

2 Tourism Marketing: The Experiential Perspective

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The objectives of this chapter are to:

- ☐ To analyse the importance of tourism marketing, especially in national parks
- ☐ To unpack the effectiveness of the Mahala Week marketing campaign in national parks.

Introduction

Tourism marketing refers to the strategic promotion of tourism products, destinations, experiences, and services aimed to attract tourists and foster memorable experiences that align with their desires and expectations. By employing a variety of marketing tactics, such as digital marketing, social media, and partnerships with local businesses, tourism marketers aim to create compelling narratives that highlight the unique attributes of a product or a destination, whether it be its cultural heritage, natural, or artificial beauty, or adventure opportunities (Middleton et al., 2009). Effective tourism marketing targets potential visitors and seeks to engage existing tourists to foster repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations (Pike, 2004). Furthermore, personalised marketing efforts such as tailored itineraries and targeted advertising enhance customer experience by addressing specific interests and needs, thereby increasing the likelihood of a positive travel experience and customer loyalty (Buhalis & Law, 2008). By leveraging emotional and rational appeals, tourism marketing strategies successfully influence decision-making and drive tourism arrivals and destination brand equity. The Mahala Week campaign is one of the effective tourism marketing tactics that the South African National Parks (SANParks) introduced to increase South African citizens' awareness of the national parks.

The Mahala Week campaign allows South African citizens to experience nature-based tourism products, such as the country's national parks. During their visits,