



**EXPLORING THE EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IMPACT: PARTICIPANTS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF SOUTH AFRICA'S CLASS AFLOAT PROGRAM ON  
TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effectiveness of educational tourism in promoting travel, using the SEAmester program as a case study. As an emerging form of experiential learning, educational tourism seeks to bridge the gap between formal, informal and non-formal educational paradigms by offering real-world experiences beyond traditional classroom settings. The research aimed to assess the impact of a 10-day research cruise aboard the SA Agulhas II on participants' academic and professional trajectories, as well as their inclination toward future travel. Semi-structured interviews and online questionnaire methods were employed involving both SEAmester participants and program facilitators. Thematic analysis revealed that the SEAmester program significantly enhanced participants' disciplinary knowledge, career aspirations, and global awareness. Key triumphs of the program included cross-disciplinary collaboration, mentorship opportunities and increased scientific literacy. Conversely, challenges such as physical exhaustion, sea-sickness and emotional fatigue limitations emerged as barriers to optimal learning. The study found a strong association between participation in the SEAmester program and increased enthusiasm for travel and pursuit of careers related to marine studies, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis that no significant relationship exists between educational tourism and career or travel outcomes. These findings align with existing literature highlighting the transformative potential of educational tourism. The study concludes that educational tourism when properly designed and supported, can serve as a powerful tool for academic enrichment and personal development. It recommends expanding such programs through increased funding, inclusive access, and post-program mentorship to amplify the long-term impact. This research contributes to the expanding discourse on educational tourism as a sustainable and innovative way for knowledge acquisition and the promotion of global citizenship.

**Keywords:** SEAmester, educational tourism, future travel intentions, non-formal education

## **DECLARATION BY STUDENT**

I hereby confirm and declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the work presented in this Master's dissertation is entirely my own and does not contain any material previously published or written by another individual. I also affirm that this dissertation has not been submitted, in whole or in part, for any other degree or professional qualification at this or any other university or institution of higher learning. The content herein represents the result of my independent research and has been reviewed and verified by my supervisor.

Signature:

Date: 10 June 2025

## **DEDICATION**

This study is dedicated to Hlamalani Mbhalati, Ntokoto Mbhalati, Lucky Shivambu, Hlayisani Shivambu, Promise Mathebula, Ntyiso Mathonsi, Gideon Mnisi, Kendrick Mufadmadi Siya Mthethwa and Medupi Monkoe for the exceptional support they gave throughout my study.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education-specific travel is often associated with the number of benefits including promotion of travellers' personal development, experiential learning, self-management of travel logistics, and engagement in diverse and authentic social-cultural interactions. Such travels are regarded as impactful special-purpose tourism product (Dou, Fan & Cai 2023). Education-specific travel falls under educational tourism as it combines travel activities with learning content (Li, Zhang, Xu & Wang 2024; Li & Liang 2020). Educational tourism is one of the fast-growing segments of tourism worldwide and is increasingly being incorporated into curricula with the aim of bridging the gap between traditional education and experiential learning in non-formal settings (Arcodia, Novais, Čavlek & Humpe 2021). This kind of tourism often takes place in universities and schools where participants engage in educational training and programs (Gani, Johari, Abdullah, Hasim & Sharif 2023). Also known as educational travel (Suciu, Savastano, Stativă & Gorelova 2022) educational tourism combines the pleasures of travel with the pursuit of knowledge, offering travellers the opportunity to explore new destinations while engaging in educational experiences (Tomasi, Paviotti & Cavicchi 2020). This form of tourism has gained considerable attention and popularity in recent years, as people increasingly seek meaningful and enriching travel experiences (Tjitunga, Njibama & Makuzva 2023), leading to increasing momentum (Kamdi, Jamal & Anuar 2018).

Ojo and Yusof (2019) link educational tourism to lifelong learning, travel, personal growth and cultural understanding, as it provides a unique platform for individuals to broaden their horizons and expand their intellectual and cultural boundaries. It goes beyond the traditional concept of tourism by emphasising the acquisition of knowledge

and skills, often in a hands-on and immersive manner (Tomasi et al. 2020), while also offering travellers an opportunity to engage with the world in a profound and transformative way (Dembovska, Silicka & Łubkina 2016). Arcodia et al. (2021) argue that experiential learning, is the cornerstone of educational tourism as it provides direct and real-life experiences emphasising observation, analytical skills and problem-solving skills.

One of the key advantages of educational tourism is its potential to spark curiosity and stimulate a love for travel and learning (Thomas & Wee 2022). Traveling to new destinations exposes individuals to diverse cultures, histories, and environments, which can inspire a lifelong passion for exploration and understanding. This exposure can be especially influential on younger travellers, fostering a sense of curiosity that extends beyond the duration of the trip (Bunghez 2022; Vieira, Pocinho, Nunes & Sousa 2022).

According to Naidoo (2007), educational tourism facilitates cross-cultural interactions and competence. When travellers engage with local communities, participate in cultural activities, or enrol in educational programs abroad, they gain a deeper appreciation for the world of diversity (McGladdery & Lubbe 2017). This first-hand exposure to different ways of life fosters tolerance, empathy, and a more profound understanding of global issues, which is invaluable in an increasingly interconnected world (Suciu et al. 2022).

Additionally, the effectiveness of educational tourism in promoting travel can be observed in its capacity to contribute to personal growth and development. Travelers often return from educational trips with enhanced problem-solving skills, adaptability, and a greater sense of self-confidence (Schoonenboom & Johnson 2017). Stepping out of one's comfort zone to explore unfamiliar territories and engage in new experiences can be a transformative process that leads to increased self-awareness and personal growth (Ram Choudhary & Srivastava 2022). Solarin, Alhassan, Lasisi and Bekun (2025) vouch that the tourism sector becomes more effective when there is an increase in revenue associated with educational tourism as opposed to just an increase in educational tourism arrivals. This project aims to examine the effectiveness

of educational tourism in promoting travelling using the case of SEAmester as a spark for further travel. SEAmester stands for South Africa's Class Afloat Program (Susandini & Islam 2022).

## **1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Educational tourism has historical roots dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries when the Grand Tour was popular among European aristocrats, emphasising cultural and educational experiences during their travels. Early forms of study abroad programs emerged in the 20th century, providing students with opportunities to travel for educational purposes (Bianchi & Pike 2011). The concept of educational tourism has evolved beyond traditional study abroad programs to encompass a wide range of educational experiences, including language immersion, cultural exchanges, volunteer work, and specialised workshops (Schoonenboom & Johnson 2017) to cater for various age groups, students and professionals (Bunghez 2022).

According to Suciu et al. (2022), the global tourism industry has witnessed significant growth, with an increasing number of travellers seeking meaningful and immersive experiences with universities at the forefront of this kind of tourism. Universities contribute to the educational tourism sector through the commercialisation of knowledge and innovations, knowledge transfer and international student exchange

Thomas and Wee (2022), further state that educational tourism offers travellers the opportunity to combine leisure with learning and personal enrichment, thus shifting travel motivations from passive sightseeing to active engagement and personal development. Travelers are now looking for experiences that foster cultural understanding, skill development, and lifelong learning, making educational tourism more appealing and lifelong.

Educational tourism does not only promote intercultural competence by facilitating interactions with local communities and providing first-hand exposure to diverse cultures, but also offer programs that focus on sustainability, conservation efforts and

responsible travel practices as travellers have become increasingly interested in eco-tourism and community-based tourism experiences (Buckley 2012).

Over the years educational tourism has gained prominence as a transformative educational tool. It offers participants the opportunity to engage themselves in new cultures, environments, and academic disciplines, fostering personal and intellectual growth. South Africa's Class Afloat Program, commonly known as SEAmester, represents a distinctive initiative within the realm of educational tourism. It provides a unique and experiential platform for students to engage in maritime education while circumnavigating the stunning South African coastline. This program not only offers a rich academic curriculum, but also promotes cultural awareness, personal development and travel experiences that are unparalleled. This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of the SEAmester programme in achieving its educational and travel promotional objectives.

### **1.3 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

There has been a noticeable increase in the popularity of educational tourism in recent years (Suciu et al. 2022). The Business Research Company (2025) concurs that the size of this sector of tourism has grown quite rapidly from 2024 \$382.9 billion to \$430.48 billion in 2025, implying an annual growth rate of 12.4%. The forecast is that this trend will continue with the possibility of the sector doubling its size by 2029. Despite this, Rahman, Haque, Suib and Kabir (2021), stated that educational tourism research has gotten minimal attention from tourism researchers, resulting in a dearth and knowledge gap in this area. Furthermore, Matahir and Tang (2017) pointed out that a lack of studies on educational tourism has a substantially negative impact on educational tourism promotion efforts.

Travelers are seeking more than just leisure: they desire experiences that contribute to personal growth, cultural understanding, and skill development. Understanding the factors that make educational tourism effective in promoting travel is essential to cater to for this rising demand in what (Richards 2013). The tourism industry is a vital

component of many economies worldwide. Exploring the effectiveness of educational tourism provides insights into how destinations can leverage educational experiences to attract tourists, boost local economies, and create sustainable tourism models (Tomasini et al. 2020).

Educational tourism has the potential to be a powerful tool for lifelong learning. Understanding its effectiveness will shed light on how individuals can benefit intellectually, emotionally, and socially from these experiences. This knowledge will inform educational institutions, policymakers, and travellers themselves about the value of such experiences (McGladdery & Lubbe 2017). In an increasingly interconnected world, fostering cultural exchange and global understanding is crucial. Educational tourism facilitates interactions between travellers and local communities, promoting intercultural competence and empathy.

An understanding of educational tourism factors that motivate travellers to engage in educational experiences can lead to innovative travel offerings, which will help travel and tourism planners, travel agencies, tour operators, and educational institutions design and market educational tourism programs effectively (Shereni, Saarinen & Rogerson 2022), as it would shed light on how sustainable and responsible travel practices can be integrated into learning experiences. It can offer insights into how travellers can engage with local communities and ecosystems in a responsible manner, contributing to sustainable tourism development (Kioupi & Voulvoulis 2019).

This project contributes to the academic and scholarly literature on travel for education-specific purpose. It also provides a deeper understanding of the impacts of educational tourism on individuals and communities, while also fuelling prospects for future travel and tourism among the participants. The choice to investigate SEAmester stems from the need to critically evaluate the impact of educational tourism programs on the participants. SEAmester's distinctiveness and the immersive nature of its experiences make it an intriguing case study. By analysing the outcomes of SEAmester, this study sought to contribute to the broader understanding of how educational tourism can promote tourism.

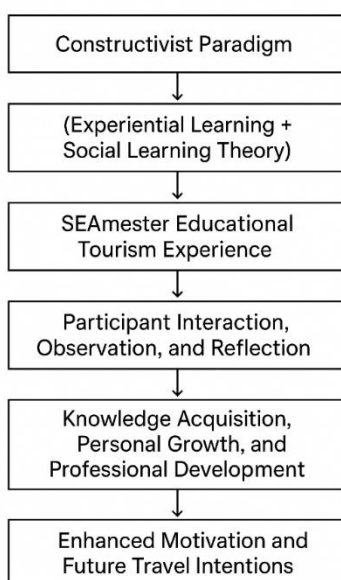
### 1.3.1 Constructive design and Theoretical framework

This study adopted a constructivist philosophical approach, which assumes that people actively develop knowledge through their experience and social interaction. Constructivism view learning as a process of creating meaning rather than simple knowledge acquisition. According to this study, participants of the SEAmester program develop their understanding of educational tourism by interacting with their peers and facilitators, experiencing life aboard the research vessel and interacting with actual marine environment.

The study is theoretically supported by Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977) which argues that the imitation, modelling and observation are the ways in which learning take place in a social setting. According to this theory, people gain new knowledge and behaviours by observing others and also engaging in shared experiences that reinforce understanding and motivation. By applying this concept to educational tourism, the study proposes that the participants learn not only from formal instructions but also from observation, collaborating with their peers and interacting with new environment.

**Figure 1.1**

*The theoretical structure underpinning the study*



This research study is conceptually grounded in the constructivist paradigm, experiential learning principles, and the Social Learning Theory. These theories explain how participation in an educational tourism program such as SEAmester can influence learners' perceptions, foster professional and personal development and encourage future travel intentions through reflective and socially embedded experience.

## **1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of educational tourism in promoting tourism using the SEAmester program operated by the University of Cape Town. The study sought to examine the experiences of researchers on a 10-day research cruise on-board South Africa's SA Agulhas II (SAA2) research vessel and determine their inclination to travel due to such experiences.

### **1.4.1 Objectives**

Thomas and Hodges (2010) argue that research objectives indicate in more detail the specific issues that the study seeks to investigate. The specific objectives of this study were to:

- Examine the theoretical underpinnings of educational tourism.
- Establish the perceptions of participants on the impact of SEAmester on their careers.
- Document the triumphs and challenges encountered by the organisers and participants during the SEAmester research cruise.
- Determining the relationship between the SEAmester program and future travel plans.
- Evaluate ways in which the challenges can be addressed to improve the SEAmester program.

### 1.4.2 Research questions

This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- What are the theoretical underpinnings of educational tourism?
- What are the perceptions of participants on the impact of South Africa's Class Afloat Program (SEAmester)?
- What are the triumphs of the SEAmester program?
- What are the challenges encountered by the organisers and participants during the SEAmester program?
- What is the relationship between the SEAmester program and travel and tourism?
- How can the challenges be addressed to improve the SEAmester program?

### 1.4.3 Hypothesis

A hypothesis states the predictions about what the study will find. It is a tentative answer to the main research question that has not yet been tested (McCombes 2022).

This study attempted to test the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>0</sub>: There is no significant relationship between participating in the SEAmester program and the travel plans of the participants.*

## 1.5 THE SEAMESTER CLASS AFLOAT PROGRAM

The SEAmester Program is operated by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in South Africa, taking advantage of the country's unique educational and travel offerings. SEAmester is a real-life, floating classroom program that combines traditional learning with a global expedition. The program aims promote marine studies and to bring 40 postgraduate cross-disciplinary students together on board the floating classroom with over 30 oceanographic, fisheries, biogeochemical and biological experts. Students on board a sailing vessel travel to various destinations, combining academic coursework

with experiential learning at each port of call. This setting provides a distinctive context for studying the effectiveness of educational tourism. These individuals were selected to provide valuable insights into the impact of the program on promoting travel and educational experiences. The programme is characterised by a strong educational component, involving a curriculum that encompasses various subjects, including history, science, literature, art and culture. The study aimed to assess how this educational component influenced participants' future travel plans.

## **1.6 SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGY**

This research project employed the pragmatic paradigm using a mixed method technique. Since 2016 to 2024, 265 graduates have participated in the program. The population of this study therefore was made of 265 potential participants who had been part of SEAmester in the past years. A sample of 100 participants was selected using a probability sampling technique. An online survey was administered with all the sampled participants (Appendix C (i) and (ii)). The researcher used a mixed method technique to analyse the collected data to assess the effectiveness of the program in promoting travel and educational outcomes. For quantitative data SPSS was used and NVIVO was used to analyse qualitative data.

## **1.7 KEY CONCEPTS**

### **1.7.1 Educational travel**

Educational tourism refers to travel undertaken with the primary aim of acquiring knowledge and cultural understanding (Chandrashekar & Ann 2021). It encompasses visits to educational institutions, museums, heritage sites, and other culturally significant locations, providing learners with experiential opportunities outside conventional academic settings (Dembovska et al. 2016; Tomasi et al. 2020). By immersing participants in diverse environments, it promotes cultural awareness, personal development, and global citizenship (Ojo & Yusof 2019). This form of travel

not only enhances academic and professional growth through exposure to new ideas, pedagogies, and potential career pathways but also contributes to intercultural competence and collaboration (Naidoo 2007). Moreover, educational tourism supports sustainable practices by encouraging responsible travel, community involvement, and the preservation of cultural and environmental assets (Shereni et al. 2022; Thomas & Wee 2022).

### **1.7.2 Travel and tourism**

Travel and tourism refer to the movement of individuals away from their usual place of residence for leisure, business, or cultural purposes, supported by industries such as hospitality, transportation, and entertainment (Sofronov 2018). It is a vital component of the global economy, contributing significantly to gross domestic product (GDP), employment creation, and foreign exchange earnings (Dupeyras & MacCallum 2013). The travel and tourism sector stimulate economic activity across both direct and indirect channels, including retail, infrastructural development and local enterprise development (Strobl, Teichmann & Peters 2015). Through exposure to new customs, languages, and belief systems, travel can enhance social cohesion and promote global citizenship (Mtapuri & Giampiccoli, 2019). This cultural dimension of tourism supports the development of inclusive and tolerant societies. It also underpins international cooperation.

### **1.7.3 SEAmester - South Africa's Class Afloat Program**

SEAmester blends academic learning with practical seamanship aboard research vessels (Ansorge, Brundrit, Brundrit, Dorrington, Fawcett, Gammon, Henry, Hermes, Hölscher, d'Hotman & Meiklejohn 2016). The SEAmester program is designed as an immersive experiential education program, offering university students the opportunity to study marine science, oceanography, and environmental issues while actively participating in the daily operations of a working ship (Ansorge et al. 2016). This integration of theory and practice aims to deepen participants' understanding of marine systems and promote interdisciplinary learning through direct engagement with

professionals in the field (Hermes & Pauw 2021; Sloyan, Rintoul, Naveira Garabato, Speer, Wijffels, Robbins & Firing 2019).

The program's unique environment which functions as a floating classroom, enables students to contribute to live oceanographic research, developing both technical and analytical skills (Dorrington, Fawcett, Gammon, Henry, Hermes, Hölscher, d'Hotman, Meiklejohn, Morris, Pinto & du Plessis 2016). Cultural immersion through port stops, combined with exposure to diverse marine habitats, enhances participants' global perspectives and environmental awareness (World Bank Group 2024). Moreover, SEAmester fosters leadership, collaboration, and resilience, while building a strong alumni network committed to marine stewardship and scientific exploration (Olivier 2025). With its adaptive curriculum and focus on innovation, SEAmester continues to evolve in response to shifts in marine science, pedagogy, and global environmental challenges (Ansorge et al. 2016). Its success highlights the transformative potential of educational tourism in shaping future marine professionals.

## **1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter provides the background to the study in terms of the rationale, aim, objectives, setting and the justification for the study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature review**

The chapter covers previous research in the fields of education and educational tourism, thus providing the theoretical underpinnings of the study. In this chapter the researcher also introduces the theory that was used to buttress the study. This is an important chapter because it provides the context within which the study was conducted.

### **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

In this chapter the researcher explains the research paradigm, the methodology, design as well as the justifications for the choices made.

#### **Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation**

In this chapter the researcher presents data collected from the participants, analyses them and provides interpretation in relation to the literature reviewed as well as the aim and objectives of the study.

#### **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

The findings are presented in alignment with the research objectives. In this chapter, the researcher also outlines the recommendations, contribution of the study and areas for further research.

### **1.9 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, Chapter 1 provided a comprehensive introduction to the research on the effectiveness of educational tourism in promoting tourism and social understanding using the case of the SEAmester Program. The background of the study elucidated the significance of educational tourism as a tool for fostering future travel plans and cultural awareness among students. The rationale for this study underscores the need to examine the SEAmester programme within the broader context of educational tourism.

As the research progresses through subsequent chapters, it delves deeper into the specifics of SEAmester, analyse the data collected, and ultimately determine the extent to which this program promotes travel and enriches the educational experiences of its participants. Chapter 2 builds upon this foundation by exploring the existing literature on educational tourism, setting the stage for a detailed examination of the research's case study. This research aims to provide valuable insights that contribute to the broader discourse on educational tourism and inform the enhancement of programs like SEAmester.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This is an important chapter that the researcher used to provide an overview of areas in this study which are disparate and interdisciplinary (Snyder 2019), such as education and travel and tourism. In this chapter, the researcher synthesises previous research in the fields of education, tourism and educational tourism to guide knowledge advancement and theory development. The literature review section provides an opportunity to scrutinise the research problem from published works, anticipating research questions, methods and results, while also providing academic reference to existing gaps in literature that can be bridged by answering the research questions of this study, accomplishing its aim and objectives (Leite, Padilha & Cecatti 2019). According to the objectives stated in chapter 1, this literature review will glance on the five primary objectives of the study which is the theoretical foundation of educational tourism, perception of SEAmester's participants' looking at the impacts of this program on their careers, encountered triumphs and challenges, the relationship between participants' future travel plans and SEAmester and also look at possible ways in which the program can be improved. This chapter lays the groundwork for a thorough examination of the central idea of the study, which is participants' perspectives of role of the SEAmester in promoting their future travel intentions. The chapter documents the findings of previous studies, a review of the methods used and some of their findings on perceptions of participants of educational tourism programs.

#### **2.2 THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION**

Education is the process of facilitating learning for the purposes of acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and desired habits (Murray 2023; United Nations

Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation 2023). Robinson and Robinson (2022), defined education as an organised system of learning. The World Bank Group (2024), emphasised on the importance of education, where the group declared education as a human right, a powerful driver of development and a crucial strategy for poverty reduction and its crucial role in transforming lives. Chazan (2022) opines that, what education is and what it is for, is determined by the society in which education is taking place, because as the society changes and becomes more complex, so does their education. This means that the purpose of education is grounded in society, cultural values, expectations and geographical location (Grouzet, Kasser, Ahuvia, Dols, Kim, Lau, Ryan, Saunders, Schmuck & Sheldon 2005), to help the children and young adults as they journey through life into the future, making the central purpose of education - enculturation, learning, unlearning and relearning (Moran 2018).

According to World Vision Canada (2023), the goal of education is to help individuals to 'navigate life and contribute to society' through the development of skills and social norms, ability to make sound judgements and differentiating between right and wrong. In addition the goal of education is personal development, enabling individuals to engage with those around them, to provide an environment where people can learn about their culture and that of others to allow them to learn to live in collaboration with others while respecting and protecting the environment around them, to enable them to be economically independent and employable while contributing to the economic sustainability of their country to reduce poverty and improve social well-being (Robinson & Robinson 2022; World Bank Group 2024).

According to Macur (2020), education is meant to benefit individuals and society through the creation of well-rounded individuals who can take care of themselves whilst operating as functional members of the society to enhance social functionalism, social placement and integration, as well as socio-cultural, economic innovation (Verma, Doharey & Verma 2023). These functional members should have the ability to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to social development. In agreement to this notion, Selwyn (2019: 84), went on and say that education speaks to maintenance of existence, and a better chance to 'survive and flourish' as education helps people to grow and expand

their worlds. Education also helps people to develop their critical thinking, and problem-solving, decision-making and communication skills, which are necessary for personal and professional growth (Verma et al. 2023). Chazan (2022:19) concluded that education is a complex, integrated and dynamic process in which the 'why' affects the 'what', the 'how', the 'where' and "when.'

### **2.2.1 Forms of education**

Education can take place in many ways. Formal education is a structured and systematic form of learning delivered by trained teachers in formalised education settings such as schools, colleges and universities (Cambridge Assessment 2022). This form of education is delivered either face-to-face, virtually or in a blended fashion usually in a planned and supervised setting (Harper, McCormick & Marron 2024). This form of education is intentional, planned and institutionalised, following formal and structured programmes (UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2024). Formal education is 'chronologically graded and hierarchically structured,' spanning lower primary school and the upper reaches of the university (Coombs & Ahmed 1974: 8). Hooser and McClain (2023), described formal education as learning of academic facts and concepts through a formalised and structured curriculum.

Informal education does not fall within the ambit of the normal strictly planned curriculum, as it tends to be more unplanned (O'Neill 2019). This form of education takes place through several unplanned channels such as observation, emulation, apprenticeships, mentorship and involvement. Verma et al. (2023), viewed informal education as unstructured, normally taking place outside of the formal classroom tending to be self-directed. To Storsve (2024: 3), informal education is an unorganised and unsystematic lifelong acquisition and accumulation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights which account for most of the total lifetime learning, which tends to be 'more natural and spontaneous.'

Non-formal education takes place outside of the formal school system, but is planned, structured, organised, contextualised, adaptable and participatory (World Health

Organization 2010). It is designed to address specific learning needs and provide job-related skills such as adult education, vocational training and community-based education (Verma et al. 2023). Most forms of non-formal education are unpremeditated and self-directed, on an individual or group basis as a response to perceived needs, interests or problems (Coombs & Ahmed 1974; Golding, Brown & Foley 2009), and does not lead to formal certification (UNESCO 2001). It is very important to understand the purpose and forms of education as it provides the necessary foundation of the first objective, which is to examine the theoretical underpinning of educational tourism. According to Tomasi et al. (2020) education plays a vital role in knowledge acquisition, behavioural change, cultural exchange and experiential learning, programs such as SEAmester are designed to blend both academic and travel-based learning experience.

## **2.3 A NEXUS BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL, TOURISM AND EDUCATIONAL TOURISM**

### **2.3.1 Educational travel**

Roberson (2018) regard travel as the best form of education because it provides lifelong learning opportunities. In support Chau and Ren (2024) argue that learning take place in many forms (as already explained in 2.2), and they believe that travel makes learning more meaningful with long-lasting effects. Travel with the purpose of education is meaningful and becomes the driving force for tourism. Their study concluded that educational travel experience promotes attitudinal changes toward lifelong learning, which can help travel planners and educational institutes with ideas to improve their offerings. This kind of travel expands the participants' knowledge base, enhances skills to think on their feet, while also broadening their horizons through intercultural immersion (Coelho, Gosling, & Almeida 2018). Consequently, various countries are promoting the idea and practice of travelling for education through study abroad programs, international internships, exchange programs and educational travel and tourism (McGladdery & Lubbe 2017; Riegel & Kindermann 2016) because it has been found to be beneficial for personal growth and multinationalism.

Arcodia et al. (2021) associate educational travel with experiential learning undertaken as extracurricular activity, teaching participants about real business environment as well as local and global aspects thereof which encourages them to relate observation to learning (Chau 2021). The physical participation component of educational travel is crucial for effective and application learning (Lin, Hung, Kinshuk & Chen 2019.). Educational travel has become a trend due to the numerous benefits that participants derive from experiential learning (Chau 2021; Hale 2019). Wee (2019) opines that study trips provide 'life-transforming experiences' that reshape the participants fundamental perspectives, shift their value systems, beliefs and behaviours, while inculcating skills and insights that classroom learning cannot. According to the Social Learning Theory the basic theoretical knowledge of the subject remains the campus that directs experiential learning during educational travel as it helps guide experience and observation to enhance learning (Alimohammadi, Mirghafourvand, Zarei & Pirzeh 2018).

### **2.3.2 Tourism**

In tourism, people spend time away from their places of residence and work in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, pleasure or business, while making use of the commercial provision of services (Walton 2023), and for less than a year (Noroozi, Dehghanzadeh, & Talaei 2020). It is a collection of activities, services and industries which deliver a travel experience comprising of transport, accommodation, eating and drinking establishments, retail shops, entertainment businesses and other hospitality services (Kamsali, Nithya & Kumar 2024). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2023), identified tourism as a key economic driver and as one of the world's largest industries that contributes 10% to global Gross Domestic Products through employment creation, extending client markets, encouraging export trades, and foreign exchange. Statista (2024) and Wijesekara, Tittagalla, Jayathilaka, Ilukpotha, Jayathilaka and Jayasinghe (2022), supported this statement in their study.

Massive growth has been recorded in the South African tourism sector (Grand View Research 2024). Research conducted by Grand View Research showed that in 2024, the market for educational tourism generated USD\$10 billion, and this figure is expected to balloon even more to a projected figure of US\$21 billion by the year 2030. This surge in demand and growth of the industry shows the strong demand that is growing from learners as well as university students and staff. This growth in this tourism sector in South Africa is not only on the international scale, but also a significant growth in domestic tourism and indicated by ZAR121 contribution which shows the important role place by domestic tourism in the country. 38 million domestic trips that were recorded in 2023 also shows how vibrant this sector is and its impact on societies (South African Tourism 2024). Tourism plays a critical role in exposing hidden talent and craft, with informal entrepreneurs being put on spotlight to showcase their craft and talent. New jobs are being created, with over 10000 new jobs recorded and a revenue of 170 billion recorded (Gauteng Tourism Authority 2024). In 2024 alone, South Africa received 8.92 million international arrivals into the country, supporting jobs that amount to approximately 1.68 million. Big functions and events play a critical role in attracting attendees from all parts of the world, and some of them include the SciFest Africa and the National Arts Festival, which provides travellers with an opportunity to experience different culture and way of life, promotes social inclusion and foster the diversification of the national economy (Statistics South Africa 2024). This tourism background presents a larger scale of the economic and social landscape in which SEAmester operates in. Having knowledge about this helps in understanding the third objective of the research project which is to document the triumphs and challenges encountered by the organisers and participants during the SEAmester research cruise.

### **2.3.3 Educational tourism**

Educational tourism is a complex phenomenon that provides a singular fusion of discovery (tourism) and intellectual stimulation (education) (Tomasi et al. 2020). Educational tourism reflects a global shift in travel tastes toward meaningful and

immersive travel (Voleva-Petrova 2020), as offerings are diverse and appealing to different interests. An educational tourist is defined by Ritchie (2003: 18), as a

*'Person who is away from their hometown or country overnight, where education and learning are either the main reason for their trip or where education and learning are secondary reasons but are perceived as an important way of using leisure time.'*

This section examines the theoretical underpinning s of educational tourism as an area where travel and education meet order to meet objective 1, both knowledge and understanding provide a framework for interpreting SEAmester participants' experience through the use of Social Learning Theory.

The main purpose of educational tourism is to obtain knowledge and experience on certain topics rather than travel itself (Mir, Shelley & Ooi, 2024). According to McGladdery and Lubbe (2017), educational tourism occurs when the style of learning is experiential, and the trip is structured around an educational programme. This niche of tourism is recognised for the following benefits: infrastructural development, emergence of new training courses, encouragement of entrepreneurship, exploration of obscure places, cultural exchange, international collaboration, image building for a region or nation, global reorganisation of destinations, and others (Tourism Beast 2020-2024). Educational tourism has a significant economic impact that goes beyond the travel and tourism sector (Suciu et al. 2022). It contributes to local economies through the multiplier effect (Tomasi et al. 2020) and it fuels the economic ripple effect. There is a connection between travel and learning as these two complement each other (Choudhary, Srivastava & Panwar 2022). The reason for this is when it comes to travel, there is always a component of learning even if it is often a passive one. The development of practical skills and the acquisition of knowledge occur in spontaneous and incidental ways during travel (Falk, Ballantyne, Packer & Benckendorff 2012; Tomasi et al., 2020).

Educational tourism offers a wide range of experiences, from academic conferences to practical workshops and field trips (Dembovska et al. 2016). Dembovska et al.

(2016), further stated that educational tourism is a revolution in human growth and development as it provides deeper experiences that go beyond gaining knowledge. These encounters improve critical thinking, adaptability and cultural competency, enabling them to function in a world that has become very connected (Voleva-Petrova 2020). Educational tourism dismantles conventional barriers to learning (Ojo & Yusof 2019). Participants are not restricted to typical classroom settings as they interact with the material in real-world scenarios (Chandrashekar & Ann 2021). Figure 2.1 captures educational tourism as a node between education and tourism. It illustrates that while formal classroom education provides pseudo-real means of education and environment, educational tourism provides real objects and environment as means of education. While education satisfies educational needs of the student, educational tourism helps them with universal, professional and specialised competences through experiential learning.

**Figure 2.1**

*Education – Tourism, A Nexus*

Field of activities						
Structure of activities	Tourism		Educational tourism		Education	
Activity	Tourism activities		Educational tourism activities		Educational activities	
Subject of activity	Tourist	↔	Tourism organizer	Educational tourism organizer	↔	Student
Means and conditions	Final purpose. Potential of tourism resources		Potential of educational tourism. Real objects and environment		Pseudo-real objects and environment	
	Natural	Cultural and historic	Natural	Cultural	Content of education	Environment of education
Needs or demands to be met	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Cognition</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Psycho-physical</li> <li>• Emotional</li> <li>• Social</li> <li>• Intellectual</li> <li>• Creative</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learning</li> <li>• Projects</li> <li>• Games</li> <li>• Research</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>	
Implementation of activity	Travel Individual or in group		Educational tour Individual or in group		In-class and out-of-class Individual or in group	
Result of activity	Satisfaction of tourists' needs		Forming universal, professional and specialised competences		Satisfaction of students' needs	

Source: Stainton (2023)

The growth of educational tourism sector is facilitated by the demand for novelty and a desire to visit new places and sites with learning experiences. In higher education, educational tourism has become a distinct form of tourism and a cornerstone of knowledge exchange (Ruhanen, Breakey & Robinson 2012). Cross-border mobility in higher education has attracted unprecedented growth including the mobility of students

and academics (OECD 2023). Studying abroad and conference attendance present opportunities to travel and engage in educational activities (Abrahams, Bama & Mokoena 2023), while also playing a key role in expanding educational tourism sector (Basri, Islam, Paramma & Anas 2023). International student mobility is expected to promote the development of future international networks and partnerships to support scientific cooperation between faculties, and in this way, more benefits are generated for the host university (Hénard, Diamond & Roseveare, 2012; Suciú et al. 2022; UNESCO Institute for Statistics 2024). The study's main question, whether educational tourism experiences like SEAmester influence participants' propensity for future travel, is informed by this literature's analysis of the intersection of learning and travel.

#### *2.3.3.1 A case for educational tourism*

Educational tourism is a new concept of sustainable development of tourism that is immersive and hands-on, thus facilitating a better understanding of the subject matter and improving knowledge retention (Choudhary et al. 2022). According to Glaze (2024), educational tourism produces sustainable economic benefits, creates long-term partnerships, empowers underserved sectors, and expands learning opportunities and exports cultures and values. This will facilitate human development, improve academic and professional competencies, and advance cross-cultural comprehension and communication (López-Duarte, Maley & Vidal-Suárez 2021). Dabamona and Oğuz, (2021) emphasise the fact that in educational tourism, education is the main purpose while tourism is the secondary one. They further highlight that the tourism element cannot be ignored and should be understood as integrated part by a destination in order for the experience to be complete. Participants gain a deep awareness and appreciation of difference through immersion experiences in many cultural contexts, which promotes tolerance and intercultural competency (Croucher & Kramer 2017). The world becomes more varied and equal (Abou-Shouk, Mannaa & Elbaz 2021), while participants adopt a lifelong learning mentality, stimulating curiosity and excitement for continuing education outside traditional academic institutions (Zhang, Shaikh, Yumashev & Chłąd 2020). This implies that socio-economic barriers are broken down through inclusive programs (Voleva-Petrova 2020; Gillovic &

McIntosh 2020) and engagement with local communities (Xu, Jiang, Wall & Wang 2019), making educational benefits mutual (Chilufya, Hughes & Scheyvens 2019). Educational tourism exposes participants and host communities to diverse educational philosophies and practices (Butnaru Niță, Anichiti & Brînză 2021), thus promoting holistic well-being (Pyke, Pyke & Watuwa 2019).

Educational tourism introduces participants to international issues as these programs often include elements of global significance (Slocum, Dimitrov & Webb 2019). This enhances critical thinking, challenging participants to think broadly about issues that affect them (Tomasi et al. 2020). Through educational tourism, participants develop intercultural and global outlook to issues (Surata, Sumartana & Utama 2024). Educational tourism programs seek to establish a love for travel (Rogerson & Visser, 2020) as participants see travel as source of self-improvement, promoting inquiry and curiosity outside the confines of classrooms.

According to Talmaciu & Manolescu (2021), educational tourism improves flexibility and resilience of participants as it enhances capacity to adjust to unusual situations since participants are frequently presented with new challenges which will enable them to flourish in challenging circumstances (Sheldon, Fesenmaier & Tribe 2016). Further, educational tourism provides a setting for promoting innovation and creativity (Emmendoerfer, Olavo, Silva-Junior, Mediotte, Ferreira, Gonçalves, Marques, Tavares & Cabeça 2020), commonality of purpose (Ratih, Edi & Hartuti 2016) and social cohesion (Pyke et al. 2019; Camilleri & Camilleri 2016). These insights are very crucial for objective 4, as they imply that experiential educational tourism like SEAmester can inspire future travel and long-term interest in studying.

### 2.3.3.2 Challenges associated with educational tourism

This section in which is in line with objective 3, examine the challenges faced by the educational programs and its participants. It does this through providing a comparative perspective that helps to understand the operational challenges that SEAmester encounter. Despite its numerous potential benefits, educational tourism is associated

with several drawbacks. According to Rosnan and Abdullah (2018), the development of educational tourism in Malaysia is hampered by the inefficient cooperation between academic institutions and travel agencies, and the unpreparedness of universities. Barriers including academicians' inadequate preparation, inadequate sponsorships, a lack of incentives and constrictive institution policies impede efforts towards the success of educational tourism programs (Rosnan & Abdullah 2018). Moreover, cultural diversity and language barrier make socio-cultural cohesion challenging and learning limited (Ting & Patron 2013). Hale (2022) seems to think that most of the educational tourism programs are not sustainable because they are facilitated by educational institutions based in Europe and the United States of America and highlight the importance of getting perspectives from other regions. Another challenge is the lack of awareness of these programs by students.

#### 2.3.3.3 Challenges to organisers

Educational tourism program planning is confronted with numerous challenges across various settings. One of the key issues is inadequate funding, which limits the resources available for effective program development. The other challenge is the lack of up-to-date and reliable data further hampers planning efforts making it difficult to formulate comprehensive educational programs (Gregory & Jegede 2021; Jacob 2020). Political interference and instability also create significant obstacles, often causing disruptions in policy continuity and creating an unpredictable environment for planners to operate (Gregory & Jegede 2021; Jacob 2020). Another major challenge is the shortage of professional educational planners. This lack of skilled personnel, combined with poor capacity development initiatives, makes it difficult to manage and implement successful programs. Without a strong workforce and adequate training, educational planning becomes inefficient and fails to meet evolving needs (Gregory & Jegede 2021; Ogunode & Musa 2020).

Extension professionals, responsible for delivering educational programs to a wide and diverse audience also face unlimited challenges. They have to continually develop new skills to meet the changing needs of their clientele as a one-size-fits-all approach is not

sufficient for the diverse populations they serve. The demand for ongoing skill development is a persistent hurdle in maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of these programs (Warner & Stofer 2014). In Europe, educational program planning faces additional challenges linked to international trends and European Union directives.

Other challenges include fidelity evaluation, low computer literacy and technical problems (Wen, Xing, Ding, Xu & Wang, 2023). Cultural insensitivity, insufficient contact, and irrelevant material can all impede the delivery of content (Wen et al., 2023). These issues have been made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, which made new material distribution strategies, updated assessment protocols, and a greater reliance on technology necessary (Machado, da Silva, da Silva, de Oliveira, Fonseca, Fonseca, de Souza Silva & Loureiro 2023). Extension specialists need to have the necessary abilities to deal with a variety of clientele's needs as well as unforeseen issues during program implementation (Warner & Stofer 2014). Discenza, Howard, and Schenk (2003), state that other problems facing educational tourism programs include the expense of equipment and remote spaces, the disappearance of conventional methods of evaluation, and possible compromises to academic integrity. Comprehending organisational limitation is essential for objective 5, which seeks to evaluate ways in which the challenges can be addressed to improve the SEAmester program.

#### 2.3.3.3 Challenges to participants

Mohammed and Belay (2019); Yorke, Gilligan and Alemu (2024) argue that time constraints are a significant barrier to participants especially for students who have to juggle educational tourism with formal studies and deadlines. Financial difficulties also pose a significant challenge on participants, with some participants struggling to raise funds to take part due to poor economic backgrounds (Egenti & Omoruyi 2011). Inadequate facilities and learning environments can hinder program effectiveness (Mohammed & Belay 2019; Yorke et al. 2024). Lack of support from employers, spouses, or institutions can discourage participation (Soares, Brandolin & Amarall

2017). Policy and curriculum issues may lead to the exclusion of certain courses, potentially resulting in lower academic performance (Mohammed & Belay 2019). Despite these challenges, participants often value the collaborative and collegial relationships formed through program involvement (Jeppesen & Joyce 2018). Participants report issues such as overload, fatigue, demotivation, and sea sickness in the case of sea study travel (Drăghicescu & Stăncescu 2021). These participant-based challenges directly address objective 3 of the study, by proving an argument for comparing SEAmester's participant experiences.

## **2.4 Possible solutions to challenges**

In line with objective 5, this section examines the possible solutions which can be brought forth in line with the literature to address the challenges found in educational tourism programs and offer insights solutions to better improve SEAmester program. Restructuring leadership is one of the suggested solutions, along with providing faculty mentoring programs (Dredge & Schott 2016). The other solution involves adjusting programs for remote learning despite technology limitations (Durgunoğlu, Cantürk, Kaya, Yazıcı & Şahin 2022). Challenges facing educational tourism programs can also be addressed by creating precise, fact-based plans for enhancing online program offerings (Charbonneau-Gowdy 2018). The efficiency of digital education could also be increased by resolving issues reported by participants and offering them the support they need especially in virtual settings (Drăghicescu & Stăncescu 2021). The requirement for participants to have a greater understanding of other cultures and to have better intercultural competency can be quite a challenge (Ting and Patron 2013). Kupkova (2024) cautions that with increasing globalisation, especially as facilitated by educational tourism, translation continues becomes a cornerstone of building a more informed and connected global community. It enables travel participants to engage with local communities, thus democratizing knowledge. On the issue of language as a barrier to experiential learning during educational travel, Way With Words (2025) states that cross-cultural communication is the key to unlocking a world of knowledge. For non-native speakers, the language barrier can be a formidable obstacle, hindering their access to educational materials. Translation devices are therefore at the forefront,

ensuring accurate and culturally relevant translations thus opening learning doors to non-native speakers to benefit maximally from educational tourism.

Gospodini and Skayannis (2005), pointed to the growing need for an "integration model" that aligns planning education with these broader trends, allowing for a more cohesive and adaptive approach. To maximise the benefits of educational tourism programs for participants and educational institutions, it is imperative to address these concerns to improve the success of these initiatives. As stated by Khaerani (2021), there may be a solution in the form of virtual tours, which let users learn about and experience unique places. Ting and Patron (2013), argue that boosting educational tourism results require strengthening intercultural competency through meaningful interpersonal experiences and expanding cultural awareness.

## **2.5 THE FUTURE OF EDUCATIONAL TOURISM**

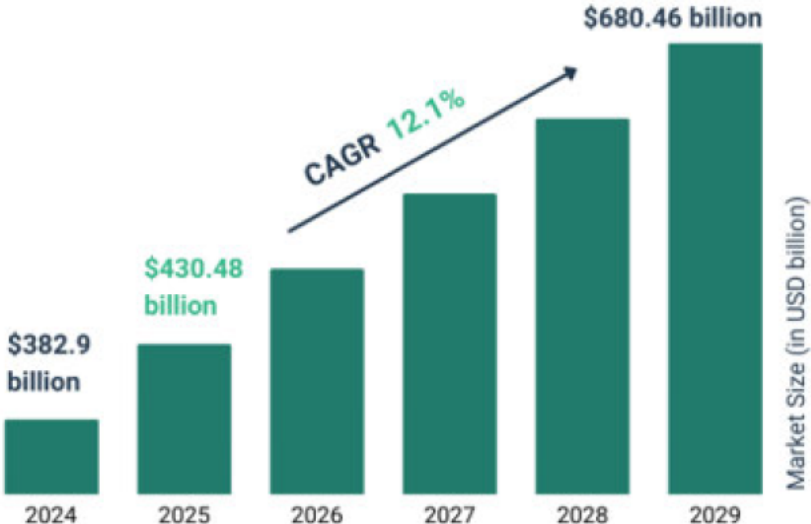
Educational tourism is evolving to meet future challenges and societal changes. The Tourism Education Futures Initiative (TEFI) emphasises the need for a fundamental shift in tourism education to promote global citizenship and stewardship (Sheldon, Fesenmaier & Tribe 2013). TEFI identified key values and skills for future tourism education, including destination stewardship, ethics, and dynamic business skills (Edelheim 2020; Sheldon, Fesenmaier, Woeber, Cooper & Antonioli 2016; Dredge, Schott, Daniele, Caton, Edelheim & Munar 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the need for innovative approaches, such as merging cultural and educational tourism with local heritage sites (Jokanović & Đorđević 2022) giving rise to and promoting virtual tours. A new conceptual model for educational tourism has been proposed, highlighting its potential for hybridization with other tourism segments and non-tourism sectors (McGladdery & Lubbe 2017). This model emphasises the process-driven and outcomes-based nature of educational tourism, suggesting its capacity to foster global peace through integrated learning experiences. Future research should focus on schools' educational tourism and international educational tourism markets (McGladdery & Lubbe, 2017). These suggested emerging perspectives are regarded essential for objective 4, as they strongly support the notion

that programs like SEAmester may have an influence in shaping the participants' long term plans to traveling or studying feather.

The Business Research Company (2025) highlights that the size of this sector of tourism has grown quite rapidly from 2024 \$382.9 billion to \$430.48 billion in 2025, implying an annual growth rate of 12.4%. The forecast is that this trend will continue with the possibility of the sector doubling its size by 2029 using the 2024 figures as the baseline as indicated in Figure 2.2.

**Figure 2.2**

The projected size of the educational tourism sector by 2029



Source: The Business Research Company (2025)

The report attributes the exponential growth to several factors including the rise in globalisation, increased demand for cultural exchange, international partnerships, increasing disposable income, growing emphasis on experiential learning, availability of funding and scholarships, researchers seeking opportunities for cross-disciplinary research, and government measures aimed at improving the reputation of educational tourism destinations.

## **2.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

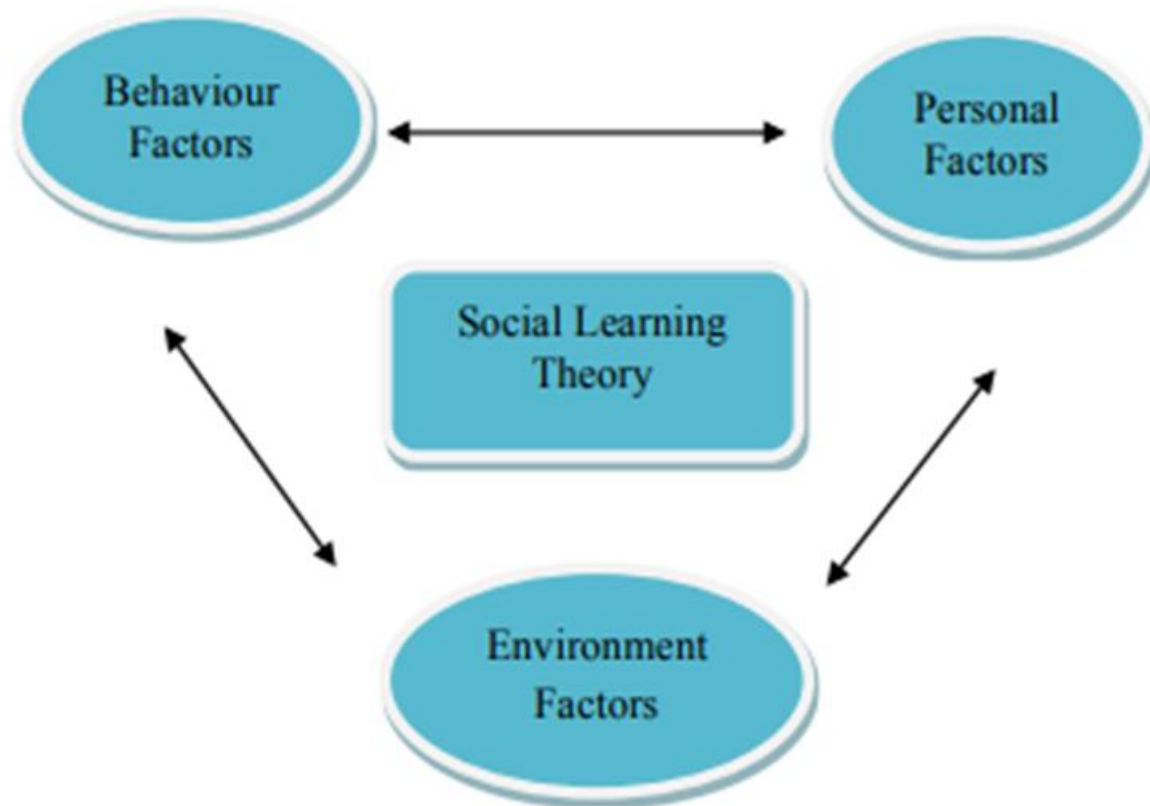
This section provides the study's theoretical foundations with the aim to address objective 1. The social learning theory serves as the framework for analysing the participants' learning and motivation during their SEAmester experience. A theory is a set of interrelated constructs that present a systematic view of phenomena by describing the relationship among the variables for explaining these phenomena. A theoretical framework is developed from existing theories to guide the research process like a roadmap to help the researcher clearly interpret their findings by providing a structure for organising data and developing conclusions (McCombes 2022; Creswell & Creswell 2017). Grant and Osanloo (2014), regard it as a blueprint that guides the research borrowed from other researcher to underpin a new study, thus providing a framework of beliefs about the current study (Adom, Hussein & Agyem 2018). This study was underpinned by Albert Bandura's 1977 Social Learning Theory.

### **2.6.1 Social Learning Theory**

The Social Learning Theory [SLT] was developed by a Canadian psychologist, Albert Bandura in 1977 (Bandura & Walters 1977). It is regarded as a bridge between behaviourist and cognitive learning theories as it encompasses paying attention, remembering, reproduction and motivation (Luszczynska & Schwarzer 2015). SLT postulates that learning occurs in social contexts, through observation and selection. SLT defines learning as a dynamic interaction between people, environment, and behaviour (Firmansyah & Saepuloh 2022). Engagement takes place in social contexts involving a dual process of making meaning, implying that meaningful learning in social contexts require active participation and reification to influence each other (Firmansyah & Saepuloh 2022). The theory focuses on acquiring new behaviours or modifying existing ones in the context of interpersonal relationships, observation and interactions (Woszidlo & Kunkel 2017). SLT it also linked to Vygotsky's theory of social development of 1978 (Lyons & Berge 2012). The theory advances that the best learning occurs in social contexts through observation, imitation and modelling (Firmansyah & Saepuloh 2022). Figure 2.3 illustrates the components of SLT

**Figure 2.3**

*Components of SLT*



Source: Ghazali and Ghani (2018)

The SLT argues that people learn from interacting with others in a social context. They observe, assimilate behaviours and imitate them especially if the experience is positive and rewarding (Nabavi 2012). Bandura & Walters (1977) argued that both environmental and cognitive factors influence human learning and behaviour, and people do not only respond to stimuli (Bandura & Walters 1977), argued that both environmental and cognitive factors influence human learning and behaviour, as people do not only respond to stimuli (Tartari & Osmani 2024). According to this theory, people live in socially defined environments, which form the spaces of activity and interaction in their daily lives (Husin, Rahman & Mukhtar 2021). They observe various behaviours from others (during the educational travel in the case of this study) and select environmental factors and behaviours that appeal to them. People store and reproduce them when environmental factors allow (Ghazali & Ghani 2018).

The 4 elements of the SLT are *attention* – meaning that first the student must notice some behaviour by paying attention to it. If the behaviour does not hold the interest of the student, it is unlikely that the behaviour will be retained and reproduced at a later stage. *Retention* is the second element of the SLT. The student must be able to remember the behaviour he or she observed, and store own memory to be accessed at a later stage. If the student can retain aspects of the object or behaviour, they may be able to reproduce it. *Reproduction* involves replicating observed behaviour. The ability of the observer to reproduce the behaviour will depend on whether they retained the behaviour following observation or not (Schunk & DiBenedetto 2020). Finally, the student gets motivated to *imitate* modelled behaviour (Kurt 2019).

### **2.6.2 Application of the SLT to the study**

The aim of this study was to explore the participants' perceptions of the SEAmester program and its implications for future travel intentions. This study sought to examine the experiences of participants on the 10-day research cruise and to determine their inclination to travel after such an experience. The researcher selected the Social Learning Theory after considering a few other. This theory was chosen because of its constructs namely: environmental factors, personal factors and behavioural factors. The elements of the theory (observation, retention, reproduction and motivation) were also taken into consideration. The thesis of this study is that involvement in educational tourism develops motivation for future travel, whether to the same destination or others. This is supported by Rogerson & Visser (2020), when stating that educational tourism programs seek to establish a love for travel as participants get to see travel as an ongoing source of education and self-improvement. Furthermore, a study conducted by Xu and Ho (2024), revealed that study tour experiences resulted in future travel intentions among the students due to affective attachment created. Cao, Vuong, Pham, Luong, Ho, Hoang & Do (2021), also seemed to think that awareness and past visitations are some of the factors affecting future travel intentions.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, educational tourism programs play a crucial role in promoting both economic growth and social development of both individual participants and host destinations. Despite the high importance of this sector, it has remained relatively underexplored, which makes the findings of this study a valuable contribution to the current body of research. This chapter has provided an overview of the key aspects of education, educational travel and tourism, forming the foundation for the study. Additionally, the conceptual framework has shed light on important theory including the profiles of educational tourism, the challenges faced by educational tourism programs, program organisers and participants, and highlighted possible solutions explored by the literature. This chapter went on to review literature on the future of educational travel and tourism and linked the Social Learning Theory to the current study. The literature reviewed in this chapter offer a thorough basis for addressing the five objectives of the study which are: to examine the theoretical underpinnings of educational tourism, to establish the perceptions of participants on how the program influence their careers, to identify the triumphs and challenges encountered by the organisers and participants, examine the relationship between the educational tourism and future travel and to also evaluate ways in which improvements can be made. This alignment provides a strong link between the literature and the study's objectives as stated in chapter 1. With the theoretical basis now laid, the following chapter delves into the methodology used in this study, explaining the approach and techniques employed to gather and analyse the data.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Every research project starts with a research design, which determines the strategy researcher uses to accomplish the research aim (Tobi & Kampen 2018; Creswell & Creswell 2017). Tobi and Kampen (2018), further claim that a research design guarantees the authenticity and reliability of the results in addition to outlining the techniques and methods. A robust research design improves internal validity by reducing biases and confounding variables that could distort the results. According to Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017), research design is essential to optimising the efficacy and efficiency of resource utilisation. A researcher can reduce time, funding, and human capital waste by giving a precise description of the scope, defining data gathering procedures, and defining analytical approaches. A good design guarantees that the aim of the study is intentionally pursued, while also making it easier to replicate and expand on the findings (Dawadi, Shrestha & Giri 2021). It is for this reason that this chapter was written to explain the methodological and design choices made by the researcher to address the objectives and achieve the research aim.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM**

The researcher assumed that participants' perceptions were subjective and shaped by their interactions with the SEAmester program in the context of examining the impacts of educational tourism. It is recognised in the context of this research project that participants' subjective evaluations of the impact of educational tourism are influenced by their interactions and exposure during the SEAmester program. The study acknowledges the complexity of reality and accepts the notion that participants actively create their own interpretation of the educational tourism experience through

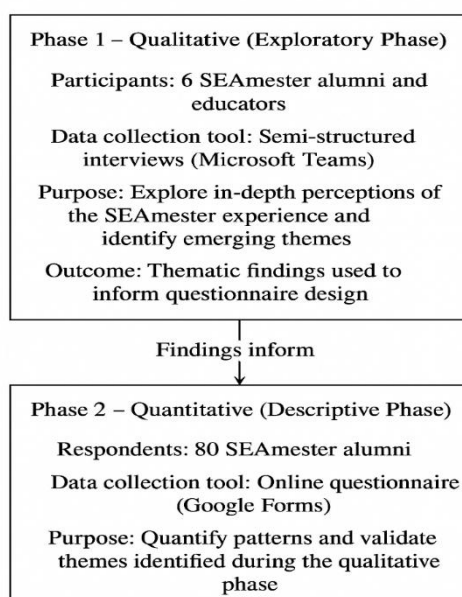
constructivism. Consequently, pragmatism was adopted as a research paradigm as the researcher acknowledged the importance of understanding who the participants were, while also allowing them room to express their views and perceptions on the educational tourism as explored through the case of the SEAmester program.

In order to capture the subjective in-depth of the participants' experiences and the quantified patterns of post experience travel behaviours, this study employed a pragmatic paradigm. Pragmatism offered methodological flexibility which allowed the researcher to use both qualitative and quantitative approaches which then helped in achieving the study's objectives.

Constructivism guided the interpretation of the six participants' personal narrative throughout the study's qualitative phase, while pragmatism facilitated the integration of quantitative and the quantitative data provide meaningful insights on educational tourism. The transition from constructivism to pragmatism is a methodological extension rather than a philosophical contradiction, certifying that both experiential understanding and factual generalisation are accomplished inside a logical mixed methods framework. To comprehend every aspect of the study, the researcher used a sequential exploratory mixed methods, which integrated both qualitative and quantitative data.

### **Figure 3.2**

#### ***Design of a Sequential mixed method for SEAmester study***



### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

A mixed methods design implies the combination of one descriptive and one numerical research component to gain a more comprehensive and deeper understanding of the research issue and corroboration (Hameed 2020; Schoonenboom & Johnson 2017). Timans, Wouters and Heilbron (2019) highlights that by combining these techniques, it is easier to triangulate results, which improves the study's validity and reliability and acceptance of the results.

The researcher employed a mixed-methods design for this research project, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences in the SEAmester program. Qualitative questions allowed participants to express their thoughts freely, while quantitative questions were meant to provide numerical data for statistical analysis for the participants.

#### **3.3.1 Research design**

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a research design is the framework "designed to determine, among other things, how to gather additional data, analyse and interpret them, and ultimately, to provide an answer to the question." Rezigalla (2020), argues that research design's main goal is to ensure that the evidence gathered permits the most straightforward possible response to the initial question or questions. To assist participants in expanding their knowledge and understanding of the field of educational tourism, the researcher used a constructivist technique that placed an emphasis on questioning and meaning making for personalised learning.

#### **3.3.2 Research population**

All the people or things that the researcher is interested in examining and making conclusions about collectively are referred to as the study population (Naseri, Hussin, Esa, Aziz & Nordin, 2021). Stratton (2021), further state that the majority of this community has the same traits in common that are pertinent to the research objectives.

The target population for this research was all postgraduate students who had participated in the SEAmester program since its inception in 2016 to 2024 excluding the years in which the program did not take place due to COVID-19 restrictions. In total the population was made of 265 individuals who have been part of SEAmester program over a 6-year period from 2016 to 2023 (excluding 2020-2021).

The chosen population of SEAmester alumni, educators and the Program personnel made up a unique and information rich group that provided a clear insight in to how experiential learning in marine influenced educational tourism outcomes. SEAmester alumni provided their post reflections and experience about the program, the educators offered pedagogical perspectives and the program personal provided operational context. Collectively this group provides information which aligns with the study’s objectives of assessing the educational, experiential and behavioural dimensions of the SEAmester program impacts.

**3.3.3 Sampling frame**

The population was made of 265 individuals who participated in the SEAmester program in South Africa from 2016 to 2024. These participants include students, educators, and program personnel, all of whom have directly engaged with the program or been impacted by it. To construct the sampling frame, the researcher utilised various sources such as participant databases, institutional rosters, and program records provided by organisers, along with social media groups and alumni networks associated with the program. The sampling frame is provided in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**  
*Sampling frame*

	Sub-population number	Sample size
Students	265	95
Educators	23	3
Program personnel	2	2
<b>Total sample size</b>		<b>100</b>

### **3.3.4 Sampling methods**

In the stratified sampling method, the population is divided into distinct subgroups or strata based on certain characteristics or attributes that are relevant to the research (Iliyasu & Etikan 2021). The researcher used a stratified sampling technique because the population was made of three distinct strata as indicated in Table 3.1. With this approach, the population was separated into distinct strata according to pertinent attributes, and each stratum's random samples were then chosen separately. This strategy made sure that individuals from different demographic groups were included in the research, enabling a thorough examination of each participant's perspectives which included 95 students, 3 educators and 2 program personnel.

Six participants from the SEAmester program participated for qualitative method collection, consisting of educators and program personnel who provided rich, and experiential insights into the program's educational design and delivery. For qualitative method, 80 participants participated out of 95 sampled alumni, these participants completed an online questionnaire google form. These respondents provided tangible data on perceptions and future travel intentions. The terms 'participants' and 'respondents' are used in this study to differentiate between those who contributed to the qualitative interviews and quantitative survey. The sample size of this research project was 100 participants.

### **3.3.5 Sample size**

The research project utilised Slovin's formula to determine the appropriate sample size for a given population, ensuring a representative sample. With a population size of 265 and a margin of error of 5%, the formula yielded a sample size of 100 participants. This sample size was deemed suitable to represent the population, which included participants from the SEAmester program and two participants from the Head of the Department of Oceanography at UCT, namely Dr Isabell Ansoorge and Tahlia Henry. Plugging these values into the formula,  $n = 265 / (1 + 265 * 0.05^2)$  and after calculation,  $n = 100$ .

### **3.3.6 Recruitment techniques**

The researcher developed a Google Form questionnaire specifically designed to gather insights into participants' perceptions of the SEAmester program's impact on travel and tourism. The researcher shared the questionnaire link through various channels such as social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp groups) and email. The questionnaire included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to capture quantitative and qualitative data concurrently. In-depth interviews were conducted to provide qualitative insights of the organisers and educators. The interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams. The researcher scheduled dates for the online meetings with the interviewees using email, WhatsApp and phone calls. The dispersed nature of the SEAmester alumni groups motivated the use of several recruitment techniques. Participants were geographically dispersed and had finished the program across a number of years, so social media platforms offered the researcher effective ways to contact and interact with them. Direct phone calls and emails ensured inclusion of participants who are less active on social media platforms, this recruitment strategies maximised the response rate. Information and consent letters were sent to all the participants for both the interviews and questionnaires.

## **3.4 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS**

### **3.4.1 Pilot study**

A condensed version of the entire study was used for pilot testing, with the goal of evaluating the validity, applicability, duration required to complete the questions, respondent comfort, and overall chance of success of the research instrument. This was also a requirement of the Institutional Ethics Committee before full ethical clearance (Appendix A) could be issued. The questionnaire was tested in advance with a sample of 10 SEAmester participants who were not selected as part of the sample to ensure clarity and identify any uncertainty, as well as to ensure data quality. Adjustments were then made to improve the validity of the query.

### **3.4.2 Data collection methods**

The google form questionnaire used a mixed-methods design, combining aspects of qualitative and quantitative research with a mix of closed- and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions gave participants the chance to provide more detailed information and covered subjects that may have been missed in closed-ended questions, whereas closed-ended questions were used to collect exact data on the variables that were being measured. The research design guaranteed compliance with the objectives of the research study and enabled answers that helped tackle all the research issues. By using this method, the researcher increased the questionnaires' validity and improved their ability to capture all aspects of the research subject matter.

### **3.4.3 Data Collection Process**

For this research project, a Google Form questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument. It was meticulously crafted to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, featuring a combination of closed-ended questions for precise responses and open-ended questions to elicit detailed explanations and opinions from participants. The questionnaires were distributed to 100 out of the 265 SEAmester program participants using social media platforms and emails to reach out to the research pool. In cases where responses were not received, the researcher directly reached out to participants via phone calls, emails and WhatsApp messages. Upon completion, respondents submitted their questionnaires through the Google form platform.

After the 10 days of the research cruise on SA Agulhas II, data was collected. This was to allow participants and respondents to reflect on the full scope of their overall experience. By collecting data after the cruise, the study was able to provide retrospective insights into perceptions, learning outcomes and travel intentions, ensuring that the response reflected considered evaluation rather than on-board impression.

## **3.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF INSTRUMENTS AND RESULTS**

### **3.5.1 Validity**

Before anything else, the questionnaire was carefully designed to guarantee that it was relevant to the research project's objectives and that there was no room for doubt. To verify understanding and intended responses, a small sample of participants participated in a pilot study. The procedure for gathering data followed a uniform methodology, whereby every participant was provided with the same list of questions. This technique reduced any possible biases resulting from different ways of asking or presenting the questions. Finally, attention to detail and methodical approach to data analysis protected against researcher biases and assumptions. Together, these methodological precautions guaranteed that the results accurately represented the population under the research's perceptions.

### **3.5.2 Reliability**

Many precautions were taken to improve the reliability and trustworthiness in this research. Precision is highly critical in this study and the two important components of precision here are the validity and reliability of the findings obtained in this study. To assess the reliability of the results found from this research, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used. Cronbach alpha it was used to measure internal reliability and consistency of the set of question items in the questionnaire to determine how closely they are related. If they were closely related, it would mean that they were also closely related to the objectives of the study, thus improving the reliability of the results. The Cronbach's aloha score was presented in Table 4.1 (Chapter 4), indicated alpha coefficient values of 0.726 and 0.722, both closer to 1.000, and confirming the reliability of each one of these items on the questionnaires, as statistically, values of 0.7 and above indicate acceptable internal consistency.

### **3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The ethical integrity of a research project is crucial for protecting participants and ensuring the validity of the findings. Ethical considerations started at the research proposal stage with the ethics questionnaire which introduced me to the dos and don'ts of research ethics. To ensure that the study complies with ethical standards and protects participants' rights, the researcher first received ethical clearance (Appendix A - *Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 100/24*) from the Durban University of Technology review board also known as the ethics committee. Furthermore, the researcher enrolled and completed the TRREE (Training and Resources in Research Ethics Evaluation) ethics course (APPENDIX E), which also prepared me for the ethical requirement pertaining to data collection and analysis.

When the participants were recruited, the letter of information and informed consent template (Appendix B) were included to ensure that the participants were informed of what the study was about as well as their rights during the research process. Informed consent, which gave participants the freedom to decide for themselves whether to participate in the study or not. To enable volunteers to give informed consent willingly, the researcher communicated the research project's goals, methods, possible dangers and benefits in a clear and understandable manner to the participants. The researcher also emphasised that participants have the freedom to leave the research at any moment and without facing any repercussions. Furthermore, the questionnaire (Appendix C) was included during the recruitment phase to inform the participants of the nature of questions that they would have to respond to. To guarantee voluntary participation and facilitate participant access, a gatekeeper's letter has been acquired from University of Cape Town (APPENDIX D).

#### **3.6.1 Anonymity and confidentiality**

Ethical processes were essential aspects in preserving the integrity of the research project. Protocols for anonymity and confidentiality, like those found in the PG2a questionnaire, ensured that participants' identities were not required during the data

collection process (See Appendices C (i) and (ii)) and research transcripts are kept safe in a password-locked folder for a period of 5 years after the study is completed, then the folder will be deleted. The researcher was careful to anonymize participant data and to leave out any information that might be used to identify specific participants.

Adherence to the anonymity and confidentiality criteria demonstrate the researcher's dedication to protecting participants' rights and welfare while promoting research in educational tourism as explained in Appendix B. The identities of the participants were also protected during data presentation and analysis. Aggregation ensured that no particular responses could be linked to certain individuals. The researcher has improved the credibility and ethical integrity of the research endeavours by cultivating an environment of respect, transparency, and responsibility through their diligent adherence to ethical processes of the university.

### **3.7 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a detailed account of the research design and methodology employed to investigate the effectiveness of educational tourism through the SEAmester – South Africa's Class Afloat program. Using a pragmatic paradigm and guided by constructivist epistemology, the study adopted a mixed-method approach to gain both depth and breadth of understanding. By integrating qualitative and quantitative data, the researcher aimed to triangulate findings and enhance the validity and reliability of the research outcomes.

The chapter outlined the target population of 265 past SEAmester participants. The stratified sampling strategy was used, and the sample size of 100 participants was used, which was calculated using the Slovin's formula, and the sampling frame was describes in Table 3.1. Clear justification was provided for the data collection tools, including open- and closed-ended questions which were distributed using tools such as Google Forms, and supplemented by direct follow-ups to improve response rate from the participants.

The chapter also discussed the pilot testing process, which helped refine the questionnaire for clarity and effectiveness. Moreover, the chapter described the procedures adopted to ensure the validity and reliability of both the instruments used and the data collected. Finally, comprehensive ethical considerations were explained, which include the securing of ethical clearance, the importance of informed consent, and the implementation of strict measures to maintain participant anonymity and confidentiality.

Together, these methodological components laid a rigorous foundation for data collection and analysis, enabling the researcher to meet the study's objectives effectively. The findings from the collected data are presented and interpreted in Chapter 4, where the impact of educational tourism using the case of the SEAmester program is examined in detail.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DATA INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The chapter is a presentation of results which were obtained from data collected from participants. This chapter starts with the scrutinizing and examination of the results which were found from the questionnaires which were distributed to participants of the SEAmester research cruise onboard on SA Agulhas II research vessel, a crucial program in exploring the impact of educational tourism. This chapter is crucial as it provides the findings that are obtained from this study, it provides an interpretation of these findings and provides an explanation of the key findings in a way that is easy to understand. Another significance of this chapter is that it makes up a foundation on which conclusions can be drawn from as well as recommendations at the end of this study. In this study, questionnaires were some of the data collection tools which were used. The questionnaires were administered to respondents who were participants of the SEAmester program from the year of its inception in 2016 to 2023 as explained in Chapter 3.

Interviews were also used to collect data and the findings from these interviews were also presented in this chapter. After the presentation of results derived from these data collection processes, the chapter gives an analysis that is well detailed of these results obtained from the interviews as well as those administered through questionnaires. Results from these questionnaires are both quantitative and qualitative, whereas the questionnaire was the main data collection instrument for the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data from the respondents with the highest response rate. With regards to interviews, there was a high response rate from the participants which exceeded the researcher's sample size by one participant.

This chapter presents the findings of this study in the form of descriptive statistics, and these are presented using tables and graphs. Data were processed using SPSS. Inferential statistics such as Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient were used to assess the reliability of the results obtained. In this study, the researcher also used the Chi-Square test, used to check if there are differences between the results which were expected and those which were found from this study. The chapter starts by presenting participants' demographics such as age, gender and race, presentation of results and results interpretation and lastly a summary of all issues discussed in this chapter.

## **4.2 SAMPLE RESPONSE RATE**

A total of 95 questionnaires were issued to respondents, and 80 came back completed. This therefore means that the response rate to of participants in this study was 84%. For this research project 5 participants were intended to be interviewed, but the researcher managed to interview six participants. This therefore means that the response rate of participants in this study exceeded the expectation of 100% which the researcher aimed for.

## **4.3 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The researcher used questionnaires and interviews to collect data presented in this chapter. These instruments (Appendix C) were administered to both student participants as well as the organisers and supporting staff, who are mostly lecturers. Each questionnaire consisted of 23 questions which the respondents were expected to respond to, while the interview guide had 11 questions.

## **4.4 RELIABILITY STATISTICS**

Precision is highly critical in this study and the two important components of precision here are the validity and reliability of the findings obtained in this study. To assess the reliability of the results found from this research, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was

used. The Cronbach's alpha score was presented in Table 1, and this is for all the items that were in the questionnaires distributed to the participants. The alpha coefficient values of 0.726 and 0.722 were obtained, which assert and confirm the reliability of each one of these items on the questionnaires.

#### **4.5 FACTOR ANALYSIS**

Factor analysis was performed and the purpose of this was to verify if items that were within each scale measure each representative factor in an effective way. To achieve these objectives, two tests were used, and these are the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and the Barlett's Test of Sphericity (BTS). To reduce the complexity in the data used in this research, the researcher used the factor analysis, also known as the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to find relationships as well as patterns between variables. The two, KMO and factor analysis, can be used in coming up with intervention ways of improving and promoting educational tourism, especially through hands-on field exercises such as that offered by the SEAmester research cruise. The two can also be used in informing policy decision making, and both being efforts to meet the objectives and the overall aim of this study.

#### **4.6 DATA ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRES**

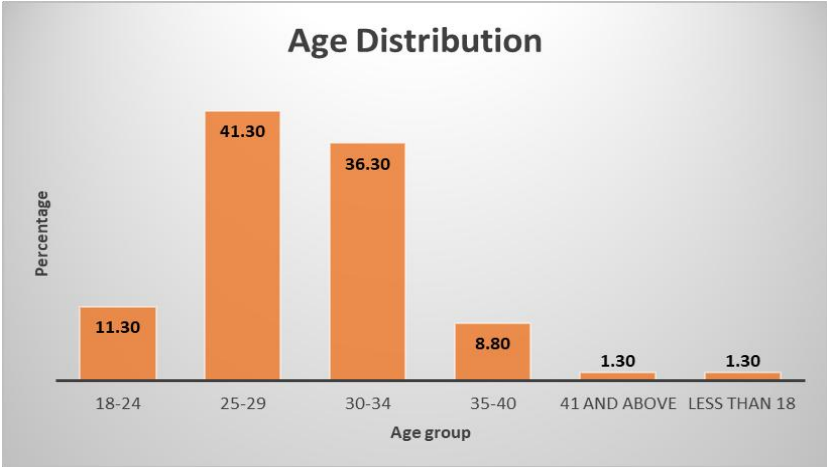
The charts, graphs and tables below provide the demographic information together with an in-depth assessment response of the respondents.

##### **4.6.1 Age of the participants**

Figure 4.1 illustrates that the age of the participants was classified into six age groups:  $\leq 18$ , 18-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-40, and the sixth group is those participants who were aged 41 and above. The age distribution of respondents showed that most of the respondents were in the 25-29 and 30-34 age brackets, representing 41.30% and 36.30% respectively.

**Figure 4.1**

*Age distribution of the participants*



This indicated a predominantly young adult demographic, a result that is not surprising since the participants of the program were mainly university students mainly doing their postgraduate studies. The 18-24 age group accounted for 11.30%, while the 35-40 age group accounted for 8.80%. Those above 41 and those younger than 18 had 1.3% each, which represents an individual each.

**4.6.2 Gender of the participants**

**Figure 4.2**

*Gender distribution of participants*

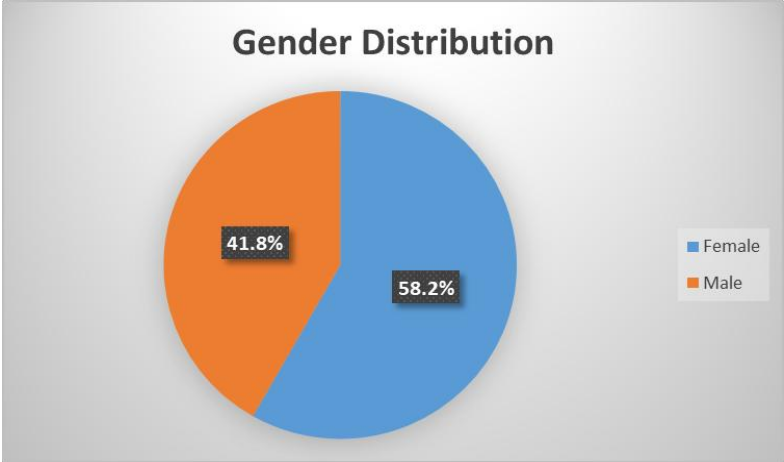


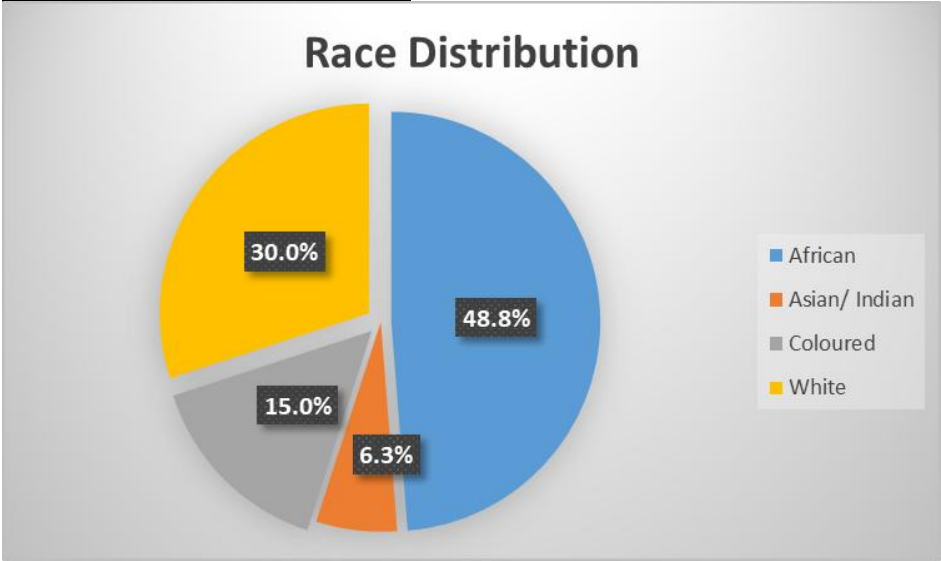
Figure 4.2 shows that the sample was made up of 51.2% male and 45.1%. 1.8% preferred not to say and 1.8% did not give a response.

**4.6.3 Race distribution**

As illustrated in Figure 4.3, the racial distribution of respondents shows that black Africans were the modal group comprising 48.8% of the sample. Whites were the second modal race with 30%, coloureds followed with 15%, and lastly the Asian/Indian with 6.3%.

**Figure 4.3**

*Participants' race distribution*

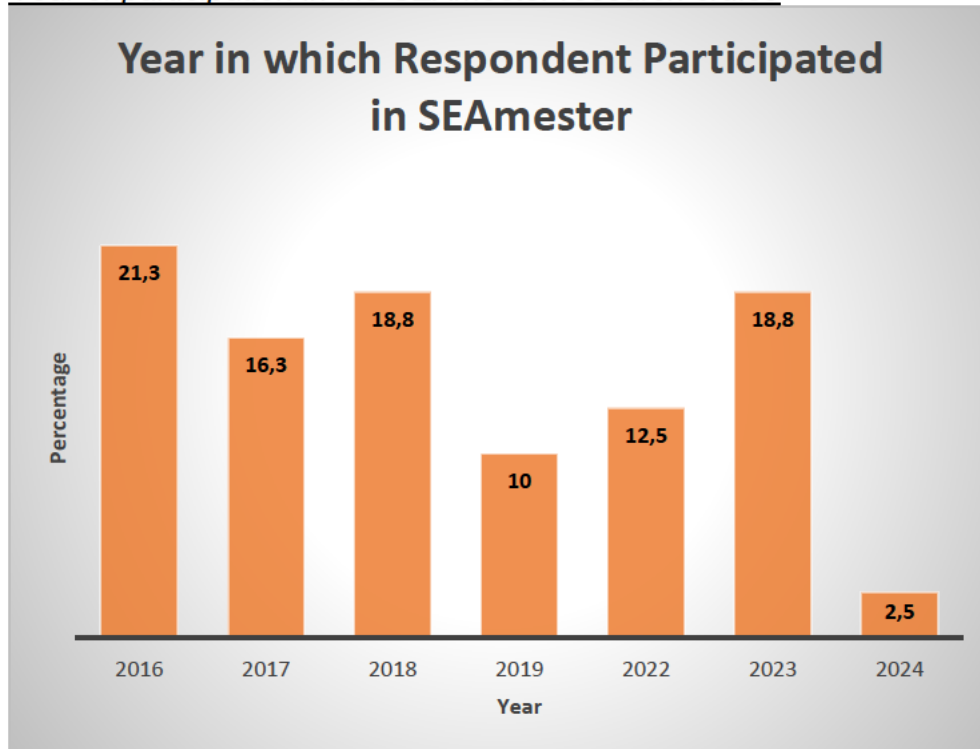


**4.6.4 Year of participation in the SEAmester program**

The respondents participated in the SEAmester program between 2016 and 2024. 2016 had the most participants, with 21.3% of respondents having participated in that year. The years 2018 and 2023 had 18.8%, while 2017 and 2022 saw moderate participation at 16.3% and 12.5% respectively. Participants from 2019 made up 10%, while the lowest percentage was from 2024, with only 2.5%. As stated in Chapter 3, the years 2019, 2020 and 2021 were excluded because the program was out on hold due to the pandemic.

#### **Figure 4.4**

*Year of participation in the SEAmester research cruise*

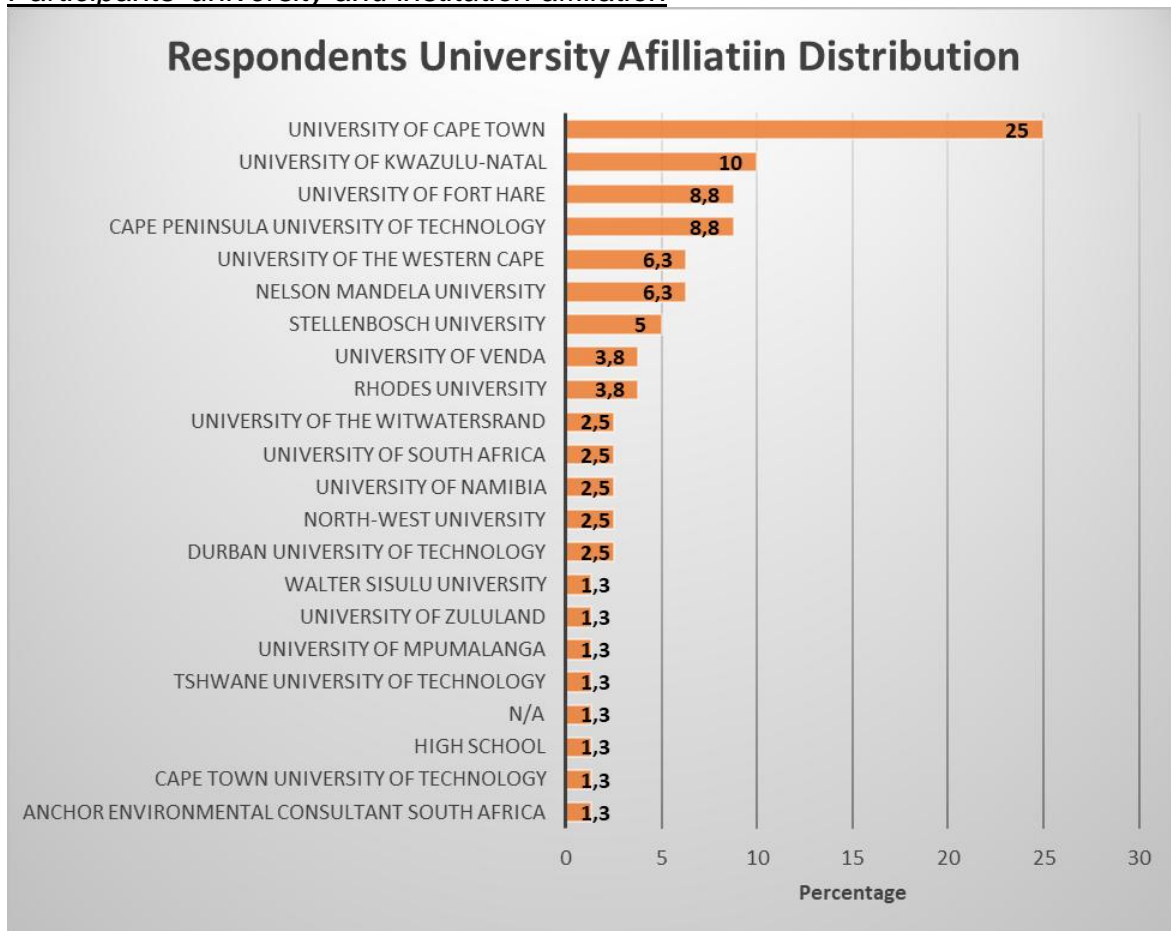


#### **4.6.5 Universities distribution**

Figure 4.5 shows that the participants were from 19 universities across South Africa including 1 from Namibia, a high school and other organisations. With regards to university affiliation, the results show that there is an intense concentration around universities on the coastlines. This finding is not surprising as these universities are close to the sea and are likely to offer marine-related programs. The University of Cape Town made up a quarter of the total respondents (25%). The University of KwaZulu-Natal made up 10%, while the University of Fort Hare and Cape Peninsula University of Technology contributed 8.8% each. Other institutions such as University of the Western Cape (UWC), Nelson Mandela University (NMU), and Stellenbosch University (SU) showed moderate representation with UWC and NMU having a 6.3% contribution each towards the overall percentage of total participants, and a 5% contribution coming from SU. The rest of the universities have less than 4% participants, including a high scholar and an environmental consultant, each representing 2.5% or less.

**Figure 4.5**

*Participants' university and institution affiliation*

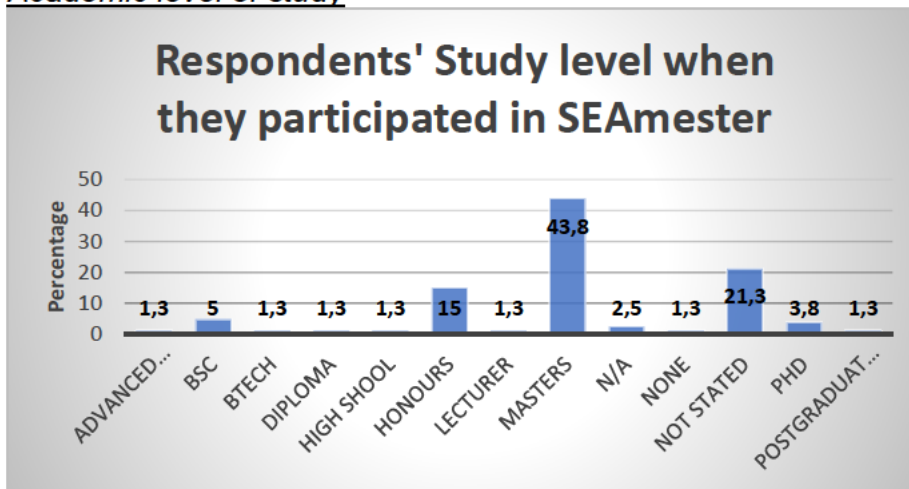


**4.6.6 Study level at time of participation in the SEAmester program**

Most of the respondents were Masters Students, these comprised 43.8% of the respondents (see Figure 4.6). The second modal group was made up of participants who did not state their study level. This group made up 21.3% of the total participants. Honours level students constitute 15% of the total respondents while respondents who were pursuing BSc, and diploma programs represent small percentages. Those who were pursuing PhDs when they participated in the program constituted a low 3.8%. Participants who were doing their BTech, Honours, Diploma, postgraduate studies, as well as those who were not pursuing any qualifications at the time they participated in the program accounted for a minimal 1.3% each.

**Figure 4.6**

*Academic level of study*

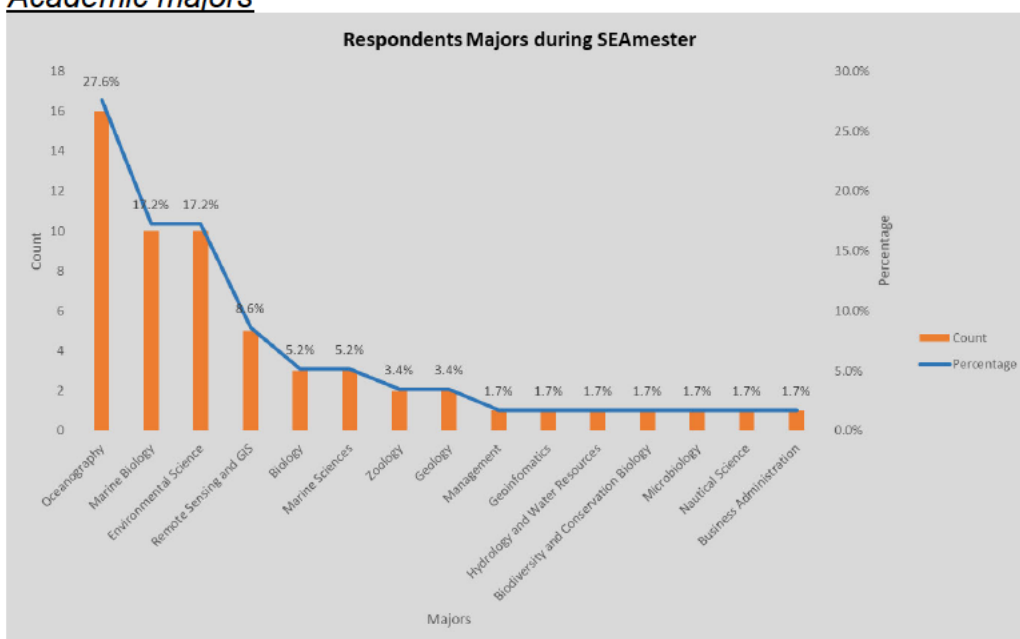


**4.6.7 Academic majors' distribution**

The researcher wanted to know the majors of the participants so as to determine the academic programs that tended to participate the most. Figure 4.7 Oceanography, Marine Biology and Environmental Science students together accounted for 62% of the participants.

**Figure 4.7**

*Academic majors*



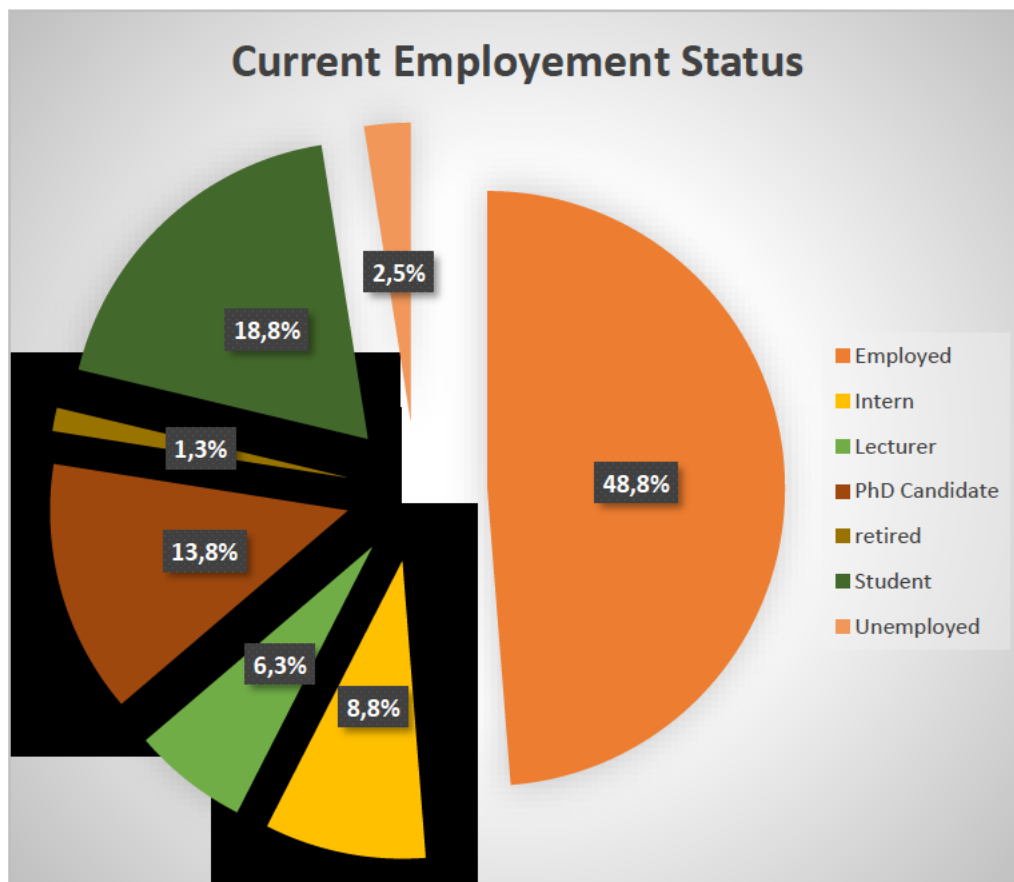
Also ranking higher on the list of majors were Remote Sensing and GIS (8.6%), Biology and Marine Sciences at 5.2%. Accounting for the smallest 1.7% were Management, Geoinformatics, Hydrology and Water Resources, Microbiology, Natural Sciences and Business Administration.

#### 4.6.8 Respondents' current employment status

Figure 4.8 displays that 48.8% of the respondents were employed at the time of this study even though they did not specify the careers they were in. 18.8% were still students, 13.8% of them were working towards their PhDs, 8.8% were interns, 6.3% were lecturers and others.

**Figure 4.8**

*Participants' employment status*



## 4.7 STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

### 4.7.1 Reliability statistics

To assess the reliability of our questionnaire, the researcher used Cronbach's Alpha. This metric will be used for the Likert scale questions. Cronbach's Alpha measures the questionnaire's internal consistency, indicating how closely related the items are. It ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating more reliability. Cronbach Alpha scores greater than 0.7 are generally considered acceptable while those greater than 0.8 are considered reliable. Those above 0.6 but below 0.7 can be accepted, but those above 0.5 but below 0.6 may require remedial action on the questionnaire. Before checking for reliability, the inter-item correlations were checked for multi-collinearity. While there is no standard value to indicate multi-collinearity, the general rule of thumb is that correlations that exceed 0.8 indicate multi-collinearity, with ones above 0.9 even more concerning. High correlations between items suggest that they measure similar constructs, and deleting one item may improve the scale's efficiency. The inter-item correlations are presented in the table below. Based on the values obtained, there is no multi-collinearity that was detected in our case, as all inter-item correlations were within acceptable ranges.

**Table 4.1**  
*Inter item correlation matrix*

	Q8	Q9	Q10	Q11	Q12	Q13
Q8	1,000					
Q9	0,217	1,000				
Q10	0,155	0,279	1,000			
Q11	0,703	0,202	0,218	1,000		
Q12	0,092	0,232	0,348	0,398	1,000	
Q13	0,392	0,376	0,270	0,424	0,219	1,000

Running the reliability test gave a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.726, indicating internal consistency within our questionnaire items. The scale item was deleted as it did not reveal any item that would have increased the Cronbach Alpha. Based on the reliability

findings, the researcher was confident that the items consistently measured intended constructs on the 6 items reflected in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.2**  
*The Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient*

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
,726	,722	6

#### 4.7.2 Factor analysis

In this section, factor analysis was used to reduce the dimension of the questions by grouping questions/items that are closely related. Factor analysis finds correlated items and groups them to create factors, also known as constructs. These constructs are what are termed factors. To determine whether our data is suitable for factor analysis, we calculate the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy. The KMO statistic is a measure that gives the proportion of the variance that can be attributed to the underlying factors. It, therefore, measures how adequate your data is for factor analysis. The KMO measure ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating more variances being explained and, consequently, the better suitability of the data for factor analysis.

While there are no strictly agreed values for sampling adequacy cut-off values, researchers tend to use anything from 0.8 as adequate and, those above 0.7 as acceptable and those below as questionable. In our study, SPSS will be used to perform factor analysis. SPSS provides another measure, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which tests the hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. An identity matrix would mean that the items are unrelated and, therefore, cannot be used to detect the underlying structures. If the matrix were an identity matrix, it would suggest that the variables are unrelated and, therefore, unsuitable for detecting underlying structures.

### 4.7.3 Factor analysis application

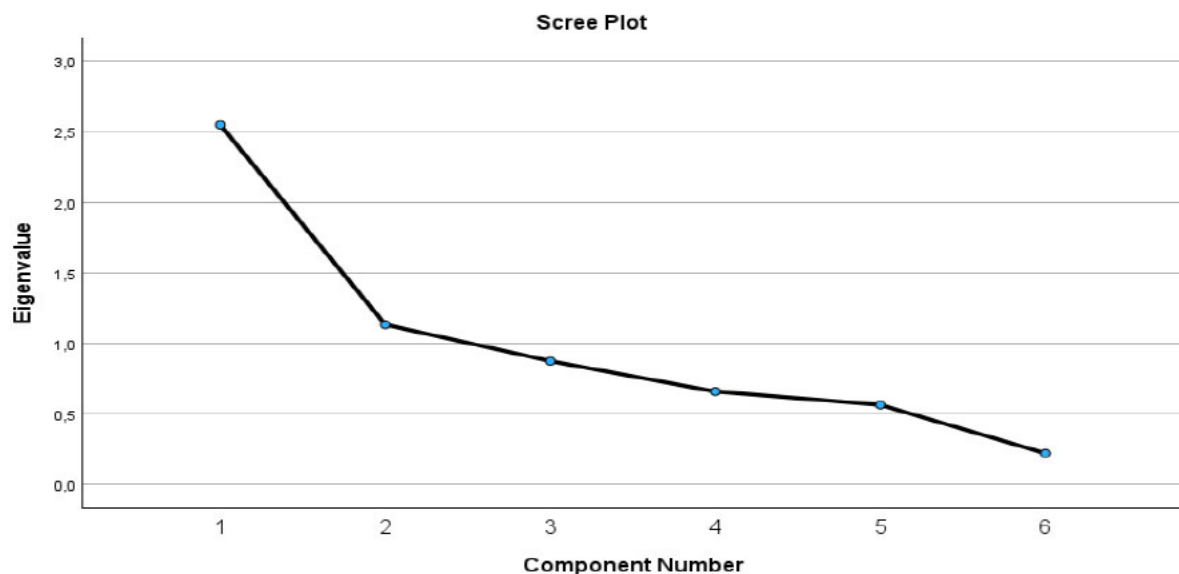
The questionnaire had six Likert type questions which were suitable for exploratory factor analysis. The KMO value is 0.617, which is not the best for sampling adequacy but is still acceptable. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity had a significant p-value ( $< 0.001$ ).

**Table 4.3**  
*KMO and Bartlett's Test*

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,617
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	114,928
	Df	15
	Sig.	<,001

The factor analysis is performed using the principal component analysis method. And the rotation used was the Oblimin rotation. The total variance explained table shows two significant components; the first explains 42.46% of the variance, and the second explains 18.88%.

**Figure 4.9**  
*The factor analysis*



Together, these components explain 61.34% of the variance. This means that the components can capture and explain a reasonable amount of the variation in the data. Figure 4.9 shows the same information, where two factors have an eigenvalue above 1, suggesting we need two factors to analyse our data. The pattern matrix was used to identify the item loadings in the two components. Three items loaded more in Component 1 than in Component 2. These were Q8, Q11 and Q13.

The items appear to be related to educational tourism and travel. Three items also loaded more in component two than 1. These items were Q9, Q10, and Q12. These items appear to be related to program impact and career development. The component matrix shows that the correlation between the components was 0.342 which is a marginal positive correlation.

**Table 4.4**  
*Component Correlation Matrix*

Component	1	2
1	1,000	,342
2	,342	1,000

**4.8 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTING FACTORS**

**4.8.1 Factor 1: Educational tourism and travel connections**

With the factors identified we proceed to analyse the resulting factors. The first item loading on factor one was Question 8, where the respondents were asked their extent of agreement to the following statement, "The SEAmester program incorporates the theoretical principles of educational tourism." The response breakdown was as follows: 2.5% of respondents strongly disagreed, 6.3% disagreed, 23.8% were neutral, 33.8% agreed, and 33.8% strongly agreed. In total, 67.6% of respondents agreed to some extent, indicating that the majority felt the SEAmester program aligns with the principles of educational tourism.

**Table 4.5**  
*Educational tourism and travel connections*

Educational Tourism and Travel Connections		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	% Agreement
8. The SEAmester program incorporates the theoretical principles of educational tourism?	Count	2	5	19	27	27	
	%	2.5	6.3	23.8	33.8	33.8	67.6
11. Do you believe that the SEAmester program is connected to the broader realms of travel and tourism?	Count	3	11	22	23	20	
	%	3.8	13.9	27.8	29.1	25.3	54.4
13. Did the SEAmester program provide you with opportunities to consider further travel?	Count	4	5	14	25	31	
	%	5.1	6.3	17.7	31.6	39.2	70.8
Cronbach Alpha	0.76						

The second item was Question 11 where the respondents were asked if they believed that the SEAmester program was connected to the broader realms of travel and tourism. 3.8% strongly disagreed, 13.9% disagreed, 27.8% were neutral, 29.1% agreed, and 25.3% strongly agreed. Over half (54.4%) agreed, meaning they recognized the connection between the SEAmester program and the broader field of travel and tourism. The last item was Question 13 which asked respondents if the SEAmester program provided them with opportunities to consider further travel. 5.1% strongly disagreed, 6.3% disagreed, 17.7% were neutral, 31.6% agreed, and 39.2% strongly agreed.

Over two thirds, 70.8% of respondents agreed that the SEAmester program provided them with opportunities to consider further travel. This shows a positive perception regarding the program's influence on travel interests. Regarding the reliability of the items in this factor, the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.76, suggesting that the three items are reliably measuring the underlying construct related to educational tourism and travel connections. In chapter 2 Voleva-Petrova (2020) argued that educational tourism reflects a global shift in travel tastes toward meaningful and immersive travel.

#### 4.8.2 Factor 2: Program impact and career development

**Table 4.6**

*The connection between program impact and career development.*

Program Impact and Career Development		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	% Agreement
9. To what extent do you agree that your participation in the SEAmester program positively influenced your career goals?	Count	4	1	9	27	39	
	%	6.3	1.3	11.3	33.8	48.8	82.6
10. Please rate the overall success of the SEAmester program	Count	0	2	4	22	51	
	%	0	2.5	5.1	27.8	64.6	92.4
12. Do you agree that implementing improvement suggestions would be in enhance the overall SEAmester experience?	Count		1	15	26	37	
	%		1.3	19	32.9	46.8	79.7
Chronbach Alpha	0.55						

The first question loading in the factor was Question 9 where respondents were asked the extent, they agreed that the participation in the SEAmester program positively influenced their career goals. A minimal 6.3% of respondents disagreed, 11.3% were neutral, and an overwhelming 82.6% which implied that they felt positively influenced by the semester program regarding their career goals.

The SEAmester Program is bound to influence the career goals of the participants because as Ritchie, Ormston, McNaughton Nicholls & Lewis (2013) stated, it combines the elements of learning and travel away from the confines of the traditional classroom.

The second question was Question 10 where they were asked to rate the overall success of the SEAmester program. An astounding 92.4% regarded the SEAmester program as successful with an insignificant 2.5% thinking otherwise. The last question was Question 12: Do you agree that implementing improvement suggestions would enhance the overall SEAmester experience? About a third (32.9%) were neutral, and a vast majority of 79.7% felt that the program would benefit from some improvements.

This means that participants feel that despite the program's good, there is still room for improvement. The reliability, as measured by Cronbach's Alpha, was 0.55. This low value would be acceptable, considering only three items were involved.

## **4.9 OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS**

In this section, we analyse the responses to the open-ended questions (Q14 to Q23) provided by participants in the SEAmester program. The responses were processed using text mining techniques, including text cleaning, word frequency analysis, sentiment analysis, and bigram analysis. These steps will allow us to obtain insights into the key themes for each question.

### **4.9.1 Data Cleaning and Pre-Processing**

The relevant questions and the responses were extracted from the data and then converted to lowercase. Extra white space was removed, as well as punctuation and stop words such as the, at, is, etc. Doing this allowed us to focus on the phrases that talk to the question.

#### ***4.9.1.1 Word cloud analysis***

From the cleaned text, the sentences were tokenized to get the singular words. Words that appear within each question were removed. For example, if the question was "What is the SEAmester program?" the words SEAmester and program were removed. This was done so that these words do not inflate the common word frequency or the word cloud, as the users would likely use the words in their response. For example, a response like, "The SEAmester program was a student activity", would have a semester and program. Once the stop words were removed, a word frequency was performed to identify the most common terms.

#### 4.9.1.2 Sentiment analysis

Sentimental analysis was used to assess the user's sentiment on the responses. This analysis was performed using the sentiment package in R. A polarity score is assigned to each response, indicating if the response's tone was negative, neutral or positive. Responses with negative scores were classified as negative sentiment, those with positive scores were classified as positive sentiment, and those with zero were neutral. A density plot for polarity is used for visual representation. A table with the top 10 words associated with negative and positive sentiments was used to gain a more detailed understanding. Here, only stop words such as the, is, etc. were removed, and those in the sentence were not removed as they can be attached to the sentiment.

#### 4.9.1.3 Bigram analysis

In addition to single words, a bigram analysis was performed. A bigram is a two-word combination; these are words that follow each other in the text. This analysis helped reveal recurring bigrams and shed light on contextual use.

### **4.9.2 Question 14: Perception of the integration of educational tourism concepts within the SEAmester program and ways do these concepts enhance the educational aspect of the experience**

The top 10 frequent words used in response to the participants' perception on the integration of educational tourism in the program and how they enhance the educational experiential aspects are presented in Table 4.7. The word-cloud shows the additional words beyond the top 10. Here the top 50 words are presented. Words like "learning," "marine," "knowledge," "hands-on," different form of learning integration of theoretical and practical knowledge and enhanced understanding indicate that the program emphasises active, experiential learning in marine environments. These words coincide with the statement by McGladdery and Lubbe (2017), that educational tourism occurs when the style of learning is experiential, and the trip is structured

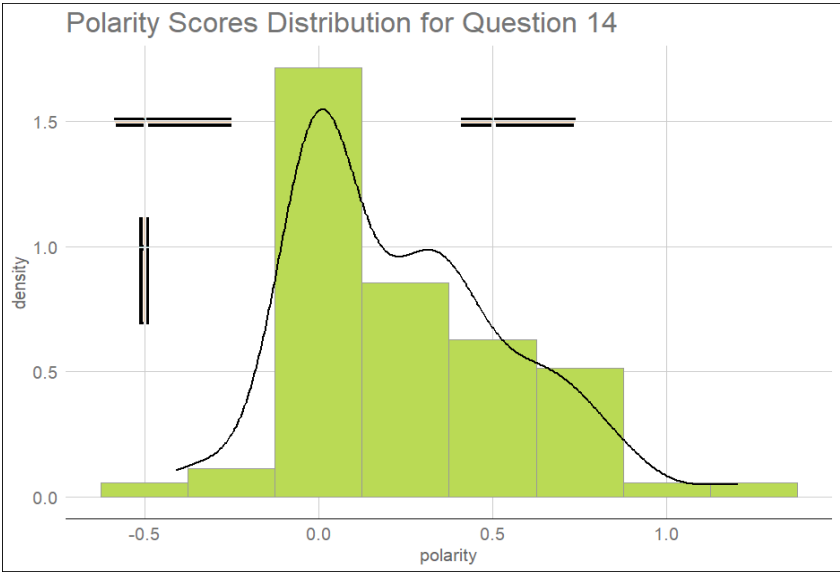
around an educational programme. The repetition of theoretical suggests a balanced approach that integrates both theoretical understanding and practical applications.

**Table 4.7**  
*Words used in participants' perception of educational tourism*

	Word	Frequency
1	Learning	34
2	Marine	17
3	Knowledge	13
4	Hands-on	11
5	Practical	11
6	Different	10
7	Theoretical	10
8	Also	9
9	Integration	9
10	Understanding	9

The distribution of polarity scores for Question 14 reveals a predominantly neutral sentiment among respondents, as evidenced by the peak density around zero. A few respondents seem to have shown negative sentiment while the right skew shows that most who were not neutral displayed positive sentiment as shown in Figure 4.10.

**Figure 4.10**  
*Polarity scores distribution*



#### 4.9.2.1 Words were associated with positive and negative sentiments

The results in the table below provide further insight into the words associated with the positive and negative sentiments. Like the polarity, the word counts show a generally positive perception. Words like learning, educational, program, and SEAmester were strongly associated with positive sentiments. These words were frequently used in responses that highlighted the transforming nature of the program. For instance, participants expressed how integrating hands-on experiences and cultural immersion into the curriculum makes learning memorable and impactful. One participant noted, "*I enjoy that SEAmester is primarily an educational exercise, which just so happens to allow us to travel. Traveling also serves the purpose of enhancing what we are learning, and I really like that!*". Another respondent said, "*SEAmester exemplifies how educational tourism can effectively blend adventure with academic rigor. The program enriches the educational journey by integrating hands-on experiences, cultural immersion, and personal development into its curriculum, making learning both memorable and transformative.*"

On the other hand, a few words appeared to have a negative sentiment. Some words, such as learning, also appeared in the positive sentiment. However, the negative sentiment surrounding learning was marginal, with a significantly higher count of positive sentiments, such as "learning", being mentioned 27 times in a positive context versus just 2 in a negative one. An example of a negative sentiment response is one user who responded, "*I do not believe the concepts of educational tourism are related to the SEAmester program as the program is (was) largely aimed at university or college students, to give them a "taste" of what a research cruise is and how a research vessel operates.*" Further in-depth analysis reveals that this was the only viable negative sentiment. The other was misjudged as the respondent said, "*The fact that students are experiencing their field of studies in a hands-on experience, whilst aboard a research vessel is an amazing experience that they would never encounter in the class room or in a text book*", the word never was likely used to assign the negative sentiment, yet it was praise for the program.

**4.9.3 Question 15: Your understanding of educational travel and tourism in the context of SEAmester research cruise**

The top 10 frequent words used in response to the participants' understanding of educational tourism in the context of SEAmester research cruise are presented in the table below. Words like learning, experience, knowledge, hands-on, travelling, and practical indicate that the participants view educational tourism in their context as being able to apply their theory to practical hands-on experience whilst enjoying the travelling.

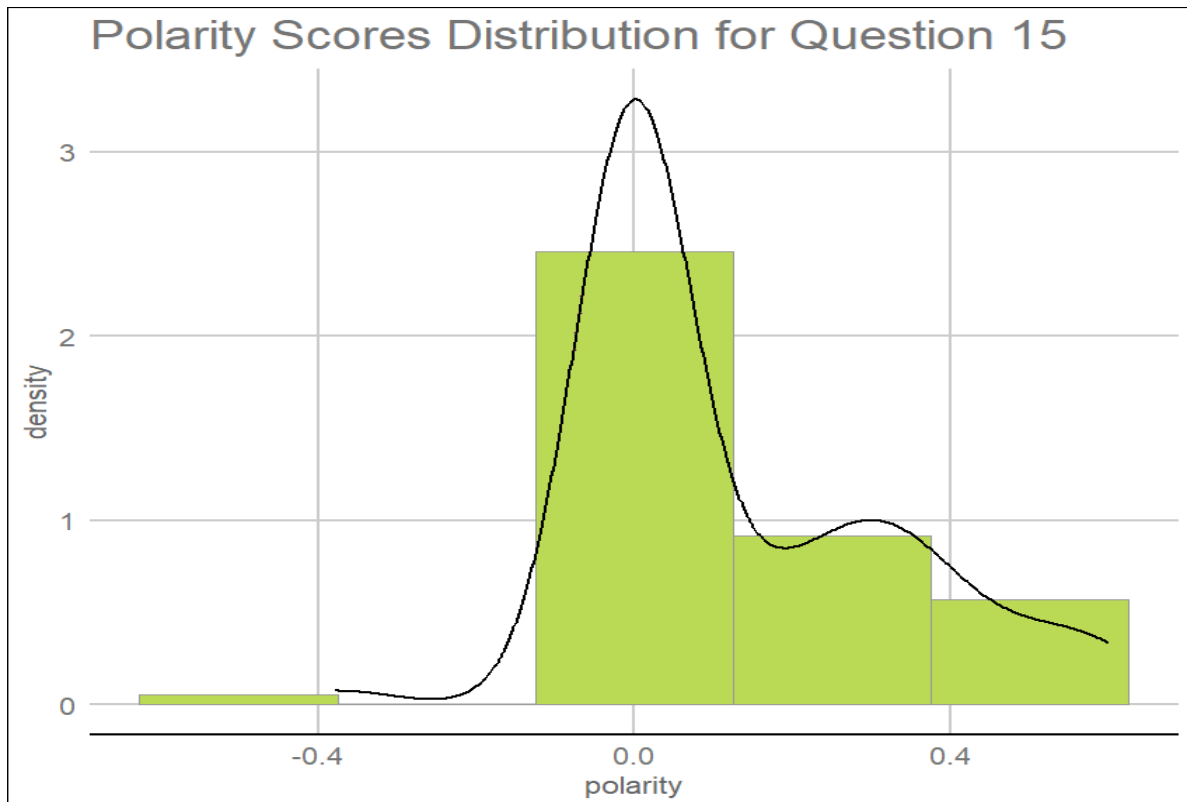
**Table 4.8**  
Top 10 frequent words used in response to participants understanding educational tourism.

	<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1</b>	Learning	38
<b>2</b>	Experience	31
<b>3</b>	Program	26
<b>4</b>	Travel	23
<b>5</b>	Marine	18
<b>6</b>	Hands-on	11
<b>7</b>	Involves	11
<b>8</b>	Practical	10
<b>9</b>	Traveling	10

The distribution of polarity scores for Question 15 represents a positively skewed distribution with the peak at neutral sentiment. The bulk of the responses were of neutral sentiment, something that is not surprising based on the question. The question asks for understanding of educational tourism in the context of SEAmester research cruise.

**Figure 4.11**

*Polarity scores distribution for question 15*



This can be answered without much sentiment. A small portion can be seen on the negative side while the rest are on the positive side. This reveals that most of the nonneutral views were of positive sentiment. As expected, based on the polarity density chart, most responses are neutral sentiments. The responses stated the users' understanding without any emotional attachment. Most respondents saw educational tourism as being able to pursue their research while also enjoying being at sea. Some of the responses were as follows, "*Educational tourism in the context of the SEAmester program revolves around combining academic learning with practical, real-world experiences.*", "*SEAmester program promotes diversity in terms of academics and cultural exchange as people from different backgrounds come together and share information.*" "*Students have an opportunity of travelling to different parts of the world to learn more about such spaces and landscapes,*" and "*I think it is travelling and learning about other countries whilst you are studying.*"

For those who are attached to sentiments, the positive sentiments greatly outnumbered the negative sentiments. The table shows the frequency of the top 10 words for both positive and negative sentiments. There were only seven negative sentiment words, each with one frequency, suggesting they may be from one or two responses. The top keywords for positive sentiments were research, educational, program, learning, and SEAmester.

**Table 4.9**

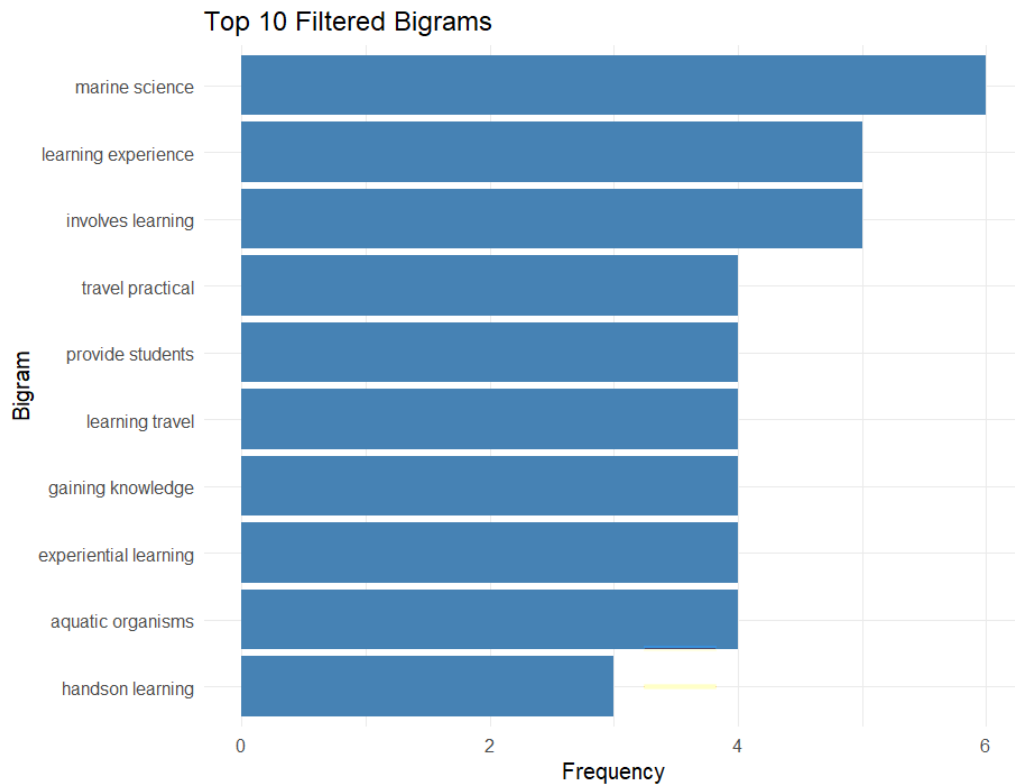
*Positive and negative sentiments words from participants.*

Terms	positive	negative		Terms	positive	Negative
Research	24	0		Area	0	1
Educational	18	1		Basic	0	1
Program	17	0		Educational	18	1
Learning	16	0		Knowledge	5	1
Tourism	16	1		Limited	0	1
SEAmester	15	0		Tourism	16	1
Marine	13	0		Understanding	5	1
Experience	10	0		Aboard	2	0
Students	10	0		Academic	3	0
Travel	10	0		Accommodate	1	0

These terms frequently appeared in responses that mentioned the program's academic content, which was immense with the tourism part. The analysis shows that the negative sentiment words came from two responses, with one saying, *"I do not believe the two are related. Educational tourism (to me) looks like tours and tour operators showcasing natural history or cultural history that took place in the areas the tourists (not researchers) are visiting"*. The other is *"I have a basic understanding of educational tourism, but my knowledge in this area is limited"*. These were misaligned as negative sentiments.

**Figure 4.12**

Top 10 filtered bigram



In conclusion, there was an overwhelming positive sentiment on how the participants understanding of educational tourism and the SEAmester program. They highly regard it for its educational approach, particularly for its integration of research, learning, and travel. This aligns with what Dembovska et al. (2016) indicated in Chapter 2 that educational tourism for academic conferences, workshops and field trips offer a variety of experiences and learning opportunities.

**4.9.4 Question 16: Influence of participation in the SEAmester program on educational and career goals**

Figure 4.13 shows that the most positively frequently used words were career, program, research, SEAmester, experience, marine, and goals were strongly associated with positive sentiments. These terms appeared in responses highlighting the program's effect in enhancing their research, helping them make connections, and

teaching them hands-on practical work. For example, one participant mentioned, "Participation in the SEAmester program has significantly influenced my educational and career goals by providing hands-on experience in marine science and research." This illustrates how the program deepened participants' understanding of oceanography, sparked career interests in environmental conservation, and helped develop practical skills in teamwork and problem-solving. Another participant said, "Expanded my network and gave me insight as to how a research vessel/cruise runs, influencing my career path." These comments resonated with the education tourism nexus model by Stainton (2023) which lists psycho-physical, emotional, social, intellectual and creative as needs met during educational tourism.

**Figure 4.13**

Word count for most frequent terms

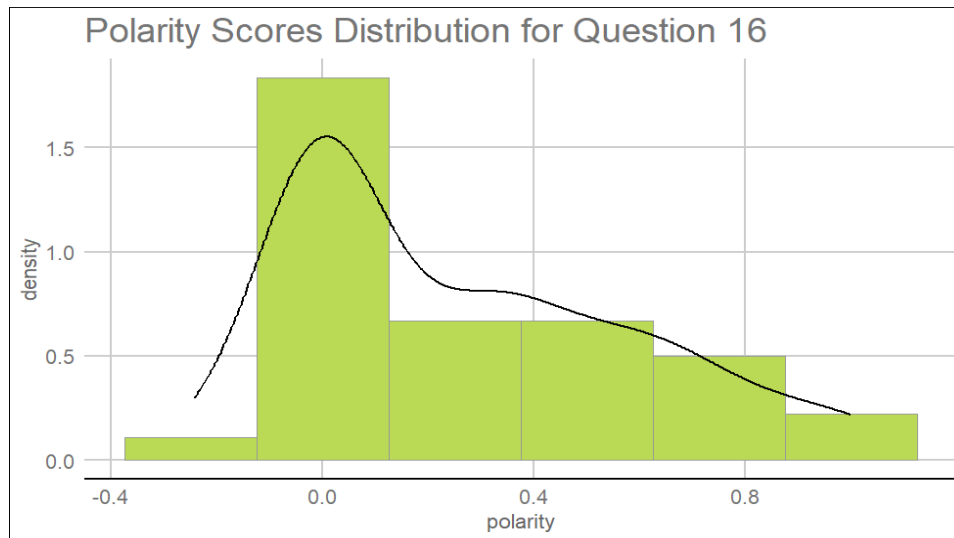
**Word Cloud for Most Frequent Terms**



The histogram and density plot (Figure 4.14) are positively skewed with a peak at zero. There is a marginal portion on the negative side. The results suggest that the responses to the question were mainly of neutral and positive sentiments. This suggest that the program had a positive impact in the attendees when it came to their careers.

**Figure 4.14**

*Polarity scores distribution for question 16*



Apart from the positive sentiments, there were negative sentiments, and these were from two respondents: one expressed that the program did not significantly alter their career goals or educational path, as they were already sure of their direction prior to the cruise. The participant noted, *"Not really in any way. I was sure about my future way before this cruise. I went on the cruise to have the experience of seagoing, especially on the Agulhas II, but I knew that it was inevitable that I was going to have to be at sea for my job sooner or later."* The other did not have a negative sentiment but did not get what he initially wanted; the response was, *"The program influenced me to want to do a research study on baleen whales, unfortunately, the institutions that I wanted were closed by the time I wanted to apply. But I shifted to working on wetlands."*

Overall, most responses indicate that the SEAmester program had a positive impact on participants' educational and career goals. It provided valuable hands-on experience in marine science, expanded professional networks, and offered new insights into career opportunities within marine and environmental fields. The program clearly played a pivotal role in shaping participants' academic and professional futures, particularly for those seeking careers in marine science and conservation.

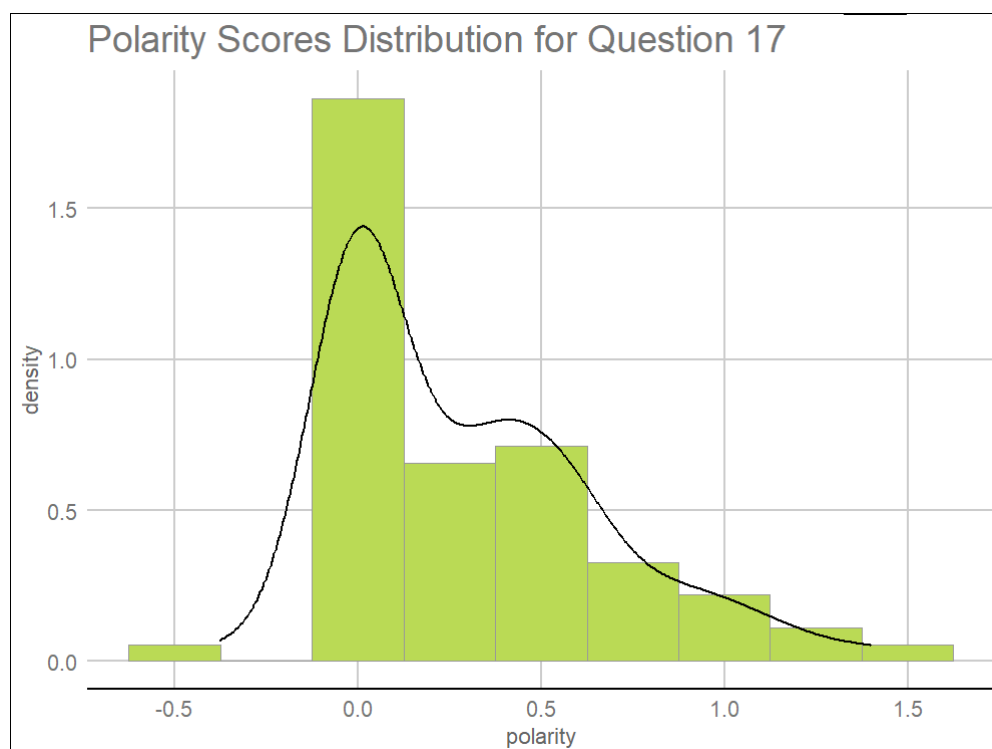
#### 4.9.5 Question 17: Contribution of the SEAmester program to professional development

The top 10 words that appeared in the responses describing how SEAmester contributed to respondents' professional development are presented below. Words like research, skills, experience, networking, and opportunities reveal that the respondents were impacted by their research skills and managed to network and get opportunities to better themselves.

The density plot shows that there were mainly positive sentiments to the response to the question. The peak is at point zero for neutral polarity. There is a small part in the negative area while the rest is on a positive end. This points to the effect that participants had positive contributions to their profession from the SEAmester program.

**Figure 4.15**

*Polarity scores distribution for question 17*



The sentiment analysis of SEAmester's contribution to professional development was predominantly positive. Words such as research, program, skills, experience, marine,

and work were frequently associated with positive sentiments. The respondents mainly highlighted the program's impact on enhancing their practical knowledge, improving their skills and research capabilities, and opening connections via networking. One participant noted, "*It equipped me with the skills and insight needed to feel comfortable on long voyages, i.e., to Antarctica,*" emphasizing how the program prepared them for real-world, professional maritime experiences, something that they could not have received if they had only done theoretical work. Another respondent said, "*It provided me with valuable on-board marine experience, enhancing my practical knowledge of marine environments and research techniques with regards to sampling water, marine life, and on-deck experience.*" A common feature in these responses was the emphasis on the program's hands-on nature, ideally training them into professionals.

Another important takeaway was the development of communication skills and understanding of the technical jargon used away from classrooms. One participant reflected, "*It was great to get to know all of the participants and grew my skills in communicating ocean science to many students who had not been exposed to it before,*" demonstrating the broader professional development benefits beyond technical skills. Digging into the words associated with the negative sentiment revealed that only one response had a negative sentiment. This negative sentiment was a misclassification by the software as it judged the term lacking as negative. The response read, "*networking, and hands-on experience are often lacking in a classroom environment,*" which was likely intended to highlight the value of the practical, real-world exposure offered by SEAmester, not necessarily a critique of the program itself.

In conclusion, SEAmester played a significant role in participants' professional development by providing hands-on marine experience, enhancing research skills, and fostering valuable professional networks. The overwhelmingly positive feedback suggests that the program effectively prepared participants for careers in marine science and related fields, with many respondents noting improvements in both technical skills and professional communication. The negative sentiment was minimal and likely a misinterpretation, further highlighting the strong overall impact of the program.

**4.9.6 Question 18: Challenges and triumphs experienced during the SEAmester program**

The respondents were asked about their challenges and triumphs during the research cruise, and the top 13 words occurring after removing stop words and words in the question are presented below. The following 13 were tied with a frequency of 6. Words like “demanding,” “schedule,” “learning,” “project,” “sea,” “sickness,” “adapting” and “managing,” “new,” “successful,” and others suggest that the respondents struggled with the demanding schedule and suffered from sea sickness but successfully managed to adapt. Words like successful, new, project and learning suggest the triumphs included learning new things through project-based learning.

**Table 4.10**  
*Top 13 Words occurring after removing stop words and words in the question*

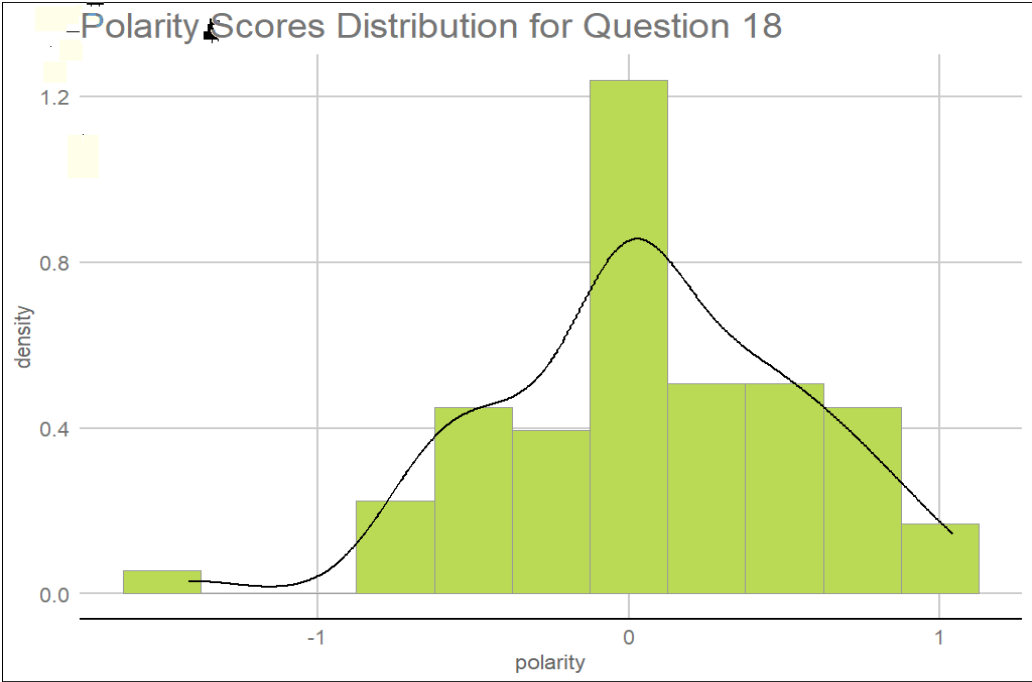
	<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1</b>	Sea	21
<b>2</b>	Time	13
<b>3</b>	Demanding	10
<b>4</b>	Schedule	9
<b>5</b>	Sickness	9
<b>6</b>	Learning	7
<b>7</b>	Life	7
<b>8</b>	Project	7
<b>9</b>	Able	6
<b>10</b>	Adapting	6
<b>11</b>	Managing	6
<b>12</b>	New	6
<b>13</b>	successfully	6

Unlike other polarity density plots that were predominantly positively skewed, Figure 4.7 has a bell-shaped distribution with a peak at zero for neutral sentiment. This is not surprising as the question itself asks for challenges and triumphs which indicate negative and positive aligned words together.

The responses regarding the challenges and triumphs experienced during the SEAmester program revealed a mix of positive and negative sentiments, which is unsurprising given the question. Words like challenges, research, sea, time, and experience were significant terms of both sentiments. For the challenges, respondents found adjusting to the demanding nature of life at sea to be challenging. These challenges included issues such as seasickness, homesickness, and fatigue. One participant responded saying, "*Challenges: Adapting to life at sea. Sea and home sickness,*" reflecting the physical and emotional toll of the journey, while another said, "*Sickness and fatigue were a challenge I encountered, but the triumphs included the onboard experience, teamwork, and activities that helped me grow academically and emotionally.*"

**Figure 4.16**

*Polarity scores distribution for question 18*



On the more positive side, triumphs were also part of the larger picture. Most triumphs were frequently linked to the program's unique opportunities and experiences. For example, one participant responded, "*Triumphs: Rare privileges to stay and learn onboard such a massive research vessel with all expenses paid for. The objectives of the cruise were met,*" highlighting the impactful and unique nature of the experience.

Another participant responded by saying, "*There were no challenges. I made friends and meaningful connections with professionals in my field,*" highlighting the networking opportunity that came with the program.

While there were challenges, the participants saw them as part and parcel of the experience. The challenges were natural processes towards growth, especially when it came to seasickness, as this was the first time at sea, and they had to adjust. One participant stated, "*Challenges were being exposed to various interesting topics/research which I knew I would not be able to pursue further as they were not related to my degree. Triumph was meeting my future employers,*" further showing that the triumphs outdid the challenges. Even though the participants did not list any serious challenges, Ting and Patron (2013) cited cultural diversity and integration in the classroom and social settings continue to be limited, making cross-cultural communication challenging during educational tours. Gregory & Jegede (2021); Ogunode & Musa (2020) highlighted inadequate funding as one of the main challenges, Warner and Stofer (2014) cited the demand for ongoing development to maintain relevance of the program as a major challenge.

In conclusion, participants faced challenges related to the physical demands of life at sea which they had to quickly adjust to. However, on the good side there were triumphs that included professional networking, academic growth, and exposure to marine research. The overall sentiment reflects a balance between overcoming obstacles and celebrating personal and professional achievements.

#### **4.9.7 Question 19: Instances where participation in SEAmester led to travel experiences beyond the program itself**

Regarding respondents sharing instances where participation in the SEAmester program led to travel experiences beyond the program, the top 10 words are presented below. Words such as research, conferences, attending, inspired, and opportunities suggest that respondents may have had opportunities to travel for research and conferences.

**Table 4.11**

Top 10 words related to travel experiences beyond the program

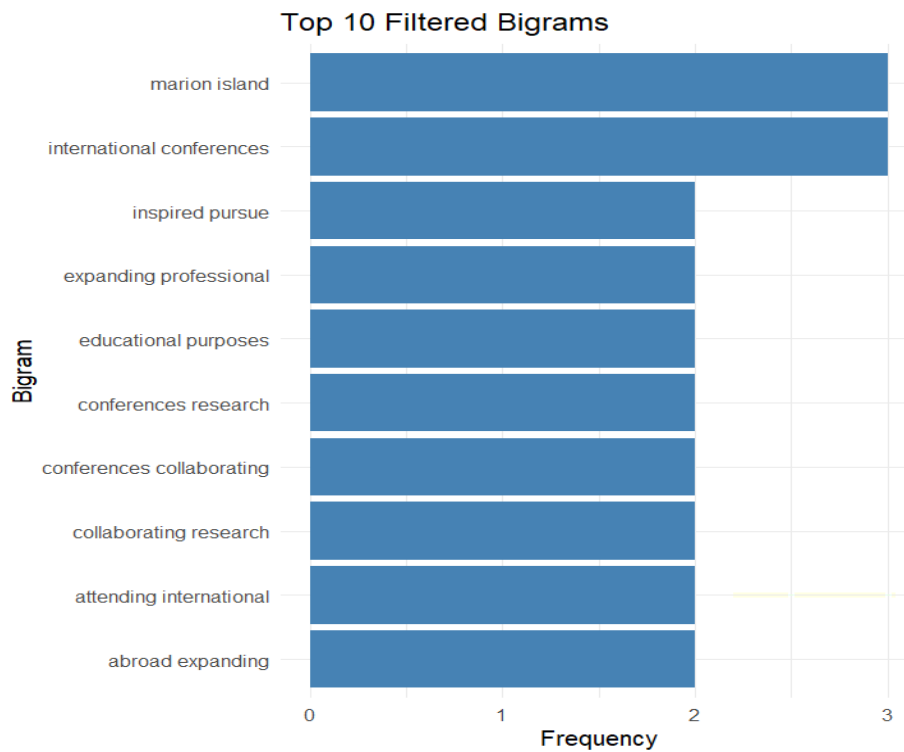
	<b>Word</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>1</b>	Research	17
<b>2</b>	Conferences	10
<b>3</b>	Led	7
<b>4</b>	None	7
<b>5</b>	Attending	6
<b>6</b>	Inspired	6
<b>7</b>	Opportunities	6
<b>8</b>	Cruise	6
<b>9</b>	Island	5
<b>10</b>	Skills	5

At the same time, the appearance of none reveals that some did not get to travel beyond the cruise. The participants frequently mentioned how the connections and experiences gained during the program opened doors to future travel opportunities, particularly in the context of research and professional growth. One participant shared, "*The connections I made during the SEAmester led to future travel opportunities,*" Another participant noted, "*What was a highlight in the program was my exposure and skills I gained in working on the active acoustics project and how that led to me joining a different cruise in January 2024 to deploy hydrophones for acoustic seascape research along our coastline.*" These responses are just some of those that highlight how the program's networking component extended beyond the cruise itself.

Further looking into other responses most answered in short emphasizing the inspiration derived from the program to travel. Examples of the responses are as follows: "*Inspired further travel for research,*", "*Led to further travel for research and conferences,*". These underscoring how SEAmester had a lasting impact on participants' professional trajectories, prompting them to pursue additional opportunities abroad.

**Figure 4.17**

*Bigram showing subsequent travel opportunities*



The bigrams with the words removed from question reveal that there was travel beyond the program. Marion Island, international conference, conference research, attending international highlights the program’s impact on travel. These bigrams suggest that participants had further travel something we have already seen on the example responses on the sentiment analysis. In conclusion, SEAmester provided valuable marine research experience and opened subsequent travel opportunities for academic and professional growth.

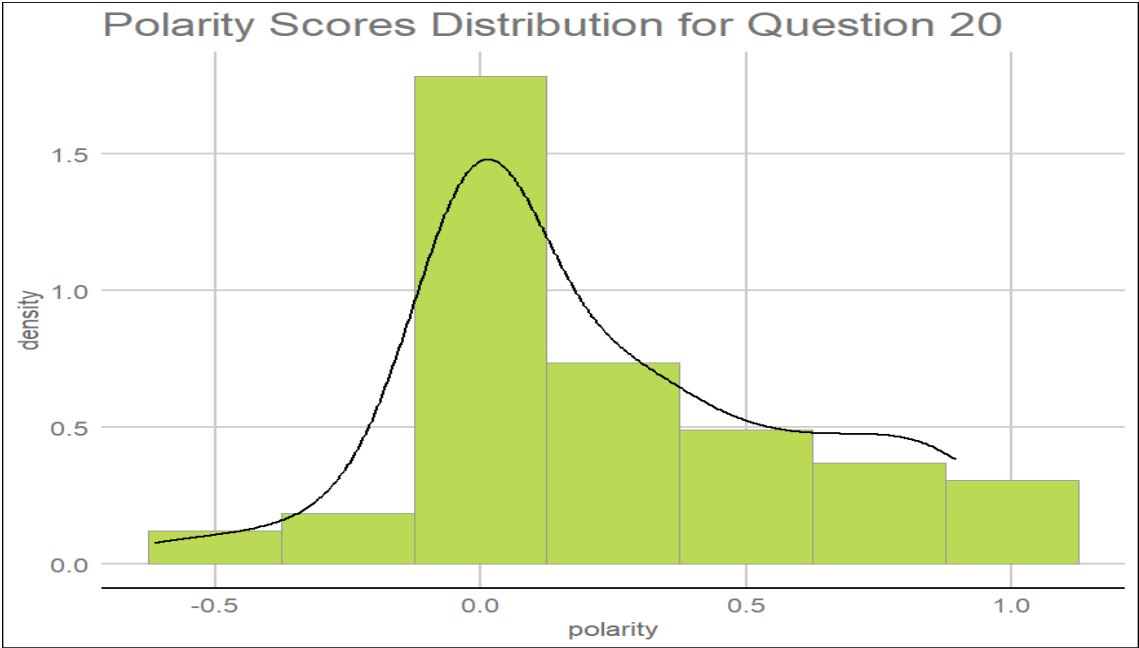
**4.9.8 Question 20: Strategies that can be employed to address challenges faced by participants during the SEAmester program**

The respondents were asked about strategies they believed would address challenges faces during the program to ensure positive experience. The top words are presented below. The words support, time, training, communication suggest the respondents wanted training and support before embarking on the cruise. The rest of the words did

not add much value without context. This question did not necessarily need any sentiment analysis as it asked for suggestions, however, with sentiment analysis some tone may be picked from the responses. The density plot shows that there was mainly neutral sentiment in the responses. There is more positive than negative sentiment.

**Figure 4.18**

*Polarity scores distribution for question 20*



The analysis of responses regarding strategies to address challenges faced by participants during the SEAmester program resulted in mainly neutral sentiment. Apart from the neutral responses, the positive sentiment outnumbered the negative sentiments significantly as illustrated in Figure 4.19. For the positive sentiments, most found the program well-structured and had the necessary support. One participant responded, "From my perspective, the SEAmester program is already well-structured and provides a highly enriching experience for participants." Another shared, "I think the program was very well handled, and there were no major problems that I can say happened and need to be improved." These responses indicated satisfaction with the current state of the program.

However, on the negative side, the respondents focused on improvements regarding seasickness, fatigue and lack of training. A common recommendation was to provide

participants more time to acclimate to life at sea before the program's activities begin. One responded said, *"Many students struggled with sea sickness; thus, I would suggest giving students a day or two to acclimatize to life at sea before starting with the actual program, only if this is financially viable."* Another respondent said, *"Providing comprehensive pre-cruise training, offering mental health support, and ensuring clear communication about expectations and schedules can help address challenges and enhance the participant's experience"*. Considering how common these issues appear from different respondents can help improve the program. In addition, Khaerani (2021) brought about the idea of virtual educational tourism as a possible solution for spreading participation and dealing with financial constraints, albeit, not as practical and hands-on as the actual tour. Students should also receive clear communication on expectations so that there won't be surprises awaiting them.

**Table 4.12**  
*Positive and negative sentiments words*

<b>Terms</b>	<b>positive</b>	<b>negative</b>		<b>Terms</b>	<b>positive</b>	<b>negative</b>
Program	16	2		Sea	4	4
Support	13	0		Students	4	4
Participants	12	2		Days	2	2
Can	8	0		Experience	8	2
Challenges	8	0		First	3	2
Experience	8	2		Make	0	2
SEAmester	8	0		Participants	12	2
Time	6	0		Program	16	2
communication	5	0		Sickness	0	2
Address	4	0		Tablets	1	2

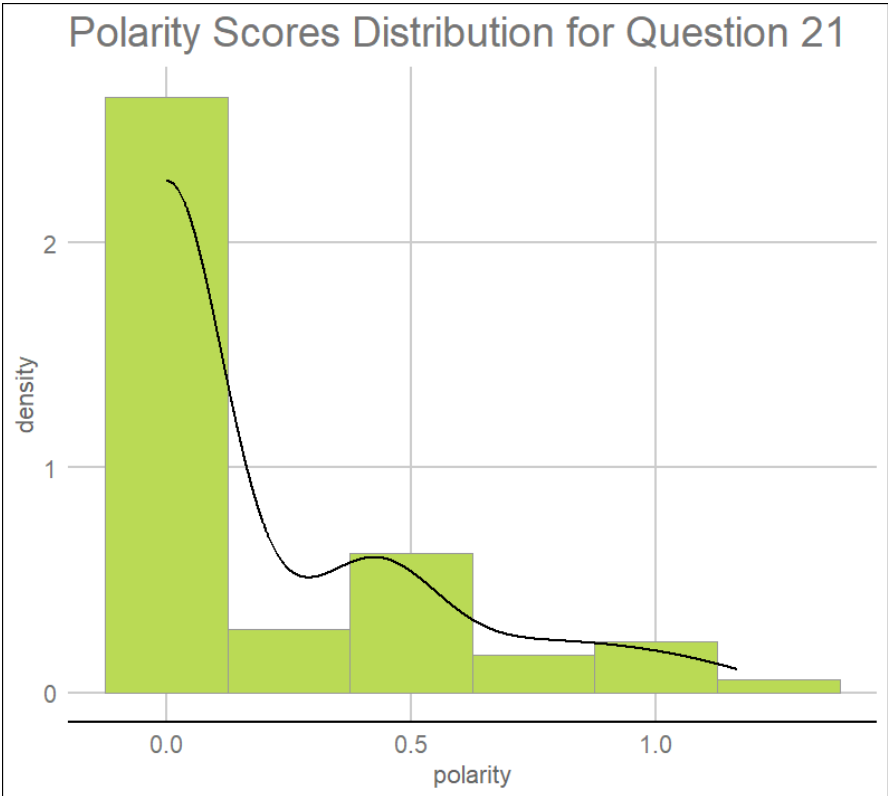
In conclusion, while the SEAmester program was generally viewed positively, addressing the issues mentioned by the respondents, such as providing more time for acclimatization, enhancing communication, and addressing sea sickness, could further improve the participant experience.

**4.9.9 Question 21: Hopes and aspirations for the future of the SEAmester program**

Respondents were asked about their hopes and aspirations for the future of the SEAmester program. The top 10 words are presented below. Words like research, continue, marine, experience seem to suggest the need for more research and continued research. Some of the words do not give much context and would need deeper analysis. The polarity scores distribution for question 21 is presented in Figure 4.21. The questions asked respondents about their hopes and aspirations, which is a question that does not necessarily require sentiment. However, sentiment may be found in the response tone. The density plot, as expected, has most of the responses on neutral sentiment, a few on the positive and none on the negative.

**Figure 4.19**

*Polarity scores distribution for question 21*



There was mainly neutral and positive sentiment regarding the hopes and aspirations for the future of the SEAmester program. Most responses were centralized around the

desire for growth and expansion of the program, increasing its accessibility to more students. One participant noted, "*Greater opportunities for the students once they leave the program. It would be really beneficial for students to get access to other ship training around the world.*" Many participants also voiced a desire for the program to become more accessible to students from diverse backgrounds. Others hoped for scholarships and financial aid options to cater to help students from low-income backgrounds. Others expressed the desire to see the program introduced to high school students and have more than one cruise. One participant said, "*I hope there can be more opportunities like this - perhaps 2 courses per year? I would love to see something like this made available to high school students.*" Another common response was the hope of seeing the program continue as it helps transform lives. Some respondents said, "*I hope SEAmester program doesn't stop. The program is doing remarkable work on students' lives, and continues to shape careers,*" and "*I hope to see the program continue and inspire more students.*"

In conclusion, the consensus from the respondents is that they strongly value the program's potential to inspire, educate, and empower students. The respondents desire to see the program growing and being accessible to students of diverse backgrounds.

#### **4.9.10 Question 22: What advice would you give to current undergraduate students at South African universities regarding educational tourism?**

The top 10 words on the response to advice respondents would give undergraduate students are represented below. Words like learning, opportunities, experience, apply, career and travel seem to suggest that the respondents encouraged undergraduates to apply for opportunities and experience the benefits that come with it.

**Table 4.13**  
Top 10 advice given to undergraduate.

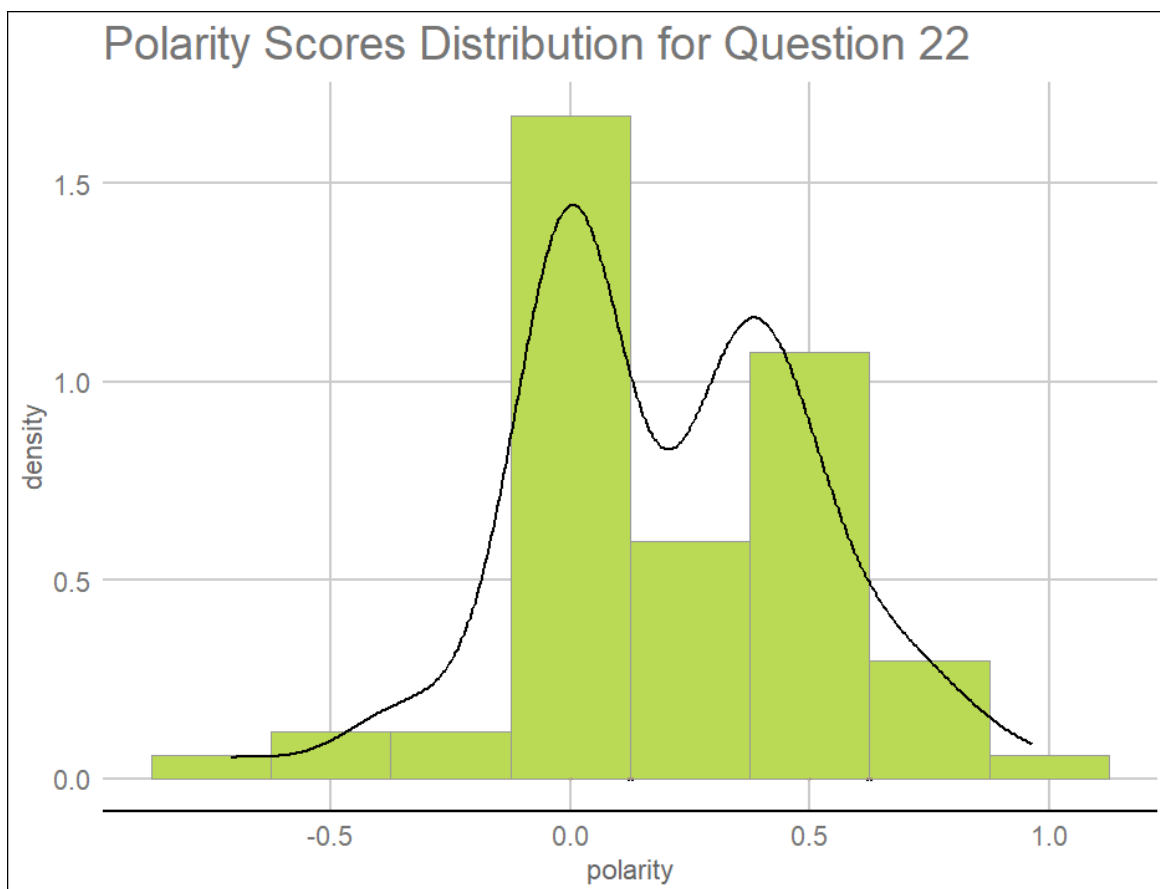
	<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1</b>	Learning	19
<b>2</b>	Can	18

3	Opportunities	17
4	Experience	14
5	Apply	11
6	Opportunity	11
7	Travel	11
8	Academic	9
9	Career	8
10	Get	8

The polarity density plot shows a bi-modal distribution with the biggest peak at the neutral zone and another around the 0.5 positive polarity zone. The distribution shows that there was mainly neutral sentiment and positive sentiment. There are a few negative sentiments.

**Figure 4.20**

*Polarity scores distribution for question 22*



The feedback in response to the question about advice for current undergraduate students at South African universities regarding educational tourism had mainly neutral and positive sentiments and an instance of misclassified sentiment as negative. The common occurring advice was for students to keep looking for opportunities to take part in educational tourism. The respondents stated that educational tourism would help those applying to shape their careers by giving them experience and helping with connections.

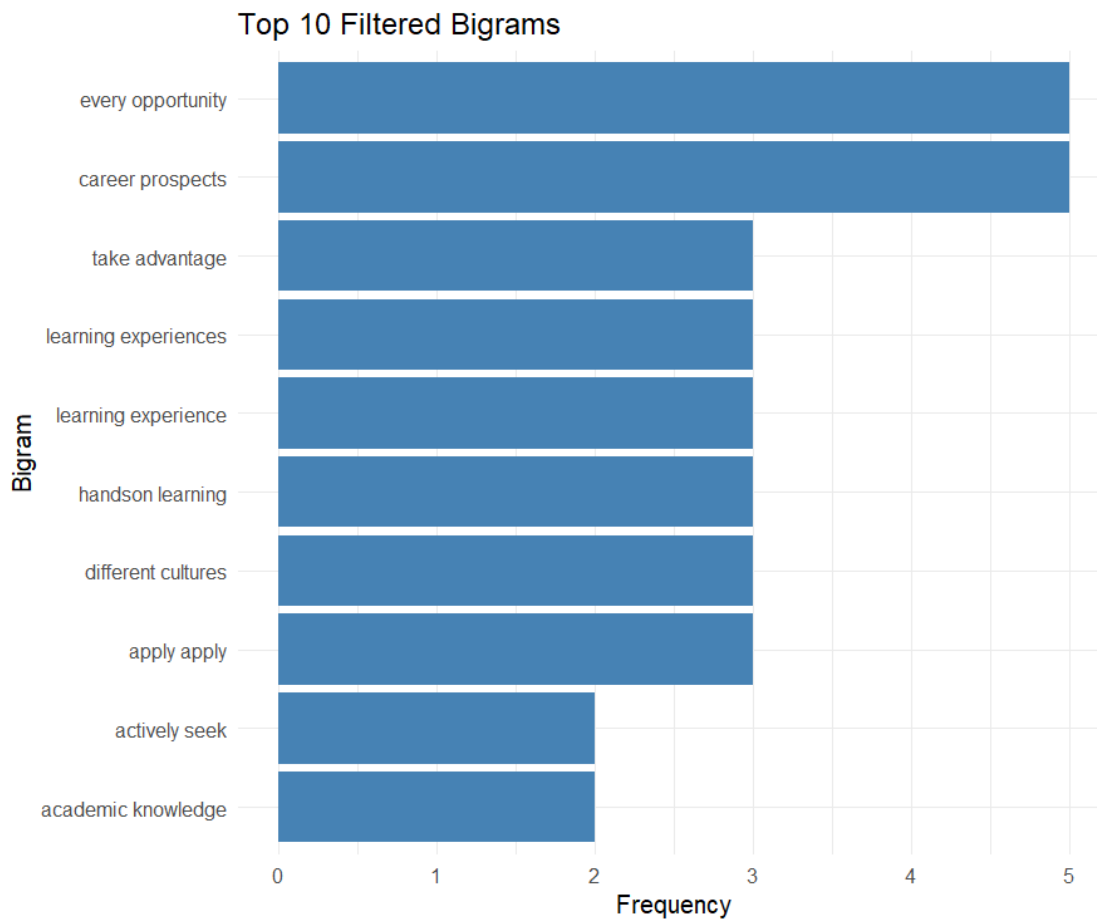
One participant said, *"I would advise current undergraduate students to actively seek out opportunities for educational tourism, as it can significantly enhance their academic experience and career prospects."* another said, *"Apply! Apply! Apply! Apply for every opportunity you see that will help you enrich the learning experience while exploring new environments and cultures. You will never regret it. You'll learn something new about yourself."* This highlights how the respondents value the program's impact on their careers.

Other responses were: *"I would advise students to go for educational tourism, it's exciting, and they should not be afraid to go for it."* and *"It's great because you get to explore different places and environments. It's worth the experience."* These responses reveal how the program is impactful not only in helping them grow academically and in their careers but also in being an exciting, adventurous program. Participants encouraged students to utilise university networks, scholarships and funding opportunities to travel and connect with others in their fields.

Regarding the negative sentiments, two respondents' responses were classified as negative. However, a closer look shows that these were misclassified. One of them said, *"Travel as much as you possibly can, it takes away the stress that you get from not being able to complete your chapter one of the thesis,"* here the stress was meant as humour but was misclassified. Another said, *"Tourism isn't a bad degree, you get to explore the world"* with the word bad degree misunderstood by the software program.

**Figure 4.21**

*Bigram showing advice to current undergraduate*



The bigram presents the top 10 bigrams after removing words from the questions. The common bigrams such as “apply,” “actively seek,” “every opportunity,” “take advantage,” show how the respondents saw the need for undergraduates to take the initiative to be part of those embracing the program as it enhanced academic knowledge through hands-on learning and experience. Bigrams like career prospects, learning experience, hands-on learning reveal what the undergraduate students would gain from the program.

In conclusion, the respondent's advice to current undergraduate students was that they should seek out and take opportunities that come from educational tourism. The respondents encouraged the undergraduates to explore opportunities outside the traditional classroom and connect with others. Doing this would broaden their perspective and make them stand out in the job market.

**4.9.11 Question 23: If the SEAmester program can be recommended to other students, and why**

**Table 4.14**

*Top 9 responses based on recommending the program to other students.*

	<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>1</b>	Yes	57
<b>2</b>	Learning	37
<b>3</b>	Opportunities	24
<b>4</b>	Program	23
<b>5</b>	Hands-on	18
<b>6</b>	Can	11
<b>7</b>	Marine	11
<b>8</b>	Knowledge	10
<b>9</b>	Networking	9

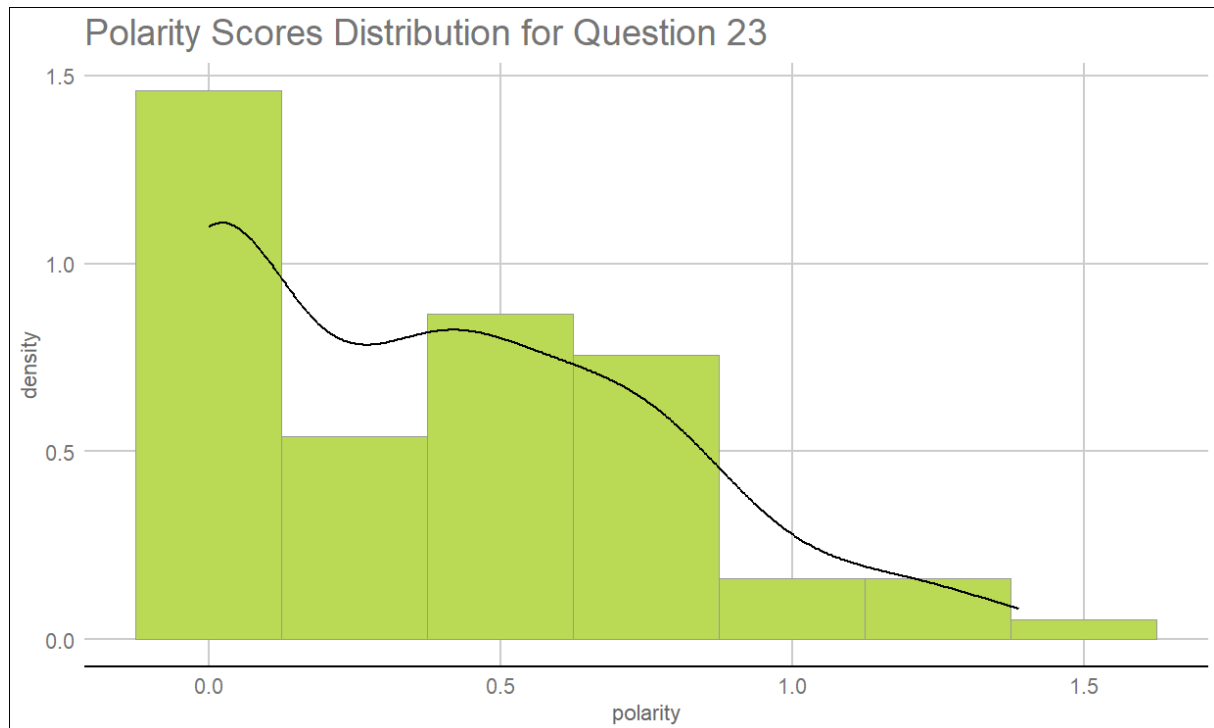
The top 9 responses to the question if they would recommend the program to other students are presented below. The word yes appeared 57 times, implying that most participants would recommend the program to current students. Other words that appeared frequently were “learning,” “opportunities,” “program,” “hands-on,” “knowledge” and “networking.” Figure 4.22 presents responses regarding the question of whether participants would recommend the program to current students.

The polarity density graph resulted in a positively skewed distribution with no negative values. The peak is at zero, indicating that the modal responses were of neutral sentiment. The rest of the responses were of positive sentiment suggesting that the respondents had positive things to say in their recommendations of the SEAmester to others.



**Figure 4.23**

*Polarity scores distribution for question 23*



Respondents also touched on the program's ability to help create connections and network with other people, which in turn helped secure careers stating that "*The program's focus on real-world issues equips students with valuable skills and knowledge that can significantly boost their academic and career prospects in environmental science and related fields.*"

In addition, some mentioned the non-academic advantages, and one respondent put it as follows: "*Yes! Because I learnt something I didn't know about myself. I learned that I love traveling and it helped me grow my interpersonal skills.*" There were no negative sentiments with regards to the question recommending the SEAmester Program to current students.

In conclusion, the feedback shows that the respondents support the program and see it worth recommending to other students. The respondents highlighted the hands-on experience, the networking opportunities and the career opportunities as the main reasons to recommend the program.

#### 4.10 ADDITIONAL STATISTICS

In this section we want to test if demographic variables, age, gender and race had an influence on the responses given to the Likert scale type questions. Initially, a Chi-Square Test of Independence was used to test for the association between the demographic variables and the questions. However, the cross-tabulation tables revealed that some of the cells had less than 5 counts which violates the assumptions of the Chi-square tests. Continuing with the Chi-square would lead to potentially unreliable conclusions. As an alternative we used the fishers exact test, which is a more robust test and can work with small sample sizes.

The hypothesis, using age and question 8 as an example is as follows,

- Null: The response to question 8 is not associated with age.
- Alternative: The response to question 8 is associated with age.

##### 4.10.1 Association between age and the responses

**Table 4.15**

*Association between Age and the responses questions*

AGE BY	Fishers exact test Value	P-Value	Significance
8. Do you agree that the SEAmester program incorporates the theoretical principles of educational tourism?	24.5	0.257	Not Significant
9. To what extent do you agree that your participation in the SEAmester program positively influenced your career goals?	25.4	0.362	Not Significant
10. Please rate the overall success of the SEAmester program	17.9	0.429	Not Significant
11. Do you believe that the SEAmester program is connected to the broader realms of travel and tourism?	17.0	0.832	Not Significant
12. Do you agree that implementing improvement suggestions would be in enhance the overall SEAmester experience?	17.4	0.535	Not Significant
13. Did the SEAmester program provide you with opportunities to consider further travel?	18.0	0.756	Not Significant

Table 4.15 shows that none of the responses to any of the questions were significantly associated with age as all the p-values were above 0.05. This means that age did not play a significant role in the responses provided.

#### 4.10.2 Association between gender and the responses

Likewise, Table 4.16 shows there was no association between the responses and the gender of the participants. This means that gender did not play a significant role in the responses provided as none of the correlation statistics prove positive correlation because they were all above 0.05 as illustrated in Table 4.16.

**Table 4.16**  
Association between Gender and the responses questions

GENDER BY	Fishers exact test Value	P-Value	Significance
8. Do you agree that the SEAmester program incorporates the theoretical principles of educational tourism?	8.0	0.654	Not Significant
9. To what extent do you agree that your participation in the SEAmester program positively influenced your career goals?	8.3	0.748	Not Significant
10. Please rate the overall success of the SEAmester program	4.8	0.913	Not Significant
11. Do you believe that the SEAmester program is connected to the broader realms of travel and tourism?	6.1	0.877	Not Significant
12. Do you agree that implementing improvement suggestions would be in enhance the overall SEAmester experience?	6.7	0.604	Not Significant
13. Did the SEAmester program provide you with opportunities to consider further travel?	5.8	0.920	Not Significant

#### 4.10.3 Association between race and the responses

Table 4.17 shows that 3 of the responses to the questions were significantly associated with race. The responses to the following questions were associated with race:

- 8. *Do you agree that the SEAmester program incorporates the theoretical principles of educational tourism*, p-value of 0.002 indicating a very significant correlation between race and the responses of the participants.
- 9. *To what extent do you agree that your participation in the SEAmester program positively influenced your career goals*, p-value of 0.034 showing a strong correlation between race and the responses.

- 13. Did the provide you with opportunities to consider further travel, p-value of 0.021 meaning that there was a strong positive correlation between the race of the participants and their responses to this question.

**Table 4.17**

*Association between Race and the responses questions*

RACE BY	Fishers exact test Value	P-Value	Significance
8. Do you agree that the SEAmester program incorporates the theoretical principles of educational tourism?	25.9	0.002	Significant
9.To what extent do you agree that your participation in the SEAmester program positively influenced your career goals?	19.3	0.034	Significant
10. Please rate the overall success of the SEAmester program	10.3	0.244	Not Significant
11.Do you believe that the SEAmester program is connected to the broader realms of travel and tourism?	11.8	0.401	Not Significant
12.Do you agree that implementing improvement suggestions would be in enhance the overall SEAmester experience?	11.7	0.200	Not Significant
13.Did the SEAmester program provide you with opportunities to consider further travel?	20.1	0.021	Significant

#### **4.11 SEAMESTER PROGRAM CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EDUCATIONAL TOURISM**

Based on the findings and themes presented in this chapter, a conceptual framework was created to illustrate how the SEAmester program demonstrates the main empirical findings, which include the relationship between education and travel, the influence of the program on career and personal development also the participants' overall learning experience. This provided a clear understanding of how educational tourism operate through the SEAmester model based. Learning context, social learning processes and educational outcomes are the three interrelated characteristics that makes up the success of educational tourism during the SEAmester program.

Learning context is regarded as the structure and authentic atmosphere in which participants interact (Sanga 2017). The SEAmester program uses the SA Agulhas II research vessel to provide learning within a real-world marine research setting. This unique experience exposes students to an applied learning environment where theoretical knowledge gained in university classrooms is then extended through practical field-based activities. The sea environment itself serves as a living classroom, providing ongoing chances for learning and reflection.

Social learning processes are represented by the interactions, collaborations and mentorships experiences which occur during the program (Vinke-de Kruijf, Bressers & Augustijn 2014). Findings from the study revealed that participants learned not only from the lectures but also from observing, engaging and collaborating with their peers and profession scientists. The SEAmester program itself promote active, peer supported and collaborative learning experience, consistent with the cooperative spirit found on expedition-based education.

Educational outcomes are regarded as both the tangible and the intangible results of participation (Holland, Powell, Thomsen & Monz 2018). The results presented indicate that participants experienced increased knowledge, self-confidence, enhanced their research and communication skills and some grow a stronger motivation to pursue marine science or other related careers. While others indicated that the experience inspired them to further travel for academic, personal growth and professional purposes, which confirmed that educational tourism through SEAmester not only educate but also cultivate curiosity and mobility.

These three aspects are dynamically independent. Educational outcomes show how effective the process is, on the other hand social learning processes act as the means by which knowledge and behaviour are being transferred and the learning context offered the institutional and physical basis. Together, they form a cyclical model in which experience, reflection and interaction reinforce each other, leading to long lasting educational and personal development.

#### **4.12 INTERGRATION WITH SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY**

The finding of this research study, interpreted through Bandura's Social Learning Theory, demonstrate why the SEAmester program work well as an example of educational tourism. According to The Social Learning Theory people learn new skills through watching other, copying their actions and getting feedback within a social context. On the SEAmester program, participants engage in observational learning by watching scientist and the educators conduct research, operate equipment on the vessel and analyse data.

The program also exemplifies reciprocal determinism, where personal factors, behaviours and the shipboard atmosphere influence one another, creating a dynamic cycle of learning and adaption. These processes transform the SEAmester program into a socially constructed, participatory learning experience that encourage development, professional identity and personal growth, while demonstrating how educational tourism can transformative and long-lasting learning outcomes.

#### **4.13 CONCLUSION**

The aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of educational tourism in promoting travelling using the SEAmester program as a case study. The research sought to examine the experiences of researchers on a 10-day research SEAmester research cruise on-board South Africa's SA Agulhas II (SAA2) research vessel, and to determine their inclination to travel due to such experiences.

Looking at the overall findings of the study, a conceptual framework was developed to illustrate how the SEAmester programme exemplifies the effectiveness of educational tourism through three interconnected dimensions namely: the learning context, Social Learning processes and the educational outcomes. The authentic atmosphere of the SA Agulhas II gave the students a platform to apply theoretical knowledge through hands on fieldwork, reflections and collaboration with educators and scientists, promoting learning through participation and observation. This process enhance knowledge, build self-efficacy and promote professional and personal growth, while

establishing a cyclical relationship in which reflection, interaction and experience all cooperate with one another. Aligned with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the framework illustrates how observational learning, self-efficacy and reciprocal determinism operate within SEAmester program's immersive atmosphere. Through the integration of experiential and social learning SEAmester program transforms traditional education into a socially constructed, participatory experience that nature cognitive, emotional and behavioural development, positioning the program as the dynamic model of educational tourism grounded in social learning principles.

Most of the participants' age group lie between 25 – 29 years and majority of these participants were ladies (occupying 58% of the total sample population). Majority of the participants were of African descent, and based on the results obtained from this study, the university which produced the highest number of participants since 2016 when the SEAmester program was introduced to date, is the University of Cape Town making a quarter of the total number of respondents. Most participants who took part in this research cruise since its inception were pursuing their master's degrees.

Findings from this study showed that combining education and tourism has a positive impact on the learning experience of the participants, and this was evidenced by most participants who gave positive responses with regards to impact of the SEAmester program on areas of study such as skills development, research and hands-on experience. As an example of an educational tourism endeavour, the SEAmester program seemed to have been a success and that with positive impact on the lives of the participants and this is evident in the top 10 words found in the responses of the participants when asked if they would recommend the research cruise to undergraduate students at South African universities to apply. Most of them used responses with words such as learning, can, opportunities and experience in their responses, which suggests that the respondents were positive about the program and encouraging others to apply.

However, despite quite a number of advantages associated with educational tourism, this study found out that there are also significant challenges that both participants and organisers face, especially since to some of them, it was their first time of living,

working and learning at sea. For instance, many students found it quite challenging to adapt to life at sea, and this is evident through many respondents who mentioned aspects such as life at sea, time management and the demanding schedule which they had to follow which was quite cumbersome. Some also had challenges with sea sickness and which made it quite challenging for them to cope with life at sea. These findings are crucial for event organisers with regards to future planning and for the continuous improvement of the SEAmester programme and other educational tourism endeavours.

The analysis performed in this study showed that age and gender did not play a significant role in the results obtained from this study. However, results found from mean and standard deviation statistics showed that race played a crucial role regarding the responses which were given by the participants.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents key findings and draws insights about the findings of the study which was set to investigate the effectiveness of educational tourism in promoting travel focusing on the SEAmester program aboard South Africa's research vessel SA Agulhas II. The research explored participants' experiences during the 10-day research cruise and examined how these experiences influenced their careers and their likeliness to travel.

In this chapter, primary objectives of the research findings are summarised in line to the research objectives. Following the discussion about educational tourism, practical recommendations are therefore suggested, limitations of the study are outlined and suggested areas of feather research are detailed.

#### **5.2 RESTATEMENT OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study as stated in Chapter 1 were to:

- Examine the theoretical underpinnings of educational tourism.
- Establish the perceptions of participants on the impact of SEAmester on their careers.
- Document the triumphs and challenges encountered by the organisers and participants during the SEAmester research cruise.
- Determining the relationship between the SEAmester program and future travel plans.

- Evaluate ways in which the challenges can be addressed to improve the SEAmester program.

The findings are presented in alignment to these research objectives in section 5.3 to conclude the study.

### **5.3 FINDINGS IN RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The findings of this study provide strong evidence which rejects the hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the program and career impact. This section links the study's findings directly to its specific objectives:

#### **5.3.1 Examine the theoretical underpinnings of educational tourism**

The study explored how educational tourism, exemplified by the SEAmester program, aligns with theoretical frameworks around experiential learning, cultural exchange, and lifelong learning (Čavlek 2015; Caton 2011). The SEAmester program exemplifies constructivist principles by providing real-world contexts in which participants construct understanding through active participation (Aljohani 2017). The direct exposure to marine research allows students to build on prior knowledge and apply academic concepts, strengthening their cognitive frameworks. Another key form of learning is experimental learning (Mugambi 2018). The program follows the cycle of experimental learning, where students gain experiences at sea and get to have reflective observation (feedback), abstract conceptualisation (linking learning to future careers), and active experimentation (applying skills post-program) (Ojo & Yusof 2019). This helps in long-term retention and practical application of knowledge.

Interestingly transformative learning theory was also seen to have taken effect as many participants experienced personal and professional transformation (Dembovska et al. 2016). Exposure to new environments and challenges such as adapting to life at sea may have helped participants in re-evaluation of career paths (Suciu et al. 2022; Naidoo 2007) because of the social learning aspect of the program. From the participant's responses, the SEAmester program was an interdisciplinary, exploratory,

and hands-on program as it makes room for learning in social environments. This aligns with the non-formal education paradigm (Johnson & Majewska 2022) and supports the idea that experiential learning can enhance retention and critical thinking (Choudhary et al. 2022).

### **5.3.2 Establish the perceptions of participants on the impact of SEAmester on their careers**

Participants expressed that SEAmester had a significant positive impact on their professional and academic development. Many indicated enhanced research skills, expanded academic networks, and a clearer understanding of career paths in marine sciences (Ansorge et al. 2016). Participants further highlighted that SEAmester increased confidence, sharpened their confidence towards marine science and paved their interest in marine science careers (Rivera, Ambrosino, Manning, Soon, Rii & Gorospe 2022). The participants indicated that this SEAmester has provided them with a platform for mentorship, given a strong sense of belonging in science and career guidance (Mitchell, Oswald, Voon & Larcombe 2011).

### **5.3.3 Document the triumphs and challenges encountered by the organisers and participants during the SEAmester research cruise**

The program's triumphs aligned with the findings of Rogerson and Visser (2020), who described educational tourism as a vehicle for global awareness, cultural exchange, lifelong learning, high levels of satisfaction, increased knowledge, and valuable peer/mentor engagement and challenges, such as seasickness, emotional fatigue, time constraints, and demanding schedules mirrored concerns by Ren and Zhou (2023); Wen et al. (2023); Brooks and Greenberg (2022) and Mohammed and Belay (2019), highlight the need for better participant preparation and adaptive learning design, which this study argues can be achieved through social learning as provided by the SEAmester program.

### **5.3.4 Determine the relationship between the SEAmester program and travel and tourism**

The findings affirm that programs like SEAmester not only promote academic learning but also cultivate a sustained interest in travel and exploration as most participants not only now saw traveling as a recreational activity but also a learning journey, aligning with Falk et al. (2012) and Choudhary et al. (2022). However, some participants clearly indicated that they did not see any alignment between the SEAmester program and travel and tourism. In response, the researcher argues that the kind of engagement that takes place during the SEAmester program requires active participation and reification to influence each other (learning and activity) as per the argument by Firmansyah and Saepuloh (2022). This kind of learning is bound to lead to new behaviours and modify existing ones in the context of interpersonal relationships, observation and interactions (Woszidlo & Kunkel 2017).

### **5.3.5 Evaluate ways in which the challenges can be addressed to improve the SEAmester program**

Based on participant feedback, practical recommendations were made to improve the program. These include enhanced pre-orientation sessions that can be organised for the participants to ensure that they are in the right state of mind or physically fit for life at sea, better scheduling of daily tasks which allow participants to rest and adjust to life at sea, ensure that there are more onboard support services which will provide mentoring of structured groups and follow-up opportunities for students and providing support after the SEAmester research cruise (Dorrington et al. 2016; Cameron, Escalante & Haslip 2024). These recommendations address the specific challenges identified and aim to improve future iterations of SEAmester.

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness that educational tourism and travel have in promoting tourism using the case of SEAmester research cruise as an example of educational tourism endeavour. A null hypothesis has been proposed, which state that there is no significant relationship between the participants' involvement and

participation in SEAmester and their travel plans. The findings from this study provide compelling evidence that proves the null hypothesis, which confirms that there is a significant relationship between participation in the SEAmester program and its impact on participants' travel, career and professional development. Figure 4.14 and 3.24 illustrate the distribution of important responses related to these outcomes in order to demonstrate how SEAmester involvement influenced participants' academic networking and their professional growth. Findings obtained from participants' feedback indicate that the SEAmester programme positively contribute towards the advancement of career goals and the formation of academic networks (Figure 4.14 and Figure 4.24). these outcomes are Constance with those of Falk et al. (2012) who stated that through networking and collaboration, experiential learning initiatives promotes social capital in additional to academic development. The observed outcomes may stem from SEAmester's immersive design, which provides mentorship and shared learning experience that strengthen professional identity. Nevertheless, the limited number of participants restrict more extensive generalisation, suggesting that future studies need explore how similar programs operate in African marine context. Educational tourism emerges as a valuable way for fostering and promoting cultural exchange and encouraging lifelong learning.

However, participants also reported several challenges associated with their involvement and participation in the program especially those who were having life-at-sea experience for the first time. Given the emphasis on comprehending the challenges participants had during the SEAmester program, the most reported on-board concerns are summarised on Table 4.10. Such challenges include seasickness, time constraints where participants had to get a lot done within a short space of time, as well as emotional fatigue (Table 4.10). While these challenges are stated by Brooks and Greenberg (2022), the highlights that the demanding nature of immersive field based learning. The intensive shipboard activities contributed to the participants' fatigue, understand the importance of balance scheduling and wellbeing support. The sustainability and inclusivity of such marine education programs could be improved by addressing these factors. Figure 4.18 and 4.19 illustrate participants' response about post program travel interest to show how participants' travel incentives changed after the SEAmester experience. The results also revealed a clear connection between the

SEAmester experience and participants' interest in travel and tourism (Figure 4.18 and Figure 4.19).

Choudhary et al. (2022) point out that educational tourism experience can change people's conceptions of tourism from leisure based to learning oriented activities, which is in line with the findings of the study. As a result, the SEAmester program encourage sustainable tourism and meaningful travel behaviour. Nonetheless, differences in participant background imply that motivation to travel may depend on prior exposure to the marine environments, an area worth exploring further in future studies.

## **5.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY**

This study contributes to both academic literature and practical implementation in several meaningful ways:

### **5.4.1 Academic Contribution**

This research adds to the limited body of knowledge on educational tourism in the African context, particularly within the marine sciences. It demonstrates how programs like SEAmester integrate theoretical learning with practical experience, offering empirical support for experiential learning models in higher education.

### **5.4.2 Policy and Program Design**

The findings offer valuable insights for educational policymakers, curriculum designers, and SEAmester organisers. The recommendations provided can inform enhancements to student support, program structure, and post-cruise engagement, increasing the program's effectiveness and inclusivity.

### **5.4.3 Career Development Insights**

By highlighting the career and academic benefits of SEAmester participation, this study underscores the importance of integrating real-world research experiences into academic programs. It also sheds light on underutilised career pathways in marine sciences, potentially guiding future recruitment strategies.

### **5.4.4 Tourism Linkages**

The study bridges the gap between education and tourism by showcasing how academic travel experiences can stimulate interest in travel and cultural exploration, thereby reinforcing the broader value of educational tourism in national development strategies. Beyond South African context, the study findings hold a broader implication for marine educational tourism across Africa and around the world. Programs like SEAmester align closely with the Africa Union's Blue Economy strategy and the UN Decade of ocean science for sustainable Development, which promote capacity building, ocean literacy and resource use.

### **5.4.5 The need for Inclusivity**

Lastly, the study amplifies the voices of South African students, especially those from historically underrepresented groups, and provides a nuanced understanding of their experiences, needs, and aspirations within a research-driven travel program.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the study's findings and aligned with the research objectives, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the SEAmester program and strengthen its contribution to educational tourism and career development:

- During the cruise there were numerous reports of seasickness and fatigue. Having orientation sessions before the cruise will vastly improve the participant's experiences. Additionally, on board medical and psychological support should be strengthened to assist participants in coping with physical and emotional demands that come with sea life.
- Most students less chances of study about marine life or being part of a research cruise. The curriculum should be intentionally set to incorporate practical sessions where participants can connect theoretical concepts to their practical experiences.
- Careers in marine life are not as common as other careers. Having formalised networking events and workshops can help link students with other colleagues and mentors in the same line of work.
- There was some negative feedback on the schedule and time spent on the cruise from the participants. Most felt the time was not enough to complete projects and they ended up having to do a lot hence resulting in fatigue, so scheduling of activities should be a top priority for the participant to enjoy the cruise
- It would be helpful to create ways where students can pursue follow-up research post-cruise. Program advisors and leaders can also engage different players in the industry to take in some of the students for more hands-on experiences.
- Implementation of a formal feedback system that regularly gathers participant input during and after the cruise will enable timely identification and resolution of issues, improving overall program quality and responsiveness.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- The study involved a limited number of participants, who were drawn from different SEAmester editions. This had an impact on the views shared as there may have been improvements on later additions.
- The reliance on interviews introduces potential bias, as participants may overstate benefits or underreport challenges due to social desirability or recall limitations.
- Data was collected at different times after the program, capturing only immediate impacts for those in the latest edition and missing longer-term

benefits or drawbacks. For those interviewed or completed the survey years after their experience, they might have had problems where they missed some critical information due to long time passing.

- The study was focused within South Africa and the specific structure of the SEAmester programme, which limited the applicability to other countries or educational systems.

## **5.7 CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated the important role that educational tourism plays in knowledge enhancement, professional and personal growth, and encouraging a closer bond with academic subjects through hands-on learning. The study's ultimate objective of examining how well educational tourism promotes travel through the SEAmester program was accomplished and it showed a direct correlation between participants, career development and increased motivation to travel. The results show that a well-planned educational tourism program like SEAmester, offers lifelong learning opportunities to the participants that extend beyond the classroom and foster critical thinking, environmental consciousness, and passion for learning. As educational tourism continues to evolve, its integration into academic curricula and national tourism strategies presents a valuable opportunity to enrich education and support sustainable development. More generally, the lessons learned from SEAmester apply to the marine tourism industry in Africa and around the world, emphasising the ways in which experiential education may promote conservation objectives, regional development and cross border knowledge exchange. Future research and collaboration between academia and tourism stakeholders will be crucial in strengthening the impact and reach of such initiatives.

## **5.8 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The study can be extended in the following ways:

- Future research could examine the long-term effects of participation in the SEAmester program, tracking alumni over multiple years to assess sustained

career progression. Tired to this is to see the impact of the changes that are made to program.

- Researchers can look at similar programs and compare the approaches and the impacts to develop a more effective program
- Given how most expressed the desire to see the program spread to other areas, researchers could explore barriers to access for underrepresented groups in programs like SEAmester and how to design more inclusive recruitment strategies.
- Researchers can investigate the emotional and psychological challenges (e.g., fatigue, isolation, seasickness) experienced during immersive, remote programs and their effects on learning outcomes and participant well-being.
- Technology Integration for Pre- and Post-Program Engagement- Given the high costs of running this program, there can be research on how to incorporate digital tools and platforms to have live streamed cruise research or virtual reality to prepare students for Sea life. This can also be used even post cruise for continued research.
- Future studies could be designed to assess the economic implications of running programs like SEAmester for institutions, local economies, and the tourism sector in South Africa.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Ethical clearance letter



**DUT**  
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY



**INSTITUTIONAL  
RESEARCH  
ETHICS  
COMMITTEE**

**Institutional Research Ethics Committee**  
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate  
2nd Floor, Barium Court  
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus  
Durban University of Technology  
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[http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional\\_research\\_ethics](http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics)  
[www.dut.ac.za](http://www.dut.ac.za)

18 October 2024

Mr T Mbhalati  
Stand No. 159  
Rivala Village  
Giyani  
0826

Dear Mr Mbhalati

**Exploring the Educational Tourism Impact: Participants' Perceptions of South Africa's Class Afloat Program on Travel and Tourism**  
**Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 100/24**

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your final data collection tool for review.

We are pleased to inform you that the data collection tool has been approved. Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the DUT-IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.


**It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.**

**Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.**

Yours Sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
Professor P Mashau  
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

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**THE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**  
DURBAN  
1923-2023

## APPENDIX B (I): LETTER OF INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM



### LETTER OF INFORMATION

#### Questionnaire

**Title of the Research Study:** Exploring the Educational Tourism Impact: Participants' Perceptions of South Africa's Class Afloat Program on Travel and Tourism

**Principal Investigator/s/researcher:** Themba Mbhalati, Master of Management Sciences (Hosp- Eco/Env)

**Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s:** Prof DC Hlengwa

**Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:**

Education and tourism have long been recognized as powerful catalysts for personal growth, cultural exchange, and economic development. Educational tourism, in particular, offers unique opportunities for participants to engage in immersive learning experiences while exploring new destinations. South Africa's Class Afloat Program stands at the intersection of education and tourism, offering a distinctive platform for experiential learning through travel and adventure. This study aims to delve into the educational tourism impact, specifically focusing on the perceptions of participants in South Africa's Class Afloat Program. By understanding your experiences and perspectives, we seek to uncover valuable insights into the influence of this program on travel and tourism in the region.

**Greeting and introduction**

Dear Participant

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Themba Mbhalati, and I am a 5<sup>th</sup>-year student at DUT currently conducting research for my Master of Management Sciences (Hosp- Eco/Env) (MMECM1). I am reaching out to you with an invitation to participate in an important research project titled "Exploring the Educational Tourism Impact: Participants' Perceptions of South Africa's Class Afloat Program on Travel and Tourism."

### **Invitation to the potential participant**

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. Your input is incredibly valuable, as it will help us gain insights into the impact of the Class Afloat Program on travel and tourism in South Africa.

### **What is Research**

In this research project, we are seeking to understand how participating in the Class Afloat Program in South Africa influences individuals' perceptions of travel and tourism experiences. We are interested in learning about your personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings related to this program and how it may have impacted your views on travel and tourism.

As someone who may have participated in the Class Afloat Program, your insights are incredibly valuable to us. We want to ensure that you fully understand the purpose and objectives of our study. You are encouraged to ask as many questions as you wish to clarify any doubts or concerns you may have. Additionally, you have the right to discuss this study with your family and friends before making a decision to participate. You are under no obligation to commit at this stage, and we will provide you with a copy of the Letter of Information document to take home for further review.

### **Outline of the Procedures:**

The aim of this study is to explore the participants' perception of the SEAmester program and its impact on educational tourism. Research objectives indicate in more detail the specific issues that the study seeks to examine the theoretical underpinnings of educational tourism, establish the perceptions of participants on the impact of SEAmester on their careers, document the triumphs and challenges

encountered by the organisers and participants during the SEAmester research cruise, determining the relationship between the SEAmester program and travel and tourism and to evaluate ways in which the challenges can be addressed to improve the SEAmester program.

*Description of Procedures:*

Recruitment will include all of you who have previously participated in South Africa's Class Afloat Program from 2016 to 2023. Recruitment methods may include contacting alumni networks, educational institutions, and program organisers. Data will be collected through semi-structured online surveys. You will be asked to share their experiences, perceptions, and insights related to the Class Afloat Program and its impact on travel and tourism in South Africa.

You may choose to participate in the survey based on their preference and availability. Surveys will be administered online, Surveys will be distributed electronically to your email addresses. You must have previously participated in South Africa's Class Afloat Program to be eligible for inclusion in the study. There is no specific exclusion criteria based on demographic characteristics.

Survey questions will be designed to explore participants' perceptions of the educational tourism impact of the Class Afloat Program, including its influence on their travel experiences, cultural understanding, personal development, and future travel intentions. You may be contacted for clarification or additional information if needed. Surveys may take around 20-30 minutes to complete.

You are expected to provide honest and detailed responses to interview or survey questions based on their personal experiences with the Class Afloat Program. You are encouraged to share both positive and negative aspects of your participation. The research aims to recruit 95 participants who have previously participated in South Africa's Class Afloat Program.

**Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:**

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

**Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study:**

As a you are participating in this research project it is important for you to understand the circumstances under which you may withdraw from the study, as well as the researcher's authority to terminate your participation.

*Participant's Right to Withdraw:*

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, without facing any consequences. Your decision to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the researcher or any services you receive in the future. If you choose to withdraw, you will still continue to receive the appropriate standard of care.

*Researcher's Authority to Withdraw Participants:*

Under certain circumstances, the researcher may decide to withdraw you from the study. This decision may be made if:

- You fail to comply with the study procedures or guidelines.
- Your health or safety is at risk due to participation in the study.
- You experience adverse reactions or discomfort beyond a manageable level.
- Other unforeseen circumstances arise that warrant the termination of your participation.

*Procedures for an Orderly Termination:*

If you decide to withdraw from the study or if the researcher decides to terminate your participation, appropriate procedures will be followed to ensure an orderly transition. You may be asked to complete any remaining study procedures or return any study materials in your possession. Additionally, the researcher will provide you with information on any follow-up care or support services that may be available to you.

Your well-being and comfort are our top priorities, and we want to ensure that your participation in this study is a positive and meaningful experience. If you have any concerns or questions about withdrawal procedures or any other aspect of the study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher for further clarification.

**Benefits:**

By sharing your experiences and perspectives, you contribute valuable data that can inform future program development, policy decisions, and educational strategies in the field of educational tourism. Engaging in discussions about your experiences may provide personal reflection and insight, allowing you to deepen your understanding of educational tourism's impact on travel and tourism experiences. Additionally, your participation may contribute to raising awareness about the importance of educational tourism and promoting sustainable tourism practices in South Africa.

**Remuneration:**

Participants will not receive any monetary or other types of remuneration for participating in this study.

**Costs of the Study:**

There are no costs associated with participating in this study.

**Confidentiality:**

Measures will be in place to safeguard personal information and research data. This measure includes personal information, assigning your unique identifiers, encrypting and securing data, aggregating findings, removing identifying details before analysis, securely storing consent forms, anonymizing quotes and examples, and being cautious about providing contextual information in reports.

**Data storage duration.**

Data collected for this study will be securely kept by the researcher for the entire duration of the study. It will be kept for a period of 5 years in case if its requested for verification by the project examiners.

**Results:**

The results of this research will be disseminated through academic publications, presentations, and possibly other forms of communication. If any significant new findings develop during the course of the research, you will be informed accordingly.

**Research-related Injury:**

In the unlikely event of a research-related injury or adverse reaction, appropriate measures will be taken to ensure your well-being. However, given the nature of this study, the risk of such incidents is minimal.

**Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings**

All electronic and hard copies of data will be securely stored and only accessed by authorized personnel. Your data will be kept confidential and will be securely disposed of at the end of the study period. I hope this information provides you with a clear understanding of the research project and your role in it. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

**Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries:** Supervisor: Prof DC Hlengwa, email: [dumisileh@dut.ac.za](mailto:dumisileh@dut.ac.za). Please contact the researcher (tel no: 078 033 3507), my supervisor (tel no: 083 307 4814.) or the Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support Dr Nomcebo Mthombeni on [Researchdirector@dut.ac.za](mailto:Researchdirector@dut.ac.za)



## CONSENT

**Full Title of the Study: The effectiveness of educational tourism: A case of SEAmester - South Africa's Class Afloat Program**

**Names of Researcher/s: Themba Mbhalati**

**Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:**

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Themba Mbhalati, about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: 22175844,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Participant Thumbprint</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Signature / Right</b>

I, Themba Mbhalati (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Themba Mbhalati	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Researcher</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>

_____	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Witness (If applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>

_____	_____	_____
<b>Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Signature</b>

**Please note the following:**

Research details must be provided in a clear, simple and culturally appropriate manner and prospective participants should be helped to arrive at an informed decision by use of appropriate language (grade 10 level - use Flesch Reading Ease Scores on Microsoft Word), selecting of a non-threatening environment for interaction and the availability of peer counselling (Department of Health, 2004).

If the potential participant is unable to read or/and write, then a right thumb print is required and an impartial witness, who is literate and knows the participant e.g. parent, sibling, friend, pastor, etc. should verify in writing, duly signed that informed verbal consent was obtained (Department of Health, 2004).

If anyone makes a mistake completing this document e.g. a wrong date or spelling mistake, a new document has to be completed. The incomplete original document has to be kept in the participant's file and not thrown away, and copies thereof must be issued to the participant.

**References:**

Department of Health: 2004. *Ethics in Health Research: Principles, Structures and Processes*  
<http://www.doh.gov.za/docs/factsheets/guidelines/ethnics/>

Department of Health. 2006. *South African Good Clinical Practice Guidelines*. 2nd Ed.  
Available at: [http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page\\_id=14](http://www.nhrec.org.za/?page_id=14)

**NOTE: Information in brackets in the Letter of Information is to be used as a guide in completing the Letter of Information. This information as well as the general section at the end of the Letter of Information and Consent document must be deleted before attaching the document to the PG 2a.**

## APPENDIX C: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

### Appendix C (i)- QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Age

Less than 18	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-40	41 and above

2. Gender

Female	Male

3. Race

1. African	2. White	3. Coloured	4. Asian/ Indian

4. In which year did you participate in the SEAmester program? -----
5. Which institution were you attending when you participated in the SEAmester program? -----
6. What degree were you pursuing during your participation in the SEAmester program? -----
7. What's your current occupation? -----
8. On a scale of 1 to 5, to what extent do you agree that the SEAmester program incorporates the theoretical principles of educational tourism?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree

9. To what extent do you agree that your participation in the SEAmester program positively influenced your career goals?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree

10. Please rate the overall success of the SEAmester program on a scale of 1 to 5

1. Total failure	2. Not so successful	3. Neutral	4. Successful	5. Very successful

11. Do you believe that the SEAmester program is connected to the broader realms of travel and tourism?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree

12. Do you agree that implementing improvement suggestions would be in enhance the overall SEAmester experience?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree

13. Did the SEAmester program provide you with opportunities to consider further travel?

1. Strongly disagree	2. Disagree	3. Neutral	4. Agree	5. Strongly agree

## Qualitative questions

14. How do you perceive the integration of educational tourism concepts within the SEAmester program, and in what ways do these concepts enhance the educational aspect of the experience? -----
15. Please share your understanding of educational tourism in the context of SEAmester research cruise -----
16. In your opinion, how has your participation in the SEAmester program influenced your educational and career goals? -----
17. Can you describe any specific way through which the SEAmester contributed to your professional development? -----
18. Reflecting on your participation in the SEAmester program, what were the most significant challenges and triumphs you experienced during the course of this research cruise? -----
19. Can you share instances where your participation in SEAmester led to travel experiences beyond the program itself? -----
20. From your perspective, what strategies do you believe could be employed to address challenges faced by participants during the SEAmester program to ensure positive experience for participants? -----
21. What are your hopes and aspirations for the future of the SEAmester program? -----
22. What advice would you give to current undergraduate students at South African universities regarding educational tourism? -----
23. Based on your overall experience would you recommend SEAmester to other students? If so, provide reasons why? -----

**APPENDIX C (ii): INTERVIEW GUIDE**

- 1. Kindly provide information on your involvement with the SEAmester program.  
-----
- 2. Kindly provide insight on the purpose and history of the SEAmester program.  
-----
- 3. How is the SEAmester program funded?  
-----
- 4. Why do you involve students from other universities and field in the program?  
-----
- 5. Kindly share with me your triumphs over the years coordinating the program.  
-----
  
- 6. Kindly enlighten me on the challenges and limitations that you encounter coordinating the program.  
-----
- 7. How can these challenges be resolved?  
-----
- 8. What are the links between the SEAmester program and tourism education?  
-----
- 9. What feedback have you received from previous participants regarding the program?  
-----
- 10. What are your aspirations for the SEAmester program?  
-----
- 11. Kindly share any other information regarding the SEAmester program.  
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**Thank you for your participation**

## APPENDIX D: GATEKEEPER'S LETTER



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### Department of Oceanography

Head: Professor Isabelle Ansoorge

University of Cape Town Private Bag Rondebosch 7701  
South Africa

Telephone +27 (021) 650 3280  
email [isabelle.ansorge@uct.ac.za](mailto:isabelle.ansorge@uct.ac.za)

17<sup>th</sup> August 2023

To whom it may concern

#### Approval for Themba Mbhalati to work with the SEAmester programme.

I am writing to formally confirm my approval as the lead PI of the SEAmester Floating University Programme that a former SEAmester participant Themba Mbhalati should be allowed access to student records and discussions in order to conduct his research: The effectiveness of educational tourism: A case of SEAmester- South Africa's Class Afloat Program at DUT.

I have no doubt that many students who have participated in the SEAmester programme will be able to provide Themba a personal assessment of the importance their ship-based experience has had on their education and academic aspirations.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or require further clarification.

Best wishes

Prof Isabelle Ansoorge

Head of Department of Oceanography

# APPENDIX E: TRREE CERTIFICATE



**TRREE**

# Zertifikat Certificat

# Certificado Certificate

Promouvoir les plus hauts standards éthiques dans la protection des participants à la recherche biomédicale  
Promoting the highest ethical standards in the protection of biomedical research participants

**Certificat de formation - Training Certificate**  
Ce document atteste que - this document certifies that

**Themba Mbhalati**  
a complété avec succès - has successfully completed  
**Introduction to Research Ethics**  
du programme de formation TRREE en évaluation éthique de la recherche  
of the TRREE training programme in research ethics evaluation

Release Date: 2023/08/14  
CID : X38zi4Xqm



Programmes de formation continue (2 crédits)  
Continuing Education Programs (2 credits)

Professeur Dominique Sprumont  
Coordinateur TRREE Coordinator



Programmes de formation  
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