The Role of Stakeholder Collaboration in Sustainable Tourism Competitiveness: The Case of Auckland, New Zealand

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A thesis submitted to Auckland University of
Technology in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Tourism Management

2015

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ABSTRACT

The competitive environment that global tourism operates in presents exceptional challenges for which tourism destinations are compelled to seek solutions in order to survive and be sustainable. The composite nature of the industry and the multiple stakeholders that are involved in producing satisfying tourism experiences and products complicate the situation for destinations in achieving and sustaining competitiveness. The success of destination competitiveness relies on the efforts of all the stakeholders that contribute to creating the total tourism experience. This makes their collaboration an essential part of sustainable tourism competitiveness (STC). STC is the ability of a destination to increase tourism yield through the growth of a profitable tourism industry that contributes to the welfare of residents while sustaining natural and cultural assets.

The significance of collaboration is heightened in areas that have experienced political amalgamation and where previously independent public administrations have been brought under a unitary authority. Political amalgamation is a phenomenon that is increasing in popularity because of the potential benefits of combining resources and avoiding duplication of processes and wastage of resources.

An increasing body of research exists on tourism competitiveness, and a range of elements has been reported as contributing to competitiveness. Stakeholder collaboration as a component of tourism destination competitiveness has not been given much attention in the existing literature. This research contributes to filling the gap by focusing on stakeholder collaboration as an element of STC using the case of Auckland, New Zealand, a recently amalgamated city region.

The case study method under a constructivist research paradigm has been adopted in this thesis to investigate tourism industry stakeholders' perspectives on the significance of collaboration in tourism, and specifically for STC. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 41 stakeholders from the public and private sectors and non-governmental organisations in order to gain an understanding of current practices in collaboration, the obstacles that tourism stakeholders face in engaging in collaborative activities, and possible ways to overcome the challenges that hinder collaboration.

The findings reveal a number of challenges for Auckland in achieving future STC. Many of the challenges of competitiveness arise from obstacles to collaborative engagements, a lack of clear communication and aversion to collaboration. At the same time, the recommendations that are given by stakeholders for facilitating collaboration show that many of the actions that assist and facilitate collaboration have the potential to enhance STC. These findings are brought into perspective in a proposed new model of stakeholder collaboration and STC. This framework builds upon and enriches existing models and frameworks in the field.

Based on multiple stakeholder insights, this study adds to the literature on stakeholder collaboration and STC, by exploring how collaboration is linked to tourism competitiveness and providing evidence and examples of how stakeholder collaboration enhances and contributes to STC. The findings will be especially useful for practitioners, researchers and policy makers interested in stakeholder collaboration in an amalgamated city context. This research challenges existing theories and research that overlook or downplay stakeholder collaboration as a key element in contributing to STC. By identifying that collaboration is vital in all aspects of a successful tourism industry, and determining how it is connected to STC, this research has illustrated that collaboration and STC are interrelated and interdependent.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMETI	Auckland Manukau Eastern Transport Initiative
ARA	Auckland Regional Authority
ATEED	Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development
AUTEC	Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee
AVP	Auckland Visitor Plan
B&B	Bed and breakfast
CAQDAS	Computer-aided qualitative data analysis software
CBD	Central business district
CCO	Council-controlled organisation
CEO	Chief executive officer
CM	Competitiveness Monitor
DMO	Destination Management Organisation
DOC	Department of Conservation
EDS	Economic Development Strategy
FIT	Free independent traveller
FCSTC	Framework of collaboration and sustainable tourism competitiveness
FTE	Full-time equivalent
GDP	Gross domestic product
GM	General manager
HRM	Human resource management
H1N1	Influenza A Virus
IR	Information and research
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LB	Local board
LTP	Long-term Plan
MBIE	Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment
MICE	Meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NZ	New Zealand
NZTA	New Zealand Transport Agency
NZTRI	New Zealand Tourism Research Institute
NZTS	New Zealand Tourism Strategy
OAP	Old-age pensioner
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PPP	Public–private partnership
RFA	Regional Facilities Auckland
RTO	Regional Tourism Organisation
RWC	Rugby World Cup
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SMTE	Small and medium-sized tourism enterprise

SOI	Statement of intent
STC	Sustainable tourism competitiveness
TALC	Tourist Area Life Cycle
TIANZ	Tourism Industry Association New Zealand
TLA	Territorial local authority
TRENZ	Tourism Rendezvous New Zealand
UK	United Kingdom
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environmental Development
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
VFR	Visiting friends and relatives
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WHO	World Health Organisation

ATTESTATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my best friends, my pillars of unwavering support, Nu, Nathi & Jay.
Determination, perseverance, faith – a fail-proof recipe for success.

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the rationale for the research, highlighting the significance of stakeholder collaboration in tourism, particularly in the context of an amalgamated urban area. The chapter brings into focus the need to include stakeholder collaboration as a vital element for achieving sustainable tourism competitiveness (STC). The research questions are presented in this chapter followed by a brief overview of the qualitative case study method that was used and an overview of the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Rationale

Creating, maintaining and reinforcing competitiveness in the market is critical to tourism industry and destination success (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003; Enright, 2011). Due to the numerous challenges prevalent in the international market, staying ahead of competition and ensuring competitiveness is often viewed as the only way to survive in the volatile global tourism industry (Erkus-Ozturk & Eraydyn, 2010), to which destinations devote substantial efforts (Kayar & Kozak, 2010). Competitiveness is the "ability of a destination to maintain the achieved market position (market share) and/or improve it over time" (Horak, Marusic, & Favro, 2006, p. 146). How to achieve this success represents one of the most significant current debates and discussions in tourism (Croes, 2010; Crouch, 2007; Lee & King, 2009). According to Dwyer and Kim (2003), "destination competitiveness is not an ultimate end of policy making but is an intermediate goal towards the objective of regional or national economic prosperity" (p. 377).

Several prevalent issues in the global tourism industry compel destinations to strive to achieve and maintain a competitive position in the market. Technological changes, accessibility to information and evolving distribution channels make the tourism industry increasingly consumer and information driven (Bethapudi, 2013). In addition to ever-escalating competition (Dredge, 2010; Sheng, 2011), the tourism industry is highly sensitive to issues such as the rising price of fuel, global financial instability (Moutinho, Ballantyne, & Rate, 2011), global climate change, rising environmental regulation, and man-made and natural disasters (Hall, 2010). The composite nature of

tourism and the diversity of players involved in creating the total tourist experience (Crouch, 2007) further complicate the competitive situation.

The competitiveness of the tourism industry in a specific destination depends on its ability to attract tourists through products and experiences that are superior to those of competitors (Choi, Li, Kim, & Cai, 2011). Attractions may be natural, such as the Grand Canyon in Arizona, United States, or man-made, for example, the Taj Mahal in Agra, India. Attractions can also be made up of experiences such as whale watching in Kaikoura, New Zealand (NZ). The efficient use of available resources is essential in creating and developing products and experiences that are more attractive than those of competitors (Hassan, 2000).

Tourism is made up of experiences achieved from the combination of a diverse range of products and services that are created by numerous providers across several industries and economic sectors (Gursoy, Saayman & Sotiriadis, 2015). Tourist destinations comprise networks of relationships among various parties (Bălan, Balaure, & Veghes, 2009) "where the action of each actor influences those of the others" (Manente & Minghetti, 2006, p. 23). Competitiveness of a destination essentially depends on how effectively the constituent units work together to produce the tourism product (Buultjens, White, & Neale, 2012). Collaborative strategies and integration of resources are necessary to maximise benefits and add value (Saxena, 2005). Stakeholder collaboration is, therefore, likely a fundamental element in achieving and sustaining tourism competitiveness (Azzopardi, 2011; Bornhorst, Ritchie, & Sheehan, 2010; Byrd, 2007).

A stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the firm's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p. 25). The process by which the main stakeholders of a "problem domain" undertake joint decision-making for the future of that domain is collaboration (Gray, 1989, p. 227). The complexities and challenges faced by those who wish to engage in collaborative engagements and strategies are widely acknowledged in the literature (Franco, 2008). Insufficient collaboration and communication between stakeholders is frequently blamed as one of the major obstacles to tourism development (Murphy, Pearce, Benckendorff, & Moscardo, 2008). The challenges of maintaining trust and long-term relationships, equal engagement and participation, and conflict resolution need to be addressed in order to increase the likelihood of collaborative success (Franco, 2008).

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A growing body of research on destination competitiveness, including empirical studies, has focused on a range of attributes: price competitiveness (Dwyer, Forsyth, & Rao, 2002), the environment (Hassan, 2000), destination marketing (Buhalis, 2000), quality (Go & Govers, 2000) and strategic management (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Despite the importance of collaboration in achieving and enhancing STC, research in this area is relatively scarce (Bornhorst et al., 2010). Few studies focus on competitiveness and collaboration (for example, Baggio, 2011a), and only a limited number of studies on collaboration's role in competitiveness are supported by empirical research (Erkus-Ozturk & Eraydyn, 2010). Considering the limited research on the topic, especially research using the case study method, in-depth studies are required to explore how collaboration may contribute to STC. The concept of STC has been summarised by Hong (2009) as:

> the ability of a destination to create, integrate and deliver tourism experiences, including value-added goods and services considered to be important by tourists, which sustain resources while maintaining market position relating to other destinations (p. 109).

The need for collaborative structures and the impact of the complexity of tourism are heightened in an urban tourism context. Urban tourism presents opportunities to those focused on urban regeneration and breathing new life into declining city areas (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2014, p. S189). Tourism also presents important challenges that can be magnified in urban centres such as balancing the interests of visitors and local residents (Paskaleva-Shapira, 2007). To address the varied challenges facing STC in urban areas, the involvement of tourism stakeholders, politicians, city planners and administrators is of paramount importance. Steering strategies towards managing the risks and challenges that the global tourism industry presents is essential to ensure the development of a competitive tourism industry for the long term. Developing effective long-term tourism strategies requires a deeper understanding and knowledge about how tourism stakeholders and municipal governments can work together.

In addition to the academic contribution that this study will make, findings from this research will be of particular benefit to amalgamated city regions, where there is a greater need for collaboration. Auckland, NZ, presents a unique and relevant example for this research. A recent political restructuring has brought several previously independent municipalities, some of which include rural areas, under the umbrella of the Auckland 'Supercity'. Using Auckland as a case study, this research extends previous works on destination competitiveness by determining the role of collaboration

in STC. The research identifies the factors that facilitate or hinder the process of collaboration and those that obstruct or assist the achievement of competitiveness. Current literature proffers a number of factors that support or impede collaboration (Charleen, Kumbirai, & Forbes, 2014; Ladkin, Aas, & Fletcher, 2005). Yet, few studies have compared the factors that facilitate or hinder collaboration with the elements that contribute to tourism competitiveness. By establishing these factors, the research determines the areas and the ways that collaboration and competitiveness overlap. The study contributes to theoretical enhancement of current knowledge by enriching and refining existing models of STC, and extending and building upon the work of Heath (2003), who argued that STC cannot be achieved without cooperation and coordination of efforts and continuous communication channels between stakeholders.

Heath's (2003, p. 132) framework for destination competitiveness uses the analogy of the structure of a house where the "foundations" consist of the basic elements upon which a destination's tourism industry is built. The "cement" that holds the structure of the house together is clear, continuous communication, striking a balance among different stakeholders' interests, managing information and research (IR) for decision-making, and managing competitive indicators and benchmarking. The "building blocks" are comprised of "sustainable development policy and framework" and a "holistic destination marketing framework and strategy" focused on effective implementation. The "roof" of the house is "a shared vision and leadership, guiding values and principles", prioritising the "people factor" and "political will, entrepreneurship, community focus and human resource development". The message conveyed by Heath's framework is that stakeholders are the owners and builders of STC, who follow a "scripted role" towards a common objective through communication and collaboration (Azzopardi, 2011, p. 38).

1.2 Research Questions

The overall aim of this research is to explore and understand the role of stakeholder collaboration in STC in Auckland. The key objectives of this research are a) to identify the linkages, if any, between stakeholder collaboration and STC; b) to discover what specific obstacles stakeholders face in working collaboratively; c) to establish the potential factors that could eliminate such obstacles and facilitate collaboration; and d) to find out the changes that may have occurred to the ways that tourism stakeholders engage collaboratively as a consequence of the formation of the Supercity.

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The answers to the following four research questions (RQ) provide insight into the nature and significance of stakeholder collaboration within the Auckland tourism industry and help to achieve the overarching aim:

> *RQ1: What are the perspectives of stakeholders regarding collaboration in the tourism industry?*
>
> *RQ2: Is there a link between the factors that assist the process of collaboration and those that support STC?*
>
> *RQ3: What are the factors that hinder collaborative processes and activities in tourism industry stakeholder collaboration?*
>
> *RQ4: What are the factors that facilitate collaborative processes and activities in tourism industry stakeholder collaboration?*
>
> *RQ5: What are the changes, if any, that occurred to collaborative practices in the tourism industry due to Auckland's political amalgamation?*

This research looks at STC from a relatively unexplored angle. Exploring stakeholders' perspectives provides an understanding about where collaboration stands in terms of its importance to the tourism industry. This information is central to discovering how significant collaboration is to tourism success, or in other words, to STC.

Understanding how easy or difficult it is to engage in collaborative activities in the tourism industry is key to learning the reasons behind the existing level of collaborative activity. Once the obstacles that stand in the way of working collaboratively are identified, the ways to overcome these challenges can be determined. Identifying the different factors that facilitate collaborative practices is of great value in providing suggestions on how to progress with collaborative engagements.

In the case of Auckland, the research questions also reveal the ease or difficulty of engaging in collaboration prior to and after a political merger. It is important to learn what inhibits or enables collaborative activities in a tourism destination. Since the city has undergone a recent amalgamation, stakeholders' perspectives reveal the impacts, if any, that the political structural change has had on collaborative processes.

Overall, the research presented in this thesis aims not only to enrich and extend current understanding on the status of stakeholder collaboration in STC, but also to look at the factors that affect the relationship between collaboration and STC.

1.3   Research Context

Auckland underwent political restructuring in 2010 and embarked upon a new development strategy to build an internationally competitive and prosperous economy. The Auckland Plan outlines the city's goals: it aspires for Auckland to be the world's most liveable city by 2021, in part, by utilising the opportunities that Auckland's visitor economy presents. To support the aim, a council-controlled organisation (CCO), Auckland Tourism, Events and Economic Development (ATEED), was established. ATEED developed a 10-year investment and action plan, the Auckland Visitor Plan (AVP), to assist Auckland to achieve the economic aspirations put forth in the Auckland Plan (ATEED, 2011a). The AVP aspires for Auckland to increase the visitor economy from $3.33 billion in 2010 to $6 billion in 2021 – a growth of 80% or 5.5% per annum. Further, the AVP envisions Auckland as a city that is "recognised nationally and internationally as an Urban Oasis, where big city sophistication goes hand-in-hand with an outstanding natural playground" (ATEED, 2011a, p. 4). Clearly, these strategies call for greater collaboration among all stakeholders under the umbrella of the Auckland Supercity in the competitive global market:

> As more and more countries enter the race for the global tourism dollar, we will succeed only if we improve the competitiveness of New Zealand tourism (Tourism Industry Association New Zealand [TIANZ], 2014, p. 3).

A number of obstacles stand in the way of the region achieving its goals. Loss of NZ's market share to other destinations in the past several years, constraints faced in the development of the domestic market due to low population growth rate, and the prospect of increased outbound travel are highlighted in the AVP as hurdles faced by the Auckland tourism industry (ATEED, 2011b). To overcome these challenges and achieve Auckland's 2021 aspiration, the significance of collaboration was recognised by ATEED (2011a):

> Through the Auckland Plan and the Auckland Council's 2012/22 Long Term Plan we will further develop our priorities to deliver on the agreed vision and seek to work in collaboration with all the other stakeholders (p. iv).

Bringing into focus the importance of collaboration for achieving the strategic goals, understanding the challenges involved in collaborating under the new political structure and reflecting on past collaborative experiences will be valuable for Auckland. This research explores the collaborative practices among stakeholders of the Auckland tourism industry before and after the political amalgamation of the region. It is

important to understand how past collaborative actions influence the current scenario in order to assist in future strategy development:

> New Zealand can learn that collaboration in business across companies within the same industry, across companies in related industries, and between companies, university sector and government can be an important source of competitive advantage (Enright, 2011).

The case of Auckland helps understand how new structures can influence levels of collaboration. It is relevant to other urban areas undergoing similar reforms and will enable application to future research on other cities.

1.4   Research Methods

The qualitative case study that forms the basis for this thesis was guided by the constructivist research paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). The constructivist paradigm requires qualitative research methods (rather than positivist–quantitative methods) to seek answers to the research questions (Bryman, 2012) about a socially constructed phenomenon. Considering the lack of existing research in NZ and elsewhere that explores stakeholder collaboration as a key component of STC, and the limited number of tourism competitiveness studies that adopt a case study approach, this method was deemed to be both useful and appropriate. A case study enabled a deeper understanding of the environment of Auckland's tourism industry, and highlighted the role that competitiveness and stakeholder collaboration play in an amalgamated city context. A case study is useful to purposely discover a context and verify its connection to a specific research objective (Veal, 2006). Use of a case study enabled discovery of the existing practices and past experiences of Auckland's tourism industry stakeholders with regard to collaboration, and to understand their perspectives on how these activities can contribute to STC.

Generalisability is criticised as a shortcoming of case studies (Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008). However, generalisability is one of several ways of acquiring knowledge. When the intent is to obtain the highest level of generalisability possible about a particular phenomenon, a quantitative representative sample may not be the best strategy. By contrast, a case study provides the richest information possible (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 227).

A sample of 41 stakeholders in the Auckland tourism industry was identified by purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) of key stakeholders from the public sector, private

sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are associated with the Auckland tourism industry. Public sector participants included members of tourism agencies, promotional bodies, the Auckland Council and different organisations under the council. Private sector participants included tourism operators from the hotel sector, industry associations, transport providers, travel agencies, cultural associations, NGOs and key attraction providers. This purposeful sampling was designed to gain a balance of opinions about collaboration from across different sectors and industries.

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with this sample of stakeholders in the Auckland tourism industry. The in-depth interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide with open-ended questions to explore stakeholder perceptions about collaboration, to identify key factors that influence collaborative decisions and actions, and to evaluate the impact of past experiences on collaboration in the new, changed context of an amalgamated city. Heath's (2003) framework was used as a guide to analyse the data and to understand the role of stakeholder collaboration in the various aspects of destination competitiveness.

1.5 Structure of Thesis

The next chapter (Chapter 2) presents a review of the literature related to STC and stakeholder collaboration. The chapter commences with an introduction to the origins of the concept of competition and competitiveness in tourism and the various approaches to defining it. This then leads to an examination of the different theoretical frameworks that explore the attributes of STC. A discussion about stakeholder collaboration and the relationship between tourism competitiveness and collaboration is presented. The chapter concludes with a contextual review of collaboration in urban areas.

Chapter 3 is devoted to methodological issues. After the research paradigm is outlined, the design of the research, sampling procedures and data collection methods are discussed. The data analysis techniques, including the ethical considerations for the research, and associated methodological limitations are described.

Chapter 4 presents the case of Auckland. It starts with an overview of NZ, which is followed by a detailed account of the city. An historical outline of Auckland's governance structure depicts significant events, from the first attempts at legislation during the 1840s through to the political restructuring in 2010. The governing structure of Auckland Council and the various strategies and plans that guide the city towards its

vision are described. A review of Auckland's economy precedes a detailed appraisal of the city's tourism industry and the role that it plays in the economy.

The next two chapters build on the review of the literature and method to present the findings from this research. Chapter 5 – the first part of the research findings – provides an analysis of the interview data to identify various factors that contribute to Auckland's current and potential competitiveness. This section brings into focus the existing competitiveness factors as well as features that can build and enhance potential competitiveness. Chapter 6 – the second part of the findings – focuses on stakeholder collaboration. The perspectives of stakeholders on collaboration within the tourism industry are discussed and the perceived significance of collaboration to tourism is described. This is followed by a discussion of the features that cross over between STC and collaboration.

Chapter 7 is devoted to the impacts on collaboration within the tourism industry that stem from the creation of the Supercity. The changes brought by the Supercity that contributed to facilitating collaboration as well as those factors that triggered obstacles to collaborative engagements due to the amalgamation process are discussed.

Chapter 8 concludes the thesis. It brings together the key theoretical issues raised in the literature review chapter, and places these in the context of the critical findings presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. This chapter also presents a proposed new model of STC, which brings together components pertaining to tourism competitiveness and stakeholder collaboration. The different facets of the model are described in detail, elaborating on the points of convergence between the two key concepts of this research – STC and collaboration. Links between the concepts and the existing literature are also discussed. The concluding chapter also outlines the contributions that this research has made to STC theory and literature and practical implications of the research findings. The chapter finishes with an outline of the potential limitations that are associated with the research and a discussion of avenues for future research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review covers conceptual and contextual perspectives on tourism competitiveness and stakeholder collaboration. The review is constructed on the basis of enhancing an understanding of the research question by demonstrating that it is grounded in past competitiveness research. Thus, the literature is reviewed for theoretical and practical insights that are relevant to STC, and covers related concepts, definitions, attributes and models. Different perspectives on competitiveness are discussed in relation to sustaining tourism competitiveness, including the concepts of competitive and comparative advantage. The connection between collaboration and competitiveness is reviewed to illustrate linkages between collaboration and STC. A discussion focusing on amalgamated city regions similar to Auckland's political structure makes it possible to track and compare the impacts and experiences of similar cases. This perspective also brings into view the big picture regarding stakeholder collaboration arising from amalgamation of regions.

2.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives of Competitiveness

The innumerable benefits that tourism brings to destinations have prompted governments to heavily invest in their visitor industries to gain a larger share of the market (Blanke & Chiesa, 2013). This has created intensified competitiveness among destinations, particularly for those in which tourism is the main economic earner (Assaker, Hallak, Vinzi, & O'Connor, 2013). With competiveness posing a new challenge for the tourism industry (Ferreira & Estevao, 2009), the past two decades have witnessed a growing interest in the concept (Pestana, Laurent, Solonandrasana, & Assaf, 2011). One of the reasons that tourism success is influenced by competitiveness is that the more a destination attains competitive advantages, the more it appears superior in the minds of potential visitors (Fernando & Long, 2012). Thus, tourism industry scholars and policy makers are shifting their focus from merely attracting more visitors to enhancing the competitiveness of destinations and regions (Alberti & Giusti, 2012).

The requisite resources and investments for consistent competitiveness are seen to support increased well-being and living standards of residents (Balkyte & Tvaronavičiene, 2010). Hence, assessing national competitiveness and devising policies to enhance it have become institutionalised tasks in many countries (Park, 2012).

National tourism marketing agencies and regional bureaus have been established to develop marketing strategies (Morrison, 2013). Economic development authorities and chambers of commerce join destination management organisations (DMOs) in the drive to develop and promote tourism. Various private organisations and consultancies have also emerged that evaluate and lobby for the cause of competitiveness. Examples include the World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland; the Competitiveness Institute, Barcelona, Spain; and the Council on Competitiveness, Washington, United States (Martin, Kitson, & Tyler, 2006).

Tourism destinations seek to achieve and enhance competitiveness through various strategies. The indirect approach of making a city more attractive and liveable is one among numerous methods by which urban destinations compete (Gilley, 2006). Investments are amplified in developing infrastructure and services such as airports, convention centres, stadiums, health care, telecommunications and education with the intention of boosting tourism (Tourism & Transport Forum, 2008). Other destinations attempt to remain at the top of the game in gaining a larger share of the market by hosting international sports events, conferences and world expos (Kruger & Heath, 2013; Preuss & Alfs, 2011). Past events and experiences have proven that not all such investments lead to positive outcomes, as was evident, for example, in the case of Montreal's Mirabel Airport that opened in 1975 (Feldman & Milch, 1983) and the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games (Mangan, 2008). As the largest airport at the time, Mirabel Airport was intended to replace Dorval Airport as the eastern gateway to Canada. Mirabel failed to achieve its goal due to its distant location and a lack of transportation links. The decline of Montreal as a tourist hub resulted in Dorval resuming the handling of overseas flights, with Mirabel being relegated to a charter and cargo airport (Berlin, 2012). Post Sydney 2000, despite the "sell-out success of the 2000 Games", anxiety over under-utilisation of the $200 million Sydney Olympic Park led some to declare the facility "a white elephant of mammoth proportions" that risked causing considerable costs for taxpayers (Mangan, 2008, p. 1871). Therefore, understanding and assessing tourism competitiveness is necessary so that the knowledge can be used to approach the development and management of destination competitiveness in a more sustainable manner.

'Competitiveness' and 'competition' are intricately connected (Gabor, Contiu, & Oltean, 2012); it is essential that the difference between the two concepts is understood (Kitson, Martin, & Tyler, 2004). The word 'competition' entered into economics from

common discourse, and for a long period of time implied "only the independent rivalry of two or more people" (Stigler, 1957, p. 1). The notion of competition in economic theory dates back to 1776 when Adam Smith (1999) referred to competition to explain how the price of a commodity increases with reduced supply and creates competition among buyers; when supply is excessive, competition is generated among sellers to dispose of excess stock. Devised by David Riccardo, the theory of comparative advantage emerged in 1817, and argues that a country can gain advantage over others by producing goods based on its advantages in factors of production (labour, capital and natural resources) (Schumacher, 2013). Goods produced accordingly have a lesser cost of production and this will lead to specialisation and opportunities for trade with other countries. Countries are able to gain comparative advantage by making use of the factors that they possess in abundance. The major drawback of this theory is that it is based on fixed inherited factor endowments and assumes diminishing returns to scale and equivalent technologies across countries (Ricardo, 2004).

A philosophy that challenged the theory of comparative advantage was presented by Porter in 1980. Based on the analysis of a firm's external environment and future projections, Porter (1980) presented a framework of analytical techniques that assist a firm to formulate competitive strategies. According to the theory of competitive advantage, a firm possesses competitiveness when it uses attributes to outperform competitors and achieve profits that exceed the industry average (Porter, 1980). Two basic types of competitive advantage were identified: cost advantage and differentiation advantage. A firm possesses cost advantage when it is able to deliver the same benefits as those of competitors at a lower cost. Differentiation advantage is achieved when it delivers benefits that exceed those of competing products. Based on this theory, Porter went on to illustrate how competitiveness can be achieved at a national level by identifying the sources of sustained wealth. Four areas that shape the environment in which local firms compete and promote or impede the creation of competitive advantage were identified. The strategies illustrated by a model widely known as 'Porter's diamond' (see Figure 2.1) aim at understanding competition between firms, and are claimed to be effectively applicable at the regional, national and city levels as well (Ketels, 2013).

Figure 2.1 Porter's diamond
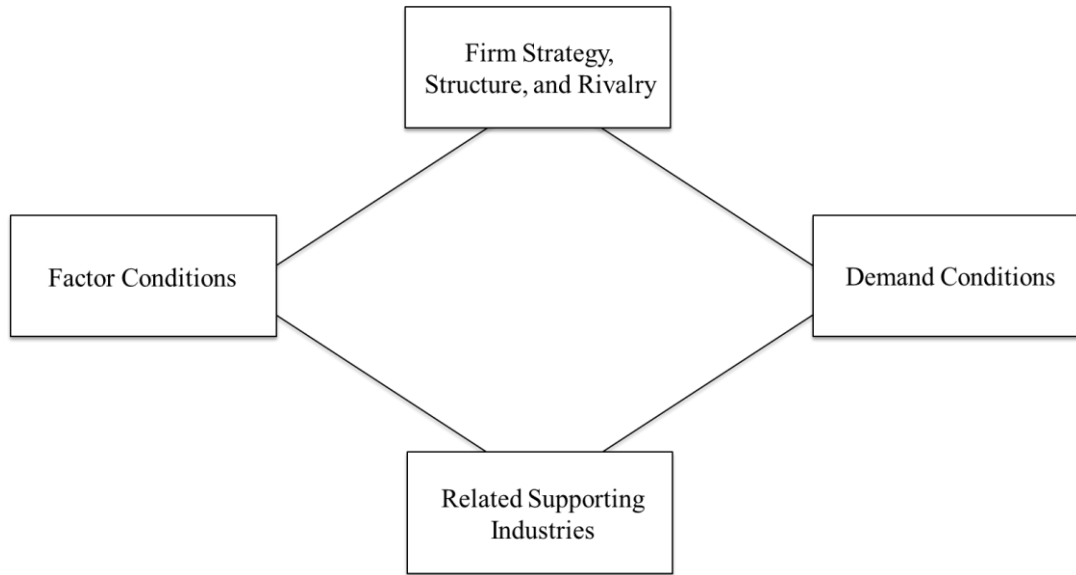
(Adapted from Porter, 1990)

Firm, strategy, structure and rivalry are the state of the nation that defines creation, management and organisation of companies. The extent of domestic competition drives companies to achieve increased productivity and innovation. Factor conditions are the factors of production that enable a nation to compete in a given industry. These are specialised factors of production that are created and not endowed to a nation such as skilled labour, infrastructure and capital, which cannot be easily duplicated by competitors. Hence, they provide competitive advantage. Demand condition portray the nature of demand for products and services of an industry in the home market. Increased demand from customers impels firms to persistently improve products through innovative products and improved quality. Related and supporting industries represent the presence or absence of international competition, suppliers and related industries. The spatial propinquity of related industries provides the opportunity for exchange of ideas, information and innovation.

Competition can occur in various areas. The five forces framework by Porter (1990) is widely used to understand the different sources of competition (see Figure 2.2), for good-quality, low-cost suppliers and for higher-end buyers. Competitive rivalry in the five forces model examines the intensity of competition in the market, determined by the number of competitors and the intensity of competition. Bargaining power of suppliers analyses the number of suppliers and the extent of power and control a business' suppliers have to increase their prices. Bargaining power of customers looks

at the consumers' power to influence pricing and quality. The fewer the consumers, the more power they have. The threat of newcomers in an industry examines the ease with which competitors can join a market. The threat of substitute products or services by competitors is also fields where competition can arise depending on how easy it is for consumers to switch from one business' products/services to another's.

Figure 2.2: Porter's Five Forces Model
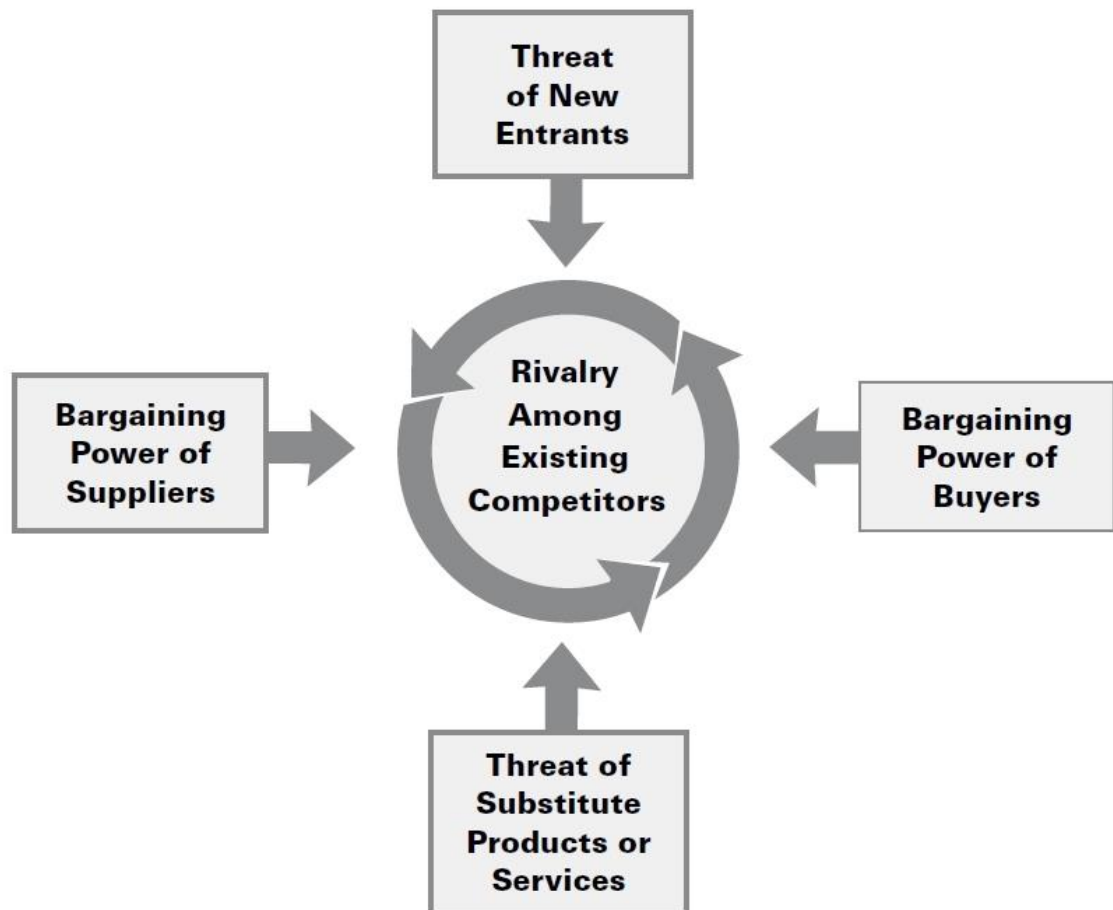
(Porter, 2008, p. 26)

The focus on competitiveness has not been limited to the macro-economic level. Competitive performance has become a key focus at regional, urban and local levels due to the growing interest from public authorities in identifying key factors of regional and urban competitiveness to guide policy making (Martin, Paget, & Walisser, 2012). In fact, the increased attention on competition is believed to have resulted from the intense place competition created by globalisation (Hall, 2007). Place competition is the:

> ability of an (urban) economy to attract and maintain firms with stable or rising market shares in an activity while maintaining or increasing standards of living for those who participate in it (Storper, 1997, p. 20).

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The concept of place competitiveness is an area of debate among researchers and industry experts. Some argue that competitiveness is most appropriately applicable to firms and products, and that the concept should not be applied to national economies (Huggins & Thompson, 2013). When applied to national economies, competitiveness is argued to be "meaningless" (Krugman, 1994, p. 44). The reason is that, unlike uncompetitive firms, national economies "do not go out of business" no matter how they perform economically because national economies do not have a "bottom line" (Krugman, 1994, p. 31). Therefore, Krugman cautioned that a country's trade balance cannot be assumed as its bottom line, because a trade surplus could indicate a sign of national weakness, while a deficit may be a sign of strength.

Debates on national competitiveness have revolved mainly around market share, costs and productivity (Delgardo, Ketels, Porter, & Stern, 2012). The interest in national competitiveness arises from the aim of countries to increase the living standards of residents. Competitiveness is determined by the productivity of a country in utilising the available resources: "Productivity is the prime determinant in the long run of a nation's standard of living, for it is the root cause of the national per capita income" and the only "meaningful concept of competitiveness" (Porter, 1990, p. 6). This argument is supported by the definition of competitiveness of the World Economic Forum, that competitiveness is "the set of institutions, policies, and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country" (Sala-I-Martin, Blanke, Hanouz, Geiger, & Mia, 2009, p. 4). This focus on productivity presents a problem for service sectors, including tourism, because measuring service productivity has always been a challenging task (Crouch & Ritchie, 2012).

Even though there is no single concept that is universally accepted with regard to the phenomenon of competitiveness, there are two points that converge in studies related to competitiveness in tourism: comparative advantage and competitive advantage. Most tourism researchers agree that tourism competitiveness is based upon destinations' endowed resources (comparative advantages) and their capacity to deploy them (competitive advantage) (Crouch & Ritchie, 2006; Dwyer, Forsyth, & Dwyer, 2011; Heath, 2003).

2.2   Comparative Advantage

The theory of comparative advantage concerns differences in the endowments of factors of production. Traditionally, factors of production were assumed to be natural

endowments. More conventional views regard created resources also as factors of production. This view is compatible when applied to tourism because factors such as built attractions and monuments are key resources in tourism, thus making them important factors of production. Factors of production can be categorised into five groups (Porter, 1990), human resources, physical resources, knowledge resources, capital resources and infrastructure:

a) *Human resources* – The tourism industry is labour intensive and relies greatly on customer service. Availability, skills, knowledge and work ethics in the labour force are crucial for tourism success.

b) *Physical resources* – Unique physical features of a destination are the primary pull factors that attract tourists. Their diversity, abundance and accessibility are central to creating tourism. Factors such as climate, size and location of a destination are important physical resources that affect tourists' motivation to travel.

c) *Knowledge resources* – The significance of knowledge for the tourism industry is visible from the demand for personnel in fields such as management, planning, marketing and engineering. Countries that are lacking in the required knowledge resources have to import skilled labour to fill the roles, which is often the case in developing countries.

d) *Capital resources* – Large amounts of capital investments are required for infrastructure and operations of services. The availability and volume of wealth are important to create a positive environment for willing investors.

e) *Infrastructure* – Infrastructure supports economic activity together with inherited assets by providing a foundation for the necessary processes and facilities.

From a tourism perspective, it makes sense to add historical and cultural resources to the above list, and also expand the category of infrastructure to include tourism superstructure (Crouch & Ritchie, 2012). Additionally, since the size of the economy and fluctuations in the quantity and quality of natural resources affect destination competitiveness, these factors need to be considered as well (Crouch & Ritchie, 2012):

Tourism superstructure – Based upon the infrastructure, superstructures such as hotels, resorts and theme parks provide additional created assets that serve tourists' needs and interests.

Historical and cultural resources – These resources may be either tangible or intangible. Examples of tangible assets are museums, ruins and battlefields, whereas customs, traditions, languages and lifestyles are intangible assets. A nation's ability and enthusiasm to preserve and protect these assets determines their value as attractions.

Size of economy – The size of the economy affects a destination's competitiveness because of the numerous advantages that a larger economy brings. It creates more domestic tourism, and facilitates supplies from local sources. Greater economies of scale for those resources can be achieved from a larger economy. The bigger the economy is, the greater the local competition is, leading to increased quality and variety in products and services.

Resource augmentation and depletion – Since the wealth of renewable or non-renewable naturally occurring resources changes over the course of time, this fluctuation will affect a country's comparative advantage. Sources such as hunting and fishing stock if the stock is well above sustainable levels are renewable, whereas inherited resources such as archaeological artefacts may not be renewable. In addition, destinations may face vulnerabilities in the future from adverse economic, social and environmental occurrences. The degree to which a destination is susceptible to such threats will affect their competitiveness (Blanke, Crotti, Drzeniek, Fidenza, & Gieger, 2011).

Simply selling the natural resources does not lead to sustainable competitiveness. As described in the World Trade Report 2010, extraction and consumption of natural resources causes their depletion or irreversibly alters their use for future generations (World Trade Organization, 2010). Although tourists do not take away physical products from a tourism experience, it can be argued that the externalities that result from tourism can cause decline in the quality of the resources (Joseph, 2011). This means that only creating and selling value-added products from the natural resources will lead to sustainable competitiveness (Gallegati, 2012). This makes the sensible protection of natural resources all the more important for tourism competitiveness.

2.3 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage lies in the efficiency and effectiveness of a destination in deploying its available resources (Barros, Peypoch, Robinot, & Solonandrasana, 2011; Stefano, Gabriele, & Zucchella, 2010). This means that, even if a nation has a wealth of endowed resources, if it is unable to mobilise them to make them accessible and present them to the market, competitive advantages cannot be achieved. Competitiveness is shaped by the productivity of endowed resources, and their capability to create added value (Barros et al., 2011). There are several modes of deployment of available resources. Through clever and innovative methods of resource utilisation, destinations with limited assets are able to achieve competitive advantage and offset their limitations (Pestana et al., 2011; Porter, 1990). Often, the central and local governments regulate, monitor and maintain resource deployment (Vanhove, 2012). Various sectoral associations and local organisations are also actively engaged in advocating for the interests of their members and act as platforms to voice the concerns of their membership in approaches to resource deployment (ibid).

The importance of collaboration in resource utilisation is evident elsewhere in the literature. A destination is an agglomeration of organisations and institutions. Therefore, joint efforts by varied actors at each of the steps described above will become inevitable and necessary. Moreover, the efficiency of firms has been found to increase when they cooperate with other businesses and clients (Daskalopoulou & Petrou, 2009, p. 794).

Five key steps to resource deployment were identified by Ritchie and Crouch (2003) (see Figure 2.3). The first step is to conduct an audit and inventory of resources to catalogue and understand their capacity and limitations as well as the consequences of their use. Secondly, maintenance of resources is necessary to protect them from deterioration and to enforce their sustainability. Growth and development of the resources are important to maintain their stock; hence, actions that enable enhancement of resources are required as a third step. The fourth and fifth steps involve efficiency and effectiveness in deploying and utilising resources in ways that lead to competitive advantage. In order to achieve and maintain efficiency and effectiveness, a degree of synergy is critical between these various processes: "Tourism resources are likely to be used more effectively when the different modes of deployment share a common view regarding a destination's strategy for tourism development" (Crouch & Ritchie, 2012, p. 73). This can happen only with "effective and inclusive communication between all stakeholders" (Crouch & Ritchie, 2012, p. 73).

Figure 2.3: Deployment of Tourism Resources
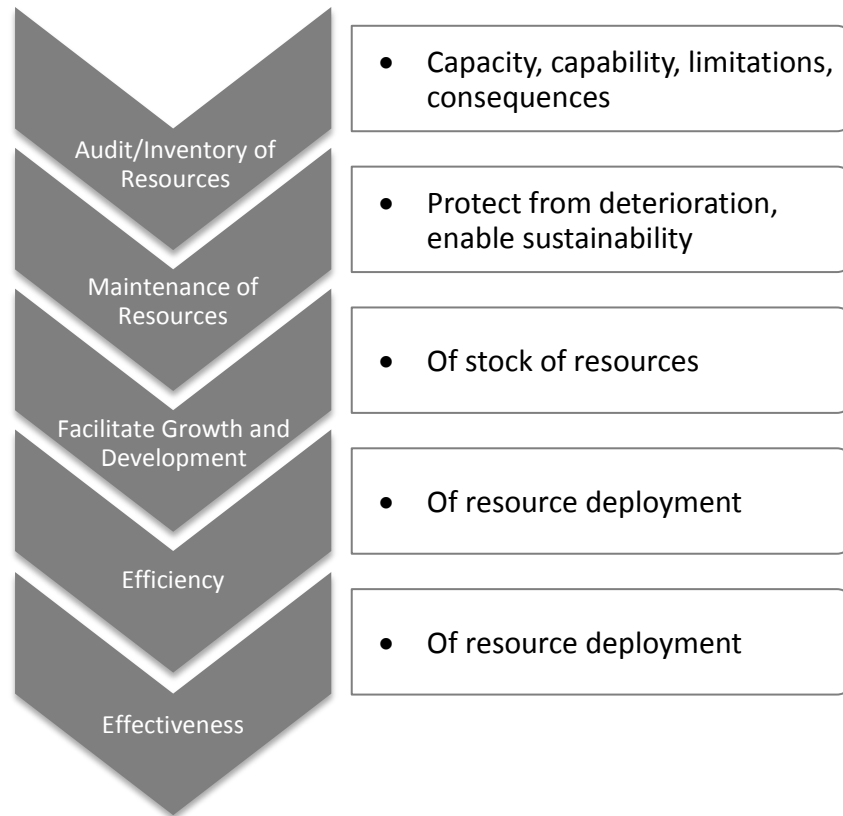
(Adapted from Ritchie & Crouch, 2003)

2.4   Tourism Competitiveness – Aspects and Definitions

Competition is a concept that is studied from diverse angles, including sociocultural, historical, strategy, management and price perspectives (Man, Lau, & Chan, 2002). Even though researchers agree that competitiveness in the service sector is as important as that of traded goods in achieving national competitive advantage (Crouch & Ritchie, 2012), when it comes to defining tourism competitiveness, mainstream literature struggles to provide a common definition (Kitson et al., 2004). Often, the complexity and multidimensional nature of tourism are blamed for the challenge (Balkyte & Tvaronavičiene, 2010). Others believe that arriving at a definition that is comprehensive and generally agreed upon is daunting because incorporating the characteristics specific to all the countries and firms is "almost impossible" (Kozak, Baloglu, & Bahar, 2009, p. 58). Tourism destinations compete by promoting the total experience on offer rather than a single product (Hong, 2009). "The tourism product is a conglomerate, an amalgam, a constellation of tangible and intangible elements" (Camison and & Fores, 2015, p. 480). Hence, a range of quantitative and qualitative variables has been used to define and assess tourism competitiveness (Croes & Kubickova, 2013).

Some authors suggest specific attributes as indicators of competitiveness, such as price, openness, technology, infrastructure, social development, environment and human resources (Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005). Others have taken a multidimensional approach and conclude that the broader a destination's range of tourism attractions, services and experiences, the more superior will be its competitiveness (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009). Three main perspectives associated with competitiveness were identified by Dwyer and Kim (2003, p. 377):

a) comparative advantage: focused on price and economic attributes;

b) strategy and management: highlighting organisation-specific attributes; and

c) historical and sociocultural: emphasising diverse political, social and cultural features that underpin the concept of competitiveness.

The features of tourist destinations according to Kozak and Rimmington (1999) can be divided into two categories – primary and secondary – and these together contribute to their overall attractiveness. These authors refer to aspects such as climate, environment, culture and tradition as primary features, whereas secondary features are facilities and services developed specifically for the tourism industry, for example, hotels, food service, transport and entertainment.

In a study that compared the competitiveness of Turkey with other Mediterranean destinations, Kozak and Rimmington (1999, pp. 273–283) proposed that by observing data such as tourist arrivals and tourism yield, quantifiable attributes or what Dwyer and Kim (2003, p. 374) termed objectively measured variables, a destination's competitiveness can be measured. Kozak and Rimmington (1999) believe that since it is the qualitative aspects such as friendliness of locals, richness of history and culture, value for money and safety and security that drive the quantitative performance, these factors need to be taken into account when assessing destination competitiveness. Dwyer and Kim (2003) referred to these qualitative aspects as subjectively measured variables.

Kozak and Rimmington (1999) concluded that the competitiveness set of each destination will vary depending on the type and structure of the tourism industry in comparison with alternative tourism products that are available in the global market. According to Dwyer, Mellor, Livaic, Edwards and Kim (2004) the level of the destination's competitiveness is reflected by the guarantee that it is superior to most of

the substitute destinations in the market in attractiveness of product as well as experience. In view of the numerous attributes that contribute to tourism competitiveness and taking into account that they differ depending on the country and the destination, Kozak and Baloglu (2011) defined competitiveness as the ability to sustain or enhance competitive advantages and market position in a way that is sustainable, which may differ by attributes of competitiveness, product mix and target markets.

Ecology and environment also present key components of destination competitiveness (Craigwell, 2007). According to Mihalic (2000), poor environmental quality can be a deterrent to potential tourists. By using the Calgary tourism competitiveness model by Ritchie and Crouch (1993), Mihalic (2000) identified that destination competitiveness can be enhanced by appropriate and effective destination management programmes. Asserting that concern for ecological degradation will affect tourism demand, Hassan (2000) defined competitiveness as a "destination's ability to create and integrate value-added products that sustain its resources while maintaining market position relative to competitors" (p. 240).

Hassan (2000) posits that STC can be achieved by converting the available comparative advantages such as climate, accessibility, location and natural resources into competitive strengths by adding value according to market demand. The strategic competitiveness framework presented by Hassan (2000) gives particular focus to developing environmentally sustainable tourism, and emphasises the importance of collaboration and partnership for achieving and enhancing STC. Market share is viewed as a significant attribute of competitiveness. Mangion, Durbarry and Sinclair (2005) affirm that competitiveness is the ability to develop and incorporate value-added products that sustain the resources of a destination while keeping ahead of competitors in market share. Competitiveness has been defined as the ability of a destination to "maintain its market position and share and/or to improve upon them through time" (d'Hauteserre, 2000, p. 23). Therefore, current and potential tourist arrivals are believed to be indicators of overall tourism competitiveness (Dwyer et al., 2004).

A body of research confirms that productivity is a central element of competitiveness (Blanke et al., 2011). The Global Competitiveness Index considers several drivers of productivity over the short and long term; their definition of sustainable competitiveness takes into account a country's ability to ensure that it meets the needs

of future generations (Corrigan, Crotti, Hanouz, & Serin, 2014). This supports the argument that in order to sustain national competitiveness, the focus should not be limited to enhancing short- and medium-term productivity. Instead, ways of improving long-term productivity are crucial (Blanke et al., 2011). Most of the competitiveness attributes identified in the literature are seen to drive the tourism performance of destinations (Assaf & Josiassen, 2011). Based on in-depth interviews with tourism industry experts, and data on 120 countries, Assaf and Josiassen determined six drivers of destination competitiveness: infrastructure, the economic conditions of the destination, levels of safety, security and health, price competitiveness, government policies, environmental sustainability, labour skills and training, and natural and cultural resources.

In addition to the attributes that are specific to a destination or the tourism industry, a correct understanding of destination competitiveness must take into account the factors that influence the competitiveness of organisations and firms that are involved in producing the total tourism product (Enright & Newton, 2005, p. 778). While the authors agree that competitiveness is the ability of a destination to "attract and satisfy potential tourists", they also believe that "competitiveness is determined both by tourism-specific factors and by a much wider range of factors that influence the tourism service providers" (p. 778). Enright and Newton argue that a better understanding of destination competitiveness can be gained when generic business-related factors applicable to any industry are combined with attributes of tourism competitiveness. They believe that industry practitioners view business-related factors as more important than some tourism elements.

Tourists are attracted to a destination not only by its endowed resources but supporting resources play an equally important role (Heath, 2003). Destination competitiveness is achieved through the fusion of individual, tangible and intangible products and experiences that create the total experience (Prideaux, Berbigier, & Thompson, 2014). Some researchers note that the efficiency and capability with which a destination deploys tourism resources delivers competitive advantage (Barros et al., 2011). Others emphasise the significance of communication and information management as vital components in achieving and sustaining competitiveness (Heath, 2003).

The economic aspects of tourism are often proposed as the core of destination competitiveness and are seen as necessary for competitive analyses to be considered

valid (Li, Song, Cao, & Wu, 2012). Hence, competitiveness is frequently seen as a means to enhance the wealth of the population and the living standard of a country (Buhalis, 2000; Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). With the aim of assessing tourism competitiveness from the perspectives of governments, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) put forward a definition agreed by the organisation's member and partner countries. Their definition is based around assessing competitiveness indicators in four categories: tourism performance and impacts, ability to deliver quality and competitive services, attractiveness of the destination, and policy responses and economic opportunities:

> Tourism competitiveness for a destination is about the ability of the place to optimize its attractiveness for residents and non-residents, to deliver quality, innovative, and attractive (e.g. providing good value for money) tourism services to consumers and to gain market shares on the domestic and global market places, while ensuring that the available resources supporting tourism are used efficiently and in a sustainable way (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013, p. 7).

Competitiveness depends on the ability to resist competition from others (Tızsér, 2010). To withstand competition, assurance of superiority is important; to determine/show that the quality of products and services is superior, they will need to be compared with those of competitors targeting similar market segments (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009). Superior quality alone does not achieve competitiveness unless it is accompanied by customer satisfaction (Caber, Albayrak, & Matzler, 2012). Some researchers believe that to achieve competeveness, a destination needs to outperform competitors on those dimensions of the tourism experience that are considered important by the visitors (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Tourists' perception of a destination is an important factor when assessing competitiveness (Fridrik & Thorhallur, 2012). Using quantitative methods to evaluate 10 determinant attributes put forth by Crouch (2011) as having the strongest effect on destination competitiveness, Fridrik and Thorhallur (2012) discovered that the perceptions of tourists and experts differ considerably on what determines destination competitiveness. Thus, competitiveness can be defined as "the ability of a destination to deliver goods and services that perform better than other destinations on those aspects of the tourism experience considered to be important by tourists" (Dwyer & Kim, 2003, p. 374).

Based on the analysis of visitors' perception of destination image and the major competitiveness components of Andalusia, Andrades-Caldito, Sánchez-Rivero and Pulido-Fernández (2012) concluded that a destination's image is directly related to its

competitiveness. Destination image comprises tourists' beliefs, ideas and impressions of a destination's attributes, such as the availability of facilities and activities (Andrades-Caldito et al., 2012, p. 4). These aspects play a key role in shaping the perception of tourist experiences. One of the most important outcomes of tourist consumption is considered to be the tourist experience (Leung & Baloglu, 2013, p. 373). The tourist experience is taken into account by Ritchie and Crouch (2003) in their definition of competitiveness.

The attributes that contribute to destination competitiveness are seen to differ depending on the stage of tourism development the destination is at during a given time (Wilde & Cox, 2008). Tourist areas evolve and change over time, the process of which Butler (2006, p. 3) termed the "tourist area life cycle" (TALC). This evolution of tourist areas is relative to the changes in the needs of visitors, deterioration or replacement of physical assets, and the changes that occur to natural and heritage resources upon which tourism may originally be based (Butler, 2006, p. 3). Based on the findings of focus groups comprising tourism industry experts, Wilde and Cox (2008) established that the factors that are most important to a destination at a mature stage of the destination life cycle are the maintenance of infrastructure and sustaining the appeal of the destination, the ability of the tourism industry and the public sector to collaborate to sustain tourism, and having a strong community-based vision for the future of the destination's tourism industry (Wilde & Cox, 2008, p. 475).

From these different opinions, it is clear that the attributes and aspects of competitiveness are vast and highly dependent on context. What is clear is that, whichever way competitiveness may be defined, and however many attributes are included, the resources on which a destination relies for its competitiveness need to be sustained (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). According to Ritchie and Crouch (2003), social, cultural, technological and political dimensions are the "four pillars of sustainability", and these should encompass both comparative and competitive advantages (p. 30). According to Ritchie and Crouch (2003), the true competitiveness of a destination depends on its ability to:

> increase tourism expenditure, to increasingly attract visitors while providing them with satisfying, memorable experiences, and to do so in a profitable way, while enhancing the well-being of destination residents and preserving the natural capital of the destination for future generations (p. 3).

For the purpose of this thesis, the above definition of tourism competitiveness will be used. This definition combines dimensions of sustainability with the concept of competitiveness. The definition reflects most of the goals that are pursued by the Auckland tourism industry, which are encompassed by the city's tourism vision and objectives that also echo the concept of sustainability: increase tourism yield and visitor nights, enhance the city's liveability for residents and visitors, and environmental sustainability (ATEED, 2011a).

2.5   Importance of Sustainability in Tourism

The centrality of sustainability to destination competitiveness was described by Ritchie and Crouch (2003) who stated:

> "A destination which, for the short-term profit, permits the rape and pillage of the natural capital on which tourism depends is destined for long-term failure" (p. 33).

Tourism is the interface between global economic, environmental, technological and political atmospheres (Sharpley, 2009). In addition to these factors, the destination's ability to compete also involves cultural and social spheres of destinations. Therefore, competitiveness that focuses on a singular dimension such as economic factors cannot continue to be attractive to an ever-increasing market and its demands (Richie & Crouch, 2003). As the authors suggest, sustainability has to be applied to all the areas including the "core attractors the supporting factors, and the infrastructure" that contribute to destination competitiveness.

Sustainability touches all spheres of human activity and the earth's resources that support an ever-increasing population (Balkaran & Maharaj, 2014). The promotion of the concept of sustainable development was initiated after the publication of Our Common Future (or the Brundtland report) by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). The report defines sustainable development as development, which meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future generations (WCED, 1987, p. 45). The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 paved the way for the institutionalization of the concept by adapting a broad-based global plan of action – Agenda 21 – for sustainable development.

The idea of sustainability has been used in diverse contexts with differing meanings and inferences by a variety of stakeholders (Goffi, 2013). It is widely recognized that tourism entails short- and long-term deterioration of natural resources at local and global levels (Gossling & Hall, 2006). As a result, the principles of sustainable development have been a focus for tourism as a mechanism for development (Berno & Bricker, 2001).

The growth of travel and tourism and the accompanying negative impacts has made sustainability "the biggest single issue" facing the global tourism industry (UNWTO, 2011, p.38). The most commonly used definition of sustainable tourism was developed by World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), which reads as follows:

> "Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of the present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future. It is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and aesthetic needs can be fulfilled while maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecology processes, biological diversity, and life support systems" (p 21, 1998).

UNWTO advocates that sustainability must be applied in all processes of tourism development and all forms of tourism including mass tourism (UNWTO, 2015). The practice and application of the concept of sustainability, particularly in tourism, is often a topic of debate where achieving a "balance" or the "wise" use of natural resources is questioned (Hall, Gossling & Scott, 2015, p. 15). These authors reason that "the gap between the use of the concept of sustainability and sustainable tourism and empirical reality raises fundamental questions" as to the prospect of how a "balance" could be achieved between the economic, social and environmental goals encompassed within the idea of sustainable development (ibid). Even though the concept of sustainable development implies limits, they are not "absolute limits"; rather the limitations are bound by the existing state of technology and social organisation on environmental resources and the ability of the environment to absorb the impacts of human activities (Cernat & Gourdon, 2005). Within these boundaries the decisions that a destination makes regarding sustainability will depend on the industries stakeholders. The support of stakeholders including members of the community, businesses and community leaders is fundamental to the successful implementation of sustainable tourism (Byrd, 2007).

2.6 Sustainability and Tourism Competitiveness

The connection between sustainability and competitiveness is evident in literature. In the quest for sustainable forms of tourism development by researchers and practitioners, destination competitiveness has received significant focus (Serrato, Valenzuela & Rayas, 2013). Competitiveness becomes a key theme associated with tourism development due to the fact that competitiveness impacts the profitability and sustainability of destinations (Balkaran & Maharaj, 2014). As established by these authors, the initiatives such as improvements to infrastructure, promotion, human resources development and marketing and promotion that enhance competitiveness increase visitor numbers and yield. Therefore, tourism competitiveness is believed to be a determinant of the economic sustainability of tourism (Wondowossen, Nakagoshi, et al., 2014).

Environmental resources are at the heart of tourism development. At the same time, these resources are an integral part of destination sustainability as well as competitiveness (Mihalic, 2013). Visitors avoid destinations that they feel are polluted or is low in environmental quality, in which case destination competitiveness can be enhanced by appropriate measures to manage environmental quality and impacts (Mihalic, 2000). Opportunities to achieve competitiveness through differentiated local tourism products may not exist for destinations where previous mass tourism initiatives have destroyed natural, cultural resources and landscapes through overexploitation (Cucculelli & Goffi, 2015).

Based on a study that investigated the destination competitiveness of Ethiopia, Wondowossen et al. (2014) posit that competitiveness augments economic, environmental, social, cultural and environmental benefits to the host destination and in the process assists in achieving the objectives of visitors through satisfactory experiences. As their findings indicate, to achieve these benefits, sustainability needs to be incorporated into all the indicators of destination. The role of sustainability in destination competitiveness was explored by Cucculelli and Goffi (2015). They added indicators that are directly related to issues of sustainability to the widely used framework of Crouch and Ritchie (2003). It was discovered that the indicators directly referring to sustainability have a positive impact on the elements of destination competitiveness (Cucculelli & Goffi, 2015). This reinforces the argument that

sustainable competitiveness cannot be achieved without conserving the factors that define the destination's uniqueness (Hassan, 2000).

The integration of cultural and natural aspects of destinations into tourism is a mark of differentiation. As long as the usage of these resources is controlled and monitored, it enhances the competitiveness of the destination. The solution to avoid long-lasting negative impacts, competitiveness that is linked with the natural resource base of a destination should follow continued innovation. This will ensure the preservation of resources and the attractiveness of the destination in the long-term with positive outcomes for the local communities (Romao, Guerreiro & Rodrigues, 2013). Effective promotional activities related to environmental quality contribute to enhancing the perceived destination attractiveness. This brings to the fore the role of destination management organisations (DMOs), their competences and strategic alliances (Mihalic, 2000).

The development of tourism products and services that enhance competitiveness need to be responsive to market demand as well as the needs of consumers while supporting the conservation of local resources (Cucculelli & Goffi, 2015). Businesses and destinations that are not attentive to the changes to consumer demand are at risk of what is referred to as "strategic drift" that could result in short-term or long-lasting "competitive disadvantage" (Dwyer, Cvelbar, Edwards & Mihalic, 2012, p. 306). Competitiveness without the requisite steps taken to protect and preserve local resources implies significant costs for the future of local communities which conflicts with the principles of sustainable development. The appropriateness of the sustainability approach adopted by a destination and how it may describe "wise use" of the natural resources will be defined by the principles and ideals of the various stakeholders of a destination (Mercer, 2000). This brings to focus the significance of stakeholder collaboration in the concept of sustainability.

2.7   Conceptual Models and Frameworks of Tourism Competitiveness

With service industries dominating industrialised economies, researchers have started to adopt and apply business sector models and theories of competitiveness to tourism competitiveness. The most widely referred to model in the literature was developed by Crouch and Ritchie (1999). Their hierarchical framework is the most comprehensive work carried out on tourism destination competitiveness and is considered a keystone

for subsequent models and frameworks (Enright & Newton, 2004; Heath, 2003; Hudson, Ritchie, & Timur, 2004). The initial model (Ritchie & Crouch, 1993) was based on research spanning several years that involved managers of national tourism organisations and visitor bureaus of leading tourism destinations in North America and elsewhere in the world. In the later version of their model (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000), the attribute of competitive collaborative analysis was added under the function of destination policy, planning and development to denote the significance that tourism industry places on developing "strategic alliances" (p. 4). A revised version of the 2003 model (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) (see Figure 2.4) was presented in 2011 (Crouch, 2011, p. 29).

The model denotes various elements in which a destination may compete with others in the market. It comprises a total of 36 factors of destination competitiveness that are categorised into five groups. The *supporting factors and resources* form the foundation of the model and emphasise that tourism cannot flourish without the requisite basics, such as sufficient infrastructure and accessibility. The *core resources and attractors* comprise key motivating factors such as natural and created attractions, culture and heritage, events and super structures. Factors of *destination management* involve internal and external processes that influence destination competitiveness. They include marketing, human resources development and resource management. *Destination policy, planning and development* concerns having a shared vision and direction that enables stakeholders to work towards a common goal. The final dimension, the *qualifying and amplifying determinants*, comprises factors that are within the destination's control (e.g. image, value for money, destination awareness) as well as those that the destination cannot control (e.g. location, safety). Nonetheless, they limit or amplify the scope of sustainable competitiveness by controlling the influence from the other groups. Continuous monitoring of the macro and microenvironments in order to detect changes that may affect destination performance is stressed.

Ritchie and Crouch's (2003) model of destination competitiveness gives significant emphasis to efficiency of resource deployment as a key determinant of competitiveness, and notes that governments, industry associations and individual tourism enterprises are administrators responsible for resource distribution. The overall message conveyed by the model is that the specific comparative (endowed resources) and competitive advantages (the ability to deploy the endowed resources) of a destination determine its competitiveness. This clearly calls for the collaboration between all those concerned.

Without the joint efforts (collaboration) of those responsible for the utilisation and deployment of the available resources (stakeholders) efficiency cannot be achieved. To achieve the maximum advantage from the endowed resources, collaboration from all stakeholders is necessary. Yet, this significant element is absent in the different elements that make this comprehensive model. The "strategic alliances" element that was later incorporated into the revised model (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) does not express the breadth of collaborative actions and engagements that are needed for the functions of tourism to achieve or enhance STC.

A model to evaluate competitiveness between countries and their tourism industries (see Figure 2.5) was developed by Dwyer and Kim (2003, p. 399). They categorised indicators of competitiveness into subgroups labelled as endowed resources, supporting factors, destination management, situational conditions, demand factors and market performance indicators. These indicators, construed from the main elements of generic destination competitiveness models and from the outcomes of discussions conducted in Korea and Australia, are categorised as hard, quantifiable or soft, qualitative measures. Demand conditions are one of the key indicators highlighted by this model. Dwyer and Kim argue that there are no singular sets of competitiveness indicators that apply to all destinations at all times. Instead, they propose that various indicators will be pertinent for a specified destination, and any number of indicators under each competitiveness factor can be applied as measures.

Figure 2.4: Ritchie and Crouch's (2003) Conceptual Model of Destination Competitiveness
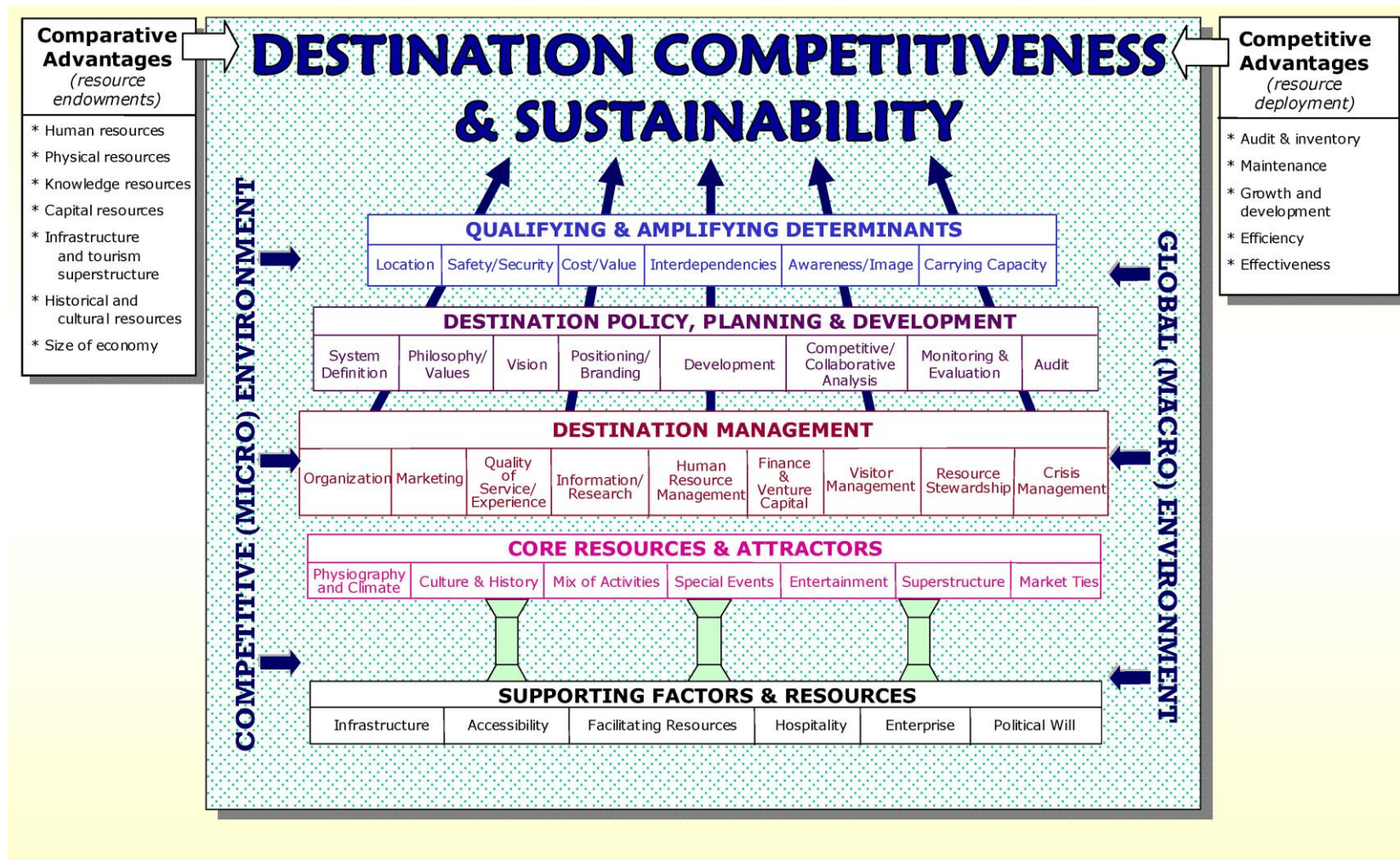
(Crouch, 2011, p. 29)

Dwyer and Kim's (2003) model notes two indicators related to cooperation under the situational conditions/competitive (micro) environment: "level of cooperation between firms in destination tourism industry" and "links between tourism/hospitality firms and firms in other industrial sectors" (p. 403). Dwyer and Kim note the level of cooperation between firms in the tourism industry of a destination and the connection between tourism/hospitality firms and those from other industrial sectors as contributors to the indicators of competitiveness (p. 403). Cooperation between firms in the tourism industry and inter-sectoral linkages do not adequately depict the comprehensive collaborative engagements that exist among tourism stakeholders. Thus, the role of collaboration between all the stakeholders that performs within the specific categories and at the various stages of the defined indicators is absent in the model. Dwyer and Kim acknowledge that there is a need to investigate the diverse forms of indicators that may be applicable to various contexts. This case study of Auckland, specifically in the context of an amalgamated region, responds to this request as it investigates collaboration between each group of stakeholders involved in all the categories of the indicators as a pertinent and an essential factor that needs to be considered in achieving STC.

Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005) applied the Competitiveness Monitor (CM) for the evaluation of tourist destination competitiveness. The CM is an instrument that is based on an initiative of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) (Mazanec, Wober, & Zins, 2007). Updated annually, CM uses published data from more than 200 countries that are available on the WTTC website, www.wttc.org (Miller, 2007). Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005) condensed 23 of the CM criteria into eight main indicators: price, openness, technology, infrastructure, human tourism, social development, environment and human resources. Aggregate indices are created for each, after which the weights for the main indicators are determined using factor analysis from a sample of 93 countries, leading to the creation of a combined index of competitiveness. Mazanec, et al. (2007) argue that using a method that combines causes and effects of competitiveness can produce merely a descriptive classification; therefore, it cannot be an effective way to describe or forecast success or failure of a tourism destination.

Figure 2.5: Dwyer and Kim's (2003) Model of Destination Competitiveness
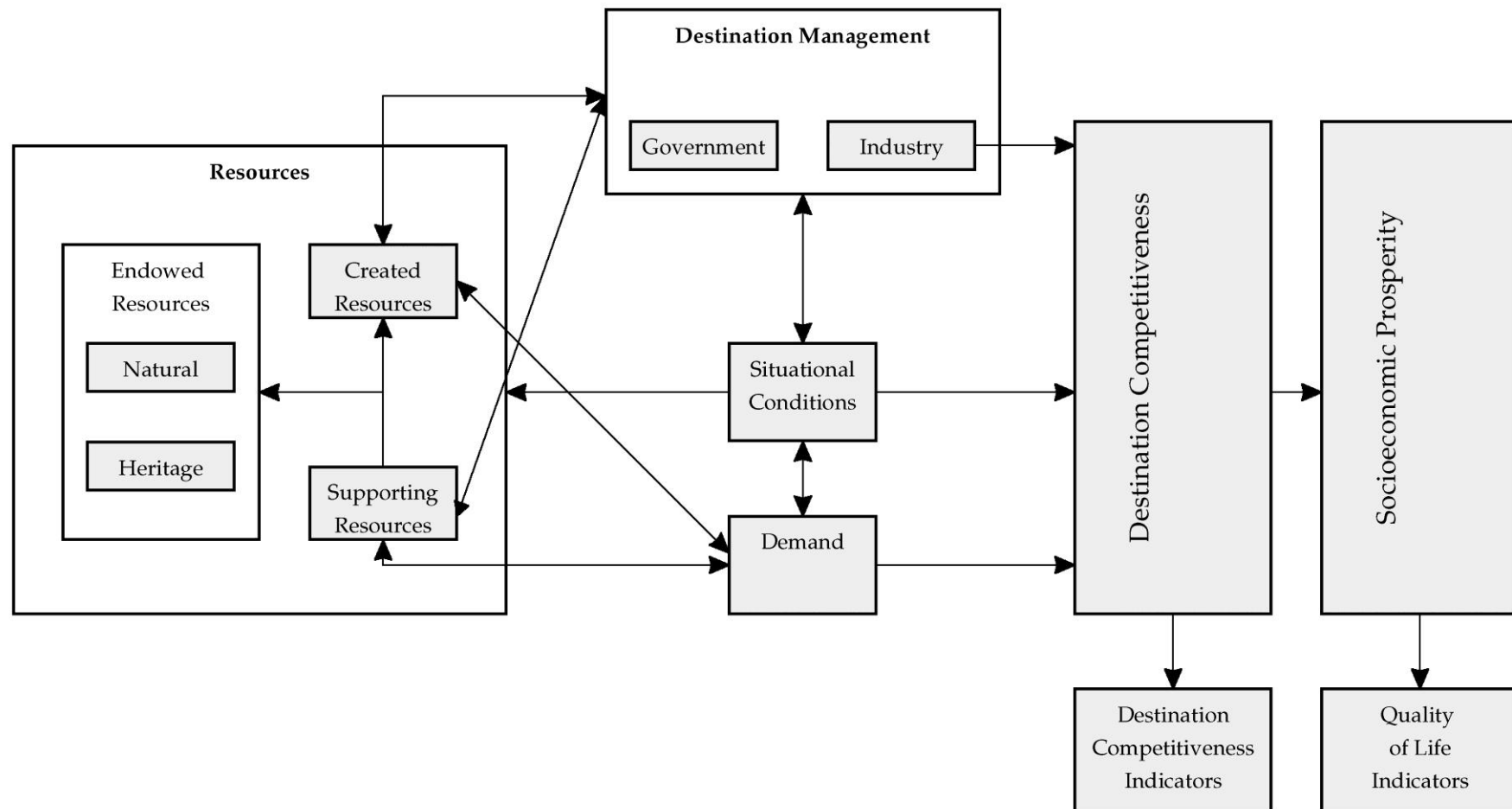
(Dwyer & Kim, 2003, p. 378)

Largely following the classifications of Gooroochurn and Sugiyarto (2005), a model to identify and analyse the factors of sustainable competitiveness in a systematic manner was created by Navickas and Malakauskaite (2009). The basis of the model was that of Dwyer and Kim (2003), which was modified to include potential indicators that represent a contemporary tourism system and the preconditions for competitiveness in the global economy. The model in the shape of a pyramid (see Figure 2.6) exhibits what are considered the "most important factors of destination competitiveness" in its various tiers (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009, p. 38). They are, from bottom to top, basic resources and factors (e.g. natural attributes); additional resources (e.g. built attractions, beaches, scenery); the administration of a tourist destination (e.g. efficiency, adaptability); tourist destination policy, planning and development; and tourism market and quality of life-related competitive and sustainable development determinants (e.g. demand conditions, regional/national well-being).

Figure 2.6: Navickas and Malakauskaite's (2009) Model of Competitiveness and Sustainable Development of Tourist Destinations
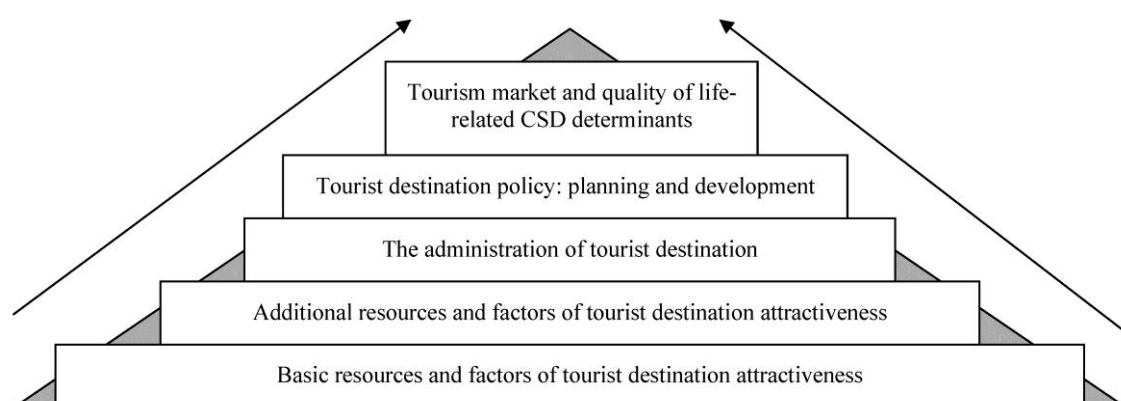
(Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009, p. 39)

The conclusion of Navickas and Malakauskaite is that the competitiveness of tourism is reliant on the legal, political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and technological atmosphere of the destination. Indeed, each of these areas cannot function on their own, therefore, the connections with each other and within each area needs to be clearly stated. There is a deficiency in this model of destination competitiveness and sustainability. There is a need to identify and include the undertakings that are necessary for their functions.

Based on research that was focused on poverty alleviation in Southern Africa, Heath (2003) also developed a destination competitiveness model (see Figure 2.7). Heath argues that the existing models of destination competitiveness are not totally appropriate

to the situation prevailing in South Africa. The key reasons that current models are not relevant from the perspective of South Africa according to Heath (2003) are (a) they do not offer sufficient incorporation of the varied problems that encompass the notion of competitiveness; and (b) adequate significance is not given to the "key success drivers" and the "vital linkages" (p. 131). The "key success drivers" are described as the "people", and "vital linkages" are explained as "communication and information management", which are presented as essential components of any sustainable destination competitiveness framework. Heath's framework proposes that destination competitiveness can be enhanced by addressing the central issues necessary to ensure sustainable global competitiveness through a common vision and strong leadership, and by coordinated efforts from all stakeholders.

Heath's (2003) framework includes both comparative and competitive advantages as well as key elements and indicators of destination competitiveness presented in the wider literature and other models of tourism competitiveness. The different aspects of competitiveness are illustrated in the form of the structure of a house. The foundations provide the base for competitiveness and consist of "key attractors", "non-negotiables", "enablers", "value adders", "facilitators" and "experience enhancers". These components are in effect the core attractors and supporting resources represented in the models of Ritchie and Crouch (2003) and Dwyer and Kim (2003). The "cement" that joins and bonds the various elements of competitiveness is what upholds the cohesiveness of the structure. This is achieved through continuous and transparent communication between stakeholders, striking a balance among their various interests, creating mutually beneficial relationships, managing information for decision-making and establishing appropriate competitive measures.

The "building blocks" in Heath's model combine comprehensive policies and frameworks for sustainable development and destination marketing that are focused on efficient implementation. The "roof" relates to the policy, planning and development components in Ritchie and Crouch's (2003) model, and comprises various key success drivers and a "tourism script" in the form of a strategic framework. Heath's model is largely influenced by his earlier research on alleviating poverty and destination planning and marketing in Southern Africa (Heath, 1988, 1989). In formulating the model, the mega trends that were predicted to shape and direct tourism in the 21st century were considered. These trends include globalisation and its impact on technology, telecommunications and transportation; the significant role of consumer demand in

shaping tourism products and services; increasing importance given by consumers to sustainable development and ethical practices; and the central role of image, positioning and branding in tourism marketing. Heath (2003) perceives that tourism "can be a catalyst" in reducing poverty and improving the quality of life of the population, provided that tourism development is given due priority and is pursued with a strategic and sustainable approach (p. 125).

As agreed by others, the essential message conveyed by this model is that if the common goal of tourism success is to be achieved, stakeholders have to follow a "scripted" role to cooperate and collaborate within a strategic framework (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Porter, 1990; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). The model concedes that technology and competition will not be the only factors that will dominate the future of the tourism industry; the realisation among tourism stakeholders of the huge benefits of collaboration and coordinated efforts will have immense influence (Heath, 2003, p. 139).

The conceptual models of destination competitiveness are based on relatively common and generally accepted definitions. Where they differ is in considering different ranges of comparative and competitive advantages depending on the focus of the research. The source of the differences lies in the emphasis that they give to specific aspects of a destination as evident from the preceding discussion. Studying different models of destination competitiveness is important because if the focus is limited to research that specifically looks at sustainable tourism competitiveness, a comprehensive perspective on the research cannot be achieved. The above discussion of models of destination competitiveness reveals that the list of possible competitiveness factors is extensive. It is clear, however, that not all of the models contain attributes related to stakeholder collaboration.

The few models that contain factors related to stakeholder collaboration, for example, those of Dwyer and Kim (2003) and Heath (2003), emphasise collaboration among all concerned parties as one of the key factors of destination competitiveness. However, in these competitiveness models and other existing research, in-depth investigations that illustrate how stakeholder collaboration impacts and links with tourism competitiveness are largely absent.

Heath (2003) incorporated the key elements and indicators of tourism competitiveness from the wider literature. After studying the key models from the literature this research

then focused on Heath's work that incorporates most other widely used models to develop as a guideline to explore the role of stakeholder collaboration in STC. Heath's (2003) research was published in the Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management. The research has been referred to in the literature related to various aspects from tourism competitiveness to sustainable tourism development, measuring destination competitiveness and determinant attributes. The authors of the most widely cited sustainable destination competitiveness model, Ritchie and Crouch have used Heath (2003) to inform their subsequent studies (see Crouch, 2007 and 2010; Crouch & Ritchie 2012). Aspects of Heath's destination competitiveness have been presented in studies on destination competitiveness (see Mihalic, 2013; Hallman, Muller, Feiler, Breuer & Roth, 2012). Others have used Heath's (2003) work to develop new models. Khin (2014) used attributes from the model to create a structural model that explores residents' attitudes towards tourism development in Bagan, Myanmar. Kitnuntaviwat and Tang (2008) utilised Heath's work to develop a model to analyse competitiveness in Bangkok, Thailand.

While the resemblance of Heath's (2003) model to a house is designed to highlight the interconnected nature of the processes that underpin and achieve competitiveness, the relationships between the various components of the model are not described nor are the impact of collaboration on each component identified. The methods for applying the constructs of the model are not disclosed, and it has not been empirically tested. Even though the significance of consistent and clear communication as well as managing information and stakeholders' interests are at the centre of the model, how these aspects feature at the various elements of competitiveness is not detailed. It is important to examine how collaboration features at each of the elements of competitiveness. Only then can the role of stakeholder collaboration in STC be established. This thesis fills this gap by analysing each of the elements depicted by Heath (2003) in the light of the research findings to reveal where and how collaboration exists at each aspect of competitiveness. This information is then reflected upon the findings related to current and potential competitiveness to establish the link between collaboration and STC. Thus, this research enhances and expands the work of Heath (2003).

Figure 2.7: Heath's (2003) Model for Enhancing Sustainable Tourism Competitiveness
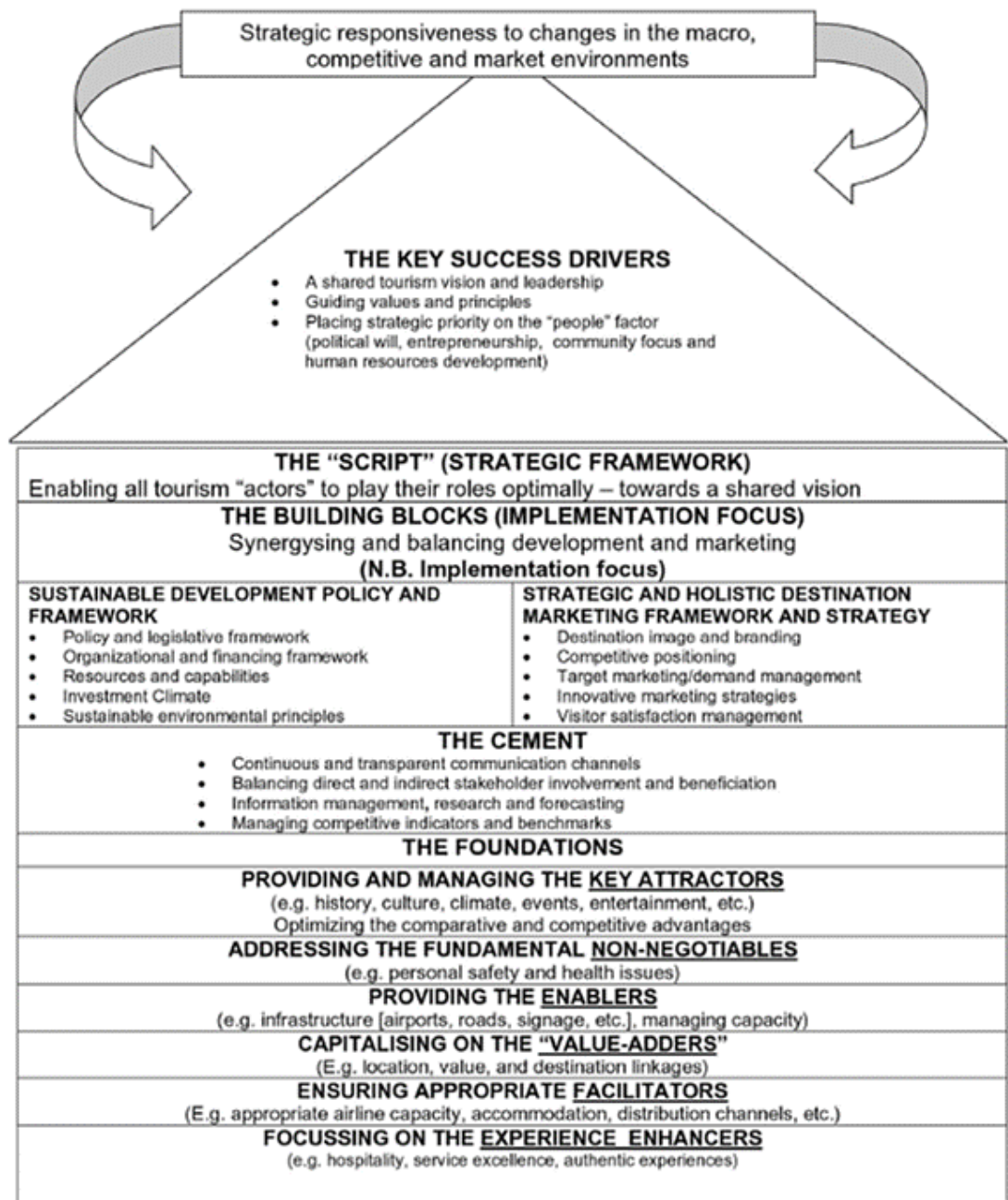
(Heath, 2003, p. 132)

2.8 Definition of Stakeholders

Tourism is an industry that involves multiple stakeholders where the responsibility for destination competitiveness is shared by suppliers, government agencies, market intermediaries, NGOs, the general public and tourists (Azzopardi, 2011). Stakeholders from public and private sectors and the local communities play critical roles in the development and implementation of sustainable tourism (Timur & Getz, 2008).

The first step to stakeholder participation in tourism is, according to Byrd (2007), to identify who the stakeholders are. Failure to identify the interest of a single primary stakeholder group holds the risk of failure of the process of stakeholder participation (Clarkson, 1995). Although the involvement of all stakeholders does not need to be equal in the decision-making process, it is important that the interests of all parties are identified and understood (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). Stakeholder identification and involvement are the foremost steps towards achieving community partnerships and collaboration within tourism (Hardy & Beeton 2001). Based on the definitions of sustainability and sustainable tourism development, Byrd (2007, p. 10) identified four different groups of stakeholders - the present visitors, future visitors, present host community, and future host community. The author divided the host community into residents, business owners, and government officials.

The literature reveals that stakeholders can be of different types, which Waligo, Clarke and Hawkins (2013) categorised into six groups: tourists, industry, local community, government, special interest groups and educational institutions (p. 343). These groups of stakeholders are able to influence tourism development initiatives in different ways, including regulation, demand and supply, research, management of tourism impacts and human resources. Often researchers categorise stakeholders into primary and secondary groups (Saftic, Tezak & Luk, 2011). There is no consensus in literature as to which group the stakeholders should belong (Tkaczynski, 2009). As illustrated in Figure 2.8, primary stakeholders include, local and central government officials, DMOs, providers of attractions accommodations and services, local communities, tourists. Among the secondary stakeholders are community groups, advisory boards, media, retail operators, research and education institutes (Saftic et al., 2011, p. 3).

Figure 2.8:   Stakeholder Types

Stakeholder type	Stakeholder
Primary	Local government organisations Destination marketing organisations Hotels Restaurants Residents Tourism attraction operators Convention centres Transportation companies Airports Tourists
Secondary	Chamber of commerce Community groups Gas stations Incentive planners Media Retail operators Universities

(Adapted from: Saftic, et, al. 2011, p. 3)

A stakeholder is "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by" tourism development in an area (Freeman 1984, p 46). Stakeholders are also referred to as persons or groups engaged in activities relating to tourism development, who can thus influence or be affected by decisions and actions connected to those activities (Waligo et al., 2013). The following definition by Yoon (2002) that covers a wide range of individuals and groups in the context of tourism will be used to describe stakeholders in this thesis, which describes stakeholders as:

> persons or groups who can affect or be affected by the tourism business within a particular market or community and who have interests in the planning, process(es), delivery, and/or outcomes of the tourism business (p. 14).

From the perspective of the destination, stakeholders are the visitors (the demand), industries (the supplier) and the host (local residents and the environment) (Pavlovich, 2003). It is the tourism industry that supports the creation and the functioning of the destination. This research identified both primary and secondary stakeholders Auckland's tourism industry. The primary stakeholders that were identified include, local government, national tourism agencies, destination management organisations (DMOs), accommodation and attraction providers, transport companies, tour operators,

community leaders, national tourism marketing agency, an airline operator and the airport was included. NGOs, community groups, university and research institutes, and cultural groups were among the secondary stakeholders that were identified.

2.9   Definition of Collaboration

Partnerships, collaboration and networks, both formal and informal, are argued by some commentators to be more profound in tourism than in any other economic sector (Scott, Cooper, & Baggio, 2008). When a wide range of stakeholders are involved and their active role is important in sustainable tourism development, their partnership, collaboration and interaction also become key elements of sustainable tourism (Caffyn, 2000, p. 201). The level of support from the various stakeholders will ultimately shape the competitiveness of a destination (Azzopardi, 2011).

Recent years have seen the emergence of several forms of collaboration in response to the complexities and instabilities present in business environments (Franco, 2008). Partnership, strategic alliance, coalition and cooperative agreement are terms that are frequently used to describe forms of collaboration (Albrecht, 2013). A business alliance occurs as a voluntary agreement between companies to share or exchange resources and to cooperate in the development of products, services and technologies (Gulati, 1998). Partnerships between stakeholders in tourism are often operationalized as networks (Albrecht, 2013). Partnerships are formed between one or more businesses where the partners agree to pursue common goals (Albrecht, 2013). Partnerships can be created within and across different economic sectors, and various kinds of organisations may partner with each other to increase the chances of achieving their goals or enhance their business scope (Gursoy, Saayman, & Sotiriadis, 2015). The choice of collaboration type depends on the goal pursued by the collaborators, whether it is "staying competitive, reducing uncertainty, obtaining legitimacy, resolving a conflict, [or] developing a shared vision" (Franco, 2008, p. 268).

Different terms have been used in the literature to describe 'working together' among stakeholders. The range of definitions for collaboration presented in the literature mostly relate to involvement of independent or semi-independent stakeholders in joint decision-making and planning for reciprocal benefits (Thomson, Perry, & Miller, 2007, p. 25). Collaboration is often interchangeably used with the terms coordination, cooperation and teamwork (Bedwell, Wildman, et al., 2012), which can occur between individuals, groups, organisations, units or societies. A number of studies can be found

in tourism literature relating to coordination (Lemmetyinen, 2014; Fangyuan & Qi, 2015; Guo & He, 2012) and cooperation (Mihalic & Fennel, 2015; Wyss, Luthe & Abegg, 2014; Czernek, 2013; Bhat & Milne, 2008). Even though cooperation and collaboration are used frequently and interchangeably in tourism literature and policy, the two terms do not imply similar functions (Jamal & Getz, 1995). Thus, it is important to distinguish and understand the difference between collaboration, cooperation (Kozar, 2010) and coordination (Gulati, Wohlgezogen & Zhelyazkov, 2012).

Cooperation and coordination are two different components of collaboration (Gulati, et al., 2012). According to these, organisations may engage in cooperation to share investment risk, or to pursue various benefits that may be unattainable or difficult to achieve through transactional relationships. On the other hand, coordination seeks to align partners' efforts in productive ways to produce the desired outcomes with the minimum costs. Accordingly, cooperation is the "joint pursuit of agreed-on goal(s) in a manner corresponding to a shared understanding about contributions and payoffs"(ibid, p. 6), whereas coordination is "the deliberate and orderly alignment or adjustment of partners' actions to achieve jointly determined goals (ibid, p.12).

Cooperative work involves dividing a task among participants where each member takes the responsibility to accomplishing part of the work (Kozar, 2010). In contrast, collaborative engagement involves mutual participation by participants in a "coordinated effort" to together complete an undertaking (ibid, p. 70). Although cooperation involves a certain degree of working together, it does not fully convey "the complex interpretations and the necessary conditions covered by the term *collaboration*" (Jamal & Getz, 1995, p. 187). The pursuance of shared goals in collaboration goes deeper than those seen in cooperative ventures; in collaboration, the partners share a common determination to achieve targeted objectives through consensus, shared knowledge and information (Martinez-Moyano, 2006). The nature and degree of stakeholder involvement in collaboration will to a large extent depend on the availability of time, resources, and leadership (Byrd, 2007).

The theoretical and empirical perspectives on the process and forms of collaboration were the foci of two special issues of the Journal of Behavioural Science (volume 27, numbers 1 and 2). As Wood and Gray (1991) note the lack of uniformity in the components comprising the various definitions of collaboration in these articles is one of the major issues in collaboration theory. Collaboration has been described as a

process in which two or more individuals or organisations work together to achieve common goals (Gursoy, Saayman, & Sotiriadis, 2015). Derived from the works of Jamal and Getz (1995), the definition of collaboration in tourism according to Robinson (2009) is "a process of joint decision making among autonomous and key stakeholders of an inter-organisational domain to resolve problems of the domain and/or to manage issues related to the domain" (p. 387).

This thesis will adopt the following definition to express the term collaboration between stakeholders in the tourism industry:

> Collaboration occurs when a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and resources, to act or decide on issues related to that domain (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 146).

The "stakeholders of a problem domain" described in this definition refers to those who have an interest, whether common or different, in a collaborative venture. The term "autonomous" is of significance because stakeholders hold their individual decision making authority even while engaging in collaborative partnerships (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 146).

2.10 Significance of Stakeholder Collaboration in Sustainable Tourism Competitiveness

The significance of collaboration in tourism development is well documented in the literature (Liu, 2011), and the problems resulting from its absence are equated to the difficulties of surviving as "lone wolf entrepreneurs" (Pansiri, 2013, p. 79). The potential benefits from collaborative actions in tourism are manifold because tourist destinations are complex systems in which a variety of stakeholder groups of varying sizes and functions are connected in numerous, dynamic ways (Baggio, 2011a). Developing collaborative strategies has been stressed as crucial in gaining sustainable competitive advantage (Nordin, 2003). It has been reported that the trust generated from sustained collaboration plays a central role in the development of a robust tourism industry (Hjalager, 2000). Development and establishment of collaboration combines stakeholders' wealth of knowledge and capabilities (Byrd, 2007). Sustained collaboration among different stakeholders have proven to contribute to building a destination brand (Brooker & Burgess, 2008).

Collaboration is frequently seen in the context of community-based tourism (Waayers, Lee, & Newsome, 2011), in which community integration and participation are central

to sustainable tourism (Matarrita-Cascante, Brennan, & Luloff, 2010). Collaboration between stakeholders is believed to involve the broader community and foster partnerships and networks. Such activities facilitate sharing of resources and their effective and efficient utilisation to create value-added, high-quality experiences and products that are capable of generating greater yield (New Zealand Tourism Research Institute [NZTRI], 2011). Collaboration is the key to avoiding the potential long-term costs that can arise from antagonism and differences between various groups. Such negative attitudes are bound to create inefficiencies when both parties harbour suspicion and hostility against each other and around each problem (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). Where stakeholders recognize the potential advantages of working together, collaboration can be used effectively to resolve conflict and advance shared visions (Gray, 1989; Healey 1998).

The underlying function of branding appears to be collaboration because the foundation of branding is building relationships between consumers and businesses (Ndlovu, 2009). Branding or positioning is a major contributor to the success of any product or service and indicates competitiveness (Crouch, 2008) by creating images of differentiation that positively affect consumers' decision-making (Pike, Bianchi, Kerr, & Patti, 2010). The role of public and private sector stakeholder collaboration is critical for the successful implementation of a destination brand, as shown by Morgan, Pritchard and Piggott (2003) in the case of the NZ brand.

Collaboration between tourism stakeholders is essential to the sustainability of natural and cultural resources, particularly for protected area destinations (Jamal & Stronza, 2009). While environmental quality and protection are critical to sustainable tourism, as emphasised by the Brundtland Report (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987), local actions play a central role in sustainable development (Khare, Beckman, & Crouse, 2011). Collaboration is central to ensuring control and responsible use of resources and tourism marketing, which will lead to socio-economic and environmental sustainability (McCool & Moisey, 2001). Sustainable use of any resource requires the involvement of stakeholders in the planning process (Landorf, 2009). Government regulation alone cannot resolve environmental issues; the involvement of participants from public, private and non-profit sectors is essential, which makes collaboration the axis of environmental sustainability (Erkus-Ozturk & Eraydyn, 2010; Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2010). Collaboration plays a critical role in the sustainable management of wildlife tourism, particularly when diverse stakeholder

interests are involved. This was illustrated by Waayers et al. (2011) in the case of turtle tourism in the Ningaloo region of Western Australia.

Numerous benefits arise from inter-organisational collaboration, including the development of high-value products. The positive outcomes from the implementation of sustainable practices through internal collaborative processes are evident in the case of La Fortuna, Costa Rica (Matarrita-Cascante et al., 2010). The resources of a firm may be more or less dynamic depending on the tasks and challenges at hand. However, participants in partnerships are likely to manage the various challenges and issues when they are engaged in dynamic collaborations, thereby enhancing the strength of their resources (Badaracco, 1991). Confidence gained through collaboration enabled members of the New Zealand Food and Wine Tourism Network to successfully develop high-value wine tourism products (Mitchell & van der Linden, 2010).

In addition to the benefits that collaboration renders, "competitive strategies that are influenced by the volatility and sensitivity of the tourism industry" make it a necessity to embrace cooperative approaches (Saxena, 2005, p. 278). Collaboration between stakeholders is central to tourism sustainability (Waligo et al., 2013). Collaboration involves the broader community, and fosters partnerships and networks leading to sharing of resources and their effective and efficient utilisation to provide experiences and products of high quality and standards (NZTRI, 2011). By assisting in the creation of value-added products, collaboration increases yield (NZTRI, 2011). Collaboration is also the key to evading long-term costs that can arise from antagonism and differences between various groups, which can end up wasteful when both parties have ensconced suspicions and confront each other on each issue (Bramwell & Lane, 2000).

Collaboration open up prospects for new and otherwise unavailable opportunities and resources by providing accessibility to confidential information. Collaborative engagements lead to competitive advantage by influencing and improving organisational performance (Scott et al., 2008). Some relationships and networks exist for the purpose of gaining access to 'private information' that is needed by businesses to perform necessary transactions (Uzzi & Lancester, 2004). According to Uzzi and Lancester (2004), private information includes evaluations and private opinions and other information that is undocumented and not easily or readily available. By working collaboratively, those involved are able to pool resources, knowledge and skills to

achieve co-specialisation in order to create rare and difficult-to-imitate products – in other words, it bestows competitive advantage (Ceci & Masini, 2011).

One approach to bringing together knowledge, resources and skills is through networking (Inkpen & Tsang, 2005). A business network is a type of social network (Kokkonen & Tuohino, 2007) where like-minded business people identify, develop or pursue economic opportunities (Gursoy, et al., 2015). Networks of relationships and collaborations bridge and facilitate the resolution of fragmentation issues that are prevalent in the tourism industry, to successfully deliver the tourism product (Baggio, 2011a). Through organised networking, tourism businesses have access to benefits such as price cartels and cost and risk sharing that add to their competitive advantage (Tinsley & Lynch, 2007). The volatile and sensitive nature of the tourism industry creates fluctuations in the success of tourism businesses requiring constant changes to competitive strategies. To combat and be prepared against such instabilities, collaborative policies and plans need to be in place (Saxena, 2005). Employing a network initiative can be of benefit in many ways to the development of sustainable competitive advantages (Stefano et al., 2010). The long-term sustainability of a destination relies upon its ability to consistently renew local resources to develop new ones (Alberti & Giusti, 2012).

Clusters and networks support and reinforce a dynamic capability that enables integration and coordination of available resources to create tourism core competencies (Porter, 2000). A cluster is a collection of businesses or industries within a particular region that are interconnected by their products, markets or other businesses and organisations, such as suppliers and service providers with whom they interact (Gursoy, et al., 2015). The ability to combine superior resources and capabilities assists in the development of exclusive and irreplaceable tourism assets, such as monuments and landscapes (Stefano et al., 2010). From this perspective collaboration can be seen as a source of competitive advantage (di Domenico et al., 2010). Collaborative approaches and network formation are important dimensions when developing a vision for sustainable tourism competitive advantage. This is certainly the case for amalgamated city regions where there is a need for "administrative and institutional coordination across the spatial organisation of the city as a whole" (Scott, 2008, p. 557). There is an increasing awareness that such collaborative actions are essential for "achieving efficiency, workability and local competitive advantage" (ibid).

In some scenarios, co-opetition rather than outright competition is seen to be beneficial to all stakeholders. Co-opetition occurs when competitors cooperate and compete at the same time (Marcoz, Mauri, Maggioni, & Cantu, 2014). Co-opetition at local and regional levels is seen as necessary to create quality tourism products that are capable of competing at the international level (Hutter, Hautz, et al., 2011). Co-opetition increases performance when competitors collaborate and share resources, information and knowledge, while they concurrently compete, working individually in other spheres to improve their performance (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Maintaining and supporting inter-firm relationships through co-opetition has been found to be mutually beneficial for tourism businesses (Hutter et al., 2011). In areas where businesses lack enthusiasm in working with one another, community-based contests have been successful in motivating collaboration (Hawkins, 2004). In order to compete against other's areas, members of a community may interact and engage in joint discussions to find ways to outperform others, thus simultaneously cooperating and competing (Hutter et al., 2011). Therefore, co-opetition, which usually exists at the firm level, is applicable within communities (Hutter et al., 2011).

Small and medium-sized tourism enterprises (SMTEs) have been described as the "life blood" of the tourism industry (Strange & Brown, 2014, p. 62) and play a significant role in developing local areas (Erkkila, 2004, p. 1). It is SMTEs that usually provide tailored products and services that meet consumers' high expectations and demands (Novelli, Schmitz & Spencer. 2006). Often SMTEs do not possess the requisite resources to perform effectively or sustain their businesses (Borodako, 2011). Clustering of SMTEs can foster competitive advantages through the concentration of resources, access to information and adaptation to innovation (Mariani & Kylänen, 2014). SMTEs particularly in rural areas are well supported by tourism networks, hence stimulate collaboration between micro firms (Borodako, 2011).

There are a number of theories that shed light on the processes and underlying conditions that facilitate cooperation: game theory, rational choice theory, institutional analysis, resource dependency theory, transaction cost economics and social exchange theory (Beritelli, 2011).

Stakeholder theory has its roots in organisational management and was pioneered by Freeman (1984) who suggested that an organisation is characterised by its relationships with different individuals and groups. This concept can be related to tourism

destinations, where a destination can be considered an organisation characterised by its relationship with the various groups and individuals responsible for the development and management of tourism (Saftic, Tezak & Luk, 2011, p. 2). These authors suggested that a distinction should be drawn between 'stakeholder theory' and 'stakeholder approach'. They argued that 'stakeholder theory' involves reasoned ideas that aim to explain facts or events, whereas 'stakeholder approach' implies "the concept, ideas, opinions or principles that underlie the subject of discussion".

Three correlated aspects to the stakeholder theory - the descriptive/empirical, the instrumental, and the normative – were developed by Donaldson and Preston (1995). The descriptive/empirical aspect examines and describes the past, present and future conditions of an organisation and its stakeholders. The instrumental aspect identifies the connections between actions and end results such as the achievement of an organization's goals. The normative aspect establishes the philosophical guidelines that an organisation follows in its operations and management Donaldson and Preston (1995, p. 71). Conversely, Freeman (1999, p. 233) notes that no significant difference can be established between normative and descriptive aspects without relying on the distinction itself.

With regards to stakeholder theory, two distinct schools of thought are discernible in tourism literature. The first area of thinking takes into consideration the interests of the stakeholders, their power and influence to develop policies and practices. More consideration is given to those with more power than those with less power or influence (De Lopez, 2001). A second idea of stakeholder theory that has emerged in recent years relates to the concept of collaborative thinking (Jamal & Getz 1995). This later concept infers consideration should be given to each stakeholder group and no one group should be given priority over the others (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). This theory presumes that by considering and balancing the appropriate interests of its stakeholders, an organisation can engender their support and maintain the relationships with them (Reynolds, Shultz & Hekman, 2006). The competitive nature of tourism makes stakeholder theory a positive and useful approach to overcome competition (Saftic, et al., 2011, p. 2).

Stakeholder theory recognises that all stakeholders are valid partners who are eligible for equal and concurrent consideration in policy- and decision-making processes (Hardy & Beeton, 2001). Stakeholder management is about comprehending and forecasting the conduct and actions of stakeholders and formulating strategies to cope with them in an

effective and appropriate manner (De Lopez, 2001). Stakeholder theory allows a wide range of factors to be considered and incorporated into the tourism system, which involves significant benefits for sustainable development (Timur & Getz, 2008). Stakeholders play a fundamental role in tourism planning and development (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Therefore, understanding and incorporating stakeholders' interests in tourism policies is important for the successful application of sustainable tourism processes (Byrd, 2007, p. 12).

A number of researchers have used the concept of stakeholder theory in tourism case studies (Byrd, 2007; Getz & Timur, 2012; Mistilis, Buhalis & Gretzel, 2014). As Byrd (2007) explains, when applied to a tourism destination scenario, Donaldson and Preston's (1995) descriptive/empirical aspect of stakeholder theory can reveal the various features of tourism, the history of tourism development, the policies and practices relating to the development and management of tourism, the variety of attractions, the economic impacts, the size of the tourism industry and the connections between the different groups that are involved in tourism within a particular destination.

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) assumes that when interacting with others, individuals seek intrinsic or extrinsic rewards that they are unable to obtain by themselves. From the perspectives of social exchange theory, social behaviour is motivated by the desire to seek rewards or to avoid cost. The fundamental principal of this theory is that individuals in social situations choose actions that maximize the prospect of achieving their self-interests in those situations (Di Domenico, Tracy & Haugh, 2009). Social exchange theory further assumes that due to the competitive nature of social systems the processes of social exchange create disparity of power and privilege (Chibucos, Leite & Weis, 2005). Those with more resources hold more power and hence, stand to benefit from the exchange. At the same time, those with less to gain through a social exchange hold more power in that exchange. This means that power stems from less dependence on a social exchange.

The concepts of reciprocity and equity are at the center of social exchange theory. According to Homans (1961), individuals are most content when they believe they are receiving remuneration from an association that is approximately equal to what they are putting into the relationship. The presence of the notion of equity in social exchanges implies the existence of reciprocity. Reciprocity assumes that exchange is guided by an expectation of return or behaviour in kind. Social exchange theory proposes that

partners in a social relationship who perceive the presence of reciprocity in the relationship are more likely to be satisfied and continue the relationship. When a party in a dyadic collaboration possesses resources that are viewed as valuable by the other, the norm of reciprocity is central to their interaction (Di Domenico et al., 2009). The implication therefore, is that individuals participate in interactions and undertake actions to achieve their objectives after purposefully considering the available options (Heath 1976). Conversely, power relationships between key decision-makers impact the nature of each individual's interaction and their ability to influence strategic goals (Cook & Emerson, 1978). Collaboration is based on cooperation that brings reciprocal benefits "that affect and are affected by the access that participants have to resources, their choices between alternative courses of action or reaction, and anticipated outcomes" (Di Domenico, 2010 et al., p. 891).

Effective collaboration is not straightforward or without complexities and challenges (Franco, 2008; Landorf, 2009). If the benefits of collaborative actions are to be realised, the various issues and challenges that undermine such efforts need to be identified. At the same time, ways to overcome the issues and approaches that facilitate collaboration need to be established.

Stakeholder theory has been proven to be a particularly useful tool to identify different obstacles that may hinder effective collaboration and communication among different stakeholders (Timur, 2010). The creation of collaborative relationships can be undermined by various issues, including action problems and differing accountability standards between organisations that strain existing collaborative efforts (Thomson et al., 2007). The non-linear ways in which the various stakeholders are connected within the tourism system makes their conduct and performance almost "unpredictable and unmanageable" (Baggio, 2011b, p. 51).

These theories have not been used as tools in this research because this thesis did not set out to identify the specifics involved in collaborative engagements and processes. It is the identification of the existence of collaboration and its significance for the elements that contribute to STC that this thesis pursues. In the light of the findings of this research, the theories discussed above could be used to understand the purposes behind stakeholders' collaborative decisions and actions.

2.11 Stakeholder Collaboration and Amalgamated Cities

The 21st century has been prophesied to be metropolitan (Heinelt & Kubler, 2005). Already, 54% of the global population lives in urban areas (UNWTO, 2012), a figure that is projected to increase to 66% by 2050 (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2014). A significant portion of that urbanisation takes place in large cities that are undergoing major expansions (Chiri & Giovagnorio, 2012). Municipal amalgamation is a common phenomenon pursued by areas undertaking expansion for a number of reasons. These range from the small size of the municipalities (Calciolari, Cristofoli, & Macciò, 2013), as a cost-saving measure, to improve accountability, to stimulate economic growth (Kushner & Siegel, 2003), to reduce governance and service replication across the municipalities (Kushner & Siegel, 2003) and to stimulate economic growth (Schwartz, 2009). Yet, not all regions that embrace several previously independent municipalities under a unitary authority live happily ever after. The fact that many opt out of the merger illustrates the challenges involved in the process of amalgamation.

A review of experiences in other metropolitan areas that have undergone jurisdictional changes reveals that collaboration prove challenging in amalgamated cities. Irrespective of the type of institutional metropolitan governance model, combining established municipalities with a metropolitan authority that can deliver a "consensual Metropolitan leadership (the strategic plan) and a framework within which municipalities can voluntarily co-operate with each other" is a daunting task (McKinlay, 2011a, p. 12). There are several factors that obstruct and hinder collaboration between merged municipalities and a metropolitan jurisdiction. One of the main factors is that enthusiasm for political amalgamations is rarely universal. The feelings of discontent start to increase when attention to local neighbourhoods is felt to lessen under a larger unitary authority, compared with when they were under the stewardship of a local council. The perceived or real under-representation and/or diminished participation of regional areas in the larger political jurisdiction create tensions within the metropolitan arena. Larger metropolitan areas consolidate regulations and services, which often leads to increased taxes and fees (Schwartz, 2009). When the increased costs are not matched with enhanced redistributive policies and do not appear to yield tangible benefits to local areas, particularly compared with the central district, discontentment can flare (Weir & Rongerude, 2007).

Prevalence of these issues is evident in merged jurisdictions, where unresolved tensions due to lack of collaboration and coordination have propelled some municipalities to opt out of the merger while others continue to struggle to search for effective ways to enhance inter-regional collaboration. Toronto, which had 2.5 million inhabitants when restructured, and Montreal, which had a population of 1.8 million, are two amalgamated cities that attracted significant academic attention due to the size and diversity of their respective populations (Boudreau, Hamel, Jouve, & Keil, 2006). A major objective for the political restructuring for both the cities was to stimulate economic growth, with tourism playing a key role. The size and the diversity of these areas have presented challenges for collaboration and coordination; subsequent to the amalgamations, the municipalities of both the areas have struggled to collaborate among themselves and within their provincial governments (Smith, 2007).

The megacity of Montreal was formed in 2002 by bringing under a unitary authority 27 previously independent municipalities and surrounding islands (Quesnel, 2006). The newly formed Montreal Metropolitan Community took over the functions of the former Montreal Urban Community (Smith, 2007). The merger had the support of major trade and labour unions that believed amalgamation would solve issues of suburbanisation. Citizens from suburban areas, however, opposed the merger and disagreed on the structure of the new jurisdiction as well as the degree of protection granted to local values by the new government. Tensions also centred on differences in cultural and linguistic identities between the English-speaking and French-speaking populations (Boudreau et al., 2006). Although strengthening economic competitiveness was supported by most, the "beggar-thy-neighbour" competition that threatened local competitiveness was not favoured by all (Tomas, 2012, p. 560). These differences in views and perceived goals made "voluntary cooperation impossible" (Tomas, 2012, p. 561). In 2006, 15 out of the 27 amalgamated suburbs demerged to regain individual municipal status (Boudreau et al., 2006).

Under a new governance structure, a board comprising the demerged municipalities was formed to represent them at the municipal level. The demerged suburbs were required to belong and contribute to the council and regional Montreal Metropolitan Community (Smith, 2007). Although the aim of the new system was to create a collaborative approach to governance, considerable discontent continues between the demerged areas and the government. Areas of dispute include misrepresentation in the council, the disproportionate taxes levied relative to the size and population of the areas and the

underlying feeling that the suburbs do not benefit fairly from their contribution, but instead are absorbed into projects targeted at the central city (Smith, 2007).

In the case of Toronto, collaboration between central and municipal governments is seen as less complex and more transparent (Boudreau et al., 2006). In 1953, when Toronto and 13 surrounding municipalities were brought under a two-tier municipal entity, there was general consensus regarding mutual benefits from the creation of the political entity (Smith, 2007). In 1967, the 13 municipalities were consolidated and reduced to six. While Toronto gained advantages from being the economic capital in the region, the fast-growing suburbs benefited from consolidation of services. A few years later, the growth of surrounding suburbs accelerated more than that of Toronto, due to exhaustion of developable land in Toronto, causing the city to become too congested and costly to accommodate the rising labour force. Delivery of essential services to the growing suburbs became strained. As a solution, a new system between the municipalities and Metropolitan Toronto was created to consolidate region-wide service delivery. Under the new system, the regional areas retained their boundaries and identities and assumed responsibility for local affairs. To ensure cooperation and collaboration, members for Metro Council were elected from the local councils to represent the regions. Metro Council undertook delivery of essential services such as water, transport and sewage. The local councils provided some community services while Metro and local councils shared some others such as senior housing and road cleaning (Smith, 2007).

In 1998, the six independent municipalities were amalgamated under a single city council for the city of Toronto (Janeiro, 2012). In contrast to consolidation in 1952, the creation of Greater Toronto occurred in the face of a high degree of local disapproval. The broad objectives that propelled Toronto's amalgamation include reducing cost, governance and service replication across municipalities, and improving accountability and efficiency (Kushner & Siegel, 2003). A number of strategic initiatives followed the restructuring to facilitate collaboration between the city and the civil society, among various departments and community organisations (Sancton, 2005). A governing structure comprising 34 councillors with elected representatives from the regional municipalities was established to provide added accountability to residents and more independence from Toronto. However, without local representatives on the Metro Board, collaboration dwindled between the lower-tier municipalities and political representatives. Battles among lower-tier municipalities and between Metro Council

became frequent. While Metro Council continued the delivery of essential services to the region, doubts were cast over the interaction and engagement at the local level (Sancton, 2005).

Ten years after the amalgamation, Schwartz (2009) reported that the objectives of the amalgamation had not been achieved: the process of amalgamation had proved very costly and had not lowered costs as expected, and the organisation of service provision across the region was a major concern. At the 2008 Symposium on Strengthening the Rural Municipal Sector, which focused on disaggregated municipal governance in Canada, the participants observed that in the amalgamated regions, noticeable indications of effective collaborative practices were absent (Martin et al., 2011). Even though a "collaborative, negotiated stewardship" of system management was recommended by the experienced stakeholder participants of the symposium, it was reported that "practitioners are still struggling, two decades on, to achieve genuinely meaningful forms of collaboration in practice" (Martin et al., 2011, p. 46).

Several reasons for failing to achieve the expected outcomes from the amalgamation were noted by Smith (2007): (1) coordination and integration between the local councils and Metro Council did not occur; (2) the large size of the council limits access to locals' direct engagement; the creation of one large entity out of previously smaller, publicly accessible local councils leads to a sense of being removed from decision-making for residents; (3) reduced funding combined with extra responsibilities forced the city to deliver more than before with lesser funds; and (4) the objective of reduced bureaucracy and duplication of services cannot be said to have been achieved as overall workforce and payroll swelled in the years that followed.

The above review of the cases of previously amalgamated cities reveals that merged city areas are volatile environments, and the success and sustainability of amalgamations depend largely on open communication, transparency and collaboration.

3   AUCKLAND SUPERCITY

The following section includes an overview of NZ as a whole, followed by a detailed account of the Auckland region, which provides a contextual setting for the case. A historical perspective on the region's political systems leading up to the 2010 amalgamation sheds light on the events that preceded this change. A depiction of the events during the amalgamation process and the present standpoint sets the context for understanding the significance of as well as the challenges for stakeholder collaboration within the merged region.

3.1   New Zealand – An Overview

NZ lies in the Pacific Ocean approximately 1,900 kilometres to the east of Australia and 6,500 kilometres southwest of Hawaii (Ministry of Economic Development [MED], 2007). First European to discover NZ in 1642 was Dutch explorer Abel Tasman, who was credited for naming the country, which was until then called Aotearoa, the land of the long white cloud, by the indigenous Māori. It was the rediscovery of NZ more than a hundred years later, in 1769, by English navigator James Cook that led to the arrival and later the settlement of Europeans. Māori ancestors, who originated from the Pacific, inhabited NZ before European settlers started to arrive from the 1800s onwards (Stone, 2001). NZ became a British colony and the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 (Stone, 2007).

NZ consists of three main adjacent islands and about 700 smaller islands stretching 1,500 kilometres across latitudes 34° to 47° south. The South Island, with an area of 150,437 square kilometres, is larger than the North Island (113,729 square kilometres). Much smaller Stewart Island located to the south of the South Island is 1,680 square kilometres. The smaller offshore islands lie within 50 kilometres of the coast of the main islands (Walrond, 2013). NZ's economic zone extends from 12 nautical miles off the coast to 200 miles offshore, making it 20 times bigger than the land area and the sixth largest in the world (Peter & Markham-Short, 2013). NZ's location on the edge of the Pacific and Indo-Australian tectonic plates and the resultant earth movements have created a hilly and mountainous terrain; about 13% is alpine terrain and many of its peaks exceed 2,900 metres (MED, 2007). Three-quarters of the land is more than 200

metres above sea level (Smith, 2012). Frequent earthquakes continue to occur throughout most parts of the country, and volcanic and geothermal activity occurs in the central North Island (Cooper & Agterberg, 2005). Lakes and fast-flowing rivers as well as glaciers cut across the landscape (Wardle, 1991).

NZ enjoys a temperate climate, although weather in the far north is often subtropical during the summer months (December–March). Snow and frosts are common in the inland areas of the South Island during the winter months (June–August) (Wardle, 1991). The highly urbanised population of 4,471,100 (30 June 2013) is mainly concentrated in the northern half of the North Island (more than 50%) with the rest distributed fairly evenly across the southern half of the North Island and the South Island over a 269,652 square kilometre area (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). Early geographic separation from the neighbouring countries has made NZ home to unique flora and fauna, many of which are not found elsewhere in the world (Smith, 2012). Among some of the well-known species are the kiwi, which lays the largest egg in the world compared with its body weight; the kakapo, the heaviest and only flightless parrot (Thomson, 2011); and the tuatara, a reptile whose origins date back to prehistoric times (Mohandesan, Subramanian, Millar, & Lambert, 2015). The giant kauri tree, which is one of the largest and holds the greatest volume of timber of any tree, is also endemic to NZ (Steward & Beveridge, 2010). NZ has an ethnically diverse population made up of Europeans (74%), Māori (14.9%), Asians (11.8%), Pacific peoples (7.4%) and various other nationalities (2.9%) (Statistics New Zealand, 2014). English is spoken by the vast majority (more than 96%) of the population, and is one of the three official languages, the remaining two being Māori and NZ sign language.

NZ's primary industries are agriculture, horticulture, forestry, mining and fishing. The primary sector makes up over 50% of total export and contributes 7.6% to the gross domestic product (GDP). National GDP stands at $216,134 million (September 2013) with a per capita GDP of $48,584 (Parliamentary Library, 2014). The largest contributing industries to the GDP (September 2012) are service industries (64.9%) and goods-producing industries (19.6%) (Treasury, 2013). The exchange rate is US$0.81/1NZ$, the inflation rate is 1.4% and the unemployment rate is 6% (Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment [MBIE], 2014). NZ is a sovereign state that follows a parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy; the British monarch is the titular head of state, represented by a governor-general in NZ (Statistics New Zealand, 2014).

Tourism plays a crucial role in the economy of NZ. Comprising a total tourism expenditure of $23.8 billion and 15.3% of the total export of goods and services, tourism is the second-largest export-earning industry behind the dairy industry in NZ (Statistics New Zealand, 2011). Tourism contributed $8.3 billion (4%) of the national GDP (year ended March 2014), and a further $6.5 billion (3.1%) of indirect value added from industries that support tourism. The tourism industry directly employs 4.7% of total full-time equivalents (FTEs) of NZ (Auckland Council 2014i). NZ's largest source markets for the year ended February 2015 are Australia, China, USA, UK and Japan. International visitors mainly travelled to NZ for vacation, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) and business.

Two important documents support NZ's tourism industry: NZ Tourism Strategy 2015 (NZTS 2015) (Ministry of Tourism, 2007) and Tourism 2025 – Growing Value Together/Whakatipu Uara Ngatahi. NZTS 2015 and Strategy 2025 are the national tourism strategies of NZ (NZTIA, 2014). NZTS 2015 was a 10-year strategy and the only strategy that informed the tourism industry during that period. The guiding principles outlined in NZTS 2015 are the philosophy followed by ATEED as disclosed in the interviews. NZTS 2015 was launched in 2007 by the Ministry of Tourism to provide vision and direction for the sector. It envisaged tourism as the leading contributor to a sustainable economy in NZ by 2015. To provide a foundation that embraces a sustainable approach to tourism development, NZTS 2015 was underpinned by the two central values of *kaitiakitanga* (guardianship), which denotes the principles of sustainability, and *manaakitanga* (hospitality), derived from indigenous principles. Four outcomes were proposed in order to reach the vision of NZTS 2015: (1) tourism provides an outstanding visitor experience, (2) the tourism industry is prosperous and attracts continuing investment, (3) tourism takes a leading role in environmental protection and enhancement, and (4) the tourism industry and communities work together for their common benefit (Ministry of Tourism, 2007).

Tourism 2025 is a framework developed by the Tourism Industry Association of NZ (TIANZ) in collaboration with leaders of the tourism industry and the public sector with the aim of uniting NZ's large and diverse tourism industry. The framework provides guidelines for a "shared vision" and represents the industry's "commitment to growing value by working together for the long-term benefit of New Zealand tourism and the wider economy" (TIANZ, 2014, p. 3). Tourism 2025 aspires to increase tourism's contribution to the economy to $41 billion in 2025, by aligning the industry for growth

and improving competitiveness. Increasing value is the key objective, and five themes underpin the framework:

a) Productivity – generate more profit from existing investments and resources, invest for the future from the profits earned, explore solutions for seasonality, and build capacity.

b) Visitor experience – constantly observe visitor expectations and refine experiences according to their needs.

c) Connectivity – expand and extend sustainable air connectivity by strengthening relationships, partnerships and collaboration.

d) Insight – drive and share progress by collecting and sharing relevant data and information to enable responsiveness to the swiftly changing world.

e) Target – identify and pursue prospects with the highest economic value.

The core theme of Tourism 2025 is for the tourism industry to work collectively towards achieving the objects that are outlined:

> Tourism is a complex, multi-dimensional, tough, highly competitive industry, but by aligning behind a common goal each of us can then work on overcoming the particular obstacles we face. For all our diversity, for all our differences, we share one *waka* (TIANZ, 2014, p. 16).

Strategy 2025 is the guiding framework for a series of initiatives that are being undertaken in NZ. It was mentioned by several key players of the industry who participated in the research as significantly important for the future direction of NZ tourism. A key aspect that is important for this thesis is the fact that the development of the strategy was the outcome of close collaboration by industry stakeholders. Strategy 2025 emphasizes increasing yield and broadening visitor experiences rather than visitor numbers, thus reflecting broad concepts of sustainability and STC.

3.2   Auckland City

The city of Auckland (Tāmaki Makaurau) was founded in 1840 by William Hobson, NZ's first British governor (Moon, 2007). Auckland was declared the capital of NZ in 1841 and remained the seat of the government until Wellington replaced it in 1865 (Roughan, 2012). The Auckland region was a Māori conurbation from approximately 1350, with native settlements spread across the isthmus (Barr, 1922). Since long before the inception of the city, the region of Auckland has been renowned for its luxury and

wealth (Palmer, 2002). The strategic position of the region on and around an isthmus, bound by two harbours, with fertile land and rich natural endowments made the indigenous Māori settlers name the area *Tāmaki Makaurau,* meaning 'land of a hundred lovers', likening it to a beautiful girl contended for by many admirers (Stone, 2001, p. 7).

Auckland is one of the 16 officially designated regions of NZ. It is located in the North Island of NZ, bordering Northland to the north and the Waikato region to the south. The region encompasses rural areas, small towns and the islands of the Hauraki Gulf. It is home to Auckland City, the largest and most populous city in NZ. With a population of more than 1.4 million, Auckland holds 33.4% of NZ's population and is the fastest-growing region in the country. It is also home to the largest Polynesian population in the world (Auckland Council, 2013b). The strong Māori roots and an ever-increasing immigrant population render Auckland a city of vibrant cultural diversity and multiple ethnicities (Collins & Wardlow, 2011). With more than 200 ethnic groups recorded to be living in Auckland and 40% of the population comprising other ethnicities (see Figure 3.1), Auckland is reported to be more diverse than London or Sydney (Tapaleao, 2014).

Figure 3.1: Ethnic Groups of Auckland
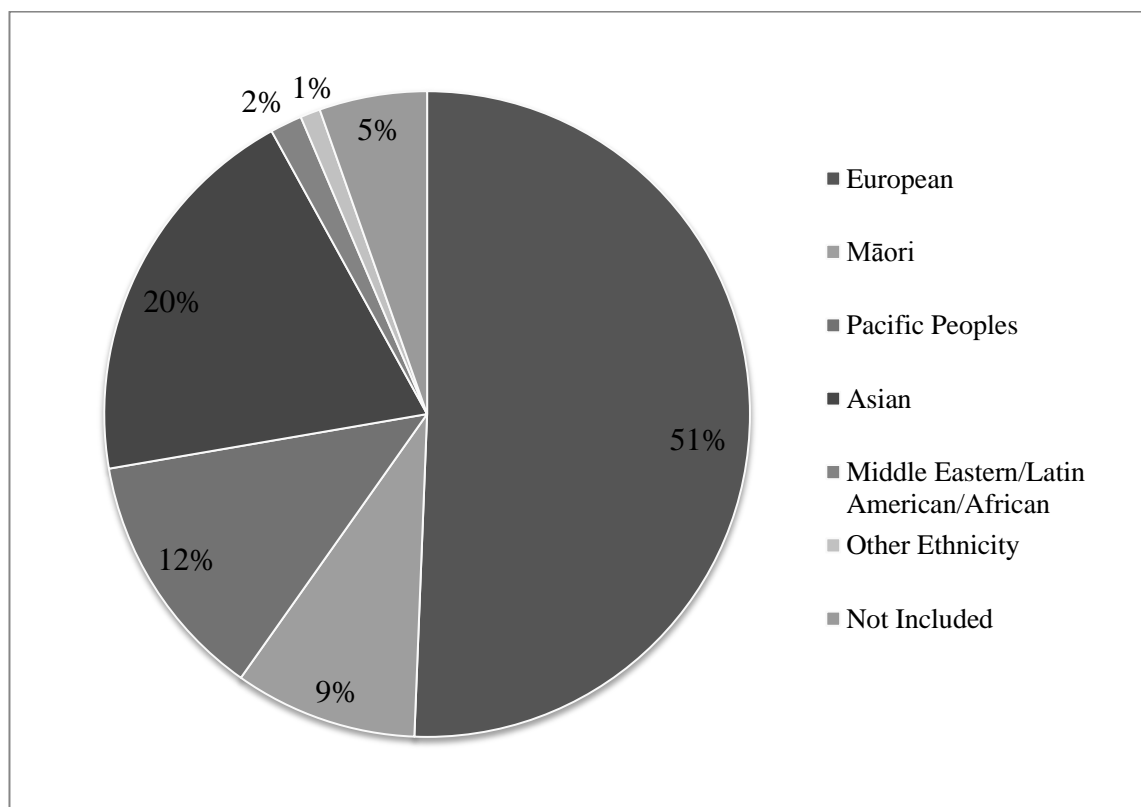
(Adapted from Statistics New Zealand, 2013)

The Auckland isthmus has a total coastline of 3,702 kilometres and measures less than two kilometres at the narrowest point (Auckland Council, 2011b). Auckland's landscape is woven with volcanic cones, harbours, lakes, rivers and mountain ranges. The two harbours and the volcanic cones are conspicuous features of Auckland. Waitemata Harbour, located in the Hauraki Gulf, melds with the Pacific Ocean to the east, and Manukau Harbour channels into the Tasman Sea to the west. About 50 volcanoes that belong to Auckland's volcanic field are situated within approximately 20 kilometres of the city centre (Hayward, Kenny, & Grenfell, 2011). These dormant volcanoes, the youngest of which erupted 600 years ago, take the form of conical craters, lakes and depressions (Lindsay, Leonard, Smid, & Hayward, 2011). Two mountain ranges – the Waitakere Ranges to the west and the more low-lying Hunua Ranges to the southeast – straddle the Auckland isthmus (Flagler, 2010). It is one of the warmest and sunniest main cities of NZ, and has humid summers and wet, damp winters. The mean annual temperatures range from 14º C to 16º C; eastern areas are generally warmer than western areas. The average rainfall is between 1,200 and 1,400 millimetres per annum and occurs all year round (Lorrey, Griffiths, et al., 2013).

3.3   Historical Overview of Auckland's Governance Structure

Attempts at local governance in Auckland began soon after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi and the transfer of administration to the new capital city in 1841 (Bush, 2009). The following timeline depicts significant milestones in the history of Auckland from 1840 to 2010:

- 1840s – first attempts at legislation by the initial colonial governors; mostly fruitless due to prematurity
- 1851 – creation of Auckland Borough Council – the first effective attempt at self-governance
- 1852 – termination of Borough Council due to lack of resources
- 1853 – governance takes the form of a city council – short-lived due to "personal politics" (p. 3)
- 1867 – passing of the Municipal Corporation Act authorising cessation of the provincial structure
- 1871 – Auckland is proclaimed a borough, and six months later a city
- 1876 – provinces are abolished and their functions reassigned to 63 counties
- 1944 – establishment of Parliamentary Committee on Local Government – advocates "amalgamation by legislation" the following year
- 1946 – Local Government Commission is set up

- 1950 – Proceedings of the Local Government Commission recessed in the face of strong hostility to further amalgamations

- 1954 – Mayor John Luxford endorses a two-tier local government – Advisory Metropolitan Local Bodies Association (later retitled Metropolitan Council) established

- 1963 – formation of Auckland Regional Authority

- 1989 – institutional restructuring under government's review of local governance systems

- 2010 – formation of Supercity

(Adapted from Bush, 2009; Jackson, 1976)

The history of territorial governance in Auckland reveals two discernible concurrent movements. The attempts and aspirations of the leaders of Auckland to expand the territory to address issues of fragmentation in an ever-growing city continued parallel to disputes and debates against the increasing size and power of Auckland by neighbouring areas. The population of the city continued to grow and exceeded the second most heavily populated city, Dunedin, in 1886 (45,518), when its metropolitan population reached 57,048 (Bush, 2009). The gap has continued to widen ever since.

3.4 Creation of the Supercity

Persistent campaigns for amalgamation from as early as 1901 advocated a "greater Auckland" and the concept of a "single isthmus authority" to bring together the large number of councils (32 city councils, 25 borough councils, four county councils and one town council) and various boards that undertook functions such as road works, drainage and parks (Edgar, 2012, p. 8). Friction, divisiveness and disharmony were prevalent between the councils and boards due to fundamental differences in philosophy, responsibilities and cost sharing. Suburban antipathy succeeded in quelling the efforts of the advocates for unified regional governance, despite the fact that lack of coordination and collaboration adversely affected metropolitan services and development (Bush, 2009).

The central government reviewed and restructured local governance systems in 1989, and introduced regional authorities with mandated functions such as transport, environmental management, recreation and planning (Collins & Wardlow, 2011). This decree by the government once again brought monumental changes to Auckland's political structure. In the midst of rallies against forced amalgamation, the Auckland Regional Authority (ARA) was reborn as the Auckland Regional Council (Dixon &

Dupuis, 2003, p. 356). Its former 44 local authorities were constricted into four cities and three districts. A number of ad hoc boards were abolished, wards for new territorial authorities were specified and community boards were elected. From 1989 until 2010, Auckland was governed by several separate city and district councils, which were organised into four cities (North Shore; Waitakere; Auckland, including the islands of the Hauraki Gulf; and Manukau) and three districts – Rodney, Papakura and Franklin (Edgar, 2012). The Auckland Regional Council had regulatory and governance responsibilities across the entire area (McKinlay, 2011b), except for the southern part of Franklin District, which was affiliated with the Waikato region (McClure, 2012).

A call for reform and direction in Auckland's governance initiated by key business stakeholders and local authorities started to gather momentum between 2005 and 2006 with the purpose of facilitating democratic representation of local communities to create strategic policy under the umbrella of one 'Supercity' and a single mayor (Cheyne, 2011). The recommendation in 2009 by the Royal Commission on Governance led to the establishment of a unitary council in order to overcome prevalent problems of fragmentation in governance and lack of engagement from local communities. The Local Government Act 2009 effectively transformed the governing structure of the Auckland Region and established the Auckland Council as a unitary authority on 1 November 2010, amalgamating the eight previous local councils.

The disestablished former councils are Auckland City Council, Auckland Regional Council, Franklin District Council, Manukau City Council, North Shore City Council, Papakura District Council, Rodney District Council and Waitakere City Council. The regions that come under the Auckland Council consisting of 15 LBs and 13 wards are collectively referred to as Auckland City. For the purpose of this thesis, the areas within the LB areas of Waiheke, Great Barrier, Albert-Eden, Puketapapa, Waitemata, Orakei and Maungakiekie-Tamaki (see Figure 3.2) will be referred to as Central Auckland and the rest of the areas will be referred to as peripheral areas. The areas thus identified as Central Auckland corresponds with the areas that are classified as Central Auckland (see Figure 3.3) in the Auckland Council's Civil Defence Emergency and Management Group Plan 2011 – 2016 (Auckland Council, 2015c).

Auckland City came to be referred to as the 'Auckland Supercity', or more commonly, the 'Supercity', to reflect the scale of the new city in comparison with other local authorities in NZ (McKinlay, 2011a, p. 2). The amalgamated Auckland City became

Australasia's largest territorial authority (Chen, 2013). The merger granted the opportunity to become "a more powerful single voice than before, with more cohesion and alignment of thinking and collaboration" (Chen, 2013, p. A34).

Figure 3.2: Map of Auckland Region, Wards and Local Areas
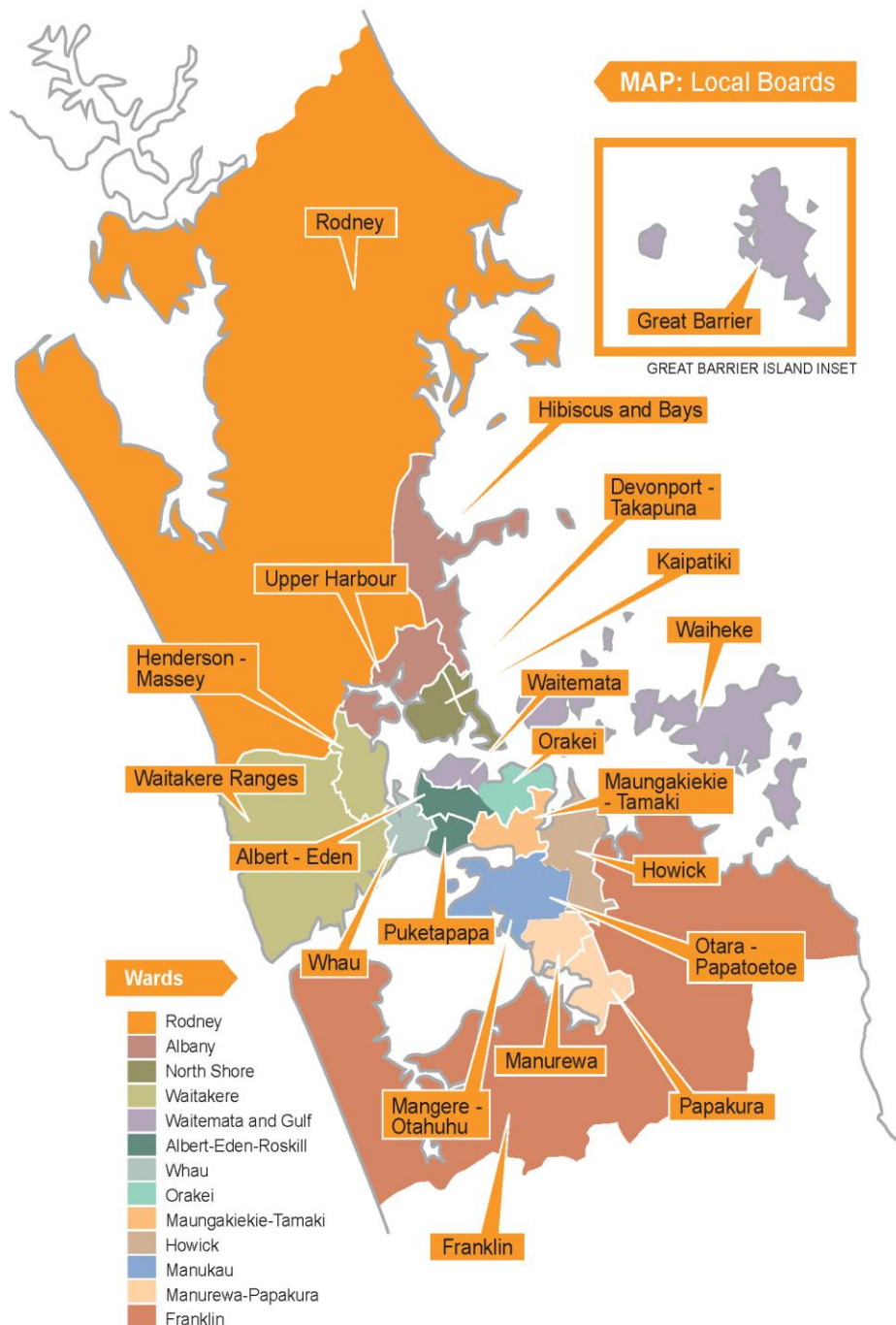
(Source: Knowledge Auckland, 2015)

The establishment of the Auckland Council stipulated changes in the council's structure, functions, responsibilities and authorities, which are different from those of all other councils. One of the significant differences is the role and the powers entitled to the mayor that makes the mayor of Auckland "the second most powerful person in New Zealand" (Rowan, 2011, p. 400). This creates instantaneous power imbalance with other local areas wanting to expand and develop their areas and to garner influence and competitiveness. It was predicted that:

> The Auckland Super City will not only bring radical change to local government in Auckland; it will also define the shape of local government in the rest of New Zealand. Now that Auckland has sneezed we are all starting to catch the cold, and it is one whose symptoms will linger for years – not days (Rowan, 2011, p. 399).

Currently "Supercity-style" inquiries are being conducted by the Local Government Commission in four regions: the Far North, Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa and Wellington. In March 2014, it was reported that a group of mayors held a "secret" gathering "to organise a fight against new Super Cities" (Fisher, 2014, p. A6). This clearly is an indication that support is divided for amalgamated governance.

Figure 3.3: Regional Map of Auckland
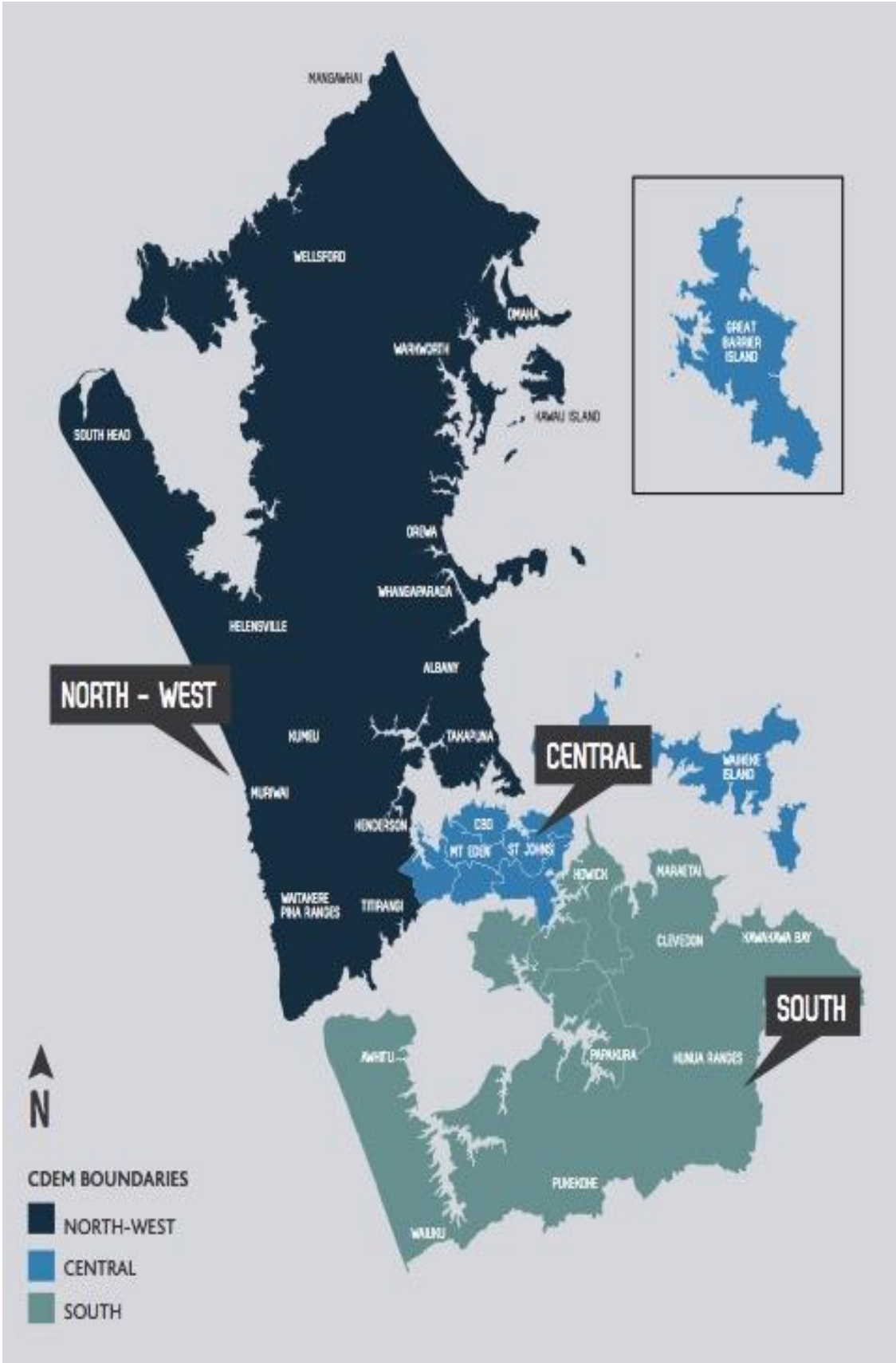
(Source: Auckland Council, 2015c)

3.5   Auckland Council

The Auckland Council is made up of two elected bodies – the governing body comprising a mayor and 20 councillors, and 21 LBs representing local communities that are elected by the board area. The main responsibility of the governing body is region-wide strategic decision-making. The LBs focus on matters related to their specific board areas, and provide leadership for communities and input to region-wide strategies and plans (Auckland Council, 2012b). Figure 3.4 illustrates the various components of the Auckland Council and their interaction.

Figure 3.4: Components and Structure of Auckland Council
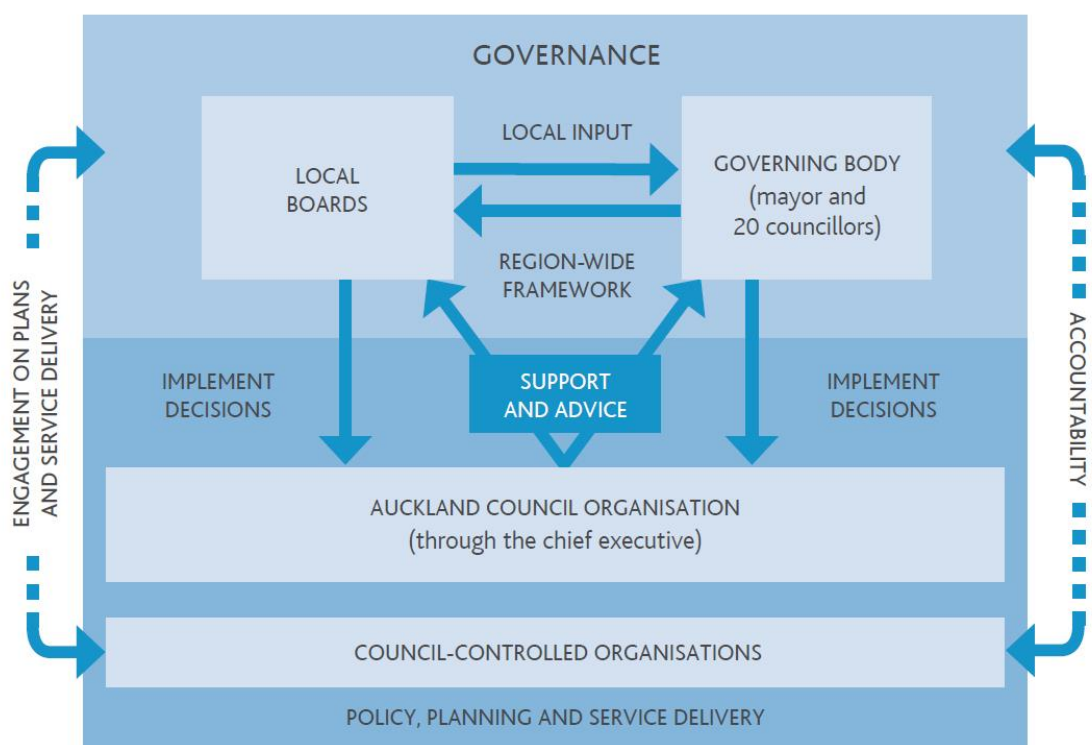
(Auckland Council, 2011b, p. 29)

CCOs were established to assist the Auckland Council in achieving its strategic goals. In a CCO, the council controls 50% or more of the votes or holds the right to appoint 50% of the directors or trustees. There are six 'significant' CCOs and several smaller ones. A 'significant' CCO is responsible for the delivery of an important service or activity or owns or manages assets valued at more than $10 million. The six significant CCOs and their functions are listed below:

- Auckland Council Investments Ltd – manages the council's investments, principally its 22% shareholding in Auckland International Airport Ltd and its 100% shareholding in Ports of Auckland Ltd.

- Auckland Council Property Ltd – manages approximately $700 million worth of commercial and non-core property (property not required for core council services or infrastructure).

- ATEED – whose stated purpose is to "rationalise and consolidate events and economic development activities across the region to achieve a consistent approach".

- Auckland Transport – responsible for all of Auckland's transport other than state highways.

- Auckland Waterfront Development Agency – charged with leading the development of Auckland's waterfront, including the completion of a master plan for the area.

- Regional Facilities Auckland (RFA) – responsible for the management and oversight of major regional arts, cultural and recreational facilities.

- Watercare Services Ltd – responsible for wholesale and retail water and wastewater across the whole of the Auckland region with the exception of the former Papakura district, where these services are managed under a long-term franchise agreement entered into 20 years ago.

(Adapted from McKinlay, 2011a, p. 6)

In 2014, three years after its establishment, the Auckland Council embarked on a review of the seven CCOs. The exercise was aimed at exploring the need for a change of CCO functions, scope and undertakings, and to examine overlapping responsibilities among them (Auckland Council, 2014d). A 'current state assessment' by private consultants revealed that, although the CCOs seemed to be working at a structural level, inherent issues existed that needed to be addressed. These include (a) lack of understanding between the councillors and LB members regarding management, ownership and governance; (b) miscommunication or lack of communication causing councillors having to bear responsibility for CCO blunders; (c) councillors getting involved in the roles of CCOs; and (d) the "no-surprises" policy of CCOs not being reciprocated by the mayor (Orsman, 2014). The purpose of a "no-surprises policy" is to ensure that the CCOs and council keep each other informed about important issues and that queries about their activities by the media are handled efficiently and by the right person (Auckland Council, 2015a, p. 5). Examples of instances when councillors had to bear criticism for CCO actions include the rule regarding the moving of roadside berms by

Auckland Transport. This is a rule that came into effect on 1 July 2013 that was included in Auckland Council's Annual Plan 2013/2014, which predicted saving $3 million annually (Auckland Council, 2014c). Other instances of conflicts occurring between the councillors and CCOs relate to the removal by RFA of the Japanese Garden at Auckland Zoo, and the objection by a councillor to the colour of road signs chosen by Auckland Transport (Orsman, 2014).

3.6   Auckland's Economy

Auckland plays a central role in NZ's economy as the largest contributing region, with a 35% share in the national GDP. Auckland's largest industry is manufacturing, which comprises over 12% of the city's GDP. With a large percentage of NZ's wholesale operators based in Auckland, the region accounted for 54.7% of NZ's wholesale trade in 2010. The highly urbanised region's lowest contributing sector to GDP is agriculture at 2.4% for the same year (Auckland Council, 2014b). Auckland's five key industries and their share in GDP are illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Key Industries of Auckland

Auckland's Top 5 Industries	Proportion of Auckland's GDP %
Manufacturing	12.5
Professional, scientific, technical, administrative, and support services	11.6
Financial and insurance services	8.2
Other services	7.5
Wholesale trade	7.2

(Statistics New Zealand, 2014)

Auckland's economy performed at a growth rate of 3.1% against 2.5% of the rest of NZ (year ended March 2015). Youth unemployment (15–19 year olds) decreased from over 30% during 2013 to 24% by March 2015. Table 3.2 summarises Auckland's key economic indicators.

Table 3.2: Key Economic Indicators of Auckland (2014)

Population	1,526,900
Percentage of total NZ population	33.8%
GDP growth rate	3.2%
Unemployment rate	7.3%
Youth unemployment rate 15–19 year olds	24%
Youth unemployment rate 20–24 year olds	11%
Inflation rate	1.5%
Median annual earnings (2012)	$56,580
Median house price	$660,000
Productivity growth rate	1.1%

(Adapted from Auckland Council, 2015b)

Auckland is well positioned with regard to a number of drivers of economic success. However, the real economic performance of Auckland is comparatively low. Placed 69th among 85 OECD city regions for GDP per capita, Auckland lags behind its closest neighbouring city regions of Sydney and Melbourne (Auckland Council, 2013a). The economic targets set in the Economic Development Strategy (EDS) (Auckland Council, 2014e), are envisaged to raise Auckland's position in the OECD rankings by up to 20 places in as many years (Auckland Council, 2012c).

3.7   Role of Tourism in Auckland

Auckland is a key player in the NZ tourism industry and is recognised as the gateway to NZ, with 72% of visitors to the country arriving through Auckland International Airport (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). In 2012, the city's visitor industry generated $4.8 billion, of which $2.37 billion was from international visitors and $2.46 billion from domestic travellers. With 1.93 million visitors and a 6% increase to the previous year, the year ending 2014 saw the highest increase in visitor arrivals to the city. The increase in visitor numbers to Auckland was common among all of its major international markets, where Australia is the largest market followed by China (Statistics New Zealand, 2015). The performance of Auckland tourism in international arrivals for the period of 2008 to 2014 is illustrated in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.5: Number of International Visitors to Auckland 2008–2014
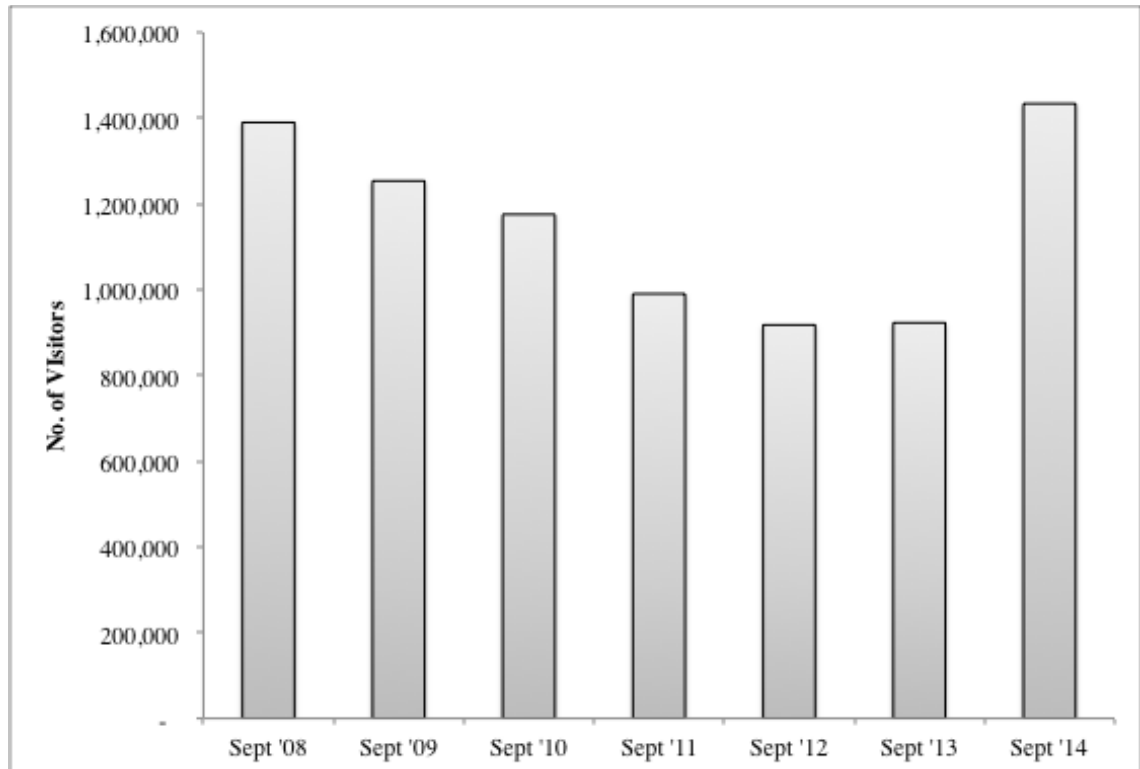
(Statistics New Zealand, 2015)

Figure 3.5 demonstrates that international arrivals to Auckland from September 2008 continued to decrease for the next four consecutive years until the same month in 2014 where the trend takes a marked upward drift. The decrease in international arrivals to Auckland within this period is a reflection of international and domestic events that impacted the overall visitor arrivals to NZ. In 2009, NZ's inbound travel was significantly impacted by the spread of the Influenza A virus (H1N1) that had spread over 80 countries resulting in the 2009 influenza pandemic (MBIE, 2009). Even though the World Health Organisation (WHO) did not endorse travel restrictions (Mateus, Otete, et al., 2014), many national health authorities from across the world implemented measures such as quarantining visitors identified or suspected of the viral infection in order to restrict the spread of the virus. Travel activities and decision to travel were shaped by the existence of the virus (MBIE, 2009). The most remarkable decline in visitor arrivals was seen from the Asian markets including South Korea, China and Japan, where by June 2009 (the first four weeks since the outbreak of H1N1) these markets were down by 38% contributing to an overall 2% decline (MBIE, 2009).

The Canterbury earthquake 2010-11 created a huge shock not only to the region's tourism industry, which fell by 46% from pre-quake years. Even though, international

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flights to Auckland suffered no loss, the significant impact on arrivals to Christchurch was reflected on the overall visitor numbers to NZ. Interference to airline routes caused by the 2010 Icelandic ash cloud and ash from the eruption of the Puyehue-Cordón Caulle volcano in Chile disrupted air travel during 2010 and 2012 respectively. These events compounded the ongoing effects of the global financial crisis that continued to affect long haul markets Europe and Asia particularly the decline of visitor numbers from 2008 to 2010 (TIANZ, 2014). These events highlight that tourism is susceptible to external and internal risks. The various events that significantly impacted NZ tourism both positively as well as negatively are illustrated in Figure 3.6. Recent data shows Auckland and NZ's tourism has largely recovered from the ramifications of the various recent adverse events. Visitor arrivals to Auckland surpassed two million for the first time in December 2014 (Bradely, 2015). The year ended October 2015 saw 7.1% increase in national visitor arrivals following a 5.4 percent growth in 2014 (Statistics New Zealand, 2015).

Figure 3.6:   **Impact of Significant events on NZ's International Visitor Arrivals**
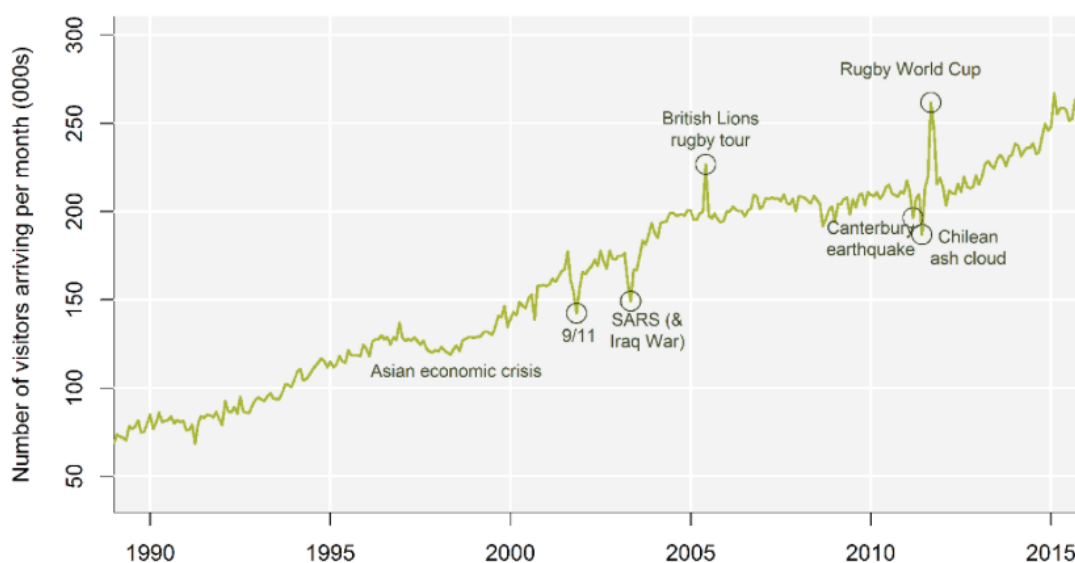
(Source: MBIE, 2015)

On the World Economic Forum's Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, NZ ranks 16th out of 141 countries across the world and 5th within the Asia Pacific region. Australia is rated 1st and Japan 2nd in the region (see Table 3.3)

Table 3.3:   **The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2015: Eastern Asia and Oceania**

Country	Regional Rank	Global Rank	Business Environment	Safety & Security	Health & Hygiene	Human Resources and Labour Market	ICT Readiness	Prioritization of Travel & Tourism	International Openness	Price Competitiveness	Environmental Sustainability	Air Transport Infrastructure	Ground & Port Infrastructure	Tourist Service Infrastructure	Natural Resources	Cultural Resources & Business
Australia	1	7	5.04	6.24	6.14	4.72	5.73	4.81	4.04	3.06	4.64	5.8	3.69	5.44	5.31	5.13
Japan	2	9	5.12	6.05	6.43	5.2	6	5.44	4.16	3.75	4.3	4.54	5.29	4.11	3.94	5.92
Hong Kong	4	13	6.08	6.31	6.41	5.3	6.22	5.63	3.78	3.59	3.96	5.42	6.45	4.05	3.63	2.58
NZ	5	16	5.69	6.41	5.72	5.34	5.57	5.62	4.55	3.77	4.94	4.72	4.06	5.87	4.41	2.27
China	6	17	4.25	5.47	5.29	5.2	4.15	4.73	2.52	5.1	2.93	4.27	3.91	3.04	5.05	6.44
Korea	8	29	4.44	5.45	6.36	4.81	5.97	4.52	3.6	4.06	3.86	4.05	5.06	4.33	2.34	4.85
Taiwan	9	32	5.27	6.03	6.13	5.1	5.41	4.41	4.07	5.04	4.09	3.4	5.4	4.05	3.01	3.25
Mongolia	18	99	4.39	5.4	6.02	4.63	3.42	4.01	2.69	5.25	3.24	2.33	2.09	3.21	2.51	1.78
Regional Average			5.03	5.92	6.06	5.04	5.31	4.89	3.68	4.2	3.99	4.32	4.49	4.26	3.74	4.03

(Source: World Economic Forum, 2015)

According to international visitors, the main strengths of Auckland are its natural attractions and scenery, and the friendly nature of locals. These are aspects that scored an average of 8 or more on a scale of 1–10 in a survey that was conducted by ATEED to inform the AVP. The cruise sector comprises a major component of Auckland's visitor economy. The 2012–2013 cruise season brought 178,000 passengers and 78,000 crew to the city and $114.9 million to its economy. Auckland is the most visited city of NZ, welcoming 70% of total visitors to the country in 2013. This included 2.8 million international and 3.5 million domestic guest nights annually. Auckland ranked third in the world on the 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015 Mercer scale of global lifestyle cities (www.uk.mercer.com). In 2012, Lonely Planet New Zealand listed Auckland as having NZ's top two experiences. The first is the Waitemata Harbour and Hauraki Gulf, and the second is urban Auckland. The recognition of the harbours presented positive impacts to Auckland's tourism industry, given that the cruise sector is a major contributor to the industry. Auckland won the title for the third best sporting city in the world at the 2013 International Sports Event Management (ISEM) Awards in London, and was named by Lonely Planet Auckland as one of the top 10 places to visit in 2014 (Auckland Council, 2014f).

ATEED is responsible for ensuring the achievement of Auckland's economic priorities, increasing visitation and its international profile, contributing to the economic performance, and supporting and enhancing its competitiveness (ATEED, 2011a). ATEED is mandated to undertake marketing and development of tourism products, running information centres and attracting and planning for major events in Auckland. ATEED's vision to improve NZ's economic prosperity by successfully transforming Auckland's economy reflects the significant role of both Auckland and its tourism industry in the economy of the country as a whole (ATEED, 2011b).

Auckland's growth and competitiveness is underpinned by collaborative partnerships. During the Emirates Team New Zealand's campaign for the 2013 America's Cup, ATEED partnered with central government's 'NZ Inc' programme. The partnership supported Auckland's goals for foreign direct investment and the promotion of international and luxury tourism and business events. ATEED's sponsorship of the largest yacht racing regatta in China – the China Cup – led to the development of close connections between Auckland and Chinese marine industry. Partnerships with China Southern Airlines and Flight Centre Australia contribute to sustain momentum of Auckland's two fastest growing and high value markets – China and Australia. The

initiatives under the partnership with Flight Centre Australia included creating Auckland experiences that appeal to various Australian market segments with the aim of making them stay longer and spend more (ATEED, 2015c).

3.8 Auckland's Major Economic Plans and Strategies

A 30-year plan by Auckland Council labelled the 'Auckland Plan' sets Auckland's strategic direction for integrating economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives. Underpinned by four key platforms (illustrated in Figure 3.7), the vision of Auckland is to be "the world's most liveable city", a place that Aucklanders are proud of, want to stay in or return to, and others want to visit, move to or invest in (Auckland Council, 2012b, p. 18). Liveability is described in the Auckland Plan as a shared desire by Aucklanders:

> to create a city where all people can enjoy a high quality of life and improved standards of living, a city which is attractive to mobile people, firms, and investors, and a place where environmental and social standards are respected (Auckland Council, 2012b, p. 18).

Several underlying strategies support and complement the Auckland Plan that was adopted on 29 March 2012 (see Figure 3.7). The procedures for implementing the vision for Auckland are illustrated in a comprehensive strategy labelled the Long-term Plan 2012–2022 (LTP). The fundamental details for aligning and executing projects, programmes and services that would achieve the results identified in the Auckland Plan are detailed in the LTP. The first years' requirements are illustrated in detail in the council's annual plan.

Figure 3.7: Auckland Plan's Key Platforms

I. COHESIVE, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES	II. AN EXCELLENT TRANSPORT SYSTEM	III. A PRODUCTIVE, HIGH-VALUE ECONOMY	IV. QUALITY URBAN, RURAL AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS
• Strong local identity	• An effective integrated transport system	• Increased Auckland contribution to NZ's economy	• A region with great people, places
• Diverse communities actively engaged in Auckland's future	• Transport for 2 million Aucklanders by 2030	• Auckland is more attractive to investors and skilled workers	• Attractive, sustainable living environment
• All Aucklanders feel they belong	• A region easy for people and freight to get around	• Increased export	• Natural environments protected, enhanced and used by the public
	• A transport system that supports better environment	• World-class infrastructure	
		• Auckland is both a gateway and tourism destination in its own right	

(Auckland Council, 2012b, p. 1)

Figure 3.8: Strategies Supporting Auckland's Vision

(Auckland Council, 2012d, p. 10)

One of the key platforms of the Auckland Plan is the development of the transport system. The proposed transport network includes a city rail link to connect with the existing rail system, an additional Waitemata Harbour crossing, improvements to the state highway network and modernisation of the community rail system. In addition, a group of transport projects labelled the Auckland Manukau Eastern Transport Initiative (AMETI) aims at realising the economic potential of the area by improving strategic transport links (Auckland Transport, 2014). The delivery of these projects is anticipated to require an investment of $12 billion over the next 30 years (Auckland Council, 2014b).

Two significant plans that support the LTP are the Waterfront Plan and the City Centre Masterplan. The Waterfront Plan is a design-led action plan for the revitalisation of the city centre waterfront. The project once completed is predicted to become a significant feature and attraction for tourists and residents alike. The City Centre Masterplan, launched in August 2012, focuses on projects for urban design and promotion of the central city. The city centre is preferred by the Masterplan as the location for local and international head offices as it is envisaged that these developments will lead to investments in tourism and business (Auckland Council, 2012a).

The EDS was formulated in tandem with the Auckland Plan to guide its economic vision, "Auckland the world's most liveable city – an internationally competitive, prosperous economy for all Aucklanders through a step change in exports and

internationalisation" (Auckland Council, 2010, p. 1). The EDS proposes three core objectives to achieve this aspiration:

- an annual average increase of regional exports greater than 6%

- an annual average real GDP increase greater than 5%

- an annual productivity growth greater than 2%.

The Unitary Plan, which replaced the former regional and district plans, is the rulebook that guides Auckland in meeting the requirements of economic and housing growth. It identifies and determines capital requirements for a 10-year period based on the requirements of services and activities for Auckland. The Unitary Plan also outlines ways for Auckland's towns to reach their potential to create a superior, more condensed city, while retaining its rural character (Su, 2014). Strategies for protecting and enhancing the natural environment are included as well. A draft of the Unitary Plan was released for public feedback during March 2013 (Lewis & Murphy, 2015) with details of a compact city model proposing high-rise, small-size apartments in towns and suburbs to develop new houses in rural areas (Su, 2014). Due to concerns by the public over some aspects of the plan, particularly the plans for intensification of urban areas, the redevelopment of town centres and zoning for apartments, the draft plan was opened for public submissions – the first time a plan has been put out for public engagement. After the assessment and further reviews, the plan became operative by the end of 2014 (Auckland Council, 2011b).

Affordability of housing is a major issue in Auckland (Auckland Council, 2014b). The proposed new rural–urban boundary and re-zoning of green field areas for further housing development is expected to ease the problem of housing affordability (Auckland Council, 2014a). However, the debates between the central government and the council interject in the process. The Resource Management Reform Bill requires that the Unitary Plan be referred to a local government and environment select committee in Parliament. It will also require that the plan be referred to a hearings panel appointed by the government before implementation. Difficulties in procedures are seen as challenges to addressing policies that constrain the Auckland Council's ability to proceed with the necessary steps to support Auckland's growth as a region, as was stated by the current Auckland mayor, who claimed they are one of the biggest obstacles to moving forward with achieving the plans set out for Auckland:

The need for us to ensure real cohesion with the central government. Successful nations and cities achieve best when they plan together and work together very closely, analyse, research and achieve outcomes. I don't think we are in that right frame in New Zealand to take up the opportunities of a united Auckland. At Governmental level we are stuck back at 50, 60, 70 years ago (Brown, as cited in Orsman, 2014, p. A9).

The Unitary Plan is reviewed every three years; the first review process conducted during 2014 identified that keeping tax rates and debt low and sustainable while continuing to invest in infrastructure to keep up with the growth of the city were areas of concern (Auckland Council, 2011a). These issues are addressed in the LTP (Auckland Council, 2014g).

While amalgamation provided the region with opportunities associated with scale, capacity and resources, it has also brought challenges. The amalgamation of the region also led to the merging of various regulatory systems across the region. Eight different former rating systems were combined to create a region-wide single rating system based on capital value that calculates rates throughout the region proportionately. This resulted in a huge increase for some and decreases for other areas. The average rates increase of 4.8% initially set out in the LTP for 2013–2014 was reduced to no more than a 2.9% increase (Auckland Council, 2014h). The adjustment was facilitated through cost-cutting measures, balancing fees across the region and employing revenue-generating actions (Auckland Council, 2013c). A new property revaluation scheme and a political decision for a uniform charge meant that high-value property owners had to pay more than they did previously. The regulation led to subsequent discontentment among Auckland's residents (Orsman, 2014, p. A9). The council envisages that public–private partnerships (PPPs), engaging people from public, private and not-for-profit sectors and local and central government could assist in overcoming these obstacles (Auckland Council, 2013c).

3.9   Key Tourism Plans and Strategies

3.9.1   The Auckland Visitor Plan (AVP)

The AVP is the key platform that guides Auckland's visitor economy to support the achievement of the city's long-term aspirations. The economic goal is to increase the visitor economy from $3.33 billion in 2010 to $6 billion in 2021 through expanding tourism revenue from international and domestic visitor yield. This goal is to be achieved through a range of purposeful steps re-evaluating existing tourism offerings and by the appropriate combination of public and private investments. The place

aspiration is to be recognised nationally and globally as an "urban Oasis where big city sophistication goes hand- in- hand with an outstanding natural playground" (ATEED, 2011b, p. 4). The place aspiration is based on research and feedback from visitors, businesses, the council, CCOs and LBs.

The AVP adopts a strategic framework with Auckland's 2021 place and economic aspirations as its central focus (see Figure 3.9). The AVP will deliver two important outcomes: (a) enhancing the visitor proposition, which will contribute to effective marketing by making Auckland a more attractive and sustainable place for visitors and locals; and (b) growing demand for Auckland.

Figure 3.9: Strategic Framework for Growing Auckland's Visitor Economy
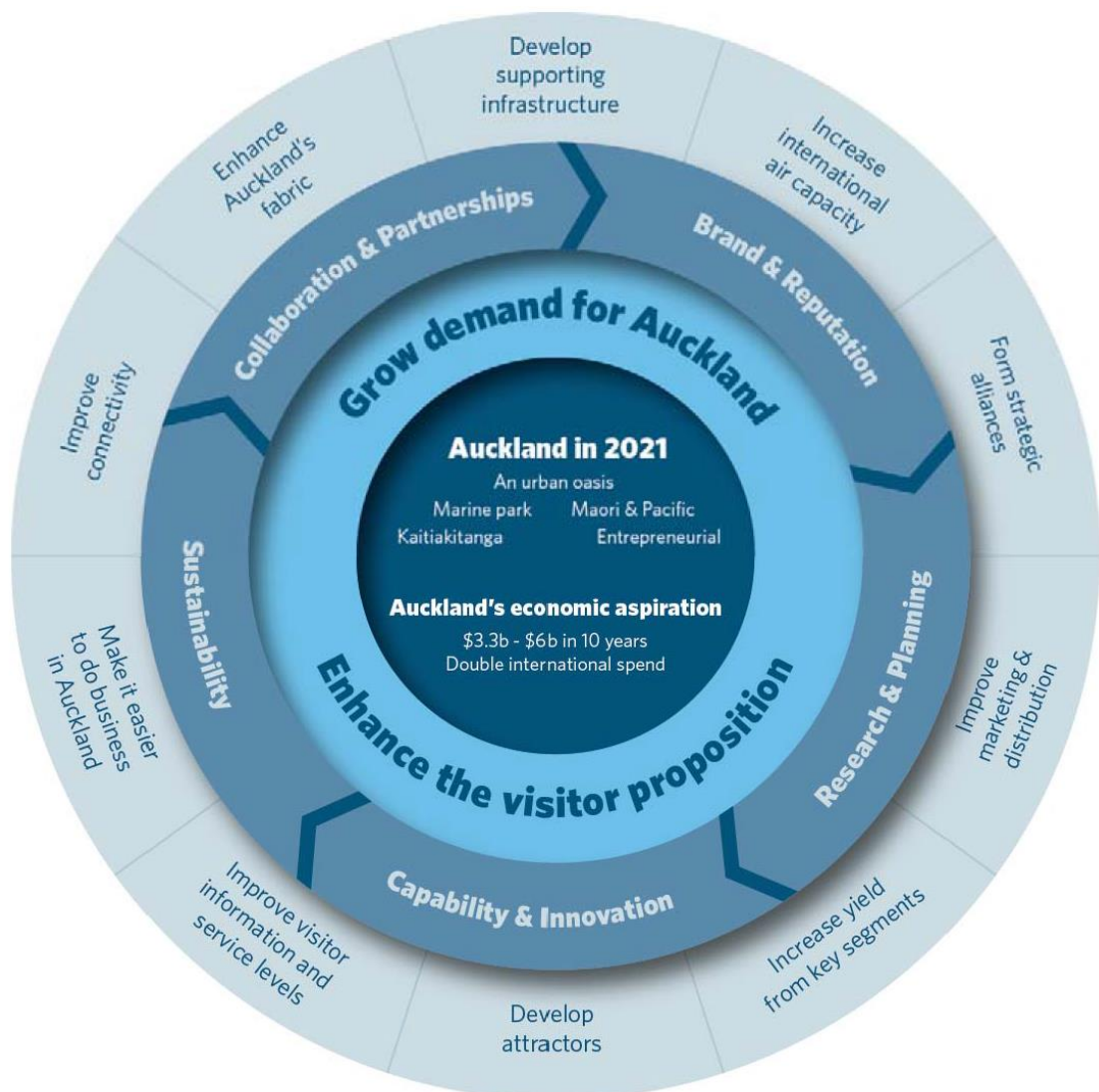
(ATEED, 2011b, p. 5)

3.9.2 The Strategic Goals of AVP

To realise the outcomes of the AVP, 10 strategic goals with related actions for each, are illustrated in the AVP. Increasing tourism yield is a priority of the AVP. Important approaches outlined in the AVP to increase yield include targeting high-value market segments, promoting the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) sector, marketing Auckland as a short-break destination to Australia and Asia, and increasing the share of the cruise sector. A major challenge to increasing tourism yield is growing and adding value to domestic tourism. Some of the reasons for the challenge include growth in outbound travel, a perception that domestic tourism is expensive relative to international travel and a lack of domestic promotion. To counter these challenges and increase domestic tourism from $1.37 billion to $2 billion, AVP specifies actions that would increase domestic tourism and retain some of the money locals spend on overseas travel (ATEED, 2011b).

Each of the actions that are specified to achieve the strategic goals of the AVP "require collaboration with the private sector and other strategic partners to deliver" (ATEED, 2011b, p. 3). To improve marketing and distribution, the plan focuses on international trade and consumer marketing activities and improving domestic promotion that links to events in the city. The commercial sustainability of existing airline routes and developing new ones are central to increasing international air capacity. AVP emphasises the development of supporting infrastructure, and identifying opportunities for foreign direct investments for facilities such as hotels and attractions. In developing attractors, sustainable tourism products and promotion of culture and heritage were noted as important initiatives.

Recognising that a successful visitor economy requires a rich social fabric that is well integrated with the tourism product, the AVP advocates increased efforts to use greater presence of Māori and Pacific people in Auckland's attractions, public spaces and visitor services. Improving the provision of visitor information requires ensuring that visitor information and booking services are available at locations such as the airport and the cruise terminal, and providing way-finding signage. Improving connectivity between the city centre and the peripheral areas in partnership with Auckland Transport and the private sector is regarded as necessary for better linkages across the region. Developing strategic alliances by working with the local and national governments and other industries is stated as necessary for joint marketing activities and to assist the development of Māori tourism businesses. The final goal is assisting tourism-related

businesses with operational issues and regulatory processes in order to make it easier for them to do business in Auckland.

3.9.3 Auckland's Major Events Strategy

Major events are recognised by ATEED as one of the "core pillars" of Auckland's visitor economy. Auckland's Major Events Strategy determines suitable events that can bring maximum immediate and future benefits (ATEED, 2010, p. 6). To underpin the city's long-term vision, four key outcomes were determined in the strategy: (1) increase Auckland's economy by injecting fresh capital and minimising leakage, (2) increase number of visitor nights by attracting domestic and international visitors and encouraging them to stay longer, (3) enhance Auckland's liveability through creating pride for residents about their city by making it an interesting and exciting place to live and to visit, and (4) increase international exposure of Auckland by using events as a platform to promote Auckland's people, places and way of life (ATEED, 2010, p. 14). Table 3.4 illustrates the major events held since 2011 and those confirmed for 2015.

Table 3.4: Auckland's Past and Future Major Events

Regular Major Events	Recent Completed Irregular Major Events	Confirmed Major Events for 2015
Pasifika Festival	2011 Rugby World Cup	2015 ICC Cricket World Cup
Lantern Festival	2011 ITU Triathlon World Cup	2015 FIFA U-20 Men's World Cup
New Zealand Fashion Week	2011/2012 Volvo Ocean Race	
Auckland Marathon	2012 ITU World Triathlon Championships	
Auckland Arts Festival	World BMX Championships	
	World Softball Championships	

(Adapted from ATEED, 2010)

The blueprint drawn for the successful delivery of the Major Events Strategy emphasises the importance of support from the public, local government, tourism operators, CCOs, and public and private agencies. The strategy advocates that it should not be the priority of ATEED alone; it should also be the priority of "the broader city, with co-operation between the council, LBs, transport agencies and venues" (ATEED, 2010, p. 10).

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the theory and research on tourism competitiveness and stakeholder collaboration. The range of definitions of sustainable tourism competitiveness and collaboration were analysed. An outline of the most important factors that underpin STC as evident in the current literature was presented, where it emerged that factors related to both comparative and competitive advantages are preferred as indicators of tourism success. An outline of existing key frameworks of STC was presented. There are several general models of destination competitiveness, with an extensive number of competitiveness factors, but few of them contain significant elements related to stakeholder collaboration. The two models that list factors related to collaboration do not provide in-depth discussion of the ways in which collaboration and cooperation contribute to competitiveness. A review of some cases of previously amalgamated cities provided a broader perspective on issues concerning merged city regions, of which lack of and obstacles to communication and collaboration are a major problem.

The chapter concluded with an overview of Auckland city. The history, key geographical features, and social and ethnic composition was followed by an illustration of the history of local governance and the events that led up to the creation of the Supercity. The process of the political amalgamation was described. An overview of the geographical and political structure of the Supercity and its functions was provided followed by a review of the various plans and strategies that support Auckland's economic vision and long-term goals.

Discussion of the economic background of Auckland preceded discussion of the role of tourism in the city's economy. The key statistics of the tourism industry, including its contribution to the GDP, major markets, visitor arrival trends and figures, were presented. The role of ATEED in driving Auckland's tourism industry and the plans and strategies developed to support and direct the visitor economy was described. A review of the economic and tourism strategies revealed that the targeted goals of both the council and ATEED call for strong cooperation, communication and collaboration between all sectors and tourism stakeholders.

4   METHODOLOGY

This chapter is dedicated to the research methodology and design used in this study. The use of the constructivist research paradigm, a case study methodology and a qualitative approach to data collection will be justified. Following this, the sample and sample selection methods will be described. The method of data collection using in-depth, semi-structured interviews, and the methods and procedures utilised for data analysis will be detailed. Issues of reliability and validity will then be discussed, followed by the ethical considerations associated with conducting the research and how they were addressed. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the limitations associated with this research project.

4.1   Research Paradigm

Social science inquiry is underpinned by a research paradigm that signifies researchers' fundamental beliefs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Research paradigms contain the ontology (nature of reality), epistemology (nature of knowledge about reality), methodology (ways of studying reality) and axiology (ethics) (Hays & Wood, 2011). These principles shape the formulation of research problems and questions, and the ways in which information is sought and interpreted (Mertens, 2005). Nominating a research framework as the first step sets the basis for the subsequent choices a researcher makes regarding research design, methodology and methods (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The selection of a theoretical framework is influenced by researchers' area of discipline, the scholarly community to which they belong, and their research experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Key paradigms that currently structure and shape qualitative research are postpositivism, critical theory, constructivism and participatory action frameworks (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). At a more general level, philosophical positions are broadly categorised into two overarching paradigms – positivism and constructivism (Paley & Lilford, 2011). Differences between positivism and constructivism are marked by the beliefs and assumptions that undergird each paradigm (see Table 4.1). Despite the evidence in the blurring of the academic divide, strong debate continues regarding the virtues of the two frameworks (Henderson, 2011).

Table 4.1: Differences between the Fundamental Values of Positivism and Constructivism

Belief	Positivism	Constructivism
Reality	Single, fragmented into independent variables	Multiple realities
Knower and known	Researcher and the research object are independent; exact or near exact truth about the object can be known	Researcher and the object of research are inseparable; truth can be studied subjectively
Generalisation	Aims at producing a context-free generalisation that is accurate at all times and in every situation	Generalisation free of context is not possible, but depending on the similarity between the sample and future cases, findings can be transferable
Causation	Rational cause and effect that can be experimentally tested	Impossible to distinguish cause and effect; research aim is to understand the meanings of the concerned subjects
Values	Uses objective methods to guarantee value-neutral research	Participant perspectives using methods consistent with personal values of researcher
Method	Experimental and quantitative; aims at verification	Mainly qualitative; aims at trustworthiness

(Adapted from Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 20; Paley & Lilford, 2011, p. 956)

Positivism assumes that there is an absolute truth that can be learned from reality from an objective and neutral standpoint (Noella & Knipe, 2006). Positivists aim to test theories in controlled environments through cause and effect experiments (Mertens, 2010). Highly structured tools, including randomisation and orally administered questionnaires with limited responses, are utilised, usually among larger samples to ensure representativeness (Sale, Lohfeld, & Brazil, 2002). The objective ontological perspectives of positivism assume that there is only one truth that can be empirically measured, and the researcher and the researched are independent entities that do not influence each other (Sale et al., 2002).

Constructivism follows a relativist ontology that recognises the existence of multiple realities that can be constructed in people's minds relative to context or perspective (Lincoln & Guba, 1998). The epistemological stance is subjective and transactional, and the inquirer and the inquired share close interaction to co-construct the reality with participants (Karataş-Özkan & Murphy, 2010). The constructivist paradigm permits the researcher to rely on participants' perspectives of the questions being studied (Krauss, 2005; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Qualitative or a combination of qualitative and quantitative (mixed-methods) tools are used by constructivists for data gathering (Peters, Pressey, Vanharanta, & Johnston, 2013).

Since social science researchers are interested in uncovering meanings about phenomena and multiple interpretations about reality, constructivism works well for them (Creswell, 2013). The constructivist paradigm allows for the use of natural settings and enables generation of contextual data (Lincoln et al., 2011). Constructivism acknowledges that meaning-making is not a neutral undertaking – subjects are influenced by their subjective realities, and the questions raised reflect individual interests (Schwandt, 1994). Thus, constructivists prefer qualitative methods such as interviews, case studies and observation that enable understanding of how people interpret the world that surrounds them (Bryman, 2012). Positivist paradigms that follow methods of natural sciences where the "inquiry takes place as through a one way mirror" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 110) are often not capable of representing the complexity and nature of social reality.

This doctoral research was guided by the constructivist paradigm. Constructivism assumes that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2005, p. 12) through the meanings and understandings that are developed socially and experientially thereby embracing a relativist ontology. Under the constructivist research paradigm, the researcher and the object of research cannot be separated, hence, takes a subjective epistemological stance. The methods employed under constructivism enable creation of dialogue between the researcher and the subjects who together construct reality. Constructionists do not begin with a hypothesis but inductively generates theory or meanings often relying on participants' views (Creswell, 2013). Thus, to understand a situation from the perspective of those experiencing it, constructivists usually employ qualitative methods such as participant observation and interviewing for data generation. Through dialogic and mutual interaction within a given research setting, and utilizing researcher initiated data generation tools such as interviews, the researcher's understanding of a phenomenon is co-constructed with that of the participants (Given, 2008). Conceptualizing the collaborative behaviour of tourism industry stakeholders or interpreting the meaning behind their interactions was not pursued by this thesis. This would have required methodologies such as ethnography and participative observation in order to observe first-hand the phenomenon being researched (Gray, 2004). Instead, the objective of this research is to understand from the perspectives of the stakeholders whether collaboration among them performs a role in STC. Hence, theories that focus on meaning-making from human interactions such as symbolic interactionism is not applied (Anderson & Taylor, 2009).

Nonetheless, by broadly following constructionism exploratory methods such as a case study and qualitative interviews can be utilised for data gathering. These methods, in contrast to structured tools preferred by positivist approaches were necessary for this research. Qualitative interviewing permits in-depth insights into the different perspectives of industry stakeholders relative to the context of their background. The constructivist paradigm is appropriate for the interactive and in-depth investigation needed to understand the opinions of stakeholders' regarding the research questions. The chosen qualitative research methods are consistent with the collaborative epistemology of constructivism, which allows for the co-creation of knowledge between the researcher and participating stakeholders (Lincoln et al., 2011). A subjective epistemological stance was essential in order to understand the perspectives of the interviewees from diverse backgrounds and to decipher meanings from their points of view. For example, the participants in this research were from the public and private sectors, diverse industries, central and peripheral areas of Auckland, large national and multinational companies and SMTEs. Positivist, objective perspectives would not have permitted the subjective and comprehensive understandings of the interviewees' opinions based on the context of their backgrounds. Advocates of constructivism hold the view that multiple realities exist because of the differences between individuals, who "create, negotiate and interpret meanings for their actions and for the social situations in which they exist" (Kuper, Reeves, & Levinson, 2008, p. 407). Following a constructivist research paradigm allowed a thorough understanding of the interviewees' responses to obtain answers to the research questions of the thesis. Constructivism's relativist ontological approach permitted the presentation of the findings in relation to the case study (Auckland as an amalgamated region) and the overall aim of the research (exploring the role of collaboration in STC).

4.2 The Case Study Approach

Case studies are driven by the desire to study a phenomenon up close and in depth in its real-world setting (Yin, 2012). Case studies can be used for descriptive, exploratory or explanatory research, and are suitable when (a) 'how' and 'why' questions are being explored, (b) the researcher has minimal control over events, and (c) a current incident within a real-life situation is being researched (Yin, 2009, p. 2). Since case studies seek to extract findings inherent to a situation (Simons, 2009), they allow the researcher to understand the perspectives and behaviours of participants beyond the statistical results of quantitative research (Yin, 2012).

Due to the in-depth focus and broader perspective that case studies permit, a wide range of topics can be included in a single case. Yin (2012, p. 6) described a case study as a "bounded entity" that can be a person, an event, an organisation, a behavioural condition or a social phenomenon. A key benefit of using a case study for this PhD research is that the "evidence is grounded in the social setting being studied", which presents an opportunity for in-depth data analysis (Jennings, 2001, p. 178). A case study is a useful and appropriate method to explore complex social phenomena, particularly in previously unexplored areas (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2012). Research that explores the role of stakeholder collaboration in STC is rare, and the number of studies on tourism competitiveness that use a case study approach is relatively limited. As Veal (2006) states, a case study is a useful approach to purposely discover a context and corroborate its connection to a specific research objective. A case study method enabled the researcher to explore the environment of Auckland's tourism industry, and its competitiveness and stakeholder collaboration in the context of a recent amalgamation. The area of study for this research is new and the issues that are explored are complex. Therefore, the in-depth information obtained from a case study is the appropriate method to adopt. Use of a case study enabled discovery of the existing and past collaborative practices of Auckland's tourism industry stakeholders, and enabled an understanding of their views on how collaboration can contribute to STC.

Case studies are sometimes criticised for the lack of generalisation of findings to other settings (Gibbert et al., 2008). With regard to generalisation, two options are available to researchers: statistical and analytical generalisation (Payne & Williams, 2005). Issues of generalisation arise when researchers attempt to statistically generalise single or a limited number of cases to larger samples (Silverman, 2013). Hence, analytical generalisation is a more appropriate method as it relies on theory to determine a rationale that may be applied elsewhere (Yin, 2014). The findings were evaluated against existing STC theories and research in order to verify, and understand, common themes and new findings that emerge. Results of qualitative research using methods such as case studies generalise to theory rather than populations; the quality of the theoretical inferences that are made is what is crucial to the assessment of generalisation (Bryman, 2012). Comparisons and linkages can also be drawn with findings of other researchers relating to similar groups. Williams (2000) referred to such linkages and comparisons as *moderatum* generalisation. Williams argues that while it may have

limitations compared with statistical generalisation, *moderatum* generalisation does contest the opinion that generalisation beyond the case is unachievable.

Transferability to other settings in qualitative research, also known as theoretical generalisation, assumes that research outcomes are context specific (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A single destination cannot generate a conclusive statement regarding STC. The exploratory nature of the research restricted it to a single case, thus limiting the generalisability of the findings. Conducting a study that takes into account more than one amalgamated city could have revealed whether the impacts of political amalgamation on collaboration and the resultant impacts on STC differ from case to case.

Nonetheless, instead of transferability of the findings, the focus of qualitative inquiry is depth of understanding of issues that are being studied. Purposive sampling is one technique that ensures the data produced cover depth and breadth of the issues investigated (Bryman, 2012). Thorough and thick descriptive data on the research issues also allow others to decide the extent to which the findings can be transferred to their own contexts (Creswell, 2013). According to Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012), the responsibility for determining the transferability lies with those who may choose to apply the findings to their own contexts.

Research bias is a problem that is frequently associated with case-study-based work. Because the researcher is the principal instrument for data gathering and analysis, the findings may be prone to influence due to the subjectivity of the researcher (Beeton, 2005). Another issue that compounds research bias is that, often, case study researchers have prior knowledge of the issues concerning the case; this knowledge may "undesirably sway them toward supportive evidence and away from contrary evidence" (Yin, 2014, p. 76). The extent to which the researcher is open to contrary findings will test the degree of bias (Bryman, 2012).

In the case of this thesis, the researcher had an overall understanding of the issues related to the research; however, the nature of the research questions did not allow presumptions to be made about the answers. For example, answers to questions that inquired about the existing and potential competitive advantages of Auckland, the opinions of stakeholders on collaboration, or the impact of the Supercity on collaborative practices could not have been affected by any prior knowledge about the Supercity or the Auckland tourism industry. Instead, the researcher was open to

exploring the opinions of the industry stakeholders without attempting to constrict their responses by any previous knowledge or research. A neutral stance during the process of research analysis enabled the researcher to identify similarities and differences between existing research and the findings of this study. As noted by Yin (2014), if the quest for contrary findings can produce documentable rebuttals, the likelihood of bias will have been reduced.

To comply with analytical generalisation, this study utilised theory as a guideline, for data gathering and analysis. Findings from the wider literature, particularly the work of Heath (2003), were used as templates to compare the outcomes of this research. Data collection was guided by a case study protocol that provided an overview of the project. This assisted the researcher to keep in mind the key issues during the formulation of the interview questions and data collection. In turn, the questions used for data collection were aligned with the research questions, thus reducing subjectivity. In addition to the interviews, this research drew upon multiple sources of evidence, including government reports, leaflets from NGOs, both published and unpublished research from public and private organisations, and websites. Use of these sources is evident from the citations reported in this thesis.

4.3   Research Methods

The characteristics of qualitative research make it an appropriate technique to study the issues that are the focus of this research. Proponents of quantitative research argue that qualitative methods do not provide the rigour and structure of quantitative methods (Silverman, 2013). When qualitative research is conducted well, however, it is a method that is unbiased, in depth, valid, reliable, credible and rigorous (Anderson, 2010). According to Anderson (2010), qualitative research enables the production of rich data and the investigation of "real life" scenarios where research participants are able to express themselves (p. 2). Semi-structured or unstructured interviews, focus groups, observations and examination of documented materials are used for data gathering in qualitative research (Kuper et al., 2008).

Qualitative researchers are criticised for their preference for inductive and unstructured methods for data gathering such as interviews over other methods (Turner, 2010). Given the nature of the research aims, quantitative methods that utilise statistical and deductive measures in data collection and analysis would not have been appropriate to explore answers to the research questions. Instead, data generated from in-depth interviews

analysed with an inductive approach and supported by secondary research yielded an adequate amount of rich data relevant to the area of research. This research does not aim to generalise the findings or test hypotheses; instead, the main purpose is to understand the opinions of tourism stakeholders about the role of collaboration in STC. For this purpose, thick description of rich data is required. As Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) state, qualitative methods are useful if the investigation involves describing a phenomenon in rich detail of which little is known (p. 20).

4.4 Semi-structured Interviews

In-depth, face-to-face interviews with tourism industry stakeholders were used for data collection. To initiate the process, three pilot interviews (Anderson, 2010) were conducted. Two of the interviewees were experts from the tourism industry and the third was associated with cultural tourism. The first two participants had been involved with Auckland tourism and economic development associated with planning and strategies, and had extensive knowledge of the Supercity, its tourism industry and its political structure. The pilot interviews helped to fine-tune the interview protocol for further interviews. In addition, these initial interviews confirmed the relevance of the topic and appropriateness of the questions to answer the issues that were targeted.

Interviewing is one of the most common sources of data in case study research (Kuper et al., 2008). Interviews can be structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Remler & Ryzin, 2011). The basis of in-depth interviewing is the desire to understand lived experiences of others and their perspectives of those experiences (Petty et al., 2012). In-depth interviewing relies on participants' verbal accounts to gain insights into their social lives, experiences and opinions – incidents that cannot be directly witnessed (Seidman, 2013, p. 9). Interviewees perform the role of informants for the researcher, revealing undertakings and actions related to events and how these were perceived by others (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

Semi-structured interviews are guided by predetermined topics and prompts to structure the conversation (Robson, 2011). A key advantage of using semi-structured interviews is the flexibility to change the direction even during the course of the investigation. Structured interviewing, on the other hand, with its predetermined, similarly worded questioning aimed at guaranteeing comparable findings does not make this possible; quantitative methods maintain an inherent momentum once the process of data collection has begun (Bryman, 2012). The flexible nature of semi-structured interviews

not only allows the disclosure of answers to the research questions, but also sheds light on how participants construct reality and how they perceive situations (Silverman, 2013). Participants' construction of reality offers in-depth understanding into the case, particularly when they are key persons of the entities being investigated (Yin, 2014). Since only a limited number of persons take up those roles, interviews with such key participants generate "'elite' interviews" (Yin, 2014, p. 12).

Despite their usefulness, some shortcomings are associated with in-depth interviews. It is believed that since people do not behave the same way in every situation, it cannot be assumed that participants' accounts would be the same in another setting (Yin, 2014). Participants' daily environment is believed to be an important factor in fully comprehending their perceptions. It is believed that there is a risk that the researcher will misinterpret participants' perspectives and make incorrect assumptions in the absence of their daily life context (Bryman, 2012). Where the interviewer is the research instrument, the influence on the research subjects is an inevitable occurrence (Maxwell, 2013). Nonetheless, these shortcomings can be alleviated by the interviewer's competence, flexibility and clever skills (Beeton, 2005).

The first step undertaken to overcome some of the weaknesses was for the researcher to become aware of the limitations associated with in-depth interviewing (see Seidman, 2013). Since this study focuses on gaining insights into stakeholders' perspectives and their experiences, individual semi-structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate tool. This technique permitted investigation of stakeholders' perceptions on tourism competitiveness and collaboration. The interviews enabled identification of key factors that impact competitiveness and influence collaborative decisions and actions. The focus of interviewees' perspectives enabled understanding of the impact of past experiences on current decisions and actions.

An interview guide (Bryman, 2012) that included a list of questions and the topics to be covered (see Appendix 1) enabled consistency in the questions, helped direct the discussion and ensured that the general areas of the research were covered. The interview guide was also useful in keeping the questioning systematic while at the same time providing the opportunity to ask follow-up questions based on the responses of participants by requesting that they further explain or elaborate certain points when necessary. The questions were mostly open-ended, with some probes and a few scales. Probes were used to prompt further discussion and elaboration from participants.

All the data that were used in this research are based on the opinions expressed by the interviewees. Relying on respondents' recollection of past events is a limitation in that their reminiscence may be influenced by their own views on stakeholder collaboration or the amalgamation of Auckland. Since the support for the amalgamation was divided among the NZ residents, their opinions may have been biased, depending on whether they were supportive or not of the creation of a 'Supercity'.

Fridrik and Thorhallur (2012) suggest tourists are well placed to evaluate the factors that influence the attractiveness of the destination and the services that they consume. However, as visitors, they are less likely to understand, and hence are unable to assess, the factors that influence the production of the services and the functions of the destination (Enright & Newton, 2004). Additionally, including tourists would have required expansion of the research beyond the current scope. Instead, stakeholders' opinions can provide accurate measures of destination competitiveness (Fridrik & Thorhallur, 2012). Since the aim of this research is to understand the role of stakeholder collaboration in contributing to competitiveness, it was necessary to interview individuals who could respond to questions on aspects of both tourism competitiveness and collaboration.

4.5   Sampling Strategy

A central distinguishing feature between qualitative and quantitative research is the techniques used in sampling. Quantitative research tends to use large, random samples that provide statistical representation, increase generalisability and reduce selection bias (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). These advantages cannot be gained from smaller samples, while random probability sampling cannot achieve what purposive sampling can yield (Patton, 2002). The appropriate option for qualitative researchers is therefore to select information-rich samples that permit thorough and in-depth understanding of the case (Creswell, 2013). Information-rich cases are "those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (Remler & Ryzin, 2011, p. 230).

This research adopted a purposive sampling strategy (Patton, 2002). The main reason for selecting this approach was to seek distinctive answers to the research questions from as many relevant information-rich cases as possible (Creswell, 2013). Instead of empirical sampling, a sample of purposefully selected cases also yields depth and understanding about the issues explored (Patton, 2002). Additionally, the validity of

qualitative research can be judged more by the richness of the cases used than the size of the sample (Newman, 2014). When the intent is to obtain the highest level of information possible for a particular problem, as is the case with this research, a representative sample may not be the best strategy; rather, the case that provides the richest information would be the ideal (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

The sample for this study was key public and private sector organisations and people who occupy important roles in them. In order to improve representativeness, the sample included as wide a range of key stakeholders across Auckland's tourism industry as possible. Major public and private tourism bodies and associations, the Auckland Council, large tourism associations as well as SMTEs, tourism associations within Central Auckland and peripheral areas, cultural tourism associations and voluntary organisations were included.

The range of participants corresponds with the definitions on stakeholders and sustainable tourism competitiveness adopted by this thesis. From the perspective of stakeholder theory, to understand stakeholders at a destination level the most appropriate party to take the role of 'the firm' are DMOs (Saftic, et al., 2011). In the case of Auckland, ATEED "provides a co-ordinated approach to growing Auckland's business, export and visitor economy" by undertaking "a range of diverse and dynamic projects in the collaborative spirit of *kotahitanga*" with a broad range of stakeholder groups including "Auckland Council, other CCOs, local boards, central government, *iwi*, industry organisations, education and training providers, private businesses and not for profit groups" (ATEED, 2013, p. 5). Thus, ATEED is the organisation responsible for destination management, tourism and economic development of Auckland. The councillors and advisors from the Auckland Council represent the local government. They, together with several officials from ATEED, were able to discuss a broad range of matters relating to tourism as well as local economy.

Local boards (LB) are the elected bodies that represent local communities. Members of the LBs were the 'voices' of the local communities. Among the sample are LB members from different areas of Auckland who provided a representation of the communities from across the region. The members of the LBs were able to speak on behalf of the communities that they represented. Including participants from across the region including central and peripheral areas provided a range of opinions that reflected the issues and perspectives of the communities from those areas. Some participants had

dual roles. For example, some respondents from Cluster Groups and industry associations were tourism operators. Therefore, they were able to speak from the point of view of an individual operator as well as a representative of the tourism group or SMTE. This is evident where some respondents have shared their personal experiences outside the responsibilities of the designated organisation. This is the whole purpose of selecting a constructivist approach – so that it allowed the researcher to understand meanings specific to the context/background of the participants.

Non-government environmental groups were included in the research. They had no direct interests in the tourism industry except that they worked for the protection and preservation of the volcanic cones and mounts of Auckland. On the day the researcher visited the site (on their request to conduct the interview) where a participating NGO was working, there were members of the local community and a tourist who volunteered to participate in the day's activities. The researcher was able to have friendly conversations about their work with different members of the group. However, it became clear to the researcher that it would not be practical to interview them, because they were not able to provide informed opinions on most of the areas relevant to the research. Therefore, the leader of the group was interviewed. It became clear that not every member of the community was able to respond to the questions that needed to be explored to answer the research questions. Nevertheless, to complete a research involving a full range of stakeholders, it would have been necessary to gather data from tourists who would have provided additional insights. Including tourists would have necessitated the expansion of the scope of this thesis. Including visitors was not an option that could be pursued in this thesis.

The Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) – which took over the responsibilities of the Ministry of Tourism in 2012 and Ministry of Transport, were contacted for their input into the research. MBIE's advice was sought on additional central government agencies to approach for the research. On MBIE's advice, national agencies such as Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Tourism Industry Association were included. In addition, Conferences and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) – the national agency that markets and promotes NZ's MICE sector was a participant of the research. It provided the research a nationwide perspective from those participants. Other agencies were approached, for example Ministry of Transport and they directed the researcher to the relevant agencies in Auckland. Thus, every attempt was made to include participants from the central government.

Tourism involves individuals and businesses that belong to different sectors and industries. To capture the voice of tourism stakeholders it is not possible to restrict respondents to one industry or sector. For instance, some key players involved in developing Tourism 2025 are CEOs, GMs and presidents of hotels, airlines, airport, travel companies and transport providers. Their multiple roles strengthened the research, as they were able to speak from more than one viewpoint.

The sample size considered sufficient to reach a credible result varies (Newman, 2014). According to Warren (2001), the minimum number of interviews for qualitative research should be between 20 and 30. Charmaz (2006) suggests that a sample of 25 is sufficient for a small project. Gerson and Horowitz (2002) argue that while fewer than 60 interviews will not yield a convincing outcome, more than 150 will generate too much information for it to be analysed effectively and efficiently. Green and Thorogood (2009) believe that 20 is an appropriate sample because any number of interviews greater than that will cease to reveal any further new findings. According to Gerson and Horowitz (2002), a sample can be seen as appropriate if it is not so small that it is difficult to achieve data saturation, theoretical saturation and informational redundancy, while at the same time not so expansive that a thorough case-focused analysis is not possible (Green & Thorogood, 2009).

According to the principles of qualitative research, the sample size should generally comply with the concept of saturation, whereby sampling is continued until informational redundancy is achieved. Mason (2010) believes, however, that saturation can be inappropriate, due to the potential for newer findings to emerge the more a set of data is analysed and examined and when researchers become more familiar with it. Hence, for this study, a sample of 41 was selected as an appropriate size to provide sufficient data to answer the research questions.

The sample adopted by this research covered tourism stakeholders across a wide range of categories, including businesses, attractions, national and local associations, NGOs, cultural groups, the Auckland Council and public tourism agencies. All relevant key stakeholder groups from the Auckland tourism industry were included in the sample. They included chief executive officers (CEOs), directors, general managers (GMs), chairpersons and presidents of public and private companies and organisations. Enright and Newton's (2004) discussions with industry practitioners disclosed that managing

directors or the most senior persons in organisations are aware of "what works and does not work on a daily basis" in tourism organisations (p. 781).

The iterative sampling and analysis procedure that was followed during data collection assisted in deciding after completing 41 interviews that the chances for substantial new discoveries to emerge from additional interviews were slim. Data from the initial analysis disclosed clear links between the themes that were emerging and the research questions and that there was substantial data under each theme to derive valid conclusions. The decision for iterative analysis conforms to the conclusion by Strauss and Corbin (1998) that rather than reaching saturation, researchers should be concerned about reaching a point where additional data do not add anything new to the overall findings. It was decided that adding participants from the stakeholder groups that were already included in the sample would not produce significantly new data; instead, calling an end to the interviewing process reduced the risk of producing excessive data that might end up being excluded from the final report.

Since purposive sampling was used, no mathematical calculation was needed to determine the ideal number of participants. Instead the criterion for determining sample size was based on securing information from a cross-section of tourism stakeholders. A sample of 35 was decided as small enough to be manageable but large enough to generate useful information. As a result of snowballing that number increased to 41. At that point a large amount of data has been collated and no new findings were emerging.

4.6   Research Process and Key Characteristics of Research Participants

In the research process, first, the relevant major organisations were identified. These included the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), ATEED, Tourism NZ, Auckland City Council and Māori tourism associations. Contact and communication with these key organisations led to the appropriate persons for participation in the interviews. Suggestions from this initial group were used to cast a wider net for contacts in an approach that would fit what is described by Bryman (2012) as a snowballing strategy. This proved to be a useful strategy as a number of key stakeholders belong to different industry associations and were able to recommend people with knowledge, experience and an interest in the field. For example, a key contact from Auckland Airport referred the researcher to the top tier of the group that was in charge of the development of the national tourism strategy Tourism 2025 at the time the research was being conducted. Several members of that group were major

tourism industry stakeholders from a wide range of tourism businesses and public tourism agencies. Similarly, participants from private companies were able to recommend others within their sector. As a result, senior managers and CEOs of hotels who became candidates for inclusion in the research were identified. Thus, the initial sample aimed at 35 key stakeholders increased to a total of 41. Appendix 2 provides a list of research participants.

Statistical representativeness of any group of stakeholders was not sought. Instead, inclusion of a wider range of stakeholder groups was seen as important to provide as wide a perspective as possible. For example, instead of aiming to include local boards (LBs) and tourism cluster groups from all areas, a mix of areas from Central Auckland and more peripheral areas were targeted. Tourism cluster groups were created in some areas of Auckland to facilitate development and promotion of tourism. These groups were initiated by local communities with financial and advisory support from ATEED. During the period in which this research was conducted, four were established: Matakana Coast and Country, Destination Great Barrier Island, Franklin Tourism Group and the Howick Tourism Forum. Participants from three of these groups were included in the interviews.

Thus, in addition to those in central areas, members from LBs and cluster groups from the northern-most area of Rodney to Franklin in the south were included. All those who were asked to participate in the research were contacted first by an email requesting the contact details of the appropriate person. Once this was confirmed, a formal written request explaining the details about the research (see Appendix 3) was sent to all participants, together with a participant information sheet (see Appendix 4). Requests were followed up by email or telephone calls.

Once initial contact was established, interviewees were provided with detailed information about the research, including the topic, the purpose and the background of the researcher. Apart from a few who used a personal assistant for their communication, most of the interviewees interacted directly with the researcher by email and phone. Most participants indicated their interest in the research topic and all of the interviewees showed willingness to participate by signing the consent form. The earlier communications assisted in 'breaking the ice' or building a trust relationship with the interviewees prior to the meetings. This approach significantly contributed to creating an air of friendly, relaxed rapport during the interviews.

The interviews were conducted from March 2013 until August 2013. The average length was 50 minutes and few went for more than an hour. All interviews were conducted face-to-face except one that was conducted and recorded over Skype for logistical reasons. Out of the remaining 40 interviews, 37 were conducted at the interviewees' offices and two were at cafes at the request of the interviewees. One interview was conducted at the site of an interviewee's weekly volunteer work, which was the most suitable and convenient option for the interviewee. The interviews were all audio recorded in full and notes were taken with permission granted by the interviewees. The researcher was told when a participant did not want a comment to go on record. At these times, pausing the audio recording and note taking while quietly listening and prompting interviewees to share their opinions freely and to continue their story encouraged the flow of the conversation and maintained a positive relationship.

There was a risk of the researcher's foreign background apparent from the researcher's appearance, accent and name presenting a challenge to interviewees 'opening up' to in-depth discussions. However, the researcher's familiarity and knowledge on the topics being discussed and the friendly rapport established early on when contacting the interviewees assisted them to open up. Particularly in the discussions about the Supercity, the researcher being considered a 'foreigner' worked in the researcher's favour as the participants were put at ease about discussing matters that sometimes were seen to be political and contentious industry issues. The reason is that, as a foreigner, the researcher represented no political bias. At the same time, the researcher's academic background earned the researcher relevant acknowledgement of being aware of current local and international industry events and issues, which the researcher was able to sense through discussions on various topics, related to the research questions. The researcher's neutral standpoint, and interest in the Auckland Supercity and tourism, encouraged interviewees to share their opinions and open up in the discussions.

The public sector participants were from the Auckland Council, various agencies and organisations under the council, and national tourism bodies. Private sector agencies included tourism cluster groups, hotels, motels and bed and breakfast (B&B) establishments, industry associations, air services agencies, and providers of transport, attractions and support services. The category of support services includes businesses that provide "support, aid and guidance" to the direct providers (Collier, 2009, p. 101).

Some of the participants held dual roles; for instance, certain senior officials in the tourism cluster groups and industry associations operated their own tourism businesses. Similarly, participants from major private agencies held senior positions in industry associations or were members of national or local tourism boards.

The key characteristics of the research participants are illustrated in Table 4.2. The participants were approximately 66% male and 34% female; gender was not given precedence in the selection process. Rather, every possible effort was made to represent a balanced number of participants from public and private sectors, large organisations and SMTEs. Over 58% of the participants were from the private sector, while private sector participants made up over 46%. The private sector participants comprised businesses (over 26%) and associations (more than 31%). More than 34% of the total organisations were small to medium, and nearly 66% were large businesses or organisations. An organisation with fewer than 30 full-time employees was defined as small to medium and those with 30 or more full-time employees were considered a large organisation.

Table 4.2: Key Characteristics of Research Participants

Gender	65.9% Male	34.1% Female
Public or Private Sector	Public: 46.3%	Private: 26.8% Businesses 31.7% Associations
Organisation Size	34.1% Small–Medium	65.9% Large
Tourism Industry Agencies	Cluster Groups; Hotels; Motels, B&Bs; Air Services; Transport; Attractions; Support Services; Government; Businesses	

4.7   Methods and Procedure of Data Analysis

Since qualitative research generates a large amount of data, their analysis can sometimes be daunting and time-consuming (Creswell, 2013). A well-formulated method of analysis is an important part of qualitative research and one that enhances the validity and reliability of its findings (Anderson, 2010). The use of computer-aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) in this research assisted in resolving many of these issues. CAQDAS eliminates the inconveniencies of manually coding and retrieving data, making the process speedier and more efficient; it also may compel

researchers to be more specific and insightful about the analysis process, thus increasing the transparency of the data analysis procedure (Seidman, 2013).

Data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing and iterative process that synchronises with data collection (Bryman, 2012, p. 593). This research used thematic analysis in working with the data. This method was useful in searching for patterns that are important and relevant to the topics being investigated (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006). It is a flexible technique applicable to a variety of epistemological stances and research issues (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013) that analyses, identifies and reports themes from the data to produce a thorough and rich description (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis can proceed in one of two ways – a realist method that reports occurrences, implications and the reality of participants, or a constructionist approach that explores how incidents, realities, meanings and experiences result from on-going dialogues with a community (Alhojailan, 2012). A constructionist approach interprets meaning and experiences as socially constructed rather than inherent within individuals (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). The latter approach was employed in this research, as it is compatible with the constructivist theoretical framework employed for this study. Following the constructionist approach, the researcher was able to listen to interviewees' ideas and comprehend meanings according to how they construct realities, relative to the specific contexts of the interviewees and the topics being discussed.

Using Express Scribe software, each interview was transcribed by the researcher and saved into a separate Word file. Although time-consuming, transcribing the interviews proved to be beneficial as it meant reading and rereading the texts; thus, it provided a thorough reviewing of the data (Burr, 2003). All interviews were transcribed and rechecked against the audio files. The Word files were then copied to the QSR NVivo data management program in preparation for analysis. Using this software approach proved valuable in managing the large amounts of data relatively easily. Preliminary data analysis commenced with the review of relevant literature to understand theoretical developments and existing research in the areas of collaboration and tourism competitiveness. Once the pilot interviews were completed, initial analysis was conducted on these to confirm the relevance of identifiable themes to the research questions. This preliminary analysis also assisted in verifying the pertinence of the interview guide for the rest of the interviews.

A crucial aspect of qualitative data analysis is identifying themes and categories from a specific set of data (Gibbs, 2008). Themes can be identified either deductively following an a priori template of codes, or inductively by taking a data-driven approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme is defined by Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) as a pattern in the data that "at minimum describes and organizes the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. 4). In thematic analysis, the "keyness" of a theme is not related to quantity; what is seen as more important is whether or not the theme reveals information useful to answering the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82).

In this research, themes were derived inductively from the raw data, allowing ideas and issues to emerge freely. In locating themes, a single comment was given the same importance as those that were recurrent or agreed upon by others. First, two broad categories were identified: (1) the role of tourism and (2) collaboration. Under these, more specific subcategories were listed in a hierarchical manner (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Initial Categories from Data Analysis

Categories	Role of Tourism	Collaboration
Subcategories	Importance of tourism to Auckland Existing competitive advantages Potential competitive advantages Challenges to competitive advantages	Perception Importance to Auckland's tourism Challenges Facilitating factors

Subsequent interviews after the pilot stage were transcribed as they were completed. This process allowed for the identification of consistency with the initial categories as well as the research questions. The iterative coding process led to modification of the initial categories, working out further categories and subcategories from the data corpus. According to Boyatzis (1998), interactivity during the process of qualitative research is a mark of the "goodness" of the research (p. iv).

Once all the interviews were transcribed, comprehensive data coding was conducted. During this process, field notes from data collection and industry events were referred to frequently. Interpreting the underlying meanings and assumptions beyond the surface of what the interviewees said assisted in coding the data into appropriate categories and deriving specific themes from them. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) assert that a "good code" is able to capture the "qualitative richness of the phenomenon" being studied (p. 4). Following latent thematic analysis enabled the understanding and

interpretation of concealed implications in the text. This would not have been possible if the data were organised at a semantic level and according to their surface meaning, as was conceded by Boyatzis (1998, p. 161). The use of latent thematic analysis permitted deeper comprehension of the messages, broadened the categories, and enabled more relevant themes to emerge.

While the second round of coding expanded the key categories into subcategories, it also led to over-coding – a problem encountered by researchers at the earlier stages of coding (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, p. 83). The initial two main categories and eight subcategories evolved into four key categories and 20 subcategories. As data reduction continued, some of the categories and subcategories were further expanded while others were compressed into existing ones. By this stage, clear themes were identifiable from the categories and subcategories. For example, under the category of 'collaboration', six themes emerged: 'significance to tourism', 'significance to competitiveness', 'collaborative activities', 'facilitators', 'obstacles' and 'sustaining collaboration'. Two of these were split further based on new themes that were identified. 'Significance to competitiveness' produced four themes: 'in public/private partnerships', 'between local/central governments', 'in conflict resolution' and 'in overcoming challenges to competitiveness'. Additionally, 'collaborative activities' was split into 'structure of activities' and 'frequency of activities'.

As recommended by Kawulich (2004), identifying inconsistencies was given as much focus as recognising themes. Any differing ideas that emerged were compared with the key themes to draw conclusions. When searching for themes, attention given to emerging contradicting themes enabled identification of two divergent themes – 'positive' and 'negative' under each of the subcategories of 'on tourism', 'on competitiveness', and 'on collaboration' under the initial main category of 'Supercity impacts'. The final categories and themes are illustrated in Table 4.4.

The coded and categorised data were retrieved and a report for each theme was produced. During this phase, text that had been either mistakenly coded under certain categories, or considered unnecessary detail, was revised in order to improve clarity. The separate reports on each theme were useful, firstly, in establishing that the themes were consistent with the key words, and secondly, to winnow out unnecessary data and confirm what is relevant to the themes. This resulted in a more clear and refined set of categories and themes.

Table 4.4: Final Categories and Themes from Data Analysis

Categories	Role of Tourism	Competitiveness	Supercity Impacts	Collaboration

Themes	• Significance to Auckland
	• To achieve AVP objectives
		• Existing
		• Potential
		• Challenges
			• On tourism
			  – Positive
			  – Negative
			• On competitiveness
			  – Positive
			  – Negative
			• On collaboration
			  – Positive
			  – Negative
				• Significance to tourism
				• Significance to competitiveness
				  – In public–private partnerships
				  – Between local and central governments
				  – In conflict resolution
				  – In overcoming challenges to competitiveness
				• Collaborative activities
				  – Structure of activities
				  – Frequency
				• Obstacles
				• Facilitators
				• Sustaining collaboration

Drawing conclusions and comparisons was the final phase of the data analysis. A variety of options are available for the qualitative researcher to draw conclusions and report the findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). It is important that the technique embodies the research issues and theoretical frameworks and is suitable to create logic from the data (Huberman & Miles, 1998). Key themes were drawn and summarised in order to create meaningful interpretations from the data. Important quotes that supported the key themes were extracted and added to the narratives.

The derived conclusions and key emergent concepts were compared with the literature described in Chapter 2, and this contributed to enhancing the generalisability of the research (Delmont, 2002) as outlined earlier in this chapter. Final conclusions involved illustrating similarities and differences between the research findings and existing theories and literature. Mind maps proved to be a useful technique in this regard, to draw linkages and connections and identify irregularities between existing theories and the key findings.

4.8   Research Validity and Reliability

Reliability concerns consistency of findings when replicated with different researchers in different contexts (Bryman, 2012), whereas validity is focused on the extent that research is free from researcher bias (Creswell, 2013). Validity involves accuracy in collecting and analysing data (Mason, 2002). Such replication is possible with positivist–quantitative paradigms that use experimental methods and quantifiable measures to test hypotheses and relationships between variables (Hannes, Lockwood, & Pearson, 2010). Qualitative research involves more than one source of data and multiple methods, where data collection is an interactive process, the nature of which varies depending on the context and the researcher (Petty et al., 2012). Utilising fixed, mechanical measures risks exclusion of important and diverse elements of social reality; in addition, data thus produced cannot be replicated (Barbour, 2013). Instead, qualitative methods provide detailed accounts of experiences and allow access to embedded processes by focusing on the context of individuals' daily lives where decisions are made and enacted (ibid).

For the above reasons, scholars have seen it as more apt to use alternative approaches to test the rigour of qualitative research (Newman, 2014). Rather than validity and reliability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose confirmability, transferability, dependability, credibility and authenticity. Confirmability is the degree to which the findings address the research issues without researcher bias. The matter can be addressed by being aware that researchers' subjectivity can influence their interpretations and conveying to the reader in a logical manner the process with which interpretations, inferences and conclusions were derived (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation also assists in reducing researcher bias (Petty et al., 2012). Types of triangulation include data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation, methodological triangulation and environmental triangulation (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011).

Dependability in qualitative inquiry accepts that variations between people and situations change over the course of time and hence the findings of a study are subject to change. Auditing of the research establishes both dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility concerns the degree to which others are able to identify participants' experiences portrayed in the interpreted findings (Creswell, 2013). Different techniques are used to facilitate detailed interpretation of the investigation process. These include validation with research participants, cross checking with

colleagues removed from the research context, prolonged engagement with participants to gain in-depth insight into the issues being studied and utilising multiple forms and sources of data (triangulation) to verify interpretations (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Using participants' own words in the final report also enhances the trustworthiness of the findings (Guba, 1981).

While member checking is believed to be the most reliable technique for assessing a study's credibility (Guba, 1981), others have argued against expert researchers or respondents attempting to arrive at the same results as the researcher (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). These authors reasoned that the efforts to enhance reliability might involve unnatural compliance with data analysis, hence impacting the relevance of the findings. According to Carlson (2010), member checking can inadvertently create "traps" that could potentially jeopardise the researcher–participant relationship and the "stability" of the research. As Carlson experienced, these "traps", if instigated, could "instil a participant with feelings of disappointment, uncertainty, or embarrassment, or squelch the willingness of a participant to continue in the study" (p. 1103). Research participants were offered the option to receive a transcribed copy of the interviews. None of the interviewees requested or indicated a wish to review the transcribed interviews. Hence, this research did not use member checking which avoided any possible disadvantages associated with the technique, such as those noted by Carlson (2010).

As a guide for qualitative researchers to ensure validity and reliability of their work, Patton (2002) suggested that researchers answer three questions:

1. What are the techniques that were used to ensure the credibility of the findings?

2. What is the researcher's experience and qualification in relation to the research issue?

3. What are the assumptions that underpin the research?

According to Tracy (2010), the quality of qualitative inquiry can be enhanced using a range of flexible "craft skills" that conform to eight principles: worthy topic, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics and meaningful coherence (p. 839). The outcome of the study is subject to the skills of the researcher and is influenced by the personal perspectives and idiosyncrasies of the qualitative researcher (Bryman, 2012). Integrity plays a significant role in the quality of qualitative

inquiry (Rolfe, 2006). Researchers' influences and biases can be addressed by acknowledging such limitations, and explaining the details of the research process and methods (Anderson, 2010). As Sandelowski (1986) stated, a study is credible when others outside the context recognise the findings.

It is clear that the criteria for validity and reliability of qualitative inquiry are not always considered the same, and there is an array of options available for the qualitative researcher. In line with the recommendations discussed above, several steps were taken to ensure and enhance the validity and reliability of this research. As a first approach, this research fits the criteria for research validity that were outlined by Tracy (2010). The research is based on a worthy topic – a topic that is well timed, interesting, important and pertinent. Conducting in-depth interviews with a range of stakeholder groups provided insights from varied viewpoints. The purposefully selected information-rich participants enhanced the validity of this study through their in-depth understanding of the issues that were investigated. Thus, the purposive sampling strategy that was applied guarantees the rigour and comprehensiveness of the data that were produced, thereby addressing the issue of generalisability (Bryman, 2012).

The researcher was well aware of the issue of reflexivity whereby the presence of the researcher is bound to influence informants' enunciations. In addition, the possibility that the researcher could introduce bias at various points of the research process was recognised. Although disregarding the researcher's own ideas, beliefs and presumptions may not be possible (Maxwell, 2013), it was acknowledged that these perceptions could influence the study's conduct and conclusions. The degree of affinity the researcher has with the population that is being investigated contributes to research bias. Being too closely associated with the sample group involves the risk of the researcher "going native" or making assumptions regarding participants' mind-sets and behaviours (Chenail, 2011, p. 257). In such a situation, the capacity for the researcher to objectively observe proceedings may be lost, thus leading to a bias towards participants' opinions (ibid).

As a foreign student, the researcher approached data collection and analysis for this study from a neutral standpoint; not being a 'local' reduced the risk of choosing data that conform to the researcher's existing preconception and goals. The researcher's knowledge on the Supercity, NZ's tourism industry, tourism competitiveness and stakeholder collaboration was largely formed and based on existing IR; hence, it was

detached from personal interests and motivations. Thus, the chances of the interviewees' comments being viewed through a lens tinted with the researcher's preconceptions of the issues being explored were reduced.

Having lived as a resident in Auckland for eight years, the researcher is well familiarised and adapted to the local environment. Being immersed in research during her time in NZ, the researcher has been exposed to and is well aware of the events and happenings within Auckland and its tourism industry. The researcher was residing in Auckland prior to, during and after the changes to Auckland's political structure. This made the researcher aware and exposed to the past and current debates about the phenomenal event. Therefore, during the research, it was possible for the researcher to be aware of what was happening locally from a NZ and Auckland perspective, but at the same time, as a foreigner, was able to detach herself from any politics or feelings of attachment to controversial local issues.

In addition to the detailed explanation of data gathering and analysis procedures employed for this research as described in the previous paragraphs, thick descriptions of the findings further enhanced the credibility of this study. Thick descriptions contribute to enhancing interpretive validity by capturing the thoughts and feelings of participants with regard to a situation or action, and ascribing present and future intentionality to the behaviour (Ponterotto, 2006, p. 539). Descriptive accounts of the conclusions drawn and the key findings that illustrate in detail the interview data that led to those inferences are provided. Clarifications of the inferred meanings are given with frequent supportive quotes from the interviewees, as is evident in the findings chapters.

While this research relies heavily on the interview data, secondary data played a significant role. One of the key reasons is that research that is overly dependent on interview data poses issues with generalisability; what is narrated by interviewees may differ from their actions in practical situations (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006). Appropriate theoretical frameworks were utilised to support the findings deduced from the interview data and also to link the findings with relevant existing literature. Following closely the events and happenings in the Auckland tourism scene in relation to the Supercity structure, and maintaining records from information gathered from news articles and attendance at industry events enabled the researcher to observe and keep abreast of the activities and actions within the Auckland tourism industry.

Secondary data thus obtained were also useful in placing the researcher within the context of the research setting.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethics plays a crucial role in the reliability and validity of a research as researchers are confronted with issues related to ethics at every stage of the research process (Hannes et al., 2010). These issues relate to the protection of the welfare and rights of those who agree to participate in the research. Participants' welfare relates to balancing the risks for participants against benefits in the form of providing answers to prevailing issues or gaining insights into an issue (Maxwell, 2013). Protecting the dignity of the participants is also a focus of ethics. This involves providing sufficient information to participants in return for their willing and informed consent to participate in the research (Flick, 2014). The importance of maintaining participants' confidentiality and not revealing information about their identity in any form was stressed by Creswell (2013). There is the risk that the information provided by the participants for the research could be used against them.

During the process of this research, several precautionary measures were followed to ensure the protection of participants' welfare and rights. Prior to the sampling and data collection, the research design and methodology along with the research tools were approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) (AUTEC Reference Number 12/306; see Appendix 5). Participants were provided with sufficient information about the research before their consent for participation was obtained to allow them to make an informed decision about participation in the research. The information given to participants included the general purpose of the research, a brief background to the research and the research questions. At the time of the interview, two copies of the consent form were provided for them to sign. One of the copies was given to the participants for their records and the other was collected by the researcher. Participants were asked to mark on the form if they preferred to receive a copy of the final report. Before the interviews commenced, after a brief introductory summary of the research, participants were given the opportunity to clarify any questions that they might have regarding the interview or research. They were asked if they would like to receive a transcribed copy of the interviews. Their approval was requested for audio recording of the interviews.

During and after completion of the interviews, all possible measures were undertaken to protect and treat the data in a confidential manner. As the findings chapter of this research shows, the researcher chose not to reveal the identity or any information that identifies the participants. All comments or direct quotes are presented in a manner that does not reveal the identity of the informant. References made to any individual or agency during the interviews were concealed and presented in a way that did not affect the flow of the narrative and still gives clarity to readers. This information was concealed in the final report and will be concealed any future publications that stem from the thesis in order to ensure the anonymity, confidentiality and the rights of the participants involved.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has covered the research methodology and justifications for utilising the selected methods. Commencing with a discussion of the assumptions regarding the constructivist research paradigm adopted in this study, the collaborative epistemology and the relativist ontology of this paradigm were described. Case study and face-to-face, in-depth interviews were illustrated as qualitative methods that comply with the chosen research paradigm and provide comprehensive explorations of the issues under focus. Justifications were provided for choosing the constructivist paradigm, case study approach and qualitative interview methods. The procedures that were used in selecting a purposive sampling strategy and the sampling frame were described, followed by a discussion on the process of data collection that was employed and the key characteristics of the interview participants.

The methods of data analysis using QSR NVivo were presented, detailing the conduct of thematic analysis and how the key themes were derived inductively from the data. Concerns related to reliability and validity of the methods utilised in this research were addressed and justification was provided for the procedures used to ensure the research findings were both reliable and valid. Detailed explanations were given on how issues relating to researcher bias and reflexivity were addressed. In addition, this chapter covered the ethical considerations relating to the research, and the procedures that were followed to ensure the protection of the research participants.

5   TOURISM COMPETITIVENESS

This chapter presents the findings from interviews with key tourism industry stakeholders whose opinions were sought on a range of issues related to Auckland's tourism competitiveness and collaboration, including issues related to the amalgamated urban jurisdiction. The chapter begins with a review of participants' opinions on the significance of tourism to Auckland and its economy and the factors that form the basis of their perceptions. The existing competitive advantages of Auckland and the shortcomings in achieving its tourism potential are discussed. This is followed by some suggestions and recommendations to overcome those limitations.

5.1   The Role of Tourism in Auckland's Economy

Stakeholders were asked to express their opinion on the importance of tourism to Auckland's economy. Industry stakeholders believe that tourism is a vital part of Auckland's economy. A range of factors was provided by the interviewees to explain how tourism is intricately woven into the fabric of Auckland's economy, and why the visitor economy is highly regarded by industry stakeholders. An interviewee from a national public tourism organisation stated, "Since tourism's contribution in Auckland's 70 billion economy is 5 billion, without a doubt, tourism is a highly significant part of the economy".

Auckland's size as the largest and most populous city of NZ inevitably links the city's economy to tourism. As the largest city, most major companies of NZ are based in Auckland, and it contains domestically unrivalled air and sea connectivity. A senior adviser for the Auckland Council stated that:

> Because Auckland is the largest city, with the biggest industrial base and is the main gateway to NZ, it is undeniable that tourism is a large part of the economy.

Tourism is viewed as a huge source of revenue and wealth generation that produces prosperity and income for local residents in numerous ways. As noted by one participant, year after year, the government revenue and the regional employment that is created from tourism, on top of the large percentage of the population that is already employed directly or indirectly in the tourism industry, prove tourism's immense potential for Auckland and its economy. A LB member noted that tourism is a source that creates diverse income-generating avenues for local communities. In addition to

those who are directly employed in tourism and tourism support sectors (such as bars, restaurants, accommodation and transport), others benefit from being part of local tourism groups, by producing goods and local arts and crafts for the tourist market. An official from a private tourism-related company noted "it does not matter which way you look at it, tourism is a method for regional importation of wealth, and that generally makes a region wealthier as a result".

The significance of tourism to Auckland is amplified by the fact that the city is not dependent on primary industries as its main source of revenue and tourism acts as an "economic driver", according to a chairperson of a tourism cluster organisation. The far-reaching ripple effects from tourism contribute to and enhance Auckland's overall economic development. A participant from the private sector stated, "Tourism introduces people to Auckland as a great place to invest and live in". Tourism is of particular importance to SMTEs and businesses in the peripheral areas of Auckland. A senior official from an industry association stated:

> The vast majority of all businesses are operated out of Auckland. It has a lot to offer. But tourism is not the be all and end all of the economy. It is the second-largest industry to dairy in New Zealand. Very, very important. It is also very important from the perspectives of some regional rural towns because their foundation is tourism.

In addition to bringing direct economic benefits to the economy of Auckland, tourism contributes to growth in other economic sectors. As illustrated by Narayan, Narayan, Prasad and Prasad (2010), tourism is the foundation of economic growth for many countries and destinations. A number of major economic activities, such as air services and transport, heavily rely on the tourism industry for their sustained operations. The revenue from tourism supports and contributes to the sustainability and regular functioning of many large private companies that offer their services to locals. An interviewee from the air services sector provided an example: "Air services are critical to the development of Auckland's economy; but it is tourism that helps make air services sustainable."

Similar views were expressed by the CEO of a private transport company: "Without tourism revenue, we wouldn't operate all year round…we couldn't operate today if we didn't have tourism, it would become an all year round cost."

The majority of the interviewees believe that tourism is significant to Auckland's economy; however, comments by some of the stakeholders reveal an existing

perception that tourism's contribution is not that important in terms of yield and economic value. According to the opinions of some interviewees, primary industries such as dairy and farming and export are NZ's major economic sectors. In comparison with these and other high-value industries such as food production, the wealth generated from tourism is less; hence, it does not contribute much to the economy, according to some interviewees.

Others feel that the impact of tourism is underestimated by the general public and the national government. One LB member commented:

> I think we are not giving it enough attention as a city, as a country. It needs to be higher in terms of priorities; it is a massive generator of income and economic development.

An industry expert stated that, although "tourism spreads and touches many facets of the socio-economic fabric of the city", it is a sector that is not "taken seriously enough by the (national) government". Even though tourism is one of the largest export industries and the sector's contribution to the economy is huge, the significance of tourism is not well recognised by many. The manager of a national tourism promotion agency expressed that:

> Tourism is usually underestimated in terms of its importance. Nationally it's the second biggest earner of foreign exchange behind dairy. It must be close to the most important export industry, obviously it's a very large employer, plus 10% of NZ's population either directly or indirectly work in tourism. Because it is so diverse, it is not always recognised as a sector in the economy.

One of the reasons that tourism is not given the due focus by the national government is believed to be the perceived low yield from the sector. When competing with other sectors for the national government's attention for investments and as a source for economic growth, tourism is seen as a relatively low-value sector; hence, it is not given as much focus as the other sectors. An executive director of a private agency noted that tourism is not viewed by the national government and the public as being on par with sectors such as financial services, research and development or food production in terms of yield. A senior adviser from a cultural association commented:

> A lot of people call it a low-skilled low-waged industry. I think we need to take tourism more seriously in this country, it is our biggest income earner, but we don't value it enough. We need to value it more.

The perceived low value from tourism is also one of the main reasons that the general public does not see tourism as a prime contributor to economic development. Not

everyone agrees with the opinion that tourism is perceived as a low-value industry, as the following remark by the senior executive of an Auckland think tank reveals:

> I think critics of the tourism industry, who say it is a low-value sector, take a very narrow view of it. They don't understand its broader consequences and broader attractors and opportunities that surround it.

Others interviewed believe that a better explanation is that tourism is so diverse that the extent to which it stretches into different sectors and the benefits it provides to the economy are not recognised by everyone. As a result, tourism is not perceived as valuable in the eyes of the general public. According to a tourism industry expert:

> The biggest tourist businesses are not what you call tourism industry. Foodtown, the Warehouse, all of these businesses make a lot of money from tourism and tourists. They wouldn't classify themselves as tourist businesses, but they are part of the industry.

A large number of people that work indirectly in tourism do not realise their contribution and hence fail to recognise its value. If they are not directly involved in businesses such as accommodation and attractions, most of the general public are ignorant about how far reaching tourism can be. The GM of an Auckland hotel commented:

> At the moment we think that tourists spend only at hotels or in restaurants and bars. That's the perception of what a tourist is. The fact is that they fund the taxis that flow in from the airport, they fund the roads by the taxis, the petrol tax and everything like that.

The lack of understanding of how far tourism spreads creates the perception among the public that tourism is low in value as an economic sector. The information about tourism provided to the general public is insufficient, considering the significance of the industry to Auckland. An industry expert noted that enough information about tourism is not being provided through the education system. The interviewee suggested that tourism information has to be integrated into the education system in order to generate knowledge for children – "the people that are going to be the future generations of planners". It was also suggested by the interviewee that LBs, industry associations and organisations such as TIANZ and the Māori Tourism Association could be key players who perform significant roles in spreading tourism awareness to convey information about the activities of their organisations and their members.

5.2 Role of Tourism in Achieving Auckland's Vision

The AVP supports the Auckland Council's objective of stimulating the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Aucklanders and becoming the world's most liveable city. According to the AVP, "Auckland has an opportunity to use the visitor economy to subsidise and accelerate its transition into the world's most liveable city" (ATEED, 2011b, p. 39). Most industry stakeholders interviewed are familiar with the AVP and its objectives. The majority of the interviewees (80%) had read the AVP, and most of the remaining participants (17%) were at least aware of the plan's purpose and objectives.

Stakeholders believe that Auckland's tourism industry has the potential to maintain the 5.5% growth rate required to successfully achieve this aspiration. Tourism is seen by most of the stakeholders as critical in reaching the economic goals as well as the place aspirations set out in the AVP. A participant who was involved in developing the AVP expressed that:

> I have been involved with ATEED…I have been involved in developing their strategy and I have been involved in developing their budgets and everything else. I happen to know that in terms of tourism and in particular conventions they want to double at least the spend that was there before they got there. It is critical for them in achieving their ends and it's critical for them in a big picture to ensure that Auckland is a first world liveable city and it becomes even more the economic powerhouse of NZ. So tourism is really, really a big driver in terms of them achieving their stated objectives for which they exist.

Stakeholders believe tourism is a significant tool for enhancing the liveability of Auckland. The actions and activities that are targeted at increasing tourism greatly contribute to enhancing Auckland's attractiveness with positive effects on its liveability. As noted by a tourism industry expert, "a lot of focal points that create the urban form and dynamics of the city revolve around tourism". An official from an NGO commented:

> A thriving tourism industry in Auckland creates a fun place to live. And there are a lot of exciting things to do. That is encouraged by a lot of international and domestic tourists. As a result, it adds to the attractiveness of the city and that adds to the liveability of the city.

The development of and improvements to facilities, amenities and infrastructure for the constituent population is crucial for the growth of a city. Most of the extensive developments and those that are planned for the future are supported to a large extent by tourism, as noted by a LB councillor. Previous research established that one of the key

reasons for tourism being a part of urban city plans is the social development that it supports (Martin et al., 2011).

The AVP recognises major events as one of the keystones of tourism (ATEED, 2011b, p. 11). An increasing number of events, including local and major international events enhance Auckland's attractiveness. A LB member commented that "dynamism and vibrancy are fundamental features of 21st-century cities". The lively environment created by the ongoing events is conducive to Auckland becoming the "world's most liveable city" and sets it on the right path. Stakeholders believe that by successfully launching and conducting tourism events and activities, Auckland has an opportunity to build a strong regional and global reputation. Earlier studies reveal that cities such as Manchester, Singapore and Hong Kong have successfully used events to create favourable destination images, and attract people and wealth (Quinn, 2010).

Stakeholders' opinions reveal that the strategies set out to achieve the AVP objectives cannot be attained without close cooperation and collaboration between all concerned stakeholders and the local and central governments. An interviewee from a major tourism agency who plays a key role in the implementation of the AVP noted that "collaboration is absolutely critical in achieving the AVP objectives" as the implementation and achievement of the goals of the AVP are reliant on the cooperation and collaboration of stakeholders from public, private and other industries. An industry expert summarised the significance of collaboration to achieving the strategic goals of Auckland:

> The AVP objectives are about making Auckland a world-class tourist destination, it's about weaving together the rich diversity and mix of experiences and cultures that make up this city. It's about enhancing visitor flows and transportation, it's about linking tourism into broader policy and strategy initiatives. All of that requires cooperation and collaboration. Without that it's not going to work.

5.3   Existing Competitive Advantages

Respondents were asked to comment on what they believe are the factors that currently contribute to Auckland's competitiveness. Auckland's strongest competitive advantages, according to industry stakeholders interviewed, are the city's natural features. This finding reflects earlier research on tourism competitiveness in which endowed resources were found to be key sources of competitive advantage (Crouch & Ritchie, 2006). According to a large majority of the interviewees, natural attributes (see Figure 5.1) are the most significant features to enhance Auckland's competitiveness.

The graph illustrates the factors that were given by the most number of respondents, the purpose of which was to compare and contrast the current factors of Auckland's competitiveness with those factors that the literature presents as factors of competitiveness presented in chapter 3.

Figure 5.1: Current Factors that Contribute to Auckland's Competitiveness
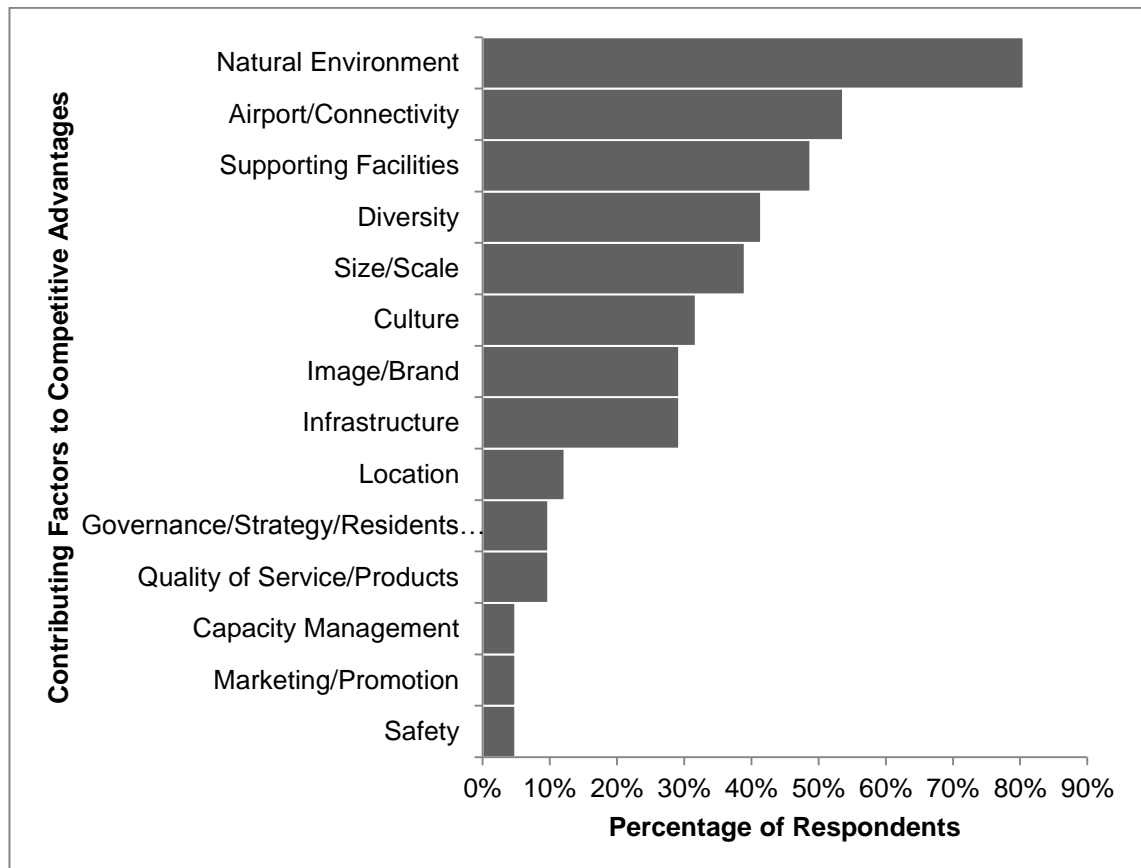
Natural features of Auckland, including the volcanic cones, surrounding islands, beaches and bush land, were noted among the most prominent competitive advantages. Stakeholders believe that these natural features, including the volcanoes and the Hauraki Gulf, with their special features within close proximity of each other, enhance Auckland's competitiveness and support a diverse range of adventures and recreational activities. In addition, the uniqueness of the city's landscape is seen as a strong differentiating feature. The location of Auckland is believed to give it a competitive advantage by 5% of the interviewees. The fact that Auckland is built on an isthmus was noted by an interviewee as a key competitive advantage as it is an ideal landscape for land- and water-based adventure and sporting activities. According to an interviewee from a tourism marketing agency, destinations "interfaced between water and land the world over tend to be where you get the richest experiential factors". Auckland's harbours – Waitemata adjacent to the northeast coast, Manukau in the southwest,

Kaipara to the northwest – along with the coastlines are described as defining features that put Auckland on a par with some of the world's most magnificent built attractions. A senior official from an industry association commented, "I don't think we need to compete with other destinations to try and have lots of attractions. Our naturalness and our unspoiled beauty make people stop to admire them".

The proximity of the natural and built attractions is believed to further enhance their appeal. An executive from a tourism industry association described the vast array of both natural and built attractions around the hub of the city "a significant international competitive advantage" that is not available to a lot of other cities. Auckland has the advantage of having the "urban component right at the back doorstep of our natural playground", as described by a senior manager from a key public tourism agency in Auckland. An official from an NGO described the variety of activities available in the relatively small area that makes up Auckland:

> As a region there are a lot of things to do and see within a very short area so that you can have a city experience like an urban experience with vibrant, thriving, restaurants. There are things to do at night, things to do at sea. It has got interesting buildings and volcanoes. You can go out to the coast, you can go to Waiheke Island, you can go Hauraki Gulf, the cycle ways, there's all of those sorts of things you can do within a very short space…its proximity around that hub of a city that provides interesting things to do both that are man-made and natural…you can't do that in a lot of other cities.

The combination of these features is perceived to add to Auckland's competitiveness and assist in uplifting the city's position in the global tourism industry. Together, they make Auckland "a city of international significance", as expressed by one interviewee. The range of unique features in Auckland is believed to possess immense potential to stimulate and retain increased consumer spend within Auckland, if they are marketed correctly.

Ritchie and Crouch (2000) expressed that the more diverse a destination's attractors, the more attractive and hence more competitive the destination will be. The diversity of the tourism products and experiences created by the combined natural and built attractions is perceived to add to Auckland's competitiveness, a factor that was mentioned by more than a third of interviewees (41%). The level of diversity of Auckland's products and experiences is perceived to be a feature that elevates Auckland's competitiveness both nationally and globally. A broad range of products and experiences are vital aspects of tourism competitiveness (Bornhorst et al., 2010, p. 584). An interviewee from a private

tourism company expressed that "Auckland is able to offer in one compact region" most of the activities in NZ's tourism product portfolio. Auckland is able to provide an urban experience, with vibrant, thriving restaurants and clubs, a range of water-based activities from the surrounding seas and beaches, and art- and history-related experiences by the interesting buildings and museums.

Connectivity has been emphasised in literature as a fundamental element in achieving tourism competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003, p. 384; Heath, 2003, p. 134). Auckland's connectivity with the rest of NZ and the world is seen by many of the interviewees as a key competitive advantage. More than half of the participants (54%) pointed to the Auckland International Airport and the ports as competitive strengths of the city. The Waitemata Harbour near the central business district (CBD), providing the main access by sea to Auckland, the Port of Onehunga, a domestic port in the Manukau Harbour and an inland port in Wiri, South Auckland, are noted as the city's key assets. The port close to the CBD is central to serve the cruise sector, and the airport provides Auckland with unrivalled connectivity as the "gateway" of NZ, as pointed out by the tourism manager from an Auckland public tourism agency. The interviewee stated that due to these crucial features, "by default", Auckland is able to receive more visitors by having the potential to "capture people who fly in and fly out of the city". Having the largest international airport also means Auckland can offer visitors the best choice of airlines compared with other cities of NZ. An official from the airline industry expressed the advantages that the airport presents:

> Approximately 90% of all travellers that travel further than the eastern seaboard of Australia come into and leave from Auckland International Airport and 70% of all travellers to New Zealand come into and leave from Auckland International Airport, so that creates a natural hub for the development of tourism in Auckland.

A significant competitive advantage for Auckland is the well-established facilities and services that support the city's tourism. Supporting facilities and services were mentioned by nearly half of those interviewed (49%) as contributing factors to Auckland's tourism competitiveness. The range of facilities, choices of accommodation and activities enable Auckland to cater to various tourism market segments and enhance tourist experiences. This reflects the broader literature that argues that supporting facilities are the foundations upon which a sound tourism industry is built (Wilde & Cox, 2008). Auckland's wide-ranging facilities enable the city to cater to different market segments. As described by an industry expert, it is the availability of the

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facilities and services that has helped Auckland to "tap into" the business market and to become a "business hub".

Recent years have seen Auckland develop into a culinary hub; in the words of the president of a business association, there are an increasing number of "world-class restaurants and cafés in which local celebrity chefs are active in their operation". A senior executive of a tourism industry association noted:

> We are starting to see that Auckland is on the cusp of truly turning into an international city with the developments that have happened in the city centre in the last couple of years and the creation of the Auckland City.

Auckland's restaurants, cafes and hotels together create "downtown experiences" that "can rival anywhere in the world", according to the president of a local business association. Auckland's dining experiences significantly enhance the city's attractiveness to residents, and domestic and international tourists. An executive from the private sector stated, "visitors like to eat and drink, and have fun; they don't want to just climb mountains and kayak". Cafes and restaurants are major attractors for tourists, which also can instigate repeat visits (Kivela & Crotts, 2006).

Some interviewees (10%) noted that Auckland possesses standards and quality of services that are competitive at both national and international levels. A destination's capability in providing quality services and products is a key component of competitiveness (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013; Dwyer & Kim, 2003). The standard and efficiency of Auckland's general infrastructure, telecommunications, health care, financial services and transport services contribute to strengthening Auckland's competitiveness, according to the comments of a number of interviewees.

The local population's willingness and enthusiasm to embrace, support and contribute to the growth of tourism are central to tourism competitiveness (Heath, 2003). Stakeholders expressed that willingness of locals to support tourism and their friendliness and hospitality are important in achieving competitiveness in Auckland. The benefits of tourism are generally felt to be appreciated by the locals, who are ready and forthcoming with inputs and suggestions. Stakeholders described instances when locals have willingly given their input in tourism development plans. Recommendations by the local communities range from ideas on how to better showcase local ways of life and other attractions, to ways for tourism development to avoid conflicts and hostility with residents.

With respect to the factors that add to Auckland's competitiveness, 10% of the interviewees noted that local governance, tourism strategy and the consistently "good" and reliable performance of local and central governance have strengthened the city's competitiveness. Political stability and support of local communities for tourism development are integral to competitiveness (Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009). Local government support and willingness to invest, and effective tourism plans and strategies are contributing factors to Auckland's tourism success. According to a comment by a LB member, positive impacts on Auckland's economy from these initiatives are evident in the form of enhanced growth of jobs in hospitality, tourism and other economic sectors.

Increased planning and investments targeted at the city's development and expansion of tourism are anticipated to further enhance the city's competitiveness and create reciprocal benefits for Auckland and its tourism industry. Stakeholders believe that these improved local developments will not only contribute to competitiveness, but also contribute to making Auckland the most liveable city in the world. Findings from previous empirical research support the view that sustainable tourism policy and management has significant importance for improving tourism competitiveness (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009).

Safety and security are crucial elements for developing and sustaining tourism (Bassil, 2013). Auckland's political stability and safety are noted by some stakeholders (5%) as elements that add to the city's competitiveness. Low levels of political and social unrest and the relative safe environment are noted as valuable aspects that create an attractive environment for Auckland's tourism success. An industry expert commented:

> Auckland has a competitive advantage based around the relative safe and easy opportunities for visitors to explore Auckland. It is not a particularly dangerous city; it's a place where people can feel comfortable.

The exchange rate is perceived to have a significant influence on Auckland's competitiveness. The recently high NZ dollar against many key tourism market currencies is argued by some to be advantageous to Auckland's tourism industry. The elevated NZ dollar is said to assist in promoting Auckland as a high-quality destination. Profiling as a high-quality destination contributes to maintaining superior quality in tourism products, and facilitates promotion to high-end markets. According to a senior official from a national tourism marketing organisation:

Exchange rate makes a huge difference. NZ exchange rate has been persistently high for about four to five years, which means we are not a cheap destination for international visitors, so it changes our product profile. We have to market ourselves as a quality destination because we are not a cheap destination. So exchange rate has a big influence.

The literature indicates that exchange rate is closely linked to price elasticity for both visitor arrival numbers and visitor expenditure (Gianluca, 2011). This argument is relevant in the case of Auckland tourism, as some interviewees expressed that a high exchange rate could also negatively impact competitiveness. They explained that when a high NZ dollar positions Auckland as an expensive destination, it adversely impacts demand from market segments other than the higher-end markets. As a result, most tourism operators, particularly SMTEs, appear to be affected by low occupancy. Unfavourable repercussions could start to appear in services, products and their quality, which it was noted would eventually impact the industry's competitiveness.

The size of Auckland and the fact that Auckland is the largest city in NZ with the biggest population is believed (by 39% of participants) to be a competitive strength. These factors assist in drawing international and domestic tourists and projecting Auckland as a city of international significance. A senior official from a key Auckland tourism agency described Auckland as the only city in NZ that is able to provide "compelling attractiveness in terms of destination appeal" on a "genuinely international scale". The size of the city and its population compared with other cities of NZ makes it possible for Auckland to cater to those who seek an urban experience on an international scale. This makes Auckland a dominant player in the country's tourism without any substantial local competition, as was noted by the CEO of a tourism marketing organisation. The fact that the largest stakeholders and executers of tourism – Air New Zealand, Auckland Airport and ATEED – are based in Auckland strengthens Auckland's competitiveness. The CEO of a private transport firm explained that the fact that the major players of the tourism industry are based in Auckland is "a real threat to the rest of New Zealand".

Being NZ's largest city proves advantageous in additional ways. According to the director of a key Auckland attraction, most travellers tend to choose the biggest city of any country when they travel. The first choice of destination for travellers to NZ therefore will be Auckland. In addition, the large size of Auckland relative to other NZ cities creates the dynamics for wide-ranging activities and experiences. According to an interviewee, it is the city's size that "drives the breadth of activity" within Auckland.

Being a large city enables Auckland to embrace the scope of current investments, according to an interviewee. The tourism and marketing manager at one of Auckland's tourism establishments commented that Auckland's size contributes to the efficiency with which the city is able to manage capacity. The interviewee added that capacity management is an important factor in achieving tourism competitiveness, which 5% of interviewees noted as one of Auckland's competitive advantages. The size of Auckland facilitates the city to cope effectively with the volume of visitors that it attracts and is therefore a competitive strength. A destination's competitiveness is related to its capability to cater to the demand and manage the supply effectively (Schiff & Becken, 2011; Vengesayi, 2003).

As the most populous city in NZ, Auckland stimulates increased domestic tourism for short-term holidays and the VFR market. SMTEs and businesses outside the CBD particularly benefit from the volume of Auckland's population through domestic tourism. An interviewee from a cluster group commented:

> Talking about the domestic market and how can they assist us – it is simply the critical mass, it is the largest population base in NZ, comparatively small internationally, but it's the largest population base in NZ, and its location in terms of family and friends staying or people living in Auckland who want to get out in the weekend, not necessarily for long-term holidays. So we have a regular opportunity to give them.

Cultural diversity is a key attribute that enhances Auckland's cosmopolitan nature and adds value to the city. Nearly a third of the interviewees (32%) remarked that Auckland's multiple ethnicities and diverse cultures are strong competitive advantages and key features of differentiation. The fusion of communities from different cultural backgrounds with their distinct and varied cultural heritages gives Auckland a richness and uniqueness that is reflected in its tourism experiences and attractions. Some examples that stakeholders highlighted include the array of festivals conducted in Auckland throughout the year, such as the Diwali, Pasifika, Chinese Lantern and Māori Cultural Festivals. According to the CEO of a major Auckland public tourism agency, such distinct cultural celebrations can rarely be experienced in any other region in NZ and on such a scale as those presented in Auckland. In addition, Auckland is the "Polynesian capital" of the world, according to one participant. The large presence of Pacific culture together with the wealth of native Māori customs, traditions and heritage are unique features that enhance competitiveness and differentiate Auckland globally.

Cultural diversity and multiculturalism are favourable physiognomies for tourism success (Hoffman, 2003).

Several interviewees (29%) noted that Auckland's reasonably well-developed infrastructure, especially in comparison with other NZ cities, is a competitive advantage. A senior official from an airline company stated that without sound infrastructure on which to base tourism development, however extensive the tourism products or experiences may be, a city cannot be "in the market at all". Without sound infrastructure, regardless of how extensive a destination's core resources may be, tourism development will be challenging (Wilde & Cox, 2008).

The strong brand and image of Auckland is a factor that significantly enhances the city's competitiveness, according to 29% of the interviewees. A senior executive from a tourism promotion agency stated that the image of Auckland as a cosmopolitan city with a "clean, green image" has been well-established and it presents as a very aspirational destination that makes people want to visit it, not only for tourism, but also for business and conventions. The CEO of a major industry association stated that "the ability for tourism to be used to really profile a city or a region or country is a really important thing in terms of competitiveness".

Strong tourism marketing of the brand image has enabled Auckland to be profiled not only as an attractive destination but also as a great place to live. The marketing and promotional activities undertaken by Auckland further augment the city's competitive edge, as noted by 5% of the interviewees. Destinations that examine and take into account their strengths and strategically plan their marketing approaches for the long term are the winners in the competitive global market (Hassan, 2000).

5.4   Impacts of the Supercity on Auckland's Competitiveness

The Supercity formation has affected Auckland's tourism competitiveness to such an extent that it was described by a councillor as a "seismic shift". The overwhelming majority of the stakeholders (95%) believe the impacts are positive; the remaining stakeholders (5%) noted some negative impacts on Auckland's competitiveness.

The most significant positive impact noted by a number of interviewees is the council's ability to combine resources by bringing the region together. The combined strength of resources has enabled the council to be more strategic in its planning. Combining resources enhances competitiveness by maximising the benefits and adding value to

tourism products (Saxena, 2005). Stakeholders believe that all areas across Auckland experience the benefits from these enhanced resources. The financial resources of the council in terms of its budget expanded after the amalgamation, allowing additional funding to be made available to the various CCOs. The most significant tourism-related benefit that resulted from the Supercity formation, according to the interviewees, is the extra funding that was made available through ATEED. The increased funding to local tourism organisations, tourism cluster groups and LBs has allowed them to broaden their activities and assisted them to engage with larger numbers of people.

According to the president of a cluster group from one of the largest areas of Auckland, the availability of funding from ATEED was instrumental in compiling and bringing together the tourism offerings of the region under one brand. A number of activities are under way, including the development of a website, and activities to promote the range of products, services and experiences that are available in the area are in the process of being established. Such endeavours and the scale on which they are being pursued would not have been possible prior to the Supercity formation, according to the interviewee. The interviewee further explained that under the previous local council and Tourism Auckland, the requisite resources were not available.

A substantial positive advantage of the Supercity is perceived to be the creation of ATEED as a central organisation mandated for the development of tourism as well as other economic activities. The enhanced portfolio of the tourism agency allows ATEED to work with NZ Trade and Enterprise, Tourism NZ and other district and city councils across the country. ATEED's collaborative engagements across the sectors and throughout the region of Auckland are instrumental in improving tourism infrastructure and increasing tourism volume. Comments by some interviewees reveal that the outcomes from these activities are already evident, and as the planned strategies are implemented, additional and broader results are expected in the future. A councillor commented that:

> Tourism is now part of economic development. It provides a wider view of how the economy works within Auckland. We have got an opportunity to see how our tourism interacts with other industries. And that is a really fresh and healthy approach.

ATEED, as the body responsible for both tourism and economic activities, is said to be able to better collaborate and integrate with other industries. ATEED's connection with different economic sectors provides the organisation with a holistic view that enables it

to conduct more coordinated and structured tourism activities that fit with the diversity of the region. Comments by public sector participants reveal that the on-going collaborative activities created by the Supercity are believed to provide opportunities that create a level of cohesion that did not exist previously. They believe the amalgamation has given Auckland tourism a different dimension as part of a broader economic growth agency. It is seen as an advantage that ATEED is responsible for different economic sectors; the broader portfolio enables identification of profitable opportunities across the sectors. Based on those prospects, the organisation is then able to engage stakeholders from the private domain.

Stakeholders believe that the creation of ATEED has enhanced efficiency and led to economies of scale within Auckland's tourism industry. The organisation's size, authority, resources and expertise are expected to bring considerable advantages for Auckland. A LB councillor described ATEED as an organisation with "real muscle to punch…not only to promote Auckland internationally, but domestically as a destination" and "an entity, which is worth the world listening to". The level of authority that the agency possesses is believed to prove particularly beneficial when dealing with activities that involve regulations.

A further advantage to emerge from the creation of the Supercity is perceived to be the ability of ATEED to accurately observe visitor demand from a broader perspective. According to a senior official from an Auckland public tourism agency, this capability has enabled ATEED to spread demand across the region where it is most appropriate. In terms of tourism product attractiveness, the amalgamation of a diverse region is believed to have enhanced product diversity, and increased the available number of attractions and experiences for visitors. Managing resources and capabilities and understanding their capacity and limitations is a central element of planning for destination competitiveness (Heath, 2003, p. 136).

A historically inherent competitive attitude between different areas of Auckland is a recurring theme in the findings. According to a comment, tensions between some areas were so profound that it was impossible "to get them in the same room". The literature also acknowledges that conflicts and rivalries are inherent factors among communities. Breen and Hing (2001) expressed that:

> Communities are not the embodiment of innocence; on the contrary, they are complex and self-serving entities, as much driven by grievances, prejudices,

inequalities, and struggles for power as they are united by kinship, reciprocity, and interdependence.

An interviewee who had worked on tourism projects that involved multiple stakeholder groups from various areas of Auckland noted that the areas were "continually competing with each other". Within the structure of the Supercity, the interviewee noted that Auckland has gained "much more traction" in a range of activities and is able to execute plans more seamlessly. This is believed to be an advantage because "decision taking is a vital part of city competitiveness", as noted by an executive from a policy-making agency in Auckland. When the previous structure had to deal with different areas and councils, the lack of cohesion and coordination resulted in various issues, some of which are said to have affected the development of those areas. The Supercity has made Auckland "more cohesive", and thus able to ensure that tourism "growth is sustainable", as noted by a senior official from a local public tourism agency.

Under the new structure, Auckland is more united and focused on positioning itself in the global tourism market as an international city and not "a collection of cities", according to a senior executive from an Auckland public tourism agency. As a result, Auckland seems to have benefited from wider offshore marketing and bigger events and international activities being brought to the city. The Supercity seems to support residents being "proud as Aucklanders" as opposed to the previous outlook among residents of belonging to a specific area. An interviewee from a national tourism marketing agency commented:

> The Supercity helps in enhancing Auckland's competitiveness. From a tourism point of view, Auckland needs the market itself as an international class city, not a collection of cities. People come to Auckland, not North Shore or Waitakere.

Having one mayor as the leader of the region is also felt to be advantageous for Auckland's competitiveness. A previous mayor from one of the amalgamated areas stated that when there was a different mayor for each, they were inclined to focus on their municipal area alone. In addition, when there were several separate areas, "there was no compelling consensus around governance, around direction, around strategy, around funding", according to the CEO of a national tourism industry association. Working with several different councils to obtain assistance with finance or advice was described as arduous, as was expressed by an interviewee from a policy-making agency.

Becoming a single region is believed to have assisted in diminishing, to some extent, the competition that previously existed between various areas of Auckland. One of the

main areas of conflict was the amount of funding allocated to each region, according to a public sector participant. The previous Tourism Auckland was funded primarily by the Auckland Council and to a lesser degree by other local councils, while there were some that did not contribute. With the limited budget, Tourism Auckland struggled for sufficient funds to support all areas equally. Since the Supercity formation, ATEED has been in a position to be able to view the entire region objectively, to identify and prioritise where more resources need to be targeted based on collaborative, independent and neutral research, as noted by a public sector participant.

The Supercity and the Unitary Plan are believed to provide direction and guidance to all the areas within the region. The Unitary Plan has provided Auckland with a unified proposition, which Auckland's previous efforts for tourism development lacked and were thus seen as fragmented. The literature emphasises the significance of a shared vision for tourism competitiveness: "The importance of powerful visioning is of such a nature that it can be regarded as a major driver of destination competitiveness" (Heath, 2003, p. 135). A member of a LB in one of the peripheral areas of Auckland stated that "one structure suggests there are some efficiencies and quick regional planning". Prior to the Supercity formation, Auckland regions were not "pitching themselves from a marketing destination standpoint as a single entity", according to a senior official from an Auckland tourism agency. As a result, the message that was conveyed was said to be "fractured" and not "compelling". The Supercity has created "one entity" for tourism, which is "singing with one voice…that has got to be good", noted an official from a national tourism marketing agency. The potential positive influences of having unified objectives on Auckland's competitiveness are echoed in a comment by a participant from the private sector, who stated that it is important to "have a common face, and a common focus as a city to be competitive".

Assessing tourism competitiveness can be problematic because increased visitor numbers or visitor yield are not perfect or accurate measures of competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Determining the degree to which tourism competitiveness is a result of the Supercity formation could be difficult. Referring to impacts on competitiveness from the Supercity formation, an official from a think tank in Auckland stated that "it would be a lost opportunity for it to not happen, but absolutely it should". The overall perception of the interviewees on the positive impacts from the Supercity on Auckland's competitiveness is that the wide range of experiences, resources and ability to coordinate those assets on a citywide scale have generated huge positive differences

that are expected to continue in the future as the city becomes established under the new jurisdiction. As an expert from the tourism industry stated, if the Supercity makes no difference, "what is the point of having a Supercity"?

5.5 Limitations to Achieving Competitiveness

Some of the comments by the interviewees disclose areas of concern within the industry. These concerns mainly centre around the failure of tourism to reach its maximum potential and the ignorance of the general public about the extensiveness and importance of the sector. The fact that due attention is not being given to the tourism industry by the government could be a contributing factor to the lack of attention given to exploring the maximum potential of existing opportunities.

Several participants from both private and public sectors expressed that, with regard to economic growth, tourism fails to meet its potential and does not deliver the outcomes that it is capable of achieving. An industry expert expressed:

> I don't think its full potential is being achieved in terms of its ability to generate the economic benefits for the city generally but for many of the communities. There are many parts that are not part of the tourism industry that potentially could be.

An official from an NGO stated, "I think there are a lot of untended prospects of the tourism industry". A number of stakeholders from both the private and public sectors believe that there is a long way to go in increasing the city's competitiveness through the prospective opportunities that exist. A participant from a cultural tourism association stated, "I think tourism can be very important for Auckland, but whether it reaches its potential – no I don't think so".

There are a number of local attractions whose potential is not reached in terms of tourism performance. One of the contributing factors is that many areas are not fully aware of how they can become involved in tourism. An interviewee commented, "I think tourism is huge, it's an untapped area for us in our local area". This results in parts of Auckland not being represented in Auckland tourism and the opportunities for those areas to showcase their local attractions not being utilised. As noted by an industry expert and the adviser from a cultural association, limited local engagement and failure to utilise local resources to their maximum advantage prevent potential tourism benefits from spreading across all the areas of Auckland. This finding echoes the conclusion by

Vengesayi (2003) that community participation is essential to maximise resource utilisation and to spread tourism benefits to locals.

The involvement and participation of local communities is perceived to be the best way to showcase local attractions to tourists, according to a stakeholder from an area where the population contains a large percentage of Polynesians. The visitor propositions put forth by some Auckland areas are believed to overlook a number of local features that could attract tourists and create enriching experiences. These include sacred mounts, with the wealth of history attached to them, local markets, shows and events. Local events showcase local food and craft, and present opportunities for interactions with ethnic groups. A variety of cultures that subsist within Auckland can be experienced in a single local event.

Based on the comments by some LB members, it is evident that, during the initiation of the LBs, some areas had to choose their priorities in their statement of intent (SOI) to the CCOs in terms of funding for the development required in those areas. Some LBs felt there were other areas – those with existing prominent tourism attractions, infrastructure and facilities – that were more appropriate and deserving of ATEED's attention and funding for tourism-related developments. Strained for time to present their SOIs to the council, and compelled to prioritise important projects for development, some LBs had to exclude tourism from their SOIs. A LB member from a central area recounted:

> Different boards also respond to CCOs for input and participation in different ways as well. With the Supercity formation and the AVP because it was a massive change…it was really busy with the whole amalgamation. It was high on the priority for some boards to push this down, it was really high on the list of things to do. For us, we participated to a certain extent, but it was lower priority for us because there was so much going on we just had to choose what we could spend our time on. We only had limited time…Local tourism is pretty underdeveloped.

From the comments by some interviewees, it emerged that some of the LB areas that excluded tourism in their SOIs to ATEED possess potential local assets that could be further developed as tourist attractions. In one area, there is a locally renowned shopping centre, a *marae* (Maori meeting place) and other Māori cultural features that are close to the town centre and the train station. When asked about the potential to build tourism competitiveness of the area, one interviewee from the LB in the area stated, "The marae is quite close to the CBD. I think there is massive potential for us".

Another area has locally acclaimed cafes and a rowing club that was established in 1883. However, when asked about the potential for tourism, a member of the LB from the area commented:

> Dress-Smart is in my area, Glenn Innes Fish Shop, Rowing Course on Tamaki River, One Tree Hill. There is nothing very high profile at all…the whole area is a lot industrial, manufacturing.

One Tree Hill and Cornwall Park are prominent features of Auckland and major attractions for locals and tourists. Dress-Smart is a renowned shopping mall featuring more than 100 local and international brands that offer products at discount prices. The mall provides daily shuttle services from several different central city locations, including major hotels, to target tourists. Referring to potential tourism opportunities, an interviewee commented, "Dress-Smart in Onehunga drives tourists into that area that's a very much co-hotel-shuttle relationship. Local tourism is pretty underdeveloped".

As the above comments indicate, significant features in some areas are overlooked by the local government. As a result, the potential tourism benefits and opportunities that these attractions could bring to the wider area are not realised or utilised. One of the reasons for this lack of focus on the potential of local attractions is likely to be the broader view taken by the council on the different areas. LBs are given the responsibility by the council for the necessary development in the areas of Auckland. However, when the LBs have to prioritise projects for funding from the council, tourism-related developments sometimes are excluded. Comments by members of tourism cluster groups reveal that the local agencies assigned with tourism development and expansion in the local areas lack the requisite skills to implement the necessary initiatives.

In some areas where there is immense potential to develop and promote existing features for tourism, LB members feel that the instigation for the projects should come from local communities and businesses. Comments by interviewees from two different LBs reveal that their viewpoint is that if the communities approached the LBs for support, assistance would be provided. With regard to developing various features that currently exist in an area, a LB member commented:

> Really the community needs to do that itself with the support of the board. The board can't really do that, my board's view is like that's a lot appropriate, almost like community and business working together collaborating to build that…if it's going to be feasible and sustainable that's the way to do it.

Local culture and heritage are aspects that stakeholders believe are under-utilised by the tourism industry. Several interviewees noted that Māori culture is a vital component of tourism. Auckland's rich heritage and built history is believed to be under-represented and not utilised to its maximum advantage. Culture and tradition is an established marker of identity formation for destinations (Mangion et al., 2005). Stakeholders believe there are opportunities to further integrate aspects of Māori culture into tourism. One interviewee explained the success of the "Kia Ora Campaign" at the London Olympics in 2012 to promote "Kia Ora" as the greeting from NZ. Visitors to the NZ House at the Olympic Village were greeted with "Kia Ora" by the security staff at the entrance and visitors returned the greeting. The campaign was a collaborative effort by the NZ Maori Tourism Association and NZ Olympic Committee with the support of the London Olympic Village organisers. According to an interviewee who was involved in the campaign, it was a huge success that was welcomed by visitors. A similar approach to welcoming tourists on their arrival and at hotels is recommended as a unique marker of differentiation of Auckland as well as NZ.

A number of cultural and heritage attractions were pointed out either for being neglected or because their potential as tourism assets were not being realised. One example provided is the *Te Puke O Tara* (Hampton Park - a Māori defensive position and settlement on a hilltop) in the area of Howick. An interviewee from that area stated it has the potential to be restored as a significant cultural attraction. Situated close to St John's Church, the *pā* is named after one of the founding fathers of the area. It is an asset that has thus far been neglected and its tourism potential unexplored.

Comments by interviewees from cultural organisations illustrate that there is potential for using tourism as a platform for further leveraging of the indigenous culture. Heritage-related assets could extend tourism revenue to the native *iwi* (tribes) if they are appropriately developed and utilised, according to an interviewee. An interviewee involved in conducting cultural tours explained that there is a need to find ways to use culture in tourism so that the benefits reach the native *iwi*:

> Because it is such a big city, and they are such small businesses, and the business is part of a tribal ownership where 2,000 plus people might own it…. How then it trickles down to people...there's quite a lot of links but there is disagreement around who actually benefits if we are selling our culture. We are entitled to be the founders of Maori cultural tourism (in the area). We run very successful tours… and yet many cousins and relatives don't have jobs, they don't have money, they don't get the benefit from the tourism that's happening.

The interviewee believes that promoting culture will also support the achievement of the long-term economic goals of Auckland. The long-term plan, specifically the AVP, emphasises and outlines programmes for progressing Māori culture. The ongoing Treaty of Waitangi settlement claims in Auckland promise more opportunities for cultural experiences to be included in tourism products, as pointed out by a stakeholder from a Māori tourism association. It is clear from the comments of a number of interviewees that tourism is an important vehicle that promotes Auckland's culture and traditions globally. Stakeholders believe promotion of local cultures has mutual benefits for the tourism industry as well as for residents, a finding well-established by previous research (OECD, 2009).

Many areas in Auckland conduct tourism-related or potentially linked activities driven by local communities. Some of these activities are long-running events that attract locals and tourists. The Otara Flea Market, for example, is one of the largest and oldest markets in Auckland and has been drawing visitors from across Auckland. The area of Otara in South Auckland, for example, has a large presence of Māori, Pacific Island, Indian and Asian communities. The Saturday Otara Markets represent all of Auckland's cultures through authentic food, fresh produce, clothing, jewellery, accessories, arts and crafts, cultural performances, live music and entertainment. A stakeholder from the area commented that the market is on the decline due to lack of funding and support from local authorities. The Saturday market held in the area of Matakana is well-known for local produce such as fruits, vegetables, dairy products, seafood and craft beers. Throughout the week, regular night markets are held at Mt Wellington, Botany, Onehunga, Papatoetoe, Pakuranga and Glenfield (Auckland Night Market, 2015). Around 200 stalls at these markets offer street food from the various ethnic groups that make up the specific area, in addition to arts, crafts, fashion accessories and fresh produce. All these markets provide live entertainment or cultural performances.

Some comments reveal a need for such attractions to be revived and developed further. These features are believed to have the potential of promoting the wider Auckland region through the varied and rich tourism experiences and attractions that the different areas possess. To undertake the revival and promotion of these features, the "feasible and sustainable approach" would be for local communities and their LBs to work together, according to a ward councillor from a central area of Auckland.

One of the limitations for Auckland in achieving potential competitiveness is the lack of a definitive brand. Developing and investing in Auckland's destination brand is among the key strategic goals of the AVP (ATEED, 2011b, p. 8). Cities act as attractors to bring more visitors, as has been established by research (World Tourism Organization, 2012, p. 4). Auckland has the potential to be developed as an international city and a brand that acts as an attractor. A senior official from the council commented:

> Sometimes cities can be part of the attractor. At the moment NZ is the attractor. Like Australia, people think about Sydney when they think about Australia, like when people go to UK they go to London, the rest of UK is not that interesting, certainly New York is a very strong attractor and brand, we need to get our brand, Hong Kong is a powerful brand. Auckland City as an international brand – we need to do that.

"New Zealand" is the attractor, not the "city of Auckland", as was noted by the president of a cluster group. According to the interviewee, Auckland needs to become a "visitor attraction" and a destination "in its own right" in order to enhance competitiveness, and increase visitor numbers and tourism yield. Creating and developing a brand is essential in domestic and international promotions and is crucial for enhancing competitiveness (Cleave & Arku, 2014). The brand of a destination greatly impacts tourists' destination choice, according to Heath (2003, p, 137). The director of a museum expressed that when there is a definitive branding, it is easier for tourism stakeholders to dock onto the proposition behind the brand:

> I think we do need a really clear positioning for Auckland about what it is we offer. Rotorua (a city in the region of Bay of Plenty, NZ) has got a very clear visitor proposition that it pumps…from the size of Auckland, you can have outdoor walks, you can have suburban shopping, you can do café this this or the other. When it used to be Auckland City of Sails, there was one clear thing that we communicated. And that was Auckland and its harbour. I think to work on that positioning, it means that everybody can just lock into that.

The previous brand of Auckland, the 'City of Sails', was used as a marketing tool for the city internationally and domestically from 1985 to 2008. The chairperson of a tourism cluster group stated that operators in local areas are unsure about ways to promote their businesses and their areas in the absence of a destination brand:

> It is very much around destination branding, because currently we have around 200 operators who just simply don't know each other, many of whom don't know what else they can use as an attractor for their businesses.

Branding involves multiple stakeholders whose interests may greatly differ. Arriving at a mutual understanding among the multitudes of stakeholders will be challenging,

according to some comments, but also essential to successfully develop a brand for Auckland. Creating an appropriate logo for a vast and diverse region such as Auckland was noted by a councillor as a challenging task. Representatives from all major tourism operators and the previous Tourism Auckland shared their insights to integrate various promotional themes from across the region. According to an interviewee, it was the effective collaboration between all the parties that enabled them to subsequently create Auckland's current brand logo – the ragged 'A' (see Figure 5.2). Literature supports that unity and teamwork between stakeholders adds to positive brand equity (Konecnik & Gartner, 2007).

On the other hand, an interviewee recounted how a perceived domineering attitude of some key players and lack of collaboration among those involved hindered efforts to create a brand for Auckland: "Every time we try to agree on an Auckland brand, it has never been an inclusive process, it has never lasted." Indeed, the power of an individual or group of stakeholders to undermine decision-making processes in tourism branding cannot be ignored (Giuseppe & Scott, 2009).

Another weakness that challenges Auckland's competitiveness is the lack of an exclusive tourism offering or a 'must do' attraction. An official from a major public tourism promotional agency stated that the absence of a distinctive feature that would appeal to and attract visitors is a disadvantage that impacts Auckland's competitiveness. According to a senior official from a national tourism agency, Auckland needs an iconic attraction to compete with other international cities:

> Auckland will struggle to sell just as a sophisticated centre. It needs other things. It probably needs some more iconic tourism products…if you ask someone overseas if you are going to Auckland, what must you do, there is nothing they can say you must do. The only thing perhaps is the Sky Tower but lots of cities have sky towers, so that's what it is missing. If you go to Sydney, you got to go to the Opera House and walk around rocks. So what are the things that you must do in Auckland, that is probably not very well-defined at the moment.

Figure 5.2: Auckland's Logo

(Orsman, 2011)

Some interviewees believe that Auckland is in need of a 'must do' attraction that is comparable with other renowned attractions elsewhere in NZ. In the absence of such a key feature, Auckland is perceived to be at risk of losing visitors, instead of retaining them, to areas with well-known 'must do' attractions. An interviewee from a private tourism-related company expressed:

> The thing that Auckland has struggled for a long time is we have had no attraction in Auckland which is what I call a 'must do' thing for overseas visitors. So in my opinion, they arrive here with a list of 'must do' things that could be whale watching in Kaikoura, that could be jet boating in Queenstown, Hole in the Rock in Bay of Islands. We struggle to find an activity to keep people here for just half a day…it's critical getting a call to action to actually make people plan to spend a day or two in Auckland to do certain things. Only by collaborating and doing the right amount of marketing can we actually improve on that.

Auckland possesses a number of distinctive natural and built attractions, examples of which include One Tree Hill and the Auckland War Memorial Museum. One Tree Hill Domain and the neighbouring Cornwall Park is the largest parkland area in Auckland. Sheep and cattle are grazed on the pastoral grounds, giving the park area a country feel. The historic One Tree Hill is one of the largest intact volcanic cones in Auckland. Its summit provides extensive views of the city. The Auckland War Memorial Museum is one of the iconic buildings of the city. The museum built on the remains of a dormant

volcano features in its collection NZ and Auckland history, military history and a large collection of Māori and Pacific Island artefacts. In view of the comments and the numerous examples that were given by stakeholders as key competitive advantages of Auckland that include cultural, natural and built features, it is clear that Auckland does have a number of distinct attractions and experiences. What seems to be lacking is the effective promotion and spreading of messages about such features as unique and comparable to a number of those in other destinations in NZ and some neighbouring countries.

A number of interviewees expressed the importance of domestic tourism in enhancing Auckland's competitiveness and increasing visitor spend. While the large volume of Auckland's population presents a competitive advantage to promote to the VFR and domestic market segments, lack of adequate promotion of Auckland to these markets limits achieving the maximum potential from it. Several stakeholders expressed that the existing promotional activities and current level of marketing to promote Auckland to the domestic market is inadequate. Domestic tourism is a large part of the clientele for businesses in peripheral areas. A motel operator observed that domestic travellers more than international tourists tend to travel and use facilities within Auckland's peripheral areas. According to the interviewee, most international tourists usually stay within the central city and do not usually seek accommodation in the peripheral areas. Even during major events, accommodation providers in outer areas receive bookings only when those in the central city are full. The CEO of a private transport company noted, "I think around the domestic market we don't do well in NZ and Auckland. We don't do much on focusing tourism promotion on the domestic market".

Due to the lack of promotional activities targeting domestic travellers, many domestic tourists are unaware of available activities and experiences in the Auckland region, according to an official from the B&B sector. The significant role of domestic tourism is well documented in the literature. The OECD reported that domestic market shares are an equally important component of competitiveness (Dupeyras & MacCallum, 2013). Development and promotion of domestic tourism is given substantial emphasis in local and national tourism plans and strategies. Attracting domestic travellers to increase visitor nights is one of the key objectives of Auckland's Major Events Strategy (ATEED, 2010). The AVP (ATEED, 2011b) also acknowledges that domestic tourism is crucial in reaching the goals of the plan and outlines specific actions to overcome

these challenges. Acknowledging the significance of domestic tourism, Tourism 2025 states:

> It is the domestic spend which provides the vital 'bread and butter' financial base for a large portion of our tourism businesses, without which many would not exist to service our international visitors…We need domestic tourism to be more competitive. (TIANZ, 2014, p. 10)

There are avenues that are unexplored in utilising the diversity of Auckland's natural features for tourism purposes. The numerous differences in product offering based on the differences in these natural features and landscapes present immense potential to promote the region based on its diversity. An official from a national tourism agency stated:

> Auckland has got a great opportunity to sell itself and utilise what it has as a multi-ethnic destination…That's a diversity that should not be seen as a problem. It should be seen as an opportunity.

Some areas under the aegis of the tourism cluster groups are beginning to look into the ways in which each area can be differentiated. The manager from a local tourism agency described the prospective opportunities proffered by the region's diverse natural environment:

> Auckland region is now so huge and diverse…having said that though we need to start to differentiate parts of Auckland. So if you are in Auckland and you want to go north, it's different between north and south. Everywhere we have got wineries, everywhere we have got beaches...But what is the scene or the brand of the subregions? We are starting to work with areas like Matakana and the group of wineries and other operators out there and they are now starting to call themselves 'Matakana Coast and Country' which is a good step in differentiating the Auckland region. But parts of Auckland are still yet to I think collaborate together to define what that is.

While there is the opportunity for areas to differentiate and market themselves based on their unique features, there are areas that do not believe they have special features to distinguish themselves. These areas have the potential to create a package of products and experiences across more than one area to create a discernible and attractive visitor proposition. The chairperson of a cluster group, who also operates an event and accommodation facility, described their plans to adopt a similar plan:

> If you are talking about something completely unique, to be fair, although some would argue with me, I don't think we have anything particularly unique. What we do have is a great position…what we have is a level of diversity and we have…the country and the coast, opportunities to leverage off and we have some good strong local existing businesses…in terms of something strongly unique,

probably not…But in terms of offerings, what we need to do is just create a package that is attractive rather than trying to be something completely different.

The approach that the area is taking is inviting and involving areas within the area's boundary and "anyone on the periphery that feels they might have an opportunity" to jointly create packages of experiences.

Areas outside Central Auckland do not receive appropriate publicity from the local public tourism agency, according to several interviewees from peripheral areas. They believe that websites and promotional materials that promote Auckland do not appear to promote or display the experiences and activities offered in various areas within wider Auckland. Not only does this leave those areas struggling for publicity and competing with Central Auckland for visitors, but significant attractions within Auckland region are obscured to visitors as well. Interviewees from various areas stressed that the value of Auckland can be enhanced by collectively demonstrating the wealth of the region. Interviewees from peripheral areas emphasised that every business, whether it is related to tourism or to any other service, has to be represented by at least a basic listing under the specific region on official websites that promote Auckland. An interviewee from an industry association who operates a tourism business in a peripheral area stated that "(tourism businesses) are trying to do their own promotions in their own areas".

Information about local areas that is available from ATEED's website (http://www.aucklandnz.com) is not particularly easy to access. The information is 'hidden' behind several layers of headings and subheadings. For example, the main page of ATEED's website provides key information related to tourism activities and events. The 'Visit' tab on the home page links to information about current activities and events (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Homepage of Auckland Tourism Website
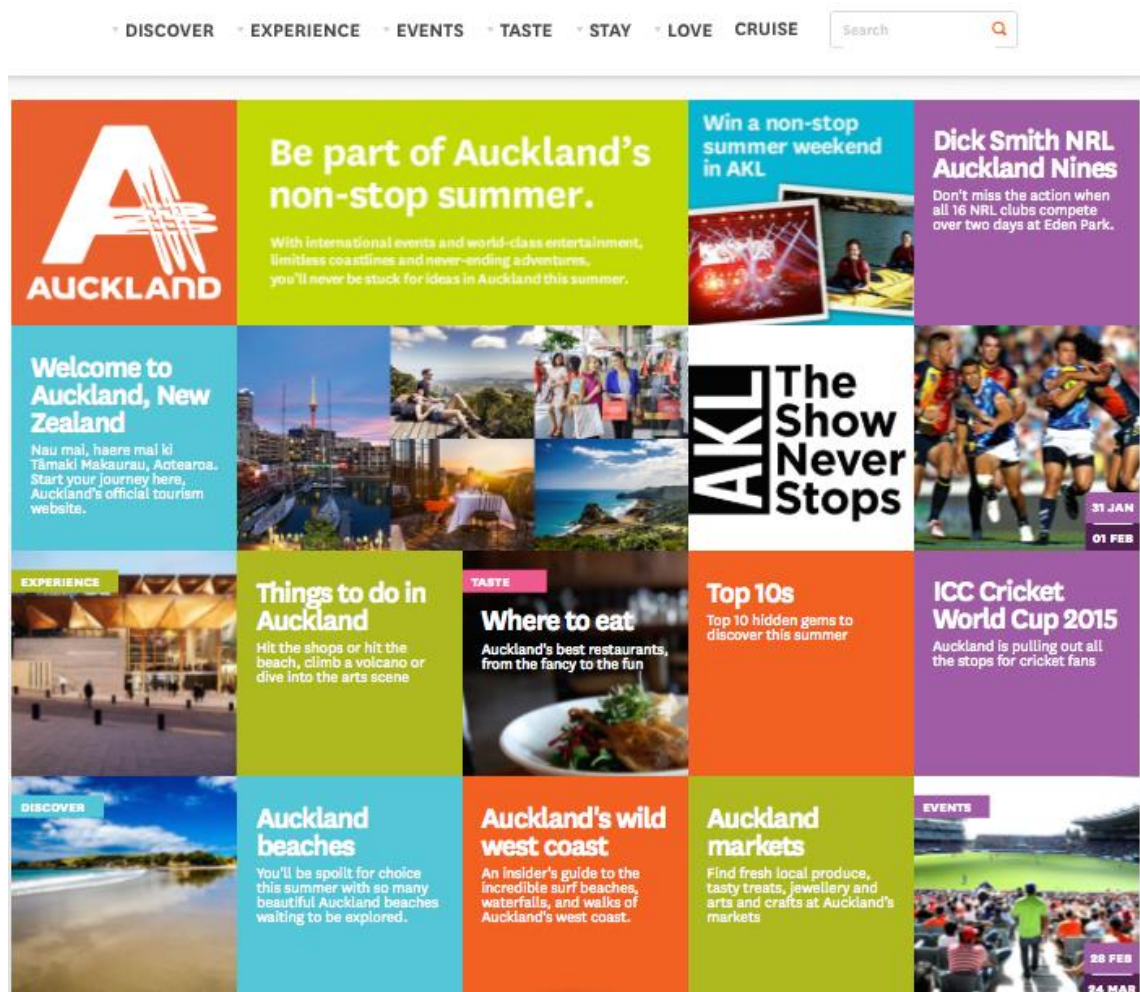
(ATEED, 2015a)

Other tabs provide hyperlinks to 'Things to Do in Auckland', 'Where to Eat', 'Top 10s', 'Discover', 'Auckland Beaches', 'Auckland's Wild West Coast', 'Auckland's Markets and Events' (see Figure 5.3). Smaller tabs at the top of the web page have the categories of 'Discover', 'Experience', 'Events', 'Taste', 'Stay', 'Love' and 'Cruise'.

Figure 5.4: 'Where to Go' in Auckland
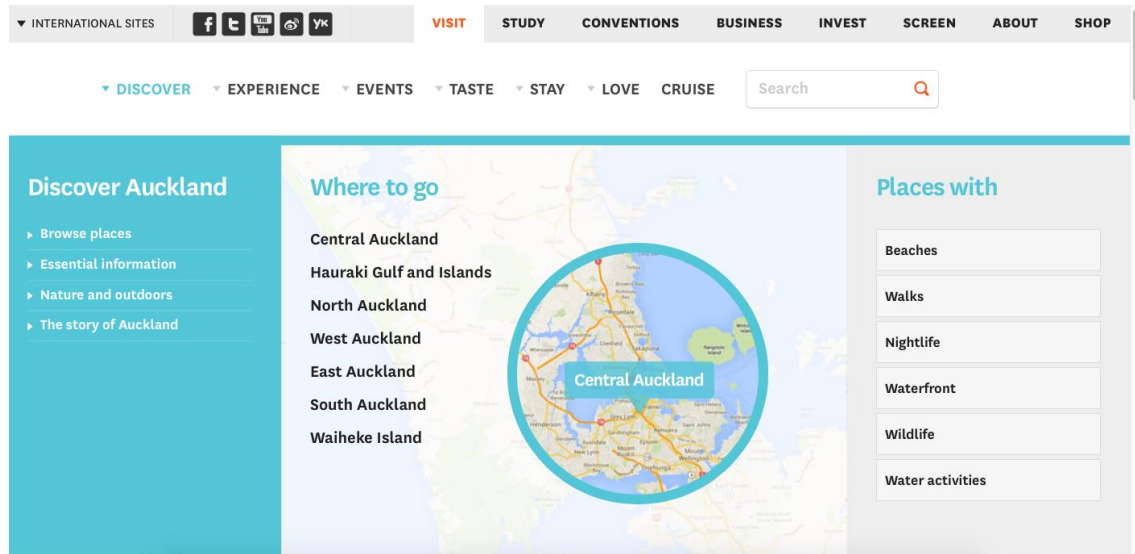
(ATEED, 2015b)

Hovering the mouse over 'Discover' brings up the title 'Where to Go' (see Figure 5.4). The areas listed underneath are Central Auckland, Hauraki Gulf and Islands, North Auckland, West Auckland, East Auckland, South Auckland and Waiheke Island. Clicking on an area brings up an interactive map of the area and the places of interest within. The key attractions of each area are listed under 'Top Picks'. Further information about the region is provided under the heading of 'Why Visit'. Separate links are given for 'Accommodation', 'Dining', 'Events and Activities' and other available services. Each of these links provide information specific to the area in the related category. The information is mainly focused on the key operators from each category; not many SMTEs are featured and not much information is available on small operators. Based on the comments by the interviewees and the information presented on the website of ATEED, it is evident that there is a gap between what stakeholders from areas of Auckland want and what is presented in the tourism authority's web page.

The disparity of numbers between large companies and SMTEs is one of the main challenges faced in trying to enhance Auckland's tourism competitiveness. The tourism industry consists of numerous SMTEs but only a few large-scale companies. Many skilled and experienced individuals within the industry are distributed across the large companies and SMTEs. According to the marketing manager of an Auckland tourist attraction, these folks make up "a close-knit group that get on very well with each other, creating a good recipe to work collaboratively". The more the participation from that

group in tourism events such as road shows, the greater would be the level of success, according to the interviewee. An interviewee from the public sector commented:

> One of my observations is that you would think industries where there are a lot of small players would naturally encourage collaboration…My opinion is that sometimes with smaller firms you find it harder to collaborate. Because they have got fewer resources…So collaboration doesn't occur there.

Most SMTEs are owner–operators with limited resources and increased pressure to make a profit who are unable to devote much time to extra activities. Their non-participation in industry events and activities is seen as a drawback that affects the whole industry. Ritchie and Crouch (2010) found that limited involvement capacity of stakeholders due to their diversity and disparities in capabilities hinders participation.

Retaining visitors and increasing visitor nights, especially managing growth in visitor numbers in a sustainable way, is a challenge for Auckland. One of the main reasons is that Auckland is perceived by most international tourists as a gateway and not as a destination. The tourism manager from an Auckland attraction commented:

> I think NZ is well-known only in international tourist map but Auckland is seen as purely a gateway to come in and out of NZ as opposed to a destination. Often when we talk about destinations in NZ, Queenstown is a destination Mount Cook is a destination; Auckland is not seen as a destination.

A large number of visitors who arrive at the airport are transit passengers who use Auckland as a stopover before leaving to other parts of NZ, according to comments by several interviewees. Stakeholders' comments indicate that other places in NZ are perceived as destinations by international visitors to a greater degree than Auckland is. An interviewee from a cultural tourism association commented:

> Well, for tourism to be very important for Auckland, you need to also make it a destination. So people want to stay and be in Auckland and then maybe go to Northland, or wherever else instead of people coming in and staying one night and then flying out.

These opinions can be related to stakeholders' beliefs that local activities and attractions are not adequately promoted to gain the attention of tourists and retain them for longer in Auckland. Retaining tourists for longer would increase tourism yield. In addition, as a senior adviser at the council noted, increasing visitor nights is easier than increasing visitor numbers:

> This is the first place people arrive. If they are FITs (free independent travellers), they would do things here and spend money here. When we get over

two something bed nights per tourist, we realise it's easier to increase that number by 50% than increase the number of tourists that are coming in by 50%. So when they are here what we need to do is keep them here longer.

Strategies are needed to make Auckland a tourist destination in its own right, and to retain tourists within the city for longer. Increasing visitor numbers through international and domestic tourism and encouraging them to stay longer is one of the key objectives outlined in Auckland's Major Events Strategy (ATEED, 2010). Strategies that focus on retaining visitors for longer in Auckland would also increase the potential benefits from the industry. An adviser to a cultural association commented that:

> I think tourism is important to Auckland but it could be a lot more beneficial to Auckland with strategies put in place to make it a destination by itself, and to further promote international tourism as well as domestic tourism.

Stakeholders believe that the existing infrastructure would be an obstacle to the city's competitiveness if tourism increased according to the vision outlined in the AVP. Further developments and improvements to the infrastructure, particularly to public transport, are needed to cope with the increased future growth in tourism. An industry expert noted that limitations with the existing public transport system and lack of easy cycle routes could inhibit the development of tourist experiences in peripheral areas of Auckland. Referring to Auckland's long-term goals, a chairperson of a tourism cluster group from a peripheral area of Auckland noted that establishing connectivity between the city's various areas is essential if a world-class transportation network is to be developed.

The AVP acknowledges that the existing infrastructure and public transport are Auckland's weaknesses (ATEED, 2011b, p. 26). At the same time, it was also stated in the AVP that currently "Auckland is viewed relatively unfavourably as a place to invest in visitor- related businesses and infrastructure", and unless this perception changes, the flow of capital from the private sector is not going to increase (ATEED, 2011b, p. 3). The plan notes that a range of investments specifically targeted at assisting the long-term goals of Auckland are under way for infrastructure development (ATEED, 2011b, p. 13).

A concern for Auckland, and NZ's tourism competitiveness, is that the tourism industry does not capitalise on the emerging markets from Asia and the Middle East. There is immense potential for Auckland to benefit from these markets, which are on the rise.

Comments from a senior official from a national tourism marketing agency reveal that the NZ tourism industry as a whole lacks the knowledge to cater to the rising middle-class market segment, mostly from Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and India. All of these markets have a large percentage of Muslim populations; however, NZ tourism operators are unaware of how to cater to the halal market. A senior manager at one of the key national public tourism agencies commented that NZ tourism operators have to overcome this inexperience:

> We know already that the industry is very ignorant, I mean they just don't know what to do, they don't know how to serve halal tourists. That's a big challenge for NZ if we are going to see an increase in their tourists.

The interviewee expressed that collaboration with the Islamic Federation in order to understand Muslim tourism and halal tourism will be imperative if NZ is to significantly increase visitors from these markets.

Expenditure by the halal tourism segment is estimated to increase to more than 13% of worldwide tourism expenditure by 2020 (Tourism New Zealand, 2015). Since the interviews for this research were conducted, two consecutive Halal Tourism Conferences have been held in Auckland, in 2014 and 2015. A third conference is planned to be held in 2016 in Christchurch. The aim of the conferences is to help operators understand the nature of halal tourism markets and how to meet their needs (University of Waikato, 2015). As noted by the speakers at the second Halal Tourism Conference held on 23 March 2015 in Auckland, Muslim tourists feel welcome at a destination when their needs are met while they are travelling. The special needs that they require include halal food (meat slaughtered according to Islamic Law and food not contaminated by alcohol), availability of places to perform their daily prayers and indicating the direction of Qibla (the direction Muslims face when praying) in rooms (Mohamed, 2015). The initiative to promote halal tourism in NZ is conducted with the support from Tourism NZ, the Tourism Export Council, the Hotel Council and the Federation of Islamic Associations New Zealand (FIANZ). In a 50-50 partnership between TNZ and Christchurch airport, the New Zealand Halal Guide was launched in September 2012. In addition to general tourism information, the guide provides a list of halal-classified restaurants and cafes in NZ.

The overall competitiveness of Auckland is affected by disagreements between community groups in some local areas. The president of a local area described tensions that exist between local businesses that are supportive and keen to bring more tourists to

the areas and some community groups. Interviewees from some peripheral areas of Auckland noted that some communities reject tourism so as to preserve the area's unique character. These communities tend to oppose tourism growth out of fear of losing their sense of place from tourism traffic, crowding and congestion. A councillor commented:

> We occasionally get complaints from some areas, say popular shopping residents, saying we got too many tourists we can't park outside our house anymore, stop encouraging tourists coming in here.

Local heritage protection agencies and some local community members view bringing more tourists to an area as destructive, and causing disruptions to their way of life. At the same time, businesses support promotion of local attractions for potential tourism benefits. Such conflicts act as barriers to those areas capitalising on their tourism potential, which stakeholders believe will ultimately affect the overall competitiveness of Auckland. The literature affirms that since local communities are in the forefront of receiving tourism impacts, their acceptance of tourism greatly affects the quality of experiences, which in turn influences the levels of visitor satisfaction (Millar & Aiken, 1995, p. 629). Reaching a compromise with the local communities and businesses in such situations is challenging for the agencies that attempt to develop and expand tourism in the local areas.

5.6 Challenges to Tourism Competitiveness Caused by the Supercity

While a better resourced council and the establishment of CCOs such as ATEED have been instrumental in contributing to the long-term goals of Auckland through enhanced competitiveness, interviewees also feel there are some challenges to Auckland's tourism competitiveness that were instigated by the amalgamation. A key concern that stemmed from the structural change is the perceived slow process of changes. Participants outside Central Auckland feel that as a consequence of ATEED's inclusive outlook for the wider Auckland, individual areas do not receive the level of attention that they used to get under their local tourism agencies and councils. There is a perception that ATEED is more focused on promoting Auckland as the city, and not the individual areas comprised within it. Under-representation and diminished opportunities for participation for all the areas in the local political system are issues that have led to tensions within politically amalgamated regions (Boudreau et al., 2006).

A number of stakeholders, particularly from areas outside Central Auckland, perceive that the primary focus of ATEED is increasing Auckland's visitor nights. Interviewees from national and local tourism associations and some major attractions agree that retaining visitors is a priority for Auckland. Some local tourism organisations and tourism cluster groups believe that due to the precedence given to increasing visitor numbers, local community events are not given much importance by ATEED, even if they attract a large number of locals. According to the president of a business association from a central area of Auckland, several locally conducted tourism activities are seen by ATEED as less important or irrelevant, and some of these had to be discontinued due to lack of support and funding. An event that was shelved due to termination of the council's subsidy is the Devonport Food and Wine Festival, which had been running annually since 1990. In the absence of the council's assistance, the festival for 2014 was cancelled. Festival organisers expressed the hope that the festival would continue from 2015 onwards with support from alternative sources (Devonport Rotary, 2014). Other events that have been affected include the NZ Sculpture OnShore exhibition that had been held biennially in Takapuna since 2004, and Polyfest, which used to be funded by the Manukau City Council, both of which are said to be struggling to secure financial support.

The new structure is believed to have created confusion among local communities and businesses about the identity of their area: the chairperson from a cluster group commented that local businesses and communities in that area "don't know who they are, where they fit and how to market themselves". This perception seems to be exacerbated when ATEED advertises events and activities historically linked to certain areas as "Auckland events"; it reinforces rather than diminishes negative feelings towards the Supercity. The V8 Supercars races that had been held in Pukekohe since 1996 are an example. The races were moved to Hamilton in 2008, but were brought back to Pukekohe in 2013. However, the 2013 races were promoted by ATEED under the banner of "Auckland V8 Supercars". An interviewee noted that it created a degree of discord among local residents that ATEED had taken their identity and used it to the advantage of the Supercity.

The size of the Auckland Council in addition to the dismantling of the previous local area councils has given some the sense that the Supercity is an unapproachable, bureaucratic organisation. The chairperson of an NGO described the Supercity as a "huge hierarchy" that is "inaccessible". The Auckland representative of a nationwide

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tourism organisation who also operates a motel in one of the peripheral areas explained that:

> They are driven from the top. They have big goals and they are just going to do the top bit, and everybody has to run to catch up on them.

Some SMTEs and cultural and volunteer agencies expressed that their voices are not heard and that it is unclear whom they should approach with their concerns. These comments indicate that the Supercity has led to distancing of the local government from the communities. This seems to have reinforced the perception that the Supercity is not a "personable sort of establishment" anymore, as described by a tourism operator from a peripheral area. This image contrasts with that of the previous local councils, which provided full support to community-driven local organisations. That backing is perceived to be absent from the council under the Supercity.

The restructuring of some public agencies under the Supercity is also believed to have affected tourism competitiveness indirectly. The president of an NGO recounted the potential long-term negative repercussions on competitiveness that could result from the reduced funding for the Department of Conservation (DOC) that came into effect in 2013. The interviewee noted such actions would affect the protection and preservation of the natural environment such as local parks, reserves, mounts and volcanic cones, which would have severe long-term effects on the natural and heritage assets: it "will greatly impact on Auckland's competitiveness in a negative way".

Some tourism activities conducted previously under Auckland Tourism were said to have discontinued when the Supercity was created. This seems to have led to a sense among local communities, particularly tourism businesses and organisations, that the areas are marginalised by the new Supercity. ATEED is said to have closed i-SITEs (tourist information centres) that served certain areas and shifted others elsewhere. Previously, the local tourism offices and i-SITEs were said to have conducted conferences and information afternoons with notable speakers that were well attended. When these events were discontinued and some of the i-SITEs closed down, a motel owner expressed that "the camaraderie" with the industry for those areas was lost.

A number of local organisations from peripheral areas believe that ATEED's focus is mainly on large events and activities that are concentrated in Central Auckland. Tourism business owners from those areas also feel that ATEED's activities are skewed towards international tourism and not much focus is given to domestic tourism. As the

president of an industry association expressed, "there needs to be more than events" in an extremely diverse region such as Auckland. It was advised that more encouragement for local tourism initiatives in the outer regions of Auckland is needed. These comments reinforce earlier suggestions on the promotion of domestic tourism.

Some comments reveal concern about further expansion of the council's structure. Several interviewees expressed that if the council is not attentive to restricting further expansion of its administration, the structure of the Supercity could in the future impede the achievement of the city's goals and long-term targets. The efficiency of processes and performance of the council is seen as the component that will shape Auckland's vision. However, there seem to be questions of whether those efficiencies projected by the Supercity are being realised. A private sector participant commented on the council's functions thus far: "Having a central body that actually coordinates the larger corporates should be better. And I know some would (say) they are doing that. In reality I am not sure."

Examples from other merged cities demonstrate that when there was resistance to the amalgamation and the new structure, voluntary collaboration by all stakeholders across all the areas proved difficult to achieve (Smith, 2007). Some areas of Auckland objected to the Supercity formation, and there was a degree of resentment in those areas towards the political merger. It is possible that those areas may still harbour vestiges of antipathy towards the Supercity, which could lead to resistance to fully participating in the Supercity. As pointed out by an interviewee from the private sector, the fact that the region is now under the umbrella of the Supercity does not essentially mean that competition that previously existed between the various regions would automatically disappear. The following comment from a LB councillor indicates that this may hold true: "You have to understand that people resisted changes; people are still seeing it with some level of scepticism…it hasn't changed. People are still sceptical."

Apart from the feelings of resentment towards the new structure, the physical size of the city seems to pose a challenge to competitiveness through intensified competition among tourism operators and service providers. Under the Supercity, tourism operators and service providers have to compete with competitors from the wider region. However, there are those who acknowledge that competition is an accepted and unavoidable occurrence in a region as large as Auckland. A councillor from a peripheral area of Auckland stated that these issues are natural in any new structure and are

expected to diminish over time: "Give it another two terms, and it will change." More time also seems to be needed in order to see any substantial impacts on the competitiveness of Auckland's tourism as a result of the Supercity formation.

5.7 Building and Enhancing Competitiveness

Discussions with the tourism industry stakeholders revealed different approaches that could assist Auckland to overcome the challenges and limitations of tourism competitiveness.

There is great potential to increase Auckland's competitiveness by developing neighbourhood-based tourism away from the mainstream tourist areas. Tourism experiences 'off the beaten track' can enhance competitiveness, as was recognised by Maitland and Newman (2009). Taking tourists "off the beaten pathway" would provide experiences that are different to the mainstream products and experiences, as suggested by an industry expert. Incorporating the daily lives of the locals into the tourism experiences would present opportunities to showcase "the tapestry of Auckland", according to the interviewee. Stakeholders' suggestions indicate that integrating these aspects into the current tourism product presents opportunities for local interaction and thus would increase tourism competitiveness. Some of the most enriching tourist experiences are those that involve local interactions (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 42). Research conducted by the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute (NZTRI) in several local areas of Auckland show that there are a range of facilities, attractions and experiences that are enjoyed by local residents that have the potential to attract domestic and international tourists: "Local stories and knowledge enhance the competitiveness and uniqueness of communities and destinations" (NZTRI, 2012, p. 7).

The suggestions for development of neighbourhood-based tourism reflect the proposed strategies of the AVP and Tourism 2025. An increasing demand from tourists for "authentic experiences and the desire to absorb the local culture, environment and way of life" is noted in the AVP (ATEED, 2011b, p. 12). One of the focuses of Tourism 2025 is improving productivity by encouraging visitors to experience more of NZ through "regional dispersal" (TIANZ, 2014, p. 19). Stakeholders believe that linking experiences available in the surrounding areas to the overall tourism offering is a potential competitive strength that would also contribute to achieving the objectives of the AVP.

The diversity of Auckland was noted by many interviewees as a distinctive feature that should be embraced by the tourism industry to enhance the city's potential attractiveness. A number of interviewees stated that the strength of joint resources and the opportunity to utilise the uniqueness of the areas as tools for marketing will greatly enhance the overall competitiveness of Auckland. Displaying experiences from various regions would require the integration of the attractions and experiences from across the areas, necessitating their collaboration. It is evident from interviewees' comments that areas within Auckland possess experiences and activities that vary immensely. The importance of including variety in the tourism offering and displaying the diversity of the Auckland region is a key aspect highlighted by interviewees to enhance tourist experiences. The president of a tourism industry association stated, "We all need to work together and appreciate our uniqueness, appreciate our similarities, and our differences. Together we make the kaleidoscope".

This is a point highlighted in the AVP, where it was acknowledged that Auckland's visitor proposition is weak compared with that of other global cities:

> Auckland has a rich and unique culture shaped by Maori, European, Pacific and Asian influences. There is an opportunity to celebrate and showcase these cultures through the development of authentic visitor experiences in Auckland (ATEED, 2011b, p. 56).

Guided walks are recommended as an authentic tourist experience that would engage locals and promote local culture. Reference was made by a senior official from an Auckland public tourism agency to an *iwi*-guided walk named the Rangitoto Motutapu Haerenga that had recently been announced by ATEED, which was a collaboration between ATEED, DOC and Fullers Group (a private ferry operator). The fees charged to visitors contribute to conservation of the environment. The interviewee noted that there is potential for developing similar paid guided walks to the numerous volcanic cones and sacred *maunga* (mountains) around Auckland. Since large numbers of tourists visit Auckland's volcanic cones daily, guided walks to these sites, "particularly if that story is told through Māori eyes", have the potential to be developed as an upmarket attraction with immense potential to attract local and international visitors. Programmes akin to the current Tāmaki Hikoi that charge visitors to contribute to the conservation and preservation of the natural heritage sites was recommended by an interviewee from the Auckland public sector. Tāmaki Hikoi (meaning 'guided walk' in Māori) is a walking tour of significant sites with a Māori tour guide providing insight into the history of Auckland. The protection of the natural environment emerges as a

strongly advocated theme for sustaining and enhancing Auckland's competitiveness. An executive from an Auckland public agency stated that the key is to be aware that the natural environment is one of Auckland's vital tourism assets, which need to be protected "without ruining the tourist experience".

The chairperson of an NGO that works for the conservation and protection of Auckland's volcanic cones and mounts voiced concern that while "bus loads" of tourists visit those heritage sites, there is no contribution from the visitors to their conservation or protection. The NGO is not supported by the local government and is entirely run by volunteers. While the significance of environmental protection is stressed in the literature, it has also been found that "individual stakeholders" contribute less to environmental protection than "groups of agents" (Erkus-Ozturk & Eraydyn, 2010, p. 114). Thus, stakeholder partnerships and networks of collaboration is essential for the development of environmentally sustainable tourism.

The promotion of local culture is a proposition that is supported by a number of interviewees from both the public and the private sectors to enhance Auckland's competitiveness. Several suggestions have been provided for integrating culture into tourism activities. Integrating cultural dimensions such as local people and their everyday life with tourism products was suggested as a way to create more balance in existing tourism offerings. Features of local culture and heritage need to be displayed and presented in all aspects of tourism, according to a senior adviser from the local government. Presenting such distinct characteristics in aspects from services to hotel décor would be a strong differentiating feature, according to the interviewee.

The significance and desirability of cultural segments in existing tourism products was revealed in some comments. The chairperson of a business association commented that:

> You could come into Auckland in a cruise ship and people cannot tell whether or not they are coming up into Sydney or just some other place. There is nothing that gives the statement about arrival in NZ. I think culture is something that can assist in getting that message across. To get that message across, we could be more collaborative.

An interviewee who liaises closely with the cruise sector explained that a large cruise company had recently requested the arrival experience of the cruise passengers to be enhanced by featuring cultural activities that differentiate NZ tourism. Creating such a programme would involve coordination, cooperation and collaboration between a vast range of groups, according to the comment. These include Māori and Pacific cultural

groups, cruise sector stakeholders, and various public and private sector agencies. Comments from cultural groups indicate their willingness to support the promotion of culture through tourism, which they believe holds mutual benefits. The CEO of a cultural agency expressed, "We feel we can play quite an important part in Auckland tourism in achieving what it needs to achieve". Despite the significance of culture as part of the tourism product, some of the interviewees felt that it is unlikely that culture alone is sufficient to promote Auckland globally. Integrating cultural aspects into the current tourism product would be the best approach to enhancing competitiveness.

Developing a cluster of other businesses to work alongside tourism will be beneficial for developing robust local trades, according to an interviewee. The literature also reveals that clusters are able to assemble and mobilise resources that a single member cannot, thus increasing competitiveness (Strange & Brown, 2014, p. 67). An interviewee who worked with cultural tourism organisations suggested creating clusters of tourism businesses and constructing ways to facilitate collaboration between them. This is an approach that supports engagement by participants in co-opetition as opposed to competition. The interviewee noted that this is a "good way of supporting small tourism businesses that are also vital stakeholders in the whole tourism environment in Auckland". Support for this opinion is found in Tourism 2025, where initiatives are proposed for businesses with common interests to form clusters to seek potential opportunities and to pursue those collectively or individually (TIANZ, 2014, p. 17). Research based on the Motor Valley in Modena, Italy, disclosed that formation and development of clusters fosters regional competitiveness (Alberti & Giusti, 2012).

Corporate travel is an area noted by interviewees as having potential for growth and an avenue for increasing visitor numbers and yield. Business travellers are considered high-value visitors; their average spend per night is $318, whereas the average international visitor spends $208 per night (TIANZ, 2014, p. 24). Additionally, many business events are held during the off-season, between March and November, thus assisting in levelling the issue of seasonality (TIANZ, 2014, p. 24). The proposed national convention centre and world-class events programme charted by ATEED are believed to further propel Auckland tourism products to global competitiveness. The significance of building and improving new and current tourism infrastructure was emphasised to cater for the corporate travel sector. It is believed that the proposed convention centre will contribute to increased tourism with positive repercussions across the Auckland area. An interviewee argued that the convention centre would

increase bed nights in Auckland, resulting in improved occupancy. This, in turn, would drive visitors to accommodation in areas other than the CBD, thus creating ripple effects that reach local communities through increased tourist spend. Tourism 2025 also notes that the convention centre will support the objective of improving productivity: "The International Convention Centre will improve…competitiveness in the business event sector and make it possible to attract more high-value international travellers outside peak visitor seasons" (TIANZ, 2014, p. 10).

In order to retain tourists in Auckland and increase visitor nights, operators of attractions, accommodation and other tourist services have to work together. The tourism manager of an Auckland attraction commented that each operator working independently is not going to achieve this goal. Instead, a team approach and collaborative efforts are required to provide visitors with a satisfying range of attractions and experiences so that they will spend more time. According to the interviewee:

> A whole lot of little players and all of the little players need to work together to create a critical mass in the minds of the visitors, because otherwise they are just going to stay overnight and move through.

> We need to work with our partners to NZ, to Auckland and to the museum. But Auckland is quite a competitive place as well, so we need to work with our business partners so we can help keep people in Auckland longer as opposed to working separately. They are coming to our place before leaving. It's great for us, but it's not good for Auckland as a hub. We need to all work together to keep visitors that extra night or two before they go to Rotorua or Queenstown or whatever.

An official from an accommodation association stated that there are lessons that can be learned from past events such as the 2011 Rugby World Cup (RWC). The cost of accommodation multiplied during the RWC. The interviewee commented that, if Auckland is to create the right image for corporate travel, a conscious effort needs to be made to "create the right image for everybody instead of sensationalising" such events.

With the considerable focus that is given by ATEED to driving major events, it was suggested that event management is an area that needs attention if Auckland is to enhance competitiveness through the events. Creating partnerships between private and public sectors on tourism product development, support services and managing events is believed to be an action that would support the visitor economy and create mutually beneficial outcomes for both public and private sectors. Stakeholder collaboration

between different sectors is imperative for planning and conducting events (Quinn, 2010, p. 264). A strategic approach to creating awareness across all the areas about scheduled events, with all operators given the opportunity to get involved, is recommended by the chairperson of a cluster group as the best approach. An interviewee from a tourism establishment in one of the peripheral areas of Auckland remarked that "there are plenty of…events that we need to be aware of, that we need to get on board. And there needs to be an open approach to that".

The tertiary education sector plays a significant role in working towards the achievements of AVP objectives, which several stakeholders believe will contribute to enhancing Auckland's competitiveness. The input from research institutions and universities will be necessary to ensure that best practices are followed. Implementing best practices is strongly supported in the literature (Zhang, Song, & Huang, 2009). Academic–practitioner partnerships are increasingly viewed as a solution to overcoming challenges and bringing mutual advantages (Hinkin, Holtom, & Klag, 2007). The director from a university-based institute stated that private, public and tertiary education sectors have to work together to enhance Auckland's competitiveness and assist in the achievement of its long-term goals: "If you can get those three groups working in a collaborative way, you have got something really powerful."

Suggestions were provided for areas that need to be looked into when building a brand for Auckland. The director of a key Auckland attraction explained that currently there seems to be a gap between the needs and expectations of some tourists and the tourism offering. According to the interviewee, the key to brand building is to understand what visitors want rather than to make assumptions about their needs. The chairperson of a tourism cluster group from Central Auckland expressed a similar opinion by stating that to enhance the potential competitiveness of Auckland through branding, visitors' needs have to be identified and integrated with the image and brand of the city. Considering customer expectation in planning tourism and designing tourism products enhances customer satisfaction and ensures effective resource management (Quinn, 2010).

A number of stakeholders expressed the significance of having a "NZ feel" as an important element to be integrated into the Auckland brand. At the same time, stakeholders believe that it is important that the Auckland brand complements, and does not revise or lose, the current and long-standing image. According to Heath (2003), the

image of a destination should "seamlessly fit into the national branding framework" (p. 137). New Zealand Tourism 2025 states that the brand of a country is a:

> marriage of identity and reputation. The closer the reputation is to the experience, the more likely people will visit the country, and those visitors will spend money and become advocates of the country in the future. (TIANZ, 2014, p. 6)

A number of interviewees stated that strategic collaboration between tourism stakeholders, including consumers, service providers and others, will be necessary to create the Auckland brand and its value proposition set out in the AVP. Insights from stakeholders not only from Auckland, but also across NZ will be necessary in order to create a brand that reflects NZ Inc., complements the current image, and echoes NZ's reputation and the visitor proposition. An executive from a national tourism events marketing body noted:

> The issue is how do you bring the entities together to actually develop a strategy that will work? But actually it has got to be done in a NZ Inc. context. It can't be done in an Auckland centric way.

There is a need to explore ways to better profile Auckland for domestic tourism. Operators outside the Auckland CBD find that domestic tourists seek facilities outside the CBD more than international travellers do. Marketing activities portraying Auckland as an attractive destination for domestic tourists is suggested as a positive approach to promoting the areas outside Central Auckland. Research conducted by the NZTRI on ways of attracting visitors to local areas illustrated that local attractions need promoting in order to attract visitors and to make them "slow down" and stay longer so that they spend "more of their leisure dollars in the Auckland region" (NZTRI, 2014, p. 5).

According to the CEO of a private tourism company, there is greater chance of success, in both domestic and international markets, if residents are happy about their city; however, "there is a lot that needs to be done on getting Aucklanders to feel good about their own city". Tourism 2025 also notes that the first step to increasing domestic travel is to win over domestic travellers from outbound tourism: "Greater and more coordinated effort to make New Zealanders aware of unique experiences they can have at home will grow demand for domestic tourism." (TIANZ, 2014, p. 10) Additional efforts in tourism promotion to the domestic market are needed to make locals aware of the range of available experiences and activities. Enhanced knowledge about local attractions will engender pride about the local destinations. There is an opportunity for

increasing the VFR market through positive messages spread through word of mouth. A visitor strategy formulated for one of the local areas reports:

> To deliver memorable experiences for both residents and visitors we must first capture the hearts and minds of our residents with new and engaging ways to discover and enjoy 'our place' and then encourage others to do so (NZTRI, 2014, p. 4).

A clear understanding of the tourism industry's strengths and weaknesses is among the suggestions provided by the interviewees as an approach to building and sustaining tourism competitiveness. Conducting a strategic analysis of Auckland's strengths and weaknesses is of significant importance, because a small country such as NZ has a number of weaknesses. These weaknesses, if not recognised and addressed, could feed a "why bother" attitude within the industry. Beritelli (2011) states that competitiveness is conveyed by how well a destination utilises its strengths and weaknesses to increase benefits for local residents, visitors and the tourism industry. An interviewee from the private sector noted that identifying challenges and the possible ways to overcome them would not be an easy task; the guidance of a strong leadership in the tourism industry is important:

> It takes a brave person to admit their strengths and weaknesses, particularly their weaknesses, and to say, we lack this in our structure, but you have got it, so we need to work with you so that we can produce an astounding result for NZ Inc.…It's easier said than done.

An important factor in achieving competitiveness is being constantly aware of the events that are occurring in the micro and macro environments. This is a point that is raised in the tourism destination competitiveness literature (Heath, 2003; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). It is through awareness of the happenings in the local and global tourism industry, and their long-term, short-term and immediate impacts, sustainable tourism and competitiveness can be achieved by keeping abreast of competitors. A senior official from a local public agency cautioned that it is imperative that Auckland and NZ as a country do not settle into being comfortable in the belief that the industry is doing well enough:

> It is a real danger to think you are okay, that things are improving because tourism is a competitive business; it is important to be constantly aware of what we are up against.

Building and enhancing competitiveness further would involve additional financial resources from the public and private sectors. Additional investments will also be

necessary to further increase tourism through additional developments and increased marketing to a level that enhances the sector's input to the economy. As the CEO of a public tourism promotion agency commented, tourism development "takes a lot of infrastructure and money to make it happen". Hence, as emphasised by several interviewees from the public and private sectors, support from the central and local government through providing funding and resources to the tourism industry is crucial. The availability and support through funding of the public sector is not only important for the development of the industry, but also for a more uniform distribution of resources across the areas of Auckland and its various tourism businesses, which in turn would also contribute to maintaining harmony within the industry.

Several interviewees stated that enhancing competitiveness of Auckland's tourism largely depends on achieving successful outcomes from the undertakings involving local areas, and the key to that is for the areas to collaborate and cooperate with each other, with areas within the CBD and with ATEED. A number of stakeholders noted that ATEED is the agency that is most suitable to take the initiative in creating more awareness of the attractions and activities available within the region. As one interviewee noted, "it depends on whether the initiative comes from an area where people have confidence in, and how far down the pecking order they go as well". It is imperative for the council and ATEED to not deviate their focus from local communities and small-scale opportunities that exist in the areas by solely concentrating on large events. As noted by an interviewee, "it is important that they stay connected with the LBs and the communities and still put money into smaller things as well".

Suggestions provided by interviewees to overcome existing limitations to competitiveness and build and enhance potential competitive strengths reveal that the key themes revolve around communicating, collaborating and informing and educating. ATEED seems to be the most fitting agency to spearhead initiatives to communicate and spread information about the potential of tourism. Some of the reasons, according to a councillor, is that ATEED is the only organisation that is incentivised to instigate such propositions and to generate adequate interest and motivation among industry stakeholders. Therefore, it is crucial that ATEED and the council liaise and collaborate with tourism and hospitality sectors. ATEED and the council need to work together on promotions, skills development, maintenance of the city's safety and security, and making Aucklanders understand the value of tourism. An industry expert observed that

while all these activities are under way in the broader context of Auckland, "unless it's coordinated and collaborative", their full potential cannot be reached.

The discussions from this chapter reveal that interviewees believe tourism benefits not only Auckland's economy but contributes to social well being of the communities. Respondents' answers indicate that the environment, connectivity, culture and supporting facilities and infrastructure are regarded as current competitive strengths. The potential competitive advantages that they believe will sustain Auckland's tourism industry and its competitive position centre on maintaining, building and improving these features. Even though interviewees were not asked to speak about their understanding of STC, these findings clearly indicate that they are aware of the concept of sustainable tourism competitiveness.

5.8   Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the first part of the findings, the main theme of which is tourism competitiveness. It commenced with a discussion on the importance of tourism to Auckland's economy and the role of tourism in achieving the objectives set out in the AVP. The chapter then moved on to reveal the city's existing competitiveness factors. The top five aspects that contribute to Auckland's current competitiveness are the natural environment, connectivity, supporting facilities, cultural and natural diversity, and size of the city. These elements together with a range of other different aspects were discussed in detail. A number of challenges stand in the way of Auckland achieving its tourism potential and enhancing its competitiveness. These obstacles were described in detail, and suggestions were then given on how to overcome the challenges. A number of recommendations for enhancing and building potential competitive advantages were presented and discussed.

The Supercity formation was found to have contributed to building and enhancing Auckland's competitive strength while simultaneously posing obstacles. Bringing the region together under a single jurisdiction provided the strength of combined resources and the availability of increased funding, and facilitated the distribution of tourism demand across the region. A single unitary authority allowed ease of decision-making, efficiency, economies of scale and diminishing of tensions and competition between some local areas. At the same time, the Supercity was found to have created obstacles to Auckland's competitiveness and to achieving the city's tourism potential. Diminished attention and under-representation of local areas, insufficient and vague communication,

and the size and structure of the jurisdiction are some of the issues that were raised by the stakeholders. Similar issues in other amalgamated cities elsewhere in the world have led to conflicts and resistance to collaborate with the local government as well as with other areas under the jurisdiction, which consequently made some merged areas opt out of the political amalgamation, as was discussed in Section 2.7.

From the findings discussed in this chapter, connections of STC to collaboration are clearly evident and can be seen to overlap in three distinct areas: (1) existing competitive advantages, (2) limitations to competitiveness and (3) building and enhancing competitiveness. Several of the factors that contribute to existing competitive advantages and those that would potentially build and enhance Auckland's competitiveness are closely tied to stakeholder collaboration. From natural resources to capacity management, most of the factors that contribute to existing competitive advantages are not independent features; on the contrary, a myriad of parties work to provide and present each of the features that were described as contributing factors to competitiveness.

The second area in which clear connections with collaboration are evident is the limitations that were outlined that obstruct achievement of potential competitiveness. Limitations include, among other factors, the tourism industry's inability to exploit existing tourism opportunities, lack of awareness of the wider benefits of tourism, perceptions of tourism as a low-yield sector, discord between local communities and tourism groups, and miscommunication and limited information provided to the SMTEs by the tourism authority. Most of these obstacles to competitiveness noted by the interviewees are caused by lack of communication and opportunities for stakeholders to engage with each other to clear up misconceptions and build relationships.

The suggestions provided to overcome the obstacles are intrinsically linked with stakeholder collaboration. Recommendations for linking culture with existing tourism products, building and improving infrastructure and showcasing the ethnic diversity call for collaborative partnerships with the public and private sectors and collaborative engagements with local areas.

Finally, the significance of collaboration comes to the forefront in enhancing and building competitiveness in an amalgamated urban area. While the Supercity has brought a number of advantages, many instances are evident where lack of collaboration and clear communication limits drawing the maximum potential from the rewards

brought by the Supercity. Further, when judged against other examples of amalgamated areas, the limitations in communication and collaboration can be viewed as a threat to the merged areas supporting the new political structure.

It is important to note that when asked about the contributing factors to existing and potential competitive advantages, none of the interviewees explicitly mentioned collaboration as an element of current or potential competitiveness. Nor was collaboration directly noted as a possible solution that could assist in overcoming the obstacles to competitiveness. Nonetheless, throughout the discussions, it emerged that clear linkages exist between tourism competitiveness and collaboration, as the findings presented in this chapter indicate. This finding is congruent with some key tourism competitiveness models and research in which collaboration is rarely noted as a contributing factor to tourism competitiveness (e.g. Ritchie & Crouch, 2003) but the importance of collaboration is widely discussed as crucial for the tourism industry (Baggio, 2011a). Part two of the findings, in the following chapter, present the discussions related to stakeholder collaboration.

6 STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

This chapter presents the second part of the findings and a key theme of this research – collaboration. The perspectives of tourism stakeholders on collaborating are discussed in detail. An account of the type of collaborative activities that they engage in and the frequency with which those activities are conducted is presented. Participants' views on the existing and potential strengths of Auckland are analysed against their perceptions of collaboration as a contributing factor in enhancing Auckland's tourism competitiveness. The focus then moves on to the challenges facing collaborative activity, followed by discussion on ways to overcome these issues. The chapter concludes with a review of how, based on the findings, competitiveness can be enhanced through collaboration.

6.1 Perceptions of Collaboration

Stakeholders believe that the significance of collaboration is heightened in the tourism industry, where different products and services have to be combined to create the total experience. There is immense support for collaboration from the major tourism agencies, large private companies and key persons from bodies such as tourism cluster groups that are trying to establish and expand tourism in the various areas of Auckland. The senior officials from the local tourism organisations expressed that collaboration would make local areas stronger and ultimately bring more benefits to local residents. However, when asked to comment on their level of collaboration with others, it became clear that collaboration is not practiced as much as it is advocated. Even those who spoke in favour of collaboration and stressed its benefits expressed that there is "room to improve" and they wanted "to go further" in implementing collaborative practices. The aspects where collaboration plays particularly significant roles are discussed below.

6.2 Significance of Collaboration to Tourism Competitiveness

Stakeholders were asked to express their opinion of collaboration as a potential factor in leading to Auckland's tourism competitiveness. When directly asked about the significance of collaboration to tourism, the majority of participants (over 97%) stated that stakeholder collaboration can contribute to the competitiveness of the Auckland tourism industry. Several examples were provided from various aspects of the tourism industry in Auckland, where collaboration is critical to achieving, sustaining and

enhancing tourism growth and competitiveness. A number of stakeholders noted that individual stakeholders and the tourism industry as a whole will benefit from enhanced and sustainable competitiveness by adopting collaborative approaches. Discussing the significance of collaboration, a senior manager from a national public tourism agency commented:

> We have limited resources in NZ, it is important there is as much collaboration as possible. From our perspective we are marketing NZ, there are other players…who are active in marketing NZ overseas...and there are the RTOs, and we do a lot of collaboration with them trying to coordinate. All those organisations will have different objectives, but it is important as far as possible, to have some coordination and cooperation.

According to a participant, without collaboration between stakeholders, the sustainable development of the tourism industry is not possible. Jongman and Dawit (2014) established that partnerships form the core of sustainable development as well as sustainable tourism. One of the reasons that collaboration is critical to achieving and building Auckland's competitiveness is the fragmented nature of the industry, which consists of a large number of SMTEs. When asked about the significance of stakeholder collaboration to tourism competitiveness, an interviewee from a private tourism firm expressed:

> Collaboration absolutely can be a competitive strength, because tourism in Auckland and New Zealand is very fragmented. There are few players that have scale and you have a whole lot of owner–operators. You have got only three players listed on the stock exchange...Then you have got thousands of other private organisations…So it's a very fragmented industry.

The CEO of a tourism promotion agency explained the importance of using a team approach and "floating the idea of NZ Inc.". The interviewee commented that while bidding for international events, instead of arguing over which city the event should be held in, overcoming internal rivalries between key tourism stakeholders has proved to give NZ an advantage over other countries: "That's our key competitiveness…if we fight each other – forget it. We get nowhere." Tourism organisations have the potential to gain competitive advantages by drawing together each other's resources such as knowledge, skills and capital (Åkerlund & Müller, 2012, p. 168).

The diversity contained within the Auckland region is highlighted by a large number of interviewees as presenting vast opportunities for enhancing the city's competitiveness. A senior official from an Auckland public tourism agency expressed that the "ability to unlock that diversity" lies in "getting people to collaborate". Collaboration among

various stakeholders across the region is seen to be essential for utilising and exploiting the diverse assets to achieve their maximum potential in ways that contribute to STC. Another interviewee commented that collaboration is a "huge advantage if you get it right". Emphasising the impact of collaboration, a councillor from a Central Auckland region commented:

> If we are not collaborating within this complete melting pot (of cultural diversity), we are going to detach from the very thing that attracts tourists to NZ…collaboration for collective action is more than a competitive advantage, because if we don't collaborate, it will undermine the very thing that attracts people here.

Partnerships and relationships increase the capabilities of local communities and assist in the transformation of local economies (Strange & Brown, 2014, p. 64). Collaborative efforts produce the strength of combined resources; therefore, an interviewee noted that there is "no question" that collaboration can be a competitive advantage: "Any company, any country in the world has finite resources and by working together you can generally achieve more." The ability to augment the available comparative and competitive resources as well as utilising them effectively and efficiently contributes to STC (Ritchie & Crouch, 2003, pp. 20–26). According to a stakeholder from a regional tourism organisation (RTO), "effective collaboration always makes sense unless you are absolutely in deadly competition with a business". In view of the potential advantages to be gained from joint resources, it is necessary for local bodies to promote collaboration (Wang & Fesenmaier, 2007).

According to several interviewees, central to Auckland's tourism competitiveness is the ability to differentiate products and experiences from those of competitors, which relates to a finding that was established by Dwyer et al. (2004). Collaboration and strong leadership are found to be essential elements in creating differentiation for the NZ tourism product. One interviewee mentioned that, due to the small size of NZ, collaboration is particularly significant because adopting "a purely capitalist competitive model" where everyone competes with each other could prove to be "quite destructive to the tourism industry". A more beneficial approach that was suggested is a "collaborative model", because such an approach would allow operators to amend any fundamental issues that may exist within the tourism industry. Referring to the economic literature, a public sector stakeholder pointed out, "we have moved from comparative advantage to competitive advantage and now collaborative advantage".

It has been argued in the literature that if success is to be achieved by organisations within tourist destinations, they need to strategize their goals towards collaborative advantage rather than competitive advantage (Causevic & Lynch, 2013). Collaborative advantage, according to Kanter (1994), is a key corporate asset and is defined as a company's ability to generate and maintain effective collaborations. An interviewee noted that at a time when there is "a lot of rhetoric in current strategies about Auckland being a competitive, world-class city", collaborative advantage is of significant importance. The interviewee stated that, if tourism stakeholders of Auckland aim to make the city the "best collaborative city", competitiveness will be a natural outcome. The message conveyed from this statement is that achieving collaboration will lead to competitiveness. A private sector participant expressed the significance of collaboration to enhancing competitiveness by stating that the only way to succeed in global tourism is to be "incredibly competitive and very strong in the market; the key to achieving that is by collaborating". While market share has been noted in literature as an attribute of competitiveness (Mangion et al., 2005), the previous comment indicates that achieving and maintaining a strong market position is reliant on stakeholder collaboration.

Comments from interviewees from both public and private sectors reveal that they believe mutual support and collaboration among all stakeholders is a requisite for tourism competitiveness. An interviewee with over 25 years of experience in the NZ tourism industry expressed that:

> It is an industry with a lot of personalities, and a lot of different voices. Collaboration provides the opportunity to get alignment. When you get alignment in a small (city), that's when you can get momentum. Otherwise that fragmentation shows in product delivery, the marketing message and service delivery.

Expanding tourism across Auckland is emphasised by stakeholders from public agencies, large private organisations, SMTEs and Cluster Groups as key to building the region's overall competitiveness. Expansion and development of regional tourism hinges on inter-regional collaboration, as explained by an interviewee from the public sector who administers regional tourism development projects in Auckland:

> It is hugely important that we collaborate with all sectors of the industry not just the top guys selling Auckland, but also the guys at other regions, in Matakana or Franklin or wherever who are supporting (tourism) and developing new products. It's compulsory.

According to the interviewee, without the support and collaboration between the various areas, tourism development cannot proceed as planned by ATEED and the council. Literature reveals that inter-community collaboration yields several positive outcomes, including enhanced decision-making capability, reduced financial liability through combining resources, economies of scale and improved market strength of participating members (Marcoz et al., 2014). If the strengths of different stakeholders are to be utilised for competitive strength, the development of relationships and partnerships is of paramount importance. The GM of one of the largest hotels in Auckland commented:

> If we don't continue to be incredibly competitive and very strong in the market, and the way we can do that is by collaborating, we won't succeed. It's very timely what has happened here. But you've got to keep it (collaboration) fresh. It's very critical.

Stakeholders believe that collaboration should extend to all those who are involved in the creation of the tourism products and experiences, from major tourism agencies through to SMTEs. As a stakeholder from a peripheral area of Auckland stated:

> Collaboration between the different areas and between an area like ours and the (city) centre is very important…There needs to be collaboration from ATEED with the various regions. And it needs to come from the region or the sub-region with ATEED, with the (city) centre. It's a two-way process.

According to the suggestions provided, collaboration must extend to include airline companies, the airport, direct tourism providers such as operators of various accommodations and rental agencies for campervans. As noted by a councillor:

> It is common sense that working together will lead to increased productivity and better resource allocation. When the goals of all stakeholders are aligned, there will be opportunities to contribute without duplicating or competing to get further than someone else. Without strong collaboration and cooperation between stakeholders they might fall on themselves.

Non-collaborative attitudes between the areas are believed to bring unfavourable and detrimental outcomes for the entire region's tourism industry. Interviewees' comments reveal that disregard for teamwork and collaboration could cause potential loss to all parties involved. A councillor from a LB cautioned that a failure to collaborate, particularly at a time when Auckland's economic growth and infrastructure development is looking positive, could bring significant negative consequences to Auckland's tourism industry. As noted by a tertiary education sector participant, the potential loss from a non-supportive attitude towards collaboration would result in "a

zero sum game" for the industry in the international tourism market, thus affecting competitiveness.

Events are considered contributing factors to tourism competitiveness because they attract visitors, motivate them to spend money that filters through the economy and increase economic output and tourism growth (Cibinskiene, 2012, p. 1333). Events are given specific focus in the AVP and the Major Events Strategy as a means to increasing visitor nights (ATEED, 2010, p. 11; 2011b). An interviewee from a business association explained how events contribute to achieving the objectives:

> The Auckland Council is investing heavily in Auckland being a destination rather than a gateway. Events help them in that respect, because even if there is a one-day event, we generally bring people here for 3 days. Because they arrive a day in advance, watch the event and they leave a day later.

In the key area of events in Auckland, collaboration is critical to success. A single successful event involves numerous businesses and agencies and their collaboration, as noted by the president of a business association from an area where a number of local and international events are held every year. Transport providers, retailers, authorities that maintain safety and security, sponsors, media and local communities, in addition to a host of other stakeholders from the public, private and NGO sectors, work closely in the successful conducting of a single event. A multitude of stakeholders together "co-create" events (Åkerlund & Müller, 2012, p. 164). Working collaboratively is believed to involve reciprocal benefits for organisers and other participants from enhanced exposure, increased economic gains and better value to sponsorships. An interviewee from a business association commented:

> Be it the community, the residents, the local council, the event promoters, the participants, the spectators, the concession holders, it's collaboration between all those parties that leads to a successfully conducted event.

An example of a situation in which collaboration is critical is when more than one event is planned for the same period of time. For the best interests of all the groups involved, cooperation and collaboration become necessary in order for the events to run smoothly. An example of a situation where an international sports event, a national annual event and a local summer festival were planned for the same time frame was given by one of the interviewees:

> Now those (events) are all at this point planned to be held at the same time. With huge pressures on infrastructure, we are sitting down with them at the moment trying to get them to collaborate, to work together for the benefit of each other's

events. All three of them are on at the same time. If we umbrella them under the Sunday Summer festival, then you have got a world championship, the national events, you got bands and movies and food festivals, and kids festivals and all sorts of things happening together. Then all of them get better exposure from it, the economy is better, and I think you probably add more value to their sponsorships and things like that. So if we can pull it off, once again, collaboration will mean a far better outcome than just one event and two others having to go elsewhere.

Another significant area in which collaboration between numerous stakeholders is indispensable is the cruise sector. A participant who works closely with the cruise sector expressed the importance of collaboration in providing visitors with a good arrival experience.

We provide the services around cruise. We have the marine team, they go and tug the ship, the pilot would go and bring the ship in, the tugs would have been prepared. We manage the cruise terminal, setting it up for customs…and we do work with ATEED, Cruise NZ. Cruise NZ brings the ships here essentially (but)…we look at how we can improve the facilities we have here. We get feedback from ATEED and Waterfront Auckland. We do work closely with these other agencies.

Scheduling a cruise ship to dock at Hauraki Gulf for one to two days entails close communication and coordination between a number of stakeholders including the cruise operator, DOC, ATEED, Waterfront Auckland and Ports of Auckland, among others. The Auckland Council, various other local government agencies, and the hospitality industry are also involved in catering the requirements of the cruise liners and their passengers. The significance of collaboration in serving the cruise liners was described by the operations manager of an agency that closely works with the cruise sector:

(The Port of Auckland) works with the operators of the wharfs. They (the wharfs) work around with cruise ships and event organisers because if a cruise ship has booked the wharf, they can't really cancel it. There is a lot of discussion on how it would work best for everyone in order to be able to serve the ships…there's definitely a close working relationship that we have. It is most important because if you have a group arbitrarily putting up events at the wharf or the port area…it's not going to work. If you had that sort of thing it would end in a big mess.

Communication with the retailers is necessary to inform shopkeepers of the times they need to be open, and to educate vendors about the tastes of the visitors and the items that may not be available on the cruise ships or at the airports. According to the interviewee, the opportunities and benefits from this important sector can only be enhanced by attracting more cruise liners, and to achieve that, collaboration between all those involved are essential.

Comments by several interviewees indicate that the fundamental services and functions of the tourism industry are heavily reliant on collaboration between the varied businesses catering to visitors (see also Dwyer, Forsyth, & Dwyer, 2011, p. 136). While the tourism industry cannot function in the absence of collaboration, as noted by a chairperson of a tourism cluster group, the significance of collaboration is increased for tourism in peripheral areas. The director of a policy institute from a university commented that "partnership between the private sector and public, working together on key things like key events and products and serviceability and so on that supports the visitor economy is vital".

According to a tourism operator from a peripheral area of Auckland, the input from a range of stakeholders from the peripheral areas needs to be taken into consideration when developing tourism infrastructure such as roads, public toilets and other facilities and amenities. It was acknowledged that increasing patronage is necessary in order to generate the requisite funding for large-scale projects such as transportation networks. For the residents to communicate their requirements to operators, and for operators to understand the volume of patronage across the regions, collaboration and communication is "absolutely essential". Thus, as noted by the interviewee, collaboration between operators, Auckland Transport, ATEED, Auckland Council, LBs and private sector stakeholders is key to developing the necessary tourism infrastructure. Literature supports the argument that collaboration between all the economic sectors is central to the development of the facilities and services required for a competitive tourism industry (Cleave & Arku, 2014, p. 2).

It is not practical to assume collaboration can be the "single sole base for growing tourism", even though collaboration is vital for the success of the tourism industry, as advised by the CEO of a private tourism firm. Nonetheless, collaboration between stakeholders can assist in making the "investment dollar go further", according to the CEO of a private tourism firm, as "there are ways to just do things a bit smarter and better through collaboration". Lack of funding is a persistent issue for tourism, as noted in literature; investments are necessary to develop and maintain infrastructure, conserve cultural and natural resources and sustain the local industry (Koutra & Edwards, 2012). Together with collaboration, investing in tourism to develop and enhance products and assets, and effective marketing and promotion are also emphasised as critical elements for tourism success.

The overwhelming theme to emerge from the stakeholders' perception of collaboration is that it is a crucial element in establishing a successful tourism industry. The following statement from a participant from a Māori tourism association sums up the opinion on collaboration held by of most of the tourism industry stakeholders interviewed: "Collaboration just has to happen, because not one person or organisation can do it on their own. If you've got good collaboration, everybody succeeds. So that's a winning formula."

6.2.1 The Role of Collaboration in Public–Private Partnerships

Public Private Partnerships (Mariani & Kylänen, 2014) in tourism are emphasised in the literature (Albrecht, 2013) for their role in facilitating better outcomes in tourism planning, management, promotion, development of products, training and education (De Lacy, Battig, Moore, & Noakes, 2002). One of the key reasons that collaboration is perceived as vital for Auckland's tourism industry is the critical role that PPPs play in the sector. Interviewees highlighted that collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential if tourism is to be developed and spread across Auckland. Collaborative approaches between public and private sectors are necessary for expanding and enhancing tourism development (Hawkins, 2004). Initiatives that require public and private sector collaboration include identifying and developing tourism attractions and experiences that are most appropriate for specific areas, packaging the various activities and attractions in ways that will enhance the city's overall attractiveness, and promoting what is on offer across the region under the banner of Auckland City. A comment from a senior adviser from an Auckland public agency shows that the public sector needs collaboration from the private sector for tourism expansion:

> We need the collaboration from tourism providers, the product people to develop the products. We can't do that on our own. We can't say to the private sector do this or that. It has to be a collaborative joint effort.

Key investments and development of major tourism facilities and attractions in Auckland are heavily reliant on PPPs and the collaboration between the two sectors. An interviewee commented that a number of large tourism-related projects require the support of the private sector because the national economy is not large enough to undertake developments of such proportions. Poon (1993) highlights that "private and public-sector collaboration is key to the success of any tourism destination" (p. 334).

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According to one interviewee, neither the local government nor the private sector alone is capable of delivering major projects as planned.

The role of PPPs is clearly evident in previous projects and strategies and those that are planned for the future. Examples provided by the interviewees include essential developments for the progress and growth of tourism such as plans for the International Convention Centre and Auckland Waterfront Project (see Section 4.8), which cannot be achieved without strong collaboration between the public and private sectors. Explaining further the significance of collaboration for the Waterfront Project, an interviewee from a public tourism agency noted that the government will need the support of private financiers, who are unlikely to invest without a good strategy portraying clear direction and projected outcomes from their investments. Unless those components are in place, as the CEO of a public tourism agency stated, "you have got a raw problem", because in order to successfully complete a project of that scale involving a large number of public and private sector stakeholders that attracts significant public interest, "anyone in the port or waterfront within the city would need to buy into collaboration".

Interviewees provided several examples of collaboration between the public and private sectors that has brought positive outcomes in the past. The development of the Tourism 2025 strategy is a "shining example" of collaboration, according to the CEO from an industry association. The framework aspires to bring together stakeholders across the NZ tourism industry to increase tourism revenue to $41 billion by 2025 through improved competitiveness. The formulation of the framework initiated by TIANZ was created by representatives from all areas of the tourism industry. A number of key participants who were involved in formulating the framework noted that the task would not have been possible without a great degree of collaboration among all concerned stakeholders.

The Auckland Metro Project that was created to support Auckland's EDS is another example of a collaborative engagement that generated significant positive outcomes. An interviewee who played a central role in the project described it as an endeavour that brought together stakeholders from the public, private and tertiary education sectors. According to the interviewee, the project involved consultations with businesses, local and regional governments, economic development agencies, and Māori, Pacific Island and migrant communities, all of whom engaged in the project in a "highly

collaborative" manner. According to the interviewee, it was the cooperation and collaboration with the different groups of stakeholders that led to the successful completion and delivery of the project. Emphasising the need for both public and private sectors to work together, a tourism operator commented that without such supportive procedures, "you can have nice strategic plans that are unable to be delivered upon, unable to be implemented".

6.2.2 Significance of Collaboration between Local and Central Governments

Collaboration between local and central governments is an area that is given significant emphasis by industry stakeholders. An interviewee from an Auckland public tourism agency further explained that if, for example, the national airline career, the national tourism agency, and the central and local governments do not get along well, it will lead to tensions that would negatively impact the industry's competitiveness, thus preventing its sustainability. Having local and central governments on "the same page" is said to be an indispensable element for the development and progress of Auckland as a city, according to the chairperson of an RTO.

Conflicts between local and central governments can inhibit a destination's objectives for sustainable tourism (Ruhanen, 2013, pp. 80–98). At the same time, intra-governmental collaboration is equally significant. Sound internal collaboration is believed to eliminate red tape and expedite processes within government agencies. A member of a LB commented:

> The political way is there to push things through, but it will be slower down the internal process that you have to go through…The ball of collaboration has to roll to make sure that it gets treated through this wider process. It is vital.

The procedures of the central government and the Auckland Council are believed to interpose with the processes of the Supercity, causing difficulties and challenges in progressing with the growth of Auckland. When the local and central government are seen to be engaging collaboratively in decisions and actions, it is believed to generate and spread positive vibes of motivation and encouragement within the tourism industry to work together.

6.2.3 Collaboration in Tourism Marketing and Promotion

Tourism promotion and marketing is one of the key areas where collaboration plays a central role. The benefits of collaboration are particularly significant in this area because of the large sums of money that marketing often incurs. A senior manager at an

Auckland public tourism agency pointed out that funding and promotional efforts by any one of the organisations will not be sufficient to make a difference in international marketing: "Auckland on its own cannot promote itself easily in China or Japan or North America." If a substantial impact is to be made, joint investments and efforts by diverse stakeholder groups are essential (Buhalis, 2005; Pansiri, 2013; Soteriades, 2012). The manager of a key Auckland tourism attraction noted that joint marketing in overseas promotions of Auckland boosts the resultant impacts on the target markets from the activities:

> We work collaboratively to target certain markets, certain demographics, and certain segments…I believe that we will achieve a lot more if a group of individual companies try to achieve that. It will cost us all a lot more as individuals. We will be able to open up Auckland to the world by working in collaboration.

Strong collaboration among stakeholders is believed to be necessary to consistently convey consistent messages about Auckland rather than conflicting ones so that core themes will compound. The ability to generate substantial impacts is believed to be of paramount importance in the competitive international market. An interviewee from the national tourism promotion agency commented:

> If we want to succeed in the (competitive) environment, even if one large stakeholder group is not part of that goal, or not trying to move towards that (goal), then it's not going to happen.

Among the large number of SMTEs comprising the Auckland tourism industry, there are a number of operators who operate on a small scale and hence are able to accommodate and cater to a limited number of people. The solution, according to an interviewee is to create a package of experiences by putting together several different products, experiences and services that involve a variety of SMTEs. Such a venture will extend opportunities for more SMTEs to participate more broadly in the overall tourism products of Auckland. The manager at an Auckland tourism attraction stated that "in order to pull everything together, it requires a lot of different players…unless those players are collaborating and working together, then it's going to be quite a disjointed experience".

Several participants expressed the importance of creating competitive visitor experiences that support "NZ Inc.", or "New Zealandness", to uplift the collective profile of Auckland and NZ. It is of paramount importance that the service providers have a "single, cohesive story" that does not conflict in order to deliver consistent

messages under a unified proposition, as noted by a tourism manager from an Auckland museum. A participant who undertakes tourism promotion for the MICE sector noted:

> If you don't speak with one voice and if you don't speak with one message and if you don't integrate all the offers around, not only tourism but transport and everything else, then your message is lost in the cart.

Large companies such as Air New Zealand, other foreign airline companies and Tourism NZ need to cooperate with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and RTOs, irrespective of their differing objectives, to ensure that the message sent out does not portray conflicting images of NZ, according to a senior executive from the national tourism promotional agency:

> (Although) we are marketing New Zealand, there are other players such as Air New Zealand, other airlines, non-New Zealand airlines, such as Qantas, Emirates, who market New Zealand as well. There is Auckland Airport and Christchurch Airport who are active in marketing New Zealand overseas. And there are one or two big private companies…and there are the RTOs…all those organisations will have different objectives, but it is important as far as possible, to have some coordination and collaboration.

Since it is the whole destination that mostly attracts visitors and not just one area, stakeholders from across the industry and from all the areas have to work together to increase visitors. Most participants acknowledge that the subsequent overall benefits from the enhanced reputation of the destination will be ultimately advantageous for all service providers. Joint domestic promotional campaigns are believed to bring mutual benefits to all public sector agencies, private businesses and SMTEs involved in marketing the wider Auckland region as well as individual services, attractions and experiences it contains. In contrast to singular advertising efforts, joint promotions assist in leveraging each area as well as the entire region at the same time. The senior manager of a public tourism agency in Auckland stated:

> Our target, the reason we exist is to bring new visitors from outside of Auckland to Auckland and make them stay longer. It's pretty simple. If you are going to have a voice outside of Auckland we need to partner with other people such as Tourism New Zealand and international markets…we always partner with somebody, in every international bit of marketing we always partner. It could be an airline, it could be a travel agent, it could be Auckland Airport, or a partner here in New Zealand, and it could be Sky City or a hotel chain.

A stakeholder from a peripheral area of Auckland expressed the importance of collaboration between the outer areas and Central Auckland:

Collaboration between the different areas and between an area like ours and the (city) centre is very important…There needs to be collaboration from ATEED with the various regions. And it needs to come from the region or the sub-region with ATEED, with the (city) centre. It's a two-way process.

Competition between stakeholders is an inevitable occurrence, which at times is necessary among certain tourism stakeholders. Collaborative promotion by tourism agencies through local agencies is essential to overcome competitive challenges (Marcoz et al., 2014). The vice president of an international hotel chain expressed that for the benefit of the wider industry, it is necessary for everyone to put "their self-interest aside and to think about the destination". Engaging in open communication and embracing the ethos of teamwork within the industry is believed to break impasses and pave the way for mutual agreements.

Stakeholders believe that while promoting the wider region is beneficial, there are bound to be regions that are solely concerned about their own areas. A number of interviewees suggested that they would be "better off" collaborating rather than "attacking" each other, even those areas that are competitors. One interviewee from a business association commented about collaborating with a neighbouring area:

> Our main competitor really is Waiheke Island which is part of Auckland. But we will do better in collaborating within Auckland rather than attack Waiheke. There is no benefit in attacking Waiheke.

The manager of one of the largest hotels in Auckland stated that instead of being locked in hostile competition, it is more advantageous to everybody to share "a bigger pie rather than depending on a small piece of the pie". According to the director of a museum, the key to overcoming the obstacle of competitiveness between the areas and converting it into a competitive strength is to "collaborate strongly". The benefits of combined strengths through collaborating with competitors are believed to bring better outcomes than being locked in stiff competition. An adviser from a public agency expressed that the Auckland tourism industry can benefit by collaborating with other neighbouring areas that are often viewed as competitors:

> I think collaborating with the neighbours particularly with Bay of Islands and Coromandel makes a lot sense as far as tourism goes; packaging up the upper North Island would be a useful thing to do. We aren't probably big enough that they can ignore it. Bay of Islands won't talk to Coromandel at all because they are similar markets. Matakana (in Auckland) is a similar market in some ways too. It makes a lot of sense to package them. It will be (an incredible) package, Coromandel, Auckland, Bay of Islands. The more you got as far as tourists go the more attractive you are.

While the significance of working together was emphasised to move away from a self-centred attitude, it was advised that collaboration does not have to mean constant agreement. The degree of collaboration may differ and working towards similar objectives may not always be even necessary. The president of a nationwide tourism organisation noted that "we all cooperate in parts of the picture but we won't be going for the same goal". The interviewee further commented that "there needs to be some form of communication and working together".

A number of interviewees noted that co-opetition offers the opportunity for getting the industry to collaborate and create partnerships on occasions when one party cannot independently deliver the desired results. Comments by some interviewees reveal that there is a need for the industry to learn to set aside commercial rivalry and personal differences to work together. This is particularly important when various stakeholder groups follow different objectives and strategies. As an example, a participant from a public tourism agency described that, whereas one of the main focuses of ATEED is increasing Auckland's visitor nights, one of the priorities for Tourism NZ is focusing on niche markets and quality tourism that target high-end tourists, which they believe are important for a sustainable tourism industry. In this case, collaboration is absolutely necessary to align strategies among such major players of the tourism industry:

> If there was to be a parting of the ways between ATEED and Tourism New Zealand in terms of strategy, that would be quite destructive, not only for Auckland, but for NZ as well.

Even though it is highly unlikely that there would be a large divergence of strategies between the major public agencies of the tourism industry such as Tourism NZ and ATEED, this comment shows the impact and consequences that a lack of collaboration between the key stakeholders can cause to the wider tourism industry.

6.2.4 Collaboration as a Tool for Conflict Resolution

The literature asserts the view that collaboration and working towards a common goal is necessary for successful outcomes in tourism (Hawkins, 2004). A cooperative approach between stakeholders is believed to assist in achieving amenable results and attaining common ground when dealing with challenging issues and projects that involve the interests of multiple stakeholders. An interviewee expressed that collaboration is absolutely essential in achieving mutual understanding for the best interests of all stakeholders involved, including the council and local communities. With important

projects such as the Auckland Waterfront Initiative or the plans to expand Auckland's port that attract significant public interest, "the council being collaborative and engaged with the market and public" is crucial, according to a private sector participant.

Ethnic stakeholder groups, including Māori tourism organisations, feel that collaboration is particularly significant in facilitating resolution of potential conflicts in a solicitous manner without upsetting or offending their cultural values and norms. Referring to an example from past experiences, a stakeholder recounted that tourism products developed by one group can quickly get replicated and widely distributed by others in a small country such as NZ. In the absence of open and sincere communication, such actions can easily lead to disputes and unhealthy competition within the groups. Working collaboratively with others in the industry has enabled tourism associations and organisations to alleviate problems. A participant who operated a B&B for several years and is now the president of a tourism industry association described how a bad review from a visitor that could have tarnished the image of the sector was avoided through collaborative actions:

> That might be just one lady, but she would tell a lot of other people. So in my view it's no use (tourism authorities) spending huge amounts of money overseas if the tourists come here and they don't have a good experience.

Tourism NZ, MBIE and Qualmark assisted the organisation to mitigate the negative feedback that could have reflected poorly on the industry.

A collaborative approach is believed to be useful in resolving problems and forging progress when conducting and developing activities that involve local communities. Conflicts and reluctant attitudes that exist among stakeholder groups hinder the efforts and activities targeting tourism development. These hurdles can be overcome by a community-driven approach to working together. An interviewee from a newly formed cluster group that was struggling to get stakeholders to collaborate noted:

> What I am seeing is this tension and taking sides and people thinking about withholding information instead of putting it in the middle of the table and saying, what is best for this community?

A LB member from a peripheral area of Auckland argued that in order to use the benefits from the tourism industry to address issues that cause poverty such as unemployment, a greater degree of collaborative engagements between the concerned public authorities, the local communities and the tourism industry is essential. A CEO of a nationwide tourism organisation commented that everyone has to "work hand-in-

hand" for the development and growth of Auckland and its communities; "it won't work unless people come together and pull together".

6.2.5   Collaboration as a Solution to Overcome Challenges to Competitiveness

Stakeholders believe that a number of challenges that stand in the way of Auckland achieving its maximum potential can be overcome through a team approach and collaborative practices. For example, the shortcoming of being a small city in a global context contributes to limited resources, creates diseconomies of scale and puts the city at a disadvantage in competing internationally. Suggestions given by interviewees to overcome these impediments include working collaboratively so that the limited resources that are available can be utilised more cleverly, efficiently and effectively to gain the maximum advantages from them. According to the CEO of a public tourism marketing agency, "what we do have, if we are smart, is a team approach", which would be relatively easy to develop in a small city such as Auckland. Other recommendations indicate some of the ways in which collaboration can be utilised as a tool to overcome some of the challenges due to smallness of size. It is believed that compactness can present opportunities for greater collaboration in a small city. The CEO of a large private tourism firm explained that:

> The opportunity to collaborate is…much more doable in Auckland…than other destinations and other cities around the world. You can gather the key people together reasonably easily and keep them together, and keep them reasonably well aligned, about a whole lot of different political agendas.

The presence of SMTEs whose numbers outweigh those of large businesses in Auckland's tourism industry compels collaboration between the small and large companies, as one interviewee from a private tourism company noted. Comments by stakeholders indicate that the limited number of large players with the requisite scale to perform a meaningful role in the development of tourism means that the only way the industry can succeed in line with major international tourism destinations is through strong collaboration with each other and with the SMTEs. As the owner of an SMTE commented, the "pragmatic" option for the benefit of the wider region is "consensus" and "collaboration". The interviewee expressed that SMTEs and large tourism firms need each other's support for growth and development. Small to medium enterprises and microbusinesses are the "backbone of the tourism industry" (Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005, p. 2). A participant with extensive experience in SMTEs and large organisations explained that while smaller firms rely on larger firms to generate sufficient trade,

larger operators require the smaller firms to perform small jobs that it is not feasible or possible for them to operate, such as guided tours, shuttle services and supply of local products. An interviewee who operates a function, events and accommodation facility in a peripheral area commented:

> (Small businesses) will never survive unless you have industry and money coming from outside and the same works in tourism. You have got a lot of small operators that are surviving day-to-day, hand to mouth. You have got a few big operators; now without those big operators sharing with the little ones, those little ones would just disappear. They haven't got the skill base, the capacity to bring in the amount of business. But from the larger operators' point of view, we need those little ones to pick up the slack that we can't do. We can't do everything on site; we can't offer every experience under one business. So without the two, not an option. So collaboration is the key absolutely.

SMTEs, in particular, are believed by some interviewees to benefit from working together with large businesses. A regional tourism operator and the president of the steering committee for a tourism cluster group illustrated this through a relevant example:

> A kayak hire business could put together a package with us; if I have got 20 people staying here to entertain, I would say here is a natural place that I would send them. But if we are not working together, it's just harder for both of us. So we need to create a good strong rapport between us, have an understanding of what needs to be improved in the region, also to provide leverage to the small businesses. There are very good established businesses, that will be able to pick up the smaller businesses.

6.3 Practising Collaboration

For the major public and private sector tourism agencies, including national and local public tourism agencies, major hotel operators, key industry associations and large private firms, stakeholder engagement is an everyday activity. These agencies hold weekly or monthly meetings and workshops to inform and keep others updated on events and activities. Stakeholders from hotel companies, private firms and industry associations noted that they have stakeholder engagement plans spanning the entire establishment and extending to the top tiers. In some agencies, both public and private, there are designated officials whose main role is to collaborate with others. A participant from one such agency noted, "My role is to collaborate, that is my whole role. I just see my whole life managing, leading collaborative forums". Explaining the consistency of collaborative engagements and its significance, another interviewee commented:

All the time, non-stop. My whole life has been about collaboration. It has been through the last 12 years…we will never achieve anything without being able to constantly spend time engaging with others.

Lack of financial resources affects SMTEs' level and frequency of engagement with others. Interviewees from an industry association and a museum in Auckland commented that collaboration between these different groups can be improved by identifying the appropriate levels and frequency of engagement that would provide the best outcome for each. A similar outlook to this finding can be found in Tourism 2025, which states that identification of stakeholders and analysing them can assist in understanding their situations so that their engagement can be targeted through strategies that suit their capabilities (TIANZ, 2014, p. 16).

Stakeholders utilise different approaches to collaborate with others. Tourism destination communities prefer informal ways of cooperating, whereas public sector institutions follow formal approaches (Ramayah, Lee, & In, 2011). This reinforces the findings from this research, as it is mostly public agencies that tend to utilise formal contract-based techniques. Participants from the public sector believe that once past the initial barriers of formalising agreements, and trust and familiarity is established, even the formal connections seem to take a more collegial approach. Formal approaches are preferred by cultural groups as well because maintaining formalities makes it easier to maintain and follow customs and traditions at events and in engaging with others. An interviewee explained:

I think formal would work best, absolutely. Because the informal communications happen anyway and particularly for Māori it's not informal as far as cultural processes go. But definitely to ensure that there is a level of trust and transparency, formal collaboration will be important.

Some industry associations and tourism cluster groups prefer informal approaches to communicate such as emails to exchange news about tourism events and to share information among members. They find that formal structures work for the total association, but local groups often prefer informal arrangements to share information and to keep in touch. Local tourism groups feel that informal meetings and get-togethers work well to resolve minor issues and to discuss matters prior to formal meetings. Interviewees from those organisations expressed that such practices and keeping each other informed instead of "springing surprises" is important to maintain good relationships. Organisations that need to employ a certain degree of formality in certain situations such as public tourism agencies, also engage in what is called a "no-

surprises" policy, where key partners and stakeholders are kept informed about each other's events and conduct. For example, sharing information with main associates before it is released to the press helps maintain good relationships with each other:

> Some of them are formal but there is almost a no-surprises policy around them so as to try and not to surprise them and keep them informed, down to the level of for example sharing the information in a press release before they go out so that the key players are informed beforehand. Air New Zealand, Auckland Airport, TIA and ATEED and TNZ – those five tend to keep each other well informed and not surprise each other.

Establishing personal relationships with key decision-makers is seen as an important way to expedite processes and help garner trust. Some participants find that informal relationships are more long lasting than formal approaches. According to an interviewee from the public sector, "if you develop a personal relationship as opposed to a commercial agreement, it's far more likely that you get enduring results out of that". An interviewee from a museum illustrated an example:

> There is a group of travel agents coming this weekend. I and three other operators are hosting them for a Kiwi barbeque. A group of us are pooling our resources together looking after these people, because this agency that is coming don't do a lot of business with NZ at the moment. That's a new focus for their business. It is allowing us to get there at the forefront with these people to sell Auckland as a destination…We are all going to do it together.

Informal meetings in friendly environments are sometimes more helpful in "getting to the heart of the matter" than official meetings, as was noted by the CEO of a marketing agency. According to some comments, the nature of the tourism industry renders it suitable for informal activities because "social activities are inevitable" in tourism. This reflects the statement by Causevic and Lynch (2013) that the tourism industry is a "fertile ground for a more collaborative approach" (p. 145). There are some, however, who believe that tourism can be "quite a political industry"; therefore, an informal approach is the ideal way to achieve the best outcomes. Those organisations that do not have the resources to frequently attend formal meetings also choose informal connections and relationships to achieve their goals and to compensate for not being able to be present at official events. The CEO of a national tourism organisation commented:

> It's informal, it's based on knowing who's who, it's based on me having personal relationships with the key decision-makers and it tends to be informal…because of the lack of resource I can't afford to have somebody who can attend every government meeting every TIA meeting. I can't justify the

resources required to do that. So we don't bother with that. We get to where we want to be in our own way which is quite effective but different.

The relatively small size of Auckland is another reason that personal relationships and informal connections are the appropriate form for some collaborative engagements. Informal social events provide the opportunity for stakeholders to get introduced to one another. Formal meetings in terms of getting the message across followed by an opportunity for networking is also a preferred method for collaborating:

> Auckland is a city of 1.5 million people. You can't assume everybody knows everybody. And there's always a regular turnover of people in the industry as people change jobs or new players come into operation.

Formal and informal structures seem to be equally important, each having a role to play depending on the situation. As an interviewee commented, the key is to have a balance and to "get your collaboration working, then that will improve your results". This finding reflects the research by Beritelli (2011), who stated that the appropriate combination of both formal and informal forms of collaboration is the key to establishing successful networks in tourism (p. 624).

There is strong support and recognition for the significance of collaboration; however, a number of interviewees argued that collaboration is not practised as much it is advocated. According to a senior official from a key industry association, the reason that collaboration has not worked effectively in the past is not that stakeholders failed to recognise its importance; instead, the concerned parties "just haven't committed themselves collectively to creating it". While the benefits of collaboration are many, it was also cautioned that care needs to be taken to avoid a situation in which constant collaborative engagement "leads to constant meetings to almost paralysis by analysis, (where) you just spend all your time talking and you do nothing". Similarly, while communication is vital in getting people to collaborate, "unimportant and frivolous activities" have to be removed, as noted by a policy maker.

6.4 Existing Collaborative Activities

It is evident from the interviews that larger firms put more focus than SMTEs on engaging in and promoting collaborative activities. This relates to the conclusion of de la Mothe (2002) that not only do smaller firms have different collaborative patterns from larger firms, larger firms are also more active in collaborative engagements (p. 65). Large public and private sector companies work with others consistently, at various levels – the commercial strategic level, the central government and regional government

level, and the sales level. The key players in the tourism industry conduct regular meetings, seminars and workshops to keep stakeholders informed and updated about events and activities. While there is new leadership in most of the major tourism organisations, they have good relationships with each other. As one interviewee described, the leaders of the key tourism organisations "get on very well", and there is "a lot of personal warmth between each other". These factors are believed to impact positively on the tourism industry "in terms of trust and collaboration", according to a senior manager at one of the national public tourism agencies.

Interviewees from large organisations (both public and private) observed that collaboration with smaller firms is less common and harder to achieve than with larger companies. Some SMTEs also noted their level of collaboration with others is quite low and expressed a desire to improve the frequency and level with which they engage with others. The main reasons for the limited level of frequency of participating in collaborative activities are limitations on time and resources. Jones and Haven-Tang (2005) found that "financial constraints and issues of economies of scale can have major implications" for operators of small to medium enterprises (p. 19). Interviewees from SMTEs commented that they feel that activities that are conducted at the community level have more direct benefits for them. Hence, they are more inclined to contribute and participate in local activities than in events held away from their areas.

The only events conducted at the community level mentioned by the interviewees are those organised by tourism cluster groups. Support from local government is available to them in the form of advice and information whenever it is required or requested. At times, a representative from the public tourism agency participates at their meetings to provide advice and suggestions. Comments by tourism cluster groups indicate that SMTEs within their local areas are keen to work together. A group established in 2013 noted that when it was formed, 80% of local operators "jumped on board immediately". In addition to formal meetings to exchange information, some members meet one on one, work together and explore ways to support each other. The local public tourism agencies, including ATEED, emphasised that the tourism update meetings held by ATEED are a valuable opportunity for SMTEs and other tourism industry stakeholders to get together. However, time taken to travel and difficulties of transportation are factors that deter SMTEs and others further away from the CBD from attending.

According to an interviewee, ATEED's collaborative activities follow the Māori philosophy of *kotahitanga*, which is based on "partnership, unity, harmony and operating as one", as described by a senior official from a public tourism agency in Auckland. Collaborative engagements of large public tourism agencies include assisting and advising small SMTEs, discussions with major tour operators and central government agencies, undertakings that involve joint ventures, marketing campaigns, working with tourism industry associations, and collaborating with different tourism agencies and other sectors around the development of facilities, plans and strategies related to tourism.

Interviews with members of LBs revealed that they work in various ways with a range of stakeholder groups in tourism-related activities. These include conducting and facilitating workshops and community consultation and contributing through discussions and feedback to the development of the Auckland Unitary Plan, Annual Plan and AVP. LBs also work with other industries and various business associations through subsidies. A LB member often participates in meetings of some of these associations. This provides a channel for open discussions between members of the LBs and representatives from businesses and different industries.

An interviewee from a tourism cluster group in a peripheral area noted that they seek the support of the local government and other regional associations to learn how different local areas function. Understanding how different local areas function under the Supercity is said to be particularly useful in understanding the best ways to collaborate with other areas. According to the interviewee, the extent of support and ways of working differ between areas. Some are more open and encouraging in sharing knowledge than others, and areas that are closest to each other seem to be more supportive and welcoming of exchanging information and knowledge than those that are further away.

In situations where public tourism agencies are not mandated to perform certain roles, collaborating with appropriate industry associations assists in performing the task. For example, when a public tourism agency needed to educate tourism operators about catering to specific markets such as halal tourism, collaboration with TIANZ was necessary to provide the requisite training for the operators.

Stakeholders from large private sector companies take the initiative to provide suggestions and ideas to public agencies, to which the public sector is said to be

receptive. Such an initiative by a private ferry operator prompted Auckland Transport to take the tourism industry into account in their planning when an electronic ticketing card was introduced. The electronic ticketing system in Auckland was introduced in 2011. The system integrated ticketing and fares for the city's train and bus passengers. The New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) in partnership with Auckland Transport developed the system parallel to a national ticketing programme and standard that required funding of over $59 million (NZTA, 2015).

In contrast, comments by interviewees from SMTEs, associations and an NGO illustrate that they struggle for their voices to be heard by key industry stakeholders and in receiving responses to their requests. One interviewee from an industry association described that "nothing has happened" in terms of receiving a response to requests for information and advice from a public tourism agency: "We just have to keep pushing and pushing and pushing." The opinions of interviewees indicate that while collaborative initiatives and engagements are strong at senior management level and between major players of the industry, there is a need to instigate collaborative practices between SMTEs and public agencies, particularly at the local level.

6.5 Sharing Information and Research

Gathering and effectively using information contributes to destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). Collaboration between stakeholders is noted as a vital component for tourism research and data gathering, particularly in processing highly confidential information and data. Industry associations and public agencies process, disseminate and release data about the tourism industry anonymously to operators and the general public. As the senior manager of a national public tourism agency noted, making the available data accessible to SMEs and the public is important because most small operators do not have the resources to spend a lot of time searching for information:

> There is a lot of research out there from the public sector and the private sector that is not always that accessible. And we know that in the industry like someone running a motel or a mountain bike operation in Waitakere don't have staff or time. They are small and they need to find out where the information is available. So it needs to be cut into very digestible bits and made relevant to them.

According to the interviewee, a project led by a key industry association is under way to create an online portal that can provide research in a more accessible way.

Managing information and data as a foundation for effective decision-making and as a means to ensure that the correct competitiveness indicators and benchmarks are in place is fundamental to achieving STC (Heath, 2003, p. 138). Generating information, data and research relies on the collaboration of stakeholders. The manager from an industry association that undertakes the gathering of confidential industry information and data stated:

> We have 130 hotels that share their data and we work highly collaboratively with all of them and MBIE to anonymously release that data. That is highly confidential data. We have to have a lot of trust and again collaboration plays a vital role there.

Collaboration becomes particularly important when the information concerns sensitive issues or is related to particular projects. A senior official from a public agency in Auckland commented that the information about the plans for the convention centre in Auckland, for example, needed careful consideration before the news could be released and shared with others. Plans are under way for the NZ International Convention Centre, which will accommodate 3,000 people, to be built in the centre of the Auckland CBD (MBIE, 2014). SKYCITY Entertainment Group (SKYCITY), a NZ corporation that owns and operates casinos in Australasia, will fund the centre's construction, which it is estimated will cost $400 million (Young, 2015). The proposed convention centre attracted significant public interest because of the funding arrangements for the project. The funding for the proposed convention centre is conditional on concessions from the national government to extend SKYCITY's Auckland casino licence until 2048 and the consent to adding extra poker machines and gaming tables (New Zealand Herald, 2014). According to the interviewee, collaboration between the concerned stakeholders was critical when information about the convention centre plans were released to the media and public.

Sharing knowledge, information and experiences (insight) is one of the key themes of Tourism 2025. The framework advocates "a collaborative – 'team tourism' –approach" to generate insight, gather the appropriate information and share experiences individually and collectively to achieve better outcomes (TIANZ, 2014). Tourism industry stakeholders collaborate in a variety of ways to exchange IR. Most major public and private tourism agencies are keen and open to sharing and exchanging IR within their own sectors, with other sectors and the public. Some stakeholders are producers of IR who actively collect and gather data, while others are mostly consumers of research.

The CEO of an agency that produces large amounts of data noted that coordinated efforts by some key stakeholders have resulted in the production of compelling research on areas such as visitor spend, regional market share and markets of origin that are beneficial for the whole tourism industry. The GM of a hotel explained further that:

> (At times) you get some information and you look at it, at times you can use some information that is collaboratively shared, and at other times you use that for commercial advantage, but overall it works well because in theory, the information that comes out takes everyone on board.

Most of the information is made available to other stakeholders and the public via databases and websites. Local or central government, and regional and private tourism associations make information available to their members through their websites or email. Some local tourism associations distribute leaflets to inform residents about locally conducted events and activities.

Participants from the private sector stated that they are open to sharing information, statistics and news about new developments that occur in their businesses within the tourism industry, and with the government and other industries. Private sector participants cooperate with public agencies in sharing data and research where the information may be beneficial for the tourism industry. Sharing IR on tourism trends and expenditure is stated to be of particular importance to stakeholders in joint marketing campaigns. Stakeholders collaborate for IR with those who possess expert knowledge and skills. Some stakeholders are better placed than others to conduct specific research. Māori associations, for instance, are better able to undertake consulting with *iwi*. Public and private sectors seek the support of the Māori associations and collaborate with them to produce the necessary IR whenever required. Referring to the close relationship with government agencies in exchanging IR, the adviser to a national cultural tourism association commented that "we are not competitors, we are working in the same place to support the sector". Another interviewee from a cultural association commented:

> Auckland City (needs) to realise that *iwi* tend to collaborate more together. So Auckland needs to be right there when those collaborations happen in order to collaborate with (the *iwi*)…We would view Auckland Council as one of our partners. So we would be very keen (to work with them).

Although stakeholders believe that they collaborate in various ways on sharing and exchanging IR, there is room for improvement in this area, particularly in producing and exchanging IR at a local scale. An interviewee from the private sector emphasised the

need for further efforts to conduct IR, not only at national and regional levels, but also at a more local level. The CEO of a large private company noted that the existing level of research is "not enough…there is a whole lot more the whole industry could do". The information that is available from the tourism industry and public sector is described as "ad hoc" and not adequate for the industry to get any real benefits from it. Because there is insufficient research at the local scale, the industry is unable to undertake benchmarking actions. Benchmarking permits the identification of front-runners of a given industry in relation to a specific indicator, such as competitiveness, customer satisfaction, tourist expenditure and productivity, in comparison with others in the industry (Assaf & Dwyer, 2013). Due to a lack of research, operators are unable to benchmark in important areas such as productivity or competitiveness. Benchmarking provides a useful tool in assessing destination competitiveness (Kozak & Rimmington, 1999). An interviewee from a private firm emphasised that there is a need to explore "different ways of sharing new research that we didn't have in the past, through collaboration". According to a participant from a local public agency, exchanging IR with others is a potential approach to creating the "opportunity to get the industry to collaborate".

In order for the tourism industry to take action to collaborate in conducting and sharing IR, a five-year Auckland research plan to achieve targeted goals in the area was recommended by a participant from a policy institute. Based on past experiences, a director of a research institute expressed that collaborating in research across different sectors – public, private and tertiary education – where each group "brings their own set of expectations which are not the same" could be a daunting task. The value of research is not always recognised by the industry, according to an industry expert, even though the tertiary education sector is well connected with the tourism industry. An interviewee from the tertiary education sector stated:

> One of the battles that you always face is for the industry to understand the value of research, including the value of universities both as sources of information and data and valuable resources for the industry.

6.6   Collaboration in Labour-Related Matters

The main issues that exist in the Auckland tourism industry in relation to labour are matching labour demand with supply. This issue is not specific to only Auckland; employment in the tourism industry worldwide is characterised by problems with labour supply, lack of training and high labour turnover (Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005; Nickson,

2013). In the case of Auckland, there is a lack of communication regarding clear career pathways in tourism industry jobs, and few opportunities exist for internships and apprenticeship programmes. While tourism is recognised as central to Auckland's economy, several interviewees expressed that not much has been done to encourage people to join the tourism industry labour force as a career pathway. A senior official from a cultural association commented that:

> We have to learn to develop career pathways so people want to be in this sector. And we need to promote what the benefits of the sector are…we have to take it more seriously and promote the sector to people along with proper career pathways.

Interviewees from the council, LBs, major cultural agencies and some large private organisations stated that they are actively engaged in working with others in matters that concern the labour market. Some of the activities conducted by the council include regular meetings between the local government and registrars and chancellors of polytechnics and universities to facilitate discussions on labour requirements and skills training for the tourism industry. The council also liaises with LBs and the tertiary education sector to seek solutions and options for unemployment, particularly for the youth in the peripheral areas. Some large private companies, cultural associations and tourism industry organisations stated that they cooperate with each other and with the local government to resolve labour-related issues in the tourism industry. The council's Southern Initiative and Youth Connections programmes are believed to be key channels for creating career and work opportunities and skills development in those areas where the programmes are targeted. ATEED is a participant but does not play a leading role in the programmes.

There is a lack of effort by the public sector to motivate youth to choose tourism as a career. The CEO of a key public tourism agency in Auckland stated, "It will be fair to say it hasn't been a major focus up until now". The tourism meetings, updates and events that ATEED conducts are seen as potential platforms for representatives from local areas such as LBs to seek prospects for employment creation from other industry stakeholders. ATEED does not play an active role in facilitating such opportunities. LB members and councillors from different areas are invited to these events and it is left to the members to pick up relevant opportunities with other stakeholders for the communities in their areas.

Comments by some key public and private sector interviewees indicate that tourism jobs are often viewed by job seekers as transitory instead of long-term career pathways. This is an attitude that is inherent in those who seek employment at entry-level jobs without the requisite training as an "in-between job until they find something better", according to an interviewee. It is a matter that is prevalent in the global tourism industry, as was noted by Jones and Haven-Tang (2005): "The tourism labour force has become increasingly flexible and casualised" (p. 6), which is affecting prospective job seekers' consideration of the industry as a worthwhile career option. The key to dispelling this outlook is creating long-term career pathways in the tourism industry together with opportunities for training. An interviewee from a cultural organisation that is involved in projects to create training and employment opportunities for Māori youth commented:

> We are looking to develop a training school for young Maori in management in the (tourism) sector. We want them to know that in the first two years they will gain a qualification and employment, and in five years they will be managing those businesses, and in 10 years they will own those businesses. So it's not just they have a job, it's a career pathway in the same way that if you go to the dairy industry you can work, you can train, and then you can start to buy into the business for the livestock or for shares. And then in 10 years you are in the business and in 20 years' time you've got this large asset that you created.

Since tourism industry jobs often require training in addition to qualifications, opportunities need to be made available for apprenticeships, internships and work experience because "there is no point in training people when they are not work ready", as the CEO of a local public tourism agency commented. Collaborative engagements between tertiary education providers and tourism organisations have produced opportunities for internships. The senior manager from a large private company that works with a tertiary institute commented that the company provides internships and opportunities for the interns to move ahead in their careers if they choose to stay:

> We have been working with another tertiary education provider in Auckland where students have internships with retailers here…I have heard from the comments coming from the operators that they don't want people to operate the tills at the store. They want people who want a career path. They are committed to providing that career path. So starting at the shop floor, becomes area manager, then becomes floor manager, then move into corporate management. There are other career paths.

A number of interviewees emphasised the importance of creating awareness about career pathways in the tourism industry for job seekers in order to attract young people to pursue tourism industry jobs as a career. A stakeholder from the public sector stated,

"As an industry we have done a poor job of articulating the career development opportunities to people". There are plenty of good examples of tourism owner–operators and entrepreneurs who started at entry-level positions and progressed to having their own businesses. Communicating these examples through schools and tertiary institutes is suggested by an interviewee as an approach to encouraging others to take up the opportunities that exist in the Auckland tourism industry. The adviser for a cultural association commented that if information about clear pathways in the tourism industry is communicated to young people and schoolchildren, the chances of "young people falling into the tourism industry by accident" will be lower, and instead, those with a real interest will be attracted and they will be motivated to stay longer in the sector:

> What I think we need to do is promote the sector, promote the career pathways, and talk with young people about what it is that they want to do and where in this industry can provide these things because no one is really doing that. So the people who are in the sector are there by accident. If they are there by accident they may not be motivated personnel career wise. I think we need to make good-quality training available. But we need to promote the sector.

Comments by interviewees from cultural organisations emphasised the importance of having a better system of providing a channel of employment opportunities for Māori. Groups identified as having *mana whenua* currently utilise opportunities that arise from corporate relationships to create employment prospects for Māori. A participant provided the example of a successful project for skills development and employment opportunities for unemployed Māori youth that resulted from collaboration between a Māori tourism association, the Tertiary Education Commission, Te Puni Kōkiri and a number of tourism providers. Such schemes are seen to be arduous to get under way due to the difficulty in getting stakeholders to cooperate. It seems particularly hard to get the support of the public sector agencies because the mandates of the agencies do not permit what the associations need. According to one interviewee from a cultural tourism association:

> It is hard work. It is hard getting them wanting to talk, the government departments in particular, because they have their little boxes...What we do is something in between and fits in a whole different hole. So it is a tough job to make government agencies to agree. They know that, they like the outcome, it is about working together to achieve that. What is holding them is their own policy guidelines. They agree with the outcome, they see the outcome, they say that's great, but in a way that fits their own rules.

An interviewee from a public tourism agency stated that the key to overcoming the issue is to consistently and clearly convey the role of the various public agencies to stakeholders. All of the stakeholders may not agree with each decision and action, but consistent communication will clarify the reasons behind those decisions so that even if they do not agree, they are more likely to accept it:

We have to keep communicating very clearly our position, what our mandate is, what we can and cannot do, what we are trying to achieve. If you keep communicating with people they may not agree with that but they are going to understand it and accept it. It is when there is lack of clarity and when there is confusion that controversy erupts. So my team's role is to make sure people understand what we are doing and why we are doing it, we don't have to make them agree to what we are doing. Just make them understand how we reached that decision. The local government and public tourism authorities support internship programmes; however, currently there are no such ongoing programmes. Public and private sector participants pointed out that there are ways for local government to work with the tourism industry to create openings for internships and apprenticeships. Indicating the need and scope to create opportunities, the CEO from a public tourism agency stated:

> There's a role that we can play both as an employer and as a provider of internship opportunities…we know where there are gaps in the industry. We can help fill those with people.

It is clear from this comment that there are opportunities for public tourism organisations to collaborate with tertiary institutes to create internship and employment prospects within the tourism industry. Creating channels of communication between the public tourism agency, the LBs, tertiary education providers and the Business Advisory Panel is believed to lead to constructive results. A LB member stated that there is not much collaboration with the Business Leadership Group as there are some members of the council who do not support the council intervening with labour market issues. The Business Leadership Group (formerly known as the Business Advisory Panel) is set up by the council to ensure a stronger working relationship between the council and the business sector. Support for this argument is reflected in a comment by a ward councillor:

> Some of us don't support much intervention into the labour market…some of us think that's a little bit interventionalist, and we shouldn't be going there…up to 25–30% of youth in Auckland are unemployed, so we all agreed that it needs to

be addressed but some of us think that it has more to do with central government and the market than the role of local government

A senior official from a multinational hotel company commented that they and other similar large hotel and hospitality establishments rely on seasonal workers on working holidays. Another interviewee from a nationwide tourism organisation gave an example:

> If you go to one of the local restaurants for dinner, we did this just last week, and we counted 14 staff, and there was one NZ staff there. The rest were international visitors who were on short-term work permits, which is great for them. But they go away and more international people take their jobs. So what happens in five years when they want to sell their business? So we need to develop our own people into the sector. That's not being xenophobic, that's (wanting) to build the capability within NZ to manage and operate the sector.

A hotel operator noted that when Auckland has a high unemployment rate, more effort is required to bring locals into those jobs: "There is plenty more we can do as an organisation, and as an industry." Collaboration and concerted efforts from the central and local governments and tourism industry are needed to attract the unemployed to the areas where jobs are available. As a senior official from a nationwide hotel chain expressed:

> I have to say as an organisation, (we have) been a little lazy. I think we have got a responsibility to work a little bit harder on that. There are parts of our population that have unemployment up to 25%. Potentially we are not doing enough in that area.

It is clear from these statements that opportunities to provide internships, training and jobs with potential career pathways exist within the tourism industry. It is also evident that there is a significant role that Auckland's public and private sector agencies can play in creating and providing such openings. Collaboration between the local and central governments, private and tertiary education sectors is needed to exploit the existing opportunities and to create new ones in order to overcome existing labour-related issues in the Auckland tourism industry.

6.7   Obstacles to Collaboration

A number of issues were identified that constrain and obstruct collaboration within the tourism industry. Where collaborative practices are in place, stakeholders feel that there is room for improvement. As the tourism manager from an Auckland attraction noted:

> I don't think we do it very well right now. So there is lots of room for us to do that and maybe because Auckland is a big place everyone wants to get their own chunk of the pie. Yes we are a big place in New Zealand, but on the world stage

we are just a little place at the bottom of the world. The more we have to offer together then people are going to come down to see us.

The frequent transfer and change of key personnel in leading tourism agencies is a profound issue that hinders the process of collaborative engagements. When the experienced people with the know-how and information about the tourism industry at the main agencies are transferred between different companies, and sometimes between sectors, it impedes communication and collaboration. A manager from an Auckland attraction stated that it takes a long time to establish trust and close relationships:

> People change jobs a lot in this industry. If you have to strike up a relationship with my company you might have to start from the beginning and you may have to work on that for two to three years to get to a good place. And when that person goes and takes all the information with them then you are stuck at the start, it's another three years and that is six years gone past already.

One of the biggest challenges to collaboration is getting cooperation from the communities and SMTEs. This is most profound in peripheral areas that are beginning to seek cooperation and collaboration from SMTEs and community groups. They are found to be struggling to attract support from local communities and businesses to work together. The efforts of those who support collaboration are hampered and made difficult because some are apprehensive of collaborating with others and choose to hold back on sharing information. Fear arising from suspicion and lack of trust of each other acts as a barrier to collaboration, and hampers progress in tourism development and achievement of the goals that have been set out to benefit the areas. An interviewee who operates a local crafts market described how getting other businesses in the area to collaborate is a challenge: "I had picked up vibes and comments where people were saying I am not going to share my ideas." The interviewee stated that "people need to grow and not feel threatened; they need to grow from the concept of protectionism to the other concept of collaboration". A councillor noted that "challenges are always there around trying to get people to work together, having them not protect their patch".

An interviewee from a local tourism association revealed that their members are currently trying to understand whom they are comfortable in engaging with in an open and non-competitive way. Interviewees expressed that those who resist collaboration do not understand the benefits of collective efforts. Ramayah et al. (2011) state that collaboration in communities is centred upon members' willingness to share information and know-how and their willingness to voluntarily work together (p. 412).

At the same time, distrust may cause an associate to evade pursuits perceived to produce negative impacts (Suh & Houston, 2010).

There is also an inherent practice of working in isolation and an attitude that "everybody does their own thing", according to an interviewee who is an SMTE owner and a member of the steering committee of a tourism cluster group. Several interviewees commented that tourism businesses in peripheral areas view each other as competitors and hence refuse to work together. The intense competition that exists in the industry was described by a stakeholder from a cultural association:

> The tourism industry can be very cutthroat to some extent and a wee bit nasty…Not at a policy level, and not at national level, but locally they can get very political and personality based.

The interviewee noted that when the benefits of working together are not fully realised in a competitive industry such as tourism, the challenges to collaborating are compounded. Referring to the difficulty of engaging and motivating others to collaborate, a motel operator commented:

> They don't attend any of the events that are organised because they are in their own world. They don't get involved, they want to do their own thing, and they don't see the benefit in it for them. If they don't see the benefit, they won't contribute to making things better.

A senior official from a policy-making agency suggested, instead of "working in silos", a collaborative approach is needed to overcome the challenge and to garner better overall results:

> There is no I in team...'I' could be an individual, person or an individual body…the more people working together, the better the outcomes would be. There needs to be consensus, there needs to be give and take…if you are looking at the good of the region, then consensus as well as collaboration is vitally important.

There are some areas that, while supportive of the idea of internal collaboration within their localities, do not recognise that much benefit could be gained from collaborating with other areas of Auckland. Instead, they believe what is important and beneficial is collaborating with public tourism agencies such as ATEED and their local communities. The director of a local tourism association stated:

> Collaboration with ATEED is critical; collaboration with other regions (within Auckland), not so...In our area it is critical, we are collaborating very strongly;

we have on our tourism initiative people from every aspect of the community represented. They are very good with the idea of working together.

Most of the organisations that are not realising the benefits of collaboration are newly established district organisations and those that are starting to understand the importance of working together. It was noted by several interviewees that once people understand the importance and benefits of cooperating, feelings of distrust dissipate and collaboration increases.

Miscommunication and unclear information is seen to obstruct collaboration between Auckland's areas and local public tourism agencies. The local tourism groups actively seek ATEED's support, which the groups receive in the form of advice and funding. However, there appears to be a degree of mismatch between what the areas require and expect in terms of advice and information and what is being provided by ATEED. It was noted by an interviewee from a cluster group that the information made available by ATEED is ambiguous at times. An example is that, while the groups are aware that they can obtain funding from ATEED, the information available to them about how to apply or the eligibility criteria is vague. This is preventing some groups from applying for funding and others from receiving the financial backing needed for tourism expansion and development in their areas. An operator of an accommodation facility who also is a member of a cluster group commented:

> In my experience their attitude (with regard to applying for funding) is that, if you don't know we won't tell you, you need to find out, and once you know, then you can apply for it, we are not going to tell you beforehand. So that makes it very difficult for smaller operators that don't know or aren't involved in that political process or have the right channels.

Comments by Auckland's public tourism authorities reveal that their stance with regard to supporting the areas is that it is the responsibility of the areas to inform and make clear what their requirements are. A senior official from a local public agency stated, "If they approach us, we will help; if they don't, we wouldn't know what they need". The statement from an interviewee from a public tourism agency further illustrates that the public agencies' approach to supporting the local areas is reactive rather than pre-emptive:

> If a local board hasn't come to me and said I need help, I wouldn't know they need help. But as soon as someone comes and says I need help, I am out there straightaway, so I think it is working really well.

Interorganisational collaboration is affected by the fact that most national tourism firms are established in Auckland while a large number of their operations are based elsewhere. Even though this necessitates collaboration between them, it also acts as an "Achilles heel" for Auckland, according to an interviewee from a major private tourism company. It was expressed that when most key decision-makers and stakeholders are based in Auckland, they tend to have a national view rather than a regional view. A national outlook seems to lead to some decision-makers excluding some important regional stakeholders from collaborative engagements. Describing their experience, the interviewee from a nationwide private firm stated that, even though their "offices are about 10–12 kilometres apart" from a key public tourism agency in Auckland, they were not "traditionally seen…as a strategic partner". The interviewee noted that, as a result, their engagement with the public tourism agency "was very, very low, probably the worst in the country". According to an interviewee from Auckland's hotel sector:

> What we need and what we have to see more of is collaboration of large parties working together, not only on a national scale, but more on a regional scale.

NZ's ethnic diversity is not represented in the leadership of the leading public tourism agencies. A senior manager from a national public tourism agency observed that the leadership of the public sector in the tourism industry is mostly "Pakeha" (European New Zealander). The interviewee noted that even though a large percentage of Auckland's population consists of people born abroad, other cultures such as Chinese, Pacifica and Indian are "visible only on the streets of Auckland" and they, as well as Māori, are absent from the top tiers of tourism leadership. It was expressed by some interviewees that representation of different ethnic groups in the leadership of the industry would encourage and facilitate communication and collaboration with those groups.

The prospect of using the ethnic communities that are already in NZ in tourism activities such as overseas promotions is recognised by the national public tourism authorities, but thus far, few steps have been taken towards realising the opportunities. An official from a national tourism agency commented:

> How do we utilise the communities that are here already is something we have thought about. Can we use them to talk and communicate with the offshore populations and how do you do that? We haven't even gone through the Chinese community here. Even though the Chinese market is heavily growing, our promotions are always straight into China. That might be the most effective way

to do it, but there might be opportunities talking to the Chinese communities here. We have recognised that; we haven't done anything about it.

An obstacle that often comes up in collaborative ventures that concern public agencies is their mandates. This is an issue that was raised by interviewees from both the public and the private sectors. According to a public tourism agency participant, their mandate does not always allow them to meet stakeholder expectations. An example given by an interviewee is that there may be a need for career development and training in those areas where local communities feel the public tourism agency should undertake the responsibility and initiative. However, in the absence of the task in their mandate, the public tourism agency is unable to get involved, even though they may be aware of the expectation from others, which often can be for important requirements. Such boundaries negatively impact relationships between local communities and the concerned public agencies. An interviewee from a national public agency noted:

> We can only do what the government wants us to do. And that may well not be what the stakeholders want us to do. So that's always going to be a challenge…We are not a private organisation, we don't have the freedom to go off into other areas, and so we have those restrictions…there is only so much that we can do.

The interviews revealed that engaging in collaborative ventures between members from diverse areas with differing objectives is a challenging task. For example, arriving at mutual agreements with travel agencies and airline companies for a large national or local tourism agency could prove daunting due to their divergent objectives. Travel agencies would want visitors to book their holidays through them, whereas for an airline it does not matter which travel company they use as long as their seats are sold. Achieving a win-win situation between stakeholders with such disparate viewpoints is challenging for promotional agencies that require a memorandum of understanding (MOU) and partnerships to be established with different stakeholders. Some local tourism associations face challenges of a similar nature. A stakeholder described that local businesses are supportive and keen to bring more tourists to the Auckland area. On the other hand, the interviewee noted that local heritage protection agencies and some local community members view bringing more tourists to an area as destructive, and disruptive to their way of life. Finding a compromise with the local communities and businesses in such situations is challenging for the agencies that attempt to develop and expand tourism in the local areas.

Another barrier to collaboration is a culture that exists in which individuals create separate groups among trusted associates and are reluctant to move out of that circle. These groups prefer to work in isolation and often do not reach out to or collaborate with others. An interviewee from a private company commented:

> I have been essentially collaborating for 20 years so if I am going to collaborate with them I go and collaborate with people whose relationship has existed for a very long time and sometimes in this industry that outweighs what might be the true economic value of a different collaboration. So often you will get, oh no, I am not going to work with you, I am going to work with them and them, because that's where the relationships are. Economic benefits for everyone may be somewhere else.

Lack of stakeholder collaboration and community participation is one of the obstacles that hinder the achievement of sustainable community tourism (Waligo et al., 2013). Once again, fear of distrust is presented as a reason. Comments given by several stakeholders from both the private and the public sectors reveal a practice of preference among some key stakeholders regarding who they work with, which is an issue for broader collaboration in the tourism industry. Collaborative behaviour is indeed an interpersonal business, and is not something that can be based purely on rational theories (Czernek, 2013, p. 94). A comment from a private sector participant illustrates the hindrances such personal dispositions create to working collaboratively:

> Instead of collaborating and saying how about we promote itineraries from Auckland to Waitomo Caves, Taranaki, Wanganui, Wellington. That involves five of these TLAs (territorial local authorities) talking and agreeing. It's just near impossible. And then you have got businesses in there having these conversations with their neighbours and saying why can't we just do this. They (TLAs) have their own vested interests to promote their own businesses and they are guided by politicians at the local level who might also be business people who are like, no, we are not working with them.

An example of fractured efforts and lack of coordination given by an interviewee is the activities undertaken for the conservation of the islands and the marine environment of the Hauraki Gulf. A number of trusts and volunteer groups are involved, and "different groups are doing different things". The interviewee from a private transport company expressed that there are "a lot of passionate people with a lot of energy and enthusiasm", but by working individually, they are "wasting the energy"; if the groups collaborated, it would bring better outcomes.

Stakeholders believe that collaboration in the tourism industry currently lacks the necessary drive to achieve the goals that are being targeted by the Supercity:

I don't think there is enough momentum. Because it's three years and we still don't have a brand. We have a visitor economy paper, but where is our tourism strategy? The Visitor Plan isn't just about tourism. It's about events, and we have got events and that's great. But it tends to be a lot of stand-alone stuff, not tourism. And we got a convention centre coming, but where is the overall strategy in the Visitor Plan that's tying that together? Where is our tourism schedule? Where is our brand? Where is all that? Seems to me we are doing all these big events but we haven't still got that bit done. So I don't think there is momentum.

A noticeable message from the participants' comments is that there is strong support from leaders of the industry for collaboration; however, at the levels below the top management, enthusiasm is lacking. A challenge for the industry leaders, even at some large tourism organisations, is conveying the benefits of collaboration to their members as well as stakeholders from other agencies and industries. At the same time, SMTEs feel that government departments and large private organisations often do not regard SMTEs and associations as important enough for their voices to be heard. A comment by an interviewee from a key public tourism agency supports this argument: "I think the big players listen to what they need to", which may not be what the small operators want. Comments by some key organisations from both the public and the private sectors indicate that there is a practice of prioritising the stakeholders that the key players listen to, based on their significance in the tourism industry. There may be difficulties in responding to all stakeholders or giving each group equal opportunities, as a comment by an interviewee from a key public tourism agency indicates:

There is a huge range of stakeholders and it's impossible to make all of them happy…in fact we prioritise our stakeholders from government and industry and sectors. We try to listen to all stakeholder views but quite honestly, the motel owner in Gore may be very loud and express his views very strongly but actually his views don't hold much weight compared to the CEO of Air New Zealand. We have to judge how influential the stakeholder is when deciding how much notice we take.

The literature also notes that leading parties who stand to benefit the most often tend to dominate in consultations and discussions, overshadowing other stakeholders (Hall, 2000, p. 281). In addition to the difficulties in making their voices heard in the industry, SMTEs struggle to get responses from key public and private agencies. An interviewee from the B&B sector noted that they often feel that larger players in the industry have an air of righteousness. This feeling stems from when there is a lack of mutual communication and key players from the industry do not provide sufficient opportunities for SMTEs to express their views and concerns:

> We have people from the ministry coming in and they are like a fountain of words...They just spurt out a lot of words without actually saying anything that we actually want to hear...Although we are the ones who are at the chalk face talking to the people, we don't know; he is the only one who knows and until they get that arrogant attitude we are going to be poles apart.

All these factors add up to creating a sense that collaboration is a difficult task to undertake and goal to achieve. This belief is perceived to discourage people from taking the lead in collaborative initiatives. A senior official from a think tank commented that there is an apprehension in taking initiatives for collaborative activities due to the perception that it is an exhausting task that "takes too long and doesn't necessarily deliver" the expected results. The expectation of immediate benefits from their collaborative efforts is also a factor that affects motivation for collaborative engagements. A CEO of a key tourism industry association also expressed that collaboration requires hard work:

> It requires such consistent hard slog that you are never in a position to relax…as soon as you relax then the intensity of the collaborative efforts fall away. So you need people really constantly engaged and the only way to do that is to stay absolutely constantly engaged yourself. Which is an enormous effort.

6.8   Factors Facilitating Collaboration

A number of suggestions were provided by stakeholders on how to overcome obstacles and facilitate collaboration. Specific themes are evident in the stakeholders' suggestions, which are categorised under subheadings in the following sections.

6.8.1   Create Awareness and Provide Opportunities for Interaction

The first step to encouraging collaboration is creating awareness about its significance and benefits. One of the main reasons for the aversion to collaborate is ignorance of the wider benefits that can be gained from collaborating. This unawareness leads to false assumptions and fears that working together would cause others to steal or copy one's business and ways of doing things. As the adviser from a public agency stated:

> Getting people together, getting people to understand the bigger picture to make them want to collaborate, making them see the benefits of what they are doing is always a challenge.

Stakeholders need to be educated about the stakes and the benefits involved in working together to overcome such misconceptions. Awareness of reciprocal benefits of collaboration is key to building mutual trust so that they will not feel threatened about

engaging in collaboration and to diminishing the resentments and unhealthy competitive attitudes between areas. The director of a research institute commented:

> The things that we need to change about collaborative practices are first of all building awareness that everyone is linked to tourism in some way, it is also about building clear channels of communication.

As an approach to conveying the importance of collaboration, familiarisation programmes such as seminars or workshops by ATEED for stakeholders from all areas across Auckland were suggested by a LB member. The purpose of the current industry update programmes run by ATEED is to communicate their activities to stakeholders. Speakers at these events also speak about the importance of working together, and there are opportunities for attendees to mingle afterwards. Such platforms would pave the way for diminishing hostilities and unhealthy competitive attitudes between areas, according to an interviewee. According to some members from LBs and tourism organisations of peripheral areas, more focus needs to be given to communicating the benefits of collaboration at such events. As was noted by Beritelli (2011), gathering individuals and groups together does not guarantee their collaboration. Interviewees feel that the education and knowledge from programmes that convey the benefits of collaboration have the potential to impart a sense of pride among participants about what Auckland, as a region, has to offer. When participants from different areas get together, it provides opportunities for each to better appreciate the value of the diverse assets within Auckland, and how each area fits within the wider city region. A councillor who was a previous mayor of an area that came under the Supercity commented:

> If you are marketing Auckland you are marketing all of Auckland and you need to get the people together. We need an Auckland conference or something, maybe ATEED needs to have workshops, some sort of familiarisation programme with participants from every area to the same place. Because it's so diverse. You have got museums, we got the historic village out at Howick, we got the walks at the Waitakere Ranges you got the Waiheke, you got the vineyard. You know then as I said we are not good at understanding and being proud of what we got. We got to somehow enthuse people to be proud of everything, not just their little area and see how it fits together.

An industry expert suggested:

> Obviously the traditional things like regular workshops, regular presentation from industry or government, networking events, those are all important. Also I think are important the local boards being able and willing to talk about and engage local communities with tourism.

In addition to the current activities conducted by the local tourism authority, further opportunities for various stakeholders to get together are needed. The existing events mainly focus on the local authorities announcing new developments and updating others on ongoing activities. Opportunities for stakeholders, particularly smaller groups such as SMTEs, to express their suggestions and ideas and to work together need to be created. The most important ways to facilitate collaborative engagements is to provide opportunities for operators, decision-makers and other industry stakeholders to get together. Conferences, seminars, familiarisation programmes, presentations and networking events encourage and initiate collaborative actions, foster new relationships and strengthen established ones. Opportunities to work together are believed to assist in building trust and encouraging engagements, which is essential to dispel existing fears and feelings of being threatened by requests to collaborate. The literature supports the view that trust built by working together is a factor that facilitates collaboration (Wong, Mistilis, & Dwyer, 2011).

The annual Tourism Rendezvous New Zealand (TRENZ) is the biggest international tourism-related trade event that is held in the country. Leading providers of tourist accommodation, activities, attractions and transport showcase their products and feature international and domestic media programmes during the event, which is attended by high-profile public and private sector stakeholders (TRENZ, 2014). According to an interviewee from a local public tourism agency, products from the city's regional producers such as wine and food products were used for the catering events during TRENZ 2014. This was perceived as an opportunity to promote local producers and food experiences. Additional ways for uniting the major operators, as well as associations, SMTEs and community groups that contribute to and work for tourism development and expansion such as local fairs or roadshows, tours or discussion groups in the local areas, are needed. In addition, where possible, participation in policy development with the local government would provide more uniform representation of opportunities for all stakeholders.

Opportunities for stakeholders to interact would be valuable for overcoming the existing issues related to limited domestic marketing and under-representation of local areas in the promotional activities of the local tourism authority. It has been argued in the literature that ensuring that all key role players understand the bigger picture of destination marketing, the roles of their fellow "actors", and their specific roles relative to the other "actors" (Heath, 2003, p. 135) is a challenge but a necessity if the support

from all the actors is to be gained. Most of the interviewees feel that once a proper channel of communication is established and relationships are created, understandings about the level and direction for collaboration will fall into place. Identifying interdependencies and reciprocal benefits is said to induce collaborative behaviour (Czernek, 2013, p. 85). Where face-to-face meetings are not possible or practical for groups such as SMTEs, online tools can foster and facilitate collaboration. Interviewees recommend information technology as a potential source that could play a significant role in more effectively connecting people or businesses in peripheral areas via link portal, webinar or similar resources.

The organisation that is most appropriate to take the lead in providing opportunities for stakeholders to get together according to the majority of the interviewees is ATEED. The reason is that only an organisation with the calibre and capacity of ATEED can reach large numbers of stakeholders, encourage and generate motivation, and create enough interest for people to dedicate their time to participate.

6.8.2 Proactive Approach, Willingness and Commitment

Sincere commitment to collaboration rather than a mere exchange of ideas is a fundamental condition for building sustainable relationships that produce productive outcomes (Waligo et al., 2013). Key components that are necessary to initiate collaboration are willingness and commitment, according to a senior official from a national industry organisation. The chairperson of a cluster group commented:

> It really is the willingness of people like me, like my committee, to voluntarily do the things that need to be done to make it happen. If we don't do it, it wouldn't happen. So it is very much dependent on the work of the small voluntary pool of people. To facilitate more collaboration from the existing people what we need is to have more commitment from other businesses and also from the regions to achieve the common goal. It's the willingness to collaborate; I mean it's the willingness to put in the hard work.

Most of the interviewees believe that the council and ATEED and other public tourism agencies have to be committed to bringing different interest groups together to work collaboratively. Commitment and willingness from all stakeholders, including SMTEs and each of the areas in Auckland and their LBs, is noted by several interviewees as necessary to achieve the city's common goal and vision. An interviewee from an Auckland public tourism agency stated that it is important that LBs view themselves as part of a region-wide organisation, while at the same time maintaining the focus and engagement with local communities. The LBs are perceived to have a central role to

play in spreading the benefits of collaboration by communicating with the communities that are engaged in tourism to encourage contributions from the areas and their communities. As a suggestion to assist the areas that are used to having their own councils, an interviewee mentioned presenting the wider advantages of being part of a bigger entity such as the council, while at the same time providing assurance that support will be available at the community level whenever required.

It is important that tourism businesses in the various areas of Auckland also view the city as "one entity" rather than separate areas. Literature supports that for collaboration to happen, "there must be concerted efforts at building trust and commitment as well as effective communication among the tourism stakeholders" (Ramayah et al., 2011, p. 412). The need for the key players in the industry to take a proactive approach in facilitating collaboration was noted by several interviewees. Establishing clear channels of communication between stakeholders and building connectivity with the peripheral areas, and improving the way collaboration is managed are recommendations provided by those interviewed as approaches that would facilitate collaboration.

6.8.3 Inspirational Leadership

Inspirational leadership is one of the core driving forces behind destination competitiveness (Heath, 2003, p. 134). Strong leadership in the tourism industry is a crucial prerequisite for having an all-inclusive outlook towards collaborating, as was noted by the CEO of a key tourism industry association. Other important attributes for an effective leadership to successfully encourage and apply collaborative practices include competency and expertise, according to the interviewee. The ability to "not control, but empower, not want to get credit and recognition but be able to give it" was suggested by a senior official from a policy-making agency as being an important attribute of an inspirational leader. The interviewee noted that in order for a leader to be able to facilitate collaboration, the ability to "leave your egos at the door" and recognising that "one-upmanship does not get anybody anywhere" are important. To foster these attributes in others, it is important to recognise these qualities in others, but at the same time, the interviewee cautioned that the ways of incentivising successes need to support shifting peoples' mind-sets about collaboration.

Successful tourism partnerships are underpinned by certain personal and interpersonal qualities, including "strong leadership, common identity, vision, honesty and openness, active listening, and ability to adjust to new situations" (Scott, 2008, p. 557). A middle

management in key public and private tourism organisations that is capable of connecting different stakeholder groups to focus on a long-term vision as opposed to a "quick-fix" is important to inspire and spread collaborative practices, according to the executive director from a think tank in Auckland. Interviewees from peripheral areas expect ATEED and other key tourism stakeholders to put more effort into assisting the areas with leadership, resources and expertise in delivering their objectives for tourism development and expansion.

6.8.4 Consistency

A recurring statement in stakeholders' comments about facilitating collaboration is that "success breeds success". When people see the main players on the same plan, others are bound to follow, particularly when they see results and an opportunity to give their input. An interviewee who has been involved for several years in tourism development in a peripheral area, and is the chairperson of a newly formed cluster group commented:

> What we need to do is to demonstrate that we can be successful. That what we set out to do we achieved. And then we will get people to agree that we have done a good job, so they will come along. At the moment we have to do the hard work to get ourselves established.

To encourage collaboration, the strength that comes from working together needs to be recognised, for which it is necessary to keep consistently spreading the message that sharing and working together will benefit not just some, but everyone. In the words of one interviewee, "the proof is in the pudding". The literature reveals that inter-relationships are characterised by "trust, conflict, cohesion and communication", and that the strength of the relationships is governed by the assurance of collaboration by others and the degree of mutual benefits (Ramayah et al., 2011, p. 412). It is believed that consistency will eventually win over, so that even if some people may not agree with a proposition, they will be more willing to understand and accept it.

6.8.5 Open, Clear and Tailored Communication

When there is lack of clarity about what is happening in the industry, the measures taken by industry leaders and the intentions behind those steps, it is believed to lead to confusion and controversy. Fostering any type of relationship in an environment where distrust and frictions subsist is not possible (Choi & Turk, 2011). SMTEs and LBs emphasised the centrality of engaging all tourism stakeholders, including the local communities, in strategies and discussions related to tourism, so that they feel motivated to cooperate and do not feel excluded. A councillor suggested:

> If we want better collaboration we not only need to listen to not only the business groups, I mean all our key stakeholders, the big boys and girls around town. We also need to listen to local people, and actually genuinely engage with them.

To clear misconceptions and the frustration that seems to have developed between some peripheral areas and ATEED, communication needs to be more clear, open and comprehensive. Keeping stakeholders informed about industry happenings is the key to maintaining harmony and relationships. An interviewee from a peripheral area where the tourist attractions include adventure sports commented that:

> There are plenty of events that we need to be aware of, that we need to get on board. And there needs to be an open approach to that. For example, there is a junior Rugby World Cup next year. All operators in the country should be made aware of that. We should know when the games are, where the games are, how many people we are expecting to have, similar to the RWC but on a smaller scale. That's where I see ATEED's role in creating awareness. They got the event; now, make sure that we are all able to jump on board.

The ability to communicate honestly without offending the other party irrespective of differences of opinions and ideas is central to collaboration, as noted by a hotel operator. Informing stakeholders about major actions and events before the information is released to the media is an approach that would foster goodwill and trust, according to comments by a councillor. According to the interviewee, if the mayor is to obtain collaboration from politicians, it is important for him to be open and transparent. For example, he should share major impending announcements with all key stakeholders, instead of a select few, prior to the announcements being released to the media:

> If the mayor wants collaboration from us politicians he probably needs to be a little bit more transparent with some of these impending announcements, because one of the things that holds collaboration is that there is that protection of information. The thing is, as councillors when we have to read it in the newspaper it doesn't often help collaboration in the chamber.

A public sector interviewee expressed that, as a key stakeholder, it is "frustrating" to learn about important developments from the media without having any prior information about those happenings. On the other hand, some comments reveal that members of the community and LBs feel that the council members are not transparent with their decisions. An interviewee from an industry association commented:

> A lot of the councillors had their own agenda…they make decisions, they are going to do it their own way…there has to be transparency to keep people involved…not just wash it over.

The keys to overcoming these issues are noted as consistent dialogue, open and honest discussions, consultations and keeping key stakeholders and businesses informed without taking them by surprise. A suggestion by one interviewee reads:

> Ongoing dialogue, involvement and consultation with all our sector groups whether community, environmental, social, business. Keep everyone engaged, everyone feeling included, and let everyone have their say in genuine consultations with the council where there is some concern particularly from the wider community.

There is a need for major players to understand the levels of communication required for various stakeholder groups. This is of particular importance when dealing with SMEs and organisations that include old-age pensioners (OAPs). An interviewee from the B&B sector commented that there are a large number of OAPs who operate B&B facilities. Communication with these groups tends to be ineffective when the methods and techniques are not tailored to fit with their needs, circumstances and backgrounds. If the messages conveyed to them are to be effective, and success is to be achieved in getting their support through working together, tailoring the communication to their needs is of utmost importance. For example, as one interviewee commented, major players of the industry such as public tourism agencies and key industry associations need to value and recognise the knowledge and skills of operators who have worked in tourism businesses for a long time as much as those who are qualified. A senior official from an industry association who has been running a B&B operation for more than 20 years commented:

> I don't have any degrees. I just speak as I feel and as I see it. I just sent a letter to the guy (from a quality assurance agency). We invited him to our board meeting. He was just like blah blah blah…he knows all about tourism. Even though we have people who have run their businesses for 15, 20 years and more, we don't know.

Another interviewee from an industry association expressed similar views:

> The key challenges I believe are that there are different people coming into the industry with different skills. They believe they have certain knowledge. Sometimes they aren't open to different suggestions because they aren't mentally capable of accepting other ideas and disseminating them with their knowledge. They are fixed in their own ways, their minds are not flexible.

A hotel operator commented that the Auckland tourism authority needs to focus on the requirements of the individual sectors that are closely linked to tourism, such as the hotels, bars and restaurants. This echoes the reflections by an interviewee from the B&B operation that the sector is under-represented and not much attention is given to it by

national or local tourism authorities. The interviewees' comments illustrate that it is important to make those sectors feel involved in order to motivate them to collaborate. An interviewee who has been operating a motel for more than 25 years commented:

> The events that they (ATEED) have tried to put together were poorly attended. They have to find people who are interested in all the small operators. I think they believe they can't contribute or bring anything (to the meetings). They all just sit around in their own world and do what they want.

While comments from the local public tourism agencies indicate that they believe that sufficient information and support is provided to all tourism stakeholders, perspectives from the different stakeholder groups suggest that there is an inconsistency between what the authorities believe is being provided and what stakeholders perceive is being delivered. For example, while key public organisations consider the tourism update meetings conducted by ATEED provide opportunities and information, these events are not seen to cover the information requirements of all industry stakeholders. As a result, a number of stakeholder groups feel the events are not relevant to them; hence, they do not feel the enthusiasm to participate. A hotel operator commented that:

> They might be doing industry updates for the entire tourism industry in Auckland for example, but then their messages are very broad. They need to actually narrow down. We should do activities for operators here, we should do for the hotel sector here, we should do activities for bar and restaurants so that the individual businesses still feel that this big behemoth company is working for the individual businesses so that they still feel engaged.

The significance of educating and spreading information about the wider benefits that can be gained from working together is a key theme proposed by a number of interviewees. It is believed that the more educated people are about the industry, the more engaged they become. On the other hand, the ignorance of the benefits of collaboration could foster the mentality that "if it doesn't bring direct benefits to my business, I can't be bothered". The chairperson of an industry association commented:

> It's just hard to get them to see the benefits of working together. We have emailed to them, we have written to them, we have phoned. But if you don't have to do something, or if you don't have to spend money, why would you?

In order to move away from such subjectivity, one interviewee suggested that it is important to make everyone understand the facts about what is happening in the tourism industry, educate them about how each stakeholder group is linked to the bigger picture, and make them see the existing and potential opportunities for them to engage in those activities and support each other through collaboration. In the same way, competitors

have to be encouraged and educated to focus on their strengths rather than to only compete, so that a collaborative attitude rather than a competitive attitude will be instigated between them.

Open and ongoing communication is noted as a conduit for assisting in diminishing some of the apprehensiveness among areas that did not support the Supercity, and to eliminating the fears about losing local identity of those communities that were under separate jurisdictions. It is believed that these steps would in the long term facilitate positive results, which in turn would contribute to enhancing collaboration among stakeholders. Some comments indicate an existing perception among tourism stakeholders and locals in peripheral areas that "Auckland" is only the CBD. It is evident that there are factors that have contributed to creating this belief. Many believe Auckland tourism has been generally "CBD centric" for a long time, with most developments focused on areas such as the harbour, Wynyard Quarter and Auckland Museum. Current tourism development activities by ATEED around the CBD reinforce these beliefs. To dissipate the perception that the local government is solely focused on tourism development within Central Auckland, development of surrounding areas "should progress in tandem with the central city", according to a councillor from a Central Auckland area. In terms of local communities' beliefs about the benefits of the AVP and ATEED's attention to peripheral areas, a councillor from one of the peripheral areas of Auckland stated, "there is a lot we need to change". An essential factor that was recommended by some interviewees to ensure collaboration and participation from all the areas is to communicate and spread the message to all concerned stakeholders that the AVP goals are set out to benefit not only the central city, but also the wider Auckland region. Higher levels of communication and engagement with locals contribute to increased support (Erkus-Ozturk & Eraydyn, 2010, p. 114). Spreading the message about the wider benefits of AVP is particularly relevant, considering that some peripheral areas and communities do not seem to realise that benefits of achieving AVP objectives will reach them. An interviewee from the private sector expressed:

> I think what ATEED here in Auckland have done is that they have identified people who want to collaborate. They are using those stakeholders and people who engage with them the most, and they have got the people who just want to compete and take and so they are not engaging with them as much. All they want is take and actually not be part of the solution, they just want to be part of the problem…I think ATEED has to be strong; if you are not going to be part of collaboration you are going to fight your own battles.

There is an opportunity for ATEED and other key tourism stakeholders to dissipate such beliefs by exercising more efforts to encourage motivation to collaborate. Efforts to create awareness of the wider benefits of AVP and the centrality of working together to achieve AVP objectives need to encompass stakeholders from the broader Auckland. Past experiences indicate that it is possible to build trust through open communication, which eventually leads to increased collaboration. A senior manager from a national tourism agency provided an example where:

> In the past (our company) and (Airline A) had had a conflict which came about from what I understand was a lack of communication. We have now got to a position where there is much more communication and understanding on both sides. We have similar goals sometimes, different goals other times. If we see an opportunity in a particular market to work with say (Airline B) on a promotion, we would do that. (Airline A) no longer gets upset. They used to get very upset, saying why are you working with another airline. Now there is a level of trust and they understand that (Airline A) is not a great promoter for that particular market, and if you are working with (Airline B), that's fine, we are not going to get grumpy. Why it has changed is that now there is a level of trust now.

In order to facilitate collaboration, it is important to recognise that, despite the inevitable differences in opinion, a level of respect must be maintained to avoid destroying relationships, as was stressed by the GM of one of the largest hotels in Auckland. The interviewee suggested that Auckland's key tourism agencies must listen and strive to achieve mutual understanding and agreement whenever possible to facilitate more collaboration from within the industry. A councillor expressed that input from all stakeholders in tourism strategies is critical to sustaining collaboration for the long-term is:

> Ongoing dialogue, involvement and consultation with all the sector groups whether community, environmental, social, business, cultural, and the wider residential groups and keeping everyone engaged, everyone feeling included and everyone having their say in genuine consultations with the council where there is some concern particularly from the wider community.

6.8.6   Monitor and Assess Collaborative Practices

An essential component of competitiveness is examining and monitoring the competitive environment for policy and strategy formulation and at the same time systematically evaluating the effectiveness of the key policies and strategies that have previously been implemented – a finding highlighted by Dwyer and Kim (2003). As an approach to establishing the practice of engaging in collaboration, an interviewee from a policy-making agency suggested the practice of identifying key performance indicators

of major tourism bodies by assessing how each individual agency is performing in its collaborative efforts. One interviewee from a private agency noted:

> It comes down to I think what other KPIs (key performance indicators) might exist for those core bodies like ATEED. They need to be measured on collaborative efforts, I don't know if they are measuring, I don't know how well they are measuring it in the industry. TNZ has started to do that, has started surveying their performance within the industry. As part of that they are assessing essentially how well they are collaborating within the industry. Which is a change.

Potential areas to be assessed include the number of joint strategies and campaigns, number of people involved in those activities, actions such as group meetings and group projects. Evaluating how the different tiers of the key tourism organisations are created can also gauge how well the systems are set up to facilitate collaboration within its various departments. Industry feedback and surveys on how well an organisation is leading on those aspects can indicate their level of collaborative performance. It is believed that implementing such a process would convey the intent and desire from the leadership towards collaboration.

6.8.7   Reduce the Council's Hierarchy

Selecting the appropriate type of organisational structure is central for effectively directing and managing the necessary processes for achieving success in destination development, management and operation (Hassan, 2000). Several interviewees proposed flattening the hierarchy of the council as a necessary step to make it more accessible to everyone. It is believed that a flat organisational structure will help convey that the local government is not removed and out of reach of the communities. A former mayor of a local area commented that it is important for the top tiers of the local government to convey a sense of caring for local communities in order to receive support for collaboration. The reason, according to one interviewee, is that people always work better if they feel the people that they engage with care about their needs. To dispel the perceived image of ATEED as "a great big behemoth that is out of touch with individual businesses in the (tourism) sector" by some, an interviewee suggested that the organisation needs to think of ways to keep a high level of engagement with the industry.

Identifying decisions that need to be made at local and regional levels by the local government and establishing appropriate governance structures were recommended by some interviewees. With regard to organisational structure, Heath (2003) states that

there are "two rules of thumb": (a) "structure should follow strategy" and (b) "the best structure is the simplest one to get the job done" (p. 132). At the same time, the author believes that ensuring that appropriate levels of governance structures are in place to facilitate planning, monitoring and maintenance of destination tourism processes is a critical element of destination competitiveness (Heath, 2003, p. 345). The level of authority given to LBs is seen as insufficient to attend to some decisions that need to be made at the local community level. Establishing layers of governance at local and regional levels will not only create a sense among communities and businesses that the council is accessible; it will also lead to easy decision-making in local matters, according to an interviewee from a policy institute. Several interviewees from peripheral areas expressed that such an approach will improve collaboration with the local government in the areas that previously had their own local councils. The literature posits that decision-making is a critical component of sustainable community tourism and necessitates multi-stakeholder participation at each level of planning and policy making, binding in partnership public authorities, NGOs, locals, industries and experts to determine the extent and type of tourism appropriate for a community (Breen & Hing, 2001).

6.8.8   Vision and Clear Goals

Well-defined values and principles with respective roles defined for each stakeholder and opportunities outlined for them to participate and contribute under a unified vision are essential to STC (Heath, 2002, p. 135). Tourism industry stakeholders believe that robust collaboration is the foundation for developing a strong national tourism plan with a resilient commitment for execution. A vision and a set of clear goals and expected outcomes for collaboration are pointed out as necessary elements to achieving success, and to ensuring commitment to collaborate from everyone, as mentioned by a senior official from a private tourism organisation. Several interviewees from major public and private agencies expressed that the recently launched Tourism 2025 will be a toll that will facilitate collaboration because the framework outlines a clear vision for the NZ tourism industry, with specific roles designated for different stakeholder groups.

A sequence of steps that would facilitate collaboration at an urban level between individual firms and subsequently spread to the entire industry was outlined by the CEO of a nationwide industry association. As a starting point for teamwork, the interviewee argued that a tool on how to work together needs to be formulated. Secondly, clear roles and responsibilities need to be set out for everyone involved, and everyone needs to be

aware of what they are meant to be doing. As a final step, it is of utmost importance to have a leader who keeps track of the collaborative functions of everyone, periodically measures their performances and keeps the plan on track. A comment from a public sector participant reads:

> You will get collaboration from the private sector as long as they see a vision and momentum and they feel supported and it's going to work for them. And that's how it is sustained. It is sustained by having a long-term strategy and having the players in it who are committed to it. You have to get results and they have to see it. And they will stay involved. In fact they will be more involved. And they will be very motivated and very supportive. And that's how you get them there. You might get them to the table initially, but if you don't actually follow through with it and there are no results, they won't come back.

In view of the findings that have revealed that a number of public and private stakeholders do not have sufficient information and knowledge about collaboration and its benefits, a plan and guideline that stakeholders can follow seems a useful and appropriate first step to take. Several peripheral areas within Auckland are starting to explore ways for further expansion and development of tourism. Specific roles and responsibilities for all the participants in a region that are engaged and wanting to contribute to the activities would reduce confusion and facilitate progress towards their common objectives. The level of willingness of stakeholders to collaborate with others will reveal whether the activities or strategies for collaborative engagements are appropriate, and adjustments can be made accordingly. As the manager of an Auckland public tourism agency noted:

> If people are willing to work with you, collaborate with you, then you are doing the right things. If the idea is a bad one, no one would want to work with you.

6.9   Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined stakeholders' perceptions about collaboration and reviewed its significance for tourism and STC in the Auckland setting. The overall response reveals that collaboration is a critical element in various aspects of tourism and plays a central role in achieving STC. This important finding emerged from the interviewees' responses about their views on collaboration. Collaboration was not mentioned before when they discussed the important attributes of Auckland's tourism competitiveness. Stakeholders are engaged in a range of collaborative activities and choose different techniques and approaches for their collaborative activities. The extent of participation in sharing and exchanging IR and the level of collaboration between stakeholders in labour-related matters were analysed. Large companies and major stakeholder groups

devote significant focus to collaborative engagements. The level of engagement by some SMTEs and other small groups is relatively low and they do not see much benefit to be gained from collaborating with others.

A number of obstacles stand in the way of their engaging fully in collaborative activities. These were reviewed, together with suggestions of different techniques that could be utilised to overcome these challenges and facilitate collaboration. A review of these factors, followed by a discussion on how collaboration could contribute to STC, was presented in this chapter.

7   THE SUPERCITY AND COLLABORATION

As this research is set in the context of Auckland as an amalgamated city, specific attention is given to understanding how the Supercity formation has impacted tourism competitiveness and collaboration. This chapter looks at the changes that have occurred to collaborative practices of Auckland's tourism industry due to the political amalgamation of the region. The findings revealed that the formation of the Supercity eases collaboration in some ways, but at the same time it complicates and hinders the processes of collaborative practices. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first looks at the ways that the Supercity formation is perceived as having contributed to facilitating collaborative engagements. The second section focuses on the factors related to the Supercity that are believed to have obstructed collaborative practices. Participants' suggestions for improving the processes of the Supercity to contribute to Auckland's tourism competitiveness and enhancing collaboration to contribute to tourism success are presented.

7.1   The Supercity as a Facilitating Factor for Collaboration

A large majority of the interviewees (92%) believe that the Supercity has made collaboration with the public sector and the tourism industry a lot easier. Those who feel the Supercity created positive impacts described the different ways that the amalgamation has facilitated and encouraged collaboration.

The most significant factor that made engaging and connecting with stakeholders easier is the creation of one entity that is responsible for the wider Auckland region. Having one council simplified comprehensive decision-making, whereas prior to the Supercity formation, several local councils had to be consulted and involved in region-wide decisions. An interviewee from the hotel sector commented:

> The way the Supercity is now, instead of having meetings with four or five different heads of councils or heads of different tourism organisations, you only meet with one person and they try and understand your business better and push you forward. It's all very good.

Those who had worked with the previous councils expressed that, prior to the amalgamation, decision-making and taking responsibility entailed a lot of bureaucracy from the various councils. The Supercity is said to have created a "one stop shop", where more cohesiveness and support is provided to the tourism industry. An

interviewee described the extent to which collaborative engagements have increased since the Supercity formation:

> Even though I am an opposition councillor, I have to say the Supercity is working; it's starting to reflect that the Supercity and the subsequent collaboration between all the departments of the government within the council and major players are working. The collaboration stretches to organisations like the Property Council to the Employers and Manufacturers' Association to the Chamber of Commerce to business forums to the Automobile Association.

A singular strategy could not have been possible under the former Tourism Auckland, because the agency was only advocating for Auckland's central city, and did not include the rest of the territorial local authorities. As noted in a study, "any planning efforts that are imposed on stakeholders, rather than developed together with them, have little effect on outcomes" (Adegbesan & Higgins, 2010). The previous Tourism Auckland had "an excuse" for not succeeding in its strategy – that of having a "very fractured model", which according to one interviewee "was very frustrating to operate". The interviewee expressed that the current strategy under the Supercity structure "from a macro strategic standpoint is a lot more stronger, a lot more focused, and a lot better funded than before. So, they have no excuse if they fail".

Through the strategic goals and implementation plans presented in the Auckland Plan, the Supercity is perceived to have created motivation to collaborate for stakeholders across the region. According to an interviewee from an Auckland attraction, having one entity, one strategy and one set of goals makes it easier to spread the message to different stakeholders, which the stakeholders also find easier to comprehend. Thus, the Supercity is believed to have given "greater clarity" on the future direction of the city, and through the Auckland Plan, provides a clear pathway, into which stakeholders are able to identify where they can "dock".

The greater authority and size of the Supercity are factors that are believed to have generated a more collaborative attitude among stakeholders. In terms of the city's \$3 billion budget and 15,000 employees, the Supercity is second only to the central government. A councillor commented that "very few organisations are game enough to go against this council. Because it is that big and powerful, they are forced to collaborate with people". The immensity of the Supercity is seen as a factor that compels attention from the central government and national public agencies. When there were different councils, government agencies also had difficulty in collaborating with them. A comment by a public sector participant reads, "It was really difficult to get

departments to work together for different councils". As a single entity, the new structure of the Supercity is believed to drive collaboration between central government and public departments as well as within the council.

The creation of ATEED after the Supercity formation is another significant factor that stakeholders believe has positively affected collaboration in the tourism industry. Since the creation of the Supercity, ATEED has become the largest and most powerful RTO. Not only does it guide Auckland tourism; it also provides leadership and direction to others outside the Auckland region. According to an interviewee from a national public tourism agency, "(ATEED is) actually providing a leadership role to the whole of the top of the North Island. Where it concerned tourism, collaboration was lost and non-existent before ATEED".

The authority and the financial capacity of ATEED is believed to have given the agency the capability to better engage with and bring more industry participants together than the previous Tourism Auckland could. With the help of additional funding and advisory support, local areas now have the opportunity to conduct activities for tourism promotion and expansion. A senior official from a national public tourism agency expressed:

> ATEED is now a very serious player in the tourism space. From our perspective they rate just below Air NZ and Auckland Airport in terms of importance because they have quite a significant budget, they are representing a third of the country's population – not a third of NZ's attractions. So ATEED is a big player. They are more useful as a combined organisation than the previous different councils were.

Referring to recent activities of the organisation that brought together stakeholders across local areas, the president of a local organisation stated:

> Before it was one small organisation that was operating and that had its membership. We were talking about just spending the small amount of money that we got on the promotions that we could do. Now we are going to do a much broader more all-encompassing sort of activity to bring everyone together. We have more money to be able to generate more and spend on what is necessary. I don't think it would have happened before because the resources weren't there to do it. The Supercity has facilitated this project. Now we are trying to combine all the different (local tourism) bodies to bring everyone together.

Bringing together previously separate councils is believed to have eliminated the disagreements between councils around the amount of funding that each should receive. The additional support by ATEED, and the fact that the local areas are now aware that

support is available for local activities, have prompted operators, businesses and community groups to engage in tourism-related undertakings more than before, and compelled them to collaborate with each other and with ATEED. As an interviewee noted:

> To be able to work with ATEED, we have to collaborate. If we don't collaborate or cooperate, we don't get any result; whereas before, everybody was happy doing their own thing.

Now that all the areas have to focus on "the big picture" that encompasses the wider Auckland region under the unified structure of the Supercity, they are compelled to communicate with each other. This is believed to have brought collaboration to the forefront after the Supercity formation, according to an interviewee from a cluster group. Thus, the Supercity formation was described as "one of the main catalysts without it being the main reason" for a number of changes to collaborative practices that have occurred since the amalgamation took place.

Initiating tourism projects is also believed to be easier now that organisers have a single body to deal with, which is responsible for and capable of decision-making in all aspects of tourism. This ease of dealing with one entity is perceived to have contributed to a positive attitude among participants towards collaboration with the council.

Relationships between the public and private sectors are believed to have improved in recent years. However, since a number of changes have also been made recently to key leadership posts of the tourism industry, it is possible that the improvements in relationships are being attributed to the Supercity, the new leadership or a combination of both. The vice president of a hotel chain noted that "there have been a lot of changes to a number of key tourism players. That lends to it as much as the Supercity". It is difficult to establish that collaboration is essentially driven by the Supercity; however, an interviewee noted that "having one organisation that is professionally run, properly focused, positively engaged and has a mayor who is very engaging (in collaborative activities) have made processes simpler and more straightforward".

The fact that ATEED is responsible for tourism as well as economic development of Auckland permits the organisation to take a holistic view of the region. The CEO of a private tourism firm commented that having an inclusive outlook enables ATEED to strategically distribute the resources according to requirements of a diverse region like Auckland, which "puts us way ahead of anywhere in the country".

The Supercity incorporates participants from the private sector in their governing structure and in the boards of its various CCOs. Several interviewees from large private companies noted that since most of these individuals are in positions that enable them to influence the private sector processes and decisions, even though they may not have total control over the decisions of the council, they are able to contribute to decision-making.

An executive from a private transport company stated that, prior to the Supercity formation, Auckland was not on the company's "radar" as a strategic partner; instead, there were other cities of NZ that were considered more important:

> (Prior to the Supercity) Queenstown, Rotorua, Northland and Canterbury were considered more important. That attitude has changed due to the Supercity's straightforward strategy, strong executive capabilities, strength in financial resources and the ease of dealing with one entity. Where there was no collaborative engagement at all previously, Auckland is now considered as a key partner with whom it is easy to engage with.

According to several public and private sector interviewees, ATEED acts as a link between the local government and other industries in collaborative engagements.

Prior to the Supercity formation, LBs were not involved directly in tourism, as it was not in their mandate. The previous structure did not provide LBs with the requisite authority to initiate any activities or projects that were conducted in their regions. Since they only had an advocacy role within the communities, all events and activities had to go through the parent council. With more powers given to LBs, collaboration under the Supercity is believed to have become a lot stronger. Support and advice for tourism development are provided by ATEED to LBs in their specific areas. Since LBs have to take the initiative to request the type and level of assistance they require, it has created a two-way process for collaboration. Although the previous local councils had closer contact with the communities, some interviewees expressed that they did not have the authority to influence decision-making. Referring to the previous local councils, a public sector stakeholder reported:

> They were there to answer to the residents of the regions. Whereas we are heavily engaged in the proactive marketing of Auckland and making a huge difference in the way that Auckland is marketed overseas and domestically. That's something that wasn't happening before. A liaison officer may have been a nice thing to have, but I would question what they are achieving.

At the same time, there is room for improvement in terms of the power given to LBs as discussed in the following section.

With regard to the structure of the Supercity and collaboration, an interviewee expressed that collaboration between Auckland's tourism stakeholders should not be linked to its political structure; instead, building good relationships should be what matters: "Local governments and political structures are not permanent. What will sustain and endure for the future will be strong relationships."

7.2 Obstacles to Collaboration Related to the Supercity

Not everyone interviewed agree that the Supercity has facilitated collaboration. Some of the participants (over 4%) argued that the Supercity had complicated things and made the process of collaborative engagements with stakeholders more difficult. While these participants were unequivocal about the adverse impacts of the Supercity on collaborative practices, others mentioned some negative dimensions that did not, however, outweigh the positive. A few interviewees (2%) stated that the Supercity has made no difference to the level or ways of engaging with other stakeholders within the industry, the public sector or other industries.

Some of the constraints to collaboration are believed to be caused by the way the Supercity is structured. According to a LB member, when the council's plans differ from the needs and interests of the voters who voted for them, it creates conflict and discontent between the LBs and the council members, slowing down and straining the processes of collaboration. Personal political interests, domestic politics and national interests influence engagement between stakeholders (Marcoz et al., 2014). The councillors and LB members, who are compelled to please the voters, may at times have to distance themselves to take a detached stance from other board and council members.

Even though the councillors and LB members are aware that certain decisions by the council are made for the benefit of the wider region, the members are unable to agree with the council without losing the support of the areas that they represent. The members believe this happens because of the way the council's political structure is shaped. As noted by a ward councillor:

> Where collaboration is being hindered is through the votes system. You have got to look after your home patch. I could be collaborative without being political if I have been supportive for everything that Len Brown stands for. I support a lot of his stuff, not all of it, but if I were a Len Brown supporter around the council

table, I would get kicked out. So I can collaborate to an extent. That's not what my people want. Collaboration is only slowed down by political realities. At the end of the day you have got to represent the wishes and wants and needs of your local community and sometimes that is not the needs and wants of the mayor of Auckland Council. So I could probably do better on collaboration at the end of my tenure.

A degree of discord and wrangling exists within the council and between the council and the CCOs, according to several members from LBs and ward councils. This is an issue that is believed to hamper the level of collaboration within those agencies and to obstruct the successful achievement of the city's tourism goals. Some of the disagreements between the council and the CCOs are believed to be related to the size of the areas and the amount of funding allocated to each. It was noted by an interviewee that there are debates within the council on the significance to be given to tourism. This dispute is believed to arise from the belief among some that tourism is a low-income sector; hence, there are some who question the rationale for the funding and investments provided to the sector. The key to eliminating such misgivings and disputes is open communication and creation of awareness. Lack of engagement from tourism industry stakeholders in cooperative discussions is noted as a major issue faced by the industry. A tourism operator noted that collaboration needs to be "a two-way process", and unless both parties that are involved in the communication are sincerely committed, the level of collaboration achieved will be low.

The council's political structure is purportedly designed to enable co-governance by the LBs and the council. According to an interviewee, "it's neither one nor the other"; instead, "what they have ended up with in Auckland is a hybrid". Such a structure is believed to have consequences for collaborative practices. For example, as explained by an interviewee, the LBs are subservient to the council. At the same time, the council officers essentially work for both the council and the LBs. Since the council pays their wages, it puts council members in a difficult situation with respect to being impartial in serving both the council and the LBs. Therefore, the political structure for that tier of the governance is seen as "suboptimal", and unless that is rectified, collaboration will continue to be inhibited at that level. An interviewee from a think tank expressed that collaboration is a challenge "in a number of fronts because the systems aren't set up to collaborate"; hence, it results in stakeholders "fighting against that system".

Such issues stem from the way the governing structure of the council is established, with the 20 ward councillors as well as the members of the 21 LBs being elected by the

areas and the wards that they represent. The initial recommendation of the Royal Commission regarding the governing structure of the council was to elect some of the councillors at large as opposed to their being elected by the wards (Thomson, Mulligan, et al., 2009). The purpose for that recommendation was to ensure greater levels of transparency and prevent a situation where the councillors become more focused on the matters of their local areas instead of having a region-wide view (Chen, 2014, p. 12).

Differences in opinions that occur between LBs and the council are also noted as a barrier that affects collaboration. The current level of authority given to LBs has been noted as insufficient and an obstacle to achieving maximum levels of collaboration according to interviewees from central and peripheral areas and some members of LBs. Under section 17 of the Local Government (Auckland Council) Act 2009, the council assigns decision-making responsibility to the LBS for non-regulatory functions of the council that do not require an Auckland-wide approach (pp. 20–21). Therefore, it is likely that the roles of the governance structure between the LB and the council are not well understood by everyone. This is similar to the finding by Chen (2014) that a lot of people believe that the decisions of the LBs can be overruled by the council. However, Chen (2014) claims:

> That is not true – when a local board makes a decision within the bounds of its delegated decision-making responsibility, that decision is a decision of the Council, and the governing body cannot overturn it. (p. 13)

The impacts of such perceptions are particularly unfavourable for stakeholders working collaboratively in the areas where there are still pockets of resident communities that do not believe in the benefits of the Supercity. Some interviewees view the elimination of local councils and replacing them with LBs as the dissociation of local government from the communities. One interviewee described the creation of the LBs as adding an extra "layer" between the local communities and the council. A previous mayor of a local council noted that creation of the LBs has brought limited local government engagement with the communities, whereas before, "there were just the council and the people. There was no layer in between". Because of the direct communication and contact between the local councils and the communities, some interviewees feel that there was better engagement between the government, the local communities and industries including tourism, and hence better overall collaboration before the formation of the Supercity. This is expressed in a comment by a councillor:

> They (areas that previously had their own local councils) are the ones probably feeling the most disempowered by the Supercity. They used to be able to knock on the door of the council to get an answer. Some of them are feeling the Auckland Council is getting too big, too powerful and there is nothing they could do to change it. So collaboration is crucial.

Difficulties and confusion exist among some stakeholder groups, including tourism cluster groups, LBs and other tourism associations, in understanding the responsibilities and accountabilities of the ATEED and the council, and how the decision-making process works within the council. Confusion about the role of the government in the picture adds to the challenges of working collaboratively. Referring to the roles of the council, ATEED and the central government, an interviewee from a cultural organisation commented that concerns about "who controls who" within the tourism industry represent a hurdle for anyone who attempts to engage in collaborative activities. The activities of the council and ATEED are particularly difficult to decipher, as shown by the following comment from the interviewee:

> There is a crossover of objectives in terms of marketing Auckland and specifically the CBD. I would have thought there is a big crossover. To me there is an area of confusion there, a bit of a fractured message and an opportunity to say we have done the big restructure but there is still a little bit of fine-tuning around the edges and that to me is something that could be done. There is a blurring of the messaging there of the two different entities.

Apart from the difficulties in understanding the various roles of the council and its different agencies, there is a perception of a lack of collaboration and coordination between public agencies. Some comments by interviewees from the private sector and NGOs indicate that the lack of collaboration and coordination has led to duplication of tasks. One of the main purposes of creating the Supercity was to reduce duplication of processes and remove inconsistencies through integrated planning and by having one authority that is responsible for decisions and coordination regarding infrastructure, economic, social and environmental actions (Auckland Council, 2012a, p. 12). An interviewee from an NGO noted:

> If everyone is doing the same thing, its duplication or triplication, and not the most efficient use of resources, so it's important to collaborate properly to not replicate things.

Statements from some interviewees indicate that local and central government's activities and engagements regarding tourism are neither well-coordinated nor complementary. This creates confusion about the roles of the local and central government in tourism, and leads to a perception among the private stakeholders that

there is a sense of competition between local and central governments. As a participant described:

> I think there is a fundamental difference in the way that the local government and central government are engaged in the sector. So this makes it difficult for an operator, for a business to understand, what is the role of Tourism New Zealand, or the Ministry of Business and Innovation and what is the role of ATEED. I think if we go out of Auckland, if we go to a region, you've got Tourism New Zealand overseeing the promotion of NZ as a destination, and then you have City Council promoting their own province, or their city whether it is in NZ or externally. They are not very well coordinated, they are not complementary. And also what happens is this territorial local authority competes with the neighbouring one.

Various decisions such as funding and investment pronouncements made at the national and local levels further confound the perceptions that there is a lack of coordination between local and central governments' decisions in tourism industry matters. Subsequently, the misconceptions create doubts and misgivings about engaging collaboratively with the public authorities with regard to development initiatives.

Local areas where interviewees believe collaboration was better prior to the Supercity were those that had their own councils and were able to directly interact with local communities. Without the support of their local councils, the businesses and tourism organisations in the areas find it difficult to work with the local government and public agencies; hence, their collaborative engagements are significantly affected by the Supercity. Interviewees from some of the tourism groups belonging to those areas stated that due to a lack of support from the council, they are struggling to get themselves established. An association trying to develop and increase tourism in their area stated that while some support is provided by ATEED, the level of assistance is not sufficient to produce the desired outcomes that are needed to achieve the objectives in terms of tourism development in the area. The president of a tourism association who is also the director of a key tourism attraction expressed that they are greatly in need of expert knowledge and guidance on how to proceed and steer the activities and actions for tourism expansion:

> We are not getting the level of support that we need from someone like ATEED to make this work. We have to employ a tourist specialist to help us. That is exactly what ATEED should be providing. They should have groups of people that are working within the community like us to help us through the process, because we are not experts.

The requested guidance does not seem to be forthcoming, which has made them disappointed and unsure of how to progress. This in turn has discouraged members of the organisation from collaborating with ATEED, as they believe ATEED does not ensure that what the local agencies need is provided to initiate and progress with the processes of developing tourism in the regions. The director of a local area tourism association expressed:

> It frustrates me that we are not getting that level of support…We talk a good talk and we talk about various propositions. We talk about competitive advantage, but do we actually understand what we are talking about? Really we don't. Tourism is a difficult business. It's something that if we are going to be successful at we can't do it ourselves. For us to pretend that we are tourism experts is completely wrong.

Another area where the Supercity has adversely impacted collaboration is reduced availability and accessibility of "higher-end" public representatives. Interviewees from areas that were previously under their own local councils expressed that the Supercity has taken away the close connections they had with the regional councils. According to one interviewee, previously, if a stakeholder from those areas needed to organise a meeting or discuss any issues, they were able to "pick up the phone and talk to the mayor". The multi-tier management of the Supercity has eliminated that accessibility and made the decision-making process difficult. Comparing the Supercity structure to that of previous local councils, an interviewee commented that it is apparent that "the level of accountability of staff (will be) much lower than the accountability of a voted member".

In addition to losing the direct communication with their local councils, the division of local tourism agencies added to the "frustrations" at not having any control over the consequences. A tourism business operator from a peripheral area noted that their "tourism offices were taken away" by the Supercity and they were "trying to re-establish again". The interviewee added, "The small ones (organisations) got lost. We miss that". When the amalgamation came into effect, some regional tourism associations that were formerly singular agencies were split between two or more areas while others went under the boundary of a different area, causing loss of business and funding to the organisations. An operator from one such organisation expressed:

> (The organisations) were bound by local government formation, local government funding. Funding was taken away; funding was given to different areas in a different manner. Now, as an operator you can imagine that is a very big thing to be controlled by an outside entity.

Comments from stakeholders that were affected by these issues revealed that the members of some tourism groups that were created prior to and after the Supercity now believe that the future control of the functions of their organisations should stay with the operators and businesses. While they acknowledge the importance of maintaining close collaboration with ATEED, the groups believe that any changes that may occur at local government level should not impact local tourism businesses. It was suggested that a system should be established to ensure that even if governments and leaderships change, fundamental tourism strategies will not be altered or affected, so that consistency is maintained across or between different periods of power and political landscapes.

Interviewees' comments indicate a perception that collaborating under an amalgamated city structure can be a challenging task and that the challenge is particularly daunting when different stakeholders have to work together towards lofty targets such as those set for Auckland's future. The tall organisational structure of the council and ATEED is seen by some private sector organisations as a barrier that affects frequent collaboration and easy communication. The structure of the Supercity is perceived to have created uncertainty among SMEs and other small groups of stakeholders about the right person to contact. An interviewee from the private sector noted that due to the vastness of the council, unless the person wanting to contact the agencies of the Supercity is from a large organisation or has contacts at higher levels of the Supercity hierarchy, getting through to the right person is difficult:

> The biggest challenge I think is now that you have formed one big large local government with 8,000-odd employees, you have got a much larger bureaucracy, and unless you have got those key contacts with persons of influence in the top two to three tiers of management, then you are going to struggle. So the flip side to that same coin is that if your organisation is quite large and strong and powerful those relationships and those collaborations are way better.

Another interviewee from a business association in a central area of Auckland expressed similar views:

> It's probably harder because we are now talking a region of seven cities' councils combined, although we have found the mayor extremely accessible, and likewise the senior staff. That may be because of the networks that we have had developed and other people may not have that same access to the mayor and council and senior staff.

Locally driven collaboration is "an impossible task" to achieve for a "top heavy" organisation such as the council, according to an interviewee from a cultural association. A participant from a private company noted that the multiple tiers of the

Supercity structure affect collaboration. While the top management is supportive of collaborative engagements, the same level of support is not present at the lower tiers of the structure. The top tier of the Auckland Council is described as "extremely accessible", but working with a "super" city that incorporates seven councils is harder than working directly with one, according to the president of a business association. A senior official from a tourism firm explained that:

> What you have got at the top two or three tiers is new people, and they are great to engage with. As you drop down the structure, you get the people that were there before the formation of ATEED and you still have a cultural dichotomy between the top and the middle and the bottom.

The GM of a hotel in Auckland compared the difference between working with the Supercity and working with the previous councils:

> I think the one thing that when you get an organisation so big is that they can lose touch with reality. Sometimes it does slow down decision-making because there are more cogs in the wheel. I think they are doing a pretty good job here of engaging, but at times it's difficult because it's quite big and to get an answer you have to go through three or four people, where before, if I had rung one person and he would say, that's fine, we will do it for you, so that's that. So it's a challenge.

There is a perceived lack of personal touch for some local agencies since ATEED took over the responsibilities of tourism development from their local councils. Previous liaison officers have been removed and their roles replaced mostly by email communication with ATEED. The loss of direct personal communication has added to the feeling of detachment between the tourism authority and the areas. The regional president of an industry association who also owns a tourism operation commented that having a local liaison person has greater impact on locals than emails and formal communication: "When you make a personal effort people come along. If you want things to happen, be ready to keep personal contacts."

Since the amalgamation, some of the previous local tourism offices have been relocated to other areas. It was noted that, together with those offices, the regular talks and meetings by local stakeholders that provided networking opportunities also came to a halt. Without their local tourism offices, those areas feel that they have "lost" their connection with the tourism authority. A motel operator commented:

> Before there used to be talks held and there used to be heaps of people. They used to talk about motels, and opportunities to mingle with different people, you get corporate speakers here…they speak about what's happening in the bigger

sector. Now we get what is written and it's one person's opinion. Before people's opinions are based on what they heard from the speakers. When you physically hear someone speak you can make your own interpretations.

There are some communities that prefer to have their own tourism offices instead of working under ATEED. In particular, the peripheral areas are more concerned about losing their local identity under the Supercity banner. Expressing how strongly locals feel about their local identity, a former mayor of a peripheral area expressed that some locals are averse to the idea of even establishing a central *marae* in Auckland for fear of losing the prominence and identity of existing ones in their areas.

Getting messages across to divergent populations with differing perspectives in a vast region where the local communities previously had close relationships with their own local councils is perceived as problematic for smooth collaborative processes. After the Supercity formation, community-driven collaboration between some cultural associations and with the council has decreased to an extent, according to an interviewee from a cultural association. The interviewee noted that collaboration is "not as strong as it used to be" and that some associations are "limping along" and not performing well. When the associations were under the guidance of the previous RTOs, the associations were believed to have had more support and better collaborative efforts were driven by the communities that made the associations function better. Reinstating the RTOs in all the areas as they were prior to the Supercity formation would strengthen collaboration with the local communities to work better in developing tourism, "if they do not get too unwieldy as they did before", according to an interviewee who worked in a regional cultural association. Most of the cultural associations that were interviewed expressed that RTOs were the most suitable agency to educate locals about tourism-related opportunities and also to provide support in marketing activities.

Comments by tourism associations in peripheral areas, SMTEs and some cultural associations reveal that feelings of distrust towards the council still exist. Lack of transparency is one of the reasons that some of these groups feel reluctant to collaborate with the council. When there is a lack of transparency, the issue of distrust will feature more prominently, particularly in the areas that objected to the Supercity. An interviewee from a peripheral area described the amalgamation of regions by the Supercity that were formerly independent as akin to a business attempting to increase its customer base through acquisition. Some local communities in the peripheral areas perceive that the three-year cycles of the local government mean that a degree of

pressure is required for the council to achieve its goals, whereas for local businesses three years is not sufficient to achieve their targets. A stakeholder expressed that the pressure for the council to achieve its goals within a timeframe may compel actions that are detrimental to local businesses and bypass collaborative approaches. An operator from a peripheral area expressed:

> When people, particularly those in the middle management of public organisations and the council, have targets to meet if they think they can steal the business off (another area), would you do it to make your business look better? Of course you would. So, I question how well (collaboration) will work.

The feeling of "being left out" was a recurring theme brought up by regional stakeholders, who stated it affected collaboration negatively after the Supercity formation. Participants from tourism groups and organisations from peripheral areas, in particular, feel that they are isolated from most tourism activities and events that occur in Auckland and have little opportunity to participate or benefit from them. A senior official from the Auckland branch of a national tourism association stated:

> As an organisation we feel that we are left out by ATEED. As a branch we are limited in what we can do. We try to do what we can.

The perception that ATEED's interests are concentrated in Central Auckland areas has affected the enthusiasm of peripheral areas for working with ATEED. An interviewee who has been operating a motel business for 25 years in a peripheral area stated, "From my experience, a lot of outlying areas feel that ATEED is focused on Auckland (central) city. There is no enthusiasm from these areas to do anything with ATEED".

These reflections illustrate similarities to the ways in which some areas felt towards the previous Tourism Auckland prior to the Supercity formation. The inequitable funding and support that it received from the previous local councils hampered Tourism Auckland's efforts to advance tourism prosperity, marketing activities and sustainability issues. While the contribution to Auckland Tourism by some areas was under-representative, others, including Rodney, Franklin, Papakura and Waitakere City Councils, did not provide any financial support (Osborne, 2009). An interviewee from a public agency commented:

> More importantly who contributed what to Tourism Auckland, which is the predecessor of ATEED, caused real problems. Because some people say I am not going to pay, then Waitakere said I am not paying them because they are not doing enough to sell West Auckland.

The aim of the Supercity was to eliminate similar issues by seeking a more cohesive and less fragmented regional approach to tourism. As the executive director of a policy-making agency commented:

> In my experience, and I was on the board of Tourism Auckland, when you have four cities and a regional council it was a nightmare trying to get any funding and any proactive direction. I think Auckland's tourism industry and Auckland as a tourism destination has suffered as a consequence of previous governance structure.

It is critical that any nascent misconceptions among stakeholders regarding the Supercity's focus for tourism across the region be resolved in order to avoid potential negative consequences affecting Auckland's tourism industry and its competitiveness. From the opinions of stakeholders, it is apparent that consistent, clear and open communication is essential to evade misunderstandings about the overall benefits of the Supercity. As one interviewee commented:

> Some people aren't happy with the ways that it is working but once again that could be from a self-interest perspective. Because when you have change most people don't like change, and the Supercity does mean change. But I guess what Supercity is all about is trying to do is what is best for Auckland, now that might mean Takapuna is disadvantaged, Browns Bay is disadvantaged, or Newmarket is disadvantaged. But it will be better for Auckland overall.

To encourage all stakeholders, particularly those from peripheral areas, to collaborate with ATEED and the council, opportunities for their input in the city's tourism plans and strategies is critical. As industry expert stated:

> Making sure that peripheral regions or businesses that do see tourism as being core are not excluded from strategies and discussions is particularly important from a regional perspective. You don't want Waitakere or Rodney to be feeling left out. They used to feel that way. The Supercity should really be changing that and I think they are making some effort to do that. So communication, awareness building and just generally reinforcing the fact that people are in this together, that they are not alone.

Others believe that the attitude and approach of people to collaboration is more important than the structure of an organisation: "It is less about form, and more about paradigms and mind-sets", according to the director of a policy-making agency. An interviewee expressed that changing beliefs may not be easy; however, by broadening stakeholder input and bringing together participants from diverse areas, it is possible to enable people to recognise and accept their different ways of thinking. It was suggested that the way to avoid obstructions to collaborative efforts in the future is to make consistent efforts to work together: "We have got to collaborate; it's absolutely

important that we collaborate." In the long run, it is perceived that collaboration will assist communication between different stakeholders, to discuss and understand each other's needs. A public tourism agency executive stated that, while collaboration for collective action whenever possible is the right pathway, when it is not possible, collaboration should proceed nevertheless.

Comments from public sector participants reveal that while collaboration is improving, "there's a long way to go". According to others, collaboration would improve in the future, as the functions of the Supercity get settled. The Supercity is perceived to be struggling with the novelty of the structure itself as well as the pre-existing apprehensiveness of some areas regarding the amalgamation. As noted by an interviewee from a public tourism agency:

> You can't deny that it's a recent amalgamation. People are still quite protective of their local area. For those to feel they are part of the wider Auckland proposition, and to see and understand its advantages (will take time).

It was acknowledged that since the structure of the Supercity is relatively new, it could take time before processes start running at their best. Understanding that the changes the new structure has created will take time to implement and instead being supportive of those who get "frustrated when things don't work immediately" is felt to be essential to maintaining the momentum of collaboration within the Supercity. One interviewee noted that "patience is the answer". Stakeholders' confidence in the government having put the right processes in place is seen as important in facilitating collaboration. One suggestion is that the greater good in working together would be proved by the local government delivering the economic benefits that were promised by the Supercity. A recommendation that was repeated by a number of interviewees is to keep consistently delivering those benefits and not to keep adding to the layers of bureaucracy, which does not contribute to the city's competitiveness. The focus has to be on implementing the long-term strategies as the key to reaching the targets: "The rubber has to roll…when it comes to actually how we are going to do this and who is going to do this." An industry expert advised:

> I think with the Supercity and the new regional organisations like ATEED, I hope that there are greater opportunities to bring these different areas together to enhance collaboration, but I think that's a challenge and will not be easy to achieve. I am not sure if there is one particular solution to that challenge, but again it comes down to the ability to have a strong strategy, strong communication and common goals and objectives.

7.3   Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the changes to collaborative practices and processes caused by the Supercity formation. The amalgamation has assisted in various ways in accelerating collaboration. The ways that the creation of one council and tourism authority with the power and resources to undertake decisions for the entire region eased the collaborative processes were discussed.

At the same time, the Supercity is also believed to have strained collaboration in a number of ways. The structure of the council and systems for electing councillors and LBs lead to obstacles that hinder collaborative engagement within the council and between the councillors and LBs. Confusion in understanding the roles of ATEED, the council and the national government in Auckland's tourism impact the motivation to collaborate. Perceptions of a lack of transparency, inaccessibility and the peripheral areas being ignored by the local tourism authority are issues that constrain collaboration. These issues were discussed in detail together with suggestions provided by the interviewees to overcome these obstacles.

8   THEORETICAL INTERPRETATION OF THE KEY ELEMENTS OF STC

The aim of this chapter is two-fold. It interprets the empirical findings beyond the rich descriptive analysis provided in chapter 5 and 6 and presents the key findings within a theoretical framework.

The chapter begins with an introduction and presentation of a new framework for collaboration and sustainable tourism competitiveness (FCSTC) that is based on the work of Heath (2003). The second part of the chapter details the six components derived from Heath (2003) as elements of STC and incorporated into the FCSTC. Each of these elements is verified against the factors of Auckland's STC identified in chapter 5. The underlying linkages between STC and stakeholder collaboration derived from the findings are woven into the discussion to present an original approach to understanding the role of stakeholder collaboration in STC.

8.1   A New Framework of Collaboration and Sustainable Tourism Competitiveness

As noted by Hassan (2000):

> In the tourism context, the multiplicity of industries involved in creating and sustaining destinations requires the development of a competitiveness model that examines the extent of cooperation needed for the future of competitiveness (p. 239).

By analysing Auckland's current and potential competitive advantages (as provided by the interviewees) against the categories illustrated in Heath's model, the various factors that contribute to Auckland's STC were identified. These factors were examined against interviewees' responses on collaboration to identify the role of stakeholder collaboration in each of the elements of Auckland's STC. This enabled the identification of the connection between STC and collaboration. These findings are synthesised in a proposed new framework of collaboration and sustainable tourism competitiveness (FCSTC) (Figure 8.1).

The FCSTC uses Heath's (2003) model for enhancing sustainable tourism competitiveness as a guide to identify the factors of Auckland's STC. In the FCSTC, the area of overlap between collaboration and competition is labelled STC, illustrating that STC is the product of collaboration and competitiveness. Collaboration and

competitiveness correspond in four key areas: (a) obstacles to collaboration, (b) challenges to competitiveness, (c) facilitating factors of collaboration and (d) potential competitive advantages.

The FCSTC is designed as a process; the hypothesised relationships between each facet of the framework are described as follows. The two principal themes – collaboration (Circle 1) and competitiveness (Circle 2) – are interrelated and interdependent. The resultant outcome of their connectedness is STC, placed in the centre (Circle 3). Contained within these three circles are the elements of competitiveness from Heath's (2003) model marked as I, II, III, IV, V and VI. Encompassing these elements of competitiveness within the proposed new model illustrates that STC can be achieved when stakeholder collaboration is present for each category of factors that contributes to competitiveness.

Arrows A and B illustrate the linkages between the four key areas that influence competitiveness. As indicated by Arrow A, the factors that act as obstacles to collaboration create challenges to achieving competitiveness. Arrow B illustrates that the factors that facilitate collaboration contribute to achieving potential competitive advantages. Each category of elements of competitiveness (I, II, II, IV, V and VI) as illustrated by Heath (2003) is affected by the four areas of influence, as shown by the smaller arrows ('C') leading from the elements towards Arrows A and B.

Figure 8.1: Framework of Collaboration and Sustainable Tourism Competitiveness
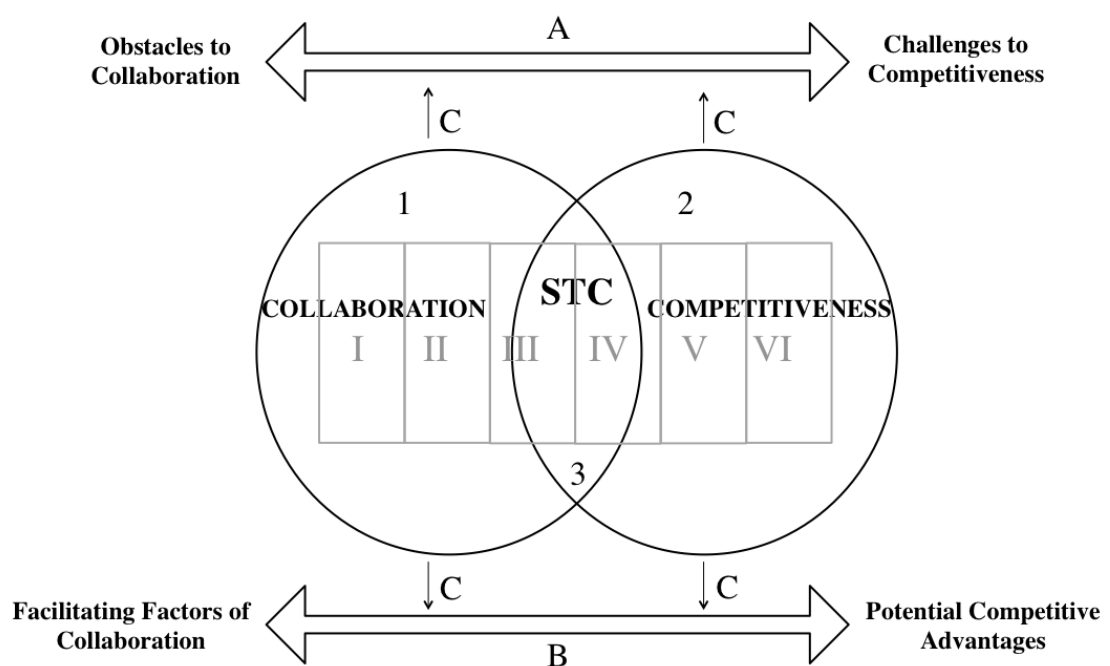
Each of the categories illustrated in the model by Heath (2003) are described below in the context of Auckland's competitiveness. These are, "the foundations", "the cement", "the building blocks", "the tourism script" "key success drivers" and "strategic responsiveness to changes in the macro, competitive and market environments". The role that stakeholder collaboration plays in each category is described and its inter-connectedness with STC is demonstrated through examples from the findings.

8.1.1 "The foundations"

Factors that are fundamental to STC form "the competitiveness foundations" in Heath's (2003) model, depicted as I in the FCSTC. Included in the foundations are "key attractors" (inherited and created attractions), "non-negotiables" (elements of safety, security and health), "enablers" (general infrastructure), "value adders" (value and price competitiveness, strategic linkages and proximity to key markets), "facilitators" (support services) and "experience enhancers" (hospitality and service excellence) (Heath, 2003, p. 131). Each of these elements are evaluated and discussed below.

8.1.1.1 "Providing and Managing the Key Attractors"

According to Heath (2003), the "key attractors" can be either created or endowed examples of which include factors such as history, culture, climate, events and entertainment. Providing and managing these "attractors" contributes to optimizing the competitive and comparative advantages (Heath, 2003, p. 132).

One of the major assets for NZ and Auckland's tourism competitiveness is the natural environment, such as islands, volcanoes and beaches. Developing products and experiences that showcase natural features is central to further enhancing and maximising the potential from these endowed resources. Protecting and conserving these assets are fundamental, not only for sustaining the competitiveness derived from these features, but also for the sustainability of the tourism industry, a finding that is well documented by the literature (Cucculelli & Goffi, in press; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

A cohort of participants from the public, private and NGO sectors are involved in sustainable environment programmes. Groups that work for the protection and conservation of the islands of the Hauraki Gulf and the volcanoes of Auckland include, among others, the DOC, the Rotoroa Trust and Gulf Forum, Friends of Maungawhai and small private trusts. Some of the programmes that are conducted by the public

sector require the support of participants from other sectors because resources from the government alone are not sufficient to undertake the programmes effectively. Erkus-Ozturk and Eraydyn (2010) and Matarrita-Cascante et al. (2010) acknowledge that the efforts of the government alone are not adequate to protect the environment; the support of the private and non-governmental sectors play equally critical roles. Limitations of resources hamper the efforts of individual parties that work for the conservation and protection of the heritage and environment of Auckland. As a consequence of lack of communication and coordination, the energy, efforts and resources of some enthusiastic private organisations and individuals are wasted in duplication of activities.

The richness and diversity of Auckland's cultures is a huge resource for the city's competitiveness based on the immense potential that it holds to differentiate Auckland's tourism. Destinations can build their competitiveness and promote their uniqueness through culture and heritage (Alberti & Giusti, 2012). The capacity to differentiate is a marker of tourist destinations' competitiveness (Camison & Fores, 2015, p. 479). Linking local experiences that display the cultural diversity of Auckland could enhance tourist experiences and increase variety in tourism offerings. A number of opportunities exist for tourists to experience local culture and interact with communities. Each local area conducts a variety of festivals, fairs and local markets where ethnic groups of the area present their food, music, dance, and arts and crafts. Taking tourists away from the mainstream tourist attractions in the CBD to outer areas to experience the local ways of life will appeal to tourists in search of authentic experiences. However, these local experiences and attractions are not well linked with the mainstream tourism products and not promoted to international or domestic tourists to gain maximum potential from these unique assets.

Presenting opportunities for tourists to enjoy local experiences and local ways of life and integrating them into tourism experiences necessitates collaboration between the local tourism authority, LBs, tourism operators, hotels and other accommodation providers, businesses and local communities. The efforts of those who conduct activities such as local markets are constrained by the competitive attitude and aversion to collaborate with others in the area. Competing instead of collaborating has pushed some markets to close and others to struggle to sustain themselves. Collaboration between the different areas can bring reciprocal benefits, not only to the area where the markets are held, but to other nearby areas as well. Better promotion to wider audiences could be achieved from the joint efforts of organisers of different markets. This will attract more

locals and domestic and international tourists to the areas, bring economic benefits and lift the areas' overall image.

Displaying local characteristics in hotels, services and products would differentiate and hence enhance Auckland's competitiveness. Using features such as local arts and crafts in the décor of hotel rooms, for example, Māori carvings and designs, having cultural features in the clothing or uniforms of staff, and incorporating cultural aspects through presentation of services and greeting visitors could showcase the exclusiveness of NZ through its culture.

Integrating and presenting the rich culture and heritage of Auckland in tourism products and experiences requires a multitude of stakeholders, their involvement and collaboration and thus "the buy-in" from operators would be necessary. In addition, collaboration will be necessary from local communities, different ethnic groups, public and private sector tourism organisations, providers of tourism facilities and services, NGOs, and local and national government agencies. In the case of Auckland, local public agencies would include, among others, the LBs, RFA, DOC and Ministry of Culture and Heritage. Participants from the cruise sector have to be involved in order for cultural events to be presented to visitors from cruise liners.

To stay abreast of national and international competitors, Auckland needs to promote a 'must do' activity. A deficiency in promoting these features has led to a perception among some that Auckland lacks a 'must do' attraction that is comparable to some national attractions and experiences. Since there are a number of distinctive built and natural features in Auckland, it is more the case that the uniqueness of existing attractions is not fully realised rather than that attractions are lacking. Special features need to be integrated into tourism to further enhance competitiveness and differentiate Auckland nationally and globally. The support of the public sector is necessary to integrate and promote the distinct local features into tourism products. At the same time, unless private tourism operators and service providers support and collaborate with the public authorities, the differentiating features of Auckland cannot be displayed through tourism products and services.

Events represent a huge source of tourism revenue for Auckland and are pursued by ATEED as a source of economic growth, community development and enhancement of the national and international image of Auckland. The successful conducting of a single event requires participation from a multitude of stakeholder groups. Stakeholders from

peripheral areas recommend that awareness be created across the region about planned events, with all operators given the opportunity to get involved. With the significant focus given by ATEED to drive events to support the AVP, event management needs to be given careful consideration and priority.

8.1.1.2 "Addressing the Fundamental Non-negotiables"

The "non-negotiable" factors relate to visitors' personal safety and health (Heath, 2003, p. 132). Political stability and the perception of an environment that is safe and free from acts of political disturbances, terrorism and outbreaks of diseases contribute to competitiveness (Heath, 2003, p. 133). Auckland's perceived safety and security add to the city's competitiveness and are critical elements for the development of a successful and sustainable tourism industry. Concepts of safety and security concerns in tourism are related to many aspects, including armed, political and religious fundamentalism, personal health, and economic and political confidence that affect the wider environment of individual destinations in which tourism industries operate (Hall, Timothy, & Duval, 2009). Maintaining the perceived safety of Auckland is essential to sustaining tourism competitiveness, necessitating strong collaboration between the tourism industry and law enforcement authorities. Destinations can sustain tourism in the aftermath of natural disasters by improving their preparedness (de Sausmarez, 2007). NZ's Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002 recognises that "emergencies are multi-agency events" (CDEM, 2008, p. 5), and calls for a cooperative approach, with participation by individuals, businesses, emergency services and government departments, RTOs and SMEs to assist with communication and coordination.

While safety and security, and providing a high standard of health services are key components of Auckland's tourism competitiveness, providing and maintaining these services require joint efforts of a large number of public organisations. In addition to the public health sector, border control agencies work closely with the airport authorities to monitor and ensure that safety and security are maintained.

8.1.1.3 "Providing the Enablers"

In addition to capacity management, efficiencies in providing services such as transport, telecommunications, financial services, water supply and information technology will determine tourists' choice of destination (Heath, 2003). Existing infrastructure, facilities and amenities, transport networks, hotels, banks, international retail brand outlets,

convention facilities, parks and open spaces form a fundamental part of Auckland's competitiveness.

The development of existing tourism infrastructure, services and facilities and their improvement and maintenance are heavily dependent on collaboration and partnerships between the local and central governments, other economic sectors and the private sector for the requisite investments and financial resources. Collaborative partnerships between public and private sectors are essential for developing the infrastructure, services and functions of the tourism industry (Zapataa & Hall, 2012). Most of the large-scale projects that were undertaken in the past and most of the on-going developments in Auckland involve PPPs and collaborative efforts to generate the strength of combined resources. Combined resources enhance competitiveness through maximising the benefits and adding value to tourism products (Saxena, 2005). Wealth of shared resources has been found to be the most important external variable that impacts destination competitiveness (Camison & Fores, 2015).

The combined effort of all the stakeholders enables high standards of facilities and amenities that contribute to enhancing Auckland's competitiveness. Issues that hinder the collaborative processes delay and hamper the development and maintenance of these features, thus reflecting negatively on the competitiveness of the destination. This was evident under the previous political structure, when different local councils needed to be consulted and their consent was required for decisions involving the development of tourism and infrastructure. The process was arduous and achieving consensus was difficult, which is believed to have impacted Auckland's competitiveness. A key reason for the ease of communication since the Supercity formation is the improved collaboration and quick decision taking within the new political structure.

Building and improving current and new tourism infrastructure and facilities is essential for increasing visitors to Auckland and increasing tourism revenue according to the goals of AVP. Developing a convention centre and other tourist facilities will contribute to increased tourism throughout the Auckland region, with positive repercussions such as increased bed nights. Retaining visitors in Auckland for longer and increasing visitor nights is a key challenge for Auckland's tourism industry. The increased occupancy from additional facilities will push more people to suburban hotels, bringing flow-on effects into local communities through increased tourism spend. A stronger public

transport system is necessary, and rail and ferries should be developed as important modes of transportation for tourists.

Additional developments to public transport and connectivity to all the areas of Auckland is fundamental to the further development of tourism, which will enhance destination competitiveness (Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). Supporting infrastructure in rural and peripheral areas is needed to operationalise activities such as providing experiences detached from the mainstream tourism, for example, biking and hiking in rural areas, and for tourists to experience the locals' ways of life within the communities. Close communication between local government, public agencies and the local tourism authority is crucial in the development of infrastructure in rural areas. Collaboration between the local and central government is fundamental to progress with solutions that resolve issues that underpin community development. Greater appreciation of collaboration is believed to expedite internal processes of government agencies and create positive flow-on effects that encourage others to work together.

It is necessary that the requirements of the local residents be taken into account when developing tourism infrastructure, because as one interviewee stated, "what tourists like to do we like to do too". This makes consultations with local communities, LBs and SMTEs from the areas for their input on ways to accommodate the needs of both the residents and the tourists in tourism infrastructure essential. Increasing patronage will be a priority in order to generate the necessary funding for large-scale transport projects. Collaboration is "absolutely essential" for operators to communicate to the authorities what their requirements are and for the authorities and investors to understand the proportion of expected patronage.

Increasing the variety and the number of products and experiences will enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of Auckland's tourism globally and locally, which in turn will boost visitor numbers and enhance yield. The mix of activities available at a destination enhances competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). The vast range of potential tourism resources that is available from wider Auckland that could further build the city's competitiveness have not been utilised to their maximum advantage. It is important that the development of Auckland's surrounding areas progress in tandem with the central city so that the untapped potential from Auckland's different areas contributes to the visitor economy and assists in achieving the goals of the AVP.

The expansion of tourism in Auckland hinges on collaboration; without it, development of tourism across the areas cannot proceed. Public and private sector stakeholders need each other's support to identify and develop products that are most appropriate for specific areas. Support and engagement by local communities, public agencies and SMTEs are necessary to plan, implement and administer tourism development and promotion in each area (Bramwell & Lane, 2000).

A key component of STC is air, land and sea connectivity, which is among the basic foundations upon which the tourism industry of a destination is established (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Heath, 2003). Auckland's international airport and the three ports, particularly the central city port that serves the cruise liners, are among the city's key competitive strengths. A multitude of stakeholders are involved in synergising the requisite functions of the services of the airport and the port. Their effective performance relies on strong collaboration between local government, customs, immigration, transportation providers, suppliers, distributors and supplementary service providers, among others.

A major recipient of the advantages that the ports of Auckland present is the cruise sector, which is a huge income generator for Auckland tourism. Encouraging cruise liners to visit the Hauraki Gulf entails collaboration and coordination between cruise operators, Auckland Council and various local government agencies. Providing visitors with a good arrival experience is not possible without collaboration between all those involved.

The tourism industry of Auckland and NZ as a whole comprises numerous SMTEs and relatively few large companies. Collaboration between Auckland's large firms and SMTEs is imperative for the seamless functioning of the tourism industry. Large firms are reliant on SMTEs for various support services, including rental agencies for bicycles, cars and kayaks, guided tours and suppliers and producers of local produce and souvenirs. At the same time, the sustainability and survival of SMTEs depend on the business that they get from large companies. Cooperation, communication and collaboration between large firms and SMTEs are essential in providing the end users (tourists) with satisfactory and memorable experiences.

Auckland's size compared with other NZ cities, together with the facilities, amenities and infrastructure available in Auckland, enable the city to effectively manage the tourism industry's demand and capacity. Capacity management is a fundamental aspect

of STC (Heath, 2003). Capacity and demand are managed through cooperation, collaboration and coordination among multiple stakeholders. The local and national tourism authorities, the transport sector, hoteliers and other accommodation providers, tour operators and travel agents are involved in the effective management of capacity and demand. Close collaboration among these various stakeholders needs to be maintained to sustain competitiveness through effective capacity management.

8.1.1.4 "Capitalising on the Value adders"

Location, value for money, and connections with neighbouring destinations are part of the foundations of sustainable competitiveness (Heath, 2003, p. 132). Developing market ties is an important aspect of destination competitiveness (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003). National and local public tourism agencies, major private tourism firms and promoters maintain close relationships among themselves and through strategic alliances with the key markets. Where the relationships are strong and more efforts are made to strengthen existing networks, positive results are evident. For example, activities and efforts to target new market segments such as the niche golf tourism market from China and halal tourism from South-East Asia contribute to the growth in market share from these regions. At the same time, new airline routes to those regions continue to be established as a result of collaborative efforts between them and Auckland's tourism industry stakeholders.

To increase visitors from the halal tourism markets, several initiatives are under way to educate tourism providers on how to serve Muslim travellers. A number of stakeholder groups from the public and private sectors, industry associations and tertiary institutes are involved in conducting these activities.

Engaging ethnic communities in Auckland to communicate with the growing overseas markets will provide ease of communication and provide understanding of the requirements of the markets. Establishing linkages with the populaces of original markets and ethnic ties will trigger VFR and business travel (Dwyer & Kim, 2003). China, for example, is NZ's largest market; using the Chinese community in Auckland to communicate with and promote Auckland to the Chinese market is an alternative route for building close relations.

Similarly, the growing Indonesian, Malaysian and Singapore markets can be further exploited by using people from those countries that are already in Auckland to conduct

promotional activities to those markets. This is a technique that would give an edge over competitors in attracting visitors from those markets. The ethnic groups have the advantage of knowing the tourist offerings available in Auckland that would best appeal to tourists from their home country and how best to convey messages to those overseas markets. Communication and collaboration between local tourism agencies, ethnic associations and various tourism marketing agencies is necessary to execute a marketing programme that involves local ethnic groups in Auckland.

Capitalising on price and value competitiveness in the context of Auckland needs careful consideration as the exchange rate plays a significant role in it. NZ's performance is below the average of the regional competitors in price competitiveness (World Economic Forum, 2015). For example, targeting high-end markets such as golf and wine tourism could present Auckland as an expensive destination. This can impact demand from backpackers, VFR and middle-class markets. Low occupancy from these markets affects SMTEs, in particular, subsequently creating adverse repercussions in the quality of services and products, and thus eventually impacting the industry's competitiveness. Strategic plans that encompass SMTEs and large firms by key players in the tourism industry are necessary to balance the interests of all stakeholder groups so that adverse impacts on competitiveness can be diminished.

8.1.1.5 "Ensuring Appropriate Facilitators"

These are the services necessary to support the provision of satisfactory tourist experiences such as car rental agencies, food services, convention centres and visitor bureaus (Heath, 2003, p. 134). Auckland's wide array of supporting services – businesses that provide assistance, support and guidance – are among the city's competitive advantages. Collaboration between the support service providers brings mutual benefits in the form of increased promotion and business, improved efficiency, economies of scale and the strength of combined resources, which increase the collective resource pool of Auckland's tourism industry. The significance of collaboration is particularly important for the tourism industry due to the numerous service providers that are involved in creating the total experience, as was asserted by Dwyer, et al. (2011). Destination competitiveness depends on the level of effectiveness in providing satisfactory services by all the businesses that are involved in creating the total tourism product (Camison & Fores, 2015). Obstacles that affect collaboration between the stakeholders that provide the various services impact Auckland's

competitiveness in the form of availability of the services, and ultimately, the quality and standard of the overall experience.

Stakeholders pointed out that the high standard and quality of the support services further enhances Auckland's competitiveness. The quality of products and services is a determinant of destination attractiveness that needs to be promoted the same way as the tangible features (Ramkissoon, Uysal, & Brown, 2011). The quality and standard of Auckland's support services depend on the cooperation, coordination and collaboration of the numerous stakeholders that provide the variety of ancillary products and services. Quality can impact a range of factors, including capacity and demand management (Khadaroo & Seetanah, 2008). Maintaining the quality and standard of products and services is essential in order to sustain competitiveness achieved through these aspects.

Collaboration and cooperation are essential to achieve, enhance and sustain high quality in the services provided, because a single bad experience can spoil the entire holiday for a tourist (Augustyn & Ho, 1998, pp. 71–75). Collaboration results in quick decision-making and proactive actions on the part of stakeholders that can contribute to preventing incidents such as the spread of negative remarks by a single dissatisfied tourist; if left untended, such occurrences can cause harm to the reputation of the destination as a whole instead of just the operator.

Consistent collaborative engagements between the various stakeholder groups that make up the tourism industry are the basis of the sustainability of not only tourism competitiveness but also the industry itself (see Jongman & Dawit, 2014). According to stakeholders, this holds true not only for Auckland but in a global context as well. The reason is that collaboration underpins and intertwines with the development of tourism and its day-to-day functions in numerous ways. Airline companies, airports, direct tourism service providers and support services work closely and consistently to provide the numerous services and products that make up total tourism experiences (Bălan, Balaure, & Veghes et al., 2009; Daskalopoulou & Petrou, 2009, p. 794; Manente & Minghetti, 2006, p. 23).

Since NZ as a country and Auckland as a city are disadvantaged by their small size and limited resources, the only way to overcome the challenge is by being "smart" in utilising the available resources through collaborative practices to achieve the strength of combined resources. The ability to combine resources and capabilities assists in the development of tourism assets that enhance tourism competitiveness (Porter, 1990;

Ritchie and Crouch, 2003; Stefano et al., 2010). A number of participants suggested collaboration and a "team approach" as solutions to overcome the limitations caused by the smallness of destination size. Efficiency and effectiveness in deploying the available resources is critical for achieving competitiveness (Barros et al., 2011).

8.1.1.6 "Focusing on the Experience Enhancers"

Hospitality and service excellence is considered a contributor of tourism competitiveness because visitors feel valued and welcome at a destination if the resident communities are receptive and friendly (Heath, 2003, p. 134). The openness and willingness of locals with respect to tourism development and expansion is one of the factors of competitiveness for Auckland. For tourism growth to be expanded across the different areas of Auckland, participation, willingness and collaboration of the local residents are imperative to sustain competitiveness. At the same time, cooperation and collaboration between local and central governments is necessary to revise and revive strategies and plans for sustainable tourism development and growth.

There are pockets within local communities that reject tourism development and expansion in some areas. Some community and heritage protection groups shun tourism activities and efforts to expand and develop tourism out of fear of adverse impacts such as increased traffic and noise and destruction to heritage and environment sites. Lack of collaboration from these groups hinders and obstructs the efforts of organisations and public agencies that work to develop and expand tourism in these areas, subsequently restricting potential tourism benefits from reaching the wider area.

8.1.2 "The cement"

This category involves continuous and transparent communication channels; balancing direct and indirect stakeholder involvement and beneficiation; forming appropriate and mutually beneficial partnerships and alliances; information management, research and forecasting; managing competitive indicators, benchmarks (Heath, 2003, p. 132). In the FCSTC, it is depicted as II.

This thesis has revealed that collaboration from stakeholders is necessary for each of these elements to be effectively established within the tourism industry. Continuous and transparent communication is an element that is not well-established in the Auckland tourism industry. While collaboration and communication between the major private and public stakeholders exist, clear channels of communication between local areas and

SMTEs is limited and needs to be strengthened. Where communication is limited and unclear, confusions occur about stakeholders' roles in the wider objectives of the tourism industry. Miscommunication and limited information also lead to distrust and misconceptions about the local tourism authority and government's interests. Such misgivings eventually create a sense of averseness to collaborating and engaging with others in some stakeholders.

Benchmarking, managing information, research and indicators of competitiveness are crucial to achieving and sustaining competitiveness (Assaf & Dwyer, 2013). Stakeholder collaboration is central to managing information, research and indicators of competitiveness that facilitate effective benchmarking. Key tourism players need to work together closely and continuously in exchanging IR (Dwyer & Kim, 2003), which assists in forecasting and keeping abreast of the competition. Major public agencies and industry organisations work collaboratively in collecting IR and disseminating it to the wider industry. Statements by private sector participants revealed the industry must put more efforts into generating research, as the current level of information available is not adequate.

A cooperative approach between stakeholders is necessary for an amenable outcome in challenging areas where interests of multiple stakeholders are involved (Pansiri, 2013). A participant from the private sector stated that, in planning significant projects such as the Auckland Waterfront Initiative or the debate around the ports expansion plan, "the council being collaborative and engaged with the market and public" is critical in achieving mutual understanding and the best interests of all stakeholders involved. The major stakeholders being receptive to the needs and suggestions of smaller groups such as SMTEs can facilitate collaboration and cooperation; these approaches can be used to assist in achieving a balance of interests of the stakeholders.

Interviewees felt it is more beneficial for competitors to collaborate than fight with each other. Hostile competition entails risks of loss to all stakeholders, whereas engaging in open communication and embracing the ethos of teamwork paves the way for mutual agreement. Co-opetition, as opposed to competition, whereby stakeholders can be fierce competitors but still work together, is beneficial for the collective advantage of the industry and individual stakeholders. Co-opetition offers the opportunity for the industry to collaborate and create partnerships on occasions when one party cannot deliver the desired results independently (Hutter et al., 2011).

Collaboration is critical for tourism (Baggio, 2011a), particularly in amalgamated regions where engaging and connecting with stakeholders from a wider region is required. Region-wide consultations with businesses and local communities are essential for comprehensive decision-making. Communication with each group of stakeholders is essential to encourage their collaboration and motivation to engage with the local government. The significance of collaboration is heightened for regions where, prior to the Supercity, the different areas had their own local councils, with whom they may have had direct and close relationships. Under a singular local council, the absence of collaboration and consistent, open communication creates feelings of detachment from the local government. Some of the discontent that is exhibited towards the Auckland Supercity is "because people think the council doesn't listen". Such perceptions may lead to doubts about the benefits of a unitary authority and renew antagonistic feelings in areas that did not greatly support the political amalgamation (Kushner & Siegel, 2003).

This thesis has revealed that collaboration is an indispensable element in the day-to-day functions of the industry, in developing the fundamental tourism infrastructure, services, activities and attractions that make up the total tourism experience. In identifying the competitive factors of Auckland and exploring the role of collaboration in each of the factors, it is evident that stakeholder collaboration builds and enhances the competitiveness of the Auckland region in several ways. These include the strength of combined resources, joint marketing activities, reducing arguments and disagreements in areas that impact tourism competitiveness and sustainability, creating education and awareness, clear and transparent communication and decision-making, generating and sharing IR.

8.1.3 "Building blocks"

Two interrelated strategies, namely, a sustainable destination development policy and framework and a strategic and integrated destination marketing framework and strategy, comprise the "building blocks" (Heath, 2003, p. 136) illustrated as III in the FCSTC. The components outlined under the destination marketing framework include developing a positive destination image, branding and market positioning; effective target marketing; demand management with specific focus on creating the right product mixes that ensure year-round tourism; and having strategies that ensure management of visitor satisfaction.

The sustainable development policy outlined by Heath (2003) involves creating conducive tourism policies and regulations, responsible management of resources and capabilities, creating a market that encourages investment, the implementation of plans that ensure necessary changes within the tourism industry, following sustainable environmental agendas and having funding programmes that are effective and appropriate.

8.1.4 "Key success drivers" and the "Tourism script"

These aspects from Heath's (2003) model are depicted in the FCSTC as IV and V. They revolve around establishing a collective vision and inspirational leadership – guiding values and principles with specific importance given to "people factors". The people factors include the government's desire to establish successful a tourism industry, free enterprise, empowering the local communities and strategic human resource development (Heath, 2003, p. 134). Based on the findings of this research, these components are analysed below in the context of Auckland.

While the existing image of Auckland is one of the strengths of the city, and a contributing factor to differentiation, all the activities that support branding or image building are the outcome of collaborative engagements between a range of tourism stakeholders. Auckland is in need of developing a unique brand to further enhance and differentiate its image. A brand is essential in domestic and international marketing and is vital for enhancing competitiveness (Cleave & Arku, 2014). Creating a unified brand that depicts localness without deviating from the existing image is an endeavour that requires insights and input from a range of stakeholders, including representatives from local areas across the Auckland region, the local and national tourism industry and public sector stakeholders.

Arriving at a mutual understanding among multiple stakeholders with differing views and objectives is challenging. The reason Auckland does not have a definitive brand is that the previous efforts have been hindered by lack of collaboration by those involved in the process. Past experiences illustrate that a collaborative approach is beneficial in endeavours that involve a multitude of stakeholders from different areas and backgrounds.

Support from national and local marketing agencies and operators from all the areas are required to package and promote the different experiences under the unified Auckland

brand. Creation of tourism packages that complement tourist experiences and attractions available from the different areas that comprise Auckland holds the potential to leverage the attractiveness of individual areas and the entire region. Compared with individual advertising efforts, joint marketing enhances and brings mutual benefits (Marcoz et al., 2014). Collaboration in domestic marketing facilitates promotion of the various experiences and activities that are available in the different areas; in turn, the collective profile of experiences enhances the visitor perception of the Auckland region.

Where collaboration is limited in marketing and promotional activities, the maximum potential is not achieved from the market segments. An example is the VFR market, which requires improved domestic and international tourism marketing to substantially increase visitors from this segment. The domestic market is not utilised to the maximum potential advantage even though it holds the prospect of increasing visitor nights and tourism yield. As the largest population base of NZ, Auckland has the potential to increase visitors from the international and domestic VFR and short-break holiday markets. There is a need to further promote local areas, and the variety of experiences and activities that are available. Promoting local areas can create a sense of pride among locals about their region, which in turn could encourage locals to show their areas to family and friends.

Limited communication between the local areas, local tourism and national tourism promotion authorities and marketing agencies impacts the promotion of local facilities such as B&B operations and motels that would appeal to locals. As a result, such facilities are obscured to prospective domestic tourists. The potential of the local areas for domestic tourism is not exploited by the tourism industry to its full potential. This prevents the possible tourism benefits from reaching the locals, and subsequently affecting the total destination competitiveness. Ritchie and Crouch (2003) note that destination competitiveness cannot be achieved without enhancing the well-being of the residents (p. 3). Marketing agencies and tourism operators, including SMTEs, motels and B&B operators, need to work together to create products and experiences that would appeal to domestic tourists. Collaboration between tourism authorities, RTOs and the local business community is also imperative to exploit the potential that domestic tourism has to offer.

In order for strategic decisions regarding destination development and tourism promotion and marketing to be embraced by all the stakeholders of the tourism industry,

consensus and mutual agreements are crucial. This means thorough consultations, feedback and input from all the stakeholders, with equal opportunities provided for each stakeholder group to voice its needs, concerns and opinions. When the Supercity was created, to a large extent, consultations were conducted with a range of stakeholders, including the LBs and other economic sectors, with regard to the strategic decisions for Auckland's tourism development. However, adequate opportunities were not given to some groups to express their opinions, while others did not have sufficient time and had to choose between the development opportunities, for which they needed to apply for funding.

Stakeholders from a number of peripheral areas expressed dissatisfaction with some of the tourism-related strategic decisions and policies. Areas of discontent are related to decisions on funding, branding and image, the structure of the local public tourism agency, decisions and practices regarding regional capacity management and the administration of local tourism offices. These issues could have been prevented with adequate collaborative engagement with all stakeholders at the time of strategic decision-making, thus avoiding creating obstacles instead of "building blocks" to STC. This makes it clear that collaboration is an essential component that should be implemented across all stakeholders of a destination in order to ensure the development of an effective tourism policy that has the support of all stakeholders.

The local and national government's support and the extent to which they are prepared to go with investments and planning strategies for tourism development to a large extent contribute to the existing competitiveness of Auckland. The investments, strategies and plans for tourism development and expansion in Auckland by the local council have intensified various tourism-related activities in the years after the Supercity. According to interviewees, these activities in turn create positive repercussions for the tourism industry and the city's liveability – part of its long-term strategy. The stance of government and institutional structures can obstruct efforts to collaborate in the tourism industry (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000, p. 203). Thus, political will and support is crucial for both collaboration and tourism competitiveness.

Matching skills with the labour market demand is a challenge for Auckland. Even though there is a level of unemployed youth, stakeholders noted that information about career pathways in the tourism industry are not well conveyed to them. Hence, many do not view tourism jobs as a long-term career option. Insufficient opportunities for

training and internships prevent the unemployed from getting jobs in the tourism industry. Tourism industry stakeholders can gain sustainable competitive advantages by implementing effective human resource management (HRM) practices that advance organisational knowledge, which can be achieved from understanding the obstacles to implementing HRM practices, and devising platforms to educate and train their employees (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

Major private and public sector agencies could play a more significant role to fill the gap in matching labour demand with trained people who are in need of jobs. Strong collaboration between tourism stakeholders and tertiary and training institutes has been successful in providing such opportunities in the past.

Conducting research to keep up with the trends of the global tourism industry, further utilisation of information technology to connect stakeholders to collaborate and share information, and employing best practices and benchmarking techniques in service and product quality are identified by this research as areas where Auckland can further enhance and build competitiveness in tourism. Dwyer and Kim (2003) state that two types of IR are useful for destinations in building their competitiveness; internal destination information enables improvement of performance, and research that assists a destination to adapt and respond to the external market conditions. Collaboration between agents in information sharing improves performance (Montoya-Torres & Ortiz-Vargas, 2014). Attempts by stakeholders to benchmark the productivity and the growth of the industry are hampered by the unavailability of sufficient and relevant IR. Collaboration between research institutes and tourism industry stakeholders is necessary in generating additional and relevant research and information.

Heath (2003) argues that a shared vision is a key driver of destination competitiveness; however, formulating a vision that takes into account stakeholders' values and is also based on consensus through a publicly driven process can be a challenge (p. 135). All stakeholders of a destination's tourism industry have the potential to contribute to competitiveness through a shared vision (Heath, 2003). This is only possible when the respective roles and opportunities exist for them to contribute to achieving the common goals outlined in the vision and marketing strategy (Heath, 2003, p. 135). Planning that is enforced on stakeholders, instead of being created collaboratively, is deemed to be ineffective (Adegbesan & Higgins, 2010).

Robust collaboration is the foundation for developing a strong local tourism strategy and a national tourism plan. At the same time, a vision and a set of common goals and a resilient commitment by the industry and local government to execute the plans are necessary elements for progressing towards achieving the objectives for the future growth of Auckland's tourism industry.

The AVP and the long-term vision for Auckland are strong contributors to Auckland's competitiveness because a unified plan and strategy makes it easier for various parties to follow a singular vision and strategic goals. Organisations that have a sound understanding of the vision and goals and know how to contribute to them strongly support and work alongside and in harmony with the AVP. Aligning the corporate objectives of key tourism organisations with those of the city's tourism vision and goals will assist in the achievement of the city's vision.

Associations such as tourism cluster groups are struggling with their plans for establishing and progressing with their efforts for tourism development. Not being clear about how to contribute and participate in achieving the AVP's vision and goals prevents them from embracing the plan and collaborating with others to achieve the objectives. This indicates that while a shared vision is a key element of STC, it requires clear communication and understanding of the vision statement by all stakeholders for it to provide the desired outcome. Unless all stakeholders are clearly aware of the goals and vision of the city and their roles in achieving these, collaboration from all the stakeholders towards the vision cannot be achieved. Without collaboration from the relevant stakeholder groups, the expected results from a unified tourism vision for STC are not possible. A vision can work effectively only when all stakeholders are well aware of those objectives and they are plainly defined, and all stakeholders clearly understand their roles and ways to contribute and participate.

A second important document that guides the NZ tourism industry is NZ Tourism 2025. The main difference in the formulation of the AVP and Tourism 2025 is that the latter was devised by tourism industry stakeholders. TIANZ initiated and provided guidance for the project. NZ Tourism 2025 was based on what was agreed upon by industry stakeholders as the strategic direction and the necessary goals and steps to achieve the strategic goals for NZ's tourism industry. Clear roles for each industry stakeholder group are defined in NZ Strategy 2025, and how they can participate and work towards the shared vision is illustrated. The framework came into effect in 2014 and was under

development at the time of this research. Because of the association's ability to engage with stakeholders from the industry, industry-wide collaborative initiatives should originate from TIANZ.

8.1.5 "Strategic responses to changes in the macro, competitive and market environments"

These components of Heath's (2003) model are illustrated as VI in the FCSTC. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the destination and being aware of the macro and microenvironments are important for sustaining tourism competitiveness and to keep up with international standards and abreast of competition. Communication and collaboration from universities and research institutes, the tourism industry, and the public and private sectors are essential for exchanging information and conducting research that is aligned with the happenings in the macro, competitive and market environments. When sufficient and relevant IR is not available, it affects benchmarking practices and employing best practices. Exchange of information and collaboration between these parties is necessary to ensure that all the stakeholders are aware of the happenings in the macro, competitive and market environments.

It is crucial for Auckland not to remain content with the performance of tourism industry. Regular audits of the destination's resources, capabilities and functioning of the tourism operations are necessary so that the adequacy and effectiveness of the tourism offerings and facilities can be assessed against the changes that occur in the macro, competitive and market environments and changes made when required (Heath, 2003).

9   CONCLUSION

This final chapter revisits the research questions and presents a synthesis of the findings. In discussing how the research questions have been addressed, the chapter looks at the contribution of the thesis to the existing body of knowledge and the enhancement of current theory in the area of STC. The chapter concludes by acknowledging the limitations of this study and offering suggestions for further research.

9.1   Answers to the Research Questions

The main aim of this research was to explore the role of stakeholder collaboration in STC. This was achieved through a case study focusing on Auckland using qualitative, in-depth interviews with 41 tourism industry stakeholders. The experiences of stakeholders in collaborating within the tourism industry under an amalgamated jurisdiction were obtained. An inductive, constructivist approach allowed in-depth analysis and interpretation to arise from the data. This chapter brings these findings together under the framework of the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the perspectives of stakeholders regarding collaboration in the tourism industry?

RQ2: Is there a link between the factors that assist the process of collaboration and those that support STC?

RQ3: What are the factors that facilitate stakeholder collaboration in the tourism industry?

RQ4: What are the factors that hinder the processes and activities in tourism industry stakeholder collaboration?

RQ5: What are the changes, if any that occurred to collaborative practices in the tourism industry due to Auckland's political amalgamation?

Research Question 1 - What are the perspectives of stakeholders regarding collaboration in the tourism industry?

The purpose of the first question was to explore the opinions of tourism industry stakeholders on collaboration as a potential factor in leading to Auckland's tourism competitiveness.

It is a key finding of this thesis that while tourism stakeholders recognise the importance of collaboration, they do not identify it as a key attribute of STC. On the

other hand, endowed resources and built attractions were the attributes that the stakeholders considered elements that contribute to and enhance the STC of Auckland. When specifically asked to express their views on collaborating among themselves within the tourism industry, the collective response by all of the participants is that it is critical in achieving success not only in STC but in other economic sectors as well. This result contrasts with the finding that collaboration was not mentioned by any of the interviewees as a contributing factor to current or potential STC (see Chapter 5).

While the senior management of most large tourism agencies and organisations and the key personnel from some Cluster Groups and SMTEs strongly believe collaboration is crucial for achieving and maintaining STC, the attitude is not uniform among all those who were interviewed. Comments from some respondents indicate that collaboration is not practiced as much as it is advocated because getting the message across about the benefits of collaboration is a challenge. Most individuals at the lower tiers of the organisations and businesses do not believe in the advantages of collaborating. Some SMTEs and Cluster Groups noted the low level of collaboration with others is due to the limited time and resources.

Respondents believe collaboration does not mean constant agreement. The degree of collaboration may differ and working towards similar objectives may not always be necessary. Stakeholders' perspectives on collaboration relates to respecting each other's decisions and opinions, being cooperative and supportive towards each other in achieving reciprocal benefits while working towards collective and individual goals. Clear, continuous communication between the various stakeholder groups within the industry was recommended as integral to collaboration. Equal opportunities for all parties to engage, participate and voice their opinions and concerns is necessary for gaining support for collaboration from all stakeholder groups. The overall finding regarding the perspectives of Auckland's tourism industry stakeholders about collaboration in the tourism industry is that the centrality of collaboration to tourism success is not understood by many, which is the main reason that collaboration is not practiced as much as it is advocated.

Research Question 2 - Is there a link between the factors that assist the process of collaboration and those that support STC?

The aim of this second research question was to explore the connection between collaboration and STC.

The current and potential competitive advantages as provided by the interviewees were analysed against their responses on collaboration to identify the role of stakeholder collaboration in each of the factors of Auckland's STC. This resulted in revealing the link between STC and collaboration. Four key areas were identified where collaboration and STC correspond. The analysis revealed that the dynamics that facilitate stakeholder collaboration correspond to the factors that contribute to Auckland's potential STC. Conversely, parallels could be drawn between the factors that hinder collaborative activities and processes and the challenges to achieving and enhancing the city's STC.

Natural environment is the one of the major factors of Auckland's competitiveness. While conserving and protecting the environment is critical for sustainability of this aspect of Auckland's competitiveness, a number of such activities by NGOs, private sector groups, businesses and individuals are not able to achieve maximum potential outcome due to lack of collaboration between the concerned parties.

The richness and diversity of Auckland's culture is a key contributing factor for competitiveness. Many of the local cultural activities and aspects are not well linked with the existing tourism products. Cultural resources are an area where NZ performs poorly compared to the other countries in the region according to the World Economic Forum's Competitiveness Index (World Economic Forum, 2015). This is an indication of the need for Auckland to improve the efforts integrate, present and promote local culture and heritage in tourism products and experiences for which collaboration between a wide range of stakeholders is necessary.

There is a perceived lack of 'must do' attractions in Auckland, which poses as a risk for Auckland where visitors could be drawn to other NZ destinations with well-known attractions. Retaining visitors is an existing challenge for Auckland that needs to be addressed particularly if the city is to achieve STC. While Auckland does possess a number of prominent natural and created features, in order for these attractions to be better marketed and promoted to domestic and international visitors to overcome the perception of limitation of attractions requires strong collaboration between public and private sector stakeholders, large national organisations and companies, SMTEs, groups that promote regional tourism across Auckland.

Local and international events are key features of Auckland's competitiveness. Events involve large number of public and private stakeholders from different industries and

economic sectors. A high level of collaboration between stakeholders is essential for successfully conducting events that attract large numbers of locals, domestic and international tourists.

While the existing infrastructure plays a significant role in Auckland's competitiveness, improvements, maintenance and further developments are needed to enhance the current competitive position and to achieve the goals of Auckland's long-term vision. Development of Auckland's infrastructure heavily relies on the collaboration and partnerships between private and public sectors. An important aspect of Auckland's competitiveness is the availability and high standard of the facilities, amenities and services. Hindrances to communication and collaborative processes delay and impede the development, maintenance and improvements to these facilities thus affecting competitiveness.

Auckland's connectivity enhances its competitiveness where the international airport and the central city port are key features. The effective functions of the airport, which is the city's main gateway, and the port that serves cruise liners, are reliant on strong collaboration of a multitude of stakeholders.

The small size of NZ as a country and Auckland as a city could be potential disadvantages to STC of the city. To overcome the challenge, the strength of combined resources through collaborative engagement and practices are necessary. Where there are pockets of local communities who reject collaborative engagements due to self-interest and lack of understanding of the benefits of collaboration, the strategies of local organisations to achieve the targets in tourism development is hampered, which consequently will reflect negatively on STC.

Branding is fundamental to enhancing competitiveness. Auckland is in need of a definitive brand that differentiates and enhances its image. The creation of a unified brand for Auckland that portrays localness yet does not deviate from the existing image requires insight and input from various stakeholders with differing views and objectives. Lack of collaboration by those involved is one of the reasons that previous efforts to create a brand for Auckland have not been successful.

A shared vision is a fundamental component of STC. Some groups that were set up to develop regional tourism in Auckland are struggling with their plans for establishing and progressing with their efforts due to lack of clear communication and the necessary

support from local public tourism authority. Lack of clear understanding on how to contribute and participate in achieving the Auckland's long-term goals prevents some stakeholders from peripheral areas from embracing the plan and collaborating with others to achieve the objectives. Stakeholders from a number of peripheral areas are dissatisfied with strategic decisions and policies related to funding, branding and image, the structure of the local public tourism agency, decisions and practices regarding regional capacity management and the administration of local tourism offices. Adequate collaborative engagement with all stakeholders at the time of strategic decision-making could have avoided these issues and contributed to the achievement of STC instead of creating obstacles.

In addition to the points noted above, details of the specific instances that illustrate how collaboration is linked to STC are woven into the discussion of the new framework of collaboration and sustainable tourism competitiveness (Chapter 8) that supports the answer to Research Question 2.

Research Question 3 – What Are the Factors that Hinder Stakeholder Collaboration?

Research Question 3 was aimed at presenting the factors that hinder collaborative practices and processes.

Collaboration is hampered because some stakeholders within Auckland's tourism industry are apprehensive about collaborating with others. Individual businesses regard each other only as competitors and are not open to working with others. Such behaviours constrain the efforts of those who wish to promote the tourism businesses and attractions in the area collectively. Difficulties in getting the support of all the stakeholders hamper progress towards the achievement of the tourism goals formulated to benefit the areas.

An inherent practice of working in isolation among some individual stakeholders affects the level of collaboration within the tourism industry. Some individuals prefer to work in isolation and often do not reach out to or collaborate with others. Self-interest and competitive attitudes between areas stand in the way of Auckland achieving its potential in tourism and competitiveness. There are areas that do not believe any benefit will be gained from collaborating with other areas. This leads to unwillingness to cooperate with other areas and a general competitive attitude. These issues obstruct and hinder the

collaborative efforts of tourism authorities, tourism cluster groups and other associations attempting to expand tourism and build the competitiveness of Auckland.

Another barrier to collaboration is a culture that exists in which individuals create separate groups among trusted associates and are reluctant to move out of that circle. A practice of preference among some key stakeholders from private as well as public sectors in whom they want to work with is an issue for collaboration in the tourism industry. The attitudes of some individual stakeholders impact the industry's collaborative practices.

Even though the major players in the tourism industry support collaboration, stakeholders are not collectively committed to creating collaborative practices. The main reason for the aversion to collaborate is ignorance of the wider benefits of collective efforts. Conveying the benefits of collaboration is a challenge for industry leaders and their members, even in some large tourism organisations. This is one of the reasons that while there is strong support from leaders of the industry such as the executives of large hotels, major public and private agencies and industry associations for collaboration, enthusiasm is lacking at the levels below the top management.

In terms of collaboration among large players in the tourism industry, there is an imbalance in their regional and national outlooks. National tourism firms with operations across the country tend to take a NZ-wide outlook instead of a regional view in their actions and activities. A national outlook leads to the key decision-makers excluding some important regional stakeholders from collaborative engagements. More collaborative activities are needed on a regional scale. A region-wide outlook is necessary for managing and spreading tourism demand and supply uniformly across the areas.

The frequent transfer and change of key personnel in key tourism agencies is a profound issue that hinders collaborative engagements. When the experienced people with the know-how and information about the tourism industry in key agencies are transferred between different companies, and sometimes between sectors, it impedes communication and collaboration as it takes a long time to establish trust and close relationships.

Opportunities for SMTEs to engage with the major players of the tourism industry are rare, and channels for communication with local tourism authority are limited. This

affects the motivation of SMTEs to collaborate with key public and private tourism stakeholders. Consequently, SMTEs, which make up a large proportion of Auckland's tourism industry, continue to do "their own thing". Limitations of resources at their level prevent SMTEs from participating in collaborative activities and industry events. Often under pressure to meet financial targets, SMTEs are usually motivated only by financial returns and hence tend to shun any other engagements that may take their time (Jones & Haven-Tang, 2005). Since a number of individuals with expert skills and knowledge in tourism operations, marketing and event management work in SMTEs, their inability to participate in industry events such as road shows and expos is a loss for the industry as a whole.

The ethnic diversity of Auckland is not represented in the leadership of the main public tourism agencies. Although a large percentage of Auckland's population consists of people born abroad, their presence, as well as that of Māori, is not reflected in the top tiers of the tourism leadership. This is a factor that contributes to hampering collaboration between the local tourism authorities and the ethnically diverse communities of Auckland.

There is a mismatch between the information and advice that is available from ATEED and what the areas of Auckland require and expect. This prevents some areas from applying for financial backing and others from getting the expert advice necessary to achieve their tourism goals. The stance of the public tourism authority towards providing information and advice to local areas is that they need to come forward with requests for assistance. Support is provided to the local areas if they come forward and request assistance. Thus, miscommunication, ambiguous information and a lack of proactive approach by the public tourism authority obstruct collaboration with the local areas, which also adversely impact their willingness to collaborate.

The expectation of immediate results from collaborative efforts is a factor that negatively affects the motivation to collaborate. When the results from collaboration are not immediate, it feeds the perception that collaboration is a difficult task to undertake, which in turn discourages people from taking a leadership role in collaborative initiatives. Not knowing how to solve the problems that come up in collaborative practices also dampens the enthusiasm and commitment to collaboration.

By identifying the obstacles that hinder collaborative activities and processes for Auckland tourism, it becomes evident that they act as barriers to building and enhancing

Auckland's tourism competitiveness. Thus, it is clear that obstacles to collaboration represent challenges to STC.

Research Question 4 – What are the Factors that Facilitate Collaboration?

The purpose of this question was to explore the factors that facilitate collaboration. Conveying the significance of collaboration and the benefits of working together is the first step to encouraging collaboration. The aversion to collaborate by stakeholders such as community groups and SMTEs stems from assumptions and fears that it would lead to others stealing or copying one's business and ways of doing things. As an approach to conveying the importance of collaboration, stakeholders need to be educated about the benefits involved in working together. Awareness of reciprocal benefits of collaboration is necessary to diminish resentments and unhealthy competitive attitudes between areas. For people not to feel threatened about engaging in collaboration requires mutual trust. Openness and transparency by local government and the public tourism authority are important for dispelling distrust to assist in the continued engagement of stakeholders.

There is a perceived risk that ignorance of the benefits of collaboration can foster the mentality that "if my business is not growing, it is not my problem". In order to move away from such subjectivity, all stakeholders need to understand what is happening in the tourism industry, how each stakeholder group is linked to the bigger picture of the tourism industry and the existing and potential opportunities for engaging with and supporting each other. One of the reasons that collaboration is a challenge at local levels are a lack of "clear communication, better understanding by stakeholders about how the industry operates, clarity and understanding how the tourism system works".

Spreading the message that collaboration will provide strength by combining the available resources across the areas, and that the benefits from combined resources will eventually reach the participating communities and individuals will encourage their collaboration. Opportunities for various stakeholders to meet will help foster relationships and friendships that could assist in diminishing resentments and unhealthy competitive attitudes. Occasions for stakeholders from across Auckland to meet will provide opportunities for sharing information about their various localities. Understanding the value of the diverse assets within Auckland and how each area fits within the wider city region will enable them to better appreciate the value of working together. The education and knowledge from such programmes have the potential to

impart a sense of pride among participants about what Auckland as a region has to offer. Once a proper channel of communication is established and relationships are created, understandings about the level and direction for collaboration will fall into place.

Ways of providing information and approaches to communication have to be tailored to meet the requirements of different stakeholder groups. It is frustrating for those who have operated their businesses for several years, sometimes 15 to 25 years, to not have the opportunity to voice their viewpoints. As noted by one interviewee from an industry association, when speakers from key industry agencies address their meetings, they feel as if they are being "lectured to" in the ways that the speakers believe are the correct and appropriate ways of doing things in the tourism industry. Less formal approaches such as informal gatherings instead of, prior to, or after formal meetings that give industry experts and operators the opportunity to interact and share their ideas would diminish disengagement from the targeted audience.

The type of support required for, for example, young groups of stakeholders such as providers of sports facilities differs from that required by OAPs who operate B&B or farm stays. Younger stakeholder groups tend to support contemporary communication methods such as emails, webinars and presentations. On the other hand, there are others who prefer personal contact and discussions with opportunities for sharing their ideas and views.

However, information technology can be a useful resource that could play a significant role in more effectively connecting people or businesses when face-to-face meetings are not possible or practical. Providing alternative means of collaboration via link portal, webinar or similar resources could compensate for when stakeholders are unable to participate in industry events and activities. Information technology can be used to facilitate collaboration between large firms and SMTEs and stakeholders based in Central Auckland and peripheral areas as tools to instigate and facilitate collaboration. Locally conducted events would also encourage attendance by those such as SMEs who are strapped for time and resources.

Focus needs to be given to the requirements of the individual sectors that are closely linked to tourism, such as hotels, and bars and restaurants, instead of, as one interviewee described, "lumping" all these different sectors together to be viewed as the tourism industry. In addition to the industry-wide activities, separate events that specifically

focus on the concerns and the happenings of the individual sectors will encourage their engagement. It will also contribute to overcoming the lack of understanding among those who work in various sectors about how they are connected to the tourism industry.

When there is lack of clarity about what is happening in the industry, the moves taken by industry leaders and the intentions behind those steps, it leads to confusion and controversy. Openness and transparency in decision-making are vital for continued engagement from all stakeholders, particularly in dispelling some of the apprehensiveness among areas that did not support the amalgamation. When stakeholders are aware of and understand the reasons behind the decisions of the key players of the industry, they are likely to accept it even if they may not agree. As an approach for further motivation for stakeholder engagement, whenever decisions are made that concern local areas and communities, consultations with the local stakeholders and explanations about the decisions are important.

A vision and a set of clear goals and expected outcomes of collaboration from the local tourism authority are necessary elements for ensuring commitment to collaborate from everyone. A vision provides future direction for a destination. A long-term strategy and the key tourism industry players being committed to implementing the plan will encourage engagement from the private sector participants. People will be more willing to continue their support if they see that the strategies are working.

As an approach to establishing the practice of engaging in collaboration, key performance indicators can be identified in main tourism bodies such as ATEED, the ministry responsible for tourism, TIANZ, among others, by assessing how each individual agency is performing in its collaborative efforts. Potential areas that can be assessed include the number of joint strategies and campaigns, number of people involved in those activities, actions such as group meetings and group projects. Evaluating how different tiers are created that facilitate collaboration within the various departments of an organisation can also gauge how well the systems within the organisation are set up to facilitate collaboration. Industry feedback and surveys on how well an organisation is leading on those aspects could be a source that would indicate their level of collaborative performance. Implementing such a process would convey the intent and desire from the leadership towards collaboration.

As a starting point for teamwork, a framework on how to work together needs to be formulated. The CEO of an industry association suggested the most appropriate party for initiating such a plan would be the private sector stakeholders, although input and support from the public sector would be necessary. The reason is that a plan formulated by the stakeholders for themselves would be best able to incorporate the concerns and possible solutions that they believe are most viable. Clear roles and responsibilities need to be set out for everyone involved, and everyone needs to be aware of what they are meant to be doing. Specific roles and responsibilities for all the participants in a region that are engaged and wanting to contribute to the activities would reduce confusion and facilitate progress towards their common objectives. Strong leadership in the tourism industry is a crucial requisite for an all-inclusive outlook towards collaborating. A leader who keeps track of the functions of everyone, periodically measures their performance and keeps the plan on track will ensure that collaboration is sustained within the industry.

Key components to initiate collaboration are willingness and commitment from the leaders of the industry. Recognising that there will be differences of opinions while maintaining a level of respect for each other's views would facilitate collaboration without destroying relationships. Transparency in decision-making and honest communication without offending the other party irrespective of differences of opinions and ideas is central to collaboration. Main tourism agencies need to listen and strive to arrive at mutual agreement whenever possible to facilitate more collaboration within the industry. Consistency is the key to sustaining and achieving collaboration so that, even if some people may not agree with a proposition, they will be more willing to understand and accept it.

The most important facilitator for collaboration is creating awareness about the wider benefits of working together, transparency and open communication and opportunities for stakeholders to meet each other. The main benefit from these actions is that it will encourage support for collaboration by more stakeholders from wider Auckland.

Research Question 5 - What Are the Changes, if any, that Occurred to Collaborative Practices in the Tourism Industry Due to Auckland's Political Amalgamation?

The creation of one council responsible for decision-making for the entire region of Auckland made engaging and connecting with stakeholders easier and simplified the processes of decision-making. Prior to formation of the Supercity, several local councils

had to be consulted and involved in region-wide decisions. Having several councils involved and taking responsibility for region-wide decisions entailed a lot of bureaucracy from the various councils. The single entity of the Supercity has created more cohesiveness and simplified the processes of the local government.

The greater authority and size of the Supercity have generated a more collaborative attitude among stakeholders. In terms of the city's budget and the number of employees, the Supercity is second only to the central government. The immensity of the Supercity is seen as a factor that compels attention from the central government and national public agencies. When there were different councils, central government agencies also had difficulty in collaborating with them. As a single entity, the new structure of the Supercity drives collaboration between the central government and public departments as well as within the council.

On the other hand, the tall organisational structure of the council and ATEED is a barrier that affects frequent collaboration and easy communication. SMTEs and other small groups of stakeholders are uncertain about the right person to contact. Some interviewees feel that unless the person wanting to contact the agencies of the Supercity is from a large organisation or has contacts at higher levels of the Supercity hierarchy, getting through to the right person is difficult. While the top management is supportive of collaborative engagements, the same level of support is not present at the lower tiers of the structure. The reason for this disparity in the attitude to collaboration is that while the top management of the council have new staff, the levels below comprise employees that remained from prior to the Supercity.

Having a unified plan and objectives, ATEED under the Supercity is able to advocate for the entire region of Auckland. Under the former Tourism Auckland, a singular strategy could not exist because the agency was only advocating for Auckland's central city and did not include the rest of the territorial local authorities. Thus, the previous tourism strategy was fractured and difficult to operate. With a singular strategy, the Supercity is able to pool its resources and be more focused on its objectives; hence, the chances of success are greater than with previous strategies. Having one entity, one strategy and one set of goals makes it easier to spread the message to different stakeholders, which the stakeholders also find easier to comprehend. The Supercity provides better clarity on the future direction of the city, and through the Auckland Plan, provides a clear route in which stakeholders are able to identify where they can

participate. Thus, through the strategic goals and implementation plans presented in the Auckland Plan, the Supercity motivates stakeholders across the region to collaborate.

On the other hand, some view the elimination of the local councils and replacing them with LBs as alienating local government from communities and adding a layer between them. The removal of local councils meant that the direct contact that communities had with their local councils was lost. Peripheral areas feel that in the absence of a direct channel of communication, local communities and industries including tourism have been impacted negatively. Some interviewees from peripheral areas feel there is a lack of transparency by the council in their decisions that concern the areas. This makes some of the groups from the outer areas reluctant to collaborate with the council. A suggestion was that when there is a lack of transparency, the issue of distrust will feature more prominently, particularly in the areas that objected to the Supercity.

Despite the fact that the council's political structure is supposedly intended to facilitate co-governance by the LBs and the council, in reality, it is "neither one nor the other". An industry expert in the area of public policy stated that the structure of the council is a hybrid of both. Thus, the structure of the council adds to the complexities and misunderstandings about the role of LBs. For example, council officers often work for both the council and LBs, although LBs are subservient to the council. The need for council members to serve both the council and LBs with a neutral stance, while being employed by the council, places the council members in a difficult situation. If the source of the issues is not remedied, limited levels of collaboration will continue to persist at that level.

When the council's plans diverge from the needs and interests of those who voted for the members, conflict is caused between LBs and council members. Councillors and LB members need to please those who voted for them, meaning that they distance themselves and take detached stances from other board and council members. This strains and impedes the process of collaboration. Although the councillors and LB members may be aware that particular plans by the council are designed for the overall benefit of the wider region, they are unable to agree with the council without sacrificing the support of the areas that they represent.

The Supercity incorporates participants from the private sector in their governing structure and in the boards of its various CCOs. Most of these individuals are in positions that enable them to influence the private sector processes and decisions. Thus,

even though they may not have total control over the decisions of the council, they are able to contribute their input to decision-making on behalf of the private sector.

Some believe there is friction within the council and between the council and CCOs. For example, the level of collaboration within those agencies is inhibited by disagreements over issues such as the amount of funding that each should be allocated. Issues of this nature could risk the instigation of collaborative practices within the Supercity. Participants from tourism groups and organisations from peripheral areas feel that they are isolated from most tourism activities and events that occur in Auckland and they have little opportunity to participate or benefit from them. The perception that ATEED's interests are concentrated in Central Auckland areas affects the enthusiasm of peripheral areas for working with ATEED.

Prior to the Supercity formation, tourism was not in the mandate of LBs; hence, they were not involved in tourism activities. Since they only had an advocacy role within the communities, all events and activities had to go through the local council. Under the Supercity, the LBs are given more authority for decision-making. Although the previous local councils had closer contact with the communities, they did not have the authority to influence decision-making.

There are some stakeholders who believe that the level of authority that LBs presently possess is inadequate for the functioning of the boards and for the level of decision-making that board members require to fulfil their roles. Perceptions are unfavourable for the collaborative efforts of those who work in areas where there are groups of resident communities that do not believe in the advantages of the Supercity.

Some stakeholder groups, including tourism cluster groups, LBs and local tourism associations, find it difficult to understand the responsibilities and accountabilities of ATEED and the council. Not knowing "who controls who" is a hurdle for anyone who attempts to engage in collaborative activities with the council and its agencies. Difficulties in understanding the roles of the council and its different agencies feed a notion that collaboration and coordination is lacking between public and private agencies, the local government and the central government, and instead, that there is competition between them. The lack of collaboration and coordination is believed to have led to the duplication of the council's tasks. These perceptions are further perpetuated by funding and investment decisions that are made at the national and local levels.

Bringing together previously separate councils is believed to have eliminated the disagreements between councils around the amount of funding that each should receive. That the areas need to collaborate with ATEED to get the requisite support works as a two-way process for collaboration. The fact that ATEED is responsible for tourism as well as the economic development of Auckland permits the organisation to take a holistic view of the region. Having an inclusive outlook enables ATEED to strategically distribute the resources according to the requirements of the different areas. On the other hand, since ATEED took over the responsibilities of tourism development from the local councils, the previous liaison officers have been removed. The loss of direct personal communication has added to the feeling of detachment between the tourism authority and the areas.

Areas that were under their own local councils previously find it difficult to work with the local government and public agencies without the support of their councils. Some tourism organisations belonging to those areas are struggling to get established due to lack of support from the council. The level of assistance that is currently provided to them is not sufficient to produce the outcomes needed to achieve their tourism goals. Sometimes the requested guidance is not forthcoming, making those that seek the information disappointed and unsure of how to proceed further. This makes some perceive that ATEED does not ensure that the local agencies' needs are met to progress with their plans of developing and expanding tourism.

With the formation of the Supercity, some regional tourism associations that were formerly singular agencies were split between two or more areas while others went under the boundary of a different area. When this resulted in loss of business and funding to the organisations but they were unable to take any action, it was frustrating to the stakeholders. They believe that the future control of the functions of their organisations should stay with the operators and businesses so that changes that occur at local government level do not impact local tourism businesses. A system should be established to ensure that, even if governments and leaderships change, fundamental tourism strategies will not be altered or affected, so that consistency is maintained across or between different periods of power and political landscapes.

Relationships between the public and private sectors are believed to have improved in recent years. Since a number of changes have also been made recently to key leadership posts of the tourism industry, it is possible that the improvements in relationships can be

attributed to the Supercity, the new leadership or a combination of both. It is difficult to establish that the Supercity essentially drives collaboration.

It is clear that Auckland's political amalgamation has facilitated and made the processes of collaboration easier in many ways for the tourism industry. The main contributing factors are having a singular council and tourism authority that undertakes decisions and responsibilities for the entire region. It is also evident that the structure of the council and the creation of ATEED caused most of the discontent among stakeholders in relation to working together. Therefore, to gain the intended benefits from the amalgamation, it is crucial that the council and ATEED continue a high level of collaboration with all the stakeholders. Open, clear communication channels and transparency in decision-making and engaging local communities from all the areas of Auckland is imperative to dissipate the feelings of antipathy towards the Supercity. Collaborative engagements need to target the peripheral areas, and those that previously had their own local councils so that without the support of the councils those areas do not feel "left out" of the Supercity's tourism development strategies.

9.2 Research Contributions

By exploring the role of stakeholder collaboration in STC, this thesis makes a number of contributions to the tourism literature on STC. STC research that uses case studies or in-depth interviews with key industry stakeholders is rare. Therefore, the findings and conclusions drawn by this thesis extend and enhance the existing body of knowledge in the field.

By understanding the perception of stakeholders on collaboration, this thesis disclosed that collaboration is crucial in the daily functioning of the industry, in the development of the requisite infrastructure, amenities and facilities and tourism activities and attractions. Based on these findings, a significant contribution by this thesis is the illustration of the interconnectedness between STC and stakeholder collaboration. A key finding of this thesis is that the factors that facilitate collaboration contribute to enhancing STC, and vice versa. At the same time, the obstacles to collaboration are correlated with challenges to STC.

A significant contribution of this research is the identification of the obstacles that hinder collaborative practices and the factors that facilitate collaboration. By identifying the obstacles and factors that facilitate collaboration between stakeholders in the

tourism industry, this thesis contributes to theory and expands research in the field of STC. While studies (e.g. Baggio, 2011a; Heath, 2003) acknowledge that communication, cooperation and collaboration are important to STC, few studies specifically identify the factors that facilitate or obstruct collaboration. By determining the obstacles to collaboration, this thesis presents researchers, practitioners and policy makers with a guide to avoid those barriers to enhance collaboration and progress towards STC. Through the suggestions to overcome challenges to collaboration, this thesis enhances existing research that explores ways to build and improve competitiveness in sustainable ways.

This thesis outlined a number of challenges related to issues brought about by the amalgamation that affect Auckland's tourism competitiveness. At the same time, the merger also assisted in facilitating collaboration and enhancing tourism competitiveness in several ways, which was disclosed by this research. This thesis revealed ways to progress with tourism development and expansion and improve tourism competitiveness under an amalgamated political structure. The perspectives that this thesis provides on stakeholder collaboration are an important contribution to existing research in the areas of tourism competitiveness as well as studies in the field of amalgamated areas.

These findings will be valuable to the Auckland tourism industry and others that recognise the value of collaboration and seek ways to implement collaborative practices. The determinant indicators of Auckland's competitiveness identified against existing literature will be useful for the city's tourism industry stakeholders. Suggestions by key industry stakeholders for achieving Auckland's long-term objectives outlined in the AVP offer valuable insights to Auckland's tourism stakeholders and policymakers. The causes for the lack of motivation and aversion to working together, the propositions for overcoming these challenges, and the suggested plan of action to sustain collaborative practices for the long term will be useful to industry practitioners and policy makers in Auckland and elsewhere, in future planning, policy making and decision-making.

By using a case study of Auckland, this thesis looks at tourism competitiveness literature from a unique angle – that of a large region where multiple areas are brought together under a political amalgamation. The changes that the political amalgamation brought to stakeholder collaboration and the resultant impacts on STC were identified.

Amalgamated regions face various challenges associated with collaboration among the merged areas. When the initial objectives of the amalgamations are unachieved (Schwartz, 2009), it has often led to the collapse of the mergers (Sancton, 2005). These findings make a valuable contribution to the literature and for policy makers, researchers and practitioners of areas that are looking for ways to improve collaboration across a region or city.

A significant theoretical contribution from this research is the proposed new framework of stakeholder collaboration and STC presented in Figure 8.1. After determining the significance of collaboration, it is added as a new and a fundamental element to STC and brought into focus in the proposed new model. The new proposed model illustrates that STC is the product of stakeholder collaboration and tourism competitiveness. By identifying the role of stakeholder collaboration at each of the categories of STC, this thesis expands Heath's (2003) model and adds to the other existing models and frameworks of STC. By highlighting the role of stakeholder collaboration in STC, the proposed framework provides valuable insights to researchers and practitioners in the field.

In consequence, this thesis proposes that the sources of sustainable tourism competitive advantage should extend to include stakeholder collaboration. The sustainable competitiveness of tourism depends, therefore, on the traditional factors of tourism competitiveness in a specific destination and the level of collaboration between all the stakeholders that are involved in creating, functioning and maintaining the elements of competitiveness. This thesis serves as an initial test of using stakeholder collaboration as a decisive factor in a STC framework and provides a template for further refinement and research in the field.

By exploring stakeholders' perspectives on tourism competitiveness in conjunction with stakeholder collaboration, this thesis has shown that stakeholders believe collaboration is an essential part of a successful tourism industry. However, they do not always think of collaboration when considering the different aspects of tourism competitiveness. Instead, their immediate response to the question of which factors contribute to tourism competitiveness is the various comparative and competitive advantages such as the natural and built attractions and quality and capacity management. Concurrently, these attributes are also the factors most commonly represented in STC models literature (Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Navickas & Malakauskaite, 2009; Ritchie & Crouch, 2003).

Based on this finding, this thesis argues that, despite its significance, the reason that stakeholders do not consider collaboration an attribute of STC is that they do not consider both concepts – collaboration and STC – in conjunction with each other.

Different studies present various elements and factors as sources of competitiveness. The closest to collaboration that is noted in the most widely used and referred to framework on the topic, that of Ritchie and Crouch (2003), is "strategic alliances" between firms. Heath (2003) indicated that communication and partnerships are the "cement" that glues the structure of STC. Dwyer and Kim (2003) in their research state coordination and cooperation by DMOs form the key elements of their destination competitiveness model. While the underlying theme from these researchers is that all stakeholders need to collaborate in order to achieve STC, collaboration is not included as a specific attribute in the models. As a final contribution, this thesis challenges existing theories and research that overlook stakeholder collaboration as one of the key elements that contributes to STC.

9.3   Limitations and Prospects for Further Research

One of the limitations of this thesis is the lack of members from the central government as research participants. Central government agencies – MBIE and Ministry of Transport were approached to participate in the research. It is interesting to note that in every instance the researcher was received warmly but that there was a focus on redirecting the researcher back to the regional counterpart. In some cases this reflected a lack of continuity among key staff in central government – in other cases it was about participants feeling that greater information would be made available at the regional level. Participants from the central government could have given valuable insights on collaboration between the local and central governments and the impacts of Auckland's amalgamation on competitiveness.

This thesis has provided information on a set of competitiveness attributes for Auckland based on the perspectives of tourism industry stakeholders and has then assessed the role of collaboration in each. To complete a research involving a full range of stakeholders, it would have been necessary to interview or gather data from tourists who would have provided additional insights. Including visitors' perspectives in this research would have required the expansion of the scope of the thesis. These are gaps that could be addressed by a future research. The perspectives of visitors on what they believe are the key attributes of Auckland gathered in a future study could provide a

comparison between stakeholders' and visitors' viewpoints of what constitute factors of competitiveness. Evaluating the role of stakeholder collaboration in elements that both the visitors and stakeholders perceive as indicators of competitiveness would provide a balanced outlook.

Since this research was conducted two years after the creation of the Supercity, limited sources of data on the impacts of the collaboration or tourism competitiveness were available. At the time of the research, most of the tourism cluster groups were starting to get established, beginning to pursue collaborative activities and starting to create awareness about the benefits of working together. Therefore, this research was unable to reflect on the outcomes of collaborative processes and activities involving these groups. If a research is undertaken a few years down the road it will reveal how well tourism cluster groups have been able to carry on with collaborative practices, and the extent to which the efforts and activities that are being put in place have affected tourism competitiveness in the areas where they are established. Further research that captures the opinions of key stakeholders conducted in a few years will reveal the relevance of the findings and disclose the sustainability and effectiveness of the collaborative processes that were implemented after the amalgamation.

Clearly the interviewees' opinions and thoughts on the Supercity varied and sometimes these emerged in interviews, but they were not a focus for the thesis. Indeed, people tended to view the formation of the Supercity as 'water under the bridge'. Interviewees may not have supported or agreed with the amalgamation, but the Supercity has been created. As a forward-looking thesis, it is the impact of this change on collaboration that thesis focused on. A future study that takes into consideration the stance of interviewees with regard to an amalgamated city would provide a comparison between the opinions of supporters and those of non-supporters of political amalgamation on the significance of stakeholder collaboration.

As a PhD thesis, data analysis was conducted by the researcher herself. A future study that triangulates stakeholders' opinions with other data sources, data analysis by more than one researcher, a review by an expert panel or input from the research participants could provide comprehensive findings to further develop upon and expand the results of this research. Future research that captures and compares information from two or more politically merged tourism destinations that looks into the significance of stakeholder collaboration would assist in overcoming the limitation of a single case.

This research has shown that there is a lot of on-going rhetoric with regard to collaboration in Auckland's tourism industry. The challenge ahead is to build on the interest in, and enthusiasm for, collaboration in Auckland's tourism development in such a way that the sustainable competitiveness of the destination can be strengthened and harnessed to bring benefits for future generations. This thesis has shown quite clearly that a collaborative focus lies at the heart of the city's long-term ability to create sustainable tourism competitiveness.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule

(The following questions form the key theme of questioning areas. The focus and emphasis of content will change relative to the individual interviewed).

Section 1: Introductory Questions on the Background of the Individual

- Tell me about yourself
  (E.g. how you got into the industry/educational background)
- Could you briefly describe your role, position and responsibility in the organization?
- How long have you been working in the industry/organisation)

Section 2: Background of the Organisation

- Could you provide some basic information regarding the nature and size of your organisation (e.g. which sector, public/private, number of employees, turnover)
- Under what legal authority does your organisation operate?
- What is your organisation's role in the tourism industry?
- How dependant is your organisation on the tourism industry?

Section 3: On Sustainable Tourism Competitiveness

- How important do you think tourism is to Auckland?
- What is your understanding and opinion about sustainable tourism competitiveness?
- What are your opinions on existing competitiveness strategies and actions for Auckland tourism?
- In your opinion, what is more important in contributing to Auckland's tourism competitiveness? Natural/created attractions (comparative advantages), or the ability to use those attractions effectively over the long-term (competitive advantage) or both?

Section 4: On Collaboration

- How important do you think is the role of collaboration between stakeholders in contributing and sustaining tourism competitiveness?
- What forms of collaboration (e.g. informal communications, joint ventures/partnerships) exists within Auckland tourism industry?
- In your opinion, what is the level of collaboration that exists within the Auckland tourism industry?
- Could you comment on the level of collaboration in the following areas:
  - Continuous and transparent communication

- Balancing interests of all stakeholder groups
- Developing mutually beneficial partnerships/alliances
- Managing information and research that facilitate forecasting/decision making
- Establishing appropriate measures for benchmarking and monitoring

- What do you think are the facilitators for collaborative actions (e.g. leadership, people)?
- What do you think are inhibitors/challenges for collaboration (e.g. people, time, environment, leadership)?
- Do you believe the level and ways of collaboration has changed after the political restructuring of Auckland? In which ways?
- Based on your experience, how might collaboration among stakeholders be improved in a way that can contribute to/enhance sustainable competitiveness?
- Any other general comments or issues that you would like to raise in connection with regard to collaboration in the tourism industry?

Appendix 2: List of Research Participants

1.	Tourism events and sales manager at a museum
2.	President of a tourism cluster group and owner of a motel
3.	CEO of an incorporated NGO
4.	President of a tourism cluster group and owner operator of accommodation and convention facility
5.	CEO of a public tourism agency
6.	General Manager of hotels chain
7.	Ward Councillor
8.	General Manager of Corporate Affairs at major holding company
9.	General Manager of Corporate Affairs at a national marketing agency
10.	Director at a university institute
11.	Director at a museum
12.	Senior Communications Advisor at a Council-owned organisation
13.	CEO at a private transport company
14.	Vice President at a hotel group
15.	CEO of a publicly listed company
16.	Executive Director at an Auckland-focussed thinktank
17.	Tourism Manager at a local public agency
18.	President at an industry association
19.	Tourism Partnership Manager at an airline company
20.	Chief Advisor at a cultural tourism association
21.	General Manager at a travel agency
22.	Maori tourism expert
23.	Chair at an environmental NGO
24.	Operations Manager at a Council-owned organisation
25.	Member of a local board
26.	Executive Director at a policy-making organisation
27.	Operations Manager at a local public agency
28.	CEO of a private transport company
29.	CEO of a major industry association
30.	Director of External Affairs and Sales at an Auckland attraction
31.	Manager at the Auckland branch of an industry organisation
32.	Auckland Councillor
33.	General Manager at a business association
34.	Sector manager of an industry association
35.	Auckland Councillor
36.	General Manager at a large Auckland hotel
37.	Senior Official at Mayoral Initiatives Office
38.	Secretary of a cluster group, and organizer of a local craft market
39.	Director at a university research institute
40.	Member of a local board
41.	CEO of a Maori tourism agency

Appendix 3: Request for Participation

Stakeholder Collaboration as an Element of Sustainable Tourism Competitiveness: the case of Auckland City

Dear----------,

I am currently conducting a research into the role of stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism competitiveness. My research looks into how collaboration could affect sustainable competitiveness in an urban destination with a focus on Auckland city. The key research questions for this study are: What are the forms of collaboration that currently exist among stakeholders and why do they take these forms? How and why do these forms of collaboration differ from the past? What are the factors that could facilitate or hinder collaboration between stakeholders and why? How might collaboration be enhanced among stakeholders in a way that can contribute to/enhance sustainable tourism competitiveness in the future? The methodology involves an in-depth case study of Auckland city.

The detailed secondary research that initiated the process of this study helped to understand the current structures of Auckland tourism industry and identify some key organisations involved in collaborative activities. To select a representative sample, 35 industry members from large to small companies and from all areas of the tourism industry were identified. Your organisation has thus been identified as a key player in the Auckland tourism industry. So far, the response from the industry has been very positive.

Your participation is requested for this research project. I hope you would accept this invitation for an interview with you which will require about an hour of your time. The interview will seek your views on stakeholder collaboration within Auckland's tourism industry.

I would like to stress that participation is entirely voluntary and whatever you say will be confidential. You will have the right to withdraw your participation at any time without providing reasons prior to the completion of the data collection stage of my research. The interview will be audio recorded. No individual will be identified in the final report or in any publications based on this research as the source of specific information or opinions. However, groups such as accommodation providers or large travel agents may be identified but the names of specific provider will not be disclosed. Your participation in this research will be very valuable and will contribute to a better understanding of the role of collaboration in Auckland tourism industry, and how it may

impact tourism competitiveness in a sustainable manner.

The initial outcome of this research is expected to be the PhD dissertation, which will be available through the AUT library. You are welcome to contact me personally for access to the dissertation or regarding any comments or questions that you may have about the research.

I hope that you will accept this invitation to participate in this project. I will be in touch again shortly to provide further details about the study and to arrange a possible meeting at your premises.

Yours sincerely

Amira Fathimath

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Consent Form

Project title: *Stakeholder Collaboration as an Element of Sustainable Tourism Competitiveness: the Case of Auckland city*

Project Supervisor: *Professor Simon Milne*

Dr. Ken Hyde

Researcher: *Amira Fathimath*

○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated dd mmmm yyyy.

○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

○ I understand that I may withdraw myself or any information that I have provided for this project at any time prior to completion of data collection, without being disadvantaged in any way.

○ If I withdraw, I understand that all relevant information including tapes and transcripts, or parts thereof, will be destroyed.

○ I agree to take part in this research.

○ I wish to receive a copy of the report from the research (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature:.....................……………………………………………………

Participant's name:.....................……………………………………………………

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

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Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 11 February 2013 AUTEC Reference number 12/306.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix 5: Ethics Approval

**A U T E C
S E C R E T A R I A T**

11 February 2013

Simon Milne
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Simon

Re Ethics Application: **12/306 Stakeholder collaboration as a key element of sustainable tourism competitiveness: The case of Auckland City.**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the AUT University Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 11 February 2016.

As part of the ethics approval process, you are required to submit the following to AUTEC:

- A brief annual progress report using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. When necessary this form may also be used to request an extension of the approval at least one month prior to its expiry on 11 February 2016;

- A brief report on the status of the project using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics. This report is to be submitted either when the approval expires on 11 February 2016 or on completion of the project.

It is a condition of approval that AUTEC is notified of any adverse events or if the research does not commence. AUTEC approval needs to be sought for any alteration to the research, including any alteration of or addition to any documents that are provided to participants. You are responsible for ensuring that research undertaken under this approval occurs within the parameters outlined in the approved application.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval from an institution or organisation for your research, then you will need to obtain this. If your research is undertaken within a jurisdiction outside New Zealand, you will need to make the arrangements necessary to meet the legal and ethical requirements that apply there.

To enable us to provide you with efficient service, please use the application number and study title in all correspondence with us. If you have any enquiries about this application, or anything else, please do contact us at ethics@aut.ac.nz.

All the very best with your research,

Dr Rosemary Godbold
Executive Secretary
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Amira Fathimath amira.fathimath@aut.ac.nz