

**LOCAL CAMPAIGN EFFECT ON TOURISM SUPPLY CHAIN DURING THE TIMES
OF COVID-19**

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Abstract

Leveraging of tourism's potential during the challenging times (such as Covid-19 pandemic) through the initiatives such as the “buy local campaign” has a critical effect in the tourism supply chain and contribute towards service excellence, creating and sustaining quality jobs. Hence, stakeholders within the supply chain are encouraged to coordinate and collaborate through different channels. This paper explores effect of a “Buy local campaign” on businesses operating in the tourism supply chain. Web Content Analysis was adopted to identify common themes likely to impact the ‘buy local campaign’ during and post covid-19 in the South African context. Although the covid-19 pandemic presented challenges in several value chains, there exist “new ways of conducting a local campaign for collective benefits”. Campaigns encourages the nation to contribute towards the economic growth and prosperity of the country through buying locally produced goods and services.

Keywords: Tourism Supply Chain, Buy Local Campaign, Tourism Businesses

Introduction

The travel, tourism and hospitality industry is expected to play a significant role in regaining the socio-economic stability after Covid 19 pandemic. Exploring the initiatives such as the “buy local campaign” during Covid-19 with an intention to identify the “new ways of conducting business” within the tourism supply chain is paramount. A ‘Buy local campaign’ is a popular strategy for marketing products in domestic markets with the main aim of supporting the local economy (Darku and Akpan, 2020), the scope can be national, regional, community or sectoral. Buy local campaigns are a response to economic threats and are hinged on notions of ethical trade, fair trade, and economic justice (Cadieux and Slocum, 2015; McCaffrey & Kurland, 2015 as cited in Darku & Akpan, 2020). Buy-local campaigns revolve around consumers’ feelings and focus on their moral duty to buy local or the threat of foreign products (Siamagka and Balabanis, 2015).

According to Vargas (2020: 691), the COVID-19 crisis has had a dramatic impact on the tourism industry, with new challenges that calls for a combination of short- and medium-/long-term perspectives. The new type of corona pandemic has not only shaken the entire socio-economic structure, but it also challenged the global business operations that caused the tourism industry to a standstill. Whilst other companies were severely affected, others closed shop. Therefore, identifying strategies that were adopted to leverage the travel, tourism, and hospitality sector's potential during the times of Covid-19 is critical towards economic development in the developing context.

The travel, tourism and hospitality sectors in South Africa experienced the devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, hence the national government developed initiatives for a recovery plan. According to Shapiro (2020), the 2.2-million South African workers lost their jobs in the second quarter of 2020 which translates to at least 8.8-million South Africans affected. Hence, Shapiro (2020) advocates for “buying local to support the South African economy”.

In South Africa, ‘Proudly South African’, is the country’s national buy local campaign that seeks to strongly influence procurement in public and private sectors. This also includes the travel,

tourism, and hospitality sectors whereby information technology is used for promotion purposes. The purpose of the local campaign in South Africa was to increase local production, influence consumers to buy local and stimulate job creation to revive South Africa's economy so that millions of jobs can be created, and unemployment can be decreased (Mshimbye, 2020). The buy local consumer education campaign was launched on 3 July 2020 on various platforms, followed by the Proudly SA's Buy Local Summit and Expo. Since the focus is on the travel, tourism, and hospitality sector, perhaps having an understanding of the Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) marketing strategies is critical.

Background: Role of the Destination marketing to market segmentation

Maintaining international as well as a local advertising campaign is crucial to any travel, tourism, and hospitality business. Destination advertising is one of the elements of DMOs, Pike and Page (2014) define DMO as the main vehicle to compete and attract visitors to a distinctive place or visitor space. Hence, one of the roles of the DMOs has been under spotlight during and post covid-19 lockdown in different countries. According to Vargas (2020: 695) any decline with regards to the marketing efforts of DMOs is caused by the external factors beyond their control because the travel, tourism and hospitality world is changing a lot and maybe too fast especially for the tourism organizations that are still dependent on government bodies and political factors. Moreover, the effect of covid-19 brought the new context of crisis management within the stakeholder in the public-private-people partnerships. Hence Vargas (2020: 696), advocates for the DMO to move away from being a *'marketer'* to *'the orchestrator of players in the destination'*; from *'an intermediary in the value chain'* to *'the facilitator of opportunities for its members'*; as well as from being a *'brand promoter'* to *'the intelligence promoter and strategic mind'*. Therefore, market segmentation is critical to handle proper campaigns in the tourism supply chain.

The concept of market segmentation is derived from the marketing discipline with an intention of "a marketer to divide up his or her market in as many ways as s/he can describe his/ her prospects" (Haley, 1968: 30). In most cases, the well-executed market segmentation research yields interesting results that could be impactful towards an organisation, such that, people who market the products and services set stricter standards rather than relying on pure intellectual satisfaction. The purpose is to justify the amount of time and money needed to conduct the market segmentation survey so that the results are actually feasible. According to Greenberg and McDonald (1989: 30), successful needs/benefits of segmentation should (1) correlate with market behaviour, (2) lead readily to product manipulation and development of message strategies, and (3) provide direction for media buying. Therefore, small manufacturers who wished to limit their investments, or whose distribution channels are not large enough to cover the entire country, segmenting the market, in effect, by selling their products only in certain areas is useful (Haley, 1960).

Therefore, in a context where there is high employment rate, proper coordination and collaboration within the tourism supply chain stakeholders is prudent to contribute towards creating and sustaining quality jobs. The Trading Economics (2022) states that South Africa's unemployment rate climbed to 35.3% in the fourth quarter of 2021, up from 34.9% in the previous period. The number of unemployed persons increased by 278 thousand to 7.9 million, employment rose by 262 thousand to 14.5 million and the labour force went up by 540 thousand to 22.5 million (Trading Economics, 2022). Henceforth, leveraging travel, tourism and hospitality's potential is critical towards economic development that would benefit the youth in the country due to the impact of COVID-19 that has constrained Africa's progress towards attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Sifolo (2022) argues that technological adaptation could improve competitiveness of a destination through re-thinking and

re-aligning the innovative integrated solutions of the SMME to achieve a quality of life. Perhaps exploring the use of technology could have an effect or change the status quo in South Africa.

Use of Social media during the times of Covid-19

Social media gained momentum tremendously during the time of covid-19. Although it has both advantages and disadvantages, the social media platforms have been a key piece for the dissemination of information for different societies. The social media has always been useful, with the covid-19 pandemic, different platforms has been useful to arrange collaborative research projects, surveys, medical education etc. Online live, recorded webinars and platforms such as YouTube, Skype, or Zoom, MS Teams, WhatsApp etc. were widely used.

Social Media challenges the behaviour and marketing campaigns worldwide. For example, with the travel, tourism and hospitality sector, the event industry, transformed completely. The Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions (MICE) started to host hybrid events which has a mix of live and virtual components. The COVID-19 pandemic created opportunities to rethink what we value and to reimagine the tourism future for the world (Sifolo, 2022; Fountain, 2021). Online shopping gained momentum during the covid-19 lockdown period. For example, according to Fountain (2021), online shopping on domestic sites increased due to the fear of disrupted international online retail. This was partly due to uncertainty as well as the reliability of international shipping and postal services during the same period. Hence the concept of 'buy local campaign' plays a critical role in supporting small businesses in the local community. While some suggest that these buy local campaigns may be short lived (Killgallon, 2020; Hall et al., 2020b), others warn that financial reality may see a return to old habits, this trend is not limited to a pandemic response (Fountain 2021). During any hard times, local buying campaigns accelerate solidarity.

Tourism potential amidst Covid-19: #Buy local campaigns adopted

Several countries adopted different strategies worldwide during covid-19 pandemic. Although these strategies date back to the 19th century, they have been used for different reasons. For example, in the 19th century, the campaign such as "China made" was used to turn the tide against Japanese products (Gert, 2003, cited in Darku & Akpan, 2020). Hence, they came to a conclusion that the buy local campaigns sometimes become the embodiment of national culture in the marketplace (Darku & Akpan (2020). Other countries initiated strong marketing and promotional campaigns locally during the pandemic (Fountain, 2021), others placed their focus on international markets. Hosseini, Paydar, Alizadeh and Triki (2021) indicated that advertising and/or discounting campaigns by managers in the ecotourism supply chain could be beneficial in the long run. There were campaigns adopted by different countries that were in line with the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) response to the current crisis, highlighting the enduring values of tourism. For example, the UNWTO encapsulated the message of solidarity and hope, through the hashtag #Travel Tomorrow, indicating that "By staying home today, we can travel tomorrow" (UNWTO). Whilst Ranasinghe, Damunupola, Wijesundara, Karunarathna, Nawarathna, Gamage, Ranaweera and Idroos (2020, 7-9) postulate that the UNWTO campaign "specify the core values of tourism that constitute the main pillars of the #Travel Tomorrow campaign such as, discovering different cultures, practicing solidarity and respect, caring for the environment, continuing to learn, fostering decent work, development and sustainability, generating new opportunities for all". They further identified countries such as Germany, Morocco, Mongolia, Oman, Uruguay and Bogotá or Vienna that already endorsed the hashtag #Travel Tomorrow (Ranasinghe, et. al, 2020). However, Darku and Akpan (2020) warn that the use of 'buy local campaigns' by countries as an intervention for reclaiming domestic market spaces can produce contradictory outcomes concurrently in the same campaign. Malhotra

and Ramalingam (2022), claim that national identity motivates and engages consumers to buy domestic-made products to promote local markets which could positively influence consumers to buy domestic-made products. Table 1 below presents the 'buy local campaigns' examples from different countries.

Summary of the selected literature on 'buy local campaigns'

Industry	Area and the type of campaign	Local campaign strategy	Source
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexi-cancellation policies, flexi-rates for all services, ensuring strict hygiene policies in Sri Lanka 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "#Travel Tomorrow "By staying home today, we can travel tomorrow 	Ranasinghe, et al, (2020)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> using local renewable resources for use in local materials for packaging, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Buy local' campaigns 	Hall (2005)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involves sponsorship contribution, promotion of the Blue Flag beaches in destination brochures and active co-operation on environmental issues by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue Flag Campaign 	Nelson & Botterill (2002: 157-170)
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> marketing campaigns for local products initiated in 1998, with a popular designation of local origin, and, to some, a mark of authenticity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Local is lekker' and 'Proudly South African' 	le Roux (2014, 809-827)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Friday Wear and Wear South African campaigns fall within the cultural economies of Ghana and South Africa, respectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Wear local" 	Darku & Akpan, (2020)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This campaign offers attendees who have purchased a Plett Rage Freedom Pass a voucher booklet that includes a number of discount and voucher coupons redeemable at various stores and restaurants within Plettenberg Bay, South Africa 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Friends of the Festival" 	Harmer & Rogerson, 1-14)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise the purchase of Kenyan products to promote the growth and development of local industries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Buy Kenya build Kenya' 	Osere & Ochieng (2019)
Hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In New Zealand, the focused was on the role of food and natural environment with an emerging desire for sustainable and localised food systems to a new, or renewed, confidence about New Zealand's unique food culture(s). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> #Backyourbackyard "Getting back to basics", "Valuing local and locals" & "Food for well-being" 	Fountain (2021)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It seeks to encourage visitors to consume by preference locally produced food and drink, and the Sustainable Farming and Food initiative in UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eat the View campaign 	David, 254
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bottle and package food locally, consider using distinctive local packaging in order to reinforce local brand identity, use local food as an attraction to tourists thereby increasing the circulation of tourist expenditure through the local economy in SA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Buy local' campaigns 	Hall (2005, 151)

The literature reveals that countries may use a similar campaign; however, the results may differ. For example, the study conducted by Darku and Akpan (2020) in Ghana and South Africa on textile and clothing industries revealed that culture was more important for Ghanaian respondents than their South African counterparts on the 'wear campaign'. They attributed this to the 'attune of the society'. Ranasinghe, et. al, (2020) found that promotion matters, for example, the flexi-rates in bookings were promoted to allow guests to move a booking to a new date in Sri Lanka. In other areas there was a sense of wanting to support the small businesses – including food and wine producers – who were unable to operate during lockdown, or who lost their usual distribution channels such as restaurants and hotels. Hosseini, et. al., (2021) revealed that campaigns on ecotourism can contribute to the economic, social, and cultural development of local societies.

The effect of the “buy local campaign” has a critical aspect in the tourism supply chain and contribute towards creating and sustaining quality jobs. Moreover, such campaign encourages the nation to contribute towards the economic growth and prosperity of the country through buying locally produced goods and services. Although covid-19 brought “new ways of conducting business”, the pandemic presented challenges in several value chains, this paper explores effect of a “Buy local campaign” on businesses operating in South Africa that plays part in the tourism supply chain. There has been a variety of local campaigns in the South African context, particularly the tourism sector. However, there is paucity of the studies focusing on 'buy local campaign' conducted in the South African context during covid-19.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the qualitative research approach whereby the web content analysis was adopted. Although web content analysis is an ambiguous technique (Herring, 2009), it incorporates the application of content analysis techniques, whether it is narrowly or broadly construed to the web, it uses various (traditional and non-traditional) techniques. The purpose for relying on web-based content is that Herring (2009) identifies it as non-traditional technique that is used for the ease of performing and preparing data conveniently. The method provides a rich opportunity to study users' styles, patterns or preferences that does not necessitate any researcher intervention (Kim & Kuljis, 2010: 370).

This study is exploratory in nature. The purpose was to explore the effect of a “Buy local campaign” on businesses operating in South Africa that plays part in the tourism supply chain. Having a better understanding and to gain familiarity with an existing phenomenon of “buy local campaign” to acquire new insight was critical. Specific aspects of web content analysis include interactivity, trust, information, and value adding features (Sambhanthan & Good, 2016). Since this study explores effect of a “Buy local campaign” on businesses operating in the tourism supply chain during and post covid-19 in the South African context; it is critical to learn from styles, patterns or preferences covered in the literature through web content analysis. According to Buhalis (2004: 104) the implications of the internet and other growing interactive multimedia platforms for tourism promotion are far reaching and alter the structure of the industry. In this study, the internet, academic articles, newspaper articles (traditional techniques) as well as 'research rabbit' (non-traditional technique) which is a website research-based platform were utilised. According to Tay (2021), research rabbit is a “literature mapping tool” from scholarly meta data that tracks most of the articles; there is a high degree of confidence on the usefulness of the visualization.

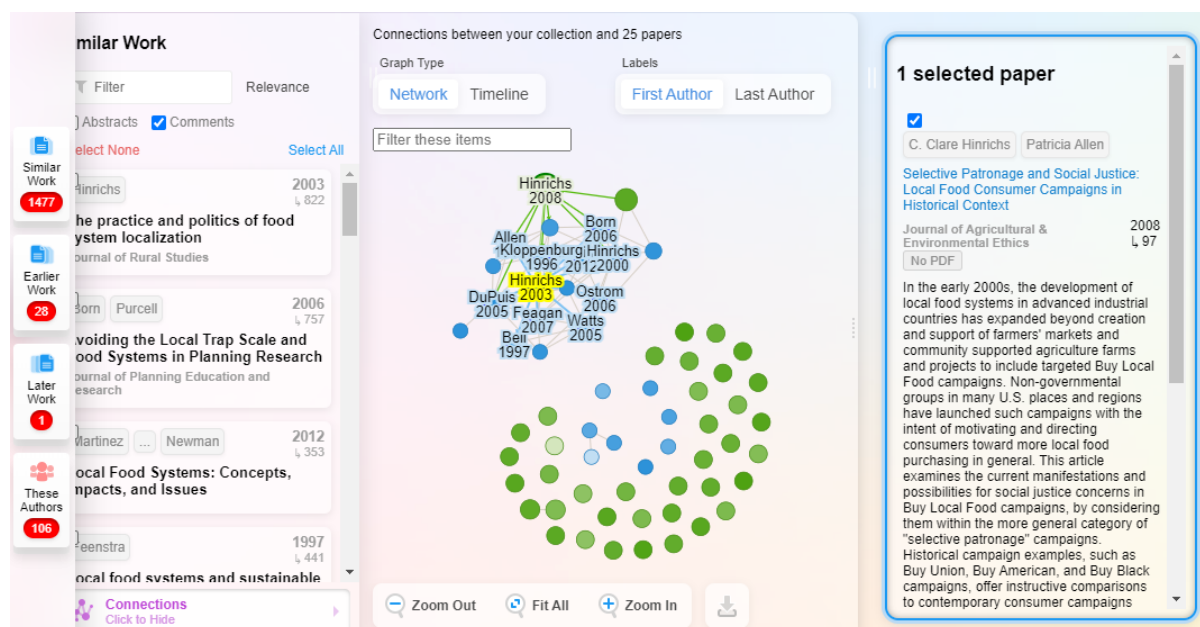
Research results: Traditional techniques outcomes

Although attempts were made to identify major themes from the literature, the themes identified are based mainly on the motivations from previous studies. The use of a hashtag # seem to be prevalent when advocating for something. For example, there are campaigns that are motivational in nature; others are providing a promise to the citizens and the interested parties. Campaigns such as “#Travel Tomorrow” campaign as well as #backyourbackyard” campaign are inclusive and patriotic in nature. During the hard covid-19 lockdown worldwide, the travel industry was forced to show solidarity, hence Sri Lanka had a local campaign such as "by staying home today, we can travel tomorrow”. Other countries were promoting ‘buy local’ campaigns that would be of value to the local supply chain. The focus was on manufacturing local products, for example, food, clothing, promoting service through campaigns such as “Friends of the Festival”, or “Getting back to basics”, “Valuing local and locals” & “Food for well-being” among others. Localisation is critical in leveraging tourism’s potential within the supply chain in a destination. Strategies such as having flexi-cancellation policies, flexi-rates for all services were critical to the hospitality sector. Moreover, using local renewable resources for use in local materials for packaging could contribute towards authenticity of a destination was one of the strategies that promoted “buy local campaign”. Some campaigns fall short when it comes to considering the cultural economies of the country. The emerging desire for sustainable and localised food systems to a new, or renewed, confidence is critical for distinctive local packaging in order to reinforce local brand identity. The use of local food as an attraction to tourists thereby increasing the circulation of tourist expenditure through the local economy in SA is paramount.

Non-traditional technique outcomes

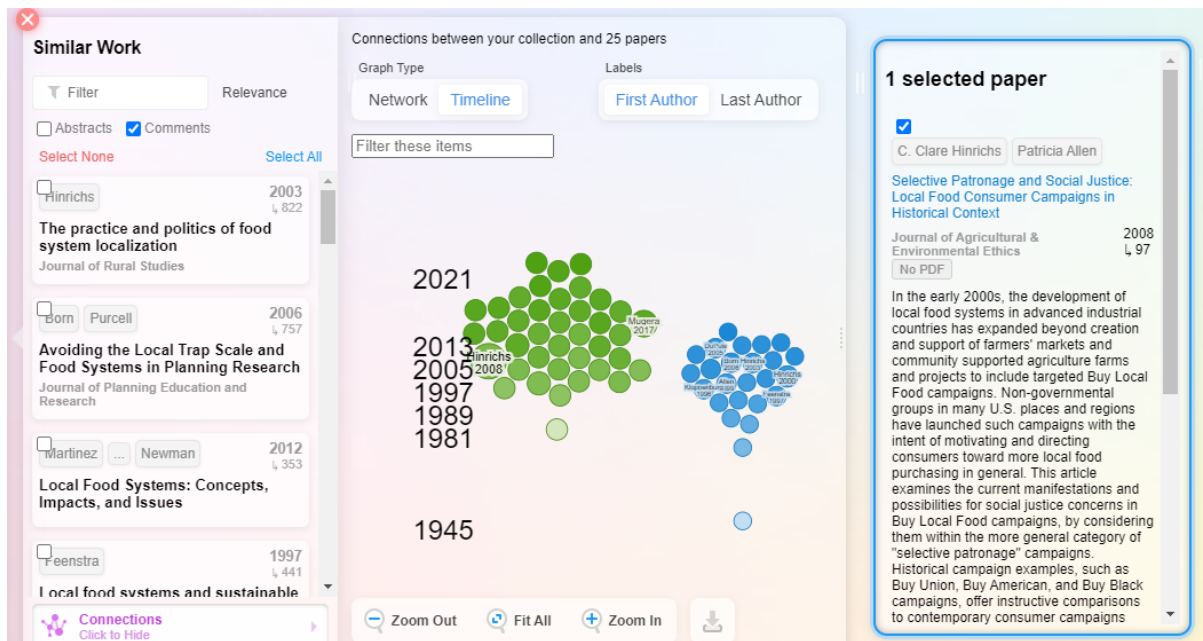
Based on literature obtained from the research rabbit website, there were 46 research papers that were published on the ‘buy local campaign’ concepts as indicated in figure 1. From those studies, about 106 authors have cited research from 46 research papers, however only 25 studies were from the collection of papers (on local campaigns) captured as indicated in:

Figure 1: connection on the number of papers on local campaigns in research rabbit



Source: Research Rabbit

The literature from research rabbit literature indicates that the literature on a 'buy local campaign' started in 1945. However, Hirtch (2022) dispute this by stating that the concept of 'buy local campaign' "started in 1936 as an organized Zionist "buy local" campaign, which in effect meant "buy Jewish", this campaign was in the Hebrew city as expressed in a 1945 letter to the municipality". Although research rabbit captured 1945, this could be symbolic to the fact that a first academic paper published on the buy local campaign was in 1945 as indicated below.



Therefore, it could be deduced that the #BuyLocal campaign has the ability to sustain businesses whilst creating a lot of opportunities for the businesses through positive messaging. In the South African context, travel, tourism, and hospitality are among the key sectors that keep South Africa's economic engine running. Together with the wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing sectors respectively. Construction could also be one of the areas during covid-19 period that offers opportunities in the tourism industry. The literature reveals that the product/service/event/experience offered in terms of the campaign is a demonstrably or proven unique innovative concept for the #BuyLocal Campaign. Apart from working in silos (social distancing), understanding the origin of the product, services and processes has an impact towards the customer's decision-making process. Such information could be informative for customers regarding the sustainable impact of their involvement in the value chain.

For example, one of the # buy local campaign in Durban alone reached almost 500,000 viewers during the month-long period of the campaign. The level of participation based on the web-based content confirms that in today's digital era, entrepreneurial travel, tourism, and hospitality businesses have widely employed automated modern information technology and communication systems to promote or market their businesses (Tajeddini, Martin & Ali, 2020). This concept can be broadened to promote local businesses and encourage our viewers to 'buy local' to further stimulate the economy and help our local businesses get back on their feet. The #Buylocal campaign could have an impact in the analytical thinking, leadership, business intelligence, digital marketing, emotional intelligence, data science, project management and communication skills of not only the customers but the businesses themselves. Figure 3 presents the summary of the effect of the buy local campaign. The tourism supply chain network is likely to flourish if there is quality service and innovative ways of conducting a business; this positive contribution leads to sustainable jobs and economic growth. Moreover, the 'by local campaign' is effective in promoting ethical fair trade, economic justice, and decent work. This is possible

through correlating marketing behaviour through messaging, supporting local economy through coordination and collaboration.

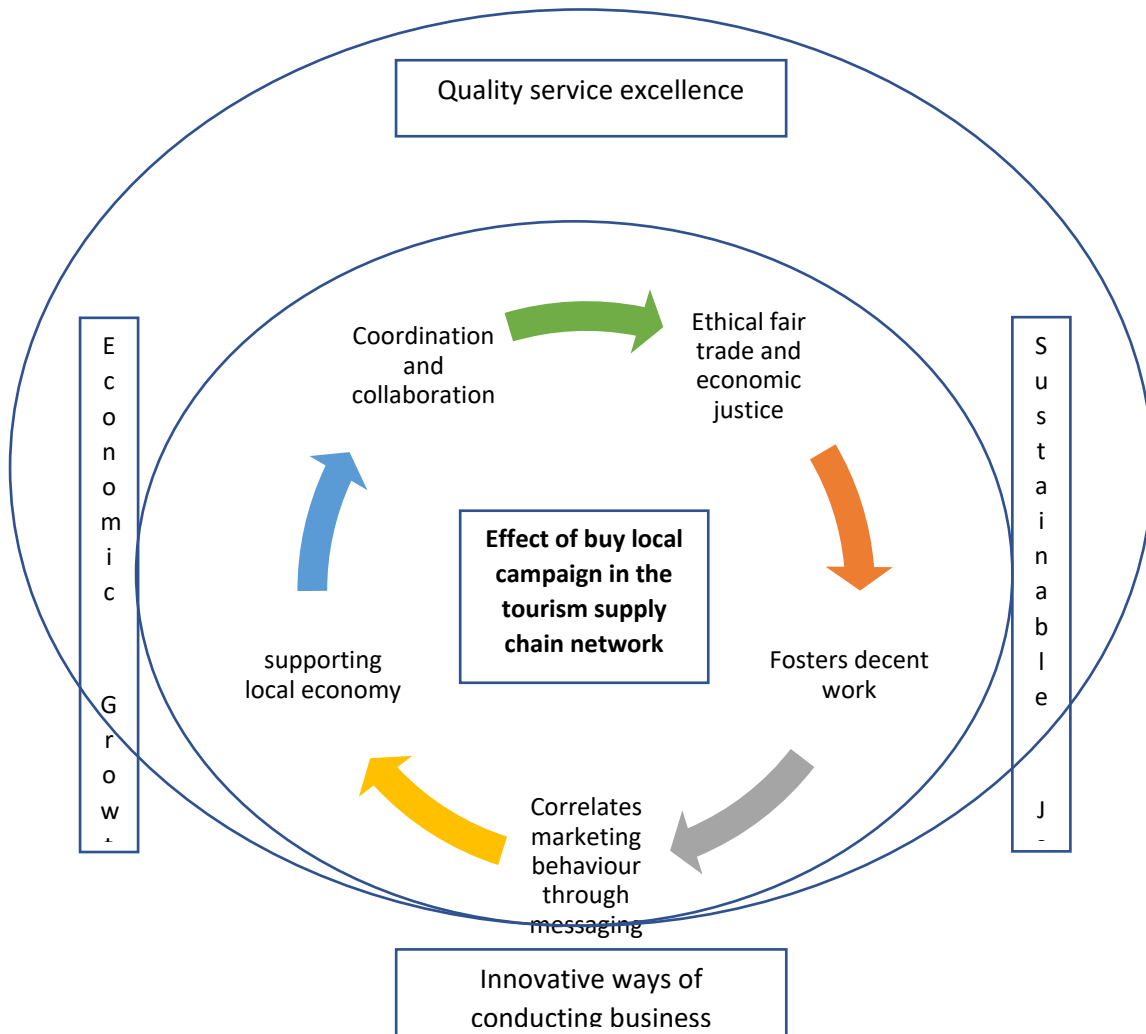


Figure 2: effects of a “buy local campaign in the tourism supply chain network”

Managerial implication and limitation of the study

Content analytic studies are sometimes considered as being devoid of a theoretical basis since the focus is on what is measurable rather than on what is theoretically significant or important (Bell: 2022). This study has fundamental managerial implications for travel, tourism, and hospitality companies in the tourism value chain. It does not present solutions on leveraging tourism's potential during the challenging times (of Covid-19), nor presents that the local campaign guarantees success on the tourism supply chain. There are benefits from a well-executed, inclusive 'buy local campaign' if the culture of the society is considered. Moreover, a successful 'buy local campaign' has elements such as ethical fair trade and economic justice, decent work, correlates marketing behaviour through messaging, supports local economy whilst encouraging coordination and collaboration. One of the limitations in this study is that there was limited time to extract more from the databases (due to the ethical implications when working with personnel handling destination marketing organisations).

Conclusion

A "buy local campaign" is vital during the pandemic with an intention to identify the "new ways of conducting business" within the tourism supply chain. The marketing academics and practitioners from travel, tourism, and hospitality agree that such campaigns tend to have effects on tourism supply chain during the challenging times. The local campaigns are critical for local economic growth contribution of local expenditure in the local economy and the re-enforcement of local brand identity. Moreover, such campaigns become the last line of defence in economies facing negative growth due macro environmental factors. From a practitioner's perspective, a well-executed 'buy local campaign' promotes ethical fair trade and economic justice, decent work, correlates marketing behaviour through messaging, supports local economy whilst encouraging coordination and collaboration.

From an academic perspective, the research offers the structure into the identification of common themes from literature and a considerable analysis of the research rabbit website. Although, the lack of a theoretical basis on the methodology in this research is acknowledged. The measurability of the content analysed for purposes of the study is appreciated.

Discourse about tourism economic recovery, particularly in the wake of Covid 19, Russia/Ukraine conflict and globally economy in distress, requires a consistent stimulation of the local economy. It must be noted be that working towards the goal of a bolstered local economy requires a major shift in thinking and awareness.

Future policy interventions must acknowledge the significance of local economies, especially in eras of pandemics, global recessions, and natural disasters. The buy local campaigns will draw significant benefits; from being patriots to promoting local pride whilst increasing local manufacturing and production in the tourism supply chain. Developing conscious policy and action towards promoting domestic tourism on buy local campaigns demands widespread skills, knowledge and understanding among owners, managers and employees in the travel, tourism, and hospitality sector. This may allow many local businesses to manage, produce and promote the services to locals more actively and in smarter and responsible ways. While international travel has been the dominant focus so far in terms of foreign exchange earnings and economic growth, the sector cannot continue to overlook the significance of buy local campaigns.

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