

# New Ideas for the Development of Pietermaritzburg as the 'Events Capital' of KwaZulu-Natal

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Occasional Paper No. 96  
September 2016

## 1. Introduction

The province of KwaZulu-Natal (or KZN) is home to a number of world-class events that take place throughout the calendar year. The city of Pietermaritzburg, which is also the provincial capital, is closely associated with most, if not all, of the major events that take place in the province. However, it has come to the attention of many key stakeholders that most of these events in and around the city are compressed into a very short space of time. In other words, the large majority of the events take place during February, May and June, which are all very close together in terms of time – an effect which is exacerbated by almost all of the events taking place over weekends. The purpose of this paper is to shed some light on the current status of events in and around the city of Pietermaritzburg (PMB), and to propose recommendations and strategies for creating a wider spread of events throughout the year, thus decreasing seasonality and increasing geographic spread.

## 2. Background and Context

This paper has been influenced not only by current trends and thoughts around the events that are hosted in Pietermaritzburg, but also by an article that was published in *The Witness* on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2015. The article was titled, "Making PMB an attractive destination" and the author, Brad Morgan, discussed how positioning Pietermaritzburg as a sports events capital is what the city needed to do in order to increase its overall competitiveness as a destination (Morgan, 2015). Dr Clive Coetzee, who is a GM in the KZN Treasury, is also quoted in the article as saying:

"The good thing about these [UCI Cycling] events compared to the FIFA World Cup, for instance, is that they are not once off, flash-in-the-pan, talk-of-the-month things. There are a continuous, recurring number of events, and every year it gets better. It means that people are now becoming familiar with Pietermaritzburg".

The article was written in the context, and at the time of, the African Cycling Forum that took place in the city during July/August 2015. It is also worth noting that PMB is known as Africa's "Bike City" and is one of only three "Bike Cities" in the world which are recognised by the 'Union Cycliste Internationale' (UCI) - translated as the International Cycling Union. It is this status that has placed the city of PMB on the map in terms of global sporting events, in addition to other major events such as the Comrades Marathon.

The former mayor of Pietermaritzburg, Mr Chris Ndlela, was also quoted in the article as saying the following:

"We welcome the Bike City concept and the whole cycling fraternity that is coming to our city, the City of Choice. This event is of international standards and reinforces the good name that we have building for ourselves as a city of events. It's not only the big cycling events that are of international standards. We also have the Comrades Marathon, the Dusi Canoe Marathon, and the Midmar Mile, and other big events. The positives that they [the events] bring include

the economic spend from visitors - the B&Bs and hotels benefit from this, as well as retailers and tourism related sites. These major competitions put us out there as a city that is capable of hosting big events. We can no longer call ourselves a small city because we are able to host events of such stature and magnitude. We appreciate them as they put us on the map and they help us develop as a city.

In light of these comments, it is vital to understand the current trends surrounding the events in the city and what can be done to spread them out so that visitors travel to the city throughout the year, and not just during the first four to six months.

### **3. Current Events in KZN and Pietermaritzburg**

As previously mentioned, both KZN and PMB are associated with, or play host to, a number of major events that attract thousands of participants and/or spectators. It is also important to note that the sporting events are not the only ones that are important for economic development. There are a number of other events that fall under themes such as, 'arts and cultural' or 'entertainment'.

The four largest or major events that are hosted in the province and are associated with the city are the Midmar Mile, the Dusi Canoe Marathon, the Comrades Marathon, and the Amashova Classic. A brief discussion on these events can be found below:

**The Midmar Mile** is the "world's largest open water swim" that takes place at Midmar Dam, just north of PMB (Midmar Mile, 2016). The event attracts over 16 000 people ( $\pm 10\ 000$  participants and  $\pm 6\ 000$  spectators), of which 90% are not from the local area – i.e. they are tourists to the area during the event (TKZN, 2016).

**The Dusi Canoe Marathon** is the biggest canoe race on the African continent. It is described as a gruelling three-day canoe race from Pietermaritzburg (the Msunduzi River) to Durban (the Umgeni River mouth), covering a total distance of 120km both on the river systems and on land (Dusi Canoe Marathon, 2016). The event attracts over 2 800 people ( $\pm 1\ 200$  participants and  $\pm 1\ 600$  spectators/crew), of which 25% are tourists in the province during the event (TKZN, 2016).

**The Comrades Marathon** is probably KZN's biggest event and it known as the world's largest ultra marathon that covers a total distance of 89km from Pietermaritzburg to Durban (Comrades, 2016). The race attracts close to 70 000 people ( $\pm 20\ 000$  participants and over 50 000 spectators), of which 68% are tourists in KZN. The event is also growing in terms of international participation with just over 1 700 participating in the 2015 event – most of which came from Europe and the USA (TKZN, 2016).

**The Amashova Classic** is Africa's oldest classic cycle race and in 2016, it will be turning 30. The main race covers a total distance of 106km from Pietermaritzburg to Durban (Amashova, 2016). The event attracts over 22 000 people ( $\pm 10\ 000$  participants and  $\pm 12\ 000$  spectators), of which 41% are visitors in the area during the event (TKZN, 2016).

In addition to these events above, there are also a number of annual, once-off, and underrated events that take place in KZN and in and around PMB. Table 1 shows an outline of the events that take place in and around Pietermaritzburg, listed per month.

Table 1: Events in Pietermaritzburg

Month	Event Name*	Event Type
January	X	-
February (3)	<b>Midmar Mile</b>	Sports
	<b>Dusi Canoe Marathon</b>	Sports
	Maritzburg City Marathon	Sports
March (2)	National MTB Series	Sports
	UCI Mountain Bike World Cup	Sports
April	X	-
May (3)	The Royal Show	Expo
	Cars in the Park	Arts and Culture
	Art in the Park	Arts and Culture
June (4)	<b>Comrades Marathon</b>	Sports
	Dusi2c	Sports
	Karkloof Mountain Bike Classic	Sports
	Tsogo Sun Sprint	Horse Racing
July	X	-
August (3)	Pietermaritzburg Jazz Festival	Music
	Capital Climb	Sports
	Mandela Day Marathon	Sports
September (4)	The Witness Garden Show	Expo
	Hilton Arts Festival	Arts and Culture
	Hill2Hill MTB Race	Sports
	100 Capital Classic	Sports
October (1)	<b>Amashova Classic</b>	Sports
November	X	-
December	X	-

\*In order of the time of the month

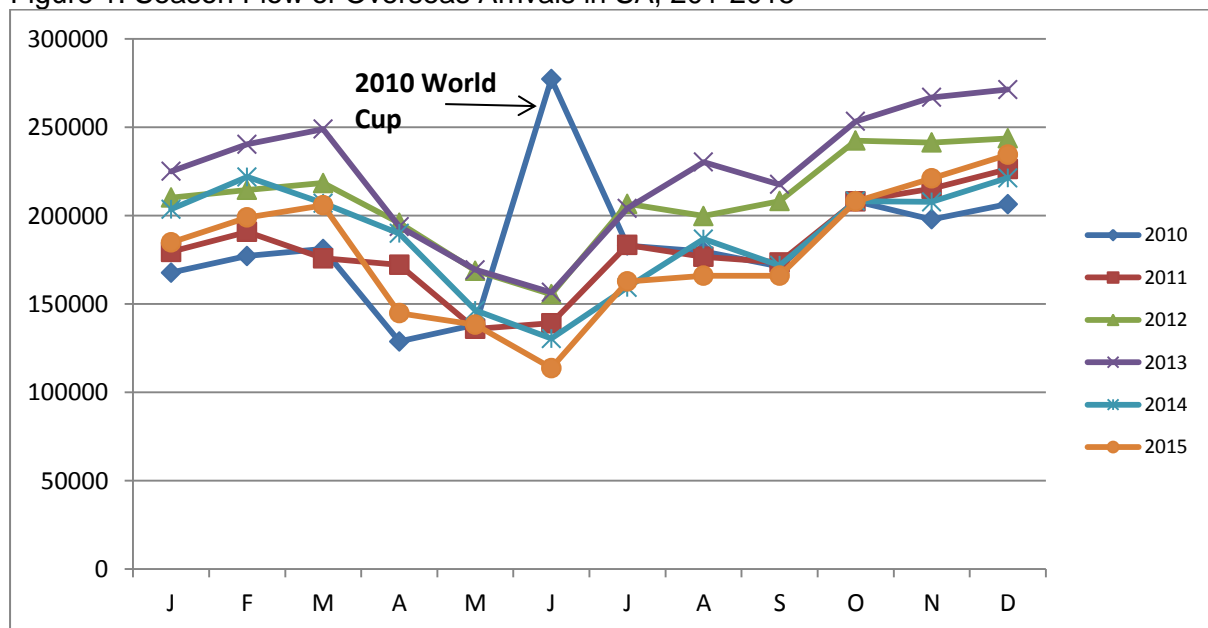
The table shows that there is a total of 12 events within the first six months of the year (January to June), while there are only eight events in the last six months of the year (July to December). The table shows that three of the four major events take place in the first six months of the year. The majority of the events that are hosted in and around the city are sporting events, which is positive as these events have the potential of attracting large numbers of participants and spectators and more often than not have a high economic impact. However, it should be noted that some of these events may be associated with PMB but may finish elsewhere. Therefore, in light of these findings, it is necessary to start strategizing on how to spread the events throughout the year or even create new events that will add to the calendar of events for the year.

#### 4. The Importance of Events for Tourism and Economic Development

It goes without saying that events are crucial for any destination in terms of image and also for economic growth. The discussion below attempts to outline the importance of events for any destination.

Firstly, events are crucial in terms of **alleviating seasonality**. In other words, events make it possible for destinations to experience an influx of tourists sometimes outside the major holiday seasons. For example, various school holidays and public holidays have a major influence on the travel patterns of domestic tourists. It has been found (see Figure 1 and 2) that the majority of domestic trips are taken during the Easter Holidays, July/Winter Holidays and over the Christmas break (December/January). Therefore, when tourists travel to take part or attend an event that falls outside of a major holiday, the event is responsible for reducing the seasonality of the normal domestic trips. An important example of this is the events that take place during the month of February – i.e. Midmar Mile, Dusi Canoe Marathon, and the Maritzburg City Marathon. February is normally a very quiet month in terms of domestic travel, but these events almost ‘force’ people to travel to PMB and its surrounds. It is also important to note, from the graphs below, that domestic and foreign/international tourism arrivals/trips complement each other, thus also reducing seasonality (refer to the footnotes for added discussion).

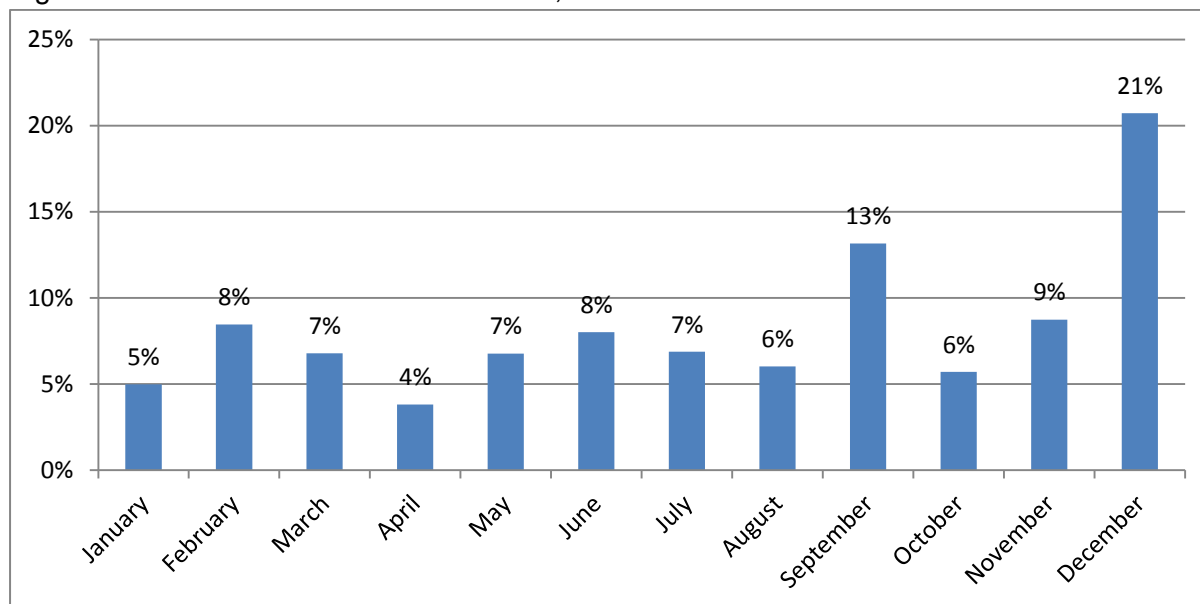
Figure 1: Season Flow of Overseas Arrivals in SA, 201-2015<sup>1</sup>



Source: SAT, 2016

<sup>1</sup> During the months of June and July, it is noted that the foreign arrivals are low (Figure 1), whilst the domestic trips are high (Figure 2). Once again, in the months of October and November, the foreign arrivals this time are high, whilst the domestic trips are low. This is evidence of how foreign tourism and domestic tourism may complement each as stated above.

Figure 2: Domestic Seasonal Flow in KZN, 2015<sup>2</sup>



Source: SAT, 2016

Events also have the potential of assisting in the **branding and/or marketing of a destination**. As the former mayor of PMB noted in the newspaper article, above, events play a crucial part in bringing people to destinations for the first time, as well as encouraging repeat-visits when such destinations were not considered otherwise. For many international or 'long haul' tourists, the participation in an event may bring them to a country or specific destination for the first time. An example of this would be when an international runner travels to KZN to take part in the Comrades Marathon for the first time. They are then mainly exposed to Durban and Pietermaritzburg, as well as everything in between. If their overall experience at the event, as well as in the destination, is perceived to be good and enjoyable, it is more than likely that they will return in the future to participate in the event again and possibly come back for a holiday in the destination. This can be backed up by all of the event impact assessment reports – for example, approximately 90% of the respondents who were interviewed at the 2016 Comrades Marathon said that they would be returning in the future (Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit, 2016).

An event may also **increase the competitiveness of a destination**. In other words, one must think that without the events that are hosted in the destination, would the destination be thriving as much as it is or as much as it could be? For example, in terms of the total arrivals in the city of PMB and the average occupancy rates of accommodation establishments, one should ask whether or not these would be higher or lower without the events. This could also cause the occurrence of possible displacement. In other words, for those families who tend to book out a 'block' week at an accommodation establishment may be discouraged from booking or may not be able to book the required number of days due to the rooms being booked during an event. Events can also give a destination an 'edge' when it comes to other similar destinations. In terms of some of the events that Tourism KwaZulu-

<sup>2</sup> In addition to Footnote 1, the months of March and April are difficult to measure in terms of tracking data due to the fact that the Easter weekend is declared during a different period each year. This also may affect the dates of the school holidays and thus the domestic flow. Sometimes domestic tourists will also travel during Easter and not in June/July, and vice versa.

Natal (TKZN) conducts impact assessments at, most of these draw in enough people to completely book out all of the accommodation establishments in the city – and enough to cause people to have to look outside of the city in areas such as Hilton, Howick and even the Midlands area.

Events also have the potential to **increase tourism development and growth**. In simple terms, as the events attract a large number of visitors to a destination, normally out of season, there is often a demand for accommodation, shopping, and entertainment. Therefore, because of this new accommodation establishments may be developed, shopping centres may be expanded or built, and more entertainment facilities may be introduced (such as casinos, bars, amongst others). Not only do these developments provide an opportunity for increased spend and economic growth, but they also stimulate the local economy as the locals will then spend more money at these new developments (barring the accommodation). The increased development of infrastructure and facilities for tourism not only adds to the competitiveness of the destination but it also has the potential of attracting visitors to the destination out of season – i.e. not during the major holidays and also at other times of the year when events are not taking place.

Finally, one of the most important aspects of events is the fact that they create a number of **economic spin-offs** – mainly the creation of jobs and the impact of economic spend by visitors. The hosting of events also allows for the creation of many permanent and part-time/temporary jobs. Unfortunately, TKZN is not in the possession of such information for any of the events. This is something that will need to be addressed in future research.

For an example of such economic spin-offs, the following has been provided - Table 2 outlines the four major KZN events that TKZN have studied, while Table 3 provides an outline on a combination of some of the other events that take place in and around Pietermaritzburg.

Table 2: TKZN Event Impact Assessment - Four Major Events

Event (2016)	Estimated Total Attendance	% of Visitors	No. of Visitors	Direct Economic Impact (mean)
Midmar Mile	16 000	90	14 400	R61.5 mn
Dusi Canoe Marathon	2 800	25	700	R1.5 mn
Comrades Marathon	70 000	68	47 600	R605.0 mn
Amashova Classic	12 700	57	7 240	R37.5 mn
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>101 500</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>69 940</b>	<b>R705.5 mn</b>

Source: TKZN, 2016

Before analysing the data in Table 3, it is important to note that these four major events, that all take place in and around PMB have injected a mean figure of close to R705 million into the provincial economy within one calendar year. These events have also attracted over 100 000 people, with just over 69 000 being visitors to the province – a higher number of

visitors is considered to be very important as the economic impact is based on the direct spend of visitors only, while local residents have their spend excluded. Barring the Midmar Mile (which takes place in Howick, but is still a major event for PMB), the rest of the events contribute to the local economies of both Pietermaritzburg and Durban. Therefore, it must be noted that only a percentage of the economic impact of the Dusi Canoe Marathon, Comrades Marathon, and the Amashova Classic actually remains within the local economy of PMB. These exact amounts have not been estimated as yet and it is therefore necessary to conduct further research on how to measure the value of an event in one city. One way of moving towards this aspect is to include a question in the event survey that reads something such as, "Did you stay in PMB or in Durban during the event?" Also, the economic impact may vary with the Comrades as there is an 'up-run' and a 'down-run' - which means that there is an alternation in terms of the start and finish in the two cities.

Table 3: TKZN Event Impact Assessments - Other Events (2015 – 2016)

<b>Event</b>	<b>Estimated Total Attendance</b>	<b>% of Visitors</b>	<b>No. of Visitors</b>	<b>Direct Economic Impact (Mean)</b>
2016 Maritzburg City Marathon	10 200	60	6 120	R7.9 mn
2016 Tsogo Sun Sprint	12 000	37	4 440	R12.3 mn
2016 Mandela Day Marathon	12 100	51	6 196	R4.2 mn
2015 Art in the Park	7 500	58	4 350	R9.9 mn
2015 Karkloof MTB Classic	5 200	73	3 796	R5.1 mn
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>47 000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>24 862</b>	<b>R39.4 mn</b>

Source: TKZN, 2016

This table supports the fact that not much spend actually remains entirely in Pietermaritzburg. This could be that other factors may be at play. It is therefore evident that these events have injected a further mean figure of close to R39 million into the local economy of PMB and its surrounding areas (such as Hilton and Howick). In addition to this, these events have attracted a further 47 000 people, of which close to 25 000 were visitors to the destination.

Therefore, the total economic impact of these nine events, between 2015 and 2016, is estimated to be R745 million. It is important to note that this is a mean estimate and a highly conservative figure. The economic impact is therefore more than likely to be much more than this figure, as stated above. In simple terms, without these events the figure R745 million would not be found in the provincial economy. The same applies for the events that contribute directly to the local economy and Pietermaritzburg.

## **5. Conclusion**

From the discussions above, it is clear that Pietermaritzburg has benefitted, and will continue to benefit from the events that are hosted in and around the city. Not only do these events have many positive socio-economic benefits for the city, but they also help to alleviate the seasonality of tourism, lead to tourism development, increase the competitiveness of the destination, and they assist in the marketing and branding of the city. However, one thing remains clear and that is the fact that the large majority of the events are all “crammed” in during the first six months of the year, which leaves the last six months of the year an opportunity for change and growth.

When analysing the spread of the events, within a calendar year, it was noted that the three of the four major events take place not only within the first six months of the year but they also take place around the time of the Easter holidays and fall just before the July school holidays. Furthermore, with fewer events taking place from July to December, this leaves a gap between the July school holidays and the ‘major’ Christmas holiday over December and January. Instead of seeing this gap as a wasted period, key stakeholders in the city and local district municipality should embrace this period and see it as an opportunity of spreading some events around, and even adding in new events that can be brought in to the city and its surrounding areas. Furthermore, events that are added during the December holidays could attract a number of day visitors from Durban and other parts of the province that are within easy reach of Pietermaritzburg.

Not only would this initiative increase the economic spin-offs and spread them throughout the financial year, but it would also see an increased number of visitors coming into the city for events, and also for holidays and even business, as their exposure to the destination will have the potential of creating motivation for future travel. However, it is up to the key stakeholders and management of the province, city, and local district municipality, to ensure that Pietermaritzburg is truly the “City of Choice”. In other words, the city and its surrounding areas would need top-class infrastructure and facilities in place that would allow further growth and development of tourism in the city. The demands of these tourists will need to be met on every occasion, whether they are in the city for an event, a holiday, or business.

## **6. Way Forward and Recommendations**

In light of the discussion above, it is therefore evident that events already play a crucial role in the growth of tourism and economic development in Pietermaritzburg. But there is still much to be done in terms of achieving this development and growth, especially in the city of Pietermaritzburg where there is great potential. Some of the key questions that remain are - how can the current events be spread across the calendar year in order to achieve a spread of the economic benefits associated with the events? Also, is there room for the addition of new events to be added throughout the calendar year, i.e. in the months with less major events?

In terms of the reliability of data, it should also be noted that research should be conducted with the objective of understanding the value of the major events for Pietermaritzburg only. In other words, the Comrades and Amashova both include Durban and Pietermaritzburg. Thus, how would the value of the event for Pietermaritzburg (only) be measured?



Another key recommendation is to establish and monitor a so-called 'Event Committee' for the city. This committee should be the driving force behind the development of an events strategy for the city and should assist in the planning and implementation of all current events, and should also be a consulting body that will assist in the attraction and development of new events for the city. The committee should be made up by key stakeholders and organisations– to name a few, Melanie Veness (Pietermaritzburg Chamber of Business), John Hall (Capital Running), Chris Fisher (The Comrades Marathon Association), Dumisani Mhlongo (Pietermaritzburg Tourism), Annie Batchelor (Amashova Classic), as well as others that could be nominated.

## References

- Amashova Durban Classic. (2016). *Tsogo Sun Amashova Durban Classic*. Retrieved September 26, 2016, from <http://www.shova.co.za>
- Dusi Canoe Marathon. (2016). *Dusi Canoe Marathon*. Retrieved September 26, 2016, from <http://www.dusi.co.za>
- Midmar Mile. (2016). *The Midmar Mile*. Retrieved September 26, 2016, from <http://www.midmarmile.co.za>
- Morgan, B. (2015, July 22). Making PMB an Attractive Destination. In *The Witness*. Pietermaritzburg: Media24.
- South Africa Tourism Strategic Research Unit. (2015). *2014 Annual Tourism Report*. Johannesburg: South Africa Tourism.
- The Comrades Marathon Association. (2016). *Comrades Marathon*. Retrieved September 26, 2016, from <http://www.comrades.co.za>
- Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2015). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Art in the Park*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.
- Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2015). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Karkloof MTB Classic*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.
- Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2016). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Comrades Marathon*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.
- Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2016). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Dusi Canoe Marathon*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.
- Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2016). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Mandela Day Marathon*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.
- Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2016). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Maritzburg City Marathon*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.
- Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2016). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Midmar Mile*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2016). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Tsogo Sun Amashova Durban Classic*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Research Unit. (2016). *Event Impact Assessment, Top Line Summary Report: Tsogo Sun Sprint*. Durban: Tourism Information Services.