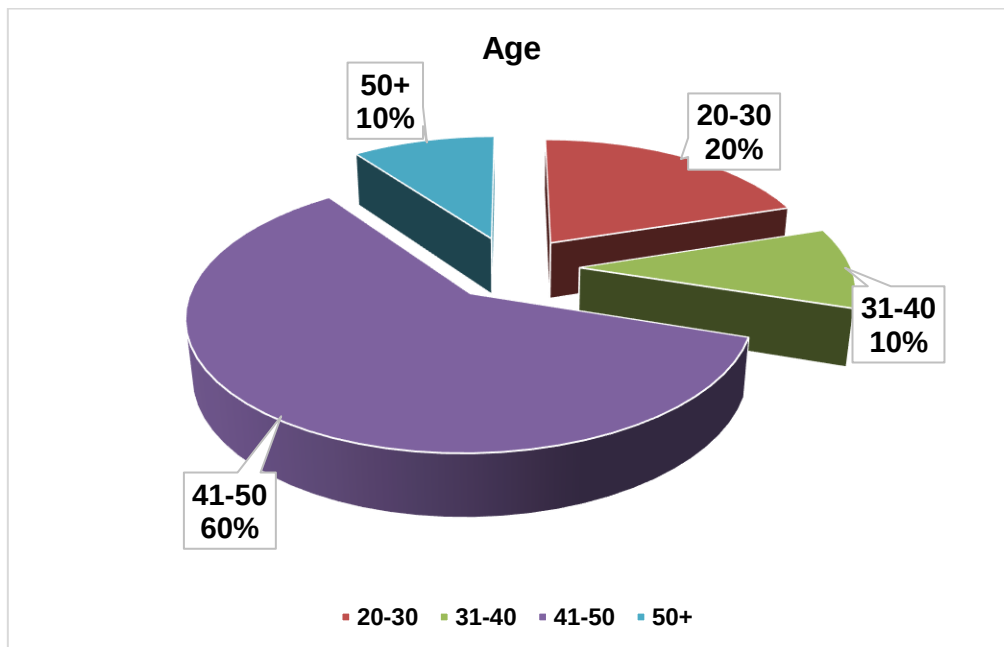


Figure 6.7: Age of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism design thinking workshop participants

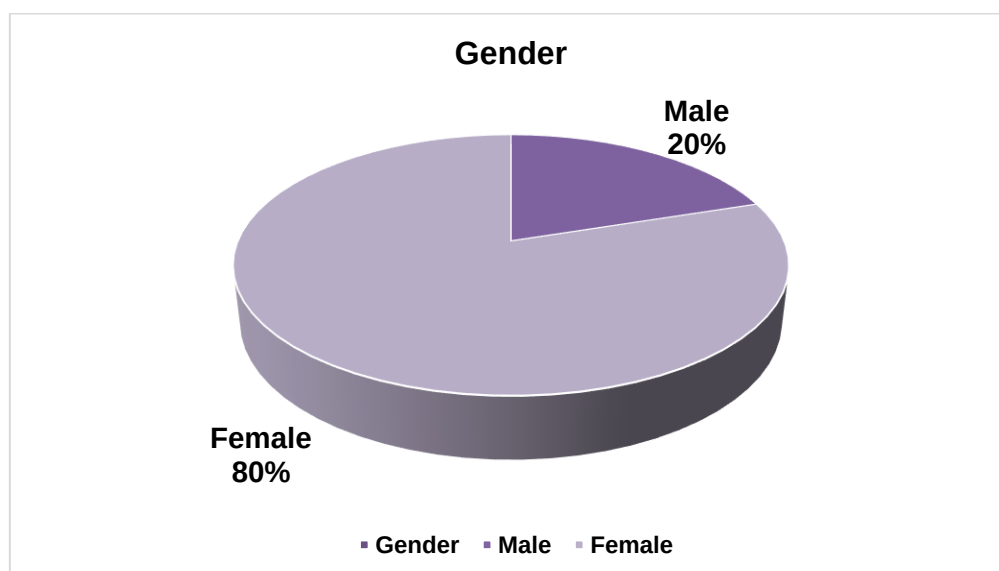


Figure 6.8: Gender of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism design thinking workshop participants

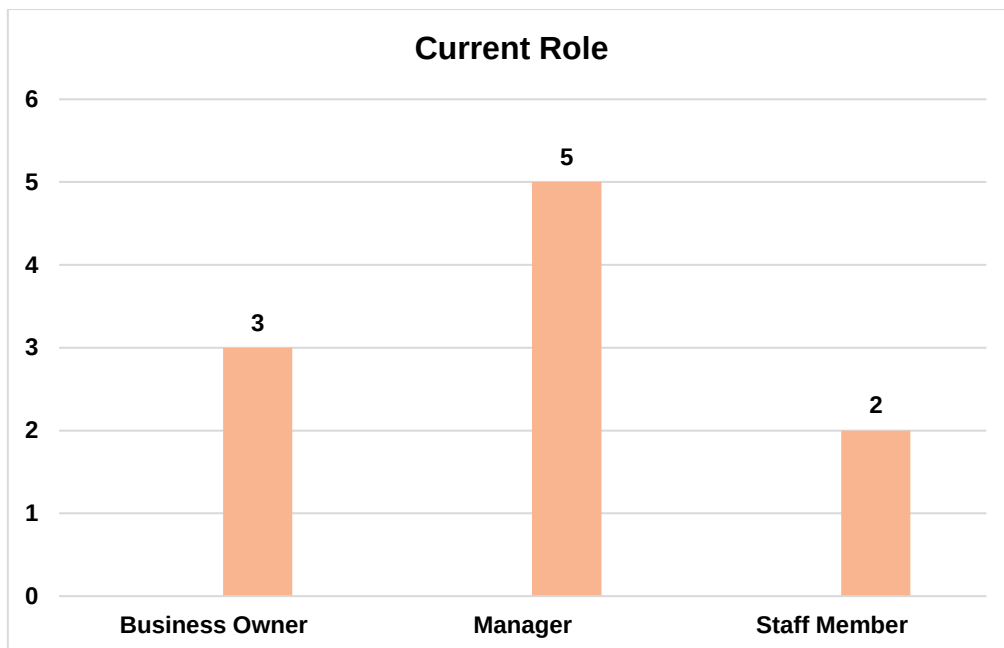


Figure 6.9: Current role of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism design thinking workshop participants

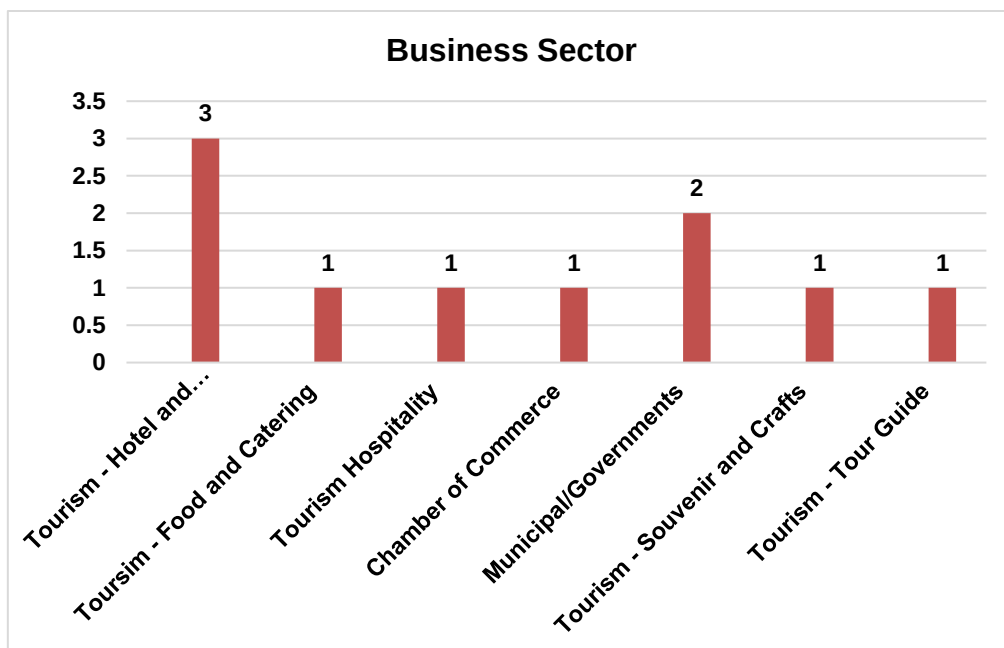


Figure 6.10: Business Sector representation of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism design thinking workshop participants

The age distribution reflected that 80% of participants were above the age of 30 years, signalling mature and experienced participation in this workshop. There were considerably more female participants (80%) than male participants (20%). The majority of the participants were from the Hotel and Accommodation sub- sector within Tourism (30%), followed by the Municipality and Government sector (20%). The remainder of the participants (5) were from various other sub-sectors within the tourism sector in the iLembe region and comprised 10% each of the total participants. In terms of their current roles, the majority of the participants were Managers (50%), followed by Business owners (30%) and Staff members (20%). The rationale for the selection of participants directly involved in the tourism sector was to gain diverse views, opinions and perceptions regarding challenges experienced in the tourism sector, as well as leadership challenges within the tourism sector.

6.5. Individual interviews: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

The researcher only managed to conduct two (2) interviews with participants from iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, which were conducted on 24th April 2020 and 14th December 2020 respectively. The low response rate and interest in this study was largely due to business uncertainty emanating from the global COVID-19 pandemic that also affected South Africa from 2020.

6.5.1. Demographic profiles of participants in the individual interview sessions: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Table 6.3 illustrates the demographic profiles of the participants in the Individual Interview sessions conducted with the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism.

Table 6.3: Demographic profiles of participants in individual interview sessions: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Individual Interviews: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism				
Unique #	Age	Gender	Current Role	Business Sector
I1	41-50	Female	Business Owner	Tourism - Souvenir and Crafts
I2	20-30	Female	Staff Member	Municipal/Governments

Figures 6.11, 6.12, 6.13 and 6.14 provide a graphical representation of the characteristics of the research participants in the Individual Interviews conducted with the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism conducted in April and December 2020 respectively.

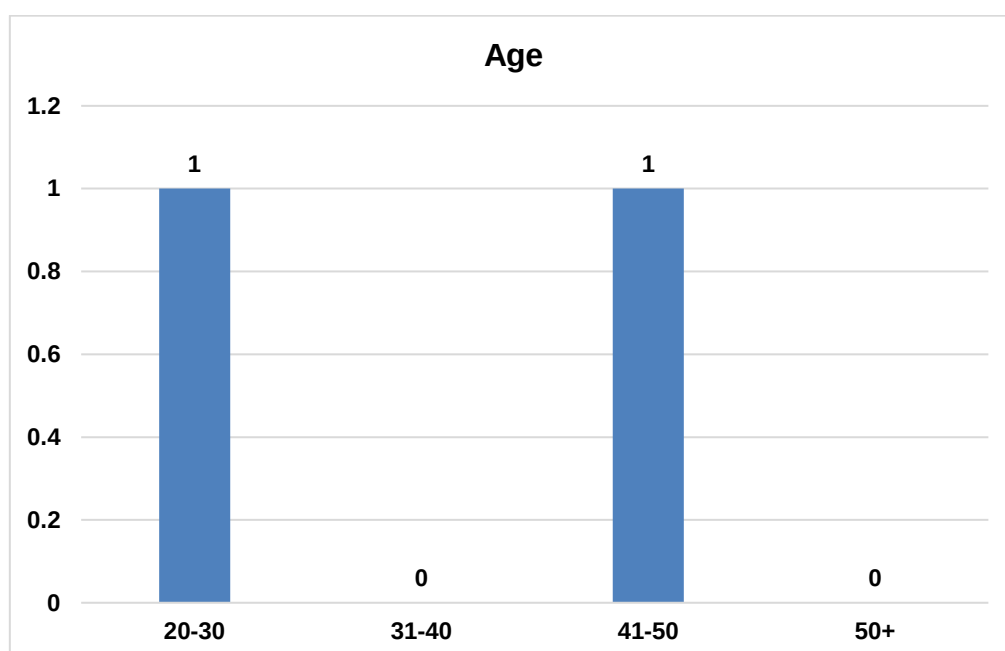


Figure 6.11: Age of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism individual interview participants

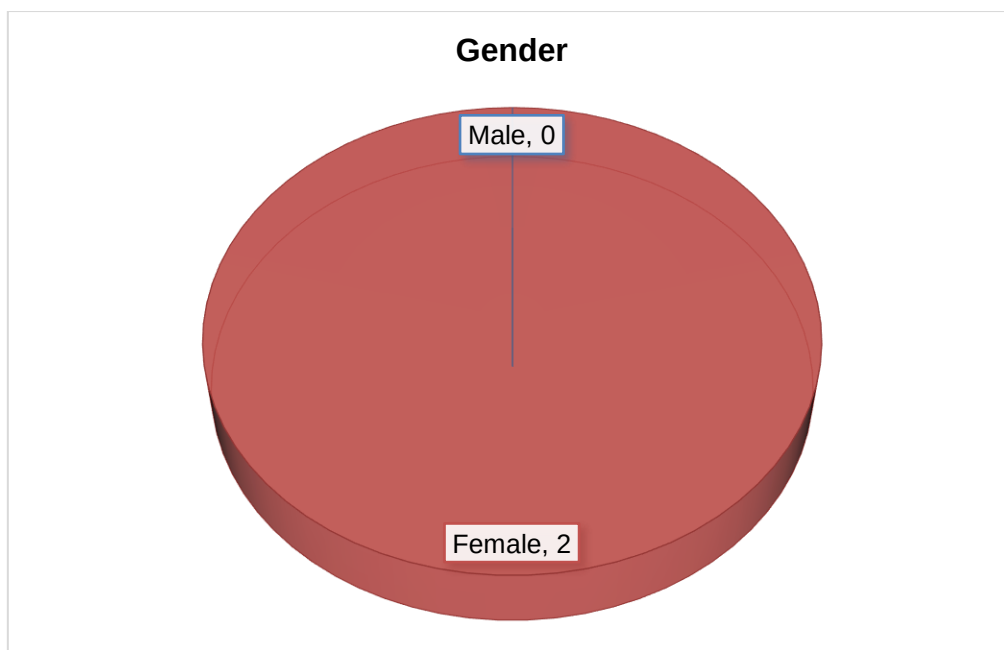


Figure 6.12: Gender of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism individual interview participants

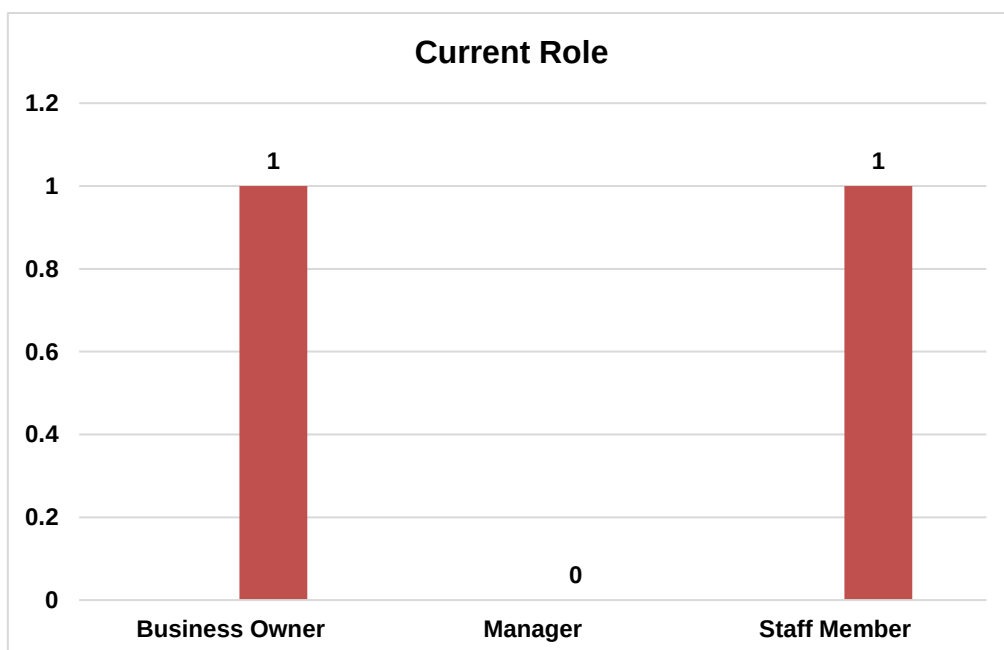


Figure 6.13: Current role of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism Individual interview participants

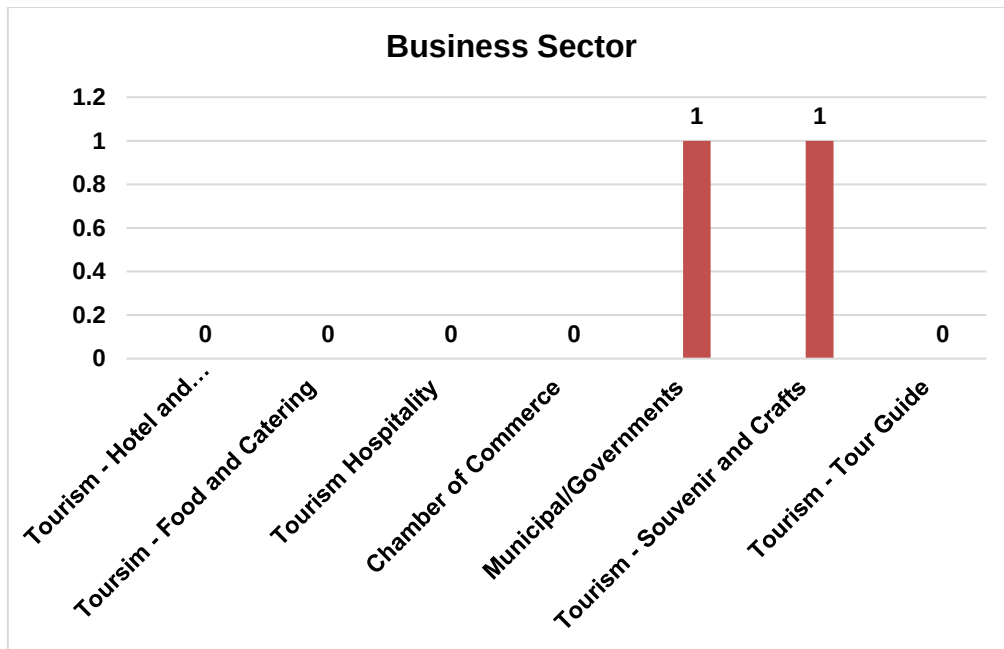


Figure 6.14: Business sector representation within the tourism sector of iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism Individual Interview participants

There were only two (2) participants for the Individual interview session at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. Both participants were female, as illustrated in Figure 6.12, with no male representation recorded. One participant was a business owner, while the other was a staff member, as is reflected in Figure 6.13, while Figure 6.14 demonstrates that the participants were from the Municipal/Government and the Tourism Souvenir sub-sectors respectively.

6.6. Design thinking workshop: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

The participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife were privy to a workshop on design thinking facilitated by the researcher and a seasoned co-facilitator. This session was held on 10th August 2021 via a virtual platform. The objective of this workshop was to engage and facilitate a platform for the participants to understand design thinking, its application and process, particularly due to the increased change and challenges faced by the tourism sector. It is this understanding that enabled the researcher to make a meaningful contribution to the study, which assisted in answering the research objectives set out in Chapter 1.

6.6.1. Demographic profiles of participants in the Design thinking workshop: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Table 6.4 illustrates the demographic profiles of the participants in the design thinking Workshop conducted with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

Table 6.4: Demographic profiles of participants in Design thinking workshop: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Design thinking Workshop: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife					
Unique #	Age	Gender	Current Role	Years in Tourism Sector	Exposed to Design thinking previously?
<i>EZDTW 1</i>	41-50	Female	Resort Manager	23 years	No
<i>EZDTW 2</i>	41-50	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +	No
<i>EZDTW 3</i>	41-50	Male	Executive Manager	10 years +	No
<i>EZDTW 4</i>	50+	Male	Executive Manager	10 years +	No
<i>EZDTW 5</i>	50+	Male	Regional Manager	10 years +	No
<i>EZDTW 6</i>	31-40	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +	No
<i>EZDTW 9</i>	41-50	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +	No
<i>EZDTW 10</i>	31-40	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +	No

Figures 6.15, 6.16, 6.17, 6.18 and 6.19 provide a graphical representation of the characteristics of the research participants in the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife design thinking workshop conducted on 10 August 2021.

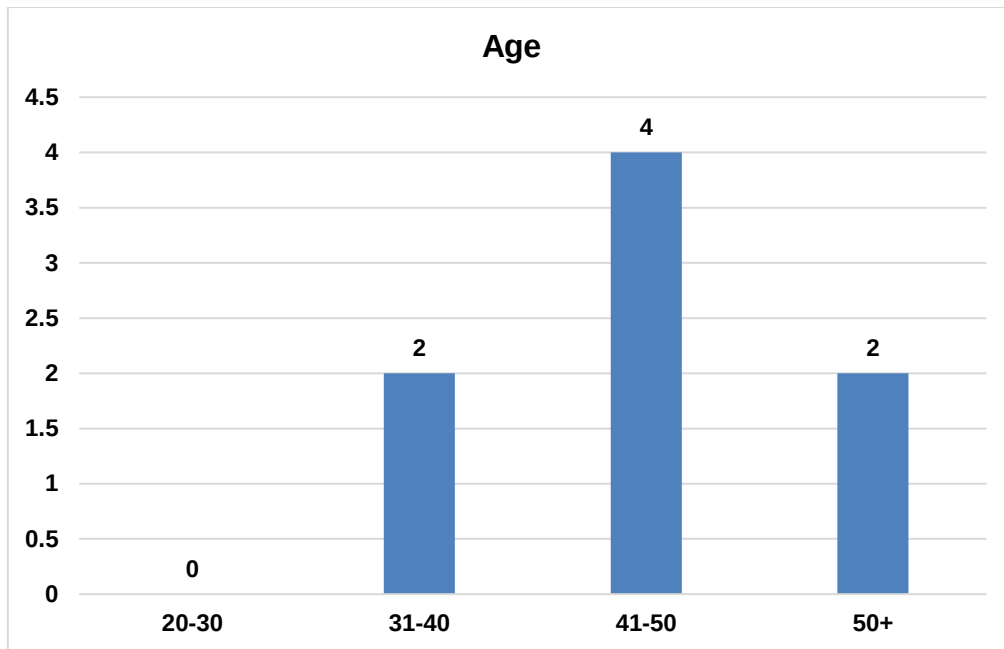


Figure 6.15: Age of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife design thinking workshop participants

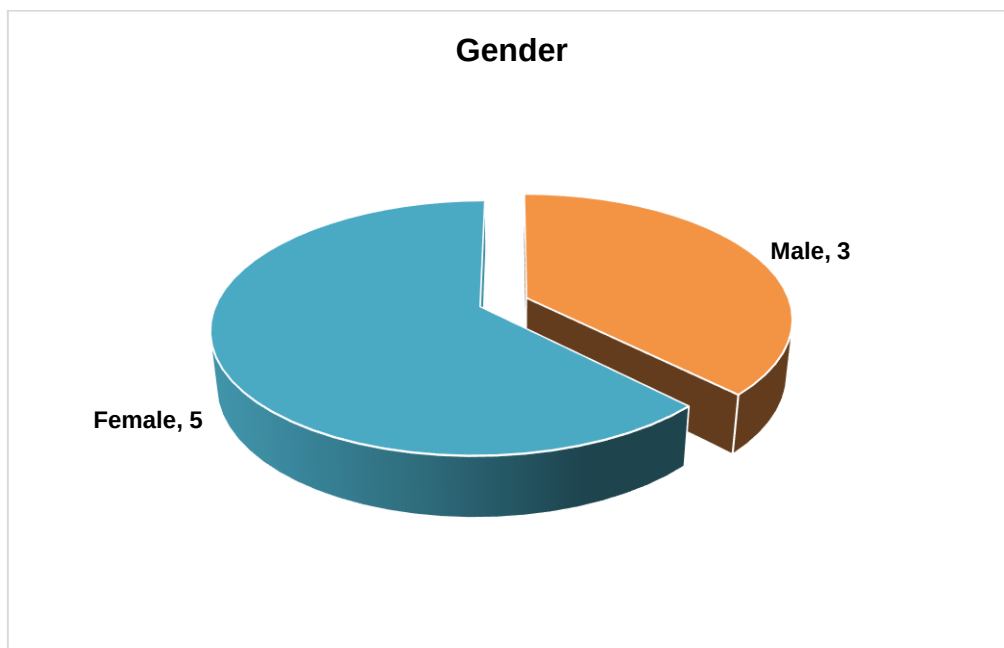


Figure 6.16: Gender of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife design thinking workshop participants

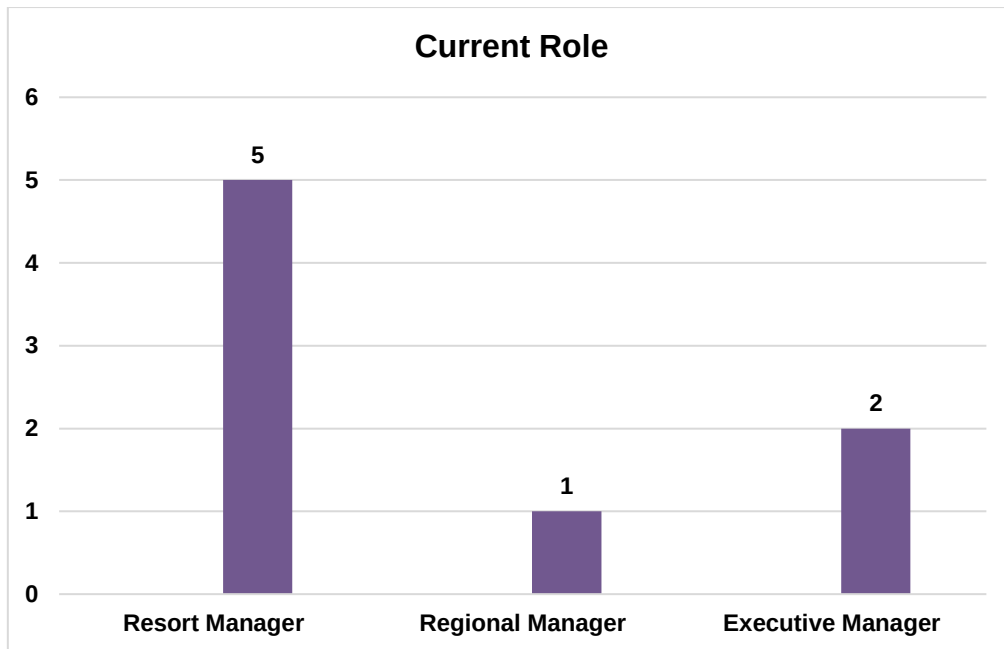


Figure 6.17: Current role of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife design thinking workshop participants

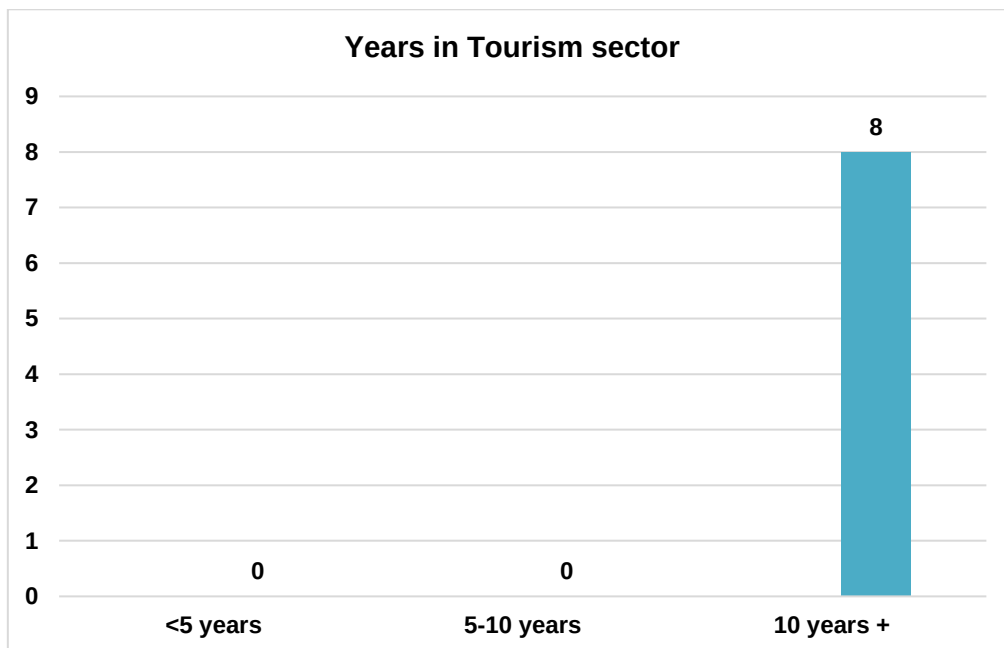


Figure 6.18: Years in Tourism of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife design thinking workshop participants

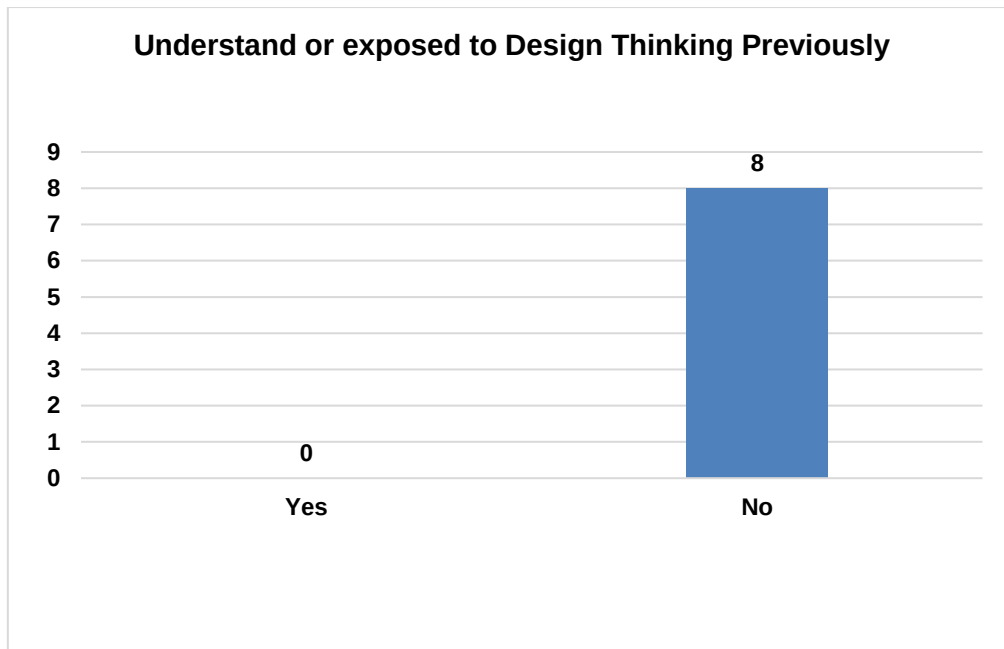


Figure 6.19: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife - Understand or exposed to design thinking previously

All participants partaking in this workshop were above 30 years of age (Figure 6.15). The participants at the Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife design thinking workshop constituted 62.5% female (5) and 37.5% male participation (3), as demonstrated in Figure 6.16. The current roles of participants as demonstrated in Figure 6.17 reflected 62.5% as Resort Managers (5), 25% as Executive Managers (2) and 12.5% as a Regional Manager (1). The participants were well experienced in the tourism sector, with all being active in this sector well in excess of 10 years (Figure 6.18). The selection of participants directly involved in the tourism sector was to understand the problems and challenges experienced by the sector, their views on design thinking and how this process can assist with the challenges faced by this sector. Figure 6.19 shows that all participants indicated that they had not been exposed to design thinking prior to this workshop.

6.7. Individual Interviews: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

The researcher conducts eight (8) interviews with participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. These individual sessions were scheduled and conducted from 24 to 26 August 2021. Two (2) interviews were re-scheduled and conducted on 4 September

2021. All interview sessions with participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife were conducted via a virtual platform.

6.7.1. Demographic profiles of participants in individual interview sessions: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Table 6.5 illustrates the demographic profiles of the participants in the individual interview sessions conducted with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

Table 6.5: Demographic profiles of participants in individual interview sessions- Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Individual Interview Session: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife				
#	Age	Gender	Current Role	Years in Tourism Sector
<i>EI 1</i>	41-50	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +
<i>EI 2</i>	41-50	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +
<i>EI 3</i>	41-50	Male	Executive Manager	10 years +
<i>EI 4</i>	50+	Male	Executive Manager	10 years +
<i>EI 5</i>	50+	Male	Regional Manager	10 years +
<i>EI 6</i>	31-40	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +
<i>EI 9</i>	41-50	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +
<i>EI 10</i>	31-40	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +

Figures 6.20, 6.21, 6.22 and 6.23 provide a graphical representation of the characteristics of the research participants in the Individual Interviews conducted with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife in August and September 2021 respectively.

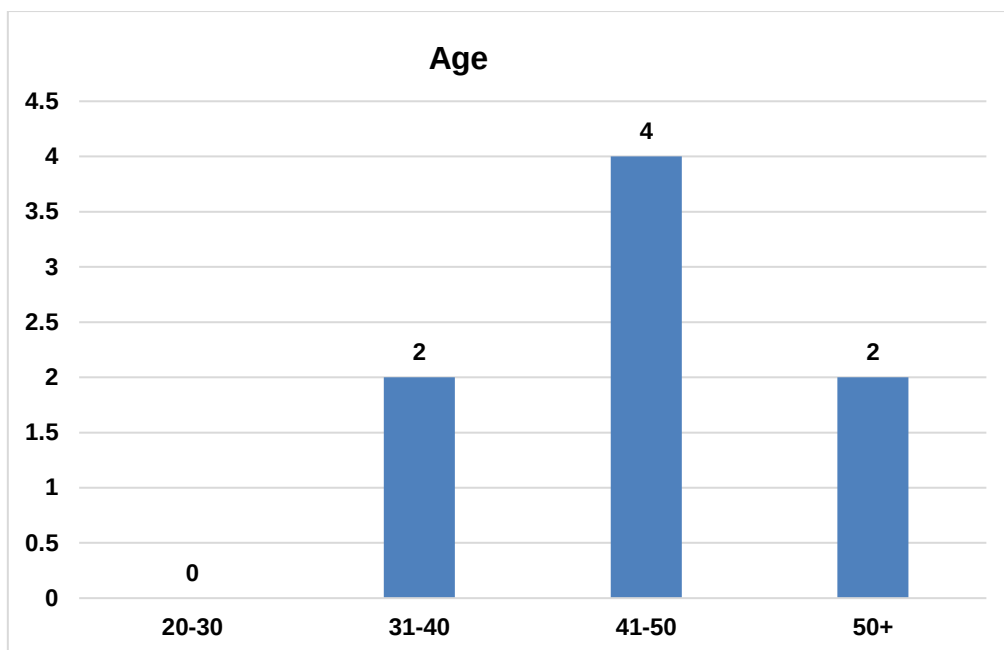


Figure 6.20: Age of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife individual interview participants

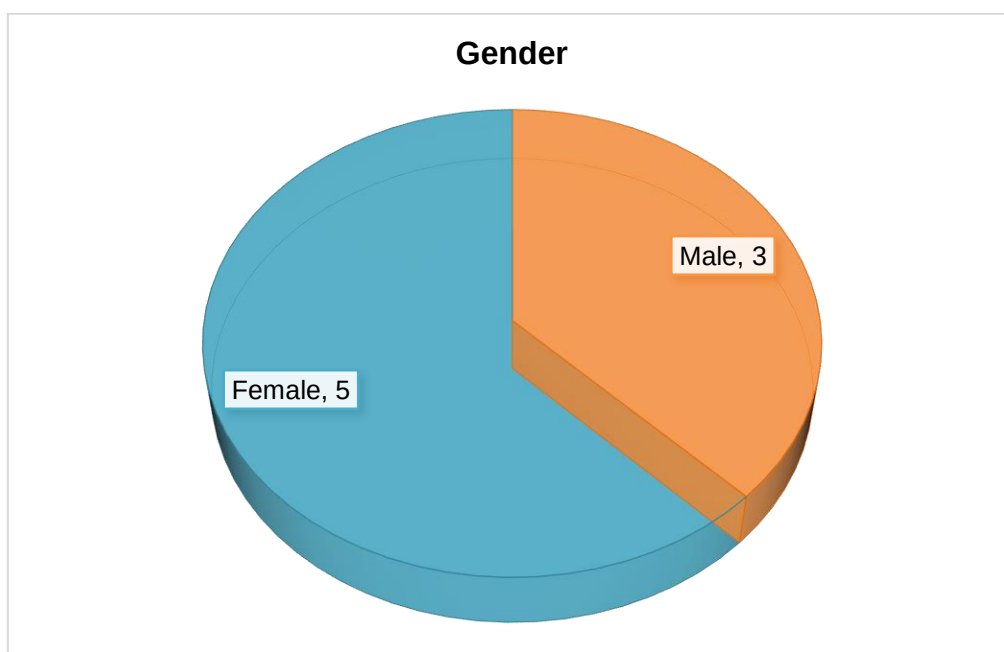


Figure 6.21: Gender of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife individual interview participants

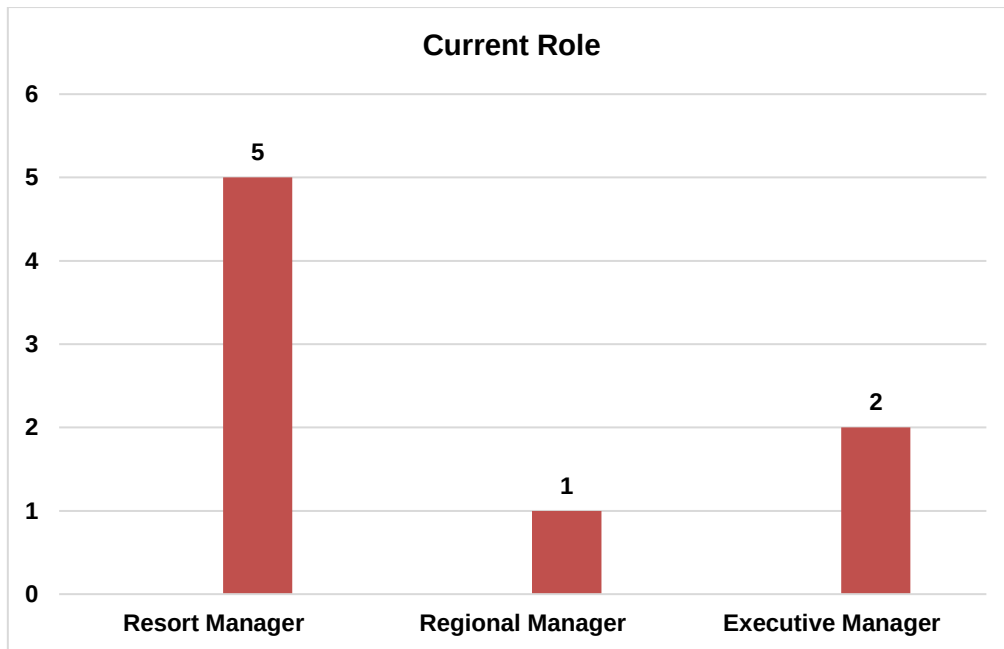


Figure 6.22: Current role of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife individual interview participants

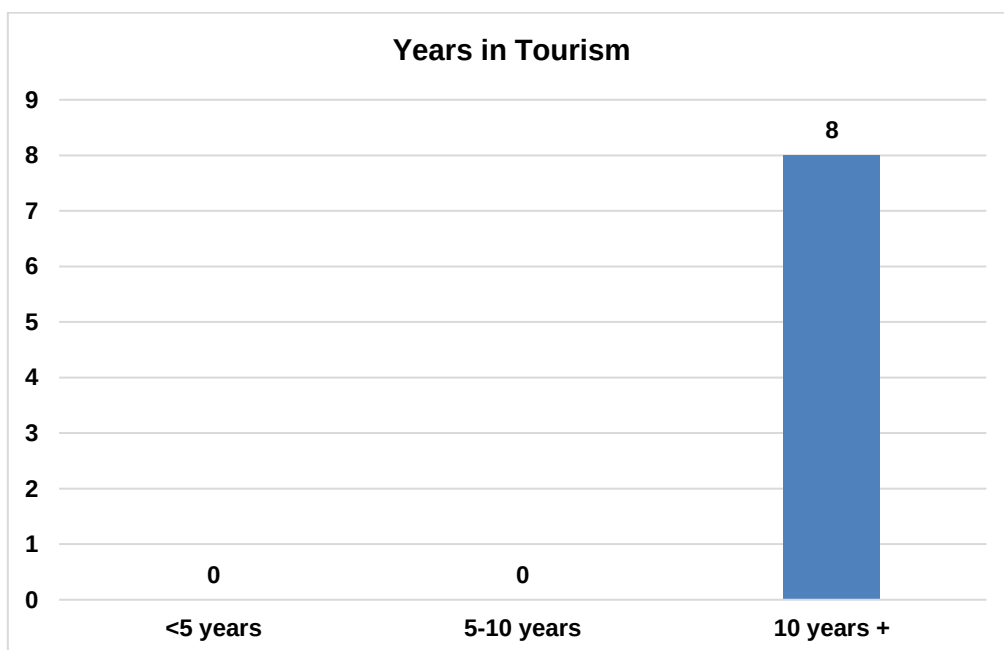


Figure 6.23: Years in tourism of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife individual interview participants

All eight (8) participants in the Individual interview sessions were above 30 years of age (Figure 6.20). There were considerably more female participants (62.5%) than

male participants (37.5%), as demonstrated in Figure 6.21. The majority of the participants were Resort Managers (62.5%), followed by Executive managers at 25% (Figure 6.22). All participants in this part of the qualitative study had more than 10 years' experience in the tourism sector and were well-versed to partake in this study, as reflected in Figure 6.23.

6.8. Focus group session: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

The researcher conducted a focus group session with participants from the tourism sector at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. This session was conducted on 28 September 2021. The aim of the session was to gain an understanding of the problems and challenges encountered by the tourism sector directly from stakeholders in this sector. Through this session, the researcher was able to understand and identify the individual feelings and expression of the research participants.

6.8.1. Demographic profiles of participants in focus group session: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Table 6.6 illustrates the demographic profiles of the participants in the Individual Interview sessions conducted with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

Table 6.6: Demographic profiles of participants in focus group session: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

Focus group Session: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife				
Unique #	Age	Gender	Current Role	Years in Tourism Sector
<i>EFG 1</i>	41-50	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +
<i>EFG 2</i>	41-50	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +
<i>EFG 3</i>	41-50	Male	Executive Manager	10 years +
<i>EFG 4</i>	50+	Male	Executive Manager	10 years +
<i>EFG 5</i>	50+	Male	Regional Manager	10 years +
<i>EFG 6</i>	31-40	Female	Resort Manager	10 years +

Figures 6.24, 6.25, 6.26 and 6.27 provide a graphical representation of the characteristics of the research participants in the focus group session with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife conducted on 28 September 2021.

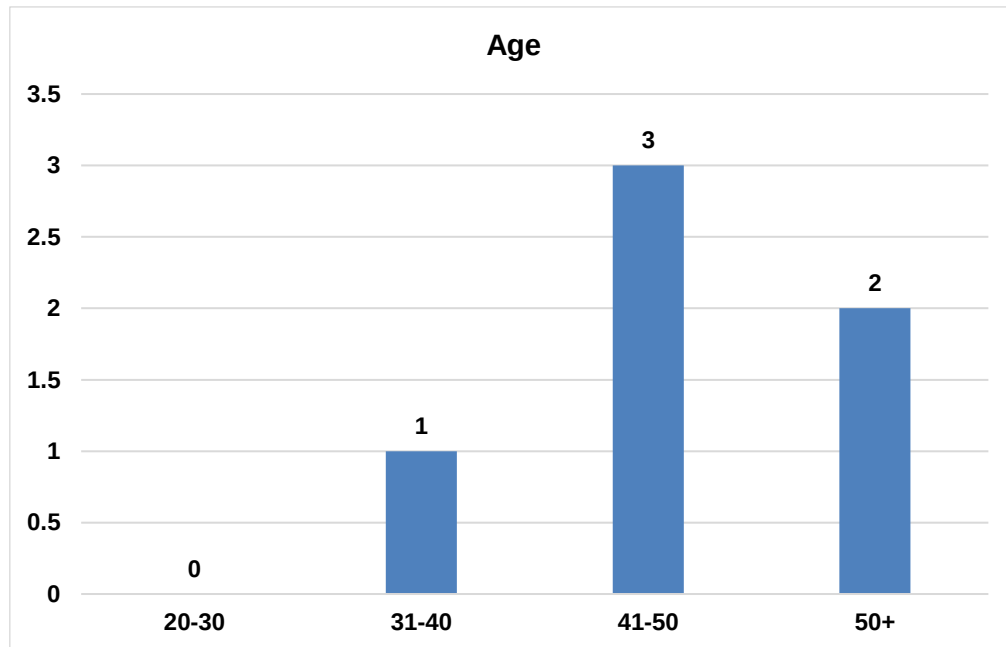


Figure 6.24: Age of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife focus group participants

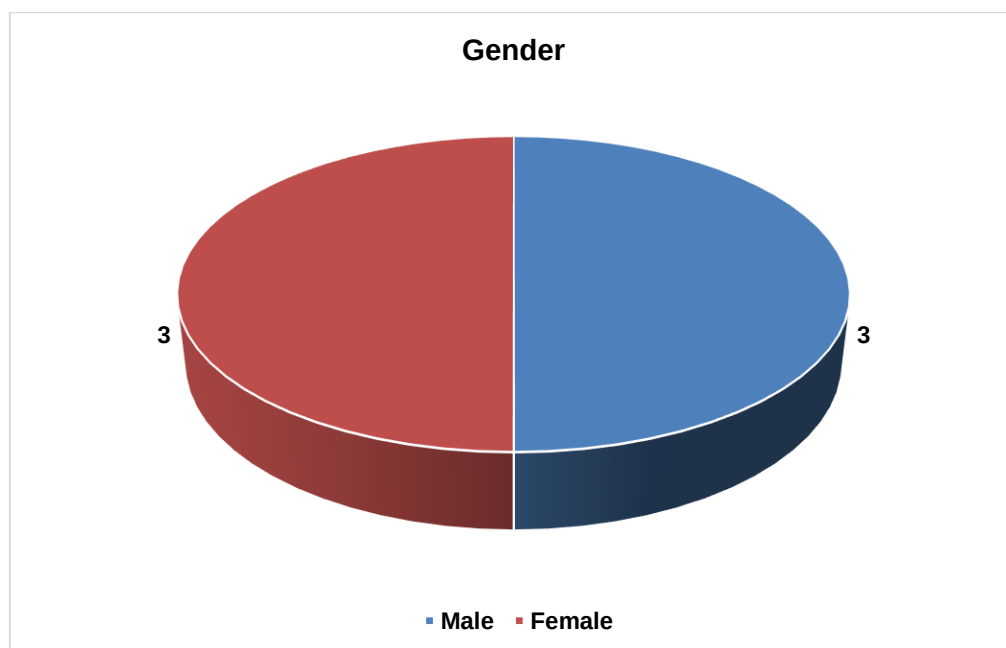


Figure 6.25: Gender of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife focus group participants

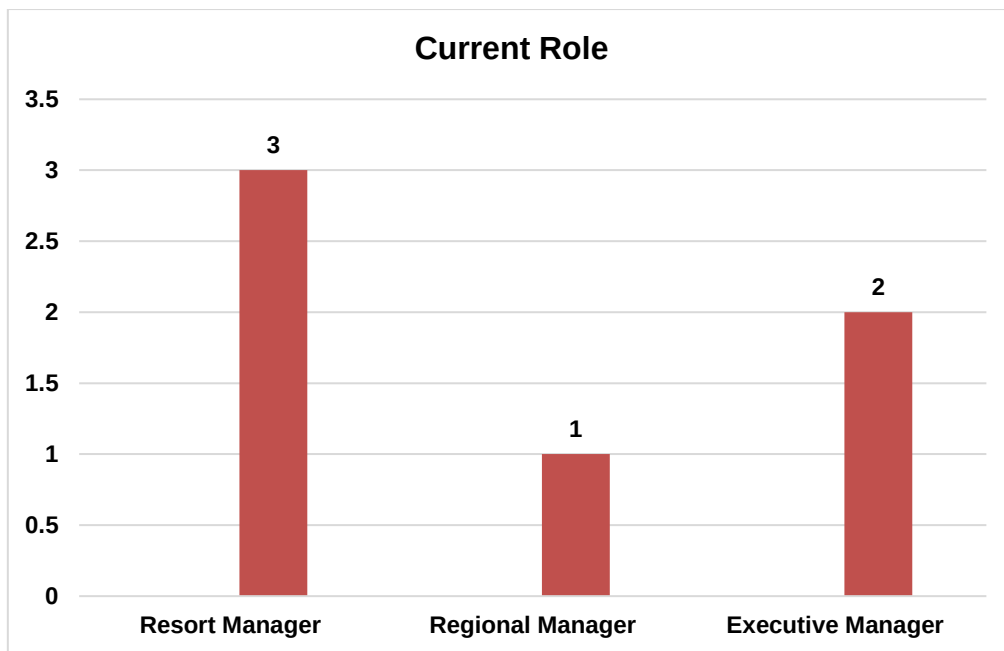


Figure 6.26: Current role of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife focus group participants

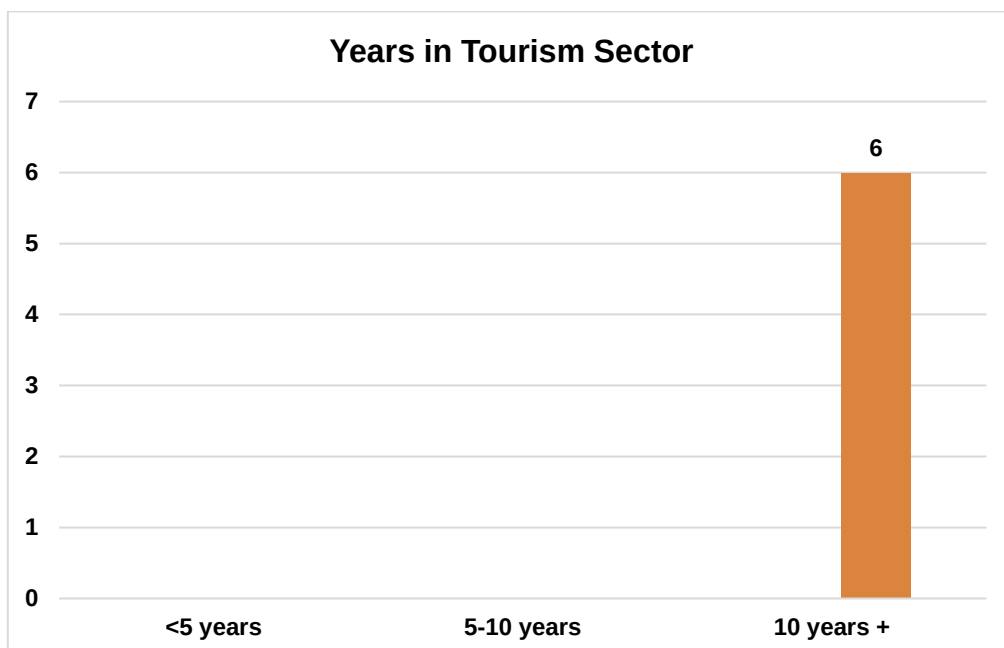


Figure 6.27: Years in tourism of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife focus group participants

The focus group session conducted with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife had an equal representation of females and males, with three (3) each in attendance (Figure 6.25). All participants were above 30 years of age (Figure 6.24) and were well experienced in the tourism sector, with each having in excess of 10 years' experience in this

sector (Figure 6.27). The management level of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife was well represented at this session, with three (3) Resort Managers (50%), two (2) Executive Managers (33%) and one (1) Regional Manager (17%) in attendance (Figure 6.26).

6.9. Qualitative analysis results

The researcher used Interviews and focus group sessions to collect data for this study as explained in detail in Chapter 5. The results of these qualitative interventions are presented in the section below.

6.9.1. Themes

The qualitative analysis generated **four (4) key themes**. These include:

- Challenges.
- Applicability of Design thinking.
- Design thinking capabilities.
- Leadership and strategy.

The following sub-themes were subsequently generated:

Sub-themes for Theme 1: Challenges

- Problems and challenges impacting your organisation and the tourism sector
- Challenges in applying design thinking in your own business

Sub-themes for Theme 2: Applicability of Design thinking

- Design thinking understanding
- Design thinking be useful or effective in your organisation
- Likelihood of implementing design thinking
- Design thinking Initiatives that can be implemented to improve resilience and sustainability

Sub-themes for Theme 3: Design thinking Capabilities

- Design thinking vs challenges faced by the tourism sector
- Design thinking as a unique problem-solving approach that is designed to generate value
- Design thinking effectiveness and benefit the tourism sector

Sub-themes for Theme 4: Leadership and Strategy

- Role of leadership in design thinking
- Design thinking as a strategic lever and management tool to develop strategy for tourism sector

All themes and related sub-themes were discussed in detail in the next chapter.

6.9.2. Definitions of Qualitative Techniques used

6.9.2.1. Word Cloud

The most commonly used terms are displayed as a word cloud. The greater the font size, the more frequently the word was used. This aids in the identification of significant areas and themes. Figure 6.28 below demonstrates the Word cloud for the data that surfaced from the qualitative interventions in this study. The Word cloud depicts that the words ‘thinking’, ‘design’, ‘customers’, ‘tourism’ and ‘need’ feature predominantly in all data collected in this study, which is quite unsurprising as these words align to the objectives of this study and are essential components in this study.



Figure 6.28: Word Cloud of Qualitative Data Collected

6.9.2.2. Tree Map

Tree Maps show the data (frequently used words) in terms of the size of the blocks. Hence, the larger blocks reflect those words that are mainly used. The entire map gives a holistic view of how data is placed in terms of the size of reference. The words, 'thinking' and 'need' feature predominantly in the analysis results. This indicates that the word 'thinking' which is central to design thinking and its process, was commonly expressed by participants as much thought needs to be expressed in this process at all levels, while the word 'need' signifies that there is much needed innovative capabilities, engagement and collaboration that is required by the tourism sector. These were followed closely by words such as 'design', 'people', 'tourism' and 'customers', all of which are essential components when leveraging design thinking in the tourism sector.

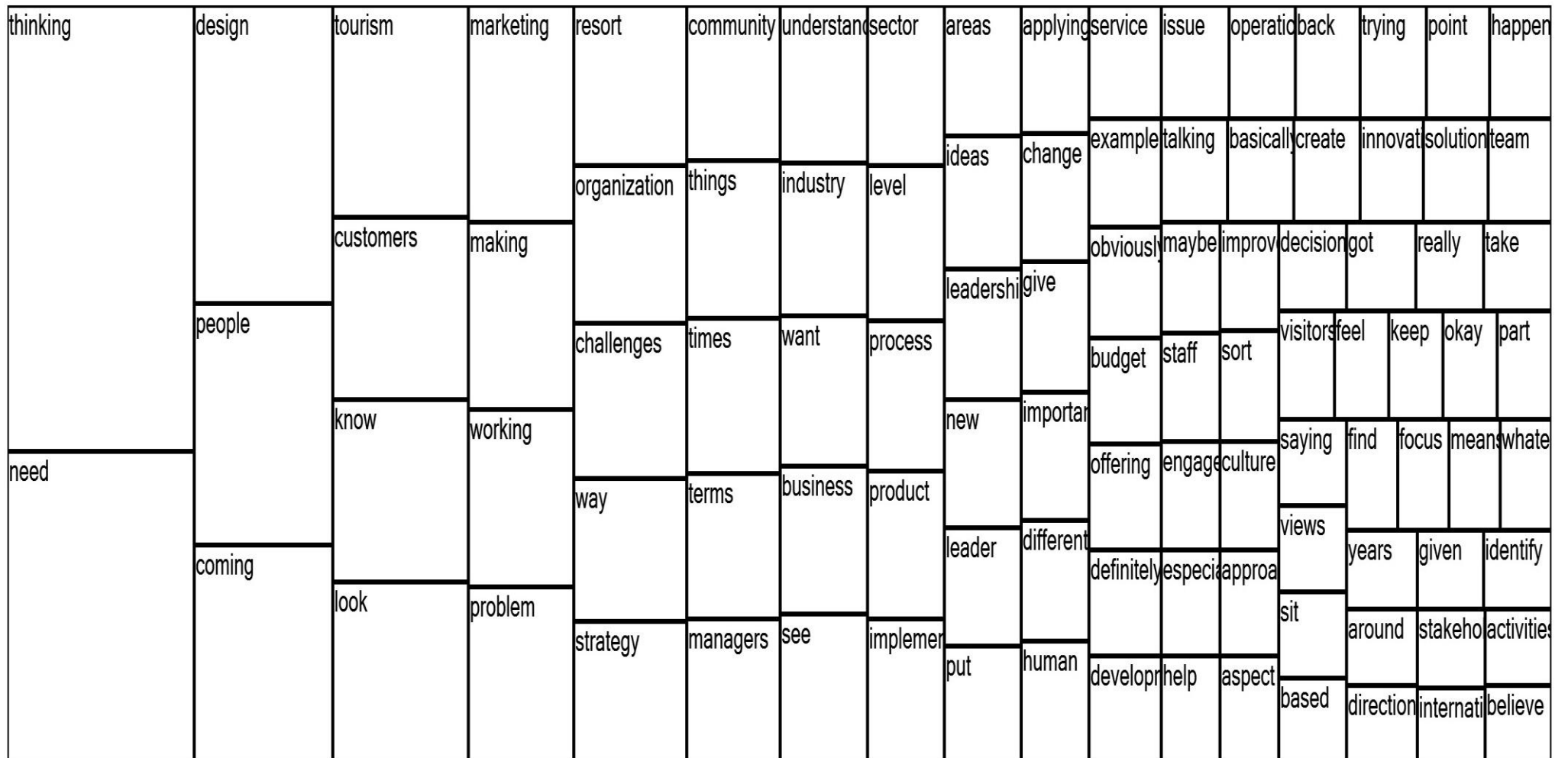


Figure 6.29: Tree Map of Qualitative Data Collected

6.9.2.3. Cluster Analysis

This study made use of bubble diagrams. These diagrams use 'bubbles' to represent the data (key words). The bigger the bubble, the more words or references there are. Furthermore, the close proximity of the bubbles indicates that those words had a connection.

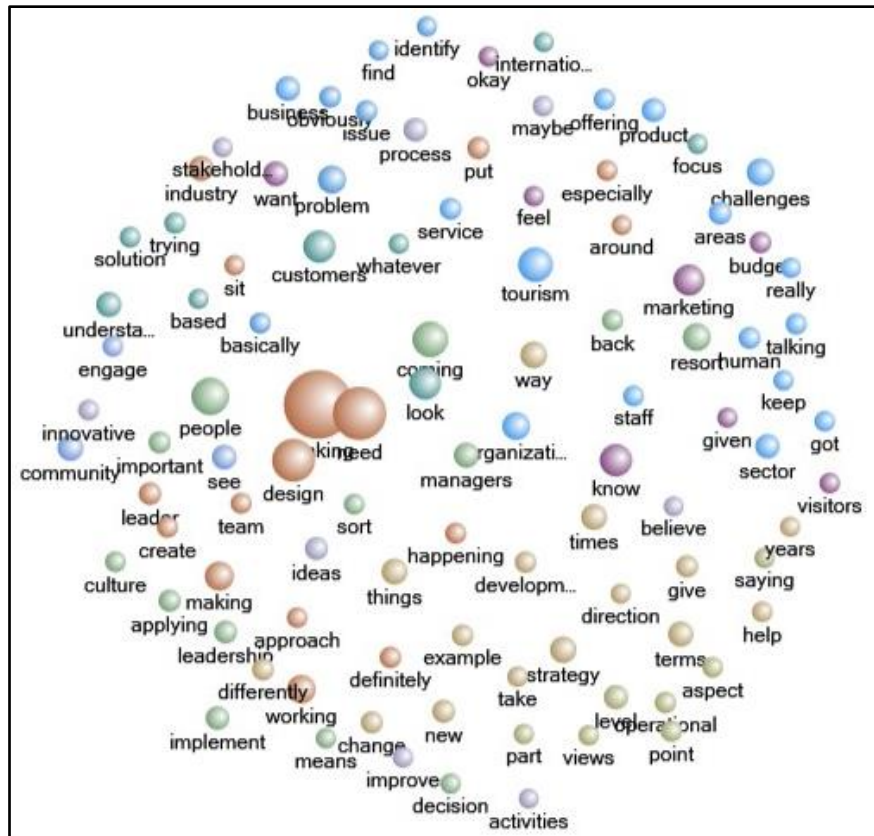


Figure 6.30: Cluster Analysis of Qualitative Data Collected

6.9.2.4. Hierarchy Chart

The size of the nodes is reflected here. The larger the area, the higher the volume or concentration of responses. The illustration in Figure 6.31. depicts the 4 key themes that were highlighted in this study and the concentration of their related responses.

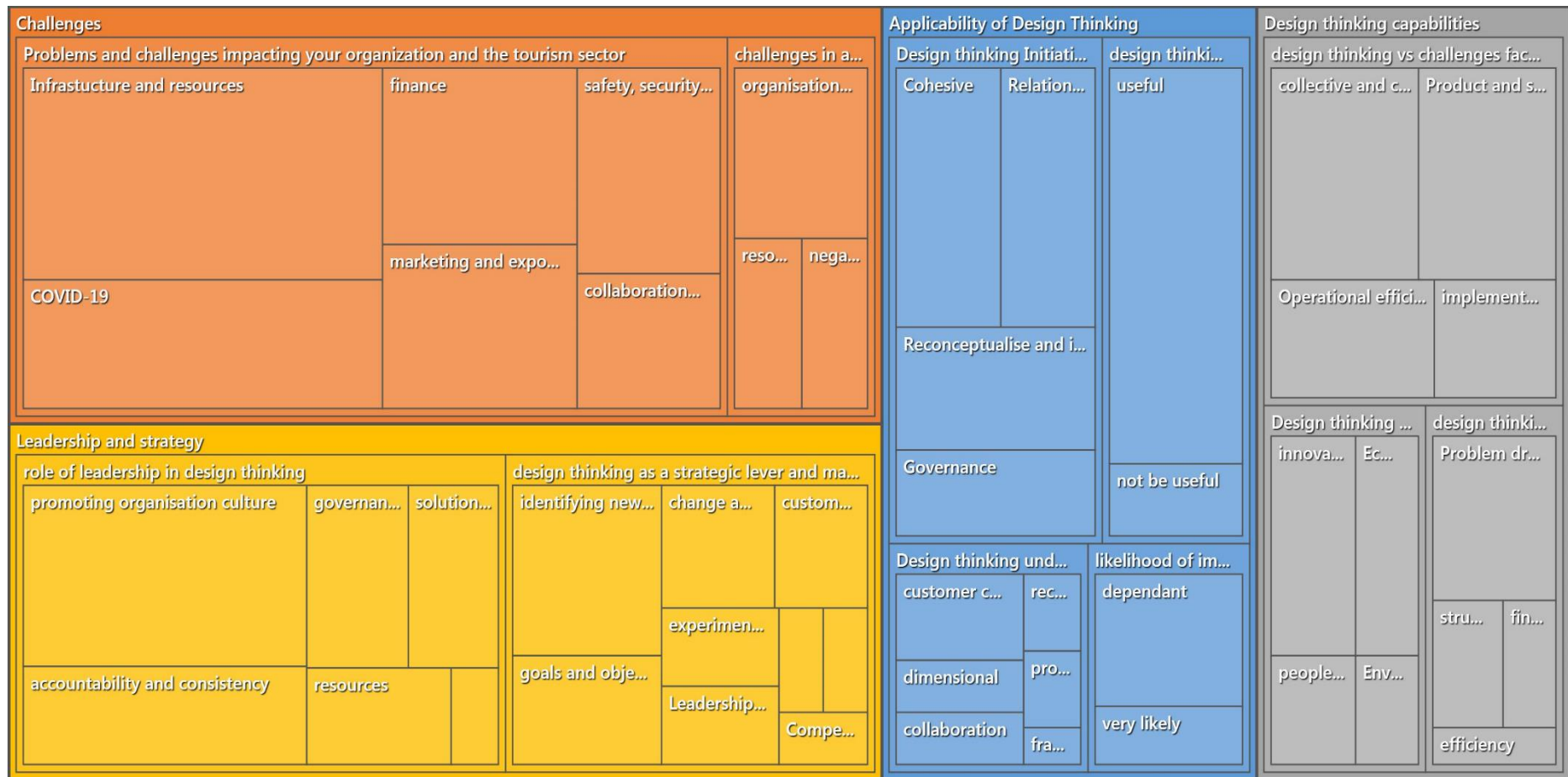


Figure 6.31: Hierarchy Chart of qualitative data collected

6.9.2.5. Word Tree

Word trees are used to depict key words and the words and/or sentences that are connected to that word. It allows one to see how these words connect to other words and sentences. As there are many words generated generally from qualitative data, the researcher presents an example of a word tree from the word 'solution', which surfaced as one of the many keywords in this study as reflected in Figure 6.32.

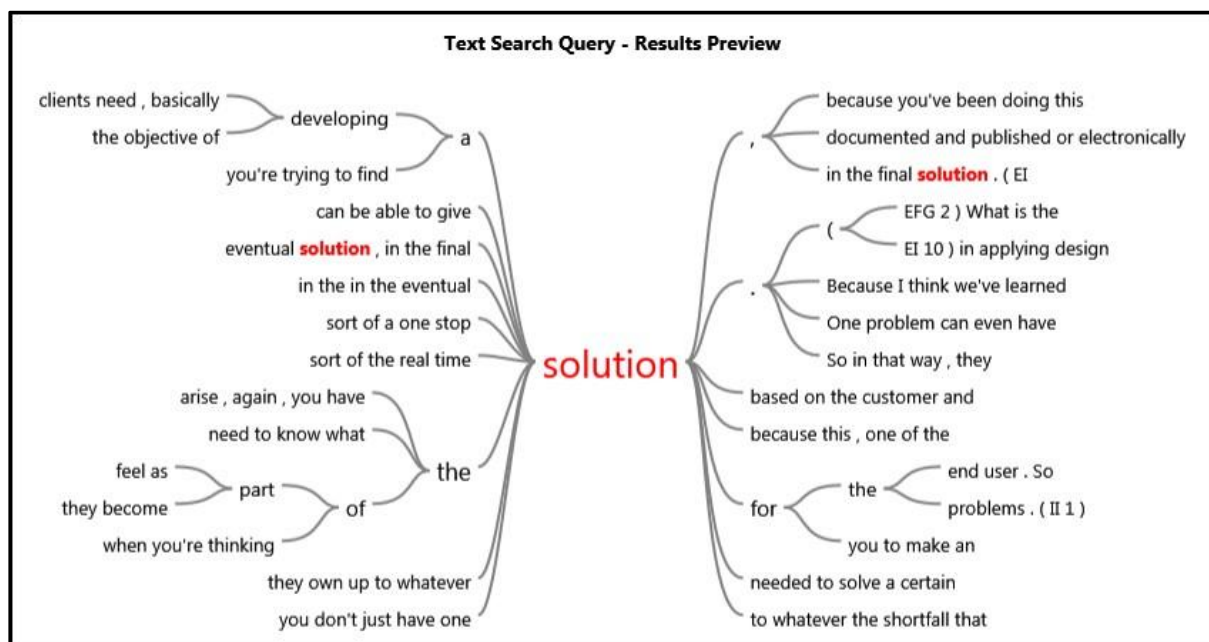


Figure 6.32: Word Tree of the word 'solution' from the qualitative data collected

6.10. Conclusion

This chapter began with the demographic details of participants in the focus group sessions, interview sessions and design thinking workshops employed in this study. The key themes that emanated from the focus groups and individual interview sessions were presented. These themes included Challenges, Applicability of Design thinking, Design thinking capabilities, and Leadership and strategy. Thereafter, the qualitative techniques used in this study (Word Clouds, Tree Maps, Cluster Analysis,

Hierarchy Charts and Word Trees) and their definitions and diagrams were explained and presented.

The next chapter will analyse and discuss the findings, which will be presented by the four (4) key themes as well as all related sub-themes highlighted in this chapter, whilst triangulating with relevant and related data sources. These findings will each provide a detailed description of how participants expressed their concerns on the challenges and problems experienced within the tourism sector, as well their views on design thinking. Additionally, in the next chapter, the research objectives will be answered on how design thinking can be used to address the challenges and problems encountered by the tourism sector and whether design thinking can be used to enhance tourism in KwaZulu-Natal.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSION

7.1. Introduction

The main objective of this research was to apply design thinking to the tourism sector within KwaZulu-Natal and to assess its impact in addressing the challenges faced by the sector.

The thesis began with the introductory chapter, presenting the background; preliminary analysis of literature; problem statement, need, objectives, research questions; and study importance. The tourism sector on a global and local level was outlined in Chapter 2. The process of design thinking, its characteristics, challenges and benefits were summarised in Chapter 3, while Chapter 4 covered leadership and its importance in strategy. Chapter 5 outlined the methodological approach adopted in this study. Chapter 6 then presented the results emanating from the qualitative data collection process.

The qualitative research approach was employed in this study with data primarily collected using focus groups and in-depth semi-structured interviews. A total of two (2) focus group sessions and ten (10) interviews were conducted. The data collected was analysed using thematic analysis, whereby four (4) key themes were identified, as highlighted in Chapter 6.

The discussion part of this research will present the four (4) themes that emerged from the qualitative analysis, as well as address and explore the findings from the qualitative data gathering process that were presented in the preceding chapter. In addition, the primary data will be triangulated with literature-based knowledge from Chapters Two, Three, and Four, and this chapter will analyze and address the study's research objectives. The chapter will be finalised with a conclusion summary.

7.2. Analysis and discussion of qualitative data

The qualitative data for this study was collected from twenty-seven (27) stakeholders involved in the tourism sector from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The transcriptions from the focus group

sessions and interviews were analysed through the Nvivo 12 computer software package, which identified numerous themes and sub-themes in this study. The results of the data collected in this study indicated various challenges within the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal, which requires appropriate interventions to mark a significant turn in results. The primary themes and related sub-themes that emerged from this analysis will be presented in the following sub-sections and present a review of the findings of the study by the researcher. The study's topic approach will maintain order and continuity throughout the debate process. Thematic analysis characterizes many qualitative research studies (Vaismoradi and Snelgrove, 2019), whereby themes and sub-themes are developed by defining codes that recur or are found to be related or display similar patterns.

7.3. Thematic analysis

The qualitative analysis generated four (4) key themes. These include:

- Challenges.
- Applicability of Design thinking.
- Design thinking Capabilities; and
- Leadership and Strategy.

7.4. Theme 1: Challenges

This primary sub-theme examined the current challenges affecting the tourism sector and the implementation of design thinking, as represented in Figure 7.1 and Figure 7.2. Each sub-theme is thereafter unpacked further below.

7.4.1. Problems and challenges impacting your organisation and the tourism sector

There was a plethora of key problems and challenges impacting on the organisation and sector. These were classified into further sub-themes below.

7.4.1.1. COVID-19

The most current major challenge remains the COVID-19 pandemic, which carried the following implications:

7.4.1.1.1. Visitors

COVID-19 has seriously impacted on Visitors and the tourism sector.

7.4.1.1.1.1. Inability to travel

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a severe inability to travel as lockdown levels prevented such. This has impacted severely on the tourism sector and possibly this sector was the most affected. Tourism is a major contributor to the economy of most countries, including South Africa. The views from participants were as follows:

“Well, the number one will have to be COVID-19. Because we have been hit with these challenges for some time, however, when COVID came for the first time we closed our doors for the first time since the inception of the resorts, we completely closed that gate. That was at the end of March last year for about two and a half months. And so, we had absolutely no guests we were not generating any revenue at all which really set us back a big way” (EI 10).

“Currently it is problems that we don't have control over, what we call it is the macro environment. It's COVID has a great impact on the organisation on the tourism side. Tourism is about people traveling, for whatever reason they may be traveling for” (EI 6).

“So, with COVID, with the economy being the way it is, people just do not have money to travel, because remember, traveling is not at the top of the hierarchy of human needs, it is basically leisure, so you would first look at your basic human

needs. And if you find if cannot cover your basic human needs, then tourism doesn't happen" (I12).

"I think that one is not a hard one to explain, because I think we all can attest as we are either directly or indirectly involved in tourism industry. But you can already you already have an idea as to how tourism has been affected. Obviously, travel has been closed and people are not allowed to travel. And obviously, one of our mandates is to promote the tourism iLembe as a number one tourist destination of choice" (EI 2).

7.4.1.1.1.2. International guests

A large component of tourists come from international countries, with many from the Global North. With guests coming to developed countries with higher currency, the revenue was high. However, due to COVID-19, international guests could not arrive and thus there was more reliance on the local economy. In discussing International Guests, multiple views from participants expressed the following:

"That was applicable to Giants Castle as well as for the organisation as well. I think about 35 to 40% of our tourists that visit specifically customers come from Germany, France, the UK, so when that when our borders were closed, that meant a very big cut of our clientele, as well as the clientele that spends the most because international tourists come in, they spend on every outlet that we have" (EI 10).

"The whole chain is affected with the lack of international tourism guests. Revenue has contracted, from what we had projected we are making about 40% of what we had anticipated. That is mainly because the international tourists and not back yet" (EI 9).

"then we are having that kind of a challenge because, we got very limited foreign guests at the moment. I think we are sitting at 5%, so you find that 95% now we are relying on our locals. So, we currently only getting busy over the weekend in some of the areas, though not all of them, and this is proving to be a major challenge, especially with the local market" (EI 5).

7.4.1.1.1.3. Virtual

Due to people moving to virtual meetings, physical conference facilities were hardly used. A participant stated:

“The resort that we in was built with an idea to host meetings. At the moment everybody's going virtual, and we are no longer using the facility to its full requirement as well. And we have seen a drop in the events that we're able to host because of the COVID pandemic” (EI 9).

7.4.1.1.1.4. Tourism forecast

The tourism forecast was also unpredictable given the impending waves of COVID-19. Moreover, with the tourism sector being highly impacted, it became rather difficult to predict visitor turn-out and additionally, it became difficult to plan with inter-connected businesses within the tourism sector. A participant added:

“Number two is tourism figures like we use forecast, these forecasts are out of the window currently, where we were forecasting 150,000, we got 5000, where we were forecasting 5000, we got 200,000. So, it's very difficult to plan. Given the scenario, like now we don't know whether the school holidays are going to happen in October or not, you don't know whether the fourth wave is going to hit in December. These are the kinds of challenges which you face. From, that's the business to consumer side, the business-to-business side, we obviously have joint ventures with restaurants, people running restaurants, etc. They are also, you know, touch and go because if we are not operational, they are not operational” (EI 3).

7.4.1.1.2. Resources and skills

The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted on Resources and the skills base.

7.4.1.1.2.1. Staff exposure

Staff exposure to COVID-19 threatened the skills base at these organisations. The threat of exposure was asserted by a participant, who added:

“But the disadvantage is if one of our team members is exposed, it's not like where

you are in a Hilton Hotel, people here will go back to their homes at a later stage. They will they all stay in communal setups. So, the whole entire staff is exposed even if one member is exposed. So, you risk the fact that others are exposed to that one person. They all live and operate as a community in communal because they live and work on the same space” (EI 3).

7.4.1.1.2.2. Supplies and resources

Due to COVID-19, supplies were inconsistent as there were not many guests to supply a service to. Furthermore, there were not many jobs available for the local community. The impact of COVID-19 had an add-on effect, particularly in the tourism sector, and this unfortunately contributed to a loss of employment. These uncertainties in the global environment had a secondary effect, whereby communities in which some resorts operate were not allowed to operate due to no support of employment for their community members, as is conveyed in the statement below:

“It has that ripple effect. I mean, you know the theories of international visitors, there is a substantial market for that. And then if you look at the food and cakes, and the beverages, you have stakeholders in that process as well. So, if you know what is coming to your establishments, then there's no need to engage with them for supplies. So, it has a ripple effect on multiple industries at the same time. Not only that, but we also hire a lot of local labourers within the communities, now the communities won't have those jobs, as we stand, the communities are fighting, demanding permanent jobs. So, with COVID-19, hitting people losing their jobs returning back home from the cities, where we operate, they now looking at us to say save them, or else we won't let you operate” (EI 3).

7.4.1.1.3. Expenses

Covid-19 brought about added expenses and a lack of funding.

7.4.1.1.3.1. Cancellations

Cancellation resulted in financial loss, as these bookings were seen as income and resources were planned accordingly. A respondent added:

“I would say the occupancy is the major problem. It's not stable. Okay. There's a lot of cancellation due to people being affected by COVID. The refund processes as well, we have a lot of bookings sitting under refunds or, and also kind of visitors, because they couldn't make time to come to visit us, and especially the international market was impacted by COVID-19” (EI 9).

7.4.1.1.3.2. Souvenir sales

Souvenir sales had also dropped since international tourists used to buy many. A few respondents shared their views:

So, the curio shop, the restaurant, activities and accommodation, whereas the local clientele will spend on accommodation, but they will Self-cater, they will probably not use the restaurant, they will use a little bit of money in the shop. So that really took a big chunk of income” (EI 10).

“Our souvenir sales have invariably taken a knock, because souvenir sales are supported mainly by international and tourism from out of province” (EI 3).

7.4.1.1.3.3. Economic

COVID-19 also brought overall economic challenges in the following ways:

7.4.1.1.3.3.1. Rand vs dollar

The rand vs dollar issue created problems whereby the rand became too weak. A respondent contributed by stating the following:

“Currently with the pandemic, it is one of those major challenges that we're facing. It has been very difficult for us to chase the rand. It is almost easier to chase the dollar because with the rand going weaker it becomes a relief on us as the tourism industry” (EI 5).

7.4.1.2. Finance

The next key challenge was Finance, which was a logical argument as money is required to keep the wheels turning. The views from multiple participants in this regard were as follows:

“It is bad for business ever, because it has an impact on our resources now, and also on the revenue stream that into your business” (EI 2).

“So, what one of the major challenges has been since I joined the organisation, there's been a talk that you know, we are we are going to go separate ways, which never took place up to this stage. So that poses a problem because we are not financing those resorts very well, and then we end up having issues in terms of the standard of the facilities, the actual resorts themselves” (EI 5).

“It all stems from the limitation of financial resources” (EI 6).

“But the challenge has been money, budgets, because without budgets, then you can't maintain resorts. You cannot employ people you cannot market your resorts and you cannot meet customer demands” (EI 9).

These statements weighed in heavily on the lack of finance and its impact on operational requirements.

7.4.1.2.1. Budget Allocation

It is logical that ‘Budget allocation’ was the most highly ranked factor supported by many respondents. Budget allocation was lacking, whereby there was no/not enough budget given. This had a ripple effect because without a budget, customer value was compromised, infrastructure could not be maintained and even marketing was compromised. A few respondents shared the following statements in relation to a lack of sufficient budget allocation to support operational requirements:

“I will say that since I've been here, we are not given, you are not given the budget to do the marketing yourself. So, we rely on head office, our marketing department to do our, our marketing for our resorts, and I believe that every resort is a unique” (EI 1).

“I think mainly, its budget wise. I will definitely say its budget wise, because the budget that that we are given is never enough to take care of the things that need to be taken care of. And, also, we are requested as resort managers that you submit your own budget to our finance department every year, and it is used for three years. But what do you get back is never enough. So, you end up in any way, when you get the budget, you know, that you cannot overspend. But when it comes to tourism, you can't limit the budget so much that I can't even buy toilet paper, because it's in necessity for the visitors that are coming. You are not going to go and buy a toilet paper that is so cheap that when you try and roll it, you know, it causes dust and everything, then the customer must feel that they are not getting value for their money” (EI 2).

A shortage in budget allocations impacts service delivery and the ability to deliver value to the customer. This was affirmed by a respondent who added:

“If you're not giving them value for their money, then they're not going to be coming back. So, I feel that we are not giving customers value for their money. In terms of the budget, so the return is a result of a low budget, whereby you can't provide value service offering to the customers because of limited funds. The limited funds end up going to maybe other resorts, the bigger resorts, you go to them and ask them if they can help you with some budget, or whatever you need, maybe to buy new linen or whatever. So that's all important in the tourism setting where you need to keep the facilities clean, and you need to have the necessities available, proper necessities and that's what attract customers” (EI 1).

Other respondents shared similar views:

“I think the biggest one is budget, availability of funding, especially for infrastructure projects in the tourism sector. You've got to always be improving your products, because we have such fierce competition. So, the number one challenge was budgets” (EI 10).

“I think the budgeting as well is a challenge. And for the fact that we say that tourism is there to support biodiversity. It is not always possible that we are able to sustain them for free and that becomes a problem. This puts pressure on the government

reliance as well, and with the government having their own budget cuts, this then has a direct impact on us as the organisation” (EI 5).

“Budget as we are responsible for marketing the north coast destination. It is not the medians of marketing but more a budget constraint. We don’t have enough money to go around and expose ourselves. We can have a great trade show in London, but it comes down to having a budget” (FG 10).

7.4.1.2.2. Standards

Service levels would drop, and standards would also be compromised, thereby painting the resorts in a poor light. A few respondents expressed disappointment in budget cuts or insufficient budgets as they are still required to deliver a good service, and with a low budget it becomes difficult to maintain the standards of the resort, as stated:

“Another main one is the budget. Okay, to run the resort itself. It’s I understand which one cannot get, you know, more than what is expected. Those budget cuts. But you know, you’re still expected to deliver in terms of service” (EI 2).

“we have got to keep up and as a result of not having enough budgets to do that, then we cannot keep up with what the market is offering. So, competition has taken over I would say. You see, it’s a grapple for the market now and maybe a change in thought or change in business model is something that we can work towards, and do things differently, let’s approach it differently” (EI 6).

7.4.1.3. Infrastructure and resources

Relating to finance came the whole issue of infrastructure and resources to support tourism.

7.4.1.3.1. Infrastructure

Infrastructure challenges were one of the most prominent. This included:

7.4.1.3.1.1. Lack of funding

Overall, there is a lack of funding to invest in restructure. A respondent stressed:

“Obviously, then compounding these issues would be your lack of funding to reinvest in infrastructure” (EI 3).

7.4.1.3.1.2. Roads

Roads are the biggest concern. When roads are in a bad condition, it deters people from visiting. Participants significantly and frequently mentioned the state of roads leading to resorts, as this affected the safety of guests travelling to their resorts. A few respondents asserted:

“The main one they could think of is infrastructure. Infrastructure, in terms of roads” (EI 2).

The same participant further mentioned:

“Within even, okay, within the parks or within resorts, the accessibility as well. Some roads, they still have dirt roads, where it's rain. So, visitors struggle if they are traveling into sedans to get through to us. We also had poor signage in terms of infrastructure, visitors will get lost to come to us. Many of our visitors that come from Johannesburg and Free state and use the N3, which was long roads and with heavy toll fees at the Tugela plaza. They'll reach us and they will be like complaining of long routes s and thinking that not fixing the R 74 was our fault but there was an external factor” (EI 2).

Other respondents shared similar views:

“At the moment, we're doing road rehabilitation. So, we had a lot of potholes inside the park compared to the outside. So, at the moment, we are doing road repeat rehabilitation, and between units as well, renovations from my side in terms of infrastructure that has been taken care of” (EI 1).

“The roads, the infrastructure, are looked after Ismangaliso themselves. But all in all, the challenges have been that our relationship with Ismangaliso has been hanging in the balance” (EI 5).

“and the potholes on the roads, because we are not in control of it” (FG 3).

“and fix the potholes on the road” (FG 9).

“I would like to emphasise on the infrastructure, the roads are very bad” (FG 10).

7.4.1.3.1.3. Buildings

Buildings were slowly becoming dilapidated and needed refurbishments, renovations and painting. A few participants emphasised this by stating:

“In terms of the infrastructure, in terms of land and building, and also the sort of refurbishments that measures your success” (EI 1).

“So, another factor that internally in terms of infrastructure was our buildings, our units. My resort is under renovation. Yes, we are doing alot of renovations internally externally” (EI 2).

“There is also the maintenance of buildings and structures because when you're dealing with hospitality, you have to be aligned with what the client is expecting to find at our resort. So, most of our buildings are deteriorating, the painting is required” (EI 9).

7.4.1.3.2. Neglect

There seems to be overall neglect in the following ways:

7.4.1.3.2.1. Neglect of sector

Overall, the sector was being neglected. Other sectors were being focused on and resources given to those sectors. Tourism was not seen as a priority sector. A respondent stated the following:

“The small business sector is focusing on similar industries particularly in municipalities where there is high focus on the construction sector, while there is so much potential in the tourism sector. The challenge is how we make those rural communities aware of the knock-on effects of the tourism sector” (FG8).

7.4.1.3.2.2. Utilities

Utilities such as electricity outages leave customer frustrated. A few participants shared their views on power outages affecting their businesses and livelihoods:

“The biggest challenge for my business is the power cuts in the electricity supply in the area. It hampers your effectiveness as a business, and it is a big challenge. A contingency is to have generators, but this also has an impact on operations and the supply chain” (FG 2).

“Power cuts are making holidaymakers disgruntled, and they leave early” (FG 4).

“Power Cuts is a big issue” (FG9).

7.4.1.3.2.3. Beaches, parks and pathways

The tourists' leisurely places such as beaches and parks needed maintenance. This included overall condition, lights and fences for security. Some areas were also untidy. Multiple participants shared similar views:

“Infrastructure of the area is a big challenge i.e., the condition of the beaches” (FG 8).

“Better walking paths – as tourists prefer walking” (FG 2).

“Untidy areas” (FG 3).

“Our business is next to the park. It's a new park. This park needs a fence as you have people bringing their dogs for training and it is unsafe when the dogs approach you” (FG 10).

7.4.1.3.3. Human resources and capabilities

Human resources were very important to ensure service delivery. Currently, such human resources were lacking. Due to certain policies and moratorium, staff positions are not being filled timeously, which led to overworking and burnout. COVID-19 also led to having minimal staff on site.

Furthermore, it was important to have the right capabilities matched to the right standards of venue and service. For example, a lower standards resort (e.g., 1-Star) would not require as many capabilities in terms of human resources, skills, infrastructure and other resources as compared to a 5-star. Therefore, it was important to match capabilities accordingly. Multiple participants shared similar views

in relation to human resources and the capacity to deliver as required. The contributions included:

“I would say, is human capital. We have a lot of staff aging. And because the government made a decision that it was not going to be hiring, I think in the past six years or so, we have not been hiring. So, if someone resigns or retires or dies, the position remains we can. So that's, that's been one of our biggest challenges” (EI 10).

“Other problems prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, was human capital. We have a lot of shortage of staff, we end up using skeleton staff” (EI 2).

“But it's the capabilities, as I say, coming back to the capabilities, the matching of the assets and the capabilities. That is for me a big challenge. That component doesn't really have to be a world class service. It has to be with the business acumen you don't want to have five stars or seven stars at all our results. You need to be able to differentiate your products and offer a variety of products. But that strategic alignment with a variety of products is not happening because of the capabilities we don't have. Like I can give you two example we can have Hluluwe Umfolozi one side of it being a Five Star, the other one of it being a one star. When you talk about a one star, you're talking about a low cost. You go in there, you pass through security, you collect your key at the security, there shouldn't be a receptionist, etc, etc, waiting for you at the one star. But at the five stars, you need to have those. So, within the same product that can be two offerings that cater for two target markets, but we don't have the strategic thinking. And the key like I keep on saying the capabilities is not there. Because we're not talking about your typical, we build a hotel at Durban beach front here. We're talking about something massive, we're talking about a park, which expands over hundreds of 1000s of hectares. The gap is solely on the capabilities in my honest opinion, even the issue of us not having budget is as a result of us not having the capabilities to manage these to profitability levels, enough to substantially keep us going into the future. I keep on telling everybody who was willing to listen that we can write our own bonus cheques. We can put our own amounts if we run these facilities because nobody else got this. These natural assets given their status as World Heritage Sites, you should optimize the process around it” (EI 3).

“Well, impacting our organisation is obviously the moratorium that has been put on the filling of vacancies by the political masters. Now that we are in a situation where there is a huge backlog of infrastructure upgrades, so capital funding is becoming a problem. And as being reliant on government, government's fiscus is drained” (EI 2).

“And those people in KwaZulu-Natal especially moved from rural areas into urban areas to get those jobs. Now that they're moving back to the rural area, there is a huge demand in the rural areas where we operate for jobs and sustainability. So, it's a very challenging time faced as a sector face at the moment, because it's both ways. It's the lack of guests coming in. And then you're looking for employment for those that are impacted by COVID, and unrest and stuff like that. So where do you start? And what do you focus on because you could invest in the semi-skilled laborers to fulfil the vacuum gap that you have in the in the personnel side, but there's no guarantee that you are going to fulfil the expectancy or the occupancy rates as you desire? Over and above that the government, because we're schedule three C public entity with our own revenue generation stream. Government is expecting us to generate more money faster because they are constrained” (EI 4).

“and secondly, with Ezemvelo as well, we have got this moratorium that started way back 2010 if I'm not mistaken, whereby for us to be able to employ even a general worker, we have to go through a whole process” (EI 5).

“Well, it's really been the loss of human resources for me, that's what it's been. I'm talking about the organisation in relation to tourism, because that's where I'm currently at. I would not really dwell on conservation as I don't have any info as far as that is concerned” (EI 6). This participant further stated:

“So, for me it has been the loss of human resources, experienced workers and they are not replaced. It's impacting on everything. The tourism sector has been impacted a lot” (EI 6).

“At the moment there is a low vacancy fill. There is a high volume of unfunded vacancies that causes so many constraints and us as the hospitality industry since we're not performing to our capability or expectation or to meet the target, we're

unable to do employment as well. So, we are also having the human capital constraint as well” (EI 9).

7.4.1.3.4. Bureaucracy

Processes to obtain resources seemed bureaucratic and tedious. A respondent added:

“And two, it’s a bureaucratic process that we have to undergo to be able to acquire certain raw materials to be able to be able to do our jobs and such that we become competitive” (EI 4).

7.4.1.4. Collaboration and communication

There was a lack of collaboration and communication.

7.4.1.4.1. Silos

The sector seems to work in silos, rather than collectively. If they worked together in collaboration, then perhaps the sector will do well holistically. A few participants stated:

“Within the tourism sector there are streams that are working independently, and the suggestion is to work and market these together i.e., golf tourism, events tourism, cultural tourism and business tourism. We need to exploit these streams as there is no cohesion and interest from the municipality” (FG4).

“Everyone in the tourism sector in this region is working as individual, whereas if we can work together, try and make it work even though we have challenges, we need to work together by recommending each other” (FG 6).

“There is collaboration but is not effective. There is a will to work together. You cannot do it on your own. The municipalities are ineffective. There is only so much that us as small businesses can do” (FG 7).

7.4.1.4.2. Collaboration

Relating to the above, there is a lack of collaboration and minimal communication channels for stakeholder collaboration. This is an essential ingredient in the tourism chain and the lack thereof was evident in the responses from participants:

“Communication channels to address these issues are also a challenge” (FG 3).

“My only challenge is collaboration for tourism related businesses. I need people to know what I have to offer as I know there are more tourist that I can be exposed to” (FG 11).

“We have tried to collaborate but municipal staff, who are key stakeholders don’t attend these meetings” (P11).

7.4.1.4.3. Business environment

The local business community was not provided an environment for them to thrive in.

“We don’t look after the individual businesses but the business community by creating an environment for these businesses to thrive in” (FG 7).

7.4.1.4.4. Tourism sub-committee

Certain committees created for the tourism sector were not successful.

“We have failed miserably in setting up a tourism sub-committee, to look after the tourism sector specifically” (FG 7).

7.4.1.5. Safety, security and areas

South Africa is a country plagued by high crime and corruption which has affected the tourism sector.

7.4.1.5.1. Safety

The safety of tourists is of the highest priority and this was the most highly ranked sub-theme. This is logical as tourists will not visit if they did not feel safe. At present crime is a big factor because due to a lack of employment, people were turning to crime. Hence public spaces such as beaches and parks were no longer safe. Multiple participants shared similar views, which included:

“That’s the main challenge that I can think of at the moment. It’s the fear of the unknown from the visitors, you know, in terms of a safety point of view as there has been a lot of resistance like I said, our visitors are mainly from Johannesburg or Durban with being the thing that happened on the N3. You know people want to be

refunded and some we have had to reschedule. Some are saying we are old, and we cannot travel. So, there were a lot of refunds, which was money that was going to be generated” (EI 2).

“Safety is another challenge, particularly for our staff that makes use of public transport” (FG 3).

“Visitors to this region are attracted by the perception of safe beaches. We don’t have the best beaches in the world – visitors from Scandinavian countries want specific water activities and often we encounter casualties” (FG 4).

This respondent further stated:

“Safety of tourism is at an all-time low. Our beaches are not safe. Crime has paid handsomely to the growth of Ballito because people are not gainfully employed” (FG 4).

“Crime is a big factor and we have only one police station in Umhlali, which is understaffed, under-resourced” (FG 9).

“Our business is next to the park. It’s a new park. This park needs a fence as you have people bringing their dogs for training and it is unsafe when the dogs approach you” (FG 10).

7.4.1.5.2. Recent unrest

The recent unrest (July 2021) has left a sour taste and a lack of confidence in future projects and investor relations. The unrest also caused damage to infrastructure and areas. A few participants asserted their views on this:

“The unrest that has happened, which has dampened confidence in KZN and then specially our commercial efforts, which is to bring in the private sector, to fund some of our capital projects, might be harder, that is number one” (EI 3).

“So, communities have I don’t know, if you followed the news, they did quite a bit of damage to some of our parks, demanding jobs etc” (EI 2).

“So yeah, that's the other aspect, which is the communities that surround our protected areas. Because when visitors come, they don't only support us directly, indirectly, they are supporting the communities around them. So, it has that knock on effect. And it's a very tricky place to be in when you're dealing with communities as well. Because the demand is always high from them in terms of jobs and employment (EI 1).

7.4.1.5.3. Protected areas scattered

Protected areas are scattered, which brings challenges for the employment of local communities who wish to be employed. A participant added:

“The other challenge is that in all our protected areas, because they're so scattered, they are located in between the communities. So that's one of the things that poses a challenge, because the community is looking at our protected areas and resorts specifically for them to get jobs and so on, and where they don't, they believe that they are not being looked after it gives rise to some kind of animosity between us and the community. They really don't understand the limitations that we as an organisation are put through” (EI 5).

7.4.1.5.4. Social ills

Social ills include anti-social behaviours, noise and neighbourly issues.

“Another challenge is operating businesses in residential areas. Noise and neighbours become an issue. Anti-social behaviour” (FG 10).

7.4.1.6. Marketing and exposure

Marketing and exposure challenges were also brought to the fore. This included the following:

7.4.1.6.1. Marketing

There seems to be a gap in the Marketing aspect. Inadequate marketing of the resorts, products and services results in a lack of visibility and a drop in tourist numbers. More creative and impactful marketing should be implemented. A few respondents shared their views:

“I think that the problem that we've been facing is mainly marketing of our resorts. But we have found that the statistics of our visitors coming to our resorts have been sort of declining over the years, and also for the fact that some of our resorts have not been taken care of, like the structures. The visitors that used to come to us a long time ago, they will tell you exactly what the resort looked like at that time” (EI 1).

“Some of them as I've even noticed, because I have a relationship with the private guest houses here, so when you go there, sometimes you will find them that they stay in there, or they will come here for, you know, for a day visitor or two, you know that they used to stay here with us previously. So sometimes it's really a problem for the resort and the sector, in terms of marketing” (EI 9).

“I will say that since I've been here, we are not given, you are not given the budget to do the marketing yourself. So, we rely on head office, our marketing department to do our, our marketing for our resorts, and I believe that every resort is unique. What can I say is the catch for the resort, what can it be marketed on, you know, so I sometimes I feel that they focus so much on the bigger resorts and forget us, about the smaller resort, that we are also here, we exist, and we need to sort of generate money as well? So, we just rely on the brochures and the website, which sometimes on the web site, and when you go and log in and look at it, you have to go to head office and tell them that the information that is on the website is actually not right. So, yeah, it's not updated regularly as well” (EI 1).

7.4.1.6.2. Exposure

There is a lack of exposure for local businesses to showcase their products. Such platforms include tourism Indabas, local exhibitions and trade shows.

“The last one that comes to my mind now is the trade shows, so we know that we're not able to go and showcase our results locally at the tourism Indaba. Yeah, the trade shows, even the local exhibition, so we aren't able to do with it, showcase our results. So, we can't exhibit now. So, the marketing aspect has fallen away, and we need the marketability to attract visitors” (EI 2).

7.4.1.6.3. Product offerings

Product offerings were limited in some instances, which also limited customers. Hence, product offerings needed to be diversified, but this was dependant on marketing and resources.

“As a company, and our product I don't think it's pitched at the level that will be attractive and relevant to the generational transformation of this country. For instance, most of our products are still feel designed to fit the old white people. That's how protected areas were crafted. And unfortunately, the organisation has not been able to move, to review and to revamp some of the products and services that we have to respond to the market appropriately. The pace of it is slow, as compared to the private sector. Our product offering is just isolated to one market and we haven't prepared more diverse offerings to the bigger market and the potential market that could attract be attracted” (EI 4).

7.4.1.6.4. Lack of promotion and branding

There was a lack of promotion and branding of products, places and areas. Some places could offer rich experiences but due to poor promoting and branding, they lost tourists to other places. The branding power of some places was also not strong enough. A few participants shared similar views:

“We need to look at how the North coast as a brand works better” (FG 2).

“From a tourism point of view, how hungry are people for the cultural experience, and not enough is being done to exploit this opportunity” (FG 4).

“Diversity of product, in terms of tourism products on offer so that this region can gain a better market from other regional rivals like Durban and Umhlanga” (P4).

“Local newspapers are quite ineffective in promoting tourism due to current social issues and challenges being given priority thus making it a less favourable read for tourists” (FG 7).

“The South African and KZN brand is untidy” (FG 8).

“The beaches here are a big attraction for me. We have an airport on our doorstep, everyone from Jo'burg should be coming here. But I don't want us to be the poor

cousin and be seen as the cheaper option. We have so much to offer, we have beautiful beaches. I reckon our beaches should be declared a reserve; our entire coastline be declared a reserve. This will attract people to come for walks” (FG 9).

“No identity to our crafts and souvenirs on offer. We have more Chinese goods being dropped off on daily basis” (FG 11).

7.4.1.6.5. Demographics

Demographics were more in line with industry rather than country, and this needed to change.

“As Ezemvelo, some of the challenges that we're facing, it's mainly attracting the demographics that is representative of the country. That is from industry perspective” (EI 4).

The outcomes of this sub-theme correlated with previous literature publications. Since the World Health Organisation proclaimed a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, the Travel and Hospitality industry has been under tremendous strain (Jamal et al., 2021). The economic worth of a tourism experience is based on the appreciation of a substantial service and its potential to remain eternal in the user's memory, rather than on creating and retaining customer loyalty (Ribeiro and Souza, 2021). At the commencement of the second decade in the 21st century, few industrial marketers anticipated that many of their markets would have vanished by March 2020, seriously disrupting supply chains and trade (Cankurtaran and Beverland, 2020). Every part of people's daily routines and ways of life is influenced by marketing and design. Customers are at the heart of marketing and design, and they have a shared goal in providing superior market products and services. (Henseler, Guerreiro and de Matos, 2021). Design thinking for tourism facilitates a closer interaction with diverse information and interest groups as it also enables one to understand and diagnose issues from the perspectives of those facing the challenges, the dangers and concerns associated with them and to relate them to the larger challenges (Dredge, 2019). Tourism can generate quality employment opportunities for long-term economic and social growth, thus reducing poverty and encouraging environmental protection, as well as providing a triple-win situation for countries seeking to move towards a more inclusive and resilient economy through

integrated policies (Khan et al., 2020). In emerging economies, tourism is regarded as a capable driver of development (Khan et al., 2020)

Breaking down silos, the silo mentality and working together is essential as Collaboration is a major component of design thinking, and it refers to important stakeholders working together to create value (Jamal et al., 2021), which is widely acknowledged as necessary for progress towards sustainable development and tourism (Li et al., 2021).

In terms of budget constraints, incorporating tourism as an economic sector necessitates ensuring that the tourism sector is sufficiently funded in the design of South Africa's monetary policy (Mogale and Odeku, 2019). While this is welcome in order for the financing to achieve the desired objectives, Mogale and Odeku (2019) state that issues such as crime, safety and other challenges need to also be appropriately handled so that the investment is meaningful and sustainable.

In relation to destination image and safety, the destination image of South Africa as presented in various news media outside of South Africa is seen as discouraging potential visitors, with reports and news of hype surrounding fear and uncertainty about safety and security in South Africa being a major deterrent for many potential travellers and tourists (Mogale and Odeku, 2019). Crime, finance, a lack of expertise and immigration are all hurdles to the tourism sector's socio-economic development in South Africa (Mogale and Odeku, 2019).

7.4.2. Challenges in applying Design thinking in your own business

Having looked at challenges affecting the sector in the preceding sub-theme, this key sub-theme examined challenges that hindered the application or implementation of design thinking in the respondent businesses.

7.4.2.1. Organisational culture

This was seen as the most highly ranked factor that hindered design thinking in the business. This is a logical argument as organisational culture plays a key role in embracing change.

7.4.2.1.1. Resistance to change

Resistance to change was the main challenge related to organisation culture. People were not eager to try new ideas and explore them accordingly. They wished to play it safe and stick to what they knew. A few respondents mentioned:

“Mostly, it's a resistance to change. Secondly, the literacy level of the people that are there that are expected to do it” (EI 4).

“And thirdly, is the cultural things, the cultural difference, to say, this needs to change. And that's the culture of the organisation and the culture that is around” (EI 2).

“I see it as a paradigm shift. They're resistant to change. So, people are accustomed to doing things in a certain way. And I think it's that culture. So yeah, another points that one can put is a paradigm shift. So, people are not comfortable with change, per se” (EI 1).

“I think it happens in most of the public sectors, we are not encouraging the culture of failure, so people tend to be scared to really explore new avenues and to, you know, so as a result of that, it becomes one of the challenges” (EFG 3).

7.4.2.1.2. Narrow-mindedness

There was also a narrow-mindedness whereby people felt that design thinking was more of a production or manufacturing industry-based concept and not applicable to the tourism sector.

“Continuous improvement. And continuous improvement is normally associated with production and manufacturing environment, not service environment. So, it's, it's a mindset, it's a culture issue. And again, it's through leadership. That that's the challenge that I see as one of the biggest challenges” (EFG 1).

“you become narrow minded when you're thinking of the solution, because you've been doing this, and you think this is the right way. So maybe what can be done is to get external advice, sometimes companies pay people, pay service providers to

actually assist them to become innovative and all of that, which is not a bad idea if you are in a position of not being able to do so” (II 2).

7.4.2.1.3. Lack of communication

Design thinking was built on communication and cooperation with stakeholders. Currently, there was lack of this in the organisations and people were not communicating with the stakeholders as much as they should. A respondent mentioned:

“I think it's a lack of communication. Because with design thinking you need a bigger circle of communications, I think this lack of communication, or what can I say, I can see there's no cooperation, this lack of cooperation. So, like, like, for example, my products are designed for tourist, tourist clients, so I need to sell them, or they need to be seen by that sector. But the people who are dealing with us sector, they don't help me to get in contact with the client” (EI 9).

7.4.2.1.4. Levels

The various levels of the organisation could hinder design thinking because each level saw things/made decisions from their viewpoints. Hence, someone at the ground level may see things differently from someone at the management level. Therefore, collective collaboration and understanding was needed.

“You see that the challenge is probably not with the design thinking, the challenge is probably at, at the level at which we operate. Like at my level, I am I am needing to make decisions. And it's implemented somewhere else. And what I will get is probably a feedback to say if they're having any challenges, if they're not, then they'll proceed. Sometimes they'll even stop and implementation until I follow up to say, ‘What is happening with this?’ So, from where I am sitting, I go up to the decision making and assigning the task. I don't get to implement if you can, if I can put it to you this way Yes, obviously, everything that we do, has follow ups. If it's prior to our monthly meetings, then a date will be scheduled. But I am probably very easy when it comes to certain aspects of business. If somebody is telling me ‘Everything is okay’, and I, I don't see any problem, any reason to question that, I will not question that. I will move on to the next thing” (EI 5).

7.4.2.1.5. Traditional

Some people were set in their ways and traditional methods of thinking and operating. design thinking was about breaking this mould and thinking outside the box. However, it became a challenge when people did not wish to change their traditional ways. A few respondents asserted:

“I think if you've been operating the same way for years, and you're not being teachable” (EI 5).

“So even in the marketing industry, it's definitely imperative. You cannot be in that sector, if you're not moving. So, when you're not thinking outside the box, you know, and the traditional methods, and you need to be able to incorporate traditional with modern techniques. So definitely, it's also a question design thinking can be used definitely as a strategy to combat issues” (II 2).

7.4.2.2. Negative processes

There were also various negative processes that hindered the progress of design thinking.

7.4.2.2.1. Bureaucracy and hierarchy

There was too much hierarchy to follow, where the top-down approach was not seen as effective and was a forced approach. There needed to be a collective approach involving everyone, even from the bottom (As alluded to in other themes). Furthermore, bureaucracy within the organisations caused delays in implementing design thinking ideas. Multiple respondents shared similar views:

“And sometimes you find it, they do they do plan from their side without involving us from at the bottom. And then they'll push it down to us, and then we'll find it we are not able to implement it, but you are forced to do it” (EI 2).

“I think it's being implemented but not in a full scale that is required. I would like to implement it almost regularly. The pace of it is not implemented as such and I think it's there are a number of things that are attributable to that. I think in my earlier comment, I mentioned bureaucracy, that's exactly what I meant” (EI 5).

“And that becomes interference in most cases as such bureaucracy, all that red tape, hampers the growth and the innovation prospects of an industry like the tourism sector as well” (EI 2).

“And secondly, I think it's the issue of culture, there is still that hierarchy process within our society, where people are expecting leadership to always come up with all answers. While in essence, some of the solutions can come even from other members of the society or members of the organisation, I hate to say from the bottom, because here we need to treat ourselves as a flat structure” (EFG 3).

7.4.2.2.2. Government sector slow

The government sector was also slow and non-responsive to design thinking and hence was more reliant on the private sector for the support of ideas.

“I think because we are operating in a government space, people tend to be scared to make mistakes. And there's too many processes and bureaucracy for anything really to be able to move. If you want to activate certain things, or if you want to achieve something in the private sector, it will be relatively quick as compared to a public space or a public entity” (EI 4).

7.4.2.3. Resources and supply chain

Resources and the supply chain were an added challenge in the following ways:

7.4.2.3.1. Resources

Ideas were also dependent on resources. Without resources, design thinking ideas could not be implemented. A few participants shared their views by stating:

“Some of them also you want to implement, but then again, you find that you are restricted in terms of resources. I haven't been able to fully, you know, apply it. But I'm wanting to try and see if it will work. It depends on what I want to implement. But then if there is no money available to do so then it hampers the whole initiative” (EI 2).

“The challenge is that we also do not have enough resources to go and market this digitally? Do we have the human resource to push this agenda of marketing digitally? So those would be the challenges currently” (EI 6).

7.4.2.3.2. Supply chain

Supply chain processes were long and costly and usually the organisation spent more than the item or service actually cost.

“And the other major one is our supply chain and so on. The way we are as the organisation we are saying that we are cash strapped, but then you, but when you want to purchase something, you have to go through your supply chain processes. If you need an item that costs 200 hundred rand, if you go through the supply chain processes, you end up paying double the amount. I think that's where we need to design thinking, absolutely is in where our supply chain processes are concerned” (EI 5).

“The supply chain is not very consistent. For my own business, Yeah, I need some guidance. It's new for me, maybe I do use design thinking, but don't even realize it” (II 1).

7.4.2.3.3. Costs

There was always a challenge trying to meet customer needs and also balance the costs associated with it.

“The challenge however is that at the end of the day, in as much as you want to meet customers halfway, you want to make the experience meaningful for them, there are costs involved. So, the challenge would be can we break even with the price that we're offering” (EI 6).

The findings of this sub-theme corresponded to these earlier articles in the literature in terms of challenges in implementing design thinking. The potential increase of "creative confidence" competence is one of the primary motives for embracing design thinking, according to Shahrabi et al., (2021). Design thinking is being recognized by a number of institutions, including the government, as a go-to technique for addressing a number of urgent community concerns (Tariq et al., 2021). However, the organisational structure of a corporation is frequently considered as a hindrance to the successful adoption of design thinking (Ramanujam et al. 2021).

Organisations must guarantee that any likelihood of success depends on the shared commitment of designers, managers, leaders and other essential stakeholders in a company when using design thinking (Ramanujam et al., 2021). Private stakeholders frequently argue that the government agency plans Tourist development without taking into account the views of the private sector (Li et al., 2021). Governments in developing countries need to support and promote tourism because of its high multiplier effects in terms of creating jobs; increasing foreign exchange earnings; improving the balance of payments; and stimulating tourism supply sectors. Additionally, all of these activities contribute to poverty alleviation (Khan et al., 2020).

7.5. Theme 2: Applicability of Design thinking

This primary theme examined the Applicability of design thinking based on respondent perceptions, presented in Figure 7.3 and Figure 7.4.

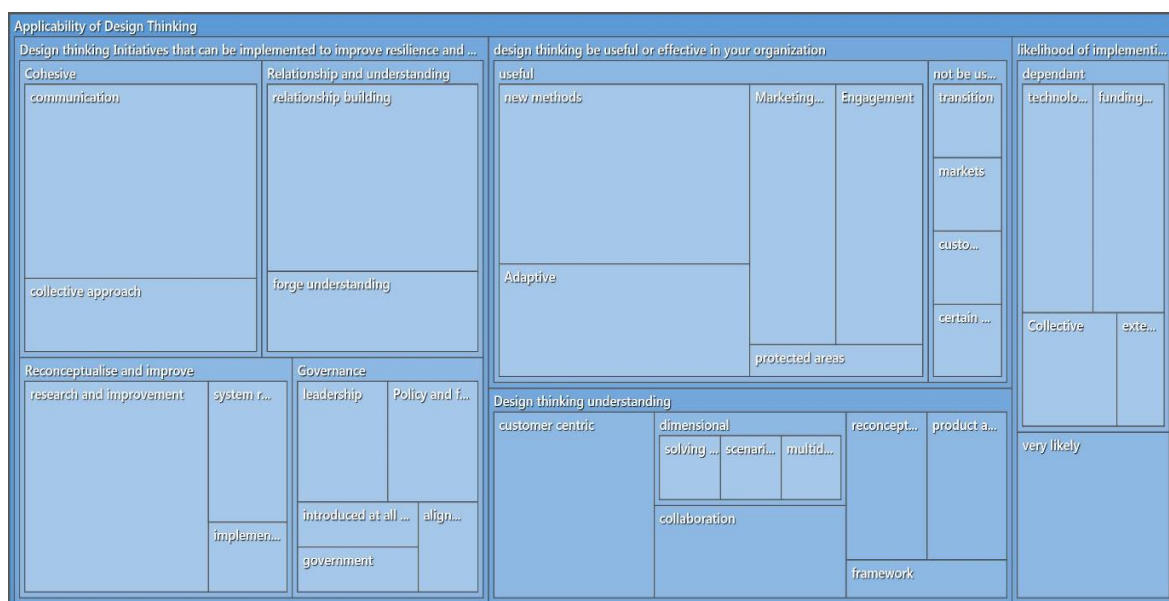


Figure 7.3: Hierarchy Chart of Theme 2 – Applicability of Design thinking

thinking	design	people	market	way	create	process	change	lot	areas	staff	level	certain	definite	establish	ideas	imple	improve
					managers	challenge	now	organizational	decisions	activities	obvious	might	whatever	allow	box	bring	center
			working	new								plan	done	innovate	internat	just	part
	looking	customers			see	get	put	sit	facing	benefit	okay						
			coming	help				strategy	issues	develop	stakeho						
					understand	time	different					together	exactly	resort	want	control	exper
need								communicate	products	flexibility	within						
	tourism											tourists	example	revoluti	assist	keep	mean
		industry	problem	sector	business	approach	feel	identify	solution	giving	back	travel	human	service	based	local	money
																	place

Figure 7.4: Tree Map of Theme 2 - Applicability of Design thinking

7.5.1. Design thinking understanding

In this sub-theme, the participants gave their views and understanding of Design thinking. Design thinking is described by Dredge (2019) as a method of problem-solving that positions problems at the centre of interest, and how they are framed and observed. The understanding of Design thinking from participants revolved around the following:

7.5.1.1. Customer-centric

Design thinking is a human-centric method of problem-solving that integrates different techniques from the fields of design, business, marketing and psychology. Its main advantage is the efficient testing of whether a solution can bring real value to its customers (Ayala, 2019). This was the highest ranked factor, as many respondents believed that design thinking was customer focused. It entailed getting to know exactly what the client needs were and formulating offerings around that. A participant mentioned:

“I will say that design thinking in my understanding is how you how you sort of perceive or how you deal with the problems that you come across. It also involves customers that come into your resort, how do you handle them, and how do you try

and understand where the customer is coming from with whatever complaint that they have or tell you that they have a problem. How do you handle that, so that both of you, especially the customer, they leave as happy customers, as you try to understand and try and resolve whatever issue they are having” (EI 1)?

Another participant explained:

“I understand that it's basically coming up with innovative ideas and ways of working that are based on what our customers are looking for, basing our innovation and our ideas on what exactly our customers are looking for. I think there will be both internal and external customers” (EI10).

Another participant added that the design thinking process creates a superior service experience and a viable advantage for business, further supporting these contributions. The participant's view mentioned:

“I believe that design thinking is the key, I mean, the key approach to it, it can be used as an as a process of enhancing customer experience by creating a superior service experience for the customer. And at the same time, it must also offer a clear and a viable advantage” (EI 2).

Finally, a participant mentioned that design thinking will assist in meeting the direct needs of the customer:

“and at the heart of it is being customer focused or customer centric, to deliver our services such that it responds to the customer's needs and desires. More than that, it needs to respond to the societal aspirations, and requirements” (EI 4).

7.5.1.2. Dimensional

This was another highly ranked factor, as respondents believed that it was a process informed by the following dimensions:

7.5.1.2.1. Multidimensional

One respondent believed that it was a multidimensional process, taking into consideration economic, cultural and spiritual aspects:

“So, from a number of things, either from recreational point of view, economic point of view, cultural and spiritual point of view. So, there's multiple dimensions that we need to look at as ecotourism” (EI 4).

7.5.1.2.2. Scenario analysis

Another respondent believed that different scenarios informed different dimensions and solutions thereof.

“I understand that design thinking is a tool or a way of thinking that could be used to solve problems or if a way of looking at its scenarios differently. Design thinking for me, I understood it as a paradigm shift from what we used to know” (EI 6).

7.5.1.2.3. Solving problems differently

Design thinking was also about solving problem differently by employing aspects of empathy in defining the problem. A key attribute or stage in the design thinking process is empathy and empathising deeply with the end user. Empathy is important, if not critical, because it allows a designer to put their own assumptions aside and focus solely on the user and their requirements (Dam and Siang, 2017). One participant commented that:

“You went on to give us processes during that time that can be applied to design thinking, which is, empathy is one of them, defining the problem and coming up with solutions and ideas. So basically, in a nutshell, for me design thinking is a way of thinking that could direct us towards solving problems and in really thinking differently out of the box” (EI 6).

The response resonated with Dunne (2018), who postulated that designers seek to empathize with users and understand from their perspective how the usage experience appears, hoping to create innovations that address unarticulated needs that can become a source of competitive advantage.

7.5.1.3. Framework

Design thinking was also understood to be a type of framework that governed the process of achieving objectives. This is evident in the comment below:

“It's the framework that we have to follow to be able to apply either to deliver on certain objectives or strategy of the organisation. So, in my thinking, that's what it is. As I said, I think it's the framework that we need to do, design thinking is the framework that we need to apply in order to deliver the objectives of the organisation” (EI 4).

7.5.1.4. Product and service offerings

Design thinking was considered by some participants as a new approach to product and service offerings whereby products and services were tailor-made and customised to client needs. A participant shared a unique account of how to customise service offerings per individual customer needs and preferences:

“I think it's also about new product offering. if, if, if maybe you look at your results, and you feel that, uh, you know, I have a product that I want to introduce, then you have to think, how better to introduce it to the customers. Like, for me, for example. I recently put on TVs, DSTV, in the rooms. And I know that a lot of my customers have always been saying they do not want the TVs in the rooms. But then the others want the TVs in the room. So, then it comes to, then how do I do it? You know, how do I resolve the issue. So, then I came up with a plan that, okay, the rooms must have TVs, which has a closing shelf. So, for the ones that doesn't want to watch TV, you come to relax and do the walking and everything, you just close the shelf, and those customers don't even notice that the TV is even in the room”. (EI 1),

Another shared the significance of creating an appeal to customer needs. The participant added:

“So, it's essential that we engage with the customer, and provide for what the customer wants, because it's not use putting up a service offering, where it doesn't appeal to the customer. So, you use this process to understand the customer from where they come from, what their needs are, and then you develop solutions, product offerings based on that” (EI 2).

7.5.1.5. Re-conceptualization and restructuring

The design thinking process involved a re-conceptualization of how processes and operations should change to develop new methods of service delivery for client and

organisational benefit. This could entail going back to the drawing board and restructuring processes accordingly. A participant commented:

“Well, my take my understanding of design thinking is that I take it as a resurrection whereby, you go back to the drawing board and then they know the thing out of the box or even think as if there's no box at all, to see how you can better your service in order to know to make it work even in in terms of challenges like we are having with the COVID-19” (EI 5).

Another participant felt that design thinking should be central to any decision taken on restructuring any processes within an organisation:

“Yeah, something that comes to mind is to look at the organisation as a whole in terms of restructuring and in terms what is out there in the market in terms of the systems that can make our organisation work very well given the challenges that we have. So, those are the things that one will think about when you're designing” (EI 5).

7.5.1.6. Collaboration

Collaboration seemed to be highlighted as an important factor of design thinking understanding because it required inputs from various stakeholders. Mahakata et al. (2017) indicated that it has been widely acknowledged that without various businesses working effectively together to serve the customer, not much can be accomplished, thus making collaboration in this sector critically essential. This was quite evident in the responses from participants from the tourism sector as well. The tourism sector is a dynamic industry that connects many other sectors in the supply chain. The participants additionally explained the need for collaboration with the communities in which they operate. A participant commented:

“You see the external community communities are your stakeholders as well, because you're in that same precinct as those communities. So whatever fixes the Giants castle could impact those communities as well, problems that may emanate within the areas that all of you because you're all stakeholders within that process” (EI 10).

The participant further added:

“If you are solving a problem for the road that leads to Giant’s castle, it will impact them as a community as well, in terms of road closures or routing and stuff like that. So, I think those are customers that you may consider as well” (EI 10).

The participant’s view indicated that in solving a problem, the use of design thinking allows for engagement with all stakeholders that are affected or impacted by the problem and hence their involvement and viewpoints become essential in the process. Ultimately, the objective is developing a solution, and this was further identified by another participant who mentioned:

“To me design thinking is a collaborative effort between different personnel with the new organisation with the objective of developing a solution” (EI 9).

This participant’s view is supported by Olowookere (2020), who postulated that within the tourism industry, an impressive range of services are offered. However, none of these can stand alone, all of which are part of a network, relying on direct and indirect partners to provide a lasting experience.

The sub-themes and responses emanating from this study correlated with previous studies. Design thinking has surged into the social impact area over the last ten years (Friedlander et al., 2021); is a method for problem-solving that positions problems at the centre of interest; and looks at how they are framed and observed (Dredge, 2019). Design thinking is one method that has arisen in recent years and is being utilized to solve social problems. Tariq et al. (2021) state that it enables people to explore and solve a variety of social problems by combining several forms of reasoning. What began as a process for product and service innovation has grown into approaches of solving social, political and environmental concerns in various situations throughout the world (Friedlander et al., 2021). Design thinking is a technique for analyzing problems and coming up with creative solutions. Moreover, it is a methodical approach (process) for determining the nature of an issue and developing solutions that are more in line with the user's needs, and desires (Shahrasbi et al., 2021). Design thinking avoids the tunnel vision approach, which is common in scientific methods, as it integrates multiple viewpoints; creates empathy for various stakeholders; and makes provision for non-human actors, such as nature (Dredge, 2019).

In terms of being customer centric, Ramanujam et al. (2021) defined design thinking as putting customer value creation at the centre of company decisions and organisational practices, and it is increasingly seen as a basis for firms to create a long-term competitive advantage. To create a solution, design thinking includes dynamic thinking, empathy, problem identification, idea generation, prototypes and testing (Tung, 2021). Design thinking is a process that focuses on understanding from various viewpoints how a problem or obstacle is framed (Dredge, 2019) and designers seek to empathize with users and understand from their perspective how the usage experience appears, hoping to create innovations that address unarticulated needs and that can become a source of competitive advantage (Dunne, 2018).

Finally, Jamal et al (2021) affirmed that Collaboration is a major component of design thinking.

7.5.2. Design thinking can be useful or effective in your organisation

This sub-theme examined if design thinking can be useful to the organisation. Most respondent agreed on its usefulness.

7.5.2.1. Useful

Many respondents felt that it would be useful for the following reasons:

7.5.2.1.1. Adaptive

Design thinking allowed the organisation to become adaptive in the following ways:

7.5.2.1.1.1. Flexibility

The participants expressed that design thinking allowed the organisation to become flexible in its product and service offerings. It can also look at other areas of revenue generation. Furthermore, design thinking can be flexible enough to be applied to different areas in the organisation, inclusive of production and marketing. A participant mentioned:

“In our organisation, as we are in biodiversity, the hospitality side was just a token because we have all these places that we can use to generate revenue. So how can

we then use design thinking to maximize such a resort to be profitable and those that are not profitable? Can we not find another business sense where it will generate revenue for us like renting it out to people because we have things like timeshare, which are not applicable in our organisation, we still have that stereotype. We are not as flexible enough on the tour operators that are selling the products for us” (EI 9).

Design thinking also allows for the generation of multiple ideas and solutions which can be applied to any facet or division within an organisation (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021). A participant who commented echoed these thoughts:

“I don't see a way why it can be not useful, because it is the same thinking in production, you still need to use this thinking in marketing and design thinking. I say it is of paramount importance” (II 1).

7.5.2.1.1.2. Create balance

Design thinking allows for a balance to be achieved in terms of ensuring that different departments collectively focus on the objectives of the organisation. A participant expressed the need to create frameworks through the use of design thinking to strike a balance with the different reporting dynamics within a tourism setting, by mentioning:

“So apart from what I've just said, it will give a framework for people to use, it will improve the capabilities of managers especially in a high-pressured environment, in an environment where you have the political aspect that we deal with and the corporate aspect and the private aspect. It's unlike your, your other departments where you only have the political aspect and some elements of corporate. Here we have the political, the corporate, and the business side of things, which is, which is very difficult to balance most of the time” (EI 3).

Another participant found that design thinking would allow issues and challenges to be solved in re-aligning to business objectives:

“At the same time, I will say that as a heritage site we don't have to be too desperate to lose our focus on our unique selling points. Because once we lose that then we going to lose our status. That is why it is important to use some sort of design

thinking tool to assist you in carrying out some of the activities that you want to do without having to lose the focus of your mission or your objectives” (EI 9).

7.5.2.1.1.3. Responsive to change

Due to the fast-paced nature of change in the global landscape, participants expressed the need to keep up to date with the latest technology available (Draskovic, 2015). The organisation can become responsive to change and keep abreast of latest developments in the industry. This is evident in the comment below:

“Because times are changing. People are evolving. There's a lot of technology that's been introduced, we need to be abreast, and we need to be able to be visible to our target audience. And we need to be able to be visible as well as to be able to be informative to them. So, we need to definitely apply design thinking as our approach” (II 2).

7.5.2.1.2. Engagement

Design thinking can be useful in terms of creating engagements, which is further supported in the points presented below:

7.5.2.1.2.1. Communication

Design thinking can improve communication between stakeholders and promote transparency on ideas and solutions. A participant who expressed the view that multiple sources of input will provide a greater platform for idea sharing and prospective solutions rather than relying on one person, commented:

“Then I think then design thinking is going to come there because if we sit as a team then everyone is going to share their own ideas. And those ideas when they are put together, you sort of sift through it through them and see what's going to work better, that design thinking process that was formed by a team is surely going to work in favour of the organisation, rather than just one person trying to solve every problem that arises in the organisation” (EI 1).

Another participant mentioned that communication with all relevant stakeholders is key and design thinking can support this process of designing eloquent products and services:

“Ezemvelo is about tourism. We market and we want to attract people, we want to educate people about the environment and nature. So, we have good stakeholders. So again, design thinking, is it's always about putting all your stakeholders at the centre of the products you design. It is about improving your communication strategy. It's about giving people a meaningful experience” (EI 6).

7.5.2.1.2.2. Information and idea sharing

Relating to the above, design thinking can facilitate information and feedback, thereby promoting idea sharing. Different ideas can bring different solutions and add value. Design thinking is a process of development and design thinkers strive to build new, useful alternatives through iteration and reflection, rather than choosing between existing well-defined alternatives (Dunne, 2018). Similarly, a participant mentioned:

“It will be effective or useful because we never get time as a tourism section whereby, we sit and workshop our protected areas or resorts to see how we can improve. One of the things that one can do is to support the resort managers and let them come up with an initiative whereby they can share with other resort managers, a better initiative that has contributed positively to their resort, but then there is no recognition. We don't have that kind of arrangement, and if we can have that I believe there will be quite a lot of ideas that we can come up with” (EI 5).

7.5.2.1.2.3. Education and empowerment

Design thinking can solve issues of staff development. People can be educated and empowered with new knowledge to curb problems that affect the industry. According to Acker (2020), design thinking is a common-good way of thinking that gives one a context to be a creative problem solver; how to learn new things; how to open one's minds to different perspectives; and how to support one's team members (Acker, 2020). It is juggling the art of problem-solving to create a design ethos that improves human capabilities. Similarly, a participant mentioned:

“Ezemvelo or my organisation is really faced with a lot of challenges even through

the conservation challenges such as poaching which is not only rhinos. Poaching occurs in different forms. So, it would really help Ezemvelo to educate people from a schooling level to when people are working, it will reach stakeholders as well" (EI 6).

7.5.2.1.3. Marketing and markets

Design thinking can assist in the areas of both marketing and reaching new markets.

7.5.2.1.3.1. Marketing

Destination Marketing can also be improved thereof. The marketing aspect can be improved via design thinking as it can allow for creative marketing and the ability to place the organisation on the map. A participant mentioned:

"we also contribute to destination marketing as the organisation because we are an organisation that predominantly drives ecotourism within the province, and we are serious contributors to ecotourism in the country. We are part of a bigger ecotourism. Let me let me give you an example, Ezemvelo is the only provincial, it's one of the two provincial entities where SanParks does not dominate. So, the ones that is run by South African National Parks in the province, it is largely implemented by Ezemvelo. So, from that perspective, that's why I use the destination marketing and product Marketing" (EI 4).

Another participant supported this view and stated:

"So, we need to be able to be on the map as well, because you find people are not even familiar with what Ezemvelo, because they just think that Ezemvelo is more on biodiversity and Ezemvelo is only at Hilltop where you find the big five, and when they come to the side of the Drakensberg, they get to be surprised on all that there's, so there is still more that we can offer" (EI 9).

Collaboration in the tourism sector is an essential factor as it highlights success and competitiveness, whilst also improving knowledge- sharing and resources (Mahakata et al., 2017). This is evident in the comment below:

"So yes, marketing is a very important tool, but it is design thinking or marketing perspective would be not to operate in silo, but rather try and collaborate activities

that will put you on the map and be with the market that will sell your product accordingly” (EI 3).

7.4.2.1.3.2 Reaching new markets

Design thinking will allow for new market spaces and clients to be identified and reached. The tourism industry is very customer-centric, unlike many other industries that position the company at the core, hence it is necessary to develop solutions that will enhance customer experiences (Olowookere, 2020). If this practice can be achieved, service providers can create confidence, relevance and a superior customer experience. A participant similarly expressed that:

“In terms of benefiting Ezemvelo, it will definitely see us soaring to new heights in terms of reaching in markets, the correct markets for the correct products, communicating correctly, accordingly and timeously with our stakeholders” (EI 6).

From a business perspective, this means a road to being a market leader by creating strategies that leap forward to competition. When a concept or solution does not evolve in a linear way or starts to develop on a plateau, design thinking is a crucial force and addresses problems in a more inventive way (Acker, 2020).

7.5.2.1.3.2. Sustainable

Marketing and new market space can lead to increased sustainability. It is rather essential for businesses operating in the tourism sector to develop sustainable strategies that allows for business continuity in the most challenging of times. A participant mentioned that design thinking will support the process of sustainable development, by adding that:

“It will make sure that we become sustainable as an organisation that is two dimensional within the tourism sector” (EI 4).

7.5.2.1.4. New methods

The participants of this study viewed design thinking as useful in promoting new methods pertaining to the following:

7.5.2.1.4.1. Break traditional methods

Design thinking, as expressed by the participants, allows for organisations to break the vicious cycle of doing the same thing repetitively. This can foster new ways of operation and service delivery. Participants in this study expressed the following:

“As I indicated that there are services that we have currently, like we have got this cash management and people are coming to our facilities collecting cash. Why is it that we carry on doing the same thing all the time? I mean, there are a lot of ideas that we can get out there, like have a completely cashless service as this will also mitigate the risk factor of keeping cash on site at the resort” (EI 5).

The participant added that design thinking can help ideate methods for a cashless system within the organisation, by stating:

“I believe we should implement a cashless system in our organisation whereby people don't have to run around carrying cash. Yes, those are the things that I believe that you can come up with, it's a lot more ideas that you can implement using the design thinking” (EI 5).

Another participant explained that design thinking can help explore alternatives for the tourism sector:

“So, let's say you have about 66 your rooms that you need to sell, and you know that with the South African tourism you are not selling. Then what is stopping you from renting your rooms to others, for people to be able to use as timeshares or organize some activities that will bring more movement around your resorts” (EI 9).

7.5.2.1.4.2. Innovative

Participants expressed that design thinking allows for innovative thinking and idea generation and looks at ways of minimising costs and resources whilst improving revenue. A participant stated that:

“We can start creating ideas, start challenging the status quo, in terms of improving and innovating. I feel that in this manner it could be very effective as well” (EI 10).

Another participant added:

“What can we then do to be innovative as people or as a company right now, and utilizing less resources? So, we definitely need to, like for instance, we are a development agency, so we deal a lot with projects, so design thinking definitely plays a role, because of projects, planning, a lot of planning, a lot of meetings, a lot of basically projects” (II 2).

7.5.2.1.4.3. Multiple solutions vs one problem

Design thinking can allow for multiple solutions to address one problem, as opposed to a one-solution vs one-problem approach. This can allow for the best solution to be found, as is evident in the comment below:

“I think it will be useful because besides the fact that it's a new concept. It's a concept that is going to work. It's a concept that is like I was saying to you it's fresh, it's new, it makes you think when you look at the problem, you don't just have one solution. One problem can even have two or three solutions. So, if we can apply that in the organisation that when there is a problem, we don't just look at it from one angle” (Ezemvelo Interview Participant 1).

The participant's view correlated with Dredge (2019), who mentioned that design thinking avoids the tunnel vision approach, common in scientific methods, as it integrates multiple viewpoints; creates empathy for various stakeholders; and makes provision for non-human actors, such as nature.

7.5.2.1.4.4. Service delivery

Design thinking is a method and a philosophy that focuses on practical solutions to issues in a human-centric manner (Stevens, 2019). For service-related organisations like the tourism sector, service delivery is of paramount importance. Participants expressed that service delivery can be improved by knowing exactly what the client requires and analysing client feedback.

“It would be very useful because instead of just being generic about what we want to do, we can focus in on what clients need, and we can formulate all our strategies, whether it's marketing or finances or human capital, we can streamline all of those things based on what our customers are looking for” (EI 10).

Another participant supported this view and expressed that service delivery is not only about customers, but also being cognisant of the environment:

“Besides even being visible to them, we need to ask as an industry, what can we do even better or to better our service delivery? It is not only about clients, even us as an organisation, how can we even get our service delivery, what can we do differently, is it going to make it cost effective, what's going to make it green or environmentally friendly?” (II 2).

7.5.2.1.5. Protected areas

Design thinking could help in terms of protected areas and safeguarding national heritage sites. A participant stated that:

“We also need a strategy to protect your wildlife and protect our conservation areas. We also have World heritage sites that need to be preserved and protected, we need to take pride in them. We need to instil education, using design thinking to have these educational talks and trips” (EI 6).

7.5.2.2. Not be useful

However, some participants felt that it would not be useful for the following reasons:

7.5.2.2.1. Markets

One respondent felt that they did not have the right market for their products, hence design thinking would not be useful. The participant added:

“I think it will be useless to have design thinking if I don't have markets for my product, I think it's a waste of time to use design thinking”. (II 1).

7.5.2.2.2. Customer vs seasons

Similarly, another respondent felt that customer support was based on seasons and hence there were times when there no customers. In addition, the seasons affected business and design thinking may not be effective enough due to such factors.

“So, I'm saying it is okay if you if you don't want to look at it from an organisation point of view, but from a resort point of view, because what challenges you may have may not be the same thing as the one that they have in hilltop. Yes, or a national

park or giants castle Oh, whichever one may be because the problems are unique. And remember the customers the times are different as well. What may appeal at Giant castle may not appeal to the same person in your resort and vice versa. And even as you're looking at design thinking, right, we're not just saying the customer is a guest Customer could be an internal customer for you as well. Because you have internal people that you are working with" (EI 2).

7.5.2.2.3. Certain levels

Another respondent made a point that it may not work holistically in the organisation but perhaps at certain levels only. Such a level would be the level that deals with customers directly.

"I don't think as an organisation, it will be effective, because each resort is unique on its own. So, it can be there, but it might not work throughout the organisation. It may work at sort of regional level, but not under at a decentralized level. Maybe it may work there, because you will say for example, it you will deal with one department, but how does one provide one service to various resorts or to various departments within one organisation, there is it or supply chain, but when it comes to our operations, it's going to be different, it's going to be difficult" (EI 2).

7.5.2.2.4. Transition

Due to current transitions to online, design thinking can only be as good as the entity's infrastructure. Hence, if the infrastructure is not good, then design thinking will not work. A participant stated:

"I'm saying it's not practical, because if you look at technology now, right, I'm just using an example because you brought up it, your resort may not work with bookings on the on the on the web bookings, you know, on the internet, right? It may not work well for you, but it's working somewhere. And a customer on the outside wants to make a booking via those websites. And somehow, it's not working. So, you could play around with it. And let the customer who complained, listen, Carol, I'm trying to make a booking at you're at your resort, but it's I'm not getting any joy. There's some technical glitch. So, you take it back to your IT department and you say Listen, I received many complaints from guests, and we need to revisit and reconfigure the system so that it's more practical and user friendly for the guests. So, in that aspect

I'm saying it will work. But it will require a lot of work as well. A lot of engagements from all angles" (EI 2).

Past literature was associated with participant views and the corresponding sub-themes of this study. Organisations and designers are re-writing models, training approaches and theories as they establish a body of empirical evidence of what works in the social sector as its popularity grows (Friedlander et al., 2021). From a business perspective, this means a road to being a market leader by creating strategies that leap forward to competition. When a concept or solution does not evolve in a linear way or starts to develop on a plateau, Acker (2020) states that design thinking is a crucial force and addresses problems in a more inventive way. Design thinking is a common-good way of thinking that gives one a context (and permission) to be a creative problem solver, how to learn new things, how to open minds to different perspectives and how to support team members (Acker, 2020). It is juggling the art of problem-solving to create a design ethos that improves human capabilities through empathy.

Vinni (2021) asserts that design thinking is currently one of the most popular management concepts and may be used to improve tourist systems, just as it can be used to produce unique tourism services that serve as many customers as possible (Jamal et al., 2021). Design has been regarded as a significant component of innovation in recent years (Tariq et al., 2021) and includes multiple rounds in which the design team widens or limits the alternatives, ideas and solutions, which are referred to as "diverge" and "converge" respectively (Shahrasbi et al., 2021).

In terms of Empowerment and Education, design thinking stresses the achievement of thinking and learning by doing, and it is incorporated in the process' actions (Tung, 2021).

7.5.3. Likelihood of implementing Design thinking

7.5.3.1. Very likely

A few respondents asserted that they would be very likely to implement design thinking. One organisation already seems to have implemented it in certain areas. This was because design thinking could improve the organisation when it came to

idea sharing and improving processes. It also did not require any financial resources but more human resources. A participant found design thinking to be immensely valuable and stated:

“For me, if it's valuable for me, I can have a look at it and try by all means to implement it as soon as possible if it doesn't need financial resources, it just needs maybe human capital, some things they don't need money to be implemented. To be implemented it can be done as soon as possible for me and like I said, to be communicated to all everyone and then get buy in from them” (EI 2).

Another participant mentioned:

“So, as a team we come up with quite a number of initiatives, some of them we are able to implement the right way. And those that need a bit of idea sharing we share them with the managing executive. So, there's quite a lot of movement in terms of coming up with ideas and then presenting them to the executive and some they get supported while some they don't, but most of them if idea is good, they normally support it” (EI 5).

Ideally, design thinking was found to be valuable in an informal tourism business that was ready to try this new methodology to improve business, with a participant stating that:

“My business is very informal. So, anything that can support business I normally implement with not much research. So, I can do that immediately. As long as I believe that it's going to improve my process” (II 1).

Finally, a participant revealed that they have embraced design thinking and practice the methodology already:

“Immediately 100%. The likelihood is very, very likely, in fact, I do it every day without even thinking it's become second nature” (II 2).

Kosmala (2018) postulated incorporating design thinking activities into organisational processes and introducing an own label for design thinking in order to integrate design thinking with organisational culture. While collaboration is a key ingredient to overall success, it is not always easy and a willingness to share information through a shared vision and regular communication through engagement can create trust,

remove barriers and inspire lasting partnerships on information-sharing and collaboration in a manner that benefits all (Mahakata et al., 2017). Organisations should concentrate on changing processes and mind-sets at the same time, implementing changes slowly and teaching non-designers hands-on while emphasizing the method's clear benefits (Kosmala, 2018).

7.5.3.2. Dependant

However, many felt that the likelihood of implementation of design thinking would be dependent on the following factors:

7.5.3.2.1. Collective

It would need a collective response, with all stakeholders actively involved. Teamwork would be necessary for implementation. A participant mentioned:

“It will be nice to form a team, sort of a strategic team so that there are standardised outcomes that is applied across all our resorts in the region. And this will be evident to the clients in that they can see it in our offerings across all our resorts. I would like to apply Design thinking back as a collective as a team, so if we if we applied it, I would feel that it's not only me that I want to apply it but it's the whole region here, all the resorts in the same area that are applying it probably at the same time” (EI 1).

Another participant was keen to implement design thinking within his or her area of control immediately. However, in terms of standardising the process organisation-wide, it would require management executives to influence the process. The participant stated:

“There is a likelihood of me implementing design thinking locally at the resorts that I manage. In terms of the organisation as a whole, that would require people like executive management to come up come up with ways on how the organisation as a whole can do it, but there's definitely a likelihood. And in fact, I think it is happening, because it's an excellent approach. So yeah, the likelihood of me implementing it locally, definitely. As an organisation, there is also likelihood it will just need leaders to come on board” (EI 10).

Managers must understand and express the importance of design throughout the organisation (Kosmala, 2018). This view was similarly supported by a participant who stated:

“I would think coming together as a as a collective, so sort of middle management coming together as a collective and building these strategies, so in terms of our marketing, looking deeply into, as going into the customer needs and basing our approach and our message on that. So, it would be the different resort management people, it would be our marketing, it would be our human resources coming together as a collective and basing what we intend doing on our customer’s needs” (EI 2).

7.5.3.2.2. Funding and resources

Funding and resources are also necessary to implement ideas generated by design thinking. Without such, it may not be possible. A participant added:

“You know we do have red tapes in our organisation that is a given and it must be made clear. But where an initiative doesn’t necessarily need huge funding, it will be an easy one, you can implement it, but where an initiative needs funding, then you know that you are going to go through processes before you can get to where you want to be” (EI 5),

EI5 further added:

“If you know an initiative that is not going to involve finance, that is easy. I mean, we do come up with a lot of initiatives. And we sell them to the funders, then they support them and then we implement” (EI 5).

Another participant expressed their desire to implement immediately, however resource constraints could prove rather challenging. The participant stated:

“It might not happen overnight, because ideas could be presented, but the resources to actually implement that could be a challenge, but there are things that could be implemented immediately” (EI 6).

7.5.3.2.3. Technology

Due to the current epoch, technology and related infrastructure are needed to also be in place. This included internet, Wi-Fi, devices and networks. A participant stated

that the ability to implement design thinking is highly dependent on acquiring modernised technology infrastructure to keep abreast with global trends. The participant added:

“It will depend on the technology first, because I will blame it to the norms that we still have, not everybody, especially in our resorts are connected on emails and everything. So, technology is going to go a long way, as well is network, if they can increase that then it will be easy for us to implement, but without that it will be seen as a failing exercise. Okay, all right. Are we not moving with times” (EI 9).

Another participant supported this view:

“I would like to implement design thinking but given the limitations of technology, at this present time, it's causing a stumbling block for successful implementation, because even right now as I am connected to you, I have had to use an external WiFi, which in the office where I'm at there is no connection. There is a limitation on that, and they don't also provide that for you. So, it's another expense for other people who feel in order for them to contribute, especially if they are not affording it, then you need to be able to give them such resources” (EI 9).

The possession of a reliable network is a key feature for a tourism destination that requires current information on customer bookings. A participant added:

“It's also a challenge when dealing with bookings because the bookings are done centrally, and we receive bookings from interface. The network is down and everything, we will not know who is coming. The system that we have, we are on SAP, which is a beautiful system. But also, it needs us to reboot our connectivity” (EI 9).

7.5.3.2.4. External

Design thinking is also dependant on external service providers. A participant expressed concern over how design thinking is likely to be implemented within their organisation due to the red tape that exists:

“To implement I don't think it be a challenge. The only part that we know from our side is if we're talking implementing anything, the process, is it going to be supported

or is it going to be run by a service provider. You know we do have red tapes in our organisation that is a given and it must be made clear” (EI 5).

Participant responses correlated with previous literature and are very keen to implement design thinking as it is a human-centric, systematic, collaborative problem-solving method that develops creative products, processes or experiential solutions to address wicked issues at the centre of design thinking (Jamal et al., 2021). Design thinking is the intersection of what people want and what is technologically available, whilst also being practical for business (Ribeiro and Souza, 2021). All of the many stakeholders in the design process are involved and active participants in the design process, discussing and sharing ideas about the problem and solution (Shahrasbi et al., 2021). Design thinking may be used to improve tourist systems in the same way that it can be used to develop creative tourism services that best serve as many clients as feasible (Jamal et al., 2021).

7.5.4. Design thinking initiatives that can be implemented to improve resilience and sustainability

The implementation of design thinking for resilience and sustainability was dependent on the following:

7.5.4.1. Governance

Governance was ranked as a key factor and was informed by the following:

7.5.4.1.1. Leadership

Design thinking starts with leadership, as leadership needs to drive the concept across the organisation. They should encourage staff accordingly and define the frameworks and resources thereof. A participant mentioned:

“And with the challenges that we are facing, design thinking is exactly what you as a leader you will need in the sense of problem solving. In a sense of being able to meet whatever requirement that is necessary to be met, but like when we do what we call the quarterly reviews, we are being asked how your performance is and how come you haven't met your target. It's not merely saying you are being underestimated, but they are So they are looking at what other values can they add

towards your entity in order to generate more revenue to be able to meet the target that they have for you” (EI 9).

Another participant stated that leaders should encourage and empower people to generate ideas and designs, by stating:

“So, I think the leaders should be more permissive and let the people apply their own thinking in the process so that we can have much more of designing” (II 1).

7.5.4.1.2. Policy and framework

A few participants indicated that policies should be defined accordingly to incorporate design thinking. Similarly, frameworks should be introduced so the organisation will have a solid framework for design thinking. This can govern the processes thereof. A participant stated:

“It, applying that design thinking, should actually be published as a policy so that you can be extremely disciplined for the benefit of the organisation. But sometimes the ideas, they come up and everything and they we sit and talk and then they are filed away and that's the end of them” (EI 1).

The above statement indicated the need for design thinking to be implemented in such a manner that it is measurable and forms part of governance principles, as there would be direction and guidance on this process, as well as it being documented to measure the progress, performance and accountability thereof. Similarly, by making this process about taking responsibility effectively, another participant affirmed:

“I will say a method that can be used is to establish a framework, a RASIC (Responsible, Approving, Supporting, Informed and Consulting) framework in which design thinking can be applied, where people know who is responsible, who's accountable, and who needs to be informed, and who needs to be consulted. So, in that way, we can promote that much faster by applying the RASIC matrix” (EFG 3).

7.5.4.1.3. Alignment

Once policies and frameworks are defined, then alignment is needed by the organisation. Alignment drives processes. A participant further asserted this:

“It's not about initiatives here. In my opinion, we can't have a singular view on such a methodology. Because as we've just discussed, we are moving towards the fourth industrial revolution. Okay, and the fifth industrial revolution is human centred, the centrality of human being worker well-being of human beings. And then you have a methodology that talks about it being human- centred” (EI 3).

Another participant questioned whether the thought processes align to human-centricity:

“So instead of maybe an initiative, I would call for an alignment, to start looking at our policies and procedures to say, are they aligned to the human centred approach that we have discussed?” (EI 4).

The participant added:

“Design thinking could be the springboard to change mind-sets and create that alignment. Because if you look at countries like South Africa, one of our biggest challenges we keep on saying we've got very nice policies and procedures, we just lack implementation. I like to, to defer bet on that. Our policies and procedures are aligned to the first and second industrial revolution at the very best. Our policies and procedures are far from aligned to the third and fourth industrial revolution. We are still talking about fuel levy to fund road accident fund, we still talking about NHI and all these components when our road accident benefit scheme is bankrupt. So yeah, we don't have in my opinion, and I haven't researched it by but just by logic, our policies are far behind what it's supposed to be” (EI 4).

7.5.4.1.4. Introduced at all levels

Participants expressed a desire to have design thinking introduced at all levels, from top-to-ground level, as this will allow every person to have an understanding of what it is. A participant proclaimed:

“I think design thinking need to be taught more because it's only now that I hear about it. I didn't know about design thinking before this program. So, I think it needs to be introduced in all different departments of the organisation, then it will make life easier in working environment, for any department. It needs to be introduced at all levels” (EI 9).

7.5.4.1.5. Government

However, Government also has a role to play going forward. Government should ensure that the right resources and infrastructure is available to support design thinking for organisations. These participants share the view that Governments play a significant role in this process and should make concerted efforts to help industries to flourish:

“I would say more a lack of understanding than reluctance, simply because when you look at countries such as India and others, as much as they have the problem, they have been very progressive in terms of their policies. So, it comes down to government and the slow pace in terms of keeping up. A lot of them talk about Fourth Industrial Revolution. And I think they were asked by someone on TV. So, what does Fourth Industrial Revolution mean? And they couldn't answer” (EI 3).

“Yeah, so it's that lack of knowledge, like you mentioned, the lack of understanding of it. And yeah, it's hampering the economy. It's hampering us as a nation. And it's, and at some stage I was I was also trying to look at doing a comparison of countries that followed the Industrial Revolution policies” (EI 6).

7.5.4.2. Cohesive

Cohesiveness was needed in the following ways:

7.5.4.2.1. Communication

To build cohesiveness, participants ranked Communication as being of utmost importance. Communication needed to be open and transparent. Communication could foster idea generation. The following statements expressed the views of participants:

“There must be more engagement between our structures, between management structures. And basically, develop a policy whereby, you make it a very strategic intent with like, so that it doesn't sit in a shelf or on some file on the computer, but it's basically practical that you actually engage on it and you get a resolution and if there's no resolution. You continue engaging until you get a resolution to resolve the problem” (EI 1).

“We also need to strive to constantly enhance how we communicate or how we market and reach our customers” (EI 6).

“We need to have a forum where you can discuss issues. And you can also learn you can be taught as a leader on what's new, what's our new ideas that the people have, and also be able to give instruction, it's vice versa, of so it's not like a one-way kind of communication” (EI 9).

“And I think to support my earlier argument about promoting constant communication and engagement” (FG 8)

“I think the most important part is communication. When I say communication, I am looking into what we are getting in terms of product development, and there is a lot of work that we are doing but it never is communicated out there. So, people can actually see what we are doing, the only thing that does interrupt our processes, and also our thinking is, we get a lot of negative information filtering through to our organisation” (II 2).

“Most of the good work that we're doing needs to be communicated out there, even internally as well. I see in biodiversity; I think they are doing a good job. See, there is quite a number of write-ups coming up. But there's none that talks to tourism most of the time” (EI 2).

7.5.4.2.2. Collective approach

A collective approach was needed to implement design thinking. This meant that everyone should be included, even staff at junior levels. Whilst executives drive strategy, they may not know how things operate at the ground level and therefore such levels should be part of the approach. This can allow for a comprehensive strategy to design thinking. The following statements expressed the views of participants:

“I think it boils down to us as managers and executive engaging. Especially when it comes to initiatives for the organisation, the marketing team, and whatever team that forms part of the tourism. When it comes to design thinking, and we sit and whatever design thinking that we come up with, that is maybe how we can resolve problems, or we cannot deal with whatever challenges we are facing, that it's not just

something that we sit and talk about. It's a shame if we just we sit and we talk about it, then it goes into the shelf and it's not being put into practice" (EI 1).

"I think the most important one would be involving all, in an operation like ours, involving all of the staff, especially staff at junior levels, because there is a lot of knowledge that they possess as people who deal directly on a day-to-day basis with our clients. So, I think involving everyone that's involved in our business in terms of the ideas that we generate. I believe really it is a winning strategy. We want to base our operations on the customers' needs. So, I couldn't think of a having a better strategy and to make that a culture for the organisation. If your staff are trained and adapted to look at the customer's needs at the first instance, then then it creates a winning formula throughout the resort throughout the organisation" (EI 10)

"Design thinking should also be a collective effort applicable at all levels within an organisation, not just at an executive level. I might be at leadership, but my views might be obsolete. I need to get other. Collective input for my decision to be relevant. And if I have for example an idea, I need to bounce it off. To look into the practicality of it, I need to bounce it off with my team. And I think teamwork is very critical in this regard" (EI 4).

7.5.4.3. Re-conceptualise and improve

There is a need for re-conceptualization and improvement via the following ways:

7.5.4.3.1. Research and improvement

A few participants asserted that through research comes Improvement. Hence research was needed in the form of customer feedback, market research, other views and perceptions as well as survey mechanisms. The related responses from participants were as follows:

"At Giant's Castle, I think we already have quite a good plan that we use. So, it is collecting information, it's making sure that every customer that comes in, by the time they leave, we know what they think of our product and service. So, when it is at that basic level, we make sure that we collect this information. We then use it when we are coming up with ideas for sales for marketing for a maintenance plan, budgeting plan, we use this information that we've collected for our customers" (EI 10).

The participant added:

“Just the fact that I feel like design thinking is a great approach. I feel like when we are involved in our day-to-day work, we tend to forget the basis as tourism managers. The basic things like collecting information from our visitors or even just having a chat with our visitors at reception. That way we know how their experience is, what they find most useful, what they are finding more enjoyable and what they dislike about what we have to offer. And that's the basic information that we should be collecting, and then using it in whatever we're doing” (EI 10).

Engaging with one's customers, embracing their viewpoint and listening to their concerns is part of research and was quite prominent in the responses, as two (2) participants emphasized:

“...and secondly, be able to get other people's views” (EI 4)

“You can't just sit in a corner and be able to design something that you expect people to adhere to. So, you need to get their views” (EI 9).

“So, when you obviously interact with your customers through surveys, interviews, you need them to be able to interpret that data. To be able to interpret that into a tangible, like, for instance, and you know, how we do surveys, and the purpose of that research is to measure the amount of business and investors that we get in the iLembe district. So that helps us to try to see, to monitor rather, how we're doing in terms of investment. So, then you collect that data and in and obviously, needs to be able to read it and to be able to make it tangible, and such a report informs your strategy going forward” (II 2).

Design thinking is an evolving organisational strategy and has transformed the manner in which leading companies create real value for their consumers (Naiman, 2019). This was supported by the views of a few participants who mentioned:

“For me, design thinking is constantly visiting your strategy, looking at what is it that is happening. We need to apply initiatives to see whether we are enhancing our products and services. Are we making it better by coming up with ideas, with new solutions” (EI 6).

“I think based on the strategy of continuous development; we need like a boost a booster. So, in theory, what we would then say is, before we embark on a continuous development, improvement strategy, we will almost need like a business reengineering initiative” (FG 1).

7.5.4.3.2. System re-think and re-engineering

A system re-think and process re-engineering would be needed after efforts to identify areas for improvement. This can lead to continuous improvement. A participant's view resonated with the iterative speciality of design thinking (Jamal et al., 2021) whereby re-working and continuously improving was a significant part of the process, as stated:

“So, you reengineer you rethink, you put that think tank together and rework your product offerings. And once you have, as you know, business reengineering is a once of project and a big bang approach. Thereafter, you embark on your continuous improvement strategy” (EFG 1.)

Another participant felt that a system should be developed to help improved innovation processes to come to reality, rather than just being documented. The participant contributed to this by stating:

“Think the leaders should come up with a system, you know, like, next should it if I go back to most of the companies, they're just using documented, commands or documented, just something that they have been using all the years without letting people think outside the box?” (II 1).

7.5.4.3.3. Implementation

Thereafter, proper implementation would be needed. This would entail adequate staff, resources, policies and alignment to the industrial revolution. A participant was quite expressive in their assertion that implementation should be effective and executed in a proper manner. The participant added:

“So very often I've been saying that South Africa has got very good policies, but implementation is lacking? For me. It is our policies are way outdated, and it needs a total revamp. And we need something to trigger us into a much, much faster, fast paced economy and local space that we find ourselves in. Especially if you want to

be challenging and you're competing in the global space. We can't be following outdated revolutions that are way beyond, beyond our time. Yeah, now was one policy that was talking about fibre to the home connectivity for free. In addition, all those things that was coming through, it has been in the pipeline for over 10 years, 12 years now. In addition, we have already moved beyond that. That was IR three. That was 10 years ago, and then you are implementing it 10 years later, whenever we talk about spectrum, spectrum was IR three, it's still not there" (EI 3).

7.5.4.4. Relationship and understanding

Relationship and understanding were also important.

7.5.4.4.1. Forge understanding

A few participants expressed the view that Understanding must be forged so that everyone understands the concept and how the process unfolds together with their role. The contributions were as follows:

"especially the communities around our protected areas, we can use that to engage with them to, you know, to make them understand where we're coming from and what is our role as the organisation, so that they understand how we are doing what we are doing" (EI 5).

Another participant felt that it was equally important to understand customer needs:

"The reason for the company has been in existence, you need to have a deep understanding of customers and their needs and engagement with your stakeholders" (II 1).

The above statement correlated with the view of Kwon et al. (2021), who postulated that the deeper the understanding and engagement with the customer goes, the more the product and service offering aligns with the customer's needs.

7.5.4.4.2. Relationship building

Relationship building with necessary stakeholders surfaced in participant responses as being rather important. The data collected contributed the following to the importance of relationship building:

7.5.4.4.2.1. Clients

Clients are the heart of the business and hence strong relationships with clients are very important. Therefore, design thinking included this component of client orientation in order to derive feedback and value. A participant stated:

“I think for one is to encourage visitors, like we said. After everything that is happened, visitors are resistant to come back to the resorts, I think is to encourage them to come back to our facilities and enjoy the benefits of what we’re offering. And by doing better, you’re going to use design thinking to do that encouraging” (EI 2).

Listening and acting on client concerns can lead to more strategies being created. This was expressed by the following statement:

“Besides I have to listen to their suggestion and incorporate those suggestions in our in our strategy. One such example is our booking and refund process. Some clients are saying that we have a very prolonged process that you guys are having, which need to be reviewed. And, and I agree with that, I mean, it should be done very quickly without them having to write to us three email five emails. So that engagement should be more efficient, given the advancements of technology and stuff like that. So basically, it’s systems that need to be upgraded and more sophisticated, and more modern” (EI 5).

A participant also mentioned how there needs to be a continuous process of engagement:

“We also need to strive to constantly enhance how we communicate or how we market and reach our customers” (EI 6).

7.5.4.4.2.2. Stakeholders

Relationships with other stakeholders are also important. This includes community stakeholders, funders, services providers and other inter-related relationships of the tourism sector. The views from participants included the following:

“I think there’s quite a few initiatives that one can come up with, but for now is, is the relationship with the community and other stakeholders like Ismangaliso and others

our relationship is with our guests, so they need to know our product very well, and they know what we are doing with our product offering” (EI 5).

“Obviously, what can be done is to reach out to the community and to participate like, to involve a lot of stakeholders into the process, not doing it alone. And to be able to identify your target audience, you need to know what the reason for the company's existence” (II 2).

Past literature correlated with the views of participants. Design thinking is a human-centred approach to problem-solving that is well-known (Gopinathan et al., 2021). Design thinking is a set of actions that puts the user at the centre of the process, allowing one to gain empathy and a deep understanding of their behaviour, values and points of view, as well as to create opportunities based on those insights (Marion et al., 2021). Design thinking promotes motivation and resilience within an organisation that improves work morale and can be quantified as improved productivity, and it is this kind of thought that serves as the basis for an organisation that attracts mission-driven talent (Acker, 2020). In order to enhance product decision-making, designers must engage end-users with a view to designing for their principles and needs (Barnett, 2020).

Design thinking can be seen as a clever technique that businesses can profit from it in order to succeed in a competitive climate (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021). Design processes have been used by businesses as a strategy and as tools for developing new practices and products (Henseler et al., 2021). Design thinking requires various supporting actions in order to be successful in terms of implementation and legitimization. Design thinking, for example, should be launched with adequate processes in place because it requires changing people's behaviour (Ramanujam et al., 2021). By making the customer the key focal point of the creative ideas, Design thinking can assist to increase the customer experience (Jamal et al., 2021). The essence of Relationship Building in tourism is critical and, in many contexts, Design thinking has been demonstrated to improve outcomes because it can lead to more imaginative human-centred solutions that are more inclusive (Ní Shé, Farrell, Brunton and Costello, 2022). Working together for mutual gain; participating in the self-sufficiency process; and responding to authoritative decisions affecting communal culture or personal life are all possibilities for such collaboration (Li et al.,

2021). In collaborative processes where participants can learn from one another, develop new policies and adjust to a changing environment, there are possible reciprocal or collective benefits for stakeholders (Van Huy, 2021). Such collaborations also need to be inclusive of the interaction and involvement of government, whose ultimate goal is to ensure that organisations successfully implement their vision of a dynamic, inclusive and innovative tourism sector (Bojanala, 2021).

7.6. Theme 3: Design thinking Capabilities

This primary theme, presented in Figure 7.5. and Figure 7.6., was crucial in determining the design thinking capabilities and was informed by the following sub-themes:

thinking	design	people	market	new	sector	business	now	feel	decision	staff	activities	benefit	flexibility	giving	level	obvious
			coming	going	managers	process	put	lot	facing	okay	definite	implem	might	still	together	tourists
		customers				approach	time	organizati	issues	stakehold	whatever	travel	box	bring	center	done
	looking		using	help	create											
						challenges	identify	sit	maybe		within	establis	especi	part	really	resort
																revoluti
		industry	way	well	see						develop	ideas	examp	sort	allow	internatio
need						change	communic	strategy	products							service
	tourism															
		working	problem	things	understand	get	different	areas	solution							
										certain	plan	just	trying	human		
															contribut	ground
															experien	keeping

Figure 7.5: Tree Map of Theme 3 - Design thinking Capabilities

“Design thinking should be implemented at all levels - operational level as well, because they face different types of challenges, which some of them might be aware of, and many of might not be aware of, it will never come to my attention. So, they can use such assistance to then inform their decision and, and the implementation of the decisions. I know, especially in our environment where we work, you know, in teams that they basically on top of each other for like a whole two weeks, and then they go home, it can get very frustrating” (EI 3).

A view surfaced that it is essential for design thinking to be introduced and implemented at an operational level. The participant mentioned:

“At an operational level, because it's unlike you and I, when we finish work, we go home, we will see our family, we don't have to worry about seeing the other people and then come back tomorrow, these people on top of each other and very often I've had issues among staff, staff not liking management being accused of this and that. And yeah, it would help management at operational level to consider the human aspect of it in decision making at an operational level” (EI 10).

7.6.1.1.2. Ground level

Similarly, design thinking at ground level would be helpful. It does not have to only be a top-down approach but also bottom-up because nobody knows the ground level better than the staff at the bottom. Management has an overall view but not a ground-level view. They need to sit down with staff at that level to understand the happenings and issues. The views from participants revealed:

“I don't know how it's going to work. So, if they sit down with us, because sometimes the problem with the companies especially in the tourism sector, what I've noticed is that the executive will sit and make decisions for the resorts or for the hotels or for without sitting down with the managers because we are on the ground. And we know what's happening on the ground. So, if we're going to make the design thinking work, we need to be part of the team that's going to be working around that because we are the ones that are on the ground. We are the ones that know what's going to work and what's not going to work. At least when you talk to somebody on the ground, then I think that that design thinking will work even much better” (EI 1).

“And further than that, it need not to be a top-down approach only, but it also needs to be a bottom-up approach. So that is also always like feeder. People should not feel that their contribution cannot be listened by the leadership. So, it needs to be a bottom-up approach as well to continue and evolve, you need to create a vacuum, create a feeder portal as such, whereby ideas can be thrown into it and, and it could be discussed at a at a broader level to the benefit of the organisation” (EI 4).

7.6.1.1.3. Change Management

Change must be enacted and managed in line with design thinking. In other words, design thinking would not work if changes were not made accordingly at all levels. A participant spoke about embracing change and plugging any identified gap according to the customer's needs:

“So, we need it to first understand properly the changes that are taking place globally. And through that we'll also understand what people are really looking for. You know it's about revising our approach and marketing our content using the best possible technology. I certainly feel that design thinking will help to tap into that marketing potential and do things differently” (EI 6).

Another participant felt that design thinking could help with staff development:

“So, it's about that flexibility that is required but also the training of our staff and their mindsets because other people they're stereotyped, and it will take some time for us to be able to change the way they think according to the new times and the needs of the customers. So definitely design thinking can help with upskilling of staff and the development of personnel within the tourism sector” (EI 9).

7.6.1.2. Collective and collaborative

There must be a collective approach with built in collaboration.

7.6.1.2.1. Collaboration

Collaboration becomes the focal point to ensure a collective response. This entails collaboration with all stakeholders, inclusive of management, staff at all levels, customers and external. This is because all inputs can be taken into account and the

Design thinking approach can be built on various ideas, thereby generating a diversity of solutions. Multiple participants shared similar views:

“And it will, it will unlock the doors if we work as a team, you know, they it's not like you are on the ground. If we sit together in this design thinking process, then it's is going to work wonders, it is going to even bring back the customers that we have lost, or even new customers that have never been to the area” (EI 1).

“Those are the people that you need to be looking at. And also, including some of the stakeholders that we have, that we have been working with as well. It's the stakeholders as well. So, involvement of them and their input is equally valuable, and will make a greater contribution to addressing our challenges” (EI 5).

“I think one of the issue or a challenge that was pointed out was in regard to the community. We know when our facilities were established, I think it's clear to everybody that no there was no involvement of the communities. So, I believe that design thinking will assist the organisation in making sure that every product that we have or that needs to be introduced, the communities as well get involved. So, they can also have an input on whatever products that need to be established within our parks, because at the end of the day it is their land, and they need to see their contribution, be part of the strategy for the organisation” (EFG 4).

“That's what design thinking is about, a lot of collaboration and synergy between tourism service providers and making it a sort of a one stop solution for the end user. So, design thinking can be used to create that synergy and make everyone work together for the benefit of the consumer at the end of the day” (II 2).

7.6.1.2.2. Collective platforms

However, in order to facilitate collaboration, collective platforms for engagement need to be created. This includes consultative platforms, meetings, feedback mechanisms and platforms that promote people working together. A participant expressed the need for a more inclusive and consultative process unfolding in order to address matters and to find a resolution, by adding:

“It shouldn't be a top-down approach, but other more consistent, more consultative approach, whereby you sit, and you put the problems on the table, and you resolve it

with the design thinking. And then you alleviate all the problems that you have in a very consultative manner, in a consultative forum, but also come up with new product offerings as well. So, you can do things differently” (EI 1).

Another participant asserted the need for the tourism sector to have a collective forum:

“But we were in process of creating platforms whereby we all get to sit and discuss issues that we face in the tourism industry, as well as investors, because those are stakeholders in the industry, and certain identify how they can combat the issues that we’re facing. So, if you want to get that to work, I think we need to work as a collective, someone somehow has the answer, we can all just put our heads together and then as to how we can combat that particular issue. So, the tourism industry is not a tangible service, it definitely needs a collective, you cannot do it on your own. What does matter is the tourism industry needs a bunch of people to work together, to be able to render that particular service” (EI 6).

7.6.1.2.3. Customer feedback and communication

Customer communication in terms of customer feedback is imperative to determine customer needs, as outlined in other themes as well. A few research participants mentioned:

“I think that getting together as managers on different levels and trying to come up with how to best serve the local clientele because that is what we have at the moment and perhaps using questionnaires and surveys. So, we do have we do get a lot of feedback from our customers about what they’re looking for. So, I think as an organisation, perhaps getting together and coming up with ideas on how to capitalize on the feedback that we have because that gives us the exact needs or what exactly they are looking for” (EI 10).

“I think communication, we must ensure that we communicate effectively to our customers, and what we communicate, what we promise is what we deliver, that’s what I’m trying to say. So basically, it’s a problem-solving exercise, but involving the customer engaging with the customer to see what their needs are, what their problems are” (EI 2).

The participant added:

“To add not forgetting the human capital, because at the same token, they need to be engaged as well, because I cannot go out and communicate with the visitors and assume that they will understand it is what I said. So, communication is key to the customers. And at the same token, you communicate with the staff as well, internally, as I said, this is where we are standing at the moment” (EI 2).

7.6.1.2.4. Understanding

The research outcomes revealed that a common understanding must be forged with all stakeholders, so everyone speaks the same language and are on the same page regarding design thinking. Feedback from a participant spoke of the consistency of understanding amongst all involved:

“So, everybody, in terms of your management and your staff, everybody is in the know and speaking the same language and having the same understanding, so it's equally important” (EI 2).

Another participant shared similar views:

“...especially for me as a leader working with a group yet I need to make them understand why we should go to get an old sweater and why you should go collecting all the wires in the streets, in the beach, to produce a fruit holder. Why we shouldn't just go to the shop, and buy those old wires, because actually, if you consider the cost and the pain of going through the garbage, sometimes it is it doesn't make sense. So, you need to brainstorm to let people understand why you're doing it” (II 1).

7.6.1.2.5. Social Cohesion

The research outcomes identified that Social Cohesion would be an ideal strategy aligned to design thinking to address challenges from a community perspective, which includes aspects such as protected areas. A participant asserted:

“Design thinking also promotes societal cohesion because it will bring the intricate relationship between protected areas and the society, particularly those that are

joining adjoining the protected areas because they will feel as part of the solution” (EFG 2).

7.6.1.3. Operational efficiencies

Operational efficiencies within the tourism sector or in any other sector can be enhanced using design thinking in the following ways:

7.6.1.3.1. Problem identification

Design thinking allowed for problem identification and hence problems can be resolved quicker and more innovatively. It allows for problems to be broken down more easily and addressed in a more manageable way. Participants shared the following views on this:

“...if you look at the process that you've outlined. The emphasize the define the ideate, the prototype and test stages. So, one has to follow the process for each of the main problem areas that we've identified. And I think I've spoken at very high level; we would need to break it down into manageable chunks and look at the different people that can contribute towards formulating the multiple problem statements in those areas” (EI 3).

“I think that can be relooked into, to make sure that even with the challenges, we are we're having guests coming to our facilities and they can still enjoy our facilities, by being safe and feeling safe as well” (EI 5).

“So basically, I can see it, it's just to engage the tourism stakeholders, tourism establishments all stakeholders participate in the tourism industry. And obviously, identify issues that we're all facing in the tourism industry, maybe local, national or provincial, maybe in any way, maybe in activities, maybe in establishments, maybe museums, whatever, all stakeholders all players. So then identify the issues, identify the reasoning, why, what rather identify the problem that you're facing within the tourism space” (II 2).

7.6.1.3.2. Matching assets and capabilities

Design thinking could allow for assets to match capabilities, thereby allowing for more effective problem-solving and service enhancement.

“For example, if we are saying lack of skills or capabilities, we would need to define that. What exactly do we mean, if the capabilities might even be broken down in terms of skills, experience, qualifications, I'm not sure at this point. But then define it, and then look at based on your model, you would be looking at what is the ideal scenario. And the ideal scenario is where you have a match between your assets and your capabilities to provide you with a competitive edge on the market” (EI 3).

This statement was supported by the view of another participant who stated:

“So definitely design thinking can help with upskilling of staff and the development of personnel within the tourism sector” (EI 9).

7.6.1.3.3. Process re-engineering

The aspect of Process re-engineering surfaced from the participants' responses and could be looked at re-inventing or re-designing certain processes to be aligned to needs.

“We can use design thinking to in that process of reinventing and innovating for us to overcome the challenges that are faced by the tourism sector” (EI 5).

“The second part is that they are looking at outsourcing all non-core activities, to improve efficiencies, and keeping or re-skilling the people towards providing experience rather than processes” (EFG 1).

7.6.1.3.4. Easier and faster

The views expressed by participants revealed that Services can become easier and faster, much to the satisfaction of the customer:

“Basically, to order to make the lives of tourists easier, you know, like, for instance, platforms whereby tourists can book flights, accommodation, and book car hire, all in one app, all in one-on-one internet page all in one, you know, in one portal. It's basically convenience. How then we in the tourism industry can make sure that tourists find it very easy to travel” (II 2).

7.6.1.4. Product and service enhancement

Product and service delivery could be enhanced via design thinking in the following ways:

7.6.1.4.1. Markets

Markets could be better understood, and this can help improve current market reach and /or reach new markets. Packages can be created accordingly through effective design thinking usage. A participant asserted:

“Firstly, it would help us to understand the markets, or the way things are done is changing all the time. Once we understand that, then we know how to market to reach the world” (EI 6).

Another participant affirmed that packages and offerings should be created for diverse customer groups by adding:

“How you can package your business to meet the needs of the people. With the international market sort of paused for now, we need to focus on domestic market. I really think we need to re strategize and create a market for the domestic customers. In doing so, I feel we need to focus or create packages that will suit locals, what their interests are, activities that people can do and what events will they be able to do while they come to your establishment” (EI 9).

7.6.1.4.2. New trends

Building on markets, new trends can also be identified in terms of what guests prefer.

“The other challenges that we have yes, we do have budget constraints, it's on the activities, what other activities that we can bring in that are in line with the new trends that guests are looking for. Especially our youth, they are not into hiking, like the old people in the previous times. So, design thinking will make you want to think out of the box and will help you to be up to date with what is happening on the spot” (EI 9).

7.6.1.4.3. Service offerings

Service offerings can be re-valuated, given the current circumstance of COVID-19 and related Issues.

7.6.1.4.3.1. Experiential tourism

A new concept of experiential tourism is already being tested at some places, whereby due to COVID-19, instead of focusing on selling bedrooms/accommodation, it is all about creating new experiences that will entice tourists to still arrive just for experiencing something new. A participant shared the following view:

“When we talk about design thinking, I’m thinking of the five components of the design thinking aspect. And if you look at what Sun International, for example, is doing, they also moving towards experiential tourism. So, they’re not looking at selling beds anymore, they are looking at creating the experience. If you look at your design thinking component, the definition and the idea, and the prototype as well as testing will fit in that new experiential tourism component that everybody is chasing in this new environment. And that that is something that sun international is actually trying to do currently, were they even looking at the view from the bedroom and what is the experience that one can get in that room that they in, not just the comfort, but you know, holistically the experience” (EI 3).

7.6.1.4.3.2. Flexible

Service offerings can be flexible and more accommodating of customer needs. It will take some time to adapt, as some participants expressed that flexibility could lead to innovative outcomes. The views shared included:

“So, it’s about that flexibility that is required but also the training of our staff and their mindsets because other people they’re stereotyped, and it will take some time for us to be able to change the way they think according to the new times and the needs of the customers” (EI 9).

Another participant shared a similar view:

“So rather than giving people a square peg, you allow a situation where products can be maneuvered, continuously improved to respond to the customer’s aspirations or

expectations. So, you're talking about flexibility in whatever you are offering. I think rather than keeping it square you manage it as per the customer's expectation" (EFG 3).

7.6.1.4.3.3. Virtual

Marketing and information can adopt a full virtual method for greater reach. Certain services can be offered digitally as well.

"We need to use digital platforms. For example, I remember when I started in the in the tourism industry, I was I worked as a as a tourism officer marketing was done through gateway magazines. They you would have tourism offices, the physical structures, you know with posters in them. But the world has changed so much, who goes and buys a gateway magazine for a holiday destination when this information is now at your fingertips" (EI 6).

"You also need to have some sort of digital set-up in the conference centre, so that those interest in are able to watch sports, rugby or whatever sport that is currently playing at that time" (EI 9).

7.6.1.4.3.4. Safe

The focus can be on safe environments for tourists to feel comfortable. A participant felt that design thinking is ideally suited to addressing and resolving safety issue within a tourist environment. The respondent added:

"and also, it can be used to relook at our products and the service that we are offering in order to ensure that we can still offer a service in a safe environment, even with the challenges that we have" (EI 5).

7.6.1.4.4. Continuous improvement

Continuous improvement could be possible, which can avoid complacency and promote the ongoing enhancement of products and services. A few participants shared their views:

"We will think about putting the customer in that process definitely, because they are the one that guides us in terms of us looking into improving our product and services definitely" (EI 5).

“And I concur with what was said, and I can add on that, in my view, design thinking process also encourages continuous improvement in how we do business, and it will address quite a number of challenges within the tourism fraternity and or tourism sector, one of which is to respond to the customer's aspiration or expectation” (EI 4)

7.6.1.4.5. Daily operations

Daily operations can be simplified through the use of design thinking to align with day-to-day activities.

“They say strategies is for managers. It's not for people who are everyday workers. So, for you to be able to see the outcome of it, it needs to be simplified such that it resonates with people day to day activities” (EI 4).

The perspectives of participants and related sub-themes were correlated with previous literature. Organisations can benefit from employing design thinking to flourish in a competitive climate because it is considered an intelligent approach (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021). It is smart business to balance current emotional costs with the potential well-being of clients' needs. In current times, data is the tool that enables designers to close this void, from easy-to-use interfaces to prototyping, to inspiring a culture of learning (Acker, 2020). Design thinking can be incorporated right from the start of an organisation's development process (Marion et al., 2021).

Tourism development is complex, and various stakeholders influence and are affected by it. Therefore, stakeholders must collaborate to solve problems, achieve goals and generate new opportunities (Van Huy, 2021). The development of tourism must also be accompanied by the development of infrastructure (Mogale and Odeku, 2019). When used correctly, design thinking may be a catalyst for innovation because it creates a secure environment where varied ideas can be welcomed and openly shared, allowing for new insights and knowledge to emerge (Tariq et al., 2021). Through committee working groups, annual conferences and meetings, tourism enterprises might be more involved in decision-making processes, thereby enhancing collaboration (Van Huy, 2021). Stakeholders from various backgrounds can collaborate to address challenges using a human-centred approach employing Design thinking. It is regarded as a framework for solving complicated problems that includes the integration of artistic and logical ways of reasoning, as well as the

application of various creative tools and approaches (Tariq et al., 2021). However, considerable worries have been expressed about domestic tourists' financial capabilities, as well as a lack of effective communication and coordination between the business sector and the government in relation to the tourism recovery plan (Bama and Nyikana, 2021)

In terms of Operational Efficiencies, design thinking cannot only act as a missing connection between design and development, but it can also be used as a creative technique to improve learning and skills development (Shahrasbi et al., 2021).

7.6.2. Design thinking as a unique problem-solving approach that is designed to generate value

Design thinking can also be used as a unique problem-solving approach that is designed to generate value in the following ways:

7.6.2.1. Problem-driven solutions

Design thinking can promote a more problem-driven solution approach. This was informed by the following:

7.6.2.1.1. Gap identification

Design thinking can promote a gap identification as it helps to provide solutions and think outside the box. A participant added:

“So, and to be able to identify gaps. Design thinking helps you identify gaps, it helps you to, to come up with solutions, you know, innovative ways that are going to assist you in business, and whatever sector that you are in. And basically, it's a problem solving, solving approach. It leads you to let you think outside the box” (II 2).

7.6.2.1.2. Past

Past processes can be examined to influence current and future solutions. Fresh ideas can hence be informed, as expressed by a respondent:

“When it comes to design thinking, and I feel that we've been doing things, you know, like they've been done in other years. And not even thinking that there might be a new way of looking at this of doing things until you came with this concept, and

we are looking at and I'm looking at it, and I'm saying, Wow, this is a fresh idea now” (EI 1).

7.6.2.1.3. Seeing a solution in a problem

Design thinking allows one to see a solution within a problem. An example cited was being able to become a quarantine site during COVID-19, which could keep revenue flowing whilst also helping fight the pandemic:

“When we were faced with Covid, we used or grabbed the opportunity to be a quarantine site, even though it was a scary thing to do, but it helped our employees to understand what is it that we are facing because they were trained for free by the Department of Health” (EI 9).

7.6.2.1.4. Becomes the process between problem and solution

Design thinking actually becomes the unique process between problem and solution. It integrates within that process, thereby promoting solutions, as affirmed by a participant:

“I think it's very valuable because you once you're presented with the problem, you only need to know what the solution needed to solve a certain a certain problem and then when you use design thinking you can be able to give solution for the problems” (II 1).

7.6.2.1.5. Customised and specific

Customer-specific solutions, services and products can be developed that are suitable to customer needs, thereby creating more individualistic solutions rather than generic. This could be done via a question-based approach by asking customers what they wanted. There were multiple participants who shared a similar view by stating:

“I think it's the fact that it is based on what the customer is looking for. We are here to serve our clients making sure that what the client is looking for is exactly what you provide. And so, I think it's a great approach because it takes you to exactly that thinking, how best do you serve your customers. I feel the design thinking process,

when applied, will generate value in the in the eventual solution, in the final solution” (EI 10).

“I think because as I'm saying it's unique, you look at the problem at hand, and you then design solutions, based on the problem at hand. You don't follow patterns that have been set before, it is thinking out of the box, that's what it is design thinking. For example, if we were to use design thinking, in an organisation as far as tourism is concerned, we would look at who can we reach now during the pandemic. We don't really have international travellers because of all the restrictions, it's only the local markets. Then we will design our marketing adverts according to what the South African market wants, we will then look at the finances as well as the economy, people are generally broke, people have lost jobs” (EI 6).

“I think what makes design thinking so valuable is to obviously to find a problem, think around the problem as to how you can then tackle it, whatever you're facing, whatever the issue is, if there's an issue right now like COVID affecting the tourism sector. And so obviously, we need to now sit down and think, how can we manage this? How can we then as a business, still function” (II 2).

7.6.2.1.6. Brainstorm

The brainstorming phase of design thinking provides a deep analysis of how to generate worthwhile solutions, as mentioned by a participant:

“And so basically, we all need to sit down and brainstorm and at some point, sit down, look at how we can as a company, as people, even as individuals, how then can we, even in our own lives or like some project, your own life is a project” (II 2).

7.6.2.1.7. Keeping abreast with global trends

Design thinking allows organisations to keep abreast with trends both at a national and global level, thus solutions could be of global essence.

“I think design thinking is like a tool for developing new ideas and keeping abreast with global developments. It's about how we can try and assist, and instead of being stereotyped in one activity” (EI 9).

7.6.2.2. Efficiency

Design thinking promoted efficiency in the following:

7.6.2.2.1. Decision-making

Decision-making can be done faster as currently decision-making takes too much time, which delays implementation. A participant felt that design thinking would improve timeous decision-making and the implementation thereof by adding:

“I think when you were explaining, and I did mention to you that I was looking at those project management methodologies previously, which was to make decisions faster and better, but decisions be implemented faster as well, because one of our key challenges is we make decisions but implementation lags” (EI 3).

7.6.2.2.2. Real-time

Relating to the above, solutions can then be developed in real-time' due to the faster decision-making process and simultaneous implementation. A participant added:

“So, if it can follow that route, I think the unique value proposition that this brings, apart from the human centred approach is that it will probably enable quicker implementation of decisions and seeing results. And then you would be able to go back and say, hey, maybe we should proceed with this or not. So, it gives you a sort of the real time solution for you to make an executive or management decision on like, you think whether to proceed or not” (EI 3).

7.6.2.3. Financial

Design thinking also brings about financial strategies and support for competition.

7.6.2.3.1. Pricing

Pricing can also be informed through design thinking. Instead of having generic pricing, it can be tailor-made to suit customer needs and budgets, especially during COVID-19 where customer budgets were compromised and hence pricing needed to be revised accordingly. This can keep customers loyal and returning to the organisation. A participant expressed the following view:

“So, we will then also price our products in line with that thinking in mind, that people would want to travel if they're allowed to travel within their own country, but they don't have money, so we would design products and sell products that are meeting the current needs of the economy and the markets” (EI 6).

The participant added:

“In keeping the customer as the central point of focus, we would look at who do we have now? Who can we reach? Who can come to us? Like I've recently learned that Saabi Sans, near the Kruger National Park, they mainly target internationals. Their resorts are very, very expensive. They are for a certain market. But when the pandemic came about, they then went back and revised their strategy and said, we cannot reach a market that is willing to pay 25,000 per night. How do we then change our pricing strategy to meet our South African market because that is what we have at the moment. And then they went at 50% discounts and things like that, so in this way we should also put the customer at the centre of our thinking” (EI 6).

7.6.2.3.2. Competitive

Due to competitors in every sector, including tourism, design thinking allows an organisation to stay competitive by being ahead of competitors. Design thinking-based solutions can keep the organisation ahead through innovation. A participant mentioned:

“And also, to look around and see what your competitors are doing. So, if one doesn't do that, then you might be left behind. And in order for one to be competitive, obviously you have to do business with it with a fresh eye as with the design thinking, it gives you a competitive advantage or highlights the fact that you need to be competitive to stay alive as a business to survive as a business. I mean, if we don't look into the design thinking, you know, you might find that your competitors are way down the line and you are behind it, which means you might not be able to catch up with them” (EI 5).

7.6.2.4. Structured, adaptable and fit

Structure and fit also become unique properties of design thinking in the following ways:

7.6.2.4.1. Structured

Design thinking needed to be structured in a way for it to be simple and easily interpreted in order to resonate with the organisation. A participant stated:

“I think the way it is structured, is structured in a way such that it's easy, it becomes easy for one, to communicate it to interpret it, to be able to enforce it. And I mean, before you enforce it to be able to implement it and then enforce it. Okay, so you're able to measure whether is it doable, or is it not doable. Is it being it viable or not viable” (EI 2).

7.6.2.4.2. Understand - fit

Relating to the above, once the structured approach was defined, then everyone needed to know how they fit into the model. From management to the cleaner level, everyone had a role to play. The cleaner needed to know why their role as a cleaner was important because that related to hygiene. Similarly, the receptionist was the front face of the organisation and they needed to be friendly and welcoming. All staff needed to understand their roles accordingly. A participant explained:

“I think design thinking brings everyone's minds and actions together. I feel it is an important undertaking for one to pursue within the organisation because it's understanding why they're doing the activities that they do within the organisation. So, it fits into the entire model of business. For example, if a cleaner cleans, they need to understand why they clean, same as the reception is the same as the manager, and same as the system administrator. So those people need to understand how they depend on each other to pursue one goal or the position, or the vision of the organisation” (EI 4).

7.6.2.4.3. Adaptability and flexibility

Design thinking allows an organisation to become adaptable to change. This was important especially when sudden change occurred, such as COVID-19. By being flexible in offerings, the organisation could still have revenue generation. A

participant added:

“Design Thinking will help us as an organisation to be flexible and to adapt to new challenges, new changes. In doing so, it prevents you from being viewed as stereotyped, whereby you only going to cater for people who are coming for pleasure. And when they are asking for beds and your site is meeting the requirements and it is a shutdown, a lockdown, then why can we not use such an opportunity and still make money. This flexibility will allow revenue for the organisation. It is important to break down the stereotypes and create flexibility as needed” (EI 9).

7.6.2.4.4. Practicality

Design thinking solutions needed to also be practical. It was of little value to have everything in theory only without testing it practically. Hence practice was important. A participant asserted:

“It is something that should not be sitting in theory, but also put into practice. I think it will really help if, once you're done with this project then, head office needs to sort of look at putting it into practice, because sometimes we do these projects and then they are not put into practice. So, I would love to see this one being put in practice because I feel that it's it is going to change the game for the tourism industry” (EI 1).

Participants' viewpoints and relevant sub-themes were compared to previous research. The concept of design thinking has evolved over the past couple of decades and is broadly applied to a school of thought which trusts in its capacity to foster creativity and innovation in organisations (Shahrasbi et al., 2021). Experimentation, which can take the form of visualisation and presentations, low-cost field experiments and other means to get feedback on the opportunity, ideas and concepts, is the final common thread amongst diverse design thinking methodologies (Marion et al., 2021). From a product perspective, the practice of design thinking ensures a way to bridge the difference between the value of the customer and the expense of the solution by re-imagining potential interactions to inspire the team to constantly learn (Acker, 2020). It is a way for product owners to know when to rotate products and when to implement gradual changes. A core

element of design thinking is gaining deep insight into user behaviour and non-obvious user demands (Marion et al., 2021). Individuals and teams can utilize design thinking to better understand users' demands and produce great product/service solutions (Kwon et al., 2021). Design thinking has become a popular method for companies to use deep customer insights to improve their goods and services (Knight, Daymond and Paroutis, 2019). Design thinking aids in the identification of user requirements and their significance in the context of social and environmental challenges (Tariq et al., 2021). Customers must be understood holistically, which requires mapping their culture, context and personal experiences in addition to investigating their true aspirations, needs and concerns. It is thus feasible to produce alternatives; propose realistic strategic options; and provide more value to customers and businesses (Ribeiro and Souza, 2021).

7.6.3. Design thinking effectiveness and benefit for the Tourism sector

Design thinking was viewed as being effective. This was outlined in the key sub-themes below:

7.6.3.1. Innovation and new direction

Design thinking can bring about innovation and a new direction and trajectory for the sector.

7.6.3.1.1. Customisation

Design thinking allows customisation to be implemented, rather than generic services all the time. Such customisation comes from asking the right questions of customers and gauging their feedback. This allows the organisation to establish needs by which services and products can be customised accordingly. It also caters for and will attract a diverse range of customers. The views shared by respondents were similar:

“Design thinking being a way of, of looking at things from a customer perspective, and then coming up with ideas on how to address those, I think that benefits the tourist and it can benefit the tourist industry immensely. Because when you think of yourself, as a tourist, when you are traveling somewhere, the things that you are looking for are pretty basic, its comfort, its friendly people, it's a good feeling

environment. And if we, as people working in the tourism sector can get ourselves to understand exactly what it is that our clients are looking for, put ourselves in their shoes, that obviously is the winning formula” (EI 10).

“So, I think it only has a positive benefit for the industry. I don't see how we as an industry would go wrong as we wouldn't design a one size fits all, rather we create unique packaging for different types of customers. Like you may have the leisure customers with the families or the business clients or you can have school groups, so different markets” (EI 6).

“I think design thinking needs you to now and again have the morning meetings with your team, look into what can you do better in increasing the occupancy. And then what other opportunities are there that enables you to package your business, example, like we did with the Department of Health. We can also do the same thing and open more space into allowing our neighbours, I will say our stakeholders to kind of commercialize some of the businesses that you are unable to run because you have shortage of staff and have them pay rental fees to you” (EI 9).

“With all the provision, like what I just mentioned before, first, you search for those needs, what needs to be done? And then you improvise, try to see a way of to the tourists need? Why do we need to have a bridge yet close the other side? And how can we make it? And why? Why should we not have a wooden deck? And instead of having an eye on one because this is low maintenance and these kinds of things? I think, okay, will improve the tourism sector a lot” (II 1).

7.6.3.1.2. Think outside the box

As mentioned in the definitions theme, design thinking allowed for one to think out of the box and such creative thinking can lead to tourism innovation for the sector. A participant added:

“It is quite effective. Because obviously, it needs to be able to adapt, you need to be able to think outside the box, you need to be able to be innovative. Okay, so if you are following one method, especially in current times and the world is evolving” (II 2).

7.6.3.1.3. Embracing new methods

Design thinking allowed for the sector to embrace new methods of operation, as expressed by a participant:

“So, technology is social media, and is really what people are utilizing. So, if you don't transform your thinking, to become innovative and creative, then you're going to be left behind. So, you need to be able to hear all the changing times, though. So, I think quite frankly, it's imperative” (II 2).

7.6.3.1.4. Revolutions

Various industrial revolutions were also impending, and every sector needed to embrace such. This included the tourism sector. Hence design thinking allowed the tourism sector to start aligning to the needs and demands of the 4th and 5th industrial revolutions.

“I think it does. And maybe let me reiterate why I said that. I did say it earlier on. We are shifting from the fourth industrial revolution to a fifth industrial revolution, according to some beliefs. And if you look at what the fourth industrial revolution is based on, the fifth industrial revolution is at its centre has humanity, the Millennium developmental goals that the world is trying to achieve. It's all about people. And now if you have a methodology that puts human at the centre, and you have an industrial revolution, which puts people at the centre, the policy and the direction and the processes are aligned” (EI 3).

7.6.3.1.5. Objectives

Design thinking allowed for objectives to be met by the organisation and in line with the sector. A participant emphasised that:

“As a new approach to doing things. It can play a role in the tourism sector in how you design your objectives, or you sort of establish and populate your objectives. So, in establishing such new objectives, you use the thinking process, and in that engagement, in that forum to come up with the objectives. So, design thinking can play a key part in that” (EI 2).

7.6.3.2. Economic

Various economic benefits could be derived from the use of design thinking. These include:

7.6.3.2.1. Improvement of revenue

Of course, revenue generation was a key aspect. Revenue keeps the financial wheels turning. Hence, design thinking allows one to unpack new ideas and strategies for revenue improvement. This can entail new and improved processes; strategies for funders; and products and services. A few participants mentioned:

“By giving the tourism sector a direction, which means it will give it direction like I said, would have the plan from the design things they set up? Then we can always go back to the drawing board and look okay, have we done 123? Is this helping us? If not, then how can we, as the guides to redesign, or maybe we can still some point from design thinking to improve, but it will benefit us in terms of giving us directions” (EI 2).

“That will identify areas that were lacking and areas that we believe we can improve in order for us to generate more revenue. I believe that as the organisation this is what we must embark on. Because once we have a plan or strategy in place, we can use that strategy to approach the funders, knowing that we have got limited funding, we can use that strategy or plan to identify funders that can potentially come and assist us in implementing some of those ideas that will be generated out of that strategy development” (EI 5).

7.6.3.2.2. New market opportunities and growth

Design thinking allows for the sector to reach new market opportunities. A few participants shared similar views:

“It can help us tap into new markets that we probably never use. There are different types of tourism. People do travel for different reasons. It could really help the industry to tap into new market, re-package traveling deals” (EI 6).

“You are also in line with the economic changes that are happening around as too many people have lost jobs. So, design thinking will benefit in a way that makes it

more adaptable to the economic changes and on stakeholders' requirements, but also the flexibility allows you to cross over into another space and still flourish in it because you are willing to adapt and to be flexible. I will say Design thinking therefore will allow us to be more open to different opportunities and at the same time it strengthens the survival of the tourism sector" (EI 9).

7.6.3.2.3. Local Economic Development

Local economic development also gets promoted via the sector.

"I think to grow the sector, that's one" (EI 4).

"...and contribute to local economic development" (EFG3).

7.6.3.3. Environmental protection and sustainability

The design thinking approach can protect the environment and promote its sustainability. This was informed by the following:

7.6.3.3.1. Deriving products out of waste material

Some businesses used old waste material to derive new products.

"Let's say material- What can you make from this and now they don't want to use it so it's a lot better. So, when I'm presented with all these discarded newspaper, old fabrics, so I need to do a lot of thinking outside the box okay. So that I can be able to produce something. It's up to me to innovate, to create something" (II 1).

7.6.3.3.2. Reducing waste

Relating to the above, apart from creating new products from waste items, it also led to waste reduction. A participant added:

"I'd say for me, because I use a lot of recycled materials, okay, because my business model is based on sustainability where the goal is cutting waste and reducing carbon footprint Okay, so research shows that I'm supposed to produce something out of the okay" (II 1).

7.6.3.3.3. Protected areas

Design thinking can also help to conserve protected areas. This can lead to its sustainability.

“I will say that part of our challenges is that we don't have our plans and strategies for each and every protected area. I was saying to the team, one of the things that I believe we need to do is to ensure that we, we think out of the box and develop, and make sure each and every protected area, whether it's a resort, that we have got at least a tourism plan for that as well. You can call it a tourism strategy for that for that resort” (EI 5).

7.6.3.4. People and culture

People and culture become the centre of the design thinking model, which benefits the sector.

7.6.3.4.1. People and client-centred

By being people and client-centred, design thinking created value for the business and sector. Customers become very happy with services and they will return, which leads to more income and ongoing value. A few participants asserted the following:

“I think it can benefit tourism sector. Mainly the happy customer, customer getting value for their money. As well as retaining the customers that we have, so that we don't have the customer that comes into a place once and they never looked back. It can, it can create a norm- that the customers are so happy that they keep on coming back in that way. Then we also see the statistics going up, we also see the money that's flowing in, going up that, you know, the resort can even be able to function on its own on what it's bringing on the on the table. Because if you have happy customers, then definitely you will, you're going to make money because that design thinking is going to lead these happy customers to be telling others about, you know, how nice is it to stay in that place. You know, how I enjoyed and maybe I had this problem, and it was resolved like immediately and you know, so then it also encourages the new customers to want to visit the place” (EI 1).

“One which is human centred, because you're dealing with people either way. Whether it's your customers, whether it's your enablers, you're dealing with people” (EI 3).

“And two, to create value for customers” (EI 4).

7.6.3.4.2. Culture

Design thinking can hence be embedded into the organisational and sectoral culture. A participant explained:

“And I think the design thinking process, if it's if it's embedded as a culture now, and you are applying design thinking you're obviously fine tuning yourself to align to what is coming in the future. So, I think I think you have certain you have certain countries in Asia that have already aligned. We have NDP national development plan, but what are the country plans to the fifth Industrial Revolution. So, in essence, it's a matter of when not if, but when and are we preparing for it in that aspect. And I think I think design thinking will help to, to navigate that way and create that alignment to those goals” (EI 3).

The perspectives of the participants, as well as significant sub-themes, were compared to previous research. Organisations in all fields of the economy have embraced design thinking (Dunne, 2018) as a ‘user-needs’ or ‘human-centered’ process that leads to commercial innovation (Kwon et al., 2021). Managers may benefit from design thinking's advanced tools and methodologies (Vinni, 2021) as the advantages claimed include organisational change, creativity, customer focus, improved decision-making, organisational development and competitive advantage, leading to the adoption of design initiatives by many organisations (Dunne, 2018). Design thinking offers an alternative way of solving dynamic problems in tourism and the visitor economy and is useful for recognizing uncertainty and interdependence (Dredge, 2019). Design thinking necessitates stakeholder participation. This should not be limited to stakeholder feedback, but they should also take part in the broader process and make decisions (Tariq et al., 2021).

Tourism has great potential for accelerating expansion in all economic sectors in a manner that is sustainable (Khan et al., 2020). The South African tourism industry is

confronted by a number of issues that act as stumbling blocks to tourism development and undermine the goal of using tourism as a catalyst for socio-economic reform. The key answers to barriers are already established in the policies, institutions, legislation and other regulatory frameworks that govern the various problematic tourism areas (Mogale and Odeku, 2019). There is a lack of current tourism-related establishments to form partnerships with local communities, as well as inadequate incentives to support private firms that create jobs and boost local capacity development (Mogale and Odeku, 2019). Both the public and private sectors needed to form strategic partnerships to overcome hurdles to collaboration in order to reap greater benefits from tourism, according to Van Huy (2021). Moreover, tourism promotion has been acknowledged as a crucial approach for economic development, community development and poverty alleviation in developing countries (Mogale and Odeku, 2019). The design thinking approach has gained traction in the tourism industry, with the goal of offering a better visitor experience and increasing the quality of tourism services (Tung, 2021). Additionally, government has a critical role to play and has the responsibility to work with as many stakeholders and role-players as possible in the Tourist industry (Bojanala, 2021)

7.7. Theme 4: Leadership and Strategy

This primary theme focused on leadership and strategy, as represented in Figure 7.7 and Figure 7.8.

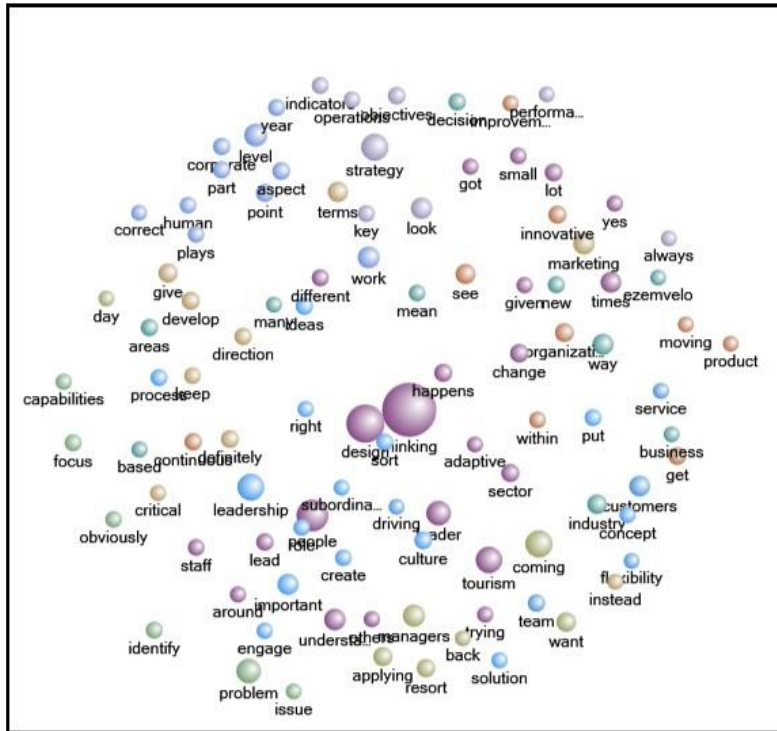


Figure 7.8: Word Cloud of Theme 4 - Leadership and Strategy

7.7.1. Role of leadership in design thinking

The role of leadership in design thinking was seen as pivotal for the following reasons:

7.7.1.1. Accountability and consistency

Leadership must drive the accountability and consistency aspects of design thinking in the following ways:

7.7.1.1.1. Lead by example

Leaders must lead by example, which therefore implies that they must make the effort to practice design thinking and drive it across the organisation in order for employees to follow. Some participants asserted their views of leadership in the tourism context:

“I will say that the role of leadership is very important in tourism. I will make an example, if I'm in the tourism sector, I am the manager, I manage the resort. If I'm the one that's not pulling up my socks to make things work, then how am I expecting my staff to do better. I feel that leadership, you need to be strong as a leader, to create a strong workforce that in a few years' time they can also be great leaders” (EI 1).

The participant further stated:

“Being a leader, you need to set an example because you also you also have your followers, your subordinates that are going to look up to you, and basically those subordinates are going to look up to you and follow your example. So, it's important that you show the right characteristics as a leader and also empower them to take up initiatives for the organisations and for themselves” (EI 1).

“Lead by example with a small rider to say that, strategies will change. And if you look at the design thinking, it's iterative, you try it, and you see what happens and then one needs to adapt, but in the adaptation, and the change component is the aspect of communication, the empowerment that you spoke of” (EI 4).

“So, for me here, how leadership can drive thinking, design thinking in tourism, communication is key here, empowerment is key here. And leading by example is

key here, because strategies will keep on changing, the days that strategies remain static are gone. So, the rider that I wanted to put into perspective is yes, led by example but understand that strategies will change” (EI 3).

7.7.1.1.2. Consistency

However, there must also be consistency in leadership so that ideas and strategy can be seen to fruition. Currently, there seems to be a change in leadership at times. Hence so one leader’s plans get changed when another leader is appointed. Continuity and consistency were prominent amongst these participants, who stated:

“We have had challenges in Ezemvelo. In terms of leadership, and just I don't believe it's really anyone's fault except the organisation because we haven't been hiring, even the leadership positions, some of them have remained vacant, or we've had someone acting for a long period of time” (EI 10).

“We don't get rid of the noises that they come across then they are not able to, perform well. As I've indicated before, part of the challenges that we have in our organisation is not recruiting. So, you also have this inconsistency of moving managers around most of the time, I mean, as an individual I have moved quite a number of times within the organisation, but in some cases, you'll find that there's no rationale as to why you are moving that specific leader. Sometimes you get moved into the position that you are not specializing on, and you can see that it's done just maybe to frustrate you” (EI 5).

Amongst other respondents, the trait of leaders taking ownership was key:

“I think ownership by leaders, it also encompasses the inconsistency. If we as the organisation, we are going to be jumping up and down sideways and so on, we will never reach where we want to get to, and this is what is happening within our organisation, I see that as a challenge. And up until we reach a state whereby, we are stable, then our contribution will not add value at all. I think that's what I was trying to say to say” (EFG 4).

“If you're a leader, you take ownership, and then you give a strategy, and then you stick to it. Don't start chopping and changing. There must be a plan to it, and follow

through that plan, in terms of what the objectives and where you are at any given point in time” (EFG 7).

7.7.1.1.3. Accountability

Leadership must be accountable so that design thinking can/will happen.

“There must be an executable plan. Accountability in terms of delivery” (EFG 9).

“Leadership needs to be proactive rather than reactive, this is where accountability comes in” (EFG 4).

7.7.1.1.4. Top-down

As with most strategy initiatives, a top-down approach is needed for design thinking in order to instil it across the organisation. Leadership has this role to play. A participant added:

“I think it's very critical for people to understand what design thinking it is, as a concept, not from the practical point of view, or not at operational level. That's what I want to say, that it has to start from the top. By the top, I mean, from the ministerial level, MEC level, executive level management level, right to the level where it can be applied by the entire team” (EI 4).

7.7.1.1.5. Buy-in

Leadership also has a role to play in obtaining buy-in for design thinking. This includes buy-in from employees, funders and other related stakeholders, as asserted by a participant who mentioned:

“Very important, because it's what we were talking about earlier, when I said, at Giants Castle as one unit of Ezemvelo, I can come up with a lot of ways to improve our product and service. But unless the leadership of Ezemvelo as a whole buys into that, so the manager at Hluluwe hilltop can come up with her innovative ways of how we can win basically as a business, as an organisation. Yeah, unless our leadership buys into that, and they believe in the same sort of philosophy, it's not going to fly, it's not going to, to work. The buy in is very important as it will allow for flexibility to innovate and move the organisation forward from whatever problems” (EI 10).

7.7.1.2. Promoting organisational culture

Leadership must promote the appropriate organisational culture for design thinking to thrive. This includes:

7.7.1.2.1. Creating a Design thinking culture

Creating a design thinking culture as part of organisational culture will include the following:

7.7.1.2.1.1. Create a Design thinking culture

Leadership must create a design thinking culture by ensuring that the concept is well defined; staff understand the concept; problems are brought to the fore; and everyone collectively bring suggestions to address the problems. Furthermore, allocating the right staff and resources at the right level will create that culture. Multiple participants shared similar views:

“So basically, as a leader, you're going to create a culture with your subordinates a culture of design, it's important. And then when that subordinate employee or worker has a suggestion, that culture is infused into practice design thinking in that manner. So, they come up with suggestions and propose it to you, and you engage as a team, sort of follow the process and, and sort out the problem and come up with solutions as well” (EI 1).

“Well, definitely there is a role because if you want a culture within an organisation, a culture permeates through leadership, and leadership will have a role to see acceptance, to promote the use of the methodology to reward if it deems right, that that's the right thing. Otherwise, it will be back to managing are you doing it or you're not doing it? I look at it as a culture issue. Are you doing things the right way? Are you putting humans at the centre, and it becomes something that leadership must promote, otherwise, it's not going to work? So, the task of, of implementing design thinking is important. It's reliant on the leadership creating that culture. So, it flows seamlessly throughout the organisation to all personnel” (EI 3).

“We also need to prepare a culture within our resorts, of design thinking as we have different type of people that are visiting. So, you have a person who's dealing with maintenance, but that person is not necessarily going to understand what a person

at reception is doing. And how do you then deal when the guest is asking you about the hiking trail and all of that. You therefore need to be informed of what is happening in your area” (EI 9).

“People need to be empowered to understand why it's changing; people need to be adaptive. So, my point that I would like to add is create an adaptive culture’ (EFG 1).

“From a leadership perspective, driving a design thinking culture is that a leader needs to apply what we call a passionate curiosity” (EI 4).

“Continuously asking the questions why, why? I mean, if I can make an example, most of the brilliant ideas that came innovative, the ideas that came into the industry in general, they come from asking the same question why and that encouraged people to be innovative. And even when something fails, you don't put punitive measures, because they failed on a concept that has been tested. But so, people are encouraged. So generally, the leader needs to be curious and passionate about the industry. So, when people see the leader that is passionate, they you know, it rubs off on everyone” (EFG 3).

7.7.1.2.1.2. Current realities

Leadership must be cognisant of the current realities affecting the organisation and sector in order to identify and solve problems.

“That's normal way of thinking we're not so because design thinking depends on the needs. So, what people need, what the place needs, it's not about what is documented. It's not about what happened last year, or what we were using 10 years ago. It's something that is a need at that moment. So, I think with design thinking, it will be better for solving problems by just using any other way of energy” (II 1).

7.7.1.2.1.3. Customers

Customers are at the heart of design thinking. Hence leaders must capitalise on this to create such a culture.

7.7.1.2.2. Surveys and feedback

Customer feedback on products and services must be solicited via surveys and other means. This can inform creativity in the products and services offered.

“One of the ways that you can actually do it is through design thinking surveys. You know, obviously allow people to get feedback on the product and the service that you render, and you identify issues or problems within the workspace. Then you afterwards you can always apply design thinking to, to the problem that you're that you're trying to find a solution to whatever the shortfall that you're experiencing the company” (II 2).

“I think it will work because actually, I use design thinking every day, but I didn't realize it until I came to you to your class. Because everything. Like for example, I tell you one big example is when I started my business, the ladies said, why don't we have shoes that are matching our dress? But then I say to myself, but I don't say manufacture shoes. I'm not just going to start investing on machinery for shoes, and then investing on indication? No. So what I did is, I started asking for the ladies to come with their own shoes. And what I do is I renew them. So, I cover them with the same fabric that I do with the dresses” (II 1).

7.7.1.2.3. Product creation and expansion

Relating to the above, products and services can then be expanded to reach new markets for increased revenue. New products and services can also be created. A participant stated:

“But I don't even have to say, when the customer wanted a bag like this, but I have cut the design looking like that. Why don't we just enlarge it or change the shape. If the bag was a novel, we can also cut a circle, if you cut a square, you can also get a triangle. So, I've seen that concept now has saturated in my small business. And I can see I'm also influencing my competitors” (II 1).

7.7.1.2.3.1. Employee strength

Leadership must consider employee strength in terms of their performance because, apart from customers, it is the employees who keep the wheels turning. These participants expressed the need to reward and empower employees by stating:

“maybe one would need to look at how do we reward people who within that sphere, if we link reward to the performance and adoption of culture that will also fast track the process” (EFG 2).

“So, I'm so lucky to have employees that always have not disagreed with me, they always, when I bring an idea like that, they take it whole 100%. And we all work together. And now it's not like I have to do design thinking alone, I can see, my employees also have taken over” (II 1).

7.7.1.2.4. Understanding

A comprehensive understanding of design thinking must be instilled across the organisation and at all staff levels. This is the role of leadership since such an understanding must revolve around what design thinking is about, capabilities, resources, customers and needs, as well as ideas. A few participants asserted similar views:

“So, leadership is critical for people to understand what the importance of tourism is and why they need to undertake or contribute towards tourism, for those who are contributors, and why they should participate for those who have capabilities of participating, particularly small businesses within the South African context” (EI 4).

“It's very important in the sense that you as a leader, you have to understand design thinking. So, you can sort of use it for your subordinates. If you make them understand the topic itself, it will be easy for them to support you in what you are trying to implement. I think it's important to make them understand because when it comes to problem solving, and you have the design thinking in place, they can offer ideas and solutions based on the same process” (EI 5).

“Because you are dealing with different people and people who are affected by too many things. So, leadership skill is very vital in a sense of understanding your customers. Understanding the background of why people are there, because some come for the peace, others they want to play some music, others they come for events, others they do sports, so you need to know what exactly is happening around you” (EI 9).

“For a leader your work is to lead. So, if you can be able to have leading quality, you understand the needs, the needs of people or the needs of places. And as a leader, you can be able to influence the people that that you're leading. So, I think with a good leader that can understand this design thinking we are better placed.” (II 1).

7.7.1.2.5. Teamwork and synergy

Leadership must create a culture of teamwork and synergy with everyone in order to achieve design thinking. Everyone should be on an equal footing as a team. These statements were emphasised by some participants:

“So, you're seeing the synergy between senior management, the guests, the subordinates, your staff, all play a critical role in in the tourism sector, but also, from a point of leadership. They need to be engaged with all levels on an equal basis” (EI 2).

“I will say allow others to take a lead when it's convenient, or when it's necessary to do so. Because hogging the leadership position or the front position, sometimes it makes people really to sit back and not engage or they tend to disengage. But if you're a leader, you allow other people even to lead in your presence. That also makes them to equally feel the responsibility and the ownership of the process that is undergoing” (EFG 5).

“And then can we, because not all problems can be not all problems are at people, for instance, some problems definitely can be combated without even people getting together. But some issues need a collective. So, you feel this whenever there's a team, it definitely must be noted and agreed. And in terms of applying design thinking, leadership is required to navigate correctly, and to see through in terms of like a strategy and to get an end result that is desirable for everybody” (II 2).

7.7.1.2.6. Passion

Leaders must first have a passion for design thinking themselves.

“Oh, well, we'll see how it pans out. I think that in the tourism industry, you need to have passion for the tourism industry, because I feel that in any type of career that you choose, you need to have a passion for that” (EI 1).

7.7.1.2.7. Reassurance and environment

The leadership must be reassuring to employees and provide a supportive environment to foster design thinking. A participant stated:

"It's very important in the sense that I mean, if you are a leader and you don't make the environment of your team safe for them" (EI 5).

Yet another participant mentioned:

"And to be able to have a voice that says, "Okay, we're going ahead with this, and we're not going ahead with that". So yeah, I think, also, obviously, as a leader, you want to obviously increase flexibility. You want to give people the chance to be able to brainstorm in a comfortable environment and it's all up to the leader to be able to say, "Okay, what is the issue that we're facing?" (II 2).

7.7.1.3. Resources

Leadership must find ways to obtain resources to support and design thinking. This view was informed by the following:

7.7.1.3.1. Human resources

Human resources remain a critical resource. This includes all employees who have a role to play. People should be placed based on their skills and expertise but rotated accordingly so that they can learn new things and be able to ensure continuity. A few participants emphasized:

"Design thinking needs to flow from the top to the bottom staff as well, for it to work on its full potential for the organisation. It doesn't mean it should just be us as resort managers that apply the design thinking" (EI 1).

"Also, human resource aspects for a leader. Like for example, if you are a hospitality manager, you have got staff management which is one of the core performance areas, we have got to make sure that we have trained people to work in the industry who are trained continuously, they know what is happening in the industry" (EI 6).

"So, rotate people around in different departments be able to do different tasks at any given point depending on what is the event all about. So, in that, it helps you not to employ too many people and at the same time you maximize in generating profit in your revenue returns. A leader in the tourism sector plays a critical role in empowering and multi skilling personnel, and it also serves as a learning and development initiative. So, a leader is responsible for ensuring that the workforce is

empowered to carry out the duties required specifically in any given circumstance” (EI 9).

7.7.1.3.2. Capabilities and assets

There must be a balance of capabilities to assets. Without such balance, there will be a capability deficiency which will inevitably cause more liability to the organisation. It is not only about preserving assets but enhancing capabilities as well. Some participants emphasised to this by stating:

“Extremely! The reason we do not have capabilities to run our establishments in the tourism sector, the way it should be run is because we didn't have the right leadership for a very long time” (EI 3).

“Leadership should have identified that you need both capabilities and assets. Instead, we kept on focusing on the assets and not the capabilities. If we have the correct leadership in place, the tactical planned executions will focus on all the key areas, which you have haven't had the luxury of in the past. And that's why you are having this gap in the in the human and capability aspect of it. The focus was only on the assets and preserving the assets, but not preserving and managing the biodiversity because that's what we were therefore” (EI 9).

7.7.1.3.3. Development

Products and services must continually be developed to keep up with the latest trends.

“So, leadership plays a role in all that, developing products, making sure that the grading standards are bits, the levels of cleanliness, inventory as well, so it's a lot of things for leadership” (EI 6).

7.7.1.3.4. Investment

Leadership must roll out adequate investment in order to achieve growth and return on investment.

“And secondly, to make sure that it is also investment, that there's adequate investment to sustain and grow it into the future” (EI 2).

7.7.1.4. Governance and direction

Leadership must provide adequate direction and governance. This deduction was guided by the following:

7.7.1.4.1. Focus and direction

It is the role of leadership to promote focus and direction on design thinking to staff. This includes current status and the objective setting of where design thinking is going. Multiple participants shared similar views that leadership must provide a course of direction by stating:

“Okay. Yeah. Okay, so the leadership was there, but it wasn't providing a roadmap of such a path that could achieve all objectives” (EI 3).

“The role of leadership in tourism is a critical one and can actually drive the tourism sector to reaching its objectives in so many ways, but critically, so in driving the brand, of what the brands that are actually supporting that tourism. So that's the most important part in what leadership can do” (EI 4).

The participant further added:

“And I think more than anything, I mean, once a person is in leadership, they have an aerial view of so many things. So, they can be able to influence how that design thinking needs to happen, or be able to take multiple variables, and connect them such that they can be able to create value” (EI 4).

“Leadership also gives direction definitely; it does give that direction to your team and also to develop strategies to appeal to your market as well” (EI 5).

“As a leader for your managers and subordinates and new workers, it is very important as in terms of giving direction for the resort and to be an example to the workforce. I realize that most of our supervisors, you need to keep reminding them. So, you need to have a program or like develop something that will keep them interested instead of doing one and the same thing” (EI 9).

“And also, for me leadership, obviously needs and it sort of like creates direction, towards where design thinking should lead, and coaching as well definitely assists people to be able to think in a certain way, you know, so sometimes when people are thinking and brainstorming, people are very easily distracted, very easily shifting from their main focus. So, leadership definitely helps in terms of identity remaining focused, staying on course, and to show direction and give leadership skills” (II 2).

7.7.1.4.2. Control and governance

Leadership should exercise control and governance. This entails ensuring that all areas of the organisation and its services are properly maintained and up to standard. It is also to ensure that staff are doing their jobs correctly. All of these aspects support design thinking.

“The role of leadership is a critical one because there has got to be somebody in control. There's got to be somebody maintaining the upkeep of the resorts, the standards of cleanliness, customer charter, recording of stats, making sure stats are captured correctly and timeously, because it's also important, you need to know who is coming, where are they coming from, how did they get to know about your resort” (EI 6).

“I think it's important but not the most important thing. It doesn't matter how innovative they are, what matters is the governance. How accountable they are in doing their job, for the decisions they make. It is wonderful being innovative but if you cannot produce the goods then it's a complete waste of time. That's where we are at the moment” (EFG 4).

7.7.1.5. Decision vs action

Decision-making and relevant action must thereafter be taken by leadership. This statement was enhanced by the following:

7.7.1.5.1. Decision-making

Leadership must make informed decisions on all aspects of the organisation/industry. A participant asserted that:

“Leadership for me is having decision makers in the tourism industry as well, we need to have decision-makers in terms of everything about tourism, marketing, finances, where the finances go, how we repackage tourism products, how we profile tourism products. So, leadership will play a role in all of that” (EI 6).

7.7.1.5.2. Action-based

Furthermore, decisions must be supported by relevant actions.

“Leadership needs to action these ideas, because when I'm here on a day-to-day basis, I have, first-hand knowledge of what, of how we can get where we want to be as an organisation, but unless my seniors are in there with me, it's not going to work. That support needs to come from the top as well” (EI 10).

7.7.1.6. Solutions and satisfaction

Design thinking can bring customer satisfaction and solutions if leadership drives it correctly, and is guided by the following:

7.7.1.6.1. Customer satisfaction

A leader must know what customer needs are in the industry in order to change accordingly to satisfy the customer. A few participants provided similar statements:

“They know what is happening in the industry and also know what the customer satisfaction index is. There is lot that you need to do as a leader in the tourism sector and in a resort and training and development of staff is a key factor” (EI 6). The participant further added:

“A leader using design thinking can drive a team or lead a team into coming up or encourage them to come up with ideas, to understand the market the tourism markets. A leader could drive a team to ensure that customers are cared for, the empathy exists and exercised towards the customer to ensure they are given a meaningful experience. Additionally, a leader in designing thinking would support future thinking, and provide directions on solutions that may work or not” (EI 6).

“And you need to be very flexible and be adaptive and have some sort of empathy of what people have experienced especially with the COVID, so others have been affected, others have been sick, you will find that they are no longer comfortable to

sit in the restaurant, they want to do room service. So, you need to have that flexibility as a leader towards the guests. You are not going to say that you are not going to be able to do that, yet you are able to cook, the only thing that you are not able to do is to do room service. Yes, we are not a hotel, we are not saying we are but the changes of the current times and the COVID has taught us how flexible one can be around the needs of the customer” (EI 9).

7.7.1.6.2. Solutions

Leadership must drive solutions and practice an open-minded approach by re-looking at the products, services and operations thereof.

“You also need to understand that as a resort, you just don't have to think about the resorts. As hospitality you need to be open minded, in a sense of what are we conserving. What are other product lines that we can introduce in terms of marketing or activities for our guests” (EI 9).

“Governance should talk to; how do we solve the tourism crisis in this area? How do we drive accountability to deliver?” (EFG 9).

7.7.1.6.3. Knowledge and empowerment

In order to progress, knowledge and empowerment are pivotal. Hence, leadership must ensure that they as well as employees are empowered with the relevant knowledge of the sector, industry and latest happenings. This also entail skills development as well. A participant stated:

“Leadership in design thinking is very important too. Because how would you be how would you lead without designing? Because, as you said, you mentioned that you need to define, you need to do a prototype, you need to be able to replicate what others are doing, so it is a study altogether. So, design thinking is relevant in that sense. I will say in aspects of tourism, it will be more on education. It will be more on training people and giving them development and giving them the tools that they can be able to use so that they can be able to solve problems that they encounter. The leader plays an important part in that, so the leader needs to take responsibility and empower people to understand design thinking and apply design thinking correctly” (EI 9).

Another participant asserted:

“You therefore need to be informed of what is happening in your area. So, the trainee staff that we have as our students, they come very handy in that because they then learn the whole aspect, from housekeeping level, to catering, how to prepare meals, how to be flexible with what the guests will require at that moment. They will have a sort of a knowledge base that's been spread throughout the organisation to all personnel” (EI 9).

Participants' viewpoints, as well as major sub-themes, were compared to previous research. Design thinking is a popular instructional approach for developing creative thinking and problem-solving abilities (Yilmaz, 2021) and is a collaborative strategy for solving challenges that is centred on the user (Gopinathan et al., 2021). More experimentation with other forms of partnerships, such as co-design, co-management and co-production, is needed to establish a more inclusive governance model (Tariq et al., 2021). Having teams develop concepts and test them more thoroughly in organisations might be beneficial (Marion et al., 2021). For organisations and companies across the globe, the threats raised by the COVID-19 pandemic are unique, interdependent and multidimensional, and CEOs must now reconsider their plans, transform their supply chains components begin the process of re-building their various customer service platforms (Cankurtaran and Beverland, 2020). Since companies struggle with product-market fit, design thinking needs to be interwoven with strategy. This issue has to do with how businesses create items that are relevant to their customers (Knight et al., 2019). However, despite the significance of more integration between design and strategic management, the match is not perfect. To begin with, introducing new ways of thinking into companies poses significant hurdles (Knight et al., 2019). If managers are to effectively explain the notion of design thinking, they must first comprehend the key principles and then try to build ways that will assist others to reach the correct attitude (Ramanujam et al., 2021). Teamwork and Synergy are also critical factors for Leadership as design thinking can play an integrative role between functional areas that are at odds with each other by introducing practices that complement existing organisational approaches, in addition to impacting ways of knowing and functioning in organisations (Knight et al., 2019)

Tourist development and people's socio-economic transformation are hampered by a lack of tourism education facilities (Mogale and Odeku, 2019). It is therefore essential for leaders to create a culture of design thinking as organisational culture is influenced by design thinking, putting a greater emphasis on strategy's process elements (Knight et al., 2019). The process of combining design thinking ideas and practices with company culture is one of the most effective approaches to assuring successful implementation (Ramanujam et al., 2021) as the goal of the design thinking framework in general is to develop independent design thinkers within firms, rather than 'design thinking companies' (Ramanujam et al., 2021).

7.7.2. Design thinking as a strategic lever and management tool to develop strategy for the tourism sector

This key sub-theme examined how design thinking can be used as a strategic lever and management tool to develop strategy for the tourism sector. It was informed by a plethora of sub-themes, namely:

7.7.2.1. Leadership level

It should start at a leadership level for the following reasons:

7.7.2.1.1. Creating the definition

Leadership must create a definition of design thinking relevant to the organisation. The definition must revolve around the understanding of design thinking and its applicability. A participant stated:

"However, people need to understand what the design thinking is and how applicable it can be in different areas. Because design thinking is way too broad for it to be understood. And I don't think it's a popular terminology that is used in the tourism fraternity, if you can go around and ask all the tourism practitioners and say, what is design thinking? And they will definitely give you multiple interpretations of it" (EI 4).

7.7.2.1.2. Corporate vs operational

Leadership must instil design thinking in the corporate-level strategy in order for operational strategy to align to it. This can be, for example, how much revenue is needed (Corporate Level), and hence what percentage of occupancy can meet that

revenue amount, and what marketing strategy is needed (operational level). The contributions from participants on this sub-point included:

"I normally deal at a corporate strategy level. And at the corporate strategy level how this would probably play out, because we talk about like you said, how much of revenue Do we need, what percentage occupancy we need, how many visitors we are targeting, etc. at the corporate level, then at for example, sales and marketing level, I would see them fitting that very easily. For example, we know that the marketing environment has shifted over the last three, four years, a lot towards social media rather than mainstream. So that can easily be implemented" (EI 3).

But at the corporate level, it's going to be difficult to say, at this point, how does the design methodology work? Look for sure. Some of the aspects will definitely work. Like the empathizing part, the defining part, because defining your problem statement is one of the key aspects, the ideating, what is our ideal position? That that is going to be but again, where I have a bit of a confusion in my own head is the prototyping and testing part. I was saying correct that from a corporate viewpoint, that's what I'm saying it's going to be difficult to go to the last two, because those are normally long-term aspects. But obviously, you use your short-term functional indicators to give you an indication of how you're going year on year. With nothing, I think, from a corporate sort of indicator point of view" (EI 1).

"So, it's more subjective in terms of what your what your what your key desires are as an organisation, as opposed to as an operational level where you can be objective about the execution of those functionalities. Correct. Right. So, you're saying that on a tactical and operational level design thinking can be used to use to develop strategies. So, it's, it's more applicable day. And on the corporate from a corporate strategy point of view? It's, it can be but it's limited. So, you can't go the whole process. Although the empathize the idea, defining the idea, could play a small part in giving some direction?" (EI 6).

"At a corporate level your human centered approach is still there. And from a hospitality perspective, you have to be human centered. I don't believe it can be otherwise. But it's kind of then stops or takes a pause at the ideate level. What is your ideal picture looking like? No, I hear you, I hear you. Because it's in the

corporate strategy and the corporate stock my point of view, it does stop you can go on through ideas and make it work when you have certain targets at that level. So yeah, there will be a difference in how it is” (EI 9).

7.7.2.2. Identifying new methods and opportunities

Design thinking can bring new methods of working and identify new opportunities.

7.7.2.2.1. New areas and markets

New areas and markets can be reached. Design thinking allows for one to be innovative in service and product offerings and attract a new market, especially in times when some markets are threatened. For example, due to COVID-19, accommodation is threatened, but customers can still come for other leisurely activities even if they do not stay for long periods. Hence other activities should be brought to the fore during this time. Participants shared similar views on reaching new markets through enhanced strategies underpinned by the use of design thinking by stating:

“And given that the tourism sector has been impacted so much by the COVID-19 pandemic, the unrest in the country. So, there's been a lot of volatility, both from a COVID point of view. It needs to be re strategize, given the current times that we live in, Times have changed. You know, I'll make an example. We used to have what we call the Golden Oldies, you know, those like the high high-income earners, or the senior citizens that are retired that are willing to spend the money spenders who like tomorrow, versus what we have now. We call them the black diamonds in the middle, they're no longer coming. And they were willing to spend and deplete them as they come in, but they're not willing to spend because they are affected. So, we need to revive, we need to change the way we're doing and then revise and say guys, these are the target markets, and they don't have money, how to address this, so that they will come and spend but yeah, things need to be changed” (EI 2).

“To add a social media level, which is happening currently at Ezemvelo, not to the scale that one would want it to be, but then this model will fit in quite well. Because then they can, they can sort out, they can empathize, they can define the problem statement, they can ideate, the current the ideal thing in terms of marketing, whereby you have a lot of supporters of friends of Ezemvelo, if you can call it that way. So,

friends have Ezemvelo concept ideated, prototype it on Facebook, or Twitter or whatever, within a location, if it works you test it further on the broader market. And you come back and say, what are the lessons learned, etc, etc. So, at that level, I think it will work because it's functional strategies going into the operational spheres” (EI 3).

“My view on design thinking is that it is a strategy or a way of doing things that should definitely be adopted. So basically, if you're using design thinking as a strategy level it will help us as a sector in tourism to break into new ground, into new territory, into new markets” (EI 6).

7.7.2.2.2. New ways of operations

New ways of operation can be looked at during the bleak time of Covid. Virtual options can be considered as well especially now as we are embracing the fourth industrial revolution. Externally sourced services can also be enhanced, and costs can be saved, but provided that agreements are enforced. Participants expressed the need to modernise their mode of operations by stating:

“The second aspect is, we are looking at new working environment, we are looking at innovation and disruption being the key, and both of which require decisions to be made, decisions to be made, taking into consideration various aspects and decisions to be tested very quickly. Because the fourth industrial revolution is characterized by high impact, high velocity changes. It's normal business, don't have the time to make a decision and wait to see what happens a year later, you need to be able to with some level of accuracy, say that if we make this decision, based on the prototyping and testing, this is a direction that we are aiming for. And that's basically now taking you to the concept of risk and uncertainty” (EI 3).

“Some virtual or visual things that people can do, for example, if you apply within the tourism, or ecotourism” (EI 4).

“Also, with regard to some of the activities that we are providing, as I said we also have agreements in terms of the food and beverage, outside service providers doing our food and beverage outlets, we've got curio shops and so on. i mean those are the areas that we believe that if we were to manage them properly using the design thinking, there's quite a lot that can be derived from those agreements. And we can

use the design thinking as a strategy to external stakeholders as well to develop strategies, with the different suppliers and stakeholders that we work with along the way” (EI 5).

“I think it's about time that as some of our areas look at design thinking to improve the situation. I mean, given the fact that we are fortunate as Ezemvelo, because we are a part of the government, when there are so many hotels, how many lodges that are closed at the moment? and i mean, that's purely because they are not having the leverage of applying this kind of a tool that can assist them in terms of coming up with, you know, new ways of doing things” (EI 10).

7.7.2.2.3. Re-define and re-create

Design thinking allows for the opportunity to re-design and re-create the product and service vision. It allows for one to come to a point of reflection of where the organisation is currently and how to project a trajectory towards the future, taking into consideration current and future challenges, as well as revolutions. Therefore, the concept of redesigning and recreating becomes possible for the sector in this regard via design thinking. A few participants asserted:

“I think yes, it can be used, it can be used, like it to give us direction, it will be able to, to, if need be, will revise our goals in our mission. Because now we are living in a different time, the times have changed. So, this will give us an indication off of either we revisit our mission and vision, and then maybe set new objectives and goals going forward, in order to direct the situation at the moment of interest in sector” (EI 2).

“Because like we all know we are in the fourth industrial revolution, so we have got to think along those lines, we have got to see the world as a global village, a global environment. Design thinking compels one to constantly re-visit the strategies that are already there, by looking at what is happening now, what is it that the customers need now? Who is a customer now, how do they search for accommodation? How do they travel? (EI 6).

The participant further added:

“So yes, design thinking would encourage or compel us to keep revisiting how we do things, how we market. It is a constant exercise of getting out of your comfort zone and changing the way in how we operate” (EI 6).

“At this point, we need to be innovative. In terms of the product offering, like we said today with even sun international that used to sell beds is talking about experiential tourism rather than comfort. So that the strategy is one where it would be innovative, it will be adaptive, it will be one of continuous improvement. And I think the emphasis was that aspect of continuous improvement is key in terms of strategies” (EI 5).

7.7.2.3. Change and improvement

Design thinking can bring about change and improvement and influenced through the following:

7.7.2.3.1. Problem identification

Design thinking helps to identify problems in a proactive way, which can then lead to multiple solutions for the problem.

“Obviously, the thing is to identify the problem. That's where you need to identify problem because whenever you're applying design thinking, there must be something that you're focusing on, to identify the problem. And then you need to research the problem, then that whole process is designed to research the problem, you find out what caused the problem, how then can you manage it, like you basically research the whole problem. So, you can do this in any sector, even the tourism industry, and it's definitely to be able to conduct the COVID-19 challenge or rather meet any other challenge, you need to apply design thinking, because obviously, there are issues. So, you need to identify the problem and you need to research it” (II 2).

7.7.2.3.2. Change and transition

Design thinking helps to embrace change and transition. Organisations are currently in changing markets, and services and products must change accordingly. It therefore allows one to think innovatively in terms of marketing, service, operations and related to accommodate change. A participant mentioned:

“But at the same time design thinking then helps you, with your marketing team, to be able to do special rates and how you can keep the business going. And also, what I realize is, instead of having to have rates that are more for international travellers, you now have domestic rates, then you go according to what people can afford. So, it's again, that flexibility that is required by the management to be able to adapt to, so you look at your occupancy level, you do your specials, now and again” (EI 9).

Another participant asserted:

“Yes, design thinking can be used as a strategy in the tourism industry, even in the marketing industry, because especially when it comes to marketing because marketing needs, it lives and breathes in innovative thinking. The marketing industry needs this, actually tourism and marketing need a person to think outside the box. People have been used to reading the newspaper, now they don't even want to read that anymore. Now things are available digital, is available on social media, people want virtual stuff instead of tangible stuff” (II 2).

7.7.2.3.3. Continuous improvement

Design thinking can bring about continuous improved by eradicating complacency:

“It can also come down to an innovation strategy as well. I think continuous improvement is one of the strategies or innovation that can be done. Once you become complacent, you tend to be left behind. So continuous improvement is one of the critical strategies that has to be continuously implemented in your service offering” (EI 4).

7.7.2.3.4. Empowerment

Design thinking should also focus on the educational component, whereby all stakeholders inclusive of community can be educated on the importance of tourism and tourism resources.

“Another part of strategic intent would be to focus on the educational side of it, where we educate our schools, our learners, the University on the importance of conserving the nature and why do we need to conserve and biodiversity has its own capability, so it then gives you that unique selling point” (EI 9).

7.7.2.3.5. Fifth Industrial Revolution

The Fifth Industrial Revolution is impending and design thinking can help the industry to embrace the changes that come with it. A participant added:

“Most definitely. Because, as I mentioned, tourism is about people. People that are your customers that come and visit and pays for your visit. But at the same time, people who are enabling the business to work we are in in an environment where we are moving from the fourth industrial revolution to the fifth. I'm still trying to understand what the fifth industrial revolution is. But based on limited understanding is that it's going to revolve around humanity. Now, if you have a concept, or maybe methodologies aligned to the fifth Industrial Revolution, then obviously your methodologies are going to be more useful” (EI 3).

7.7.2.4. Communication and engagement

Design thinking should be built on open communication and engagement and is guided through the following:

7.7.2.4.1. Continuous engagement

Engagements built on communication with staff and stakeholders can foster teamwork and solution-building to a maximum.

“Enhancing our communication. So, if we can enhance communication, training and training and continuous engagement of the team, so that they become part of the solution. So, in that way, they own up to whatever solution because this, one of the problems that we've identified is that the concept of design thinking it's relatively a new and foreign concept, so I think continuous communication and engagement and that can help address that” (EI 3).

7.7.2.4.2. Customers

Engagement with customers will allow for their views and perceptions to inform their needs, which can be factored into design thinking.

“I think it's an excellent approach. I truly think so. Like I said, my management style really is focused on where we're going, right, where are we going wrong? What are our customers saying? Where should we be focusing on at this time? And where we are in terms of our projections, where do we want to be investing our fund (EI 10).

7.7.2.5. Competitive advantage

Design thinking can bring about competitive advantage, which is always needed.

7.7.2.5.1. Capabilities vs competitive advantage

Rather than only focusing on assets, one can capitalise on building capabilities such as innovation, efficiency, response and being disruptive, in order to build competitiveness.

“When I look at competitive advantage, I think about two aspects. One, which is the assets, the other one, which is the capabilities. The capabilities that we need is innovation, disruption, response responsiveness. And those are part and parcel of decision making. And I'll give you another example. We are short of resources, manpower. And I suggest that because it's above my paygrade, to make the decision to close down certain of our underperforming results. But because of the fear of bad publicity, we have not been able to take that decision. And that was put on the table four years ago by me to the board of directors” (EI 3).

7.7.2.5.2. Collective vs competitive

If areas made collective efforts to attract tourism, then all establishments can benefit. It should not be about competing against each other but rather it should be about uplifting an entire area.

“I think design thinking will work effectively if at a national or at a provincial level, institutions can be able to collaborate it instead of competing with each other. So, if you were to be able to say in the Drakensberg, if I were to visit the Cathedral Peak area, and then you combine your activities and you market them around the tourism sectors like the economic development departments, so they are aware of what you

are doing instead of you doing it by yourself. So being out there or being on the map, as well as using your municipality, so that they can recognize what is your establishment and what do you have to offer” (EI 9).

7.7.2.6. Customer focus

Customer focus is the crux of design thinking. The following is how design thinking can enhance the sector based on this. It is based on the following:

7.7.2.6.1. Customer service

Design thinking can enhance the customer service if one puts themselves in the shoes of the customer to understand their needs. This can build customer loyalty. This can include improving service offerings, operational efficiency, comfort, pricing. A participant mentioned:

“In terms of customer service, I honestly believe, listening and knowing exactly what people are looking for, and looking at what the majority of your customers are looking for, and then basing your activities, your daily operational activities on that making sure the room is comfortable. Making sure the reception at the gate and at reception is what it should be. And then that actually, in my opinion, is the winning formula. That's what's going to keep people coming back” (EI 10).

While another participant affirmed:

“I definitely think so, even though I'm just trying to think of an appropriate way of putting it. One of the most important processes for me with design thinking is coming up with ideas. So, in management at any given time, you have got to always come up with ideas and solutions and you spoke about putting yourself in the shoes of others, in the shoes of our customers, so understanding what the customers' needs are, and then developing a marketing strategy from these needs” (EI 6).

7.7.2.6.2. Repeat customers

Repeat customers can be an ideal source of ideas because these customers are obviously happy with the service, which can be used to attract more customers.

“When we are clear about what, especially repeat customers, are looking for, we can streamline our message that we send out to the public based on that, as well as finance, which areas of our operations needs the funding the most and what needs improvement the most? So yes, I believe so, design thinking can be used to develop strategies” (EI 10).

7.7.2.6.3. Feedback analysis

Customer feedback must be collected and analysed for determining preferences and trends. Strategies can then be built around this, with a participant emphasizing:

“If local managers like me were to, it's not everyone who takes what the customers are needing or what they're seeing really seriously. So, the one way would be to really prioritize that. Being curious and wanting to know what your customers are thinking. And basing your activities around that. I think that's how it can be used. It is important to engage with the customers and seeing what we can improve” (EI 10).

Another participant mentioned:

“We would then look through as a team, and the supervisors of the different units like restaurants, shop, housekeeper and maintenance. We look at where the majority of the compliments have come from so maybe it's breakfast in the restaurant, and where the majority of the complaints have come from, and maybe it's the receptionist was unfriendly. And on a monthly basis, we go through those and the supervisors know exactly which areas because if a tourist came in, and the receptionist was unfriendly, then we filter down to the receptionist that was on duty on that day” (EI 2).

7.7.2.7. Experimentation and applicability

Design thinking can be applied from an experimentation perspective.

7.7.2.7.1. Trial and error

Trial and error can be an ideal way to determine what works and what does not. This can be done with discretion. A respondent added:

“So, you need to identify the problem and you need to research it, find ways of combating the issue and then you identify a particular method you implement it, then you test it. So, you test the method that you that you identified and then obviously if it doesn't work, you try another method. So, until you until you find one that is correct for that particular issue or problem solving” (I1 2).

7.7.2.7.2. Realistic

Design thinking can allow the sector to tackle realistic issues and put strategies in place accordingly.

“With design thinking, we can develop new strategies for the tourism sector, so we can put strategies in place to, to take us as tourism out from what we are going through currently and move forward towards achieving more realistic objectives” (E1 5).

7.7.2.7.3. Turning problems into viable solutions

Design thinking will allow for current problems to be turned into viable solutions, guided by the following:

7.7.2.7.3.1. Current examples

Some examples given by respondents included creating bridges over wetlands, ponds with fish in them and other related ideas:

“Yes, yes, what I've seen, I will tell you, when I know I understand design thinking I lived in an estate last year, you know, in, in, in a gated community, okay. And I remember the area behind my house, they used to be there was mushy land, you know, this wetland. And the ladies always complained that the children cannot be able to cross the other side of the field of the where we had a common a playground, just because there was a small stream passing there. And my neighbour decided to put a log, and everybody started going there. But the log also had its own challenges because some people, their coordination is so bad that they can't walk on a small log. So, it is the complaint went on and on. But then I was thinking how you can make a small bridge there and make a small port where kids can play with water it made. So, I was thinking is the same here. A lot of people in Ballito complain about lots of things so it wouldn't work. But you see, I thought we could make a small like,

like a pond that we can put some nice fish that the tourists can come and see. And I think is a lot of things we can do instead of all the time complaining, the government is not doing this. I think there's a lot of design thinking that can be used, especially in a country like South Africa" (II 1).

7.7.2.7.3.2. Past problems

Past problems can inform current knowledge on how to solve similar problems when they arise. Hence, a knowledge strategy of past problems can help. A participant expressed:

"I think that you could create a knowledge strategy in the sense that you create a knowledge base of past problems and how they will resolve so when these problems arise, again, you have the solution, documented and published or electronically available for your staff. In talking about knowledge, we keep track of all input and comments on a monthly basis" (EI 10).

7.7.2.8. Goals and objectives

Design thinking can assist in achieving goals and objectives and is guided by the following:

7.7.2.8.1. Achieve goals and objectives

Goals and objectives can be defined, and design thinking can be utilised to achieve them. This can include formulating the strategies necessary to meet goals and objective via design thinking. A few participants asserted the following:

"So, I think it's an excellent approach as design thinking will help steer the organisation and resorts to reaching the objectives. If they are out of line, you can always use the design thinking process to realign to the desired goals" (EI 10).

"I think it can, first we need to have objectives. And secondly, aligned to those objectives, there should be key performance indicators. And then those indicators, they need to have targets, attainable targets" (EI 4).

"So, under objectives, there can be multiple different strategies that can be listed such as marketing strategies, pricing strategies, human capital strategies. Design thinking can be applicable to all of these, but more than anything, it needs to be

looked at from service offering or operations at the operation level. So, it does apply in designing our pricing. People can understand and see the value for money for what they are paying for” (EI 5).

7.7.2.8.2. Direction

Direction can be sought on where the organisation and sector need to be going. Design thinking can assist in this. A participant confirmed:

“Like if like I said, if we get funding, they know what's needed, but I think it can be used to give us like a guideline and a direction. So, the design thinking process can be used to develop a strategy that can be used, it can be used” (EI 2).

7.7.2.8.3. Measurement

Design thinking must be built around measurement. This can be done by implementing indicators, performance contracts and a customer satisfaction index. A participant exclaimed:

“And then those indicators, they need to have targets, attainable targets” (EI 4).

Another participant supported this statement:

“In addition to that, people have to have performance contracts. Besides performance contracts, they should have some indication of how performance is happening” (EI 3).

While another mentioned:

“there should be a Customer Satisfaction Index that needs to be put in people's efforts needs to be done or in a way that at least it focuses on a certain objective, and that objective can easily be measured” (EI 5).

7.7.2.9. Human resources

Design thinking cannot be achieved without human resources.

7.7.2.9.1. Staff integration

It would be important to integrate staff into the design thinking approach no matter whatever level they occupy. This will make them more solutions- orientated and

resolve problems timeously, as well as enhancing customer service, as affirmed by a participant:

“I think it can be definitely used as a strategic tool for the tourism sector. And the fact that as managers, we need to understand it fully, and its potential in everything. And I will say that, if ever we have new staff, or the students that we take from UKZN, for me personally, I will suggest that it is driven by us as managers in the resort. So that when we take up like students, maybe we meet in one resort for a few days, to get them through the design thinking and how it came about. And how we are applying it in our resorts, so that you don't end up you as a manager, being the only one that needs to apply that design thinking when it comes to problems that arise in the results” (EI 1).

The participant further added:

“Because it's not going to be like I'm always there. So, if I'm not there, then the problem arises, then the personnel at reception can apply design thinking into the problem rather than waiting for me to come back for from wherever I've gone to, I will say especially when it comes to our visitors, because if they have a problem, now, they want their problem to be solved. Now, they don't want you telling them that they should please wait for the manager, she is going to come back tomorrow, or she is going to come back in the afternoon. So, they also need to be taught how to apply design thinking so that we all sort of work hand in hand. So, it becomes increasingly important to create a culture throughout the resort from the management type to the bottom. And everyone applies design thinking in the same manner” (EI 1).

7.7.2.9.2. Human resources vs seasons

It would be adroit to assign human resources according to seasons because each season brings its own number of visitors. It would be unfeasible to have many staff during quiet seasons, hence perhaps assigning a ratio of staff based on seasonal demands can save money. A participant stated:

“It will also even go as far as how we then acquire human resources. Through design thinking we could come to a point where we say, let us not keep people at work permanently but rather employ only when you need staff, for example, employ what

we call seasonal or temporary workers during peak season. I think that is also a management or strategic tool to say, let's not keep people throughout the year even though they may not be needed. It does align our prices with peak seasons and all that, so effectively we will be looking at a marketing strategy, a human resources strategy and also a pricing strategy, all 3 are inter-linked and using the design thinking methodology and processes" (EI 6).

The perspectives of participants, as well as main sub-themes, were compared to findings from earlier studies. Design thinking provides a way for companies in the corporate and public sectors to create original goods and services that meet latent needs, which in the face of rapidly evolving consumers, supply chains and hyper-competition is considered a source of competitive advantage, a way of innovating, handling organisational change and of solving "wicked" issues (Dunne, 2018). A range of methodical techniques to building on information from ethnographic study is another prevalent feature of design thinking. Personas can be used to construct and frame user traits, as well as mind-mapping the opportunity space and structured brainstorming to generate and classify ideas (Marion et al., 2021). Design thinking for tourism should be considered for the following applications, as an approach and a collection of practices:

- To help express, beyond employment and development, the intent of tourism and the visitor economy, i.e., to recognize social, economic, environmental, cultural and other types of value created by tourism (positive and negative).
- To diagnose and evaluate visitor management issues collectively.
- New, diverse and/or alternative business environments that are fit-for-purpose can be jointly created and innovated; and
- To develop and prototype the strategies and activities of ground-up visitor management (Dredge, 2019).

Organisations are now hastily required to think beyond conventional methods of thinking and doing, considering the novelty, difficulty and severity of the Coronavirus pandemic (Ribeiro and Souza, 2021). Designer's prototype and test what does not yet exist, which makes the process of design thinking an especially suitable way for companies to tackle the diverse issues of the global business landscape and solve the wicked problems that are now surfacing (Cankurtaran and Beverland, 2020).

For some businesses, overcoming the crisis may be the best possible outcome, but for others, the use of design approaches and tools may result in improved reputations; forward and backward integration; and new markets (Cankurtaran and Beverland, 2020). The processes within the design thinking methodology help to consider and integrate a broader spectrum of voices than those typically invited to engage in the diagnosis of issues and challenges (Dredge, 2019). For industrial marketers who were unexpectedly faced with a shortage of customers and a potentially catastrophic future, the COVID-19 pandemic caused a number of wicked problems (Cankurtaran and Beverland, 2020). Empathy can be cultivated through design thinking, which leads to a growth mentality, essentially new thinking processes (Gopinathan et al., 2021). By generating customer value, design thinking can be converted into a competitive advantage; makes business more innovative through knowledge development; and is considered the "next competitive advantage" (Dunne, 2018).

Design thinking is a toolkit for creative problem-solving, knowledge creation and collaborative creativity that requires deep participation (Yilmaz, 2021) as collaboration is a group of brilliant people who work together to develop critical thinking skills in order to solve challenges more creatively (Noh and Abdul Karim, 2021). The focus on human connection in design thinking encourages innovation; integrates public organisations in new ways; and contributes directly to the development of public value (Vinni, 2021). Design thinking is beginning to affect how corporate executives approach strategic management, particularly how they incorporate customer data into their day-to-day operations (Knight et al., 2019). If an organisation changes the way it functions, a design thinking approach to producing the most effective innovations necessitates a visionary leader who supports democratic decision-making and is strong enough to face different ideas without being deterred (Tariq et al., 2021).

7.8. Answering the Key Research Questions

The key research questions for this research study are as follows:

7.8.1. What are the challenges within the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal?

This study triangulated data from literature on the tourism sector and primary data collected from interviews and focus groups.

After collating and analysing the responses from research participants, many challenges within the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal surfaced. Amongst the most and significant challenges currently were:

- COVID-19.
- Risk of Staff Exposure.
- Supplies and Resources.
- Budgets.
- Infrastructure.
- Human Resources and Capabilities.
- Collaboration.
- Safety and Security.
- Marketing; and
- Product Offering.

Historical challenges included:

- Budgets and Resources.

The challenges that surfaced, as identified and contributed by research participants, enabled the researcher to fully understand and comprehend the real issues and challenges facing the tourism sector. The identification of these challenges will support the research in aligning to the objectives and purpose of this study, which is: **The role of design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal.**

7.8.2. How can the role of leadership drive design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal?

One of the key variables of this research study was to examine the role of Leadership in using design thinking in the tourism sector. The study found that all participants viewed the role of Leadership in design thinking as pivotal.

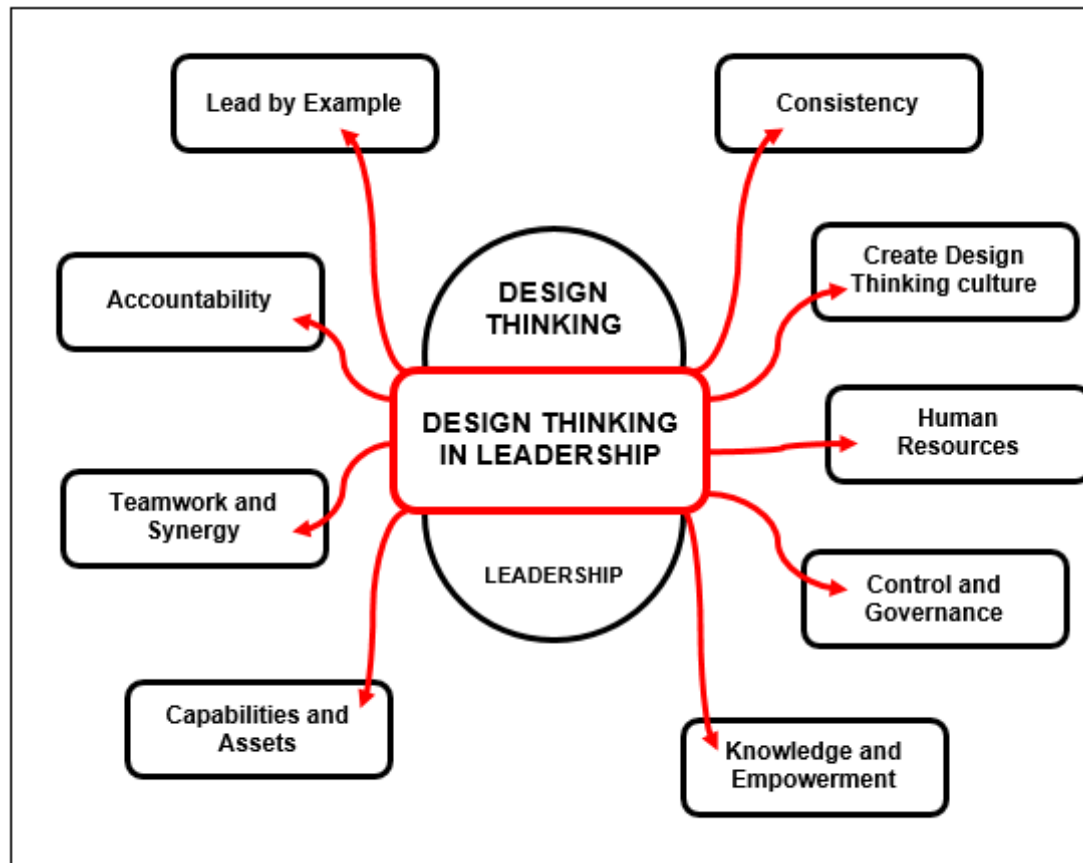


Figure 7.9: Factors influencing design thinking in leadership

Source: Constructed by the researcher (2021)

The main elements that emanated from this research and supported this perspective included the following, as represented in Figure 7.9:

- **Lead by example**

For design thinking to be effective in the tourism sector or in any other sector as well, leaders must set an example for their followers, which means that they must put up the effort to practice design learning and spread it throughout the organisation.

- **Consistency**

It is also important for leadership to be consistent in order for ideas and strategies to be realized. Currently, there appears to be a shift in leadership every now and then and as a result, one leader's ideas are altered when a new leader is selected. These participants exhibited a high level of consistency and continuity.

- **Accountability**

The study found that design thinking can or will happen if leadership is held accountable.

- **Create a Design thinking culture**

It was established from this study that Leadership must establish a design thinking culture by ensuring that the concept is effectively defined; that staff understands the concept; that problems are identified; and that everyone contributes solutions to the problems. Furthermore, allocating the appropriate personnel and resources at the appropriate levels will help to establish that culture.

- **Teamwork and Synergy**

According to the findings in this study, leadership must evaluate staff strength in terms of performance because it is the employees, not the consumers, who keep the wheels going. In order to achieve design thinking, the leadership must also foster a culture of collaboration and synergy amongst all employees. As a team, everyone should be on an equal footing.

- **Capabilities and Assets**

Human resources should always remain the most important asset. All personnel that have a role to play are included in this. People should be positioned based on their talents and competence, but they should be rotated so that they can learn new things and maintain continuity. In addition, the ratio of capabilities to assets must be balanced. Without this balance, the organisation would suffer from a capability deficit, which will inevitably result in increased liability. It is not just about maintaining assets; it is also about improving capabilities.

- **Control and Governance**

It was found that leadership is responsible for providing proper guidance and oversight. Control and governance should be exercised by the leadership.

This requires ensuring that all aspects of the organisation and its services are kept in good working order. It is also to make sure that employees are doing their tasks correctly.

- **Knowledge and Empowerment**

The study found that knowledge and empowerment are essential for progress. As a result, leadership must guarantee that they, as well as their workers, have up-to-date knowledge of the sector, industry and current events. This includes the development of talents as well.

In summary, the role of leadership can drive design thinking in the tourism sector. However, the above-mentioned elements (outlined) and contributing factors need to be complied with.

7.8.3. What recommendations can be made through the use of design thinking to enhance tourism in KwaZulu-Natal?

Firstly, the study found that all participants were encouraged by design thinking and confirmed and agreed that design thinking would be a great tool to support improvements and innovation in the tourism sector. The following factors influenced the support of this view, as graphically presented in Figure 7.10:

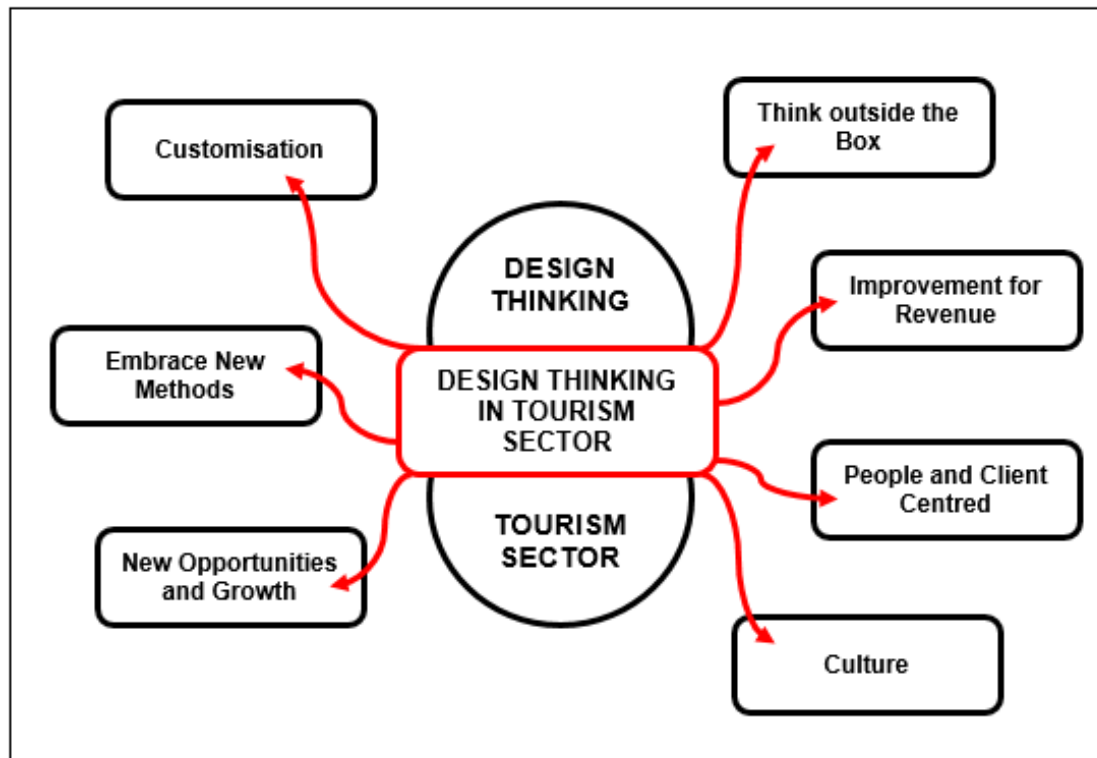


Figure 7.10: Factors contributing to design thinking improving business in the tourism sector

Source: Constructed by the researcher (2021)

- **Customisation**

Customization can be implemented, instead of generic services all the time, due to Design Thinking. Customers are asked the correct questions and their feedback is gauged, resulting in personalization. This enables a need to be identified, for which services and products can be tailored accordingly. It can also be offered to a wide spectrum of customers, which will entice them.

- **Think outside the box**

Design thinking helps people to think outside the box and this type of creative thinking can lead to tourism innovation.

- **Embracing New Methods**

The industry will be able to adopt new operating procedures as a result of design thinking, such as keeping up with the latest technology which allows for real competitiveness and most importantly customer satisfaction.

Moreover, customers will appreciate the reliability and modern service methods at their disposal. In the internal space, the use of new technology as inspired by the design thinking process allows the internal mechanisms of an organisation to be refreshed.

- **Improvement for Revenue**

The financial wheels of an organisation keep revolving due to increased revenue. As a result, design thinking enables the exploration of new revenue-generating concepts and tactics. This could include new and enhanced procedures, financing tactics, as well as products and services.

- **New Opportunities and Growth**

Design thinking assists the tourism sector to seek new business opportunities by being more open to alternative possibilities, whilst assuring the sector's existence.

- **People and Client-Centred**

Design thinking will add value to the business and sector by focusing on people and clients. Customers may be so pleased with services that they will return, resulting in increased revenue and long-term value.

- **Culture**

Design thinking should be integrated into the organisational and sectoral culture by aligning and tweaking to correspond and prepare for what is coming in the future.

However, if design thinking is to be successful in the tourism space, it is highly dependent on the following key factors:

- **Implementation**

Design thinking must be adopted at the operational level in order to speed up processes and inform decision-making at that level. Ground-level design thinking might also be beneficial. It does not have to be a top-down strategy- it can also be a bottom-up one because no one knows the ground better than the people on the ground. Management has a top-down view, but not a

bottom-up view. They must meet with staff at that level to gain a better understanding of events and challenges.

- **Change Management**

Change must be implemented and managed in accordance with design thinking as the process will not succeed until changes are made at all levels.

- **Collaboration**

To ensure a collective response, collaboration becomes the focal point. This necessitates collaboration with all stakeholders, including management, all levels of staff, customers and the general public. This is because all inputs must be considered and the design thinking approach can be based on a variety of ideas, resulting in a wide range of solutions. It will also require collective platforms to be created, which will include meetings, consultative platforms and feedback mechanisms to be set up with the primary objective of people working together and developing workable solutions.

- **Customer Feedback**

Any process implemented should factor in customer feedback as an integral part because it is imperative that communication with the customer establishes if customer needs are being met.

- **Assets and Capabilities**

Assets could be matched to capabilities via design thinking, enabling more effective problem-solving and service enhancement. If talents are absent, they must be described using the design thinking paradigm in order to determine what exactly is lacking in terms of skills, experience or certifications.

- **Markets**

Markets could be better understood, which could assist to expand present market reach and/or open up new ones. Through the application of design thinking, packages can be built as needed.

- **Service offerings**

Given the current state of COVID-19 and related issues, service offerings will have to be re-assessed.

The study found that design thinking can improve business in the tourism sector through various contributing factors, as outlined. However, its effectiveness is highly reliant on other factors such as implementation, service offerings and feedback mechanisms (amongst others) that will need to be properly structured and aligned.

Secondly, the study found that participants were keen to embrace design thinking in this sector and provided a range of initiatives to support this objective. These initiatives, as expressed by the participants, will drive the implementation of design thinking in this sector and align with improving resilience and sustainability for business in this sector, as represented in Figure 7.11:

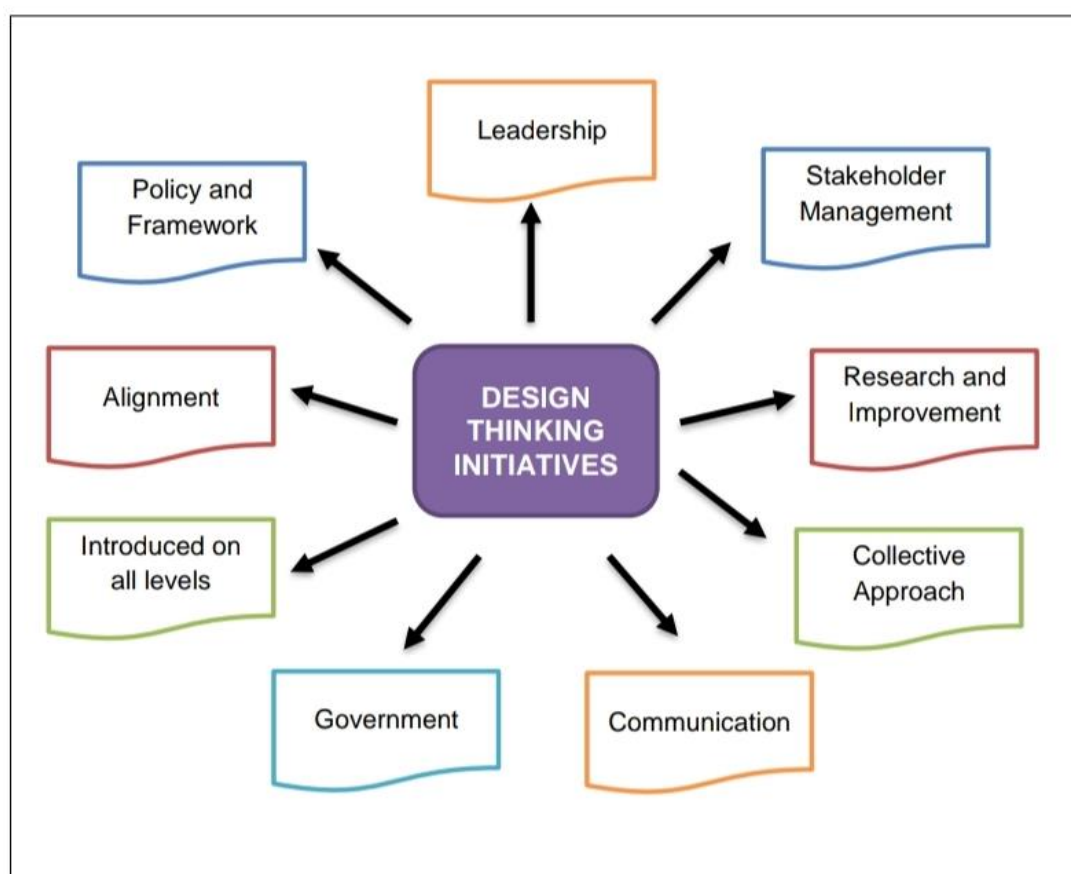


Figure 7.11: Design thinking Initiatives for the tourism sector

Source: Constructed by the researcher (2021)

Nine (9) key *initiatives* were identified in this study, namely:

- Leadership
- Policy and Framework

- Alignment
- Introduced at all levels
- Government
- Communication
- Collective approach
- Research and Improvement
- Stakeholder Management

It all starts with **leadership**, as the concept must be spread throughout the organisation. They should motivate employees in this manner and **establish frameworks** and resources to support them. To include design thinking, **new policies** should be established properly. Similarly, **frameworks** should be developed so that the organisation has a sound design thinking framework. This can be used to control the procedures involved. After policies and frameworks have been created, the organisation must align them as processes are driven by **alignment**.

The study further revealed that design thinking must be introduced **at all levels** from the top to the bottom in order for everyone to comprehend what it is. Going forward, the government must also play a role. The **government** should make sure that organisations have the resources and infrastructure they need to enable design thinking. Rigid engagement forums should be initiated with Government by the tourism sector. The findings suggest that governments play an important role in this process and should make concentrated efforts to assist industries in flourishing.

According to the findings of this study, **Communication** was seen as extremely important and required to be open, transparent and effective. Communication can stimulate idea generation, which is a crucial attribute of design thinking. To incorporate design thinking, a **team effort** was required. This means that everyone, including lower-level employees, should be included. While executives are in charge of strategy, they may not be familiar with how things work on the ground, so they should also be included in the process. This may provide a more thorough approach to design thinking. A multitude of views surfaced in this study indicating that **research** leads to **improvement**. As a result, initiatives to gain in-depth views such as customer feedback, market research, various perspectives and perceptions, as well as survey procedures, will be required. **Relationships** surfaced as being

essentially critical, especially with other stakeholders. This comprises stakeholders in the community, investors, funders, service providers and other tourism-related interdependencies.

7.9. Contribution of this research

The first contribution of this study is that it has proved the existence of design thinking in the tourism industry, and that there is still huge potential for growth. The researcher noted that although none of the participants in the study were able to clearly define design thinking in its textual sense nor fully unpack and explain the five (5) stages of design thinking, there was significant evidence to suggest that the human-centric base of design thinking was clearly espoused as a key phase for the tourism sector.

The second contribution is that of Collaboration, which was evident in this study as being essential and was considered a significant factor. When it comes to tourism projects, constructive collaboration is essential, especially if sustainability is a priority (Li et al., 2021). Design thinking was the perfect platform to ensure various and dependent stakeholders within the tourism chain working effectively together. A significant suggestion surfaced of setting up a Tourism Sub-Committee, which is hereby proposed as part of this research contribution. A Tourism Sub-Committee, using design thinking, will create an identity and ensure solutions to all problems, issues, challenges and uncertainties facing the tourism sector. These committees or forums, underpinned by the design thinking methodology, could easily penetrate the most challenging of problems encountered by the tourism sector and provide multiple solutions.

Additionally, Leadership and Design Thinking mixed well and was evident in the research outcomes, with the former being able to use the attributes to create various strategies and strategic outcomes. The researcher found design thinking in the leadership of the tourism sector, from the ministerial level to the most junior managerial level, to be most essential. The outcomes from this study reveal that design thinking in leadership gives direction and promotes a definition and awareness of design thinking. This ultimately allows for a culture of design thinking to be active amongst all levels of the organisation, as well as to maintain the same

standard of problem solving across all levels of responsibility and execution, while ensuring that everyone is committed to being fully customer focused.

Design thinking can also contribute to identifying gaps in processes, human capital and service offerings. In doing so, design thinking is considered unique for its multi-pronged approach to problem-solving, ultimately generating true for the end-user and for those facilitating the iterative process.

In Chapter 1, the researcher emphasised that this study was considered revolutionary as it sought to integrate three (3) key variables of design thinking, tourism and leadership, on which no previous studies were published.

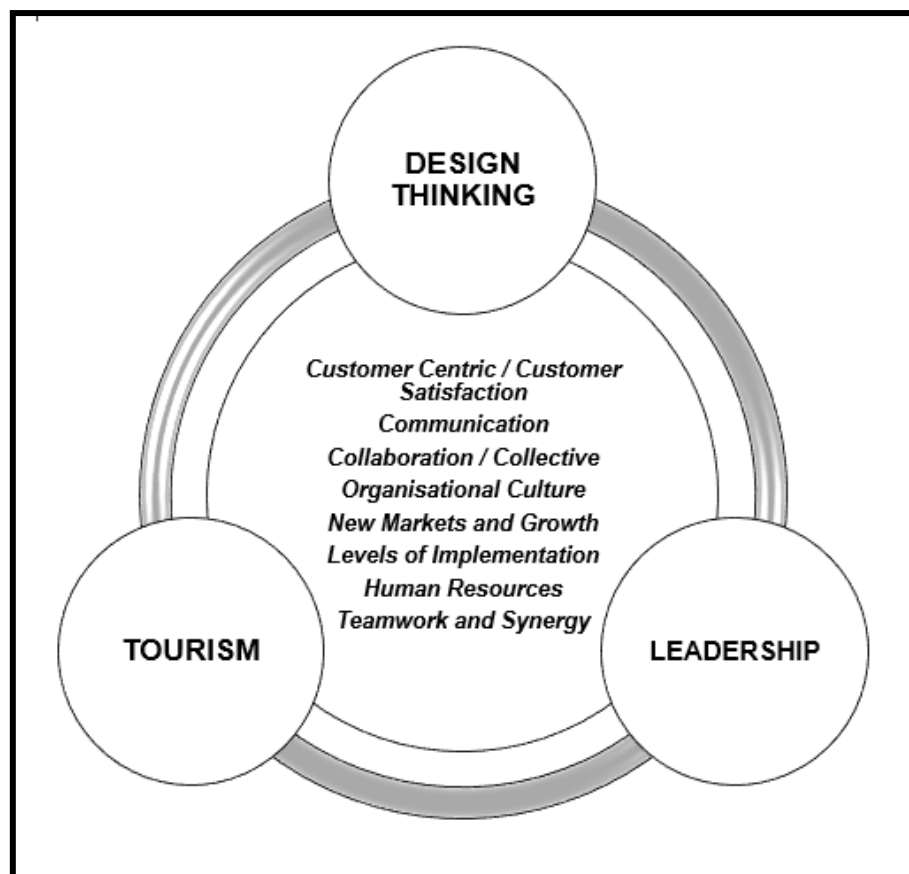


Figure 7.12: Integrating Design thinking, Tourism and Leadership

Source: Constructed by the researcher (2021)

The evidence emanating from this research study provides a link between Design Thinking, Tourism and Leadership, as illustrated in Figure 7.12. This relationship and its related outcomes can serve as an ideal platform for leadership within the tourism sector to establish a solid framework of design thinking within this sector. Ideally, this

link can serve in any other sector as well, as the related outcomes are fairly generic and applicable to multiple sectors. From the tourism perspective, this relationship can give rise to many different categories of collaboration, which is evidently lacking. The creation of a framework will lead to policies being created, giving rise to governance measures that will form a control on proceedings, developments and objectives of the tourism sector. In recent years, the convergence of design thinking and strategic management has generated much attention. Several of the world's top strategy consulting firms now include design as part of their services (Knight et al., 2019). Thus, in summarising the contributions of this research study, the researcher has developed a model for the tourism sector to serve as a starting point in embracing design thinking into their organisations, executive and operational levels, establishments, product and service offerings, and ultimately in customer feedback and engagement sessions. The use of a design thinking approach to tourism development could be quite beneficial. However, until recently, there has been little research on how to put this strategy to work, with most case studies demonstrating novel solutions developed by the process (Tung, 2021). This model is presented below.

7.9.1. Design thinking model for the tourism sector

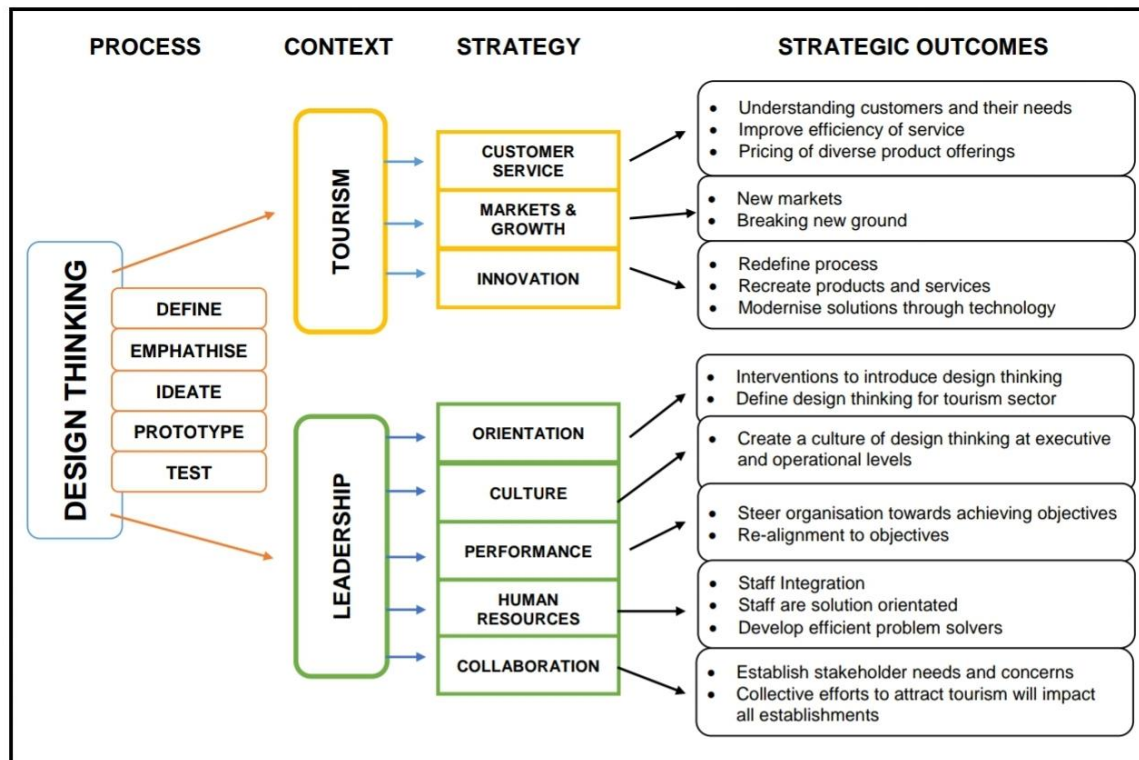


Figure 7.13: Design thinking model for the tourism sector

Source: Constructed by the researcher (2021)

This research sought to recognize the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal. The valuable outcomes have allowed the researcher to identify key strategies that are applicable for tourism and leadership. Given the challenges impacting the tourism sector currently, the data surfacing from this study provided adequate reasoning for such strategies to be created. Once the key strategies were identified for this sector, the researcher then identified the strategic outcomes that will be applicable for each listed strategy. The model presented in Figure 7.13. has been developed and proposed for the tourism sector and its leadership to confront their challenges strategically through the effective implementation and use of design thinking. A number of iterative divergent and convergent procedures are used in the design thinking process (Tung, 2021). The researcher further proposes that this strategic model can be used with various customised strategies that may be identified by the tourism sector, once they

collaborate and engage amongst key stakeholders within their own circle and environment.

7.9.2. Conceptual Design thinking framework for tourism (derived from Study results)

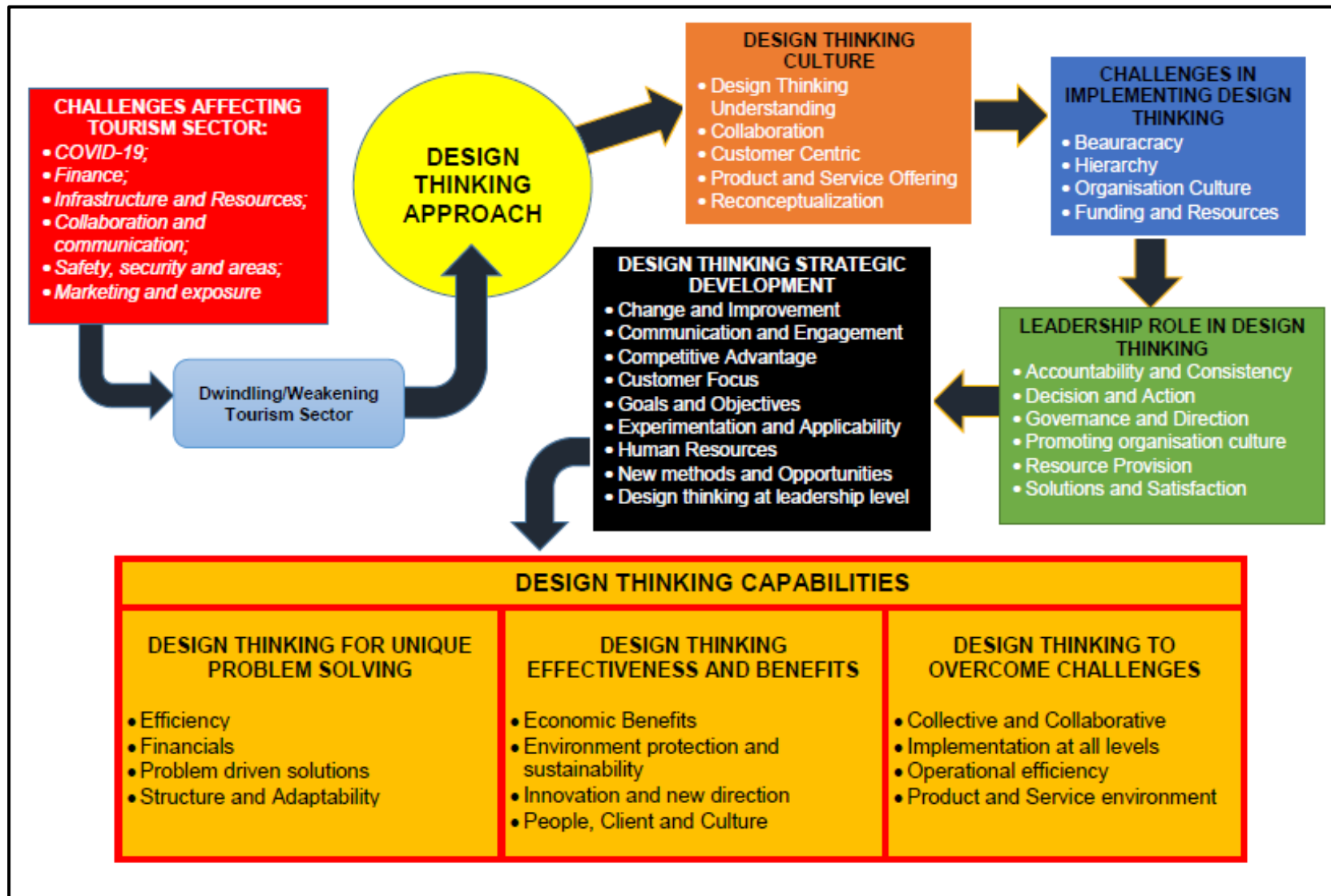


Figure 7.14: Conceptual Design thinking framework for tourism (derived from study results)

Source: Constructed by the researcher (2021)

The challenges identified in the tourism sector have resulted in a weakened tourism sector. This research study explored the role of design thinking in tourism and leadership. Upon introducing design thinking to tourism and leadership, the first initiative would be to identify the challenges hindering the implementation of design thinking. Leadership has a strong role to play in this by working with staff and realising the potential of design thinking and breaking barriers thereof. A design thinking culture can be created by developing an understanding of this process across the organisation and at all levels. This process would experience challenges in implementation and would therefore require the highlighted elements to be addressed for effective implementation. Upon the creating of a design thinking culture which is driven by leadership and understood at all levels, alignment towards design thinking can be achieved. This can then make design thinking a strategic lever of the organisation and a design thinking strategy can drive Organisational Strategy. Finally, the process will culminate with design thinking capabilities and benefits being realised for the leadership, organisation and tourism sector.

This model (Figure 7.14.) is a conceptual model developed from the results of this study. Further testing would be required on the model at statistical and practical level. This can inform future researchers and studies.

In addition, comparable studies should be conducted in other African towns that wish to learn more about design thinking in the tourism sector. However, most of these areas lack the necessary information on how it works. Instead of more traditional theories, this research could serve to expand on the strategic model produced within this study as a starting point for similar future investigations. This is due to the fact that attempting to simplify the research will result in a loss of a thorough comprehension.

7.10. Conclusion

The chapter commenced with the introduction of the discussion chapter and then outlined a chapter coverage until Chapter Six of the research study. The research methodology used in this study was then outlined. The four (4) key themes were then presented and discussed. The chapter then proceeded to the discussions in answering the key research questions, which concluded with nine (9) key initiatives

being identified. Thereafter, the researcher presented the contributions of this research study by firstly presenting the link that has been identified between Design Thinking, Tourism and Leadership. These outcomes then allowed the researcher to present the design thinking Model that has been developed from this study for the tourism sector. Finally, the researcher was able to present a Conceptual Design thinking framework for tourism. The next chapter will provide a detailed yet compact outline of each chapter in this study and will conclude with recommendations for the tourism sector.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Introduction

This final chapter of this research study summarises Chapters One to Nine and provides practical and theoretical recommendations for future research. This summary unfolds in a sequential manner. As a result, the first part of this chapter discusses the context and background that was included in Chapter One, followed by discussions on the three literature chapters, commencing with Tourism, then Design thinking and Leadership. The research methodology used to collect and analyse data is reviewed. Results and observations from the qualitative data collection process, as illustrated in Chapter 6, are discussed briefly. This comprehensive thesis concluded in Chapter 7, through a discussion of the data, including data triangulation, the three key research questions and the contributions of this research study. Finally, the recommendations and conclusion to the study are presented in this chapter.

It is important to note that, to date, no literature or previous research has been undertaken to establish a structure or model using design thinking in South Africa's tourism sector. As a result, not much applicable literature was available for reference. The process of collating a number of different theoretical and practical disciplines will always add an additional layer of complexity, especially in the manner in which the various elements interact. Nonetheless, significant results have been reported and will lay the foundation on which to build future research.

8.2. Context and background

A number of factors currently affecting the South African economy were highlighted at the start of this thesis, which provided a background to the challenges faced by the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Rising unemployment levels, falling real GDP per capita and a grim market outlook imply that South Africa is experiencing its worst period of decline since records began in 1945 (PWC, 2020). In the third quarter of 2020, the South African economy was 6% lower than in the fourth quarter of 2019 (SONA, 2021). The National Treasury (2019) cautions that South

Africa's current financial trajectory is unsustainable: financial progress has stalled, unemployment is rising, and inequality remains high. The most pressing task for South Africa is to create jobs for the unemployed whilst also ensuring that workers are prepared for future jobs. Over the last year, South Africa has experienced a sharp drop in growth, along with a significant increase in unemployment. Poverty is on the rise and the wealth divide is expanding (SONA, 2021). Moreover, South Africa's unemployment rate has reached an all-time high of 30.8 percent and is continuing to rise (SONA, 2021). The tourism sector is one of 18 sectors in the South African economy that are considered "holy grails" for their potential in job creation, hence there must be a concerted effort to address any challenges that may impede the economy's progress (Mahlakoana, 2019). To address these national concerns, South Africa needs a solution. The study advocates that design thinking is a problem-solving tool (Munyai, 2016; Ordonez et al., 2017; Akay and Demirel, 2018; Hernandez-Ramirez, 2018; Ivanova and Vodenova, 2018; Tu et al., 2018; Dam and Siang, 2019; Yilmaz, 2021; Jamal et al., 2021), which will assist South Africa in alleviating its current challenges. The research aimed to establish the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in boosting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal, against this setting.

Once the introduction to the thesis was complete, the South African economy, the tourism sector and design thinking were discussed in more detail. In today's changing business world, reliance on market research and aligned business models is no longer viable, and entrepreneurs cannot rely on these traditional tactics (Hubbard, 2017). As a result, new approaches to business growth and strategy are gaining traction around the world. One lives in a time where the world is changing rapidly, hence it is easy to see why design thinking is becoming more popular (Keeley, 2015). For the tourism industry to reach higher levels, more coordination between the private and public sectors is required, since this industry has the power to quickly offer much-needed jobs and growth to the economy (Bojanala, 2019).

The research gap was clarified, and the key literature variables focused on Design Thinking, Tourism and Leadership. Taking these specific themes into consideration, the research is considered a ground-breaking initiative in connecting these subjects by examining the features of design thinking as a strategic lever in the tourism

sector. Previous research on design thinking and its applicability has mainly focused on the process's customer-centric value addition advantage. There is significant and related literature in the global space (Gopinathan et al., 2021; Elsbach and Stigliani, 2018; Hatchuel et al., 2017 and Liedtka, 2014), as well as in South Africa (Cassim, 2013 and le Roux, 2016). The researcher also noted that while an earlier study conducted by Tussyadiah (2017) focused on Technology and Behavioural Design in Tourism, there is not enough research on the importance of design thinking in the tourism industry in KwaZulu-Natal or on design thinking as a strategic lever in the tourism sector. A recent examination by Jamal et al., (2021) confirmed that design thinking in tourism, specifically in relation to this research study, was non-existent.

In addition, the problem statement of the research was discussed. The tourism sector in South Africa is seen as the main potential engine of economic growth and job creation (amongst all industry classifications), with a focus on the broader economic benefits that tourism expenditure has on economic activity, investment and job creation chances (PWC, 2020). The tourism sector globally, and equally in the South African setting, was devastatingly impacted by the onset of the coronavirus. The COVID-19 pandemic that has infected the global economy has also infected the African economy, with many African countries taking bold quarantine and lockdown measures to contain COVID-19's spread, albeit at a cost of deteriorating health systems and a painful economic crisis or recession (Ozili, 2020). Government retention strategies and reduced hours helped a huge section of the South African workforce, but without a full recovery in travel and tourism, job losses are still a possibility (Smith, 2021). According to Smith (2021), travel and tourism accounted for one out of every four new jobs produced globally prior to the pandemic, including direct, indirect and induced effects.

It was proposed that an understanding of the challenges facing the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal would serve as the basis for implementing design thinking in the tourism sector, as design thinking in this sector does not exist. The study's main contribution was to investigate the extent to which design thinking may be used to address contemporary difficulties in the South African economy, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal Tourism sector. Since there appears to be a paucity of research on the implementation of such methodologies in the tourism industry, this work could

indicate a significant link between Design Thinking and Tourism. Participants from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, as well as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, were expected to be empowered to use design thinking to build answers to their own problems and challenges through research that is both practical and theoretical at the same time. It was determined that the majority of stakeholders from the tourism industry who participated in this study were able to embrace the design thinking process and saw the value that it would add to the tourism sector and on leadership within the sector. Consequently, a strategic framework was created.

The key research questions were presented as follows:

1. What are the challenges within the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal?
2. How can the role of leadership drive design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal?
3. What recommendations can be made through the use of design thinking to enhance tourism in KwaZulu-Natal?

This study had its share of limitations, as does most research. The most serious constraint was the availability of participants from the tourism sector, particularly at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa and its related government regulated lockdown of the economy in March 2020. There was improvement in participation once the study context was changed to Ezmevelo KZN Wildlife. The COVID-19 pandemic had drastic implications and limitations for both the researcher and this research study. The engagements for this study, which included design thinking workshops, focus group sessions and individual interviews, were all conducted virtually, except for the first (1st) focus group session and the design thinking workshop with iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. The researcher would like to place on record that these two (2) sessions were conducted in August 2019, prior to the pandemic and the resulting lockdowns. Such limitations impacted the researcher's ability to fully engage with participants on a one-on-one basis. Nevertheless, the researcher persevered with alternatives in realising the objectives of this study.

The relevance of this research academically is that it would be developing new knowledge for the tourism sector and the leadership thereof using design thinking.

8.3. Literature

The literature review in this study comprised three (3) chapters. The first literature chapter covered the tourism sector on both the global and local levels. The key attributes and relevance of the tourism sector were presented, including the benefits to the economies in which they operate in both in the local and global space. An essential issue arising is that tourism in an economy can be thought of as a complex and dynamic system, necessitating a theory that can deal with such qualities.

8.3.1. Tourism

Firstly, the definition of tourism was presented and is described by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation as "the socio-economic movement of people to destinations outside of their typical environment for commercial, personal or professional interests (Tabash, 2017; Khan et al., 2020; Van Huy, 2021). Thereafter, the purpose of tourism in an economy was discussed. Tourism is a substantial economic industry that directly contributes to employment and GDP (OECD, 2017), and it has grown to become one of the world's major economic businesses over the last six decades. Tourism is a complicated industry (Van Huy, 2021) all over the world because it acts as a distinctive component of modern civilisation (Bunghez, 2016) and is influenced by a number of essential elements. Revenues from the government, infrastructure development and contributions to the local economy are amongst them.

In South Africa, the economy relies heavily on Tourism (Robbins, 2017). Rout, Mishra and Pradhan (2016) argue that a country's government should support, plan and be proactive in growing the tourism sector, whilst also exercising caution and enforcing strict controls to mitigate any risk factors that may affect the attraction of local and international tourists, demonstrating the tourism sector's importance as a key to long-term economic growth. On a local level, The KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government is committed to transforming the region into a 21st-century economic powerhouse, and it is well supported by the province's unique and deeply entrenched business community (KZN Tourism A-Report, 2017). The economic growth of a country's economy is reliant on sustainability. The tourism sector is one

such sector that can contribute significantly to the developmental objectives of a nation. Many tourist destinations have boosted economic development as a result of their initiatives and creativity in utilizing resources to promote their sectors (van Huy, 2021). When it comes to scale, this sector has the potential to have a huge impact on economic growth, diversity goals and economic structural reform (Khan et al., 2020).

The chapter concluded with a description of the challenges faced by the tourism sector. Tourism can have a beneficial or negative impact on an economy depending on how it is planned and managed (Scarlett, 2021). The most important aspect will be to eradicate violent crime in South Africa, thereby improving the safety of the general populace in South Africa as well as visitors and tourists. Despite all the benefits that the tourism sector can provide to the economy, Ramawela (2017) argues that due to a lack of cohesion, planning and policy implementation, there is insufficient leveraging of this potential, resulting in the creation of unwanted barriers that stifle the tourism sector's growth.

8.3.2. Design thinking

The second literature chapter covered the topic of design thinking, which has typically been broadly recognized in the pursuit for inventive solutions. Furthermore, its development has experienced an uptick in recent years, with notable concepts such as design thinking, strategic design and design management rising to the fore (Ní Shé et al., 2022). Design thinking is a philosophy and a method for dealing with complex problems that puts people at the centre of attention (Qian, 2019). Design thinking has long been regarded as the holy grail of innovation, as well as a cure to organisational lethargy (Friedlander et al., 2021). Design thinking is ultimately about improving people's lives, the environment and their quality of life (Gopinathan et al., 2021). In its most basic form, design thinking is a method of developing new and inventive solutions to challenges faced by organisations and businesses. It is applicable to all aspects of human existence and is not confined to any particular field or industry.

While design thinking may appear to be a new phenomenon, its roots may be traced back to 1960s Participatory design (Wyman, 2017), which incorporated consumer feedback into the construction of software prototypes during the development process. Stanford University's d-school was the first to integrate design thinking at the school level, teaching students from many disciplines how to work effectively in addressing challenges in a human-centred manner (Ordonez et al., 2017).

The underlying notion of design thinking paves a way to issue solving that is thoughtful and methodical, with an extensive process of refining or rejecting ideas and moving on to a new plan of action (Vinni, 2021). The most prominent component of design thinking is the constant balance of human-centred initiatives with company viability and practicality (Qian, 2019). Design thinking is a method that is comparable to service design (Gloppen, 2009). The evolving position of the client is one of the distinguishing features of the service business (Järf-Wartiovaara, 2017). Service providers are businesses that operate in the tourism industry. Design thinking, according to Noh and Abdul Karim (2021), is a thorough process that drives innovation in small and large businesses, and it is not limited to product and service development, but includes procedures, systems and end-user experiences.

Design thinking as a strategy was also discussed. The design thinking technique entails integrating the entire system, starting with product creation and moving on to service and communication strategies, from which a company can advertise itself in society, giving rise to its strategy (Shahrasbi et al., 2021). Design thinking is changing organisational strategy and has changed how top firms produce genuine value for their customers, as it goes beyond simply providing a commodity and can be applied to procedures, systems, protocols and user experiences (Naiman, 2019).

8.3.3. Leadership

The third literature chapter focused on leadership. Leadership plays a critical role in steering an organisation towards its objectives. Organisations all over the world are using technology to modernize all aspects of their operations in order to build and improve their inventive capabilities in order to meet the demands of the changing business landscape. In addition, human capital is critical to the success of design thinking. Leadership is required in every human group, including communities,

governments and organisations (Xu et al., 2017). Direct, general and strategic leaders are required (Abdul Rahman et al., 2018). As a result, strategic leadership must foster a culture of design, creativity and innovation amongst all employees of the company. The literature on leadership then further expanded on leadership and strategy. Importantly, leadership has a significant impact on the strategic management process (Azhar et al., 2012). Change, which is a fundamental quality of an effective leader, is how an organisation's sustainability is handled in the business environment (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015). Being a leader entails that the organisation must make a strategic decision that will benefit the organisation in the long run (Daud and Wan Hanafi, 2018). Every leader must understand the significance of a well-defined corporate plan (Pasmore, 2014). An effective leader's ability to be clear and specific in giving guidance to staff leads to job dedication and promotes synergy by fostering a collaborative effort to achieve organisational goals (Hao and Yazdanifard, 2015). An organisation prioritizes focusing on its leadership since it is a critical approach for improving organisational performance and managing unexpected events (Manzoor et al., 2019).

Finally, the literature presented leadership using design thinking. According to Dam and Siang (2019), the current climate's rapid change makes forecasting the future difficult, with the inability to predict unforeseen obstacles just around the corner, let alone in the coming months. As a result, a dynamic style to foster strategic planning and innovation is required: a way that is easy to adjust to the various tough situations that lie ahead. Since leaders can opt to present fresh ideas; set particular goals; and urge followers to be more solution focused, as highlighted by Marion et al. (2021), leadership style has been emphasized as one of the most crucial individual effects on the problem-solving process in an organisation.

8.4. Research methodology

The fifth chapter described the research methodology used in this study. Design thinking has evolved from a focus on process and product design to a vital component in company strategy formation (Vinni, 2021; Knight et al., 2019), and is gaining acceptance globally, particularly in South Africa (Munyai, 2016). Therefore, a qualitative study was utilized to collect the data needed to answer the study's

research objectives, as the researcher sought to collect information on a variety of qualities linked to the study issue in order to generate a comprehensive picture of the situation. This research method allowed the researcher to gain a deep insight into the experiences through high involvement (Mohajan, 2018), which is particularly useful for obtaining in-depth data on current design thinking capabilities in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

Intangible elements such as societal standards, socio-economic status, gender roles, ethnicity and religion, the importance of which may not be easily apparent in the study problem, can also be identified using qualitative methodologies (Mack et al., 2005). According to Jameel et al. (2018), qualitative research has been employed in the social sciences for centuries to investigate society's and individuals' perceptions and perspectives. A qualitative research study enables the researcher to obtain a thorough understanding of policies and regulations whilst also learning from the experiences of shareholders (Squires, 2018). Qualitative research is defined as an iterative process in which the scientific community gains a better knowledge by generating new meaningful differences. This is accomplished by getting closer to the phenomenon being investigated; is guided by a clear goal to solve a problem; and employs open-ended questions that may arise or are posed from the start (Aspers and Corte, 2019). The researcher thus made use of open-ended interviews, focus groups and participant observation as part of this research study.

Diverse perspectives, viewpoints and opinions are required in order to have a thorough grasp of the research objectives and questions. As a result, representatives of the tourism industry in KwaZulu-Natal made up the study's intended sample population. Samples from the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, as well as Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, were used in this research study.

8.5. Key findings and results

The findings from qualitative data collection exercises were presented in Chapter Six. The qualitative data for this study was gathered from two (2) different sources. Within the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, a focus group session, a design thinking workshop and only a few individual interviews were

performed with tourism stakeholders. Due to difficulties with the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the researcher arranged for the study to be re-started at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, where qualitative data was extracted from a Design Thinking workshop, individual interview sessions and a focus group as the final stage of direct engagement with participants.

The data from the focus group sessions was acquired by voice recordings (iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism) for data analysis reasons, and the focus group session at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife was captured through the virtual platform used for this session. Thereafter, the raw data was converted into text format, yielding nine (9) pages of textual data. The researcher also gathered information from interviews with two (2) members of the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and eight (8) members of Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. The information gathered throughout these sessions resulted in fifty (50) pages of written information. The Nvivo 12 software package was used to analyze the textual data generated by the qualitative methodologies used in this study. The researcher became familiar with the textual material by reading and re-reading each transcription several times to discover surfacing themes that were relevant to the study's goals.

To reiterate, the data for this study was gathered through interviews and focus group sessions. Four (4) main themes emerged from the qualitative investigation. These included Challenges; Applicability of Design thinking; Design thinking capabilities; and Leadership and strategy. A detailed discussion of these four (4) keys themes were presented in Chapter Seven (7), along with their related sub-themes.

8.5.1. Focus groups

Two focus groups sessions were conducted with a total of seventeen (17) participants. There were eleven (11) participants in attendance at the focus group session with iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. In terms of demographics for this session, 82% of participants (9) were Female, while the remaining 18% (2) were Male. The participants' current roles ranged from Business Owners to Managers and Staff Members from within the tourism fraternity. Six (6) participants who attended the session with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife. In terms of

demographic details for this focus group session, there was equal representation of Females and Males (3 each). The current roles of participants were Executive Managers (2), a Regional Manager and three (3) Resorts Managers from the tourism sector at Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife.

8.5.2. Interviews

In total, the researcher conducted ten (10) individual interviews. All intended people participated, with the exception of nine (9) participants from iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism who withdrew their participation from this study mainly due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. For the individual interview sessions with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, there were two (2) withdrawals (one withdrew totally from the study, while the other did not present themselves). In terms of demographics, the two participants from iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism were both Female, with one being a Business Owner and the other a Staff member. Participants from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife were made up of 62% females (5) and 3 males (38%), with current roles of participants being two (2) Executive Managers, a Regional Manager and five (5) Resort Managers.

8.6. Discussions and analysis

The discussion chapter presented and discussed the four (4) themes. Thereafter, the key research questions were answered and provided the contribution of this research study to the tourism sector.

Four (4) themes developed as a result of the data analysis, namely:

8.6.1. Theme 1: Challenges

This key theme looked at the contemporary difficulties facing the tourism industry, as well as the application of design thinking and formed the following sub-themes: *Problems and challenges impacting your organisation and the tourism sector* and *Challenges in applying design thinking in your own business*. These were presented, discussed in detail and triangulated with participant responses and related literature.

8.6.2. Theme 2: Applicability of design thinking

Based on respondent perceptions, this primary theme investigated the applicability of design thinking and produced the following sub-themes, which upon presentation were discussed in more detail. These included *Design thinking understanding*; *whether design thinking would be useful or effective in your organisation*; *Likelihood of implementing design thinking*; and *design thinking initiatives that can be implemented to improve resilience and sustainability*.

8.6.3. Theme 3: Design thinking capabilities

This primary theme was critical in developing design thinking capacities, and it spawned the following sub-themes, *Design thinking vs challenges faced by the tourism sector*; *Design thinking as a unique problem-solving approach that is designed to generate value*; and *Design thinking's effectiveness and benefit for the tourism sector*. These were presented, unpacked and triangulated using participant feedback and associated literature.

8.6.4. Theme 4: Leadership and strategy

The last theme produced from the qualitative data analysis focused on leadership and strategy. This theme proceeded to unravel these sub-themes, which were presented with participant responses. They included the *Role of leadership in Design thinking* and *Design thinking as a strategic lever and management tool to develop strategy for the tourism sector*.

8.6.5. Key research questions

The key research questions for this study are:

8.6.5.1. Research Question 1: What are the challenges within the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal?

Many issues in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal were highlighted after compiling and analysing the comments from the research participants. Amongst the most

pressing and critical issues identified were: ***COVID-19; Risk of Staff Exposure; Supplies and Resources; Budgets; Infrastructure; Human Resources and Capabilities; Collaboration; Safety and Security; Marketing and Product Offering***. Amongst the historical challenges surfacing from participants were ***Budgets*** and ***Resources***.

The concerns and challenges that arose as defined and expressed by research participants allowed the researcher to completely know and understand the true issues and challenges that the tourism sector faces. The identification of these obstacles will aid in the research's alignment with the study's aims and purpose.

8.6.5.2. Research Question 2: How can the role of leadership drive Design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal?

The role of leadership in utilising design thinking in the tourism sector was one of the important factors of this research study. The participants in the survey agreed that the role of leadership in design thinking is critical. These views were influenced by the following contributing factors:

- Lead by example
- Consistency
- Accountability
- Create a Design thinking culture
- Teamwork and Synergy
- Capabilities and Assets
- Control and Governance
- Knowledge and Empowerment

8.6.5.3. Research Question 3: What recommendations can be made through the use of design thinking to enhance tourism in KwaZulu-Natal

Design thinking was deemed to be inspiring to all participants, who affirmed and agreed that it would be a fantastic tool to help improvement and innovation in the tourism sector. The following factors emanated as being highly influential in

contributing to design thinking improving business in the tourism sector: *Customisation, thinking outside the box, Embracing New Methods, Improvement for Revenue, New Opportunities and Growth, People and Client-Centred and Culture*. The success of design thinking in the tourism industry is however heavily dependent on the following main factors:

- Implementation.
- Change Management.
- Collaboration.
- Customer Feedback.
- Assets and Capabilities.
- Markets; and
- Service offerings.

Participants in the study were eager to embrace design thinking in this industry, and they proposed a number of actions to help them achieve their goal. According to the participants, these activities will encourage the implementation of design thinking in this industry and align with strengthening business resilience and sustainability. The initiatives identified in this study are:

- Leadership
- Policy and Framework
- Alignment
- Introduced at all levels
- Government
- Communication
- Collective approach
- Research and Improvement
- Stakeholder Management

8.7. Recommendations for the tourism sector in the KwaZulu-Natal

Recommendations largely mirror the challenges and contributions that have been expressed by participants, which were mentioned in the Discussion chapter. A few

aspects recur from both the interview and focus groups, which can be also be found in the discussion chapter.

Firstly, the study has established that design thinking has a place in the tourism sector. It is therefore recommended by the researcher, through this research study's outcomes, that a concerted effort must be made to implement design thinking within the tourism sector. As surfaced in this study and espoused in the discussion chapter, Design thinking is not only for the executive level, but is required to be implemented at all levels within the tourism sector and within the respective organisations that are mandated to promote tourism. This is also proposed to individual and privately owned tourism businesses. The benefits of this recommendation are firstly to introduce design thinking to all levels, such that it epitomises the mind-sets of those directly involved to be cultivated in a customer-centric priority, from the ground level to the operational level and up to the ministerial level. Secondly, this recommendation is crafted to ensure standardisation across the organisation, whereby decisions, ideas and solutions are processed using the design thinking methodology. However, the tourism sector is not yet at this level and will require more rigorous interventions to effectively implement design thinking. Thus, the researcher proposes more design thinking design thinking workshops as a first level entry into the tourism sector, thus ensuring that Implementation is successful.

Additionally, design thinking can boost business in the tourism sector, according to the study, due to a number of contributing variables. However, additional aspects like implementation, service offerings and feedback systems, amongst others, will need to be correctly designed and coordinated in order to be effective. In taking these factors into consideration, the researcher is proposing that engagement with key stakeholders commences. The first steps would ideally be to identify all related role-players because not being aware of key links in the tourism chain could be detrimental. A key aspect that surfaced in this study was that of Collaboration. However, there is not much of a healthy effort made to listen to everyone in order to find common ground, compromise or collaboration (Li et al., 2021). The act of collaborating is both internal and external. Hence, it becomes essential to identify all role-players within a tourism setting or sub-sector. A participant mentioned that it was quite disappointing that other tourism stakeholders operating within the same

region were not aware of the services being offered by this participant. In collaborative processes where stakeholders can learn from one another and adjust to changing environments, there are possible reciprocal or collective benefits for stakeholders. Hence, the researcher stresses that networking, collaborating and synergising with all stakeholders can reap multiple benefits through the effective use of design thinking. It is further emphasised that fellow stakeholders are internal customers and hence design thinking principles of being customer-centric are applicable in these scenarios as well.

It is critical that government becomes involved in the tourism sector and provides adequate support for a sector that contributes so heavily to the economy in a variety of ways. It is therefore recommended that a Tourism Sub-Committee be established, with the sole objective being to engage with government on behalf of all stakeholders. Design thinking principles allow brainstorming, ideation and solutions of the most complex of problems. It most certainly also helps by defining an actual problem so that prototype solutions can be developed accordingly. In the same vein, government engagement and interaction can be simplified through the iterative process of design thinking. Participants stressed that design thinking engagements should not be an exercise for the bookshelf or an archive folder, but in reality, this should be a level of accountability and execution in driving this process to fruition.

This gives rise to the next recommendation, which is Leadership. The study explored the role of design thinking in leadership and found that there is common ground that can serve as the foundations for building a more robust process. As affirmed above, accountability and execution are key. It is in this space that leadership is required to outline design thinking for their organisation or the tourism sector at large, in a manner that is transparent, clarified and provides direction. This can be implemented and executed through proper strategies that will serve as key enablers in helping the tourism sector to realise its key objectives.

The researcher recommends that the initiatives identified and presented in 7.9 of Chapter Seven serve as the starting point to effectively implement design thinking in the tourism sector. Finally, this research sought to explore the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in the tourism sector. The researcher thus recommends that the design thinking model developed by the researcher as a contribution for the tourism

sector and presented in 7.9.1. of Chapter Seven be effectively implemented. This study and its outcomes therefore provide the basis for developing an understanding on the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal.

8.8. Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this empirical study should be noted. One of the main weaknesses of this research was the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector. As a result, the availability of the various stakeholders proved problematic, as the interventions required in-depth engagement. The researcher made concerted efforts to increase participation rates with tourism stakeholders through frequent personal visits to the respective regions and by communicating with the respective stakeholders, encouraging their involvement and participation in this study. Furthermore, the study was limited to the tourism sector within KwaZulu-Natal. The reason for this was to ensure that the time, cost and quality of the study was manageable.

8.9. Recommendations for future research

There is still a need for the creation of a strategy or procedure that allows the data obtained to be transformed into information that can be used to construct frameworks models, as indicated in the literature. Multiple levels of mapping and triangulation were found to be effective for information translation in this study. However, more research is still needed, possibly improving on the techniques used in this study as it was solely a qualitative study. In terms of future research, it is suggested that a mixed method study be used to analyse the minute details contributing and influential factors found in this study, which can be paired with the design thinking strategic model framework. This will lead to the construction of equations that control specific interactions with other components, allowing the building of a simulation model for the tourism sector to proceed.

8.10. Conclusion

This research study was initiated to understand the role of design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal. Primary data was gathered from stakeholders in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and current challenges in the sector were identified. Thereafter, design thinking was explored within this industry, with contributing and important elements linked to design thinking application in the tourism industry being discovered. The study also looked into the function of design thinking in leadership, which was necessary in order to establish the strategic competencies that design thinking underpins. As a result of these findings, a design thinking strategic model for the tourism sector was developed.

The importance of contributing and influential factors for design thinking in the tourism sector should not be underestimated. However, as the tourism sector is part of a bigger supply chain, inter-connected through multiple stakeholders, it does not operate in isolation. Any isolated operation, as evidenced in this study, can be deeply detrimental for isolated individuals or businesses. It is therefore a pre-requisite for design thinking that all key role-players contribute equally and significantly to the design thinking process. As there will probably be a plethora of objectives arising from tourism forums, there will almost certainly be conflict and disagreement amongst stakeholders. Collaboration and compromise are therefore required in this regard, which can only happen in an atmosphere of trust. The correct implementation of design thinking principles at all required levels will certainly help define challenges and allow for an engaged problem-solving exercise to unfold and yield the desired results.

This chapter served as a summary of all previous chapters, beginning with the first chapter, which established the research's backdrop and core research topics. The three literature chapters were then discussed, followed by the research methodology that directed this study. The chapter on data collection results was next provided. The analysis and discussion of the research findings, the answering of research questions in detail and a conceptual design thinking framework for tourism was presented in the seventh chapter. Finally, recommendations were presented in the final chapter of this research study.

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APPENDIX 1: Letter from Gatekeeper iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism



Unit 14
The Quarter Centre
1 Stewart Drive
Ballito Business Park

21 January 2019

Dr Simon Taylor
Graduate School of Business and Leadership
University Of KwaZulu-Natal
Westville Campus
Durban
3630

Dear Dr Taylor

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter serves to confirm that I, Cobus Oelofse in my capacity as Chief Executive Officer, hereby acknowledge and approve the research of Zahir Sayed, within the iLembe Chamber of Commerce, towards the completion of his PhD studies.



Cobus Oelofse
Chief Executive Officer: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry & Tourism

Cc: Xolani Gumede – President
Lesa Bradshaw – Chairperson Human Capital Standing Committee

APPENDIX 2: Letter from Gatekeeper: Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife

E 22/1



SCIENTIFIC SERVICES

Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife
Scientific Services
1 Peter Brown Drive, Montrose
Pietermaritzburg
3202

17 May 2021

105 Kampara Estate
50 Mountain View Avenue
Morningside
Durban

Dear Mr Zahir Sayed

CONFIRMATION OF PROJECT REGISTRATION: PROJECT NUMBER HO/4073/12

Thank you for your interest in conducting research in relation to Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife's protected areas. We are pleased to inform you that your project, "**Design Thinking as sector a strategic lever in promoting Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal**" has been registered, with myself, Mr Ian Rushworth, as the project coordinator. Your project registration number is HO/4073/12 and should be quoted on all correspondence and reports relating to the project.

In terms Section 35(1) of the Regulations for the Proper Administration of Nature Reserves, 2012 (GG35021), this letter serves as your written authorisation to carry out research in or relating to a nature reserve. Your application fulfilled the requirements of Section 35(2)(a), and you are hereby informed that in terms of Sections 35(2)(b) and 35(2)(c) you are required to submit copies of your thesis and all reports and publications emanating from the research project to ourselves within four weeks of their completion/publication.

We understand that the entire interaction with staff will be remotely using digital meeting platforms. However, should you need to visit any protected area please ensure that you make contact with the relevant staff member at least 48 hrs before any planned visit. Please retain this letter as written proof of authorization to conduct research. Names and locations of staff that have agreed to participate in the survey are appended to this letter.

P O Box 13053, Cascades, 3202 • 1 Peter Brown Drive, Montrose, 3202 • Tel : +27 33 845 1999 Fax : +27 33 845 1899
www.kznwildlife.com

If you need to visit a protected area, arrangements for camp or chalet accommodation need to be done well in advance and bookings can be made through our central reservation office (Tel: 033 845 1000, Fax: 033 845 1001, E-mail: bookings@kznwildlife.com).

If you would like to request any data from Ezemvelo this needs to be done on the official Data Request Form, quoting your project registration number, and submitted to data@kznwildlife.com.

As a condition of being allowed to conduct work in Ezemvelo's protected areas you will be asked for annual progress reports. The format for the annual progress report will be e-mailed to you in due course.

I wish you success with your project. Please contact me if you require any further assistance.

Yours sincerely



Mr Ian Rushworth
Manager Ecological Advice West
For Chief Executive Officer

APPENDIX 3: Focus group questions: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

PHD Research Project

Researcher: Mr. Zahir Sayed (081 764 5444)

**Supervisors: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches, Professor Abdullah Kader
and Dr Simon Taylor (0312608318)**

Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

**Title of study: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in
KwaZulu-Natal**

Focus group questions

1. What are some of the problems or challenges that are currently experienced in business currently?
2. How long have these problems or challenges been in existence?
3. Have there been any specific methods that have been applied to address and solve these problems or challenges? If so, please elaborate?
4. How important is leadership in an organisation, especially in times of challenges? Please elaborate
5. Is it essential for the leadership of an organisation to create a culture of innovation to address these challenges? Please elaborate

APPENDIX 4: Focus group questions: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

PHD Research Project

Researcher: Mr. Zahir Sayed (081 764 5444)

**Supervisors: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches, Professor Abdullah Kader
and Dr Simon Taylor (0312608318)**

Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

**Title of study: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in
KwaZulu-Natal**

Focus group questions

1. What is your view on the design thinking process and its ability to assist the tourism sector?
2. What is the biggest challenge in implementing design thinking in the tourism sector?
3. What strategies can be developed for the tourism sector through the use of design thinking?
4. What methods can be used to fast track a design thinking culture within the tourism sector?
5. How can leadership drive design thinking in the tourism sector?

APPENDIX 5: Email Request for Focus group participants: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

From: Zahir Sayed
Sent: 15 July 2019 09:08 AM
To: ##### @ilembechamber.co.za>
Cc: #####; 'zahirsayed786@gmail.com' <zahirsayed786@gmail.com>
Subject: RE: Zahir PHD @ iLembe
Importance: High

Good Morning #####

As per our discussion on Friday, kindly find my Research proposal attached as requested. Please note the Methodology part (Page 31 onwards) which will require the engagement with iLembe Chamber and the research participants.

In addition, kindly provide feedback on the 2 points listed in my mail to you dated 26 June 2019 below. I need feedback on the following please:

Date and time for the next monthly meeting

The course participant information - I will need to interview each participant prior to the course and then have a group session with all participants after the course. Please can you notify all registered participants of this please i.e., interview before the course and then group session after the course – this will be used to collect data for the research study

Your feedback will be appreciated. Thanks

Kind Regards
Zahir
081 764 5444

From: Zahir Sayed
Sent: 26 June 2019 11:39 AM
To: ##### (#####@ilembechamber.co.za)
Cc: 'zahirsayed786@gmail.com'
Subject: Zahir PHD @ iLembe
Importance: High

Good Day #####

Trust that you are well

Just an update from my side – I have passed the Panel approval stage at UKZN, which effectively means that once I obtain Ethical clearance from UKZN (application is pending), I can proceed fully with my engagement at iLembe Chamber

The 1st part will be the Monthly meetings – **please can you advise on the next schedule meeting date and start time?** I think I will only be able to attend one session of this before the course

The **Course scheduled for the 29-30 August – by when will we be able to get the course participant details?** I will need to interview each participant prior to the course and then have a group session with all participants after the course.

***** Please can you notify all registered participants of this please i.e., interview before the course and then group session after the course – this will be used to collect data for the research study**

Your assistance and feedback will be appreciated. Thanks

Kind Regards
Zahir

APPENDIX 6: Email Follow-up Request for Focus group participants: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

From: Zahir Sayed
Sent: 23 August 2019 10:21 AM
To: #####
Subject: RE: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in iLembe
Hi #####
Trust that you are well
How is the response to the workshop thus far? Please note changes in the schedule for next Thursday and Friday

29 August – Focus group session with all participants from 9am – 10.30 a.m.

30 August – Design thinking Workshop commencing from 8.30am - 14.30 p.m.

The follow-up Focus group session will take place on 25 November 9am – 11.00 a.m.
Please ensure that all involved are notified of the dates and times. Thanks

Kind Regards
Zahir

From: ##### [mailto:#####@ilembechamber.co.za]

Sent: 21 August 2019 08:34 AM

To: Zahir Sayed

Cc: #####

Subject: FW: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in iLembe

Good day Zahir

Please see email sent out personally by ##### below to invite critical tourism stakeholders and businesses in iLembe. I will keep you updated as the RSVPs come in.

Regards

#####

From: ##### [mailto:#####@ilembechamber.co.za]

Sent: Tuesday, 20 August 2019 9:54 PM

To: #####; #####; #####

Subject: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in iLembe

Dear all

The Chamber has been presented with a unique opportunity to participate in a review of the Tourism Sector in the iLembe region as part of a PhD research study by Zahir Sayed, entitled "**Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in iLembe**".

The workshop, which will be facilitated by ##### and Zahir, will introduce, and apply, design thinking as a mechanism to identify and address key challenges facing the Tourism sector in iLembe and means of promoting the economic contribution of this sector. As a key Tourism Sector stakeholder within our Chamber, please join us for a Tourism Design Thinking Workshop, facilitated by UKZN, on the 29 & 30th of August 2019.

Design thinking is a process used to stimulate innovation, drawing on methods from design and combining them with ideas from the arts, social sciences, and the business world. The workshop will introduce "design thinking" techniques used to cultivate innovation and strategic leadership.

Workshop outline:

- The design thinking philosophy & process; • Tools on each of the design thinking steps; • Tips and tricks from practice; • Pre-workshop interview; • Focus group interview

Facilitators: ##### and Zahir Sayed

Dates: 29 & 30 August

Time: 08h30-14h30

Venue: iLembe Chamber Boardroom

Please RSVP to #####@ilembechamber.co.za asap.

This is a unique opportunity to support a PhD research study into our area, and to reflect on the potential of Tourism as an economic driver - thank you for joining us.

APPENDIX 7: Email Request for Focus group participants: Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife

From: Zahir Sayed <zahirsayed786@gmail.com>
Sent: 19 September 2021 02:53 PM
To: ##### <#####@kznwildlife.com>; ##### <#####@kznwildlife.com>; ##### <#####@kznwildlife.com>; ##### <#####@kznwildlife.com>
Cc: ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>; ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>; ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>; Zahir Sayed (214579447) <214579447@stu.ukzn.ac.za>
Subject: EZEMVELO WILDLIFE KZN: ZAHIR SAYED PhD STUDY- FOCUS GROUP SESSION

Greetings All

I would like to commence by conveying my gratitude to each of you. My research process has really gone off very well and more significantly I have managed to Interview 8 out of the 10 candidates, while gaining valuable insight on my study topic and the Tourism industry.

I have also noted and accepted that ##### has informed me that it is her wish not to take part in my study.

As I am now at the last phase of my engagement with Ezemvelo, which comes in the form of a focus group discussion, I really require some assistance and guidance from your side on the following:

1. FOCUS GROUP SESSION:

I scheduled a focus group session quite some time back. In fact, this date (14 September) was outlined in my initial engagements with Mr ##### when I applied for permission with your organisation. I did inform participants of this at the Design Thinking workshop on 10th August 2021. At the scheduled session on 14 September, there were only 2 participants (##### and #####), whilst numerous others conveyed their apologies for not attending due to work commitments. The session was postponed, and I notified all on the WhatsApp chat group that this session will be rescheduled. The Focus group session is critically important to my study as the triangulation process will greatly assist in analysing the data collected.

I therefore hereby request you to help in scheduling this session soon at a time when all participants are available at the same time. I have found through the Interview phase that scheduling sessions outside of general working hours works well as participants are more flexible during these times. I am flexible and any time after 5pm or 6pm can work for me, preferably within the next week and a half as I am now behind on my research timelines.

Your assistance in this matter is most appreciated. Thanks

Kind Regards
Zahir
081 764 5444

APPENDIX 8: Email Request for interview participants: iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Zahir Sayed <zahirsayed786@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Dec 10, 2020 at 9:08 AM

Subject: Re: Zahir Sayed Research Study - Interviews on Design Thinking 2020

To: ##### <#####@#####.co.za>, ##### <#####@telkomsa.net>, ##### <#####@gmail.com>, ##### <#####@#####.co.za>, ##### <#####@yahoo.com>, ##### <#####@#####.co.za>

Cc: ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>

Good Day All

Trust that you are all well

I am at a stage in my research study whereby I need to conduct and finalise interviews with you. This is required as I need to finalise my study, please and your input is vital. All interviews will be conducted securely and within the Zoom application.

On my last request to you in April this year (mail below), I only received 1 response of which the interview was conducted.

Kindly advise by return email as to the most appropriate time and date to conduct these please? In responding, please supply your contact number as well (I only took down e-mail details at the workshop)

I look forward to your response. Thanks

Kind Regards

Zahir

From: Zahir Sayed <zahirsayed786@gmail.com>

Sent: 23 April 2020 09:55 AM

To: ##### <#####@#####.co.za>, ##### <#####@telkomsa.net>, ##### <#####@gmail.com>, ##### <#####@#####.co.za>, ##### <#####@yahoo.com>, ##### <#####@#####.co.za>

Cc: ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>; Zahir Sayed <zayed@sars.gov.za>

Subject: Re: Research Study - Interviews on Design Thinking

Good Day All

Trust that you are well. Please can you respond via the individual mails that i have sent to you, so that I may schedule the interview appointment please. Your assistance in this regard is greatly appreciated. Thanks

Kind Regards

Zahir

----- Original message -----

From: Zahir Sayed <zahirsayed786@gmail.com>

Date: 2020/04/16 19:31 (GMT+02:00)

To: ##### <#####@#####.co.za>, ##### <#####@telkomsa.net>, ##### <#####@gmail.com>, ##### <#####@#####.co.za>, ##### <#####@yahoo.com>, ##### <#####@#####.co.za>

Cc: ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>; Zahir Sayed <zayed@sars.gov.za>

Subject: Research Study - Interviews on Design Thinking

Greetings All

Trust that you and your families are safe and well during this period of lockdown. These are really trying and testing times for us all!

Last year, ##### and I facilitated a Design Thinking workshop with you. I did mention to you at the end of this workshop that the plan was to follow-up that session with individual face-to-face interviews to gather information and input from you on Design Thinking in the tourism sector within your region. Unfortunately, these did not transpire due to various reasons including scheduling conflicts and non-availability of participants in November last year. I have been engaging with ##### since the beginning of the year to arrange these sessions with you. Unfortunately, the lockdown was enforced by government and these face-to-face individual interviews were no longer possible. We have however, been brainstorming alternative methods, much like the design thinking process, and have decided to continue these interviews via the **Zoom Cloud Meetings** application, whereby we can conduct and conclude these interviews in our own spaces. This method has also been suggested and approved by the UKZN Research office.

For us to proceed we will need you to obtain this application - The Zoom Cloud app can be downloaded as follows:

on the App Store for iPhone devices or on the Google Playstore for Android devices; For those willing to use their PCs, the application can be obtained using the following link > Download Zoom for Windows; - This application is proving quite popular during this period of lockdown and therefore we are recommending that you download the application so that we may proceed and conclude these interview sessions.

I would like to commence these interview sessions from the 23rd of April and hopefully all participants can be concluded by the 30th of April please. I will be sending out individual mails to you shortly. These will be to confirm that you have

downloaded the application, your preferred date and contact details (cellphone numbers). I will then schedule these Zoom interviews as I receive confirmations from you. My preferred method going forward will be to conduct 1 interview per day, but this can be changed to 2 per day, as I will need to save the video recordings and then transcribe the data from your feedback.

Your support and input to my study is greatly appreciated. I will be in touch.

Regards

Zahir Sayed

081 764 5444

APPENDIX 9: Email Request for interview participants: Ezemvelo KwaZulu-Natal Wildlife

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Zahir Sayed <zahirsayed786@gmail.com>

Date: Fri, Aug 13, 2021 at 10:51 AM

Subject: Individual Interview Schedule

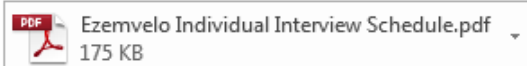
To: <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>

Cc: ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, Zahir Sayed (214579447) <214579447@stu.ukzn.ac.za>

Subject

FW: Individual Interview Schedule

Attached



Good Morning All.

Please find Individual interview schedule attached. Should you wish to change you date and time, please message me. However, any changes will have to be done within the 24 to 26 date range and available time slots as per the attached please. I will await any change request and then mail you the Zoom invites. Thanks

Kind Regards

Zahir

081 764 5444

From: Zahir Sayed <zahirsayed786@gmail.com>

Sent: 27 July 2021 04:30 PM

To: <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>, <#####@kznwildlife.com>

Cc: ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, ##### <#####@ukzn.ac.za>, Zahir Sayed (214579447) <214579447@stu.ukzn.ac.za>

Subject: PhD STUDY: ZAHIR SAYED - Design Thinking as a strategic lever in promoting Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal I

Good Day All

I am ZAHIR SAYED, a PhD student at the University of Kwazulu Natal. I have been granted permission from Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife to conduct research as part of my PhD study entitled "**Design Thinking as a strategic lever in promoting Tourism in KwaZulu-Natal**". The study will entail the following:

A Design Thinking Workshop via Zoom, facilitated by ##### and me **on 10 August 2021 from 9am to 11am**. After a period of 2 weeks (from the Design Thinking workshop), I will conduct **Individual Interviews** with each of you via Zoom. These will be conducted **between 24 to 26 August 2021. These interviews will be recorded for accurate data collection**

On **14 September 2021, a focus group session** will be conducted with all participants and the discussion will focus on Design Thinking and how it is applied in your environment, lessons learnt and experiences. This session will conclude your participation in my PhD project.

Please diarise these dates. I will be creating a WhatsApp group shortly for alert and communication purposes. Initially it will be an Administrators can send messages only" group. The Administrators will include my research supervisors and myself.

Your participation and contribution to my study is greatly appreciated.

Kind Regards

Zahir Sayed

081 764 5444

zahirsayed786@gmail.com

APPENDIX 10: Interview questions

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP
PHD Research Project**

**Researcher: Mr. Zahir Sayed (081 764 5444)
Supervisors: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches, Professor Abdullah Kader
and Dr Simon Taylor (0312608318)**

Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

**Title of study: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in
KwaZulu Natal**

Interview Questions

1. What are some of the problems or challenges your organisation faced prior to the CoVid-19 pandemic? Please elaborate.
2. What are some of the specific problems impacting your organisation and the tourism sector currently? Please elaborate.
3. What do you understand by design thinking? Please elaborate
4. How can design thinking be used to address the challenges currently faced by the tourism sector? Please elaborate.
5. What makes design thinking a unique problem-solving approach that is designed to generate value? Please elaborate.
6. In applying design thinking in your organisation, what were some of the challenges that you experienced? Please elaborate.
7. How can design thinking be used as a management tool to develop a strategy for the tourism sector? Please elaborate.
8. What is your view on design thinking as a strategic lever for the tourism sector? Please elaborate.
9. How can design thinking benefit the tourism sector? Please elaborate.
10. Why would design thinking be useful or effective in your organisation? Please elaborate.
11. How important is the role of leadership in tourism? Please elaborate.
12. How important is the role of leadership in design thinking? Please elaborate
13. What initiatives can be implemented through the use of design thinking, to improve resilience and sustainability for businesses? Please elaborate.
14. What is the likelihood of you implementing design thinking in your organisation immediately and how would you execute this implementation? Please elaborate.
15. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

APPENDIX 11: Informed consent – Focus group

Informed Consent Letter 3C

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

PhD Research Project

Researcher: Zahir Sayed (0817645444)

Supervisors: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)

Professor Abdul Kader Dawood

Dr. Simon Taylor

Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Respondent,

I, Zahir Sayed am a PhD: Management Studies, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: **“Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal”**. The aim of this study is to determine the challenges facing the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal; how design thinking can improve businesses; the role of leadership in driving design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal and identify initiatives on how design thinking can improve resilience and sustainability for businesses in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

Through your participation in a focus group session, I hope to understand your views, opinions and perceptions of design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal. The results of the focus group session is intended to contribute to the extent in which design thinking can be used to address current challenges in the South African economy. This work could thus signify an important connection between design thinking and tourism, in the tourism sector.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research study. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the Interview or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor/s on the numbers listed above. The focus group session should take about 2 hours. I hope you will take the time to participate.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature _____ Date:

This page is to be retained by the participant

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

PhD Research Project
Researcher: Zahir Sayed (0817645444)
Supervisors: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)
Professor Abdul Kader Dawood
Dr. Simon Taylor
Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT

I.....(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby consent/do not consent to record my participation (voice recording and video recording) in the focus group session.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

This page is to be retained by the researcher

APPENDIX 12: Informed consent – Interviews

Informed Consent Letter 3C

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

PhD Research Project

Researcher: Zahir Sayed (0817645444)

Supervisors: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)

Professor Abdul Kader Dawood

Dr. Simon Taylor

Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Respondent,

I, Zahir Sayed am a PhD: Management Studies, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: **“Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal”**. The aim of this study is to determine the challenges facing the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal; how design thinking can improve businesses; the role of leadership in driving design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal and Identify initiatives on how design thinking can improve resilience and sustainability for businesses in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

Through your participation in an Interview session, I hope to understand your views, opinions and perceptions of design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal. The results of the interview session is intended to contribute to the extent in which design thinking can be used to address current challenges in the South African economy. This work could thus signify an important connection between design thinking and tourism, in the tourism sector.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in this research study. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the Interview or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor/s on the numbers listed above. The Interview session should take about 45 minutes. I hope you will take the time to participate.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature _____ Date: _____

This page is to be retained by the participant

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

PhD Research Project
Researcher: Zahir Sayed (0817645444)
Supervisors: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)
Professor Abdul Kader Dawood
Dr. Simon Taylor
Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT

I.....(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby consent/do not consent to record my participation (voice recording and video recording) in the Interview session.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

This page is to be retained by the researcher

APPENDIX 13: Informed consent – Design thinking workshop

Informed Consent Letter 3C

**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP**

PhD Research Project

Researcher: Zahir Sayed (0817645444)

Supervisors: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)

Professor Abdul Kader Dawood

Dr. Simon Taylor

Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Dear Respondent,

I, Zahir Sayed am a PhD: Management Studies, at the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. You are invited to participate in a research project entitled: **“Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal”**. The aim of this study is to determine the challenges facing the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal; how design thinking can improve businesses; the role of leadership in driving design thinking in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal and Identify initiatives on how design thinking can improve resilience and sustainability for businesses in the tourism sector in KwaZulu-Natal.

Through your participation in a workshop on design thinking, I hope to understand your views, opinions and perceptions of design thinking in the tourism sector. The observations from the design thinking workshop is intended to contribute to the extent to which design thinking can be used to address current challenges in the South African economy. This work could thus signify an important connection between design thinking and tourism, in the tourism sector.

Your participation in this project is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any time with no negative consequence. There will be no monetary gain from participating in the design thinking workshop. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant will be maintained by the Graduate School of Business and Leadership, UKZN. If you have any questions or concerns about participating in the design thinking workshop or about participating in this study, you may contact me or my supervisor at the numbers listed above. The design thinking workshop should take about 2 hours. I hope you will take the time to participate.

Sincerely

Investigator's signature _____ Date: _____

This page is to be retained by the participant

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

PhD Research Project
Researcher: Zahir Sayed (0817645444)
Supervisor: Professor Cecile Gerwel Proches (0312608318)
Professor Abdul Kader Dawood
Dr. Simon Taylor
Research Office: HSSREC - Tel: (0312604557) / Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

CONSENT

I.....(full names of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

I hereby consent/do not consent to record my participation (video and voice recording) in the design thinking workshop.

.....
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

.....
DATE

This page is to be retained by the researcher

APPENDIX 14: Editor's Note

POST EXAMINATION EDITING LETTER

696 Clare Road
Clare Estate
Durban
4091
31 July 2022

To: Whom it may concern

Editing of PhD: Zahir Sayed

Design Thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in Kwazulu-Natal

This letter serves as confirmation that the aforementioned thesis has been language edited post examination.

Any queries may be directed to the author of this letter.

Regards|



MP MATHEWS
Lecturer and Language Editor
Mercimathews4@gmail.com
083 676 4778

APPENDIX 15: Ethical Clearance: Original July 2019



15 July 2019

Mr Zahir Sayed (214579447)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Sayed,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000015/2019

Project title: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting Tourism at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Full Approval – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 07 June 2019 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

This approval is valid for one year from 15 July 2019.

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Rosemary Sibanda (Chair)
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 16: Ethical Clearance: Amended application May 2020



11 May 2020

Mr Zahir Sayed (214579447)
Graduate School of Business & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Sayed,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000015/2019

Project title: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting Tourism at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Approval Notification – Recertification Application

Your request for Recertification dated 07 May 2020 was received.

This letter confirms that you have been granted Recertification Approval for a period of one year from the date of this letter. This approval is based strictly on the research protocol submitted and approved in 2019.

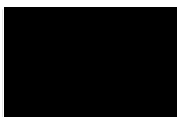
Any alteration s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane J Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587

Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

APPENDIX 17: Ethical Clearance: Amended application July 2021



27 July 2021

Mr Zahir Sayed (214579447)
Grad School Of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear Mr Sayed,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00000015/2019

Project title: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting Tourism at iLembe Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Tourism

Amended title: Design thinking as a strategic lever in promoting tourism in KwaZulu-Natal

Approval Notification – Amendment Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application and request for an amendment received on 19 July 2021 has now been approved as follows:

- Change in research site
- Change in title

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form; Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

All research conducted during the COVID-19 period must adhere to the national and UKZN guidelines.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair)

/dd

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8350 / 4557 / 3587

Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses:  Edgewood  Howard College  Medical School  Pietermaritzburg  Westville

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