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Rachel Perkins

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Business Clustering as a Collaboration Strategy for Small Tourism Businesses Contributing to Regional Destination Branding

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ABSTRACT

Effective branding for destinations encourages visitation and ensures the financial stability of regions that rely on tourist expenditure. Literature reveals however, that the destination branding process is not straightforward, particularly in regional destinations of which Australia's tourism industry is largely comprised. Scholars advocate for collaboration as a solution to enacting destination branding, but, the feasibility and practicality of working together presents many challenges. It is therefore crucial that collaboration is further understood by honing in on the collaborative strategy 'business clustering' to effectively unpack collaboration complexities. Business clustering combines the skills, talents and attributes of multiple stakeholders within a geographic region and has proven to be a successful strategy for enhancing destination branding. Surprisingly, past research has only investigated clusters that already exist in a region. Until the present thesis, there was no research that explored how these clusters are created, leaving a gap in academic knowledge and subsequently leaving regions without a cluster unable to reap its benefits.

The overarching research question of this thesis seeks to understand how small tourism businesses progress through the steps of cluster formation to contribute to destination branding. This thesis will explore the complexities of collaboration, identifying the role and contribution of stakeholder typologies and stakeholder networks to the contribution of cluster formation. The research adopted a participatory action research (PAR) design to bring together academics and industry to create practical knowledge. The study involved 19 stakeholders from local businesses, the local tourism organization and the local council in the Granite Belt region, the regional tourism organization for South-East Queensland and the state tourism organization in Queensland, Australia. Data collection occurred over 11 phases of enquiry during a two year period, resulting in a 45 file dataset which was thematically analysed by the researcher in Excel and NVIVO.

This thesis includes three journal papers. **Paper 1** is a systematic narrative literature review that investigates the challenges of destination branding for small tourism businesses in regional areas, by exploring the concepts of collaboration. The findings from this paper emphasised the need for empirical research aimed at trialling how stakeholder collaboration can be implemented effectively from initiation. Papers 2

and 3 are empirical. **Paper 2** is the first empirical paper in this domain that forms a tourism business cluster, subsequently reporting on the phases and steps to cluster formation. The cluster enabled participants to contribute to the destination brand in their region through the conceptualisation of an event that celebrates local artisan providers. The event is due to be hosted in the future after experiencing COVID-19 setbacks. **Paper 3** provides critical insights into stakeholder typologies and stakeholder networks during the cluster formation process. The paper uncovers the degree to which different stakeholders types are helpful and/or harmful to the cluster formation process and contributes the Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum (SHC), which depicts helpful and harmful stakeholder actions. It also offers insights into the composition of stakeholder networks pre and post cluster formation and the usefulness of the cluster in enhancing these stakeholder networks.

This thesis offers an array of new, significant contributions to theory, to practice and to methodology. Theoretically this thesis offers entirely new insights to the tourism collaboration literature, offering an empirically-tested Total Cluster Formation Framework (TCFF) which delivers insights on forming a business cluster, transferable to other collaboration forms. This thesis also contributes significantly to the stakeholder literature, offering insights to stakeholder typology with the development of the SHC which provides guidance on helpful and harmful stakeholder behaviour as it pertains to collaboration. Practically, this thesis offers guides for industry in creating and achieving effective cluster formation and other types of collaboration. The step-by-step TCFF can be followed by industry to form collaborations and the SHC provides useful insights to managing and understanding different stakeholder types and their behaviours. In terms of the methodological contribution, this thesis provides an insightful expansion of PAR as it is applied in the context of regional tourism as well as offering an expansion of new literature review techniques.

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

This work has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Rachel Perkins

01 March 2021

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES & FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a journey this PhD has been. One that would not have been possible without the help and support from many. I must begin by thanking my best friend and partner, Aden. I remember feeling hopeless after I had just received feedback on my writing that I could not make sense of. You then proceeded to make a strange analogy about the feedback I had received with a phone charger and an international adapter and it was as humorous as it was insightful. You spent hours with me, talking me through each comment of feedback and explaining what it meant and how I could address it, despite tourism not being your area of expertise as a civil engineer. I cannot express how much that meant to me. Just like this time, there have been multiple occasions on which I thought it best to throw in the towel and give up and when I could not see my next step forward. On those days, you were always there making jokes and reminding me that I am enough; with or without the 'Dr.' title. The same too, goes for my Mum and Dad, sisters Sarah and Jodie, my Nonna, Aunty Viv, Uncle Marty and Sammie and my best friends Michaela, Jess, Alex, Lucy, Kayla, Lizzy, Shae, Ebony, Annalyse, Abbey, Samaya and Jo. You were there to support me in my many achievements throughout my PhD and also there through the harder times. Receiving phone calls, messages and your handwritten letters of encouragement during important milestones and especially in the week before my submission is something I will always be grateful for.

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A sincere thank you to all of the participants who gave their time to this project. Without your contribution, this dissertation would not be possible. Thank you for the fun pizza nights, for putting your trust in me and sharing your stories and working on some great ideas for a region we are all proud of. I hope to soon see some of our collective visions come to fruition.

In the wise words of Elle Woods, *"we did it!"*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PAPERS INCLUDED IN THIS THESIS

Section 9.1. of the Griffith University Code for Responsible Conduct of Research ("Criteria for Authorship"), in accordance with Section 5 of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, states:

To be named as an author, a researcher must have made a substantial scholarly contribution to the creative or scholarly work that constitutes the research output, and be able to take public responsibility for at least that part of the work they contributed. Attribution of authorship depends to some extent on the discipline and publisher policies, but in all cases, authorship must be based on substantial contributions in a combination of one or more of:

- Conception and design of the research project
- Analysis and interpretation of research data
- Drafting or making significant parts of the creative or scholarly work or critically revising it so as to contribute significantly to the final output.

Section 9.3 of the Griffith University Code ("Responsibilities of Researchers"), in accordance with Section 5 of the Australian Code, states:

Researchers are expected to:

- Offer authorship to all people, including research trainees, who meet the criteria for authorship listed above, but only those people.
- Accept or decline offers of authorship promptly in writing.
- Include in the list of authors only those who have accepted authorship
- Appoint one author to be the executive author to record authorship and manage correspondence about the work with the publisher and other interested parties.
- Acknowledge all those who have contributed to the research, facilities or materials but who do not qualify as authors, such as research assistants, technical staff, and advisors on cultural or community knowledge. Obtain written consent to name individuals.

Included in this thesis are three papers which are co-authored with my supervisors. My contribution to each paper is outlined at the front of the relevant part.

The bibliographic details (if published or accepted for publication)/status (if prepared or submitted for publication) for these papers including all authors, are also included at the beginning of the relevant part and a summary can be found on the following page. Appropriate acknowledgements of those who contributed to the research but did not qualify as authors are included in each paper.

Signed [redacted] 01 March 2021

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PhD SPECIFIC PUBLICATIONS

Published Journal Papers

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2020). Understanding the contribution of stakeholder collaboration towards regional destination branding: A systematic narrative literature review. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *43*, 250-258. **(ABDC Rank: A, IF: 3.415)**

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2021). Collaboration in marketing regional tourism destinations: Constructing a business cluster formation framework through participatory action research. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 46,* 347-359. **(ABDC Rank: A, IF: 3.415)**

Journal Papers currently under review

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, A. (2021). Don't hate - collaborate! Exploring stakeholder typologies, relationships and networks during the business cluster formation process. Manuscript under review by *Tourism Management* **(ABDC Rank A*, IF: 7.432)**

Conference Papers

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2020). Participatory action research for regional tourism destinations. In *CAUTHE 2020: 20:20 Vision: New Perspectives on the Diversity of Hospitality, Tourism and Events*. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University of Technology, 2020.

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2020). Forming a tourism business cluster: A how-to guide. In *CAUTHE 2020: 20:20 Vision: New Perspectives on the Diversity of Hospitality, Tourism and Events*. Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University of Technology, 2020. **(Award: Springer Second Best Research Paper)**

Perkins, R. (2019). The art of working together, collaboration as a trust exercise. In *Critical Tourism Studies 8: Pride and Prejudice: Que(e)rying Tourism Hope.* Ibiza, Spain: University of the Balearic Islands, 2019.

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcoda, C. (2018). Business clustering as a tool for successful destination branding. In *CAUTHE 2019: Get Smart: Paradoxes and*

Possibilities in Tourism, Hospitality and Events Education. Newcastle, Australia: University of Newcastle, 2019.

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2018). Challenges to successful collaboration for regional small tourism firms in contributing to the destination brand. In *CAUTHE 2019: Get Smart: Paradoxes and Possibilities in Tourism, Hospitality and Events Education.* Newcastle, Australia: University of Newcastle, 2019. **(Award: Best Poster)**

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PART I. INTRODUCTION

1.0. Research Inception

As this section reflects the researcher's personal inspiration of this thesis, it is written in first person.

I had just graduated my Bachelor of Business at Griffith University and was spending some time in my home town, Stanthorpe, where my Mum, Dad and other family members still live. Mum and I went for ice cream and coffee at a local berry farm and I told her how business ownership was something that interested me. Being the supportive mother she has always been, she told me about two small cottages that were for sale in town. We then went for a drive-by and a visit to the listing real estate office. We booked an appointment with the bank and neither Mum or I were too surprised that my lending capacity was not very impressive as a recent graduate who had been studying full time. The bank manager then turned to Mum- Mum and Dad had the capacity to borrow. The seed was planted… perhaps more so in my mind than Mum's.

I told Mum excitedly on the drive home how thrilling this adventure would be for her, that she could have a career change and create a business she was passionate about. Mum and Dad had extensive experience in agri-business, but had not delved into the tourism industry before. Mum seemed dubious but eager. She still had her eye on the two little cottages and saw their potential to succeed. She needed more information, so she reached out to friends who owned tourism businesses in town. I tagged along, filling in time until I had planned to return to Brisbane to begin a career in Marketing. I was captivated by these local business owners and loved hearing their stories: their struggles, their successes and their words of wisdom for Mum. At the same time I had been offered a research pathway at Griffith University. The more stories I heard from small tourism business owners, the more my future career path became clear. I chose research, first an Honours Program and then a PhD.

I have immensely enjoyed the opportunity to not only listen to stories of small business, but to have the ability through my research to effect change in a region that I am still proud to call home.

1.1. Research Rationale

1.1.1. Setting the Scene on Regional Small Tourism Businesses

Small tourism businesses in regional destinations are critical to Australia's economy and are important for regional development (Alonso & Liu, 2012; Jackson & Murphy, 2006). Small tourism businesses make up 78% of all tourism businesses and of this, 31% of tourism businesses are located in regional areas where 44 cents of every visitor dollar was spent in the 2018-2019 financial year (Tourism Research Australia, 2021). Given the importance of regional Australia, the Australian Government continues to support regional areas and released a regional package of more than $550 million of Government support to these areas (Australian Government Budget 2020-21, 2021). As such, regional tourism businesses are worthy of research attention to help develop effective strategies that ensures their success and longevity into the future.

In regional areas, effective destination branding is an important strategy for establishing competitive advantage and effective positioning (Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2006; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Since the 1970s when the concept of destination image was defined by Hunt (1975, p.1) as "perceptions held by potential visitors about an area", destination branding literature has been discussed and applied in many settings, as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Destination branding literature at varying geographical levels

Level	Authors
International	Chen, Dwyer & Firth, 2015; Prayag, 2007
National	Alejandria-Gonzalez, 2016; Aziz, Kefallonitis & Friedman, 2014; Bianchi & Pike, 2011; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2018; Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Kouris, 2009; Murillo, 2014; Ndlovu & Heath, 2011; Oliveira, 2013; Pike & Bianchi, 2016; Ravichandran & Suresh, 2010; and Sziva et al., 2017
Regional	Henthorne, George & Miller, 2016; Kimbu, 2011; Lee & Arcodia, 2011; Makkonen, 2016; Marcoz, Melewar & Dennis, 2016; Murphy, Benckendorff & Moscardo, 2007; O'Connor, Flanagan & Gilbert, 2008; and Pike & Mason, 2011
Cities	Ahn, Hyun & Kim, 2016; Giraldi & Cesareo, 2014; Huang, Zhang & Choi, 2013; Merrilees, Miller, Herington & Smith, 2007; Kavaratzis, 2016; Pereira, Correia & Schutz, 2015; Seljeseth & Korneliussen, 2015; Souiden, Ladhari & Chiadmi, 2017; Sou, Vinnicombe & Leung, 2016
Rural and Local	Cai, 2002; Hall, 2008; Marcoz et al., 2016; Son & Zu, 2013; and Wheeler, Frost & Weiler, 2011

These scholars have emphasised the importance of establishing and promoting destination branding for the success of destinations. Of those who investigated destination branding on a regional scale, only few scholars (Cai, 2002; Murphy, Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2007) explored challenges faced in these areas. Research is therefore nascent in this domain and requires expansion. Scholars explain that the planning and implementation of branding activities in regional areas is multisectoral and often incoherent (Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus & Naipaul, 2013) due to multiple elements being provided by individual tourism businesses (Hall, 1999). Issues arise with regional destination branding because multiple stakeholders provide differing contributions (Wang et al., 2013). Given this problem, collaboration between stakeholders could certainly be a useful tool to ensure businesses within these areas were 'on the same page' when it came to branding their region.

1.1.2. Collaboration for Destination Branding

There is little question on the benefits of collaboration within tourism literature, with scholars agreeing that collaboration is useful in enhancing core competencies of a region (Telfer, 2001), in acting as a competitive strategy against other destinations (Caple, 2011; Saxena, 2005) and in promoting forward-thinking discussion, encouraging negotiation, establishing mutually beneficial proposals for future tourism development, and helping governmental bodies understand the aspirations of regional tourism destinations (De Araujo & Bramwell, 2002). Scholars state that the need for cooperation between competing firms is ever growing (Saxena, 2005), and that businesses need to reach out to their competitors to promote unified tourism districts (Telfer, 2001). There has also been calls for smaller tourism providers in regional destinations to improve their appeal by using collaboration (Fyall & Garrod, 2004). Cai (2002) explains that collaboration is imperative to destination branding as branding requires a strategic, cooperative approach, and there are increasing calls for regional tourism providers to improve their destination's appeal through collaboration (Fyall & Garrod, 2004). While scholars make calls for regional operators to collaborate, there is uncertainty surrounding how this collaboration should be implemented. For example, Hankinson (2007) includes collaboration as an *element* in the guiding principles for destination branding, not claiming that it is *essential*. The elements are consistent communication with a wide range of stakeholders and partnerships with compatibility and synergy

(Hankinson, 2007). Conversely, Cox and Wray (2011) integrate collaboration in their best practice marketing strategies, encouraging cooperation with nearby regions, the pooling of resources, education for the local community, and integration with the regional tourism organisation. Evidently, there has not been a unified stance among scholars on whether collaboration is an element or quite essential for destination branding. This thesis therefore seeks to further understand the role of collaboration in destination branding and how exactly regional small tourism businesses should be implementing collaboration.

1.1.3. Challenges in Enacting Successful Collaboration

While collaboration is repeatedly acknowledged as a success strategy for regional destination branding, enacting collaboration can prove to be extremely challenging. Difficulties can include resource allocation, policy ideas, unequal contribution from involved stakeholders, issues with communication (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999a, 1999ba.; Gray, 1996), competition between stakeholders, differing opinions, and a perceived lack of leadership from governing tourism bodies within the region (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). Issues with collaboration can arise as a result of the collaboration having no actual structure and no goal or objective setting, resulting in a lack of communication and understanding between stakeholders, then, inevitably the collaboration is perceived to have no useful outcomes (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). There is a need to understand strategies that can be implemented to overcome such challenges yet research in this domain remains absent. This thesis addresses this gap, subsequently pioneering a blueprint for small tourism businesses to engage in a successful collaboration strategy.

1.1.4. Strategies for Collaboration

Business clustering is common collaboration strategy that has been purported to allow stakeholders to gain competitive advantage (Porter, 1990) and can create interdependence between stakeholders, fostering knowledge and skills transfer between them, subsequently raising the profile of their region (Caple, 2011). Literature on tourism business clusters has established a foundation of understanding about the operation of clusters, their benefits and challenges (e.g. Caple, 2011; Grimstad, 2011; Hopeniene & Rutelione, 2016; Jackson, 2006; Taylor, McRae-Williams & Lowe, 2007; and

Toader, Bota, Negrusa, Gavriletea & Tutunea, 2013), but there is an absence of knowledge on how these clusters are actually formed in practice. Martin and Sunley (2003) argued that the notion of a cluster has a total lack of conceptual clarity and 18 years after their work was publish, this clarity is little improved. Further, Wolfe and Gertler (2004) explained that there was a lack of consensus over how clusters were started or set in motion through purposeful design, calling for research to address this uncertainty. Literature has still not extended to broach destinations in which a business cluster does not currently exist, and there is no empirical research to explain how a business cluster is formed, so there still remains uncertainty in this domain.

Hawkins and Calnan (2009) offer suggestions on cluster development including: engaging an objective facilitator to convene the cluster, identifying potential members and beginning recruitment, determining member contribution, establishing objectives and performance benchmarks, building team synergy through communication and activity, engaging community support, and engaging the public sector. Although their research offers some guidance, their study is 12 years old and has not to date been empirically tested. As such, an empirical understanding of how a business cluster is formed is crucial to resolve this gap in current knowledge.

1.1.5 Understanding Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholders that are involved in the formation of a cluster need to be understood, because understanding their actions, relationships and networks will help to effectively understand the cluster formation process. It is not yet understood how different stakeholders specifically contribute to cluster formation, even though the importance of acknowledging stakeholders has gained recognition (Wilson, Nielson, Scherrer, Caldicott, Moyle & Weiler, 2018). This thesis responds by using stakeholder theory as a means by which to understand more complex perspectives of the interests that stakeholders have (Harrison & Wicks, 2013), and more specifically, by using stakeholder typology (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997) to classify stakeholder types using the attributes of power, legitimacy, and urgency. These attributes will bring clarity to different stakeholders and their subsequent contribution to business cluster formation.

Within business clusters, stakeholder networks can exist. Previous research has used the terms ‘network’ and ‘cluster’ interchangeably within tourism literature (as seen in Bodega, Cioccarelli & Denicolai, 2004; Hall, 2005; Lade, 2010, and Novelli, Schmitz &

Spencer, 2006, but this thesis distinguishes the cluster and network concepts, recognising differences between the two structures. Nordin (2003) explains that clusters differ from networks because clusters are often cross-sectoral and made up of cooperating and competing firms, whereas the study of networks is recognised as a means to understand interactions that take place among tourism businesses (Viren, Vogt, Kline, Rummel & Tsao, 2015, p. 110). Understanding stakeholder networks can provide insights to the extent to which stakeholders have relationships between them (Timur & Getz, 2008). Yet, at present there are no insights on how these stakeholder networks contribute to the cluster formation process, nor what type of stakeholder comprises such networks, and this study seeks to resolve this absence of information.

2.0. Research Framework and Questions

As mapped in Figure 1, there are five specific research gaps that this thesis aims to resolve; 1) It is unclear the extent to which collaboration contributes towards successful regional destination branding, 2) there is ambiguity on collaboration strategies; networks and clusters, 3) there is a lack of insight of the role of stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration in regional destination branding, 4) it is unknown to what degree stakeholder typologies contribute to cluster formation and 5) it is unknown how stakeholder networks contribute to the formation and composition of a cluster. Overarching these gaps is the overall research gap: it is unknown how businesses progress through cluster formation to contribute to destination branding.

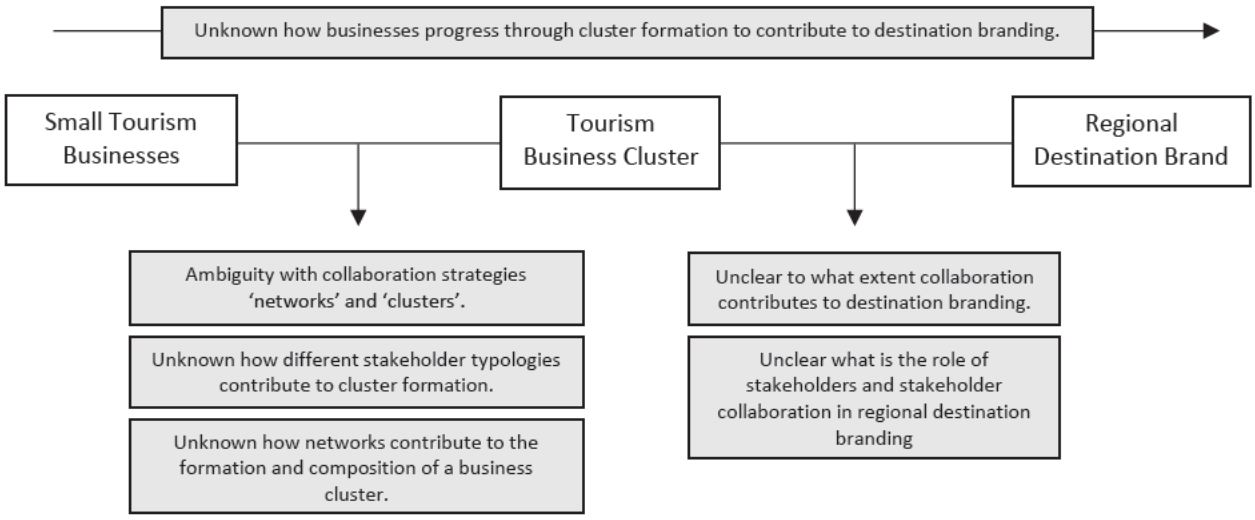

Figure 1: Summary of research gaps.

Subsequently, the overarching research question for this thesis is as follows:

How do small tourism businesses progress through the steps of cluster formation to contribute to destination branding?

To respond to this overarching research question, the following research questions will be responded to within this thesis and the individual papers:

RQ1: To what extent does collaboration contribute towards successful regional destination branding?

RQ2: To what extent are there differences between collaboration strategies; networks and clusters?

RQ3: To what extent do stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration play a role in regional destination branding?

RQ4: To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation?

RQ5: How do networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?

Note: Paper 1 uses the term 'research objectives' rather than 'research questions'. This approach was taken to suit the style of the published paper. While each of the papers present the research questions numbered according to each paper, numbering is kept numerical throughout this thesis for readability.

The research questions resolve the research gaps as depicted by Table 2 below.

Table 2: Research questions, gaps and paper number.

Research Question/Objective	Resolving Research Gap	Paper No.
Overarching RQ: *How do small tourism businesses progress through the steps of cluster formation to contribute to destination branding?*	Unknown how businesses progress through cluster formation to contribute to destination branding.	2
RQ1: To what extent does collaboration contribute towards successful regional destination branding?	Unclear to what extent collaboration contributes to destination branding.	1
RQ2: To what extent are there differences between collaboration strategies; networks and clusters?	Ambiguity with collaboration strategies 'networks' and 'clusters'.	1
RQ3: To what extent do stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration play a role in regional destination branding?	Unclear what the role of stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration in regional destination branding is.	1
RQ4: To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation?	Unknown how different stakeholder typologies contribute to cluster formation.	3
RQ5: How do networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?	Unknown how networks contribute to the formation and composition of a business cluster.	3

The below research framework (Figure 2) has been adapted from the above summary of gaps to display overarching research question: understanding how small tourism businesses can form a tourism business cluster that can then contribute to the regional destination brand. The research questions emerge where there is overlay between topics. As small tourism businesses progress into a tourism business cluster, questions emerge. For example, RQ5 emerges here, as it is not known how stakeholder networks contribute to the cluster. Then, as the tourism business cluster contributes to the destination brand, more questions emerge. For example, RQ1 emerges here, as the extent that collaboration with a cluster can contribute to the destination brand is unknown. The questions have been colour coded into their respective journal papers; green for the overarching research question, dark blue for RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3, and pale blue for RQ4 and RQ5.

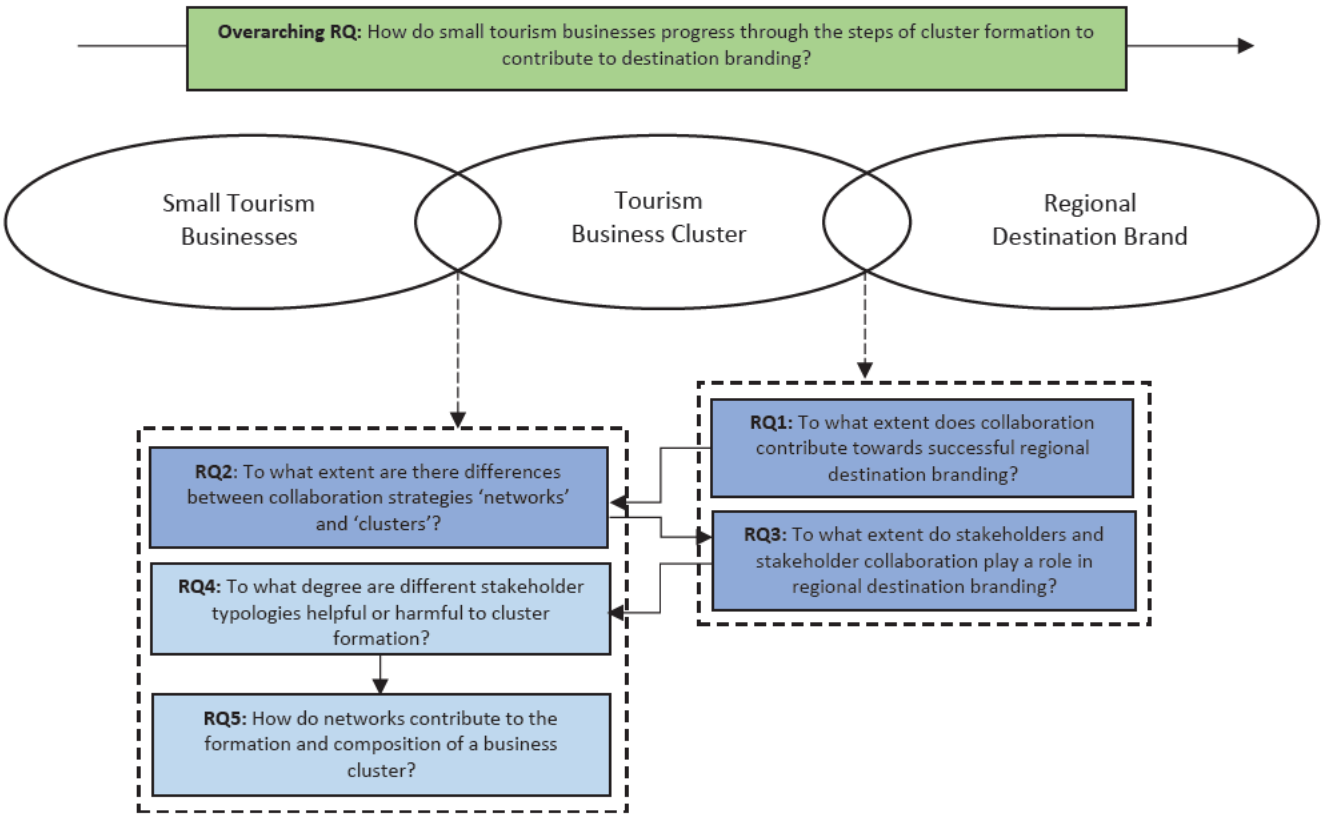

Figure 2: Research framework.

3.0. Overview of Methodology

The purpose of this section is to provide a concise overview of the methodological selections for this thesis. Please note that 'Part III Methodology' presents a full chapter on methodology, detailing the research design, explaining the methodological stance and research paradigm, and detailing the data collection, data analysis, and validity protocol. In addition, the methodology is also presented in each respective empirical paper. The full methodology chapter offers significantly more depth in comparison to the method section in each of the papers due to the brevity required of a journal article.

This thesis utilised participatory action research (PAR), which is a methodology that combines theory, action and participation that is aimed at assisting groups in focus (Fals-Borda, 2001). PAR creates inclusion of stakeholder groups (Ho et al., 2017; Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh & Ismail, 2017) which is suitable to the aims of this thesis. Gardiner and Scott (2017, p. 25) summarise their academic-industry research collaboration by emphasising that expertise and competencies can be greatly enhanced when business

operators and academics work together and call for academic researchers "to consider engaging in longer term relationships within industry research projects". This thesis responds to that call by implementing PAR. PAR methodology can use both qualitative and quantitative methods, but qualitative approaches have a greater potential to develop authentic and supportive relationships between the researcher and participants (Capriello, 2012) and as such, a qualitative approach was adopted.

Data was collected over a two-year period via participant observation, formal meetings, informal discussions, 'follow-ups' with key stakeholders, telephone conversations, text messages, emails, membership of a Facebook Group, document share, and attendance at committee meetings (the primary researcher was a committee member on the 'Economic Development and Regional Promotion Advisory Committee' for the Southern Downs Regional Council). All transcribed data totaled 45 data files. This data was then thematically analysed by the researcher in Excel to derive themes, and again in NVIVO to confirm the themes with nodes and sub-nodes, and running a series of queries. Additional detail about data collection and analysis is presented in Part III: Methodology, and in each of the papers.

4.0. Significance of Research

4.0.1. Theoretical Significance

First, Paper 1, a systematic narrative literature review, offers theoretical contributions by investigating the complexities of destination branding for small tourism businesses in regional areas, revealing gaps in knowledge that subsequently informed the remaining research questions in this thesis. The review synthesises destination branding literature that focuses on collaboration, establishing a basis of knowledge that future research can expand on, and offering new insights and interpretations on collaboration for regional destination branding.

Secondly, and importantly, this study offers theoretical advancement by addressing a call to enhance the conceptual clarity of a cluster (Martin & Sunley, 2003). Prior to this study there was a striking lack of consensus over cluster emergence (Wolfe & Gertler, 2004), and this research is the first to present empirically tested cluster formation processes. This study significantly expands on the literature by offering a complete framework to guide cluster formation, which includes the pre-cluster, cluster

formation, and cluster progression phases with a total of 12 respective steps within. The newly formed cluster in this study was able to contribute to the destination brand through event planning activities, which was chosen by members of the cluster. The final stage of total business cluster formation is project delivery. For the newly formed cluster in this study the event 'Granite Belt Living Lightly' was proposed and will be hosted in the future due to COVID-19 delays. As such, future papers will report on the cluster's ability to contribute to the destination brand and to raise awareness about the region (Caple, 2011; Gardiner & Scott, 2014; Saxena, 2005). Future studies will also report on any increase in tourism expenditure, which is a recognised outcome for regions that have fully adopted clustering (Lade, 2010).

Third, this thesis provides insights into the stakeholder typology, stakeholder collaboration and stakeholder network domains. Informed by Stakeholder Typology by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997), the classification of stakeholders historically required a high level of researcher judgement to establish if a stakeholder possessed classifying attributes. This thesis provides insights into identifying definitive, dominant, discretionary, dependent and dormant stakeholder typologies by describing tangible actions and/or behaviours each stakeholder typology exhibits making it easier for future researchers to identify the stakeholders that comprise their studies. The researcher then mapped the actions and/or behaviours of these various stakeholders into a 'Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum'; an original proposal that offers entirely new insights to the theory in this domain. The continuum indicates a range of actions from stakeholders and their degree those actions are helpful or harmful for cluster formation. This thesis also provided insights about the composition of stakeholder types within stakeholder networks, the degree to which stakeholder networks contributed towards cluster formation, and substantiation that the cluster enabled greater network development in the region.

4.0.2. Methodological Significance

First, the systematic narrative approach to the literature review offers a new perspective and method to perform literature reviews that combines benefits from both approaches. Narrative and systematic are the two main types of review articles in academia, and a paper typically adopts one method or another. Paper 1 in this thesis, however, presents a narrative approach to the literature review with integration of

systematic methods in a later stage of the review. Rather than a conflict between the two review types, it has been suggested that narrative and systematic review types can work together to provide the best information to academia and industry (Henry, Skinningsrud, Vikse, Pekala, Walocha, Loukas, Tubbs & Tomaszewski, 2018), and Paper 1 of this thesis offers evidenced support of this method.

Secondly, utilising a PAR design contributes toward advancing methodological approaches in the collaboration, stakeholder, and destination branding domains of tourism research. Literature had highlighted the successes of PAR for the progression and development of communities, yet this methodology is still not dominant in qualitative methods in tourism (Capriello, 2012). Gardiner and Scott (2017) made a call for academic researchers to foster longer term relationships within industry research projects, and this thesis responds to that call by adopting a PAR approach, fostering knowledge transfer and creation in an industry-academia relationship. The success of this PAR research project contributes support to the arguments for using PAR in tourism studies.

4.0.3. Practical Significance

This thesis offers a practical solution to a prevalent industry issue. Stakeholders face challenges collaborating, but this thesis offers a practical, step-by-step 'Total Cluster Formation Framework' (TCFF) and a 'Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum' (SHC) which offers insights into managing stakeholder relationships and interactions. For regions where successful collaboration is difficult or perhaps rarely exists, the TCFF offers guidance on how clusters can form and prosper by following the phases and steps. This research can therefore resolve future managerial issues with collaboration formation. While the cluster formation framework may not necessarily be transferable to all regional destinations, the study nevertheless offers insights to all forms of organised collaboration. The TCFF can be used by an array of stakeholders in many regional areas including local tourism businesses, local councils, local tourism organisations, chambers of commerce and local residents. In addition, the final stage of total business cluster formation is project delivery. For the newly formed cluster in this study, it is the event 'Granite Belt Living Lightly', which will be hosted at a later date after having to be postponed due to COVID-19. Such an event is likely to bring additional benefit to the region. Furthermore, the SHC offers a clear guideline for helpful and harmful stakeholder actions when engaging in collaboration. This offers critical insights into identifying

appropriate stakeholders to engage in collaborative projects. This study also offers insights into the types of stakeholders that comprise stakeholder networks, and demonstrates that clusters enable increased connections between stakeholders.

Further to this, participants reported outcomes from their involvement that contributed to their personal development. They experienced an opportunity to network with others aligning Taylor and Miller (2010) research that explains that business clusters encouraged togetherness within the community. Participants also reported an increased critical thinking ability, echoing the notion that business clusters promoted forward thinking discussion (DeAraujo & Bramwell, 2002) and encouraged innovation (Jackson, 2006). Therefore, participants in other destinations that utilise the cluster formation framework may also benefit from such personal development opportunities.

5.0. Structure of Thesis

This thesis is presented in a PhD with publication structure in compliance with the Griffith University Thesis Guidelines (Appendix 1) and Griffith Business School Guidelines (Appendix 2) for a PhD thesis that includes published and unpublished papers. The thesis consists of five parts: an introduction, a literature review (published), a methodology section, two empirical papers (one published and one under review), and an overall conclusion, described further below. **Note: Each part has its own numbering system to keep uniformity for thesis as all papers offer the same formatting. References and appendices from the thesis are presented at the end of the thesis but references for each of the three papers are included respectively in each paper.**

In Part I, a general introduction to the thesis has presented the rationale, summarised the theoretical background and highlighted gaps in present literature, leading to the research proposition and objectives. This section also outlined the methodological approach and now, the structure of the thesis.

Part II consists of **Paper 1**, which is a systematic narrative literature review, published in the A ranked journal (according to the ABDC ranking), *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*. Through a unique systematic narrative review process, Paper 1 investigates RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3 of this thesis, unpacking the challenges of destination branding for small tourism businesses in regional areas. It explores the concepts of collaboration including strategies for stakeholder collaboration. The review synthesises destination branding literature with a focus on how collaboration can be executed to

enable operators to contribute to regional destination branding, revealing many challenges in the clustering and network strategies. The paper concludes that success of stakeholder collaboration in practice is limited, suggesting future research should empirically trial how stakeholder collaboration can be implemented effectively from initiation. Findings from this paper were useful in informing the present thesis.

Part III is the methodological section. In this section, the methodology and research design are explored, with a justification for the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative PAR design choices. The two-year data collection process is thoroughly described in this section, as is the data analysis process, and the validity protocol that was followed to ensure a rigorous investigation.

Part IV consists of Paper 2 and Paper 3, which are the two empirical papers fulfilling RQ4, RQ5 and the overarching research question of this thesis. **Paper 2** is published in an A ranked journal (according to the ABDC ranking), *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management.* The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how tourism businesses progress through the phases of cluster formation, enabling them to contribute to destination branding. It is the first empirical paper that forms a tourism business cluster from initiation. Bringing together academics and industry in a PAR project, this paper presents the phases and their inherent steps to forming a tourism business cluster, presented in the 'Total Cluster Formation Framework' (TCFF).

Paper 3 is under review with *Tourism Management* (an A* ranked journal according to ABDC ranking) and provides critical insights into stakeholder typologies and stakeholder networks during the cluster formation process. The paper reveals the degrees that definitive, dependent, dominant, discretionary and dormant stakeholder typologies are helpful or harmful to the cluster formation process, offering the Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum (SHC) as an entirely new contribution for managing stakeholders during collaboration. The paper also contributes to the discussion of stakeholder networks, their composition, and their usefulness to cluster formation.

The thesis concludes with Part V, a summary of all key findings. Contributions of this thesis are also discussed in detail, as are limitations and recommendations for future research. The thesis also concludes with final researcher remarks. Table 3 below summarises the sections of this thesis with an indication of the different stages of the research project.

Table 3. Structure and content of thesis.

PART	PAPER	OBJECTIVE	APPROACH	DATASET
PART I	**INTRODUCTION**	General introduction and research rationale	N/A	N/A
PART II	**PAPER 1** *Understanding the contribution of stakeholder collaboration towards regional destination branding: A systematic narrative literature review.*	**Respond to RQ 1, 2, & 3:** To what extent does collaboration contribute towards successful regional destination branding? To what extent are there differences between collaboration strategies; networks and clusters? To what extent do stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration play a role in regional destination branding?	Systematic Narrative Literature Review	N/A
PART III	**METHODOLOGY**	Justification and analysis of paradigm, methodology, and research design	N/A	N/A
PART IV	**PAPER 2** *Collaboration in marketing regional tourism destinations: Constructing a business cluster formation framework through participatory action research.*	**Respond to overarching RQ:** How do small tourism businesses progress through the steps of cluster formation to contribute to destination branding?	Qualitative Participatory action research	19 Participants 45 Data files
	PAPER 3 *Don't hate-collaborate! Exploring stakeholder typologies, relationships and networks during the business cluster formation process.*	**Respond to RQ 4 & 5:** To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation? How do networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?	Qualitative Participatory action research	19 Participants 45 Data files
PART V	**CONCLUSION**	Summary and conclusions of thesis contributions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.	N/A	N/A

PART II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, a systematic, narrative literature review (Paper 1) is presented in the published version in place of a traditional literature review chapter. The formatting, spelling, and referencing style follow the requirements of the journal. Please note, the paper contains page numbers relevant to the journal, but running page numbers in this thesis will continue after the paper (pages in the paper contribute to the running total).

Paper 1 is a co-authored journal article. In accordance with Griffith University requirements, full bibliographic details and statement of contribution is provided below.

Paper 1

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2020). Understanding the contribution of stakeholder collaboration towards regional destination branding: A systematic narrative literature review. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, *43*, 250-258. **(ABDC Rank: A, IF: 3.415)**

The co-authors of this manuscript are my thesis supervisors, Associate Professor Catheryn Khoo (previously Khoo-Lattimore) and Professor Charles Arcodia. My contribution to the paper involved: conception of the theoretical framework, analysing the articles, interpreting the findings, drafting, re-writing and editing the paper and acting as corresponding author.

Signed [redacted] 01 March 2021

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Understanding the contribution of stakeholder collaboration towards regional destination branding: A systematic narrative literature review

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ABSTRACT

Through a rigorous systematic narrative literature review process, this paper investigates the complexities of destination branding for small tourism businesses in regional areas, revealing the challenges faced by these destinaitons in attracting sustained tourism. In regions comprised of numerous small businesses, complexities arise in destination brandingas each business projects their individual ideas about the destination's brand, creating a diluted marketing message. If businesses were to collaborate for destination branding, the marketing message would no longer be diluted. As such, this literature review explores the concepts of collaboration including strategies for collaboration and stakeholder collaboration, to understand how they can best contribute to successful destination brands. This review synthesizes destination branding literature that focuses on collaboration and how it can contribute to positive destination branding, establishing a basis of current knowledge in this domain and offering new insights and interpretations on collaboration for regional destination branding. This review highlights how useful collaboration has proven to be in regional destination branding, but also reveals how difficult and problematic enacting collaboration can be in practice. A framework is proposed within this paper to explain relationships between the concepts, to be used as a platform to direct future research in this domain.

1. Introduction

There are scales of destinations, differentiated by their size and type (for example, rural, region, city, state, country) and of these, regional destination branding has been argued to be the most fragmented (Hall, 1999). This is because the tourism product mix of a region consists of multiple elements, the majority of which are supplied by individual tourism businesses (Hall, 1999; Pike, 2005). It is essential to overcome these marketing complexities, and literature has suggested that collaboration is key; Cai (2002) implies that collaboration is imperative to destination branding, stating that "successful destination marketing is underpinned by the need for a cooperative and strategic approach" (p.531). Additionally, Cox and Wray (2011) integrate elements of collaboration in their best practice marketing strategies for tourism businesses within regional destinations, encouraging cooperation with nearby regions, the pooling of resources, education for the local community, and integration with the regional tourism organisation (RTO) in order to achieve successful regional destination branding. Scholars state that the need for cooperation between competing firms is ever growing (Saxena, 2005), that businesses need to reach out to their competitors to promote unified tourism districts (Telfer, 2001), and studies have emphasised the importance of strong informal stakeholder groups in brand development (Saraneimi & Komppula, 2019). There is little question about the benefits of collaboration, with most scholars agreeing that collaboration is useful in enhancing the core competencies of a region (Telfer, 2001), acting as a competitive strategy against other destinations (Caple, 2011; Saxena, 2005), and useful in promoting forward thinking discussion, encouraging negotiation, establishing mutually beneficial proposals for future tourism development, and helpful to governmental bodies in understanding and taking into account the aspirations of regional tourism destinations (de Araujo & Bramwell, 2002).

It is important to clarify that the authors consider coopetition, cooperation, alliance, partnership and various other terms are *forms* or *strategies* of collaboration. This can be evidenced by Gray's definition of collaboration as a process whereby "a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engage in interactive process, using shared rules, norms and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain" (Wood & Gray, 1991, p., 146). As such, the terms coopetition, cooperation, alliance, partnership etc. all fit this definition of collaboration as they describe autonomous stakeholders working together on a problem domain.

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While collaboration is repeatedly acknowledged as a success strategy for regional destination branding, actually enacting collaboration can prove to be extremely challenging. These include difficulties with resource allocation, policy ideas, unequal contribution from involved stakeholders, issues with communication and issues with the structure of the collaboration (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999a, 1999ba.; Gray, 1996). Other challenges identified for collaboration between small tourism businesses include; unbalanced efforts from stakeholders, small business mentality, competition between stakeholders, differing opinions, and a perceived lack of leadership from governing tourism bodies within the region (Perkins & Khoo Lattimore, 2019). Issues with collaboration can arise as a result of the collaboration having no actual structureand no goal or objective setting, resulting in a lack of communication and understanding between parties and inevitably the collaboration not being perceived as useful by other stakeholders (Perkins & Khoo Lattimore, 2019). It is also worthy to consider that when competing firms engage in collaboration, they could run the risk of decreasing the overall destination appeal if they engage in any sort of cartel agreement to limit competition and raise prices.

Evidently, research to date explains how useful collaboration can be, but it also explains tells how difficult collaboration can be to execute in a regional tourism setting. As such, there is a need for research to expand to understand how collaboration can best be enacted so that it can contribute towards destination branding in regional tourism areas where income from this industry is relied upon for the survival of these destinations. This narrative literature review begins by setting the scene on the importance of collaboration for regional destination branding. Then, to understand collaboration further, best practice collaboration strategies for regional destination branding are investigated within this review, revealing a large gap in knowledge on how collaboration is initiated. Finally, the review considers the important role of stakeholders, and investigates how they collaboration in relation to regional destination branding. This is important as there are currently no review articles that combine and synthesise these topics and is a clear gap in the literature. This will highlight what is yet to be understood in this domain, proposing a framework on how these theories and concepts can be integrated to inspire future research in this domain. Fig. 1 below depicts the structure for this review.

2. Review aim and objectives

This paper synthesizes the current literature on collaboration and regional destination branding with the aim of building a framework that maps the relationships between the concepts, with the overarching research aim;

> "To establish the role and importance of collaboration towards successful regional destination branding"

Importance is given to establishing how collaboration is best initiated for success. As such, this paper proposes to address the research aim by responding to the following objectives;

(1) To understand the extent to which collaboration contributes towards successful regional destination branding;
(2) To understand collaboration strategies, including networks and clusters
(3) To understand the role of stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration in regional destination branding;

This review seeks to seeks to offer a new interpretation of the existing literature on the concept of collaboration and to understand the contribution of collaboration for regional destination branding.

Fig. 1. Structure of review.

3. The method

Narrative and systematic are the two main types of review articles in academia, and a paper typically adopts one method or another. This paper, however, differs from this by offering a narrative approach to literature review, with integration of systematic methods in a later stage of the review. Rather than a conflict between the two review types, it has been suggested that narrative and systematic review types can work together to provide the best information to academia and industry (Henry, Skinningsrud, Vikse, Pekala, Walocha, Loukas, Tubbs & Tomaszewski, 2018).

A narrative approach typically describes the current state of knowledge on a specific topic from a theoretical and contextual viewpoint with little explicit structure for gathering and presenting evidence, whereas a systematic approach provides an overview of literature by identifying, critically appraising and synthesising the results with an explicit methodological approach (Henry et al., 2018). In a narrative approach, it is at the authors discretion how they search for articles, which they include and don't include, and why they draw their conclusions (Henry et al., 2018), and this is extremely useful for the authors to tell a story with narrative review. This can be a drawback, however, because the validity of such a study depends on the integrity of the authors, and can be subject to bias (Fletcher & Fletcher, 1997; Henry et al., 2018). A systematic approaches can offer a solution to this as they present a systematic assembly, critical appraisal, and synthesis of relevant studies on a specific topic (Cook, Sackett, & Spitzer, 1995).

Given that the research aims and objectives require a synthesis of topics, a narrative methodology fitting to respond to the research aims and objectives because narrative reviews allow synthesis to occur. Synthesis is important for this review, as it offers a process whereby interpretations and evidence from multiple sources are used to form understanding of the issue (Mays, Pope, & Popay, 2005; Yang, Khoo Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2017). Narrative reviews are useful in linking together many studies on different topics for the purpose of interconnection (Baumeister & Leary, 1997), and because this review aims to combine knowledge from various topics, narrative synthesis is useful as it offers the author to be able to tell a story based on accounts of previous literature (Yang et al., 2017; Mays et al., 2005; Popay et al., 2006). A narrative methodology is useful for providing information on a certain topic or theme from the viewpoint of the authors, discussing a specific topic from a theoretical and contextual point of view (Rother, 2007). A narrative approach "allows topics that are too broad for focused systematic literature searched to be covered" (Henry et al., 2018, p. 365), and this was particularly relevant when searching the literature on collaboration and destination branding (Stage 1 and 2) (See Fig. 2) as these are huge bodies of literature. Network theory (Stage 3) and Stakeholder Theory (Stage 5) also present large bodies of literature, and as such, a narrative approach was more applicable for these topics.

Within the literature returned from the searched in Stages 1 3, business clustering had been a recurrent topic in the synthesis and reported as a preferred strategy for collaboration. Business clustering, in its infancy in the tourism literature, was scalable for a systematic

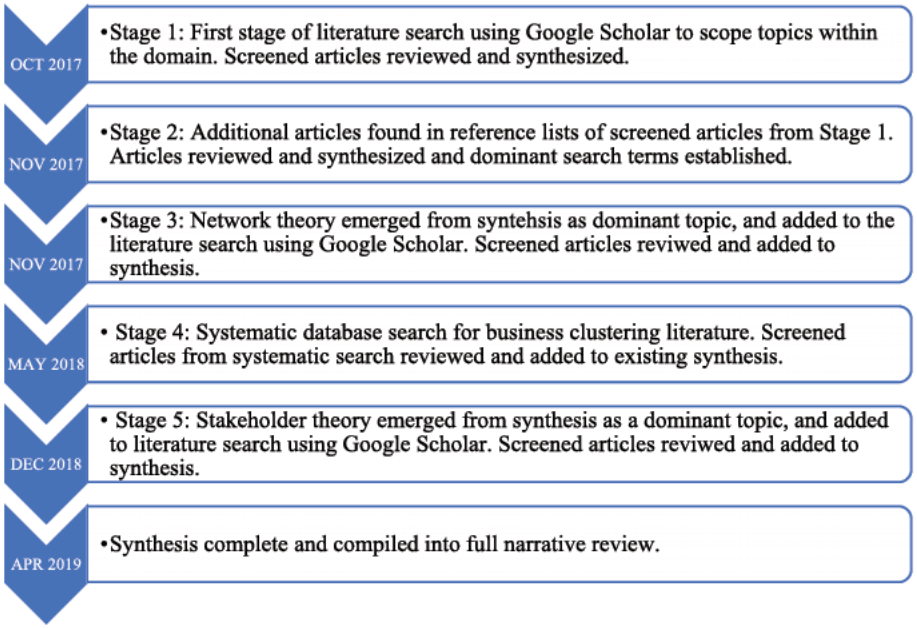

Fig. 2. Overview of literature search.

literature review. Introducing a systematic approach at this stage of the review would offer a reduction in bias, adding in a methodological approach to the study that would allow a portion of the study to be re produced (Rother, 2007). The infancy of business clustering within tourism literature presents opportunities for future research to expand in this domain, and a systematic approach for this topic would provide an explicit methodology (Higgins & Green, 2011) for gathering and presenting evidence so that it would be able to be re produced.

As such, Stages 1, 2, 3 and 5 (as per Fig. 2 above) reflect a narrative approach to reviewing literature and Stage 4 reflects a systematic ap proach to reviewing literature.

3.1. Narrative methodology

In the narrative approach to this review, findings and interpreta tions from both qualitative and quantitative literature have been the matically analysed and the data has not been altered (Yang et al., 2017; Mair, Ritchie, & Walters, 2014). Thematic analysis within this review allowed for integration of the authors insights, understanding, and creativity, which was important in constructing the narrative. During this review, the four phases of narrative synthesis were adhered to; 1) constructing the theoretical foundation of the review, 2) preliminary synthesis of screened records, 3) relationship assessment between screened records and 4) assessing the robustness of the synthesis (Mair et al., 2014; Popay et al., 2006; &; Yang et al., 2017). The first phases occurred with justification for the review, and establishing the review aim and objectives. The second phase occurred with organising screened articles into their topics of research, methodologies, location, and contributions, to interpret the configuration of the literature and its development. Phase three involved coding and grouping relevant arti cles into identified themes. In Phase four, assessing the robustness of the literature review was done via presentation to experts in the field.

For this part of the search, English language articles were synthe sised, and to ensure the quality of the extracted literature, the search was limited to peer reviewed, academic journal articles. In an initial Google Scholar search, key search terms relating to 'branding', 'mar keting', 'tourism', 'regional tourism', and 'collaboration' presented ar ticles that helped to map out the important topics within these topics. This stage was crucial to developing an understanding of the topics and their interconnections. Stage 3 of this search expanded to include literature on network theory, as this had presented as a dominant topic in the synthesis so far. Google Scholar was again used with the search terms "network theory" AND "tourism". Stage 5 of the literature search expanded to include literature on stakeholder theory, as stakeholder collaboration presented as a dominant topic in the synthesis so far. Google Scholar was used with the search term "stakeholder theory" AND "tourism". Articles that had presented titles relevant to the topics were selected to review and synthesise. Other articles were also in cluded if they had citations above 500, even if the titles only aligned with one of the domains. Additional articles were abstracted from the reference lists of these articles when the titles were well aligned with the topics, or when a cited paper presented significant contributions.

3.2. Systematic methodology

Business clustering arose from Stages 1 4 as a dominant topic, and given that it is still in its infancy in the tourism literature, it was scal able for a systematic review, which would reduce the bias of the study, as well as providing a platform for future reviews on tourism business clustering. The terms "business cluster", OR "tourism cluster" OR "destination cluster" or "cluster develop*" were used in the titles, ab stracts and keywords of articles, and terms and "tour*", OR "travel" OR "destination" were used to filter title of the publication. The search was not limited by year of publication, as tourism business clustering is still in its infancy stages in tourism and the first author had the resources to review all of the relevant findings, and additionally, wished to portray the most systematic and accurate representation of the progression of research. Seven academic databases were identified from prior litera ture reviews in tourism, starting with Scopus, EBSCO Host (Hospitality and Tourism Complete), ProQuest, Science Direct (Elsevier), Sage, Web of Science and Emerald (Table 1). Scopus was selected as the database for the initial search, as Yung and Khoo Lattimore (2017) and Yang et al. (2017) had recognised Scopus as the most efficient of the seven databases as it operates as a search engine of other databases.

4. Findings & discussion

Destination branding literature began in the early 1970s when Hunt (1975) explored destination image and its role in tourism development, defining destination image as the "perceptions held by potential visitors

Table 1
Overview of systematic search for business clustering literature.

Database	No. of articles	No. of unique relevant articles	Percentage of Articles
Scopus	49	39	73.58%
EBSCO	31	9	16.98%
ProQuest	13	0	–
Science Direct	19	4	7.55%
Sage	11	1	1.89%
Web of Science	10	0	–
Emerald	1	0	–
Total		**53**	**100%**

about an area'", (p.1). More recently, Morrison and Anderson (2002) defined destination branding as a way in which to differentiate a destination from its competitors by communicating its unique identity. Ekinci (2003) says that successful destination branding occurs when the brand matches the needs of the tourist and involves the development of mutual relationships between destinations and tourists. Destination branding has been recognised as a trend in tourism marketing (Murphy, Benckendorff, & Moscardo, 2007), and is considered an important marketing tool for establishing product differentiation and competitive advantage, and for effective positioning within the marketplace (Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Morgan, Pritchard and Piggot (2003) proposed that destination branding was the most powerful marketing tool for destination marketers.

Destination branding can apply broadly to a number of settings, including singular cities or towns (Table 2). Tourism scholars have discussed and/or applied destination branding theories on a multitude of scales and all of these scholars have emphasised the importance of establishing and promoting destination brand images for the success of destinations.

There is a large body of literature on destination branding, and within this only few (Cai, 2002; Murphy, Moscardo & Benckendorff, 2007) have investigated destination branding on a regional scale and considered the unique challenges that regional destinations face in branding activities. As such, there is a limited amount of literature that analyses destination branding on a regional scale, and it has been argued that regional destination branding is actually more complex than other scales of destinations, because a region's tourism product mix consists of multiple elements supplied by individual tourism businesses (Hall, 1999). Given that there are complexities in marketing regional destinations, it is essential to understand how collaboration offer solutions.

4.1. The contribution of collaboration towards regional destination branding

Research objective one sought to understand the extent to which collaboration contributes towards successful regional destination branding, and the following paragraphs demonstrate this link. The literature explains that collaboration can promote forward thinking discussion between stakeholders, encourage negotiation, establish mutually beneficial proposals for future tourism development, and help governmental bodies understand and take into account the aspirations of regional tourism destinations (de Araujo & Bramwell, 2002). Understanding the collaborative behaviours of stakeholders can create opportunity to be more effective in the management of tourism within a destination (Todd, Leask, & Ensor, 2017) as it allows for a more inclusive consideration of all issues affecting the host community (Bramwell & Lane, 1993). As summarised by McComb, Boyd, and Boluk (2017), stakeholder collaboration can offer a form of management that facilitates widened support for the development of tourism (Keogh, 1990; Lankford & Howard, 1994). Collaboration is used to enhance the core competencies of a tourism region, and for competitors to unify to promote their region (Telfer, 2001). As the tourism industry can be volatile and sensitive, particularly in regional destinations, the need for cooperation between competitors is ever growing (Saxena, 2005), and where complementary products, activities, accommodation, transport and food (all examples of STBs) are co existing within a region, there is opportunity for connections and interrelationships (Pavlovich, 2003). In relation to the research objective, the existent literature explains that collaboration does in fact greatly contribute towards regional destination branding, but it isn't quite that simple. The conscious action and processes of collaboration towards regional destination branding, however, is still an under researched topic within the tourism literature, which is perplexing given that it is considered to play a significant role in the development of a regional brand (Caple, 2011; Saxena, 2005). This leads into research question 2).

4.2. Investigating collaboration strategies that contribute towards regional destination branding

Research objective two sought to investigate the collaboration strategies that contribute towards regional destination branding. The terms 'network' and 'clusters' are commonly referred to within destination branding literature as effective strategies by which the collaborative arrangements take place between stakeholders. The terms 'network' and 'cluster' are often used interchangeably within the literature, as demonstrated by Bodega, Cioccarelli, and Denicolai (2004), Hall (2005), Novelli, Schmitz, and Spencer (2006) and Lade (2010). But, from the Organisation for Economic Co operation and Development (OECD), Nordin (2003, in Hall, 2005, p. 155) explains that terms should not be used interchangeable, but rather, differ from one another. The cluster concept goes beyond 'simple' horizontal networks; clusters are often cross sectoral (vertical and/or lateral) networks, made up of dissimilar and complementary firms specialising around a specific link of knowledge base in the value chain" (OECD, 1999, p. 12). In alignment with this explanation, many authors state that clusters have socially embedded vertical and horizontal linkages of co locating firms and their interaction with education and other organisations (Malmberg & Maskell, 2002; Maskell, 2001; Wolfe & Gertler, 2004). Based on the above definitions, it is understood that networks exist within clusters because of the commonalities that exist between the

Table 2
Scales of destination branding.

Scale of Destination Branding	Authors
International	Chen, Dwyer, & Firth, 2015; Prayag, 2007
National	Alejandria-Gonzalez, 2016; Aziz, Kefallonitis, & Friedman, 2014; Bianchi & Pike, 2011; Hemmonsbey & Tichaawa, 2018; Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Kouris, 2009; Murillo, 2014; Ndlovu & Heath, 2011; Oliveira, 2013; Pike & Bianchi, 2016; Ravichandran & Suresh, 2010; Sziva et al., 2017; Telišman-Košuta, 2016
Regional	Henthorne, George, & Miller, 2016; Kimbu, 2011; Lee & Arcodia, 2011; Makkonen, 2016; Marcoz, Melewar & Dennis, 2016; Murphy et al., 2007; O'Connor, Flanagan, & Gilbert, 2008; and Pike & Mason, 2011
Cities	Ahn, Hyun, & Kim, 2016; Giraldi & Cesareo, 2014; Huang, Zhang & Choi, 2013; Merrilees, Miller, Herington, & Smith, 2007; Kavaratzis, 2016; Pereira, Correia, & Schutz, 2015; Seljeseth & Korneliussen, 2015; Souiden, Ladhari, & Chiadmi, 2017; Sou, Vinnicombe, & Leung, 2016
Rural and Local	Cai, 2002; Hall, 2008; Marcoz et al., 2016; Son & Zu, 2013; Wheeler, Frost, & Weiler, 2011

Table 3
Networks vs Clusters.

Factor	Network	Clusters
Goals	Members have common business goals	Members share a collective vision
Membership	Restricted membership between firms who work together to produce output	Open 'membership' for all firms, regardless of similarities and differences
Cooperation vs Competition	Based on cooperation between businesses with common goals	Based on both cooperation and competition between businesses who are both alike and different
Agreements	Based on contractual agreements	Based on social values that foster trust and encourage reciprocity

stakeholders within.

Within the literature, definitions by Hall (2004) proved to be effective in comparing the two collaboration strategies; "networking refers to a wide range of cooperative behaviour between otherwise competing organisations linked through economic and social relationships and transactions", and "clusters exist where there is a geographic concentration or association of firms and organisations involved in a value chain, producing goods and services and innovating" (p.170). To add to this distinction between the terms, the authors also refer to Rosenfeld (1997), who also drew clear distinctions between networks and clusters. Table 3 provides an overview of the differences, as summarised from Rosenfeld (1997).

Networks and clusters for destination branding will each be discussed separately in the following sections.

4.2.1. Networks for destination branding

Network research provides insights in understanding groups of stakeholders, often referred to by the literature as 'actors', who engage in frequent interactions (Collins & Raven, 1968; Frank, 1995; Viren, Vogt, Kline, Rummel, & Tsao, 2015). The study of networks is recognised as a means to understand interactions that take place among tourism businesses "by examining the formal and information connections linking them together" (Viren et al., 2015, p. 110). While research has considered stakeholder networks and relationships within destinations (Buhalis, 2000; Carey, Guontas, & Gilbert, 1997; Cooper, Fletcher, Gilbert, Fyall & Wanhill, 2005; Morgan, 1996; Ritchie & Crouch, 2005; Sautter & Leisen, 1999), it does not entirely explain the complexities of the ties between stakeholders, and thus, Hazra (2017) argued that a deeper understanding of the links between stakeholders is necessary, and this remains true for this review. The literature tells us that understanding the power hierarchy between stakeholders within a network is important, as stronger networks can lead to a number of financial and social benefits for stakeholders (Morrison, Lynch & Jones, 2004). It also acknowledges that connections and interactions within a stakeholder network can offer insights to both researchers and practitioners about the networks behaviours, the interrelations between stakeholders, and the factors that contribute to, or detract from, the success of the network (Viren et al., 2015). Yet, there still remains a lack of understanding of the behaviours *within* a stakeholder network, highlighting an area were future tourism research could expand to beyond the present study. As the literature cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder networks, this review looks to the business clustering literature in an effort to further understand how stakeholder collaboration can contribute to destination branding.

4.2.2. Clusters for destination branding

Seminal work on business clustering began in 1998 with Porter defining a business cluster as a "geographic concentration of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field" (p.78). The present tourism literature explains that clusters have an embeddedness and interdependence between businesses, can foster knowledge transfer and have an objective or raising awareness about their region (Caple, 2011), which are factors that enable stakeholders to embrace competition for future success, and allow the cluster to achieve economies of scale (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). Stakeholders can receive benefits of heterogeneous marketing strategies, global collaboration potential, ease in attracting talent, establishment of long term relationships, trust in information sharing, and reduced risk when innovating (Caple, 2011). Porter (1990) later explained that 'competitive friction is a key factor in the success of a cluster as a consistent firm does not want to appear to be laggard and will strive to stay in the forefront' (p. 157). While businesses within any tourism destination are essentially competitors, they also have to work together to create a consistent high quality of tourist offering and as such, it is both cooperation and competition that are present within clusters (Grangsjo, 2003). In a study of the Niagara regional cluster wineries had reached a pleasant balance of collaboration and competition, ranging from joint marketing, to sharing of customers, and research (Telfer, 2001).

Within the literature, emphasis is placed on how business clustering can assist with raising awareness about the tourism destination and enhance destination marketing efforts by combining knowledge and resources (Hall, 2005; Randall & Mitchell, 2008; Taylor & Miller, 2010). By fostering a sense of togetherness within the community, clusters can assist a region in developing its desirable characteristics to attract tourism and contribute to the destination brand (Taylor & Miller, 2010). Lade (2010) established that regions who had implemented clustering were inclined to be more successful in terms of tourism expenditure and overnight tourist visitation in comparison to regions without clustering, and the literature suggests that this is because clustering can encourage businesses to sell the destination before selling their individual businesses (Gardiner & Scott, 2014).

It is important to note, however, that research to date has only examined business clustering in regions where a cluster *already exists* successfully and provides no information *how* clusters come into this existence. In fact, it has been said that there is a "striking lack of consensus over how clusters are started and to what extent their emergence can be set in motion by conscious design" (Wolfe & Gertler, 2004, p. 1073). To the best of the authors' knowledge, the tourism literature has not yet extended to broach any areas in which a business cluster does not already exist and therefore, does not provide knowledge on how a business cluster can be initiated, or provides details on the stages to cluster formation.

Further to this, while the literature does report on the challenges to business clustering, it has not yet extended to empirically establish how to overcome these challenges. Lade (2010) outlined barriers to successful clusters; reluctance to share knowledge and information, greed and self interest, lack of trust and cooperation between local businesses, backward and close minded thinking including a lack of vision and ignorance of new business arrivals, lack of organisation and leadership, lack of time, expertise and interest, border anomalies or undefined geographical borders and governing bodies of those borders, business diversity, and established conservative business clusters who are exclusive and do not allow new members (p. 568 569).

Aside from explaining that clusters should have a balance of competition and collaboration, reporting on the some of the activities that stakeholders engage in, and outlining the challenges encountered in clustering, the literature has not yet expanded to reveal the nature of interaction between stakeholders in such a collaboration, how challenges within clusters can be overcome, and how a cluster is actually formed. In an attempt to understand this gap, this review expands to

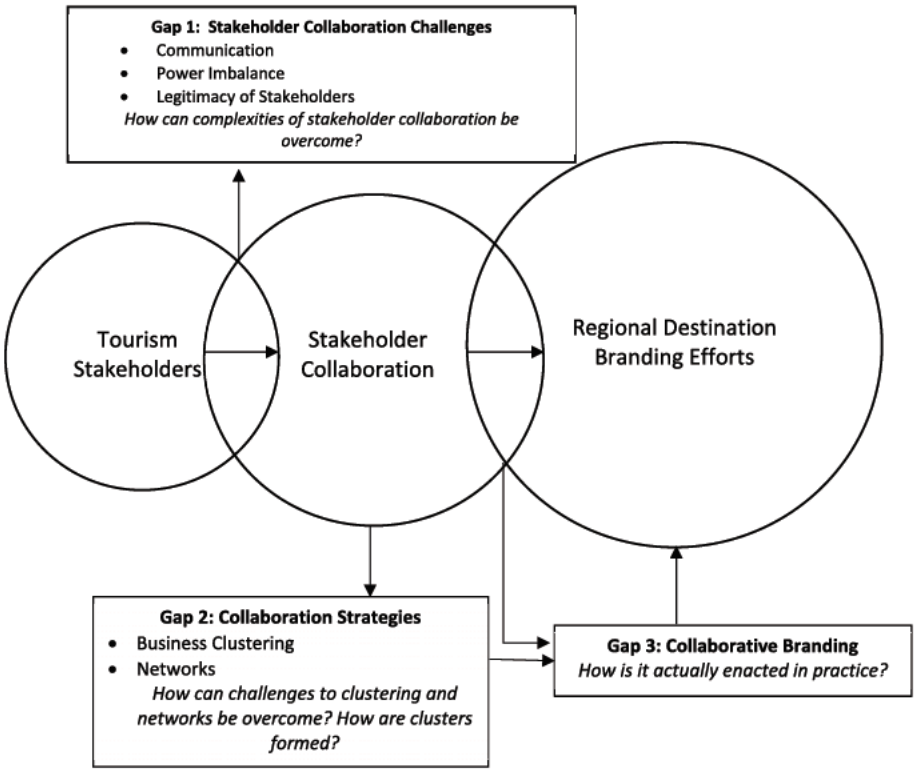

Fig. 3. Framework for Stakeholder Collaboration for Regional Destination Branding highlighting gaps for future research.

consider stakeholder interaction within collaboration.

4.3. Understanding the role of stakeholders and their collaborative efforts for regional destination branding

Research objective three sought to understand the role of stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration towards regional destination branding. To do this, the seminal work on stakeholder theory are looked upon first. Freeman (1984), and Donaldson and Preston (1995), called for organisations to gain insight and an understanding of the key stakeholders who were involved in their company's activities. Freeman (1984) defined a stakeholder as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives' (p.46), which extended to say that a stakeholder was a group or individual that had a legitimate stake in that organisation. In his seminal works, Freeman (1984) explained that when core stakeholders come together with a communicated shared sense of value and an understanding of the purpose of the organisation, then value is created for that organisation. This explanation hints at an inclusion of collaboration within stakeholder theory, yet it did little to extend beyond this. To date, there has still been a paucity of stakeholder research since that expands with a collaboration focus. Within the literature, the term 'stakeholder collaboration' emerged from stakeholder theory (McComb et al., 2017) in an effort to understand how stakeholder groups can support the overall objectives of an organisation (Mainardes, Alves, & Raposo, 2011) and to understand how groups of stakeholders with similar interests are formed (Mainardes et al., 2011). However, there remains a fragmented understanding of stakeholder collaboration, which seems nonsensical, given that the literature explains that stakeholder collaboration is critical for the success of tourism destinations (McComb et al., 2017). The literature even specifically says that "appreciating how and when these engagements occur is relevant to building upon existing stakeholder theory and is pertinent to the tourism management and studies literature" (Todd et al., 2017, p. 495), and yet the literature has still not expanded in this direction.

Interestingly, within the literature on stakeholder collaboration, challenges are a main focus of many papers. Perhaps these challenges the reason that researchers have shied away from investigated stakeholder interactions and collaboration? It is important for this review to now highlight research by Aas, Ladkin and Fletcher's (2005) into the world heritage site of Luang Prabang in Laos, which aimed to combine both heritage conservation and tourism development through stakeholder collaboration. Their project noted that communication was more difficult to manage than expected, and many issues arose in the collaborative process (Aas, Ladkin, & Fletcher, 2005). Further to this, when looking closer at challenges to stakeholder collaboration, it is important to recognise the factor of trust and its implications on collaboration. Trust can increase commitment of stakeholders and reduce decisional uncertainty, but trust is challenging Marcoz, Mauri, Maggioni & Cantu, 2016). The development of trust can take a large amount of time, and trust is also often a matter of personal relationships between tourism stakeholders (Marcoz et al., 2016). This suggests that stakeholder collaboration is significantly more complex than we currently understand, and reinforces the importance of given more attention to understanding and overcoming these complexities.

Shockingly, over *half* of all of the collaborative relationships shown in empirical studies have resulted in failure (Spyriadis, 2002, in; McComb et al., 2017). McComb et al. (2017) suggesting that the failure of stakeholder collaboration is likely because of the complexities of the stages involved in stakeholder collaboration. The authors suggest that this failure rate in collaborations can be attributed to the complexity in identifying legitimate stakeholders, gaining stakeholder participation, and then working towards effective collaboration (McComb et al., 2017), and Bramwell and Sharman (1999a, 1999ba) suggest that unequal power relations often exist amoung stakeholders, which can contribute to this failure. Savage et al. (2010) contribute to this point, explaining that stakeholder collaboration is complex as it involves multiple stakeholders with varying interests and goals. The goal of research objective three was to understand the role of stakeholder collaboration towards regional destination branding, and while it is

understood that stakeholders can play a crucial role when collaborating, there many complexities in this domain that should be expanded on into the future.

4.4. Synopsis

This review concludes that the success of stakeholder collaboration in practice is limited within the literature (Fyall & Garrod, 2004), leaving many questions unanswered and many areas for future research. It is recommended that future research seeks to empirically trial how stakeholder collaboration can be: (a) implemented from the initiation, (b) implemented effectively, to ensure the success rates of stakeholder collaboration addressing challenges encountered; and (c) to embed the success of stakeholder collaboration into destination branding efforts. This paper offers a framework (Fig. 3) for understanding how the stakeholder collaboration strategies can be integrated with destination branding, providing an indication on the anticipation of how stakeholder collaboration challenges can effect successful collaboration.

5. Conclusions

The overarching aim of this literature review was to establish the role and importance of collaboration towards successful regional destination branding. This review, however, has proposed more questions than it has answered and in an effort to map what we know about collaboration for destination branding this review instead highlighted several gaps in the current state of knowledge and outlined what is not yet known. The three research objectives are presented again below to highlight the contribution of this review work to current knowledge on collaboration regional destination branding.

1) Understanding how collaboration contributes towards successful regional destination branding.

This review highlighted the importance of collaboration for successful regional destination branding, and proposed questions on how this collaboration is actually enacted in practice. While much of the literature reported how beneficial collaboration was for the purpose of regional destination branding, it was not clear how the collaboration was actually set in motion, nor did it provide advice on how to begin collaboration if it does not already pre exist within a region. This added further importance to research objective 2, which investigated collaboration strategies in more detail.

2) Understanding how networks and clusters can contribute to the success of regional destination branding efforts.

This review is the first to comprehensively map what we know about collaborative strategies, specifically networks and clusters. This review revealed that networks and business clusters have been proven as successful collaboration strategies, but many challenges within networks and clusters were identified. While suggestions are made within the literature to overcome these collaborative challenges, this review established that to date, there is not yet any empirical evidence to provide evidence on these.

3) Understanding the role of stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration in regional destination branding.

This review contributes to the literature on destination branding by revealing many challenges associated with stakeholder collaboration revolving around communication, power imbalance, and the legitimacy of stakeholders involved. It is not yet understood within the literature how these complexities can be overcome, which highlights a gap in literature, and also provides challenges for industry wanting to better stakeholder collaborations for the purpose of regional destination branding.

To summarise, it is essential to point out that the resounding finding throughout this research is that stakeholder collaboration for destination branding is underdeveloped within the research, and as such, while collaboration may have been reported as successful in some regions, we will not be able to duplicate these results in other regions until we have a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder interactions.

5.1. Future research

By offering a narrative approach to literature review, with integration of systematic methods in a later stage of the review, this systematic narrative review has provided a new understanding of the importance of collaboration for successful regional destination branding, however it proposed more questions about how collaboration is actually enacted in practise. To this point, it is essential that future research expands to consider how collaboration can be enacted from initiation in a practical setting, with importance on detailing what form the collaboration takes, and how collaboration can be set in motion.

In addition, this review highlighted the successes of networks and business clusters as collaboration strategies for regional destination branding, but it also highlighted many challenges in relation to these collaboration strategies and was not able to provide any empirical evidence to show to overcome these. As such, future research should empirically understand the strategies to overcoming the challenges of collaboration that are proven to work within an industry setting, which will contribute to building a theoretical framework for further investigation.

5.2. Limitations

This study is not without limitations. This review only considered articles published in English. Future research may wish to extend to firstly, acknowledge articles in other languages, and furthermore, may wish include articles from journals that focus on different industries and take insights from these. In addition, as only peer reviewed articles were considered within the present study, future research could also consider conference papers, reviews, editorials, dissertations and thesis, and books, as these may also contribute understanding. The transparent nature of the methodology of this literature review offers an increased ease for follow up studies to expand the results from this paper.

This study does not specifically focus on the inclusion of destination marketing organisations (DMOs) in the collaborative relationships. Recent research has suggested an overemphasis of DMOs within destination marketing literature, explaining that focusing on DMOs ignores the early stages of any destination organisation which is in the hands of public sector actors and local stakeholders (Saraneimi & Komppula, 2019). The authors acknowledge that DMOs can take varied structures, and can be formed from an array of tourism stakeholders. Practically, not every destination actually has a DMO, and as such, from a practical standpoint, the authors did not place more emphasis on DMOs than other tourism stakeholders, but future studies could expand in this direction.

Lastly, this study does not broach the body of literature on destination competitiveness, recognising that as a separate body of literature that could be included in future studies as it sat outside of the scope of the present study. A recent doctoral thesis by Katarina Melicevic (2016) draws a separation between destination branding and destination competitiveness, describing destination branding as a factor for destination competitiveness. She also explains that destination branding influences tourism destination competitiveness, and highlights that connections between destination branding and destination competitiveness are missing (Melicevic, 2016).

Declaration of competing interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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PART III METHODOLOGY

1.0. Introduction

Paper 1 has offered a comprehensive examination of existent literature in the domain of this thesis, presenting research gaps and proposing a direction for future research. The research gaps are depicted in Figure 3 of the literature review (Paper 1) above and is an adaptation of Figure 2 within this the Introduction Section of this thesis, which is the proposed research framework. The literature review proposed questions on how collaboration is enacted in practice, recommending that future research expands to consider how collaboration can be enacted from initiation in a practical setting. The review highlights the successes of networks and business clusters as collaboration strategies for regional destination branding, but it also highlighted challenges in relation to these strategies and was not able to provide any empirical evidence to show how to overcome these. This literature review informed the methodological selection of this thesis.

To reiterate, the overarching research question for this thesis is:

How do small tourism businesses progress through the steps of cluster formation to contribute to destination branding?

To respond to this overarching research question, the following research questions are addressed within this thesis and its papers. Paper 1 addressed RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3:

RQ1: To what extent does collaboration contribute towards successful regional destination branding?

RQ2: To what extent are there differences between collaboration strategies; networks and clusters?

RQ3: To what extent do stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration play a role in regional destination branding?

RQ4: To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation?

RQ5: How do networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?

To resolve the overarching research question and RQ4 and RQ5, this thesis adopts a participatory action research (PAR) design. This chapter details the design approach, explains the paradigm that aligns with this method and research problem, and informs data collection and analysis methods.

2.0. Research Design

2.0.1. Defining Participatory Action Research

Gardiner and Scott (2017) summarized their academic-industry research collaboration by emphasising that expertise and competencies can be greatly enhanced when business operators and academics work together, calling for researchers to actively engage in relationships with industry. This thesis responds to this by adopting a PAR approach, seeking to foster relationships between academia and industry. The research sought to uncover the processes of tourism business cluster formation, by exploring stakeholder collaboration. McComb, Boyd and Boluk (2017) explain that for research that involves the study of stakeholders to be effective, the research design must elicit responses from stakeholders regarding the problem domain. Given that this study adopts the belief that stakeholders are crucial to decision making activities to solve tourism problems (Robson & Robson, 1996), PAR is suitable as it offers substantive inclusion of stakeholders (Ho, Chia, Ng & Ramachandran, 2017; Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh & Ismail, 2017). Further, inviting stakeholder participation in research processes can strengthen communities by fostering connections, creating a sense of belonging, building trust and credibility among members (Jafaar et al., 2017).

Reason and Bradbury (2001, p. 1-2) define PAR as "a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in pursuit of worthwhile human purposes", and explain that PAR produces practical knowledge that is useful to those involved. PAR combines theory, action, and participation (Fals-Borda, 2001), and there has long been a growing interest in this research design approach, as it creates opportunities for change and development at a grassroots level (Fals-Borda, 1987). Participatory methodologies that involve community stakeholders have proven to offer

stakeholders the opportunity to contribute to control and allocation of resources, resulting in increased efficiency, as well as equity and harmony among stakeholder groups (Nicholas, Thapa & Ko, 2009). Because the research orientation of PAR reflects empowerment (Jafaar et al., 2017), the aim of this methodology is to encourage high levels of stakeholder participation (Capriello, 2012) which is in alignment with the anticipated outcomes of this thesis. By involving tourism stakeholders in the research process, opportunities are created for them to influence the direction of tourism development rather than passively receiving tourism benefits (Jaafar et al., 2017). PAR involves assessing paths of action which encourages strategic thinking (Capriello, 2012), and is said to challenge academic routines of knowledge creation (Fals-Borda, 1987) to provide a superior depth of information obtained during data collection process. PAR is about "working towards practical outcomes, and also about creating new forms of understanding, since action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless" (Capriello, 2012, p.2).

2.0.2. Justification for Methodological Selection

There have been many cases where PAR has been utilised in research with a similar scope and context to the present thesis, reiterating the appropriateness of PAR. PAR has been used as a means to facilitate small tourism firm learning networks (Kelliher, Foley & Frampton, 2009), where the authors examine the operationalisation of a small firm learning network model in an Irish tourism development agency. The authors claim that PAR proved powerful to enhance the model, allowing for feedback cycles that helped to refine assessments and learning value measurements. Waayers, Lee and Newsome (2012), also used PAR to explored the theory of stakeholder collaboration as a practical issue in the case of turtle tourism in the Ningaloo region of Western Australia, and it proved useful in contributing to theory with the appointment of an industry conveyor proving a vital role in facilitating the research process. Similarly, Schmitz and Lekane Tsobgou (2016) explain that the initiation of their research project came from the researchers but that the findings and recommendations were a result of collaboration between the stakeholders and the researchers. PAR allowed them to identify barriers to tourism entrepreneurship, find solutions with local stakeholders, and to implement change in local practices (Schmitz & Lekane Tsobgou, 2016). This indicates the appropriateness of the present thesis in adopting PAR as the present study also seeks

to identify barriers, find solutions and implement solutions in a similar manner. Capriello (2012) also implemented PAR for stakeholder collaboration in a case study in the rural area of Piedmont, concluding that "PAR is a valid approach when the research purposes are not only to produce a deep understanding of forms of collaboration but also create a co-operative climate by planning actions with local actors" (Capriello, 2012, p. 323-324). Capriello (2012) explained that PAR is particularly useful within tourism, as the approach empowers local stakeholders in the development of community processes. This demonstrates PAR to be a well aligned methodology as the purpose of the present thesis is to enhance collaboration between tourism operators and empower them to overcome collaboration challenges they are facing.

2.0.3. Aims of Participatory Action Research to Guide Research

There are four aims of PAR which are used to develop the methodological guidelines for the present study. The first aim, the **enlightening and awakening of common people**, represents the progression of self-awareness through the process of self-inquiry and reflection (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). As such, the data collection process in this thesis incorporated self-inquiry and reflection activities. The second aim, **social transformation**, occurs with the strategic guidance of intellectuals to provide leadership to the group for social change to occur (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). Most PAR projects cannot occur without the guidance of such a leader with the expertise, time and ability to commit to the PAR project (Reason, 1994), helping to reinforce the role of the researcher in enacting this project within this thesis. The third aim, **producing knowledge and action that are useful to the group**, occurs by learning with reflection and self-research in small groups, encouraging thinking, feeling, and action (Tandon, 1989). In PAR, academic knowledge and industry knowledge work together to create a more profound understanding of the situation (Bernard, 2000), thus, the present thesis included learning activities for cluster members. The final aim is **answering research questions via the process of human flourishing**, honouring the right of stakeholders to contribute input into decision making that affects their way of life within that chosen community, empowering them to grow and feel empowered during the process (Selener, 1997). To realize if the present PAR project is successful, participants should experience increased levels of empowerment and confidence, which will be measured in the present thesis.

3.0. Methodological Stance and Research Paradigm

PAR has historically adopted both qualitative and quantitative methods, but "qualitative approaches have a greater potential to develop authentic and supportive relationships" (Capriello, 2012, p.327). Qualitative approaches in PAR provide opportunity for participants to share their personal experiences (Nelson, Ochocka, Griffin & Lord, 1998) and are ideal in encouraging participants to have a voice (Gaventa, 1991). The lens that participants have their own experiences and voice naturally leads to an interpretivist approach which has been suitable in helping encourage participant sharing and uncover why they shared it in that particular way (Jebreen, 2012). Hazra, Fletcher & Wilkes (2017) adopted an interpretive-qualitative methodological approach within their study of tourism stakeholder relationships as the approach provides a means to explore relationships, behaviors and stakeholder perceptions, which are often not quantifiable (Gratton & Jones, 2007; Silverman, 2006; Zapata, Hall, Lindo & Vanderschaeghe, 2011). This indicates the alignment of the interpretivist paradigm for this thesis. Gaining an understanding of participant experience within this study is essential to the outcome, and an interpretivist paradigm will allow understanding from an insider's perspective (Tracy, 2013).

The ontology and epistemology for interpretivists considers that the world and knowledge (one's reality) are created by social understanding (Guba, 1990; Riley & Love, 2000). The ontology of interpretivism is that reality is relative, there is no 'one' reality and instead there are multiple realities (Hudson & Ozanne, 1998). In this research project this ontological assumption allows the researcher to understand the world view of each participant. The epistemology of interpretivism understands that the grounds of knowledge exist through the perception of one's knowledge and allows focus on specifics (Carson, Gilmore, Perry & Gronhaug, 2001). As such, the epistemological assumption allows the researcher to recognize all knowledge and interpretations, rather than seeking generalizations and concrete descriptions (Carson et al., 2001).

4.0. Data Collection

4.0.1. Viability of the Target Region

The definition of a target community is critical in PAR studies (Penrod, Leob, Ladonne & Martin, 2016) specifically because the planning cycle involves assessing the target community and working with it to create strategies to move forward (MacDonald, 2012). In this research the target community are the stakeholders involved in business cluster formation and this study took place in the Granite Belt region in South-East Queensland, Australia. The region's viability was confirmed by the researcher's ability to travel to the region within a short amount of time due to its proximity to Brisbane (the researcher's current city of residence). Further, the researcher has family within the region so accommodation was not a matter of concern and the researcher's personal connections within the region due to being raised there allowed easy access to participants. In addition the researcher within this study had access to local resources via relationships with Southern Downs Regional Council (SDRC) and Southern Queensland Country Tourism (SQCT) that were established during prior research (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019).

4.0.2. About the Target Region

The Granite Belt offers immense potential as a successful tourism destination. Described by Lonely Planet *"Queensland's only real wine region of any size- the place in the state where it's cool enough to grow commercial quantities of grapes"* the region is known for intimate, small-scale cellar doors and alternative grape varieties. (Lonely Planet, 2021). According to the Stanthorpe & The Granite Belt Visitor Guide 2020-21, *"The Granite Belt has always been a place of rest and relaxation- a place where people came to enjoy nature or recover from illness or war. In 1905 the State Government gazetted the region as Queensland's official 'health resort'. And it remains so to this day."* (Granite Belt Wine Country, 2021, p.3).

The Granite Belt forms part of the Southern Downs Region, located in South-East Queensland around 200km south of the state's capital city, Brisbane. The Southern Downs Region is made up of an array of small villages, with Stanthorpe being one the most prominent villages (see Figure 1 below). Small tourism businesses and subsequent stakeholders in focus within the Granite Belt consist of accommodation, cafes,

restaurants and other food services, retail trade, arts and cultural services and tour operator services, which is common for many regional tourism destinations. The Granite Belt is governed by the Southern Downs Regional Council (SDRC), which was formed in 2008 as an outcome of the Queensland Local Government Reform process, and encompasses the areas that were formerly occupied by the Warwick and Stanthorpe Shire Councils.

Figure 1: Map of the Southern Downs Region. Source: Southern Downs & Granite Belt (2021)

In 2016 the SDRC founded 'Destination Southern Downs', a Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO) but have since dissolved this and created a revised DMO, 'Southern Downs and Granite Belt' to which there are no fees for operators to become members. The SDRC had also formed a tourism advisory committee in 2016, the 'Regional Promotion, Tourism and The Arts Advisory' (RPTAA), but since the election of

a new council in 2020, it has still not yet been announced if this advisory committee still exists. External to the local council, the Granite Belt is included by the regional tourism organisation (RTO) 'Southern Queensland Country Tourism' (SQCT). Membership to SQCT requires an annual fee. There is communication between SQCT and the local council, however no hierarchical relationship exists- SQCT exists outside of the scope of local councils. The Granite Belt is also included in the State Tourism Organisation (STO), Tourism Events Queensland (TEQ). Within the Granite Belt, a local tourism organisation has been formed for many years called Granite Belt Wine Tourism (GBWT), also paid membership. This information provides context to the region in which the research will take place, mapping out the current structure of governance that exists within the region, which may impact on cluster formation. Figure 2 below outlines the current structure of tourism bodies within the region.

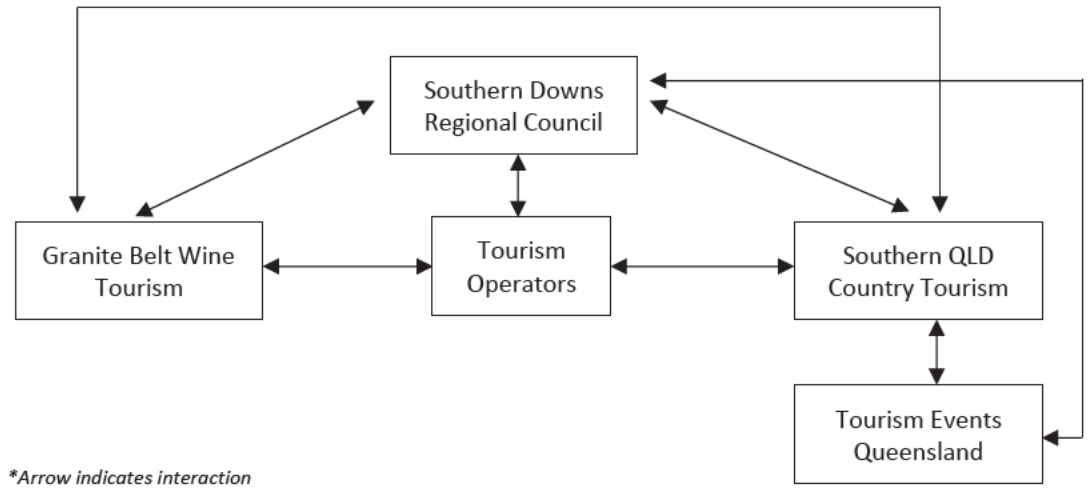

Figure 2: Governing structure of the Granite Belt

4.0.3. Defining the Sample

Defining and identifying stakeholders is not a straightforward process as there are many perspectives on what constitutes a stakeholder (Ritcher & Dow, 2017). The broad perspective considers groups such as terrorists, vegetation, sea creatures, and future generations (Freeman, 1984) as legitimate stakeholders. This broad perspective does not align with the present study given the scope of a business cluster requiring only involvement from tourism stakeholders. As such, the stakeholders in the present thesis

are limited by a narrower perspective, considering the 'survival' conceptualisation of stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995). According to this view, the legitimacy of stakeholders is based on economic requirements that the stakeholder has at risk (Ritcher & Dow, 2017). So, for stakeholders that have interest in participating in cluster within this study, their involvement will depend on what they have to lose or gain in an economic sense. This will limit the applicable stakeholders for this study primarily to those who own and operate small tourism businesses within the region, as those are the stakeholders who can either gain or lose in an economic sense from involvement in the cluster. The cluster **does not** require a fee, however stakeholders would need to sacrifice their time to the cluster and would also be receiving any gains or losses that the cluster brings to the region as a whole.

This understanding of what constitutes a suitable stakeholder results in the entire sample population including stakeholders within small tourism businesses, tourism organizations and local councils within the Granite Belt. In order to select the sample, non-probability judgement sampling was used. Non-probability sampling is where all individuals within the population are **not** given an equal chance at selection- that is, the participants are carefully selected using judgement by the researcher. Non-probability sampling is appropriate for this thesis due to cost efficiency, convenience and to allow the researcher to use existing knowledge about the region to be purposeful when selecting the sample. Snowball sampling (can be referred to as chain referral sampling) is a popular non-probability sampling technique (Parker & Scott, 2019) and was utilized to secure more participants. In snowball sampling, each participant secured is asked to refer individuals with a specific characteristic (Parker & Scott, 2019; Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Goodman, 1961). In this instance this was small tourism business owners/managers that were collaborative in nature, as outlined in 'Criteria for small tourism businesses' in Table 1 below. Snowball sampling is well suited when the context of the study requires insider knowledge to locate suitable participants (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981) which is suitable to the present thesis as it was essential that participants in the study were known to be collaborative based on prior collaborations or by expressing interest in collaborating. Table 1 below identifies the criteria for small tourism businesses and whether that criteria is compulsory or not for participation in the research.

Table 1: Criteria for small tourism businesses

Factor	Criteria
Size of Business	Must be a small tourism firm with 20 or less employees (with exception of council or tourism organisations).
Type of Business	The small tourism businesses can fit in the classification of 'host residents', 'local businesses', 'national business chains', 'competitors' or 'employees' and any government or council involvement within the project would fit into the classification of 'government', 'tourism planners' or event 'activist groups' (Sautter & Leisen, 1999).
Age of business	No criteria. The age of the business has no relevance to the study.
Age of owner/ manager	No criteria. The age of the owner/manager has no relevance to the study.
Time in region for business	No criteria. The time in region for the business has no relevance to the study.
Time in region for owner/manager	No criteria. The time in region for the owner/manager has no relevance to the study.
Experience of owner/manager	No criteria. The experience level of the owner/manager has no relevance to the study.
Prior collaboration	Must be collaborative in nature- has participated in collaboration in the past or has expressed interest in collaborating.

Bias is a predominant issue in non-probability sampling and can occur when participants were chosen because they were easily found, they were similar to the researcher, they were willing to be interviewed and so on. To avoid this, the researcher kept to the sampling frame and continuously 'checked-in' with the sampling frame during the recruitment process to ensure quality choices were made.

4.0.4. The Sample Size

Many authors suggest that in qualitative research, saturation is reached at a relatively low level (Griffin & Hauser, 1993; Guest et al., 2006; Mason, 2010; Romney, Weller & Batchelder, 1986). Bertaux (1981) suggests that 15 is the smallest acceptable sample for qualitative research and Mason (2010) conducted an analysis of a variety of studies to investigate the most common sample size (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell 1998; Green & Thorogood, 2009; Morse, 1995/2000; Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003) resulting in 20 to 30. As such, this study sought a sample size no less than 15 and no greater than 30 based on previous literature. There were 19 participants in total which aligned with

recommendations from existent literature and was considered acceptable as saturation was reached.

4.0.5. The Respondent Profile

Note: This respondent profile also appears in Paper 2 and Paper 3 since the methodology section of is an integral part of journal articles.

Table 2: Respondent profile

Participant No.	Business Type	Role in Business
1	Café/Attraction	Owner/Manager
2	Local Council (SDRC*)	Representative
3	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
4	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
5	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
6	Regional Tourism Organisation (SQCT**)	CEO
7	State Tourism Organisation (TEQ***)	Destination Director
8	Local Tourism Organisation	Representative
9 & 10	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
11 & 12	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
13 & 14	Attraction	Owner/Manager
15	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
16 & 17	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
18	Winery	Owner/Manager
19	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative

**SDRC: Southern Downs Regional Council; **SQCT: Southern Queensland Country Tourism, ***Tourism Events Queensland*

4.0.6. The Researchers as Research Instruments

Given that researchers are highly involved in the PAR process, they are considered an important research instrument. This is because of the element of familiarity, as participants feel more comfortable discussing subject matter with a familiar face (Archer, 2007; Boudieu, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Establishing the researcher as a research tool had already begun prior to this study in previous research (see Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). The researcher established strong connections with participants as well as forming relationships with SDRC and SQCT. The researcher was also connected to the region being born and raised in Stanthorpe, the region's

predominant town. Living in the region, the researcher was aware of its ability to attract and accommodate tourism, worked at and visited many local tourism businesses and attended events within the region. In 2016 the researcher's parents acquired an accommodation business within the region and in helping them to establish their business effectively, the researcher became aware of strengths and weaknesses in the region. The researcher acknowledges that their positionality will be represented in the project through personal bias, understanding, values and thoughts (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Archer, 2007; Boudieu, 2004), however it is due to researcher's positionality that the richness of data was gained.

4.0.7. Data Collection

Data collection for PAR involves the team of researchers working in partnership with communities to generate knowledge to solve the identified problem at hand (Chambers, 1994a). Eden and Huxham (1996, p. 81) note that the researcher is not expected to have a "precise idea of the nature of the research outcome of any intervention at the start", explaining that the most valuable insights emerge from the consultancy process in ways that the researcher will not be able to anticipate or expect. It is legitimate for a researcher conducting action research to begin interaction with no expectations of what might arise and it is also important the reflection processes of PAR are built into the project, allowing for change to the plan (Eden & Huxham, 1996). Typically for PAR, data collection occurs via community meetings and/or events, both small and large, that serve to identify issues for that community, analyse the information and then use reflection to plan for the next stage of data collection (Selener, 1997). In consideration of this, a flexible focus group and individual interview protocol were created and followed (Appendix 3 and 4) to begin the data collection.

There are three principles that can be used to empower participants in a PAR project. The principles are describe in the table below, outlines the methodological strategies that were implemented to achieve the principles.

Table 3: Alignment to PAR principles

Principle	Strategies Implemented to Achieve
1: Develop network between researcher and participants with active partnership	• Use pre-existing connections to make contact and begin relationship development between researcher and participants. • Organize meetings with participants. • Create comfortable environment for participants. This included offering drinks and meals to participants and meeting them in locations comfortable to them (often their place of business). • Listen intently to participants and be open and honest with research intentions.
2: Promote co-ownership through co-construction of knowledge	• Listen intently to participants and allow space for them to suggest, discuss and find solutions to problems they face. • Use research skills to maintain equal contribution to conversation and discussion at meetings. • Empower less confident participants by explicitly asking for their ideas.
3: Translate into change built upon local knowledge	• Collaboratively brainstorm and identify projects for the region.

According to McTaggart (1997, p. 35), one way to begin data collection using PAR is to collect initial data within the community of interest, analyse the results and then make a plan for changed actions. The results from each phase would be reflected upon before taking action on the proposed following phase. PAR is an evolving, cyclic process, and as such it is important to evaluate at every step of the data collection process before moving on. The data collection in this study began with an initial enquiry phase into the research problem within the target community, analysis of the results, creation of a plan towards cluster formation, reflection on the first round of enquiry and taking action before moving to the second round of enquiry. There is no limit on the rounds of enquiry it takes before reaching completion. Data collection for this research occurred throughout 11 enquiry phases, over a two year time period.

As described in the Introduction section, in the Methodology Overview, data was collected via varied methods:

- Formal and informal interviews were conducted with stakeholders one-on-one, or with two participants (if from the same business). These were called 'meetings' by participants and the facilitator as this aligned with an industry perspective.

- Focus groups were hosted when multiple participants met in the same location (including online during COVID-19 restrictions) and these were also called ‘meetings’ by participants and the facilitator, again aligning with an industry perspective.
- ‘Follow-ups’ with key stakeholders
- Telephone conversations
- Text messages
- Group and individual emails
- Membership of a Facebook Group and subsequent interaction
- Document share with Google Docs
- Participant observation by the researcher
- Attendance at committee meetings (the researcher was a committee member on the ‘Economic Development and Regional Promotion Advisory Committee’ for the Southern Downs Regional Council)

Video diaries and handwritten notes were taken throughout the data collection process and immediately after important discussions. All non-typed data was then transcribed. The dataset was 45 files, that totaled over 99,762 words, because there was 1,477 pages of email communications and 16 pages of PDF/PAGES documents which could not provide a word count. Table 4 below indicates all data files included in this thesis.

Note: While care has been taken to ensure low duplicity, information in the preceding paragraph also appears in Paper 2 and Paper 3. Table 4 also appears in Paper 2 without inclusion of the enquiry phase column.

Table 4: All data files and associated phase of enquiry

Enquiry Phase	File #	Date	File Description *(All files transcribed)*	Word Count or Page Count
1	1	07.08.2018	Notes from Meetings with Industry Leaders	1,321 words
1	2	23.08.2018	Project Outline sent to Industry Body	8 pages
2	3	27.08.2018	Notes from Meeting with Participant	512 words
2	4	31.09.2018	Notes from Meeting with Participant	1,380 words
2	5	07.12.2018	Voice Memo following Issues with Data Collection	1,638 words
2	6	28.12.2018	Voice Memo following Meeting with Participant	368 words
2	7	11.01.2019	Voice Memo following Meeting with Industry Body	5,044 words
2	8	20.03.2019	Notes from Meetings with Potential Cluster Members	798 words
3	9	23.03.2019	Interview with Cluster Members	12,676 words
3	10	23.03.2019	Interview with Cluster Members	13,811 words
3	11	23.03.2019	Voice Memo following Interviews	1,337 words
3	12	30.03.2019	Interview with Cluster Members	6,726 words
3	13	30.03.2019	Voice Memo following Interview with Cluster Members	647 words
3	14	01.04.2019	Research Collaboration Group Plan	1,504 words
4	15	03.05.2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	984 words
4	16	03.05.2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	688 words
4	17	05.05.2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	133 words
4	18	06.05.2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	400 words
4	19	10.05.2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	362 words
5	20	10.05.2019	Mind Map and Target Markets Output from Cluster Members	357 words
5	21	10.05.2019	Mind Map Output from Cluster Members	157 words
6	22	10.05.2019	Target Markets Output from Cluster Members	272 words
6	23	10.05.2019	Target Markets Output from Cluster Members	425 words
5	24	17.10.2019	Mind Map Output from Cluster Members	85 words
6	25	17.10.2019	Target Markets Output from Cluster Members	576 words
6	26	17.05.2019	Target Markets Output from Cluster Member	280 words
6	27	12.07.2019	Group Event Planning Shared Document	1,906 words
7	28	15.07.2019	Face to Face Focus Group	11,187 words
7	29	15.07.2019	Voice Memo following Focus Group	2,937 words
8	30	15.07.2019	Interview with Cluster Members	14,310 words
8	31	15.07.2019	Voice Memo from Interview with Cluster Members	519 words
8	32	28.07.2019	Self-Complete Interview from Cluster Members	650 words
8	33	02.08.2019	Self-Complete Interview from Cluster Members	634 words
8	34	13.08.2019	Self-Complete Interview from Cluster Members	686 words
8	35	13.08.2019	Self-Complete Interview from Cluster Members	660 words
8	36	17.09.2019	Voice Memo following emails with Cluster Member	951 words
8	37	20.09.2019	Events Proposal for Industry Body	7 pages
9	38	29.01.2020	Notes from Face to Face Focus Group	1,068 words
9	39	29.01.2020	Face to Face Focus Group De-Brief Notes	2,105 words
10	40	13.05.2020	Zoom Focus Group	8,084 words
11	41	15.05.2020	Self-Complete Questions Cluster Members	396 words
11	42	15.05.2020	Self-Complete Questions Cluster Members	704 words
11	43	18.05.2020	Self-Complete Questions Cluster Members	378 words
11	44	21.05.2020	Event Run Sheet (Webinar Event)	1 page
NA	45	30.06.2020	All Email Communications	1,477 pages

4.0.8. Data Analysis

Audio files (recordings from interviews, focus groups and voice memos) were transcribed using webpage 'Transcribe'. Transcribe is a webpage that allows you to put your audio recordings on a 'Play, Pause, Rewind' loop adjusted to the typing speed of the researcher to avoid manually stopping and starting the audio. This transcription tool allows the researcher to stay close their data as they still transcribe, compared to a program like Dragon that is more automatic. The other files were already in written format (emails, researcher diary, work sheets).

Analysis of the data began once the data was compiled into coherent and usable form (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000). To begin, data was moved into idea groups or idea clusters which helped to arrange the large amount of raw data into a manageable system (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000). The researcher created idea groups using hand-drawn mind-map diagrams to establish key ideas and then group relevant ideas together. The researcher then conducted thematic analysis using a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel, using inductive coding to identify themes in each data collection item. The codes were derived with theoretical guidance from the reviewed literature to offer a more holistic understanding of the research problem, either confirming, disproving or expanding on original assumptions. Principals 1 and 2 of PAR as well the reviewed literature on business cluster formation, stakeholder collaboration and stakeholder typologies was used as the basis of the coding process, to identify data that informed business cluster formation, stakeholder typology and stakeholder typology helpfulness to cluster formation. As PAR is a cyclic process, the cluster formation guidelines by Hawkins and Calnan (2009) was used in the coding process because it offered guidance to the organisation of the data analysis phases, with each phase informing the next stage (McTaggart, 1997). As a result, it was important that the data was kept in accordance to the phases by which it was collected.

The data was then added and inductively coded in NVIVO. All data was entered into theme 'nodes' and 'sub-nodes' and their relationships were analysed using queries, explore and compare diagrams, and mind and concept maps features. This process confirmed ideas discovered during the initial analysis in Microsoft Excel and also offered new perspectives of the data as the program allowed the researcher to see the data in new ways with the analysis tools.

Note: While care has been taken to ensure low duplicity, information in the preceding paragraph also appears in Paper 2 and Paper 3.

5.0. Validity

According to Fals-Borda (2001), validity for PAR studies results from common sense, empathetic involvement in the research process and consideration for the opinion of local reference groups. Given that PAR as a method involves empathetic involvement from the researcher as well as continued input from members of the local community, the validity is, to some degree, ensured within this research project. There are five PAR validity criteria which have been summarized in table 5 below, with comment on how the present thesis addressed each validity criteria.

Table 5: Validity criteria for participatory action research

Validity	Description and Addressing Criteria
Outcome Validity	"The research must lead to a successful resolution of the relevant problem" (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008, p. 426). Capriello (2012) explains that communication between members and sharing of information is also a positive outcome of PAR. In order to complete this validity criteria, the results will need to show improvement within the cluster.
Democracy Validity	Democratic validity seeks to include the widest possible range of alternative perspectives and interests within the research, as well as including the deepest and highest quality contribution from all participants including the researcher (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). The PAR process seeks to solve the problem by involving those affected by the issue, and if this is not done correctly, the outcome validity of the PAR project cannot be assured as the research has not involved the appropriate community. To ensure democracy validity is reached, it is important to ensure open and equal communication between representatives affected by the issue (Capriello, 2012). In order to complete this validity criteria, the primary researcher will enact her training during data collection processes to facilitate open and equal communication between participants.
Process Validity	"Process validity is the extent to which problems are investigated in a way that allows for ongoing learning and improvement" (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008, p.427). It is essential for PAR to develop the capabilities of those participants involved in the research process (Reason & Bradbury, 2001), and this development is therefore important to monitor. To complete this validity criteria, the results will need to show development of the capabilities of participants involved.
Catalytic Validity	The extent to which the researcher and participants alike are inspired to understand and change reality both within and external to the study is referred to as catalytic validity (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Catalytic validity can be achieved by fusing local knowledge and beliefs with theory, in order to create practical solutions (Capriello, 2012). To ensure this validity criteria is achieved, the results will need to show that a practical solution has risen from the problem domain.
Dialogical Validity	Dialogical validity encourages all participants of the PAR project to have critical dialogue with one another about the research findings and subsequent action (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). "Active interventions, observations of processes and the exercises of critical judgement are instrumental in maintaining trustworthiness" (Capriello, 2012, p.328), and it is important to engage with peers to help identify discrepancies. Dialogical validity requires the research team to engage in debates with peers for the purpose of challenging the findings in the search for alternative explanations (Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008). In order to complete this validity criteria, the primary researcher will enact her training during data collection processes to stimulate debates to challenge findings and search for alternatives.

In addition to adhering to the validity criteria for PAR, triangulation was also implemented as a validation strategy for this research. Triangulation enhances validity by offering a more considered picture of the research problem as it looks at different ways of understanding the research problem, checking that different methods and/or observers reach the same result (Nightingale, 2020). There are four different forms of applying triangulation (Flick, 2004) which are outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Triangulation of the research

Form of Triangulation Application	Description and Addressing Criteria
Triangulation of the data	Triangulation of data involves combining data from different sources, at different times, in different places and/or with from different people (Flick, 2004). PAR naturally offers the opportunity to triangulate data, offering observations of social processes, the accounts of participants and changes in these accounts over time (Eden & Huxham, 1996).
Investigator triangulation	Investigator triangulation requires the use of different observers and/or interviewers to balance out any subjective influences on individuals (Flick, 2004). This PhD comprised a research team of three (PhD candidate, primary supervisor and secondary supervisor), where consensus between all researchers on general observations, perspectives of the data and themes derived from the data was reached.
Triangulation of theories	Triangulating theories means "approaching data with multiple perspectives and hypothesis in mind... Various theoretical points of view could be places side by side to assess their utility and power" (Denzin, 1978, p. 297). The narrative component of the literature review within this thesis offered synthesis of interpretations and evidence from multiple sources to form a wholesome understanding (Mays, Pope & Popay, 2005; Yang, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2017 (in Perkins, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2020)).
Methodological triangulation	"Methodological triangulation involves the complex process of playing each method off against the other so as to maximize the validity of field efforts" (Denzin, 1978, p. 304). Triangulation was achieved between methods, given the PAR approach involves an array of varied data collection methods (McTaggart, 1997). Methodological triangulation can also be done within-method (Flick, 2004) and to achieve this, during data collection the researcher made sure to ask questions in different ways, checking that participant response was unaltered.

6.0. Ethics

Full Research Ethics Clearance was granted for this project (GU Ref No: 2018/529) on June 25th, 2018 by Griffith University (Appendix 5). The principal ethical consideration was the use of humans within the research project. The Griffith University Research Ethics Manual (GUREM) provided several booklet-based manuals that address ethical issues, which the researcher used as a guide for the planning and management of this human research project. In particular, this project referred to Booklet 35 'Ethical Issues in Focus Group Research'.

In order to maintain ethical conduct during the process of recruiting participants, the researcher ensured that all participants were advised they are under no obligation to elect to participate and that they can end their participation at any time. As per the GUREM, it is assumed that the topics discussed with participants in this study will not create or stir any overwhelming emotions given the content of the research project, but should any potential conflicts arise between participants that are not conducive to the research process, the primary researcher will engage assistance from the research team to enact conflict resolution.

As per GUREM, participants would be made aware that they are under no obligation to continue participation within the project if they do not feel comfortable, and will be able to 'opt out' at any time should they encounter any experience that was unfavorable. For the purposes of ensuring to ethical conduct, the researcher will engage in reflective practice during the research by continually 'checking in' with the ethical dimensions of the project at every stage, given that the phases may change with PAR being a cyclic process. This reflective practice involves the researcher's awareness of the responsibilities and standards to adhere to, and always considering the welfare of participants.

7.0. Summary of Methodology

In summary, the research was conducted via a PAR design approach with an interpretivist paradigm, which is highly aligned to the overarching research question of this thesis, seeking to create practical knowledge on collaboration. Data collection included varied formal and information techniques and after all data files were transcribed, a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was created to conduct thematic analysis

where each data collection item was coded inductively to identify broad themes and patterns. A secondary data analysis occurred in NVIVO were data was inductively coded and NVIVO analysis tools were used to offer new perspectives. To ensure validity, this thesis adhered to the PAR validity criteria as well as GUREM manuals and guidance.

Findings from this process resulted in two empirical papers (Paper 2 and Paper 3 in this thesis, presented in the following section (Part IV Findings). Paper 1 addressed RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3.

The methodology in this section was employed to respond to the following research questions;

RQ4: To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation?

RQ5: How do networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?

As well as addressing the overarching research question;

How do small tourism businesses progress through the steps of cluster formation to contribute to destination branding?

PART IV. FINDINGS

The fourth part of this thesis presents empirical papers, Paper 2 and Paper 3, that address RQ4 and RQ5 as well as the overarching research question. In accordance with the methodology outlined in the previous section, the two papers followed a PAR design. It is important to note here that Paper 2 was analysed, drafted and published first. As such, Paper 3 makes reference to Paper 2.

Paper 2 has been published in A ranked journal (according to the ABDC ranking), *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management.* The purpose of this paper was to answer the overarching research question, to understand how small tourism businesses form a tourism business cluster to contribute to destination branding. It is the first empirical study that actually forms a tourism business cluster from the initiation stage. Bringing together academics and industry in a PAR project, this paper presents the phases and their inherent steps to forming a tourism business cluster in a region where a cluster did not already pre-exist. The phases and steps within are presented in the 'Total Cluster Formation Framework' (TCFF). The newly formed cluster in this study enabled participants to contribute to their region's brand through the conceptualisation of an event 'Granite Belt Living Lightly' for their region (Appendix 6), which has been delayed due to COVID-19. The event aims to celebrate local businesses in the region. The local council (Southern Downs Regional Council) has invited the cluster to submit a funding application for the event with the Local Events Funding Program (LEFP), which is jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments as a component of the 2019 Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements. Round 2 is now opened (https://www.sdrc.qld.gov.au/doing-business/grants-to-community-radf/local-events-funding-program). As the event was delayed, the cluster worked with Griffith Institute for Tourism (GIFT) to host a webinar for local operators, 'Future Normal', which offered guidance from Griffith experts Professor Chris Fleming and Professor Chris Barter on transforming to sustainable business (Appendix 7) in June 2020.

Paper 3 is under review with A* ranked journal (according to the ABDC ranking), *Tourism Management,* and answers RQ4 and RQ5, to understand the degree of helpfulness of different stakeholder typologies and to understand the contribution of stakeholder networks to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster.

This empirical paper unpacks the degrees to which different stakeholders are helpful or harmful to the cluster formation process, and contributes a new empirical model, the 'Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum' (SHC) that maps helpful and harmful stakeholder behaviours. This continuum offers useful insights for those engaging in the cluster formation process, as well as advancing literature in this domain. The paper also contributes to the discussion of stakeholder networks within a newly formed business cluster and the usefulness cluster formation in creating new stakeholder networks, comprised of varying stakeholder types.

Papers 2 and 3 are both co-authored manuscripts (details will precede each paper). Paper 2 is presented in the published version and as such, the formatting, spelling and referencing style follow the requirements of the journal. The papers contains page numbers relevant to the journal but the page numbers of this thesis will be continued after each paper (with the running total including each page of the paper). Paper 3 is currently under review and as such, the spelling and referencing style follow the requirements of the journal for new submissions. In accordance with the requirement of Griffith University, full bibliographic details and statement of contributions for the papers are provided for each paper.

Paper 2

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, C. (2021). Collaboration in marketing regional tourism destinations: Constructing a business cluster formation framework through participatory action research. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management, 46,* 347-359. **(ABDC Rank: A, IF: 3.415)**

The co-authors of this manuscript are my thesis supervisors, Associate Professor Catheryn Khoo (previously Khoo-Lattimore) and Professor Charles Arcodia. My contribution to the paper involved: conception of the theoretical framework, analysing the articles, interpreting the findings, drafting, re-writing and editing the paper and acting as corresponding author.

Signed [redacted] 01 March 2021

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Collaboration in marketing regional tourism destinations: Constructing a business cluster formation framework through participatory action research

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ABSTRACT

Current research advocates for the effectiveness of tourism business clusters in promoting collaboration between stakeholders and successfully marketing destinations. However, there is a lack of insight on how a cluster is actually formed in order to reap such benefits, if a cluster does not already pre-exist within a region. Importantly, there is no research framework to explain the steps involved in forming a tourism business cluster in these areas. This inhibits regions that don't have an operational cluster in gaining the benefits of this form of collaboration. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how tourism businesses progress through the phases of cluster formation, enabling them to contribute to destination branding for their region. This paper presents the phases and their inherent steps to forming a tourism business cluster resulting from a Participatory Action Research (PAR) study where stakeholders formed a tourism business cluster in a regional destination in Queensland, Australia. The study involved participants from local tourism businesses, the local council, the local tourism organisation, regional tourism organisation, and state tourism organisation. Findings reveal three distinct phases to cluster formation, with each phase encompassing multiple steps. The newly formed cluster enabled participants to contribute to their region's destination brand through the creation of an event for their region. This study contributes important insights to the bodies of literature on collaboration and business clustering, as well as managerial implications for enhancing collaboration structures in a region.

1. Introduction

Collaboration has received praise in the literature for the benefits it offers businesses and of the many types of collaboration, the success of tourism business clusters has been widely noted (Caple, 2011; Gardiner & Scott, 2014; Hopeniene & Rutelione, 2016; Lade, 2010). Business clusters are unique to other types of collaboration, as they enable both cooperation and competition (Grangsjo, 2003; Rosenfeld, 1997), encouraging stakeholders to embrace competition for future success, while allowing the cluster to achieve economies of scale by pooling efforts and resources (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). Business clustering can also assist with raising awareness about the tourism destination and enhance destination marketing efforts by combining knowledge and resources (Hall, 2005; Randall & Mitchell, 2008; Taylor & Miller, 2010). Furthermore, clusters have shown to increase a regions success in terms of tourism expenditure and overnight tourist visitation, in comparison to regions who had not fully adopted clustering (Lade, 2010).

It is of utmost importance to note, however, that existant research has only investigated clusters that already exist within a region. Present literature does not explain *how* clustering can be formed in a region where this type of collaboration does not already pre-exist. In fact, Wolfe and Gertler (2004) refer to a striking lack of consensus over how clusters are formed and how they can be set in motion. Seventeen years later, the conceptual clarity of clusters is not improved and there is still a lack of literature reporting on the formation of a cluster. If business clustering is so beneficial, how can it be that it is not yet understood how to create this type of collaboration?

In unpacking challenges that may inhibit cluster creation, literature suggests that stakeholder relationships from a collaborative viewpoint is complex, as stakeholder relationships involve multiple stakeholders with varying interests and goals (Savage et al., 2010). In fact, McComb, Boyd & Boluk (2017) questioned whether stakeholder collaboration should be pursued if there is uncertainty surrounding its implementation. The authors raised critical questions on whether stakeholder collaboration was as beneficial as the existing literature had reported. Indeed, research on collaboration between small tourism operators in Australia revealed small businesses were reporting more issues than benefits within their collaborative efforts (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore,

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2020). These issues included limited knowledge, unbalanced efforts between businesses, competition and differing opinions between businesses, a perceived lack of leadership from local governing bodies, an informal nature of the collaborative arrangements, and that involvement in collaboration was not structured, without any formalisation of their collaborative efforts.

Resolving collaboration challenges therefore begets an understanding of the factors inhibiting successful and effective collaboration in regional tourism destinations. Since stakeholders in previous studies referred to the informal nature of previous collaboration efforts (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2020), a business cluster could surely be used as a formalised collaboration model to address the challenges facing these businesses. Therefore, research into the process of business cluster formation is essential so that regions without pre-existing business clusters can apply these strategies and develop effective collaboration. As such, the aim of this study is to provide insights into how small tourism businesses in a regional destination without an operating business cluster can progress through the phases of forming a tourism business cluster, resulting in the research question; *How do small tourism businesses progress through cluster formation to contribute to destination branding?* Gaining this understanding would significantly develop the paucity of literature in this domain and contribute greatly to managerial know-how on cluster formation.

2. Conceptual background

2.1. Understanding destination branding and the challenges that regions face

Destination branding is considered an important tool for establishing destination differentiation, competitive advantage and effective positioning within the marketplace (Hosany, Ekinci, & Uysal, 2006; Kotler & Gertner, 2002). Destination brand and image are essential in motivating the tourist to visit the destination (Cai, 2002) and can be created by strengthening those associations that tourists deem important and valuable (Keller, 1993). But, literature suggests that the planning and implementation of marketing activities for a regional destination are somewhat multisectoral and incoherent (Wang, Hutchinson, Okumus, & Naipaul, 2013). Given that destinations are multidimensional, particularly in comparison to consumer goods, marketing them is more difficult than consumer goods and other types of services (Pike, 2005). When the scope of the destination is limited to regional locations, these dimensions become even more complex as regional destinations are largely comprised of small tourism businesses. These businesses face a unique set of challenges due to their size (Ateljevic, 2007; Page, Forer, & Lawton, 1999; Thomas, Shaw, & Page, 2011), and as such, face challenges in successfully contributing to their destination brand (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2020). Although there has been progression in understanding regional destination branding and its complexities, understanding of the guiding principles for regional destination branding is still fragmented, as a region's tourism product mix consists of multiple elements that are supplied by different small tourism providers within that region (Hall, 1999).

2.2. Collaboration for regional destination branding success

Collaboration can play a significant role in the development of a regional brand (Caple, 2011; Saxena, 2005), as it can promote forward-thinking discussion between stakeholders, encourage negotiation, establish mutually beneficial proposals for future tourism development, and help governmental bodies understand and take into account the aspirations of regional tourism destinations (de Araujo & Bramwell, 2002). Gray (1989) discussed features of collaboration, including autonomous stakeholders who were also co-dependent and constructively dealing with differences, and joint ownership of all decisions and collective responsibility for the future. Collaboration between stakeholders can facilitate wider support for the development of tourism in a region (McComb, Boyd, & Boluk, 2017), and understanding this collaboration can create opportunities to more effectively manage tourism within a destination (Todd, Leask, & Ensor, 2017). Within guiding principles established for the success of destination brands by Hankinson (2007), 'consistent communication across a wide range of stakeholders' and 'compatible partnerships with synergy' are mentioned as two key elements. This suggests the need for collaborative efforts from stakeholders for successful destination branding yet does not claim that collaboration is essential, but rather just an element of successful destination branding.

Where complementary products, activities, accommodation, transport and food (all examples of small tourism businesses) are co-existing within a region, there is opportunity for connections and interrelationships (Pavlovich, 2003). Cox and Wray (2011) also integrate elements of collaboration in their best practice marketing strategies for tourism businesses within regional destinations. They encourage cooperation with nearby regions, the pooling of resources, education for the local community, and integration with the regional tourism organisation in order to achieve successful regional destination branding, yet collaboration between tourism businesses within the region is not highlighted as a key factor. While collaboration is evidently an important factor for regional destination branding success, how exactly such collaboration is created has not yet been analysed within the literature.

2.3. Unpacking collaboration with business clustering

Business clusters are a form of collaboration commonly discussed in the literature. Business clustering is a strategy by which firms can collaborate to gain competitive advantage (Porter, 1990), which, in a tourism context, encourages businesses to sell the destination before selling their individual businesses (Gardiner & Scott, 2014). Tourism business clusters can create interdependence between stakeholders, fostering knowledge and skills transfer between them with the objective to raise the profile of their region (Caple, 2011). Clusters can be particularly useful for a tourism region to achieve competitive advantage as clusters can assist with raising awareness about the tourism destination (Hall, 2005), and they do this by enhancing destination marketing efforts by combining knowledge and resources of cluster members (Hall, 2005; Randall & Mitchell, 2008; Taylor & Miller, 2010). Porter (1998), defines a business cluster as a "geographic concentration of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field" (p.78), and it is this definition that has been most frequently used within tourism literature for assessing business clusters. As business clusters foster a sense of togetherness within the community, a region can further develop its desirable characteristics to attract tourism (Taylor & Miller, 2010). Telfer (2000) reported that cluster members engaged in joint marketing, sharing of customers and research, and Jackson and Murphy (2006) explained that clusters encouraged differentiation and innovation rather than focusing on competition, as well as discouraging competitive behaviors like cost cutting. Evidently, research to date suggests that business clustering is a successful strategy for collaborative and destination branding success.

Business clusters can either be implemented top-down by regional authorities, or bottom-up by a group of firms (Fromhold-Eisebith & Eisebith, 2005). While it is commonly top-down official cluster policies that are strongly regarded, bottom-up initiatives that are directly governed by groups of businesses and do not require public support should also receive this regard (Fromhold-Eisebith & Eisebith, 2005). Fromhold-Eisebith and Eisebith (2005) explain that top-down clusters better address the material base of the economies of a cluster, can be more inclusive and expansive, and have wider regional impacts, but bottom-up clusters best support immaterial qualities of socially embedded interaction, they can create stronger motivation between cluster members, and "can induce faster outcomes in terms of functional, innovation-related collaboration affecting firm performance"

(Fromhold-Eisebith & Eisebith, 2005, p. 1265). As the interaction between stakeholders within the cluster is of importance to the present study, it is understandable that a bottom-up approach is the most suitable cluster formation style.

With all of this insightful research, however, there is still a major lack of information on how a cluster is formed. According to a recent literature review on tourism stakeholder collaboration (Perkins, Khoo-Lattimore, & Arcodia, 2020), there is a current lack of understanding on how a cluster is actually formed. Their paper states that "the tourism literature has not yet extended to broach any areas in which a business cluster does not already exist and therefore, does not provide knowledge on how a business cluster can be initiated, or provide details on the stages to cluster formation" (Perkins, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2020, p.254). Literature to date has not specifically outlined how these clusters are set in motion, which contributes to what Wolfe and Gertler (2004) described as a "striking lack of consensus over how clusters are started" (p. 1073). Since 2004, this lack of conceptual clarity is not improved, emphasising the importance of the present study which seeks to resolve these uncertainties. In order to find a starting point, research by Hawkins and Calnan (2009) can be used, as they summarised their study with practical suggestions for future cluster development projects. While their research is 11 years old and their suggestions are not empirically tested, their research is suitable to guide the present study due to the practical nature of their suggestions, which have been summarised into Steps by the authors of this paper into Fig. 1 below.

Hawkins and Calnan's (2009) study also poses many questions to cluster formation. The authors provided the guidelines without empirically testing their effectiveness, and without providing necessary explanation of each step. The present study seeks to confirm or deny, and understand each step in cluster formation, to resolve this gap in understanding. The above guidelines form a basis for this study and will seek to respond to the proposed research question.

3. Methodology

This study used participatory action research (PAR) to address the research question. PAR has been defined as a "participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in pursuit of worthwhile human purposes" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1). PAR was selected for this study, as it seeks to develop practical knowledge into the formation of a tourism business cluster. PAR is useful when the purpose of the research is to gain a deep understanding of forms of collaboration (Capriello, 2012), which shows strong alignment to this study. Furthermore, PAR is useful in creating a collaborative climate by planning actions with local stakeholders (Capriello, 2012). This approach is useful for the present study, as it seeks to create a collaborative climate in the case study region. Further, planning actions with local stakeholders will be essential to progressing through cluster formation. It is expected that this focus on local stakeholders will also reveal insights into the stakeholder typologies that drive or hinder cluster formation. Since participatory research design offers an opportunity for stakeholders to be involved (Ho, Chia, Ng, & Ramachandran, 2017; Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh, & Ismail, 2017), such framework is highly suitable for this study, as it posits that stakeholders should be allowed to participate in the decision-making activities to solve tourism problems (Robson & Robson, 1996).

Within tourism, action research has been used in varied settings, including tourism planning and/or development (Grant, 2004; Jernsand, 2017; Papathanassis & Bundă, 2016; Schmitz & Lekane Tsobgou, 2016), stakeholder collaboration and/or networks (Capriello, 2012; Kelliher, Foley, & Frampton, 2009; Waayers, Lee, & Newsome, 2012) and has been explored in numerous contexts including small businesses (Anckar & Walden, 2001; Kelliher et al., 2009) and rural tourism (Capriello, 2012; Idziak, Majewski, & Zmyślony, 2015; Paul, Weinthal, Bellemare, & Jeuland, 2016; Salvatore, Chiodo, & Fantini, 2018; Schmitz & Lekane Tsobgou, 2016), proving PAR's applicability in tourism settings.

Within PAR, researchers work in partnership with communities to generate knowledge through systematic inquiry to solve the identified problem at hand (Chambers, 1994; MacDonald, 2012; Fals-Borda, 2001; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Participants' opinions are shown without manipulation from the researcher, and participants are active in making decisions throughout the research process (MacDonald, 2012). Typically for PAR, data collection occurs via community meetings and/or events,

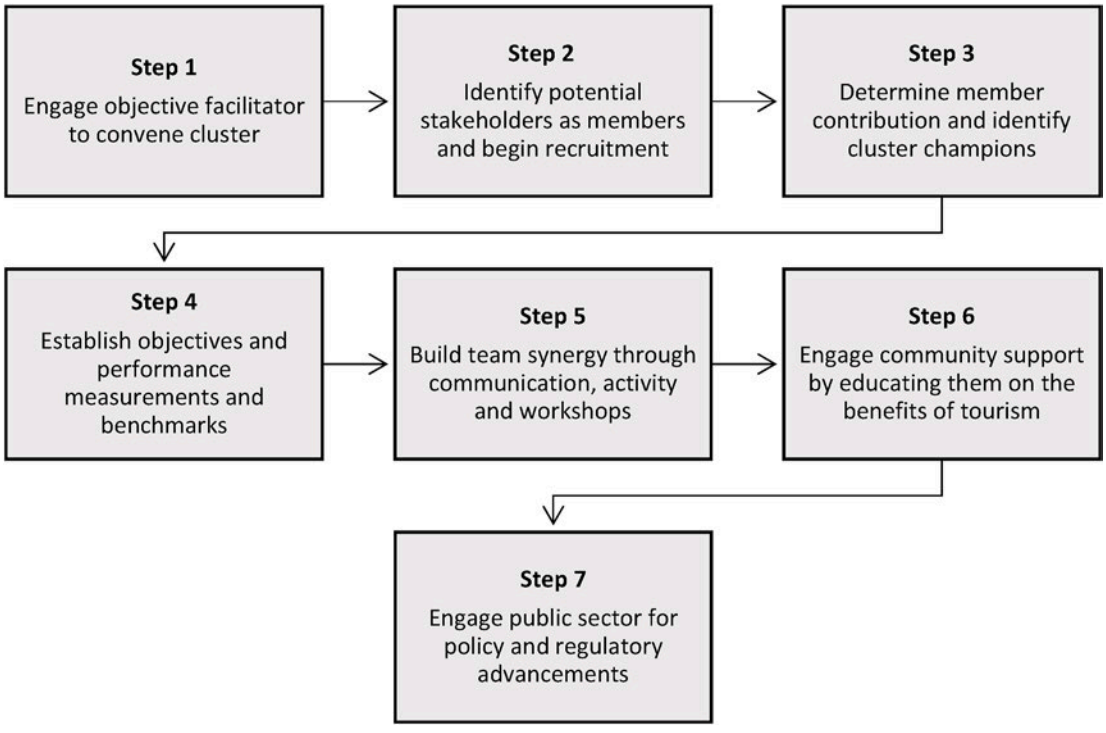

Fig. 1. Guidance for Tourism Cluster Development, informed by Hawkins and Calnan (2009).

both small and large, that serve to identify issues for that community of interest, analyse the information gathered at the event, and then use reflection to plan for the next stage of data collection (Selener, 1997). According to McTaggart (1997), one way to begin data collection using PAR is to collect initial data within the community of interest, analyse the results and then plan for changed actions (McTaggart, 1997). The results from each stage are reflected upon before acting on the proposed following stage. Given that PAR is an evolving, cyclic process, it is important to evaluate throughout every step of the data collection process before moving on. As such, it is appropriate that the data collection method allows for flexibility. Fig. 2 below is the methodological framework that has been created by the authors to guide the present study, which has been conceptualized to align with the research question and the theoretical framework for cluster development.

3.1. Defining the target community

In all PAR studies, it is essential to define the target community (Penrod, Leob, Ladonne & Martin, 2016), specifically because the planning cycle involves assessing the target community and working with it to create strategies to move forward (MacDonald, 2012). In this research, the target community were the stakeholders involved in business cluster formation. There was an array of stakeholders involved in this study totaling 19 participants; 1 café/attraction, 2 attraction providers, 1 winery owner, 7 accommodation providers, 5 representatives from the local council, 1 representative from the local tourism organisation, 1 representative from regional tourism organisation, and 1 representative from state tourism organisation. These are further described in a Respondent Profile in the findings below in Section 4.0. (Table 2).

The Granite Belt Region in South-East Queensland is the case study and target community of this study. Previous research had revealed that this region was facing many challenges to collaboration (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2020). As such, this research posits that this region would benefit from forming a tourism business cluster, with the PAR approach offering opportunities to foster the creation of a collaborative climate among stakeholders (Capriello, 2012). This region was also selected because the primary researcher is familiar with it, having developed a broad network of stakeholders within the region, and subsequently, trust between the researcher and participants.

This is important because developing a collaborative network between researchers and participants is Cardinal Principle 1 of PAR methodological strategies (Penrod, Loeb, Ladonne, & Martin, 2016 and trust leads to a sense of co-ownership over the project, which is Cardinal Principle 2 (Penrod et al., 2016). This familiarity was also useful to recruit participants via familiar face to face contact, and snowball sampling. Lastly, the Granite Belt fits into the regional classification of a destination and comprises several small tourism businesses, which is central to the focus of this study.

3.2. Data collection

As depicted in Fig. 2 the appropriate way to begin data collection using PAR is to collect initial data with participants of interest, analyse the results and then plan for action (McTaggart, 1997). The results from this initial stage would be reflected upon, and then the researchers would act on the proposed next step (McTaggart, 1997). As a result, data collection occurred throughout many phases, over a period of months as the cluster was formed, and stakeholders continued to work together to plan an event for the region. Data collection included participant observation, formal meetings, informal discussions, 'catch-ups' with key stakeholders, telephone conversations, text messages, emails, membership of a Facebook Group, document share, and attendance at committee meetings (the primary researcher was a committee member on the 'Economic Development and Regional Promotion Advisory Committee' for the Southern Downs Regional Council). Handwritten notes were taken throughout to capture key discussion points and notable quotes (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000). The researcher also took notes about body language, group mood etc.- which cannot be captured on an audio recording (Krueger, 2000). Following any meeting, the researcher took video diaries immediately after in a 'debrief' type session, to discuss additional perspectives, observations, and thoughts 'after the fact' (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000). In some situations, like a phone call, it was not practical for the researchers to request to record the conversation, and in this instance, the researchers took detailed notes during those occasions and also followed them up with a voice memo or video recording recap. Many of the meetings shared common features of a focus group (lasting between 1 and 2 h and consisting of between 6 and 12 participants) (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009), In keeping with the most rigorous analysis for a focus group, transcriptions were required for analysis, along with notes (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009). All of this data was then transcribed (unless already in typed format). In total, the dataset consisted of 41 data files, totaling just under 99,762 words, plus 1477 pages of email communications plus 16 pages of PDF/PAGES documents (this type of document could not provide a word count). The data files are shown below in Table 1.

3.2.1. Trustworthiness in data collection

In the context in this study, consideration must be given to the trustworthiness of the data collection due to using various collection techniques. Data was collected via some formal methods (meetings, interviews) and some less formal methods (Facebook Group, texts,

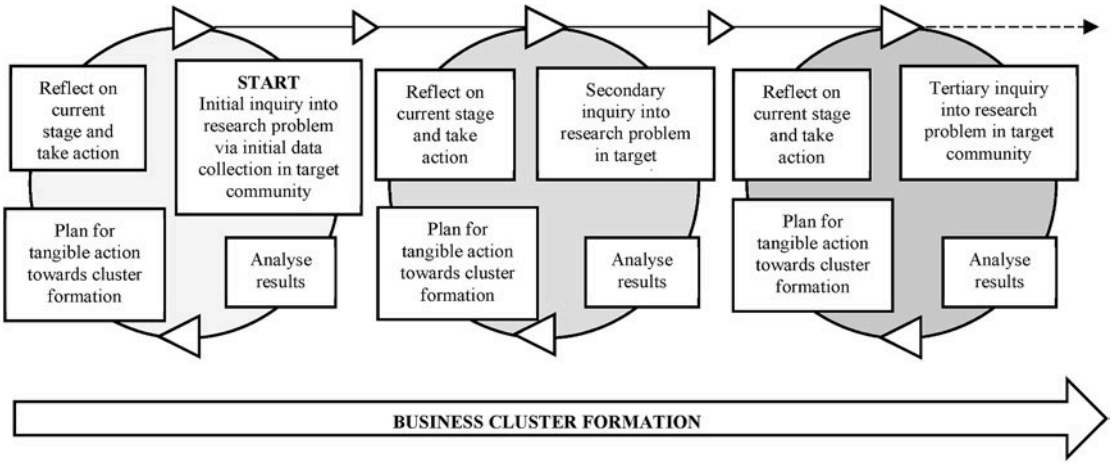

Fig. 2. Methodological framework: A systematic inquiry into business cluster formation.

Table 1
All data files analysed.

File #	Date	File Description *(All files transcribed)*	Word Count or Page Count
1	August 07, 2018	Notes from Meetings with Industry Leaders	1321 words
2	August 23, 2018	Project Outline sent to Industry Body	8 pages
3	August 27, 2018	Notes from Meeting with Participant	512 words
4	September 31, 2018	Notes from Meeting with Participant	1380 words
5	December 07, 2018	Voice Memo following Issues with Data Collection	1638 words
6	December 28, 2018	Voice Memo following Meeting with Participant	368 words
7	January 11, 2019	Voice Memo following Meeting with Industry Body	5044 words
8	March 20, 2019	Notes from Meetings with Cluster Members	798 words
9	March 23, 2019	Interview with Cluster Members	12,676 words
10	March 23, 2019	Interview with Cluster Members	13,811 words
11	March 23, 2019	Voice Memo following Interviews	1337 words
12	March 30, 2019	Interview with Cluster Members	6726 words
13	March 30, 2019	Voice Memo following Interview with Cluster Members	647 words
14	April 01, 2019	Research Collaboration Group Plan	1504 words
15	May 03, 2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	984 words
16	May 03, 2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	688 words
17	May 05, 2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	133 words
18	May 06, 2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	400 words
19	May 10, 2019	Event Brainstorming Output from Cluster Members	362 words
20	May 10, 2019	Mind Map & Target Markets Output from Cluster Members	357 words
21	May 10, 2019	Mind Map Output from Cluster Members	157 words
22	May 10, 2019	Target Markets Output from Cluster Members	272 words
23	May 10, 2019	Target Markets Output from Cluster Members	425 words
24	October 17, 2019	Mind Map Output from Cluster Members	85 words
25	October 17, 2019	Target Markets Output from Cluster Members	576 words
26	May 17, 2019	Target Markets Output from Cluster Member	280 words
27	July 12, 2019	Group Event Planning Shared Document	1906 words
28	July 15, 2019	Face to Face Focus Group	11,187 words
29	July 15, 2019	Voice Memo following Focus Group	2937 words
30	July 15, 2019	Interview with Cluster Members	14,310 words
31	July 15, 2019	Voice Memo from Interview with Cluster Members	519 words
32	July 28, 2019	Self-Complete Interview from Cluster Members	650 words
33	August 02, 2019	Self-Complete Interview from Cluster Members	634 words
34	August 13, 2019	Self-Complete Interview from Cluster Members	686 words
35	August 13, 2019	Self-Complete Interview from Cluster Members	660 words
36	September 17, 2019	Voice Memo following emails with Cluster Member	951 words
37	September 20, 2019	Events Proposal for Industry Body	7 pages
38	January 29, 2020	Notes from Face to Face Focus Group	1068 words
39	January 29, 2020	Face to Face Focus Group De-Brief Notes	2105 words
40	May 13, 2020	Zoom Focus Group	8084 words
41	May 15, 2020	Self-Complete Questions Cluster Members	396 words
42	May 15, 2020	Self-Complete Questions Cluster Members	704 words
43	May 18, 2020	Self-Complete Questions Cluster Members	378 words
44	May 21, 2020	Event Run Sheet (Webinar Event)	1 page
45	June 30, 2020	All Email Communications	1477 pages

Table 2
Respondent profile.

Participant No.	Business Type	Role in Business
1	Café/Attraction	Owner/Manager
2	Local Council (SDRC[a])	Representative
3	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
4	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
5	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
6	Regional Tourism Organisation (SQCT[b])	CEO
7	State Tourism Organisation (TEQ[c])	Destination Director
8	Local Tourism Organisation	Representative
9 & 10	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
11 & 12	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
13 & 14	Attraction	Owner/Manager
15	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
16 & 17	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
18	Winery	Owner/Manager
19	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative

[a] SDRC: Southern Downs Regional Council.
[b] SQCT: Southern Queensland Country Tourism.
[c] Tourism Events Queensland.

phone calls), which added a complexity but also depth to the process. In order to ensure trustworthiness of the data and how it was collected, the researchers adhered to established and generally accepted guidelines for qualitative data collection such as focus groups (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000), and kept their personal interpretations of all data collected to their research notes and diaries. All data that was collected was transcribed verbatim where possible, removing bias from the researchers during data collection. For instances where a direct recording and transcription was not possible (a phone call, for example), the researchers aimed to keep as neutral as possible when writing research notes or a diary entry, while acknowledging that total non-bias is impossible to achieve with qualitative methods. In fact, the researchers recognise that personal bias, understanding, values and thoughts were inevitably represented within this project at times due to the primary researcher's connections to the region; and it is due to this that the researcher was able to gain a richness of data, as the researcher was welcomed warmly by participants, due to familiarity and personal history within the industry (Archer, 2007; Bourdieu, 2004; Ellis & Bochner, 2000).

In addition, as the study sought to confirm or deny Hawkins and Calnan (2009) research, care was taken by the researchers to not guide participant responses towards the research objective during interviews etc. While participants were informed of the research project and were offered complete transparency to see the research proposals, the common motive for participants to join the study was to work with other participants towards the group project, rather than analysing how the group was progressing. Participants expressed a desire to work towards a benefit for their community/region and this was their focus-the researchers were the only people involved in the study that were monitoring the progression of the group and how it moved through the different stages and steps of cluster formation.

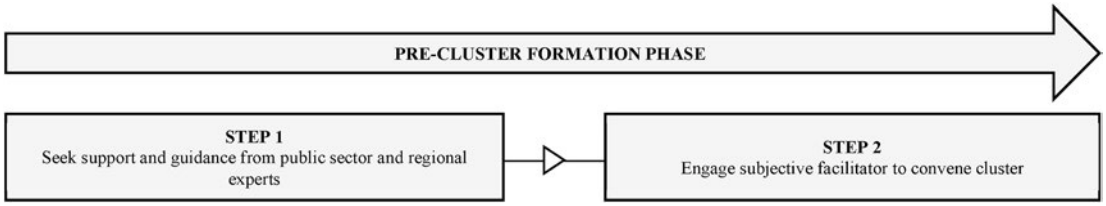

Fig. 3. Pre-cluster formation phase.

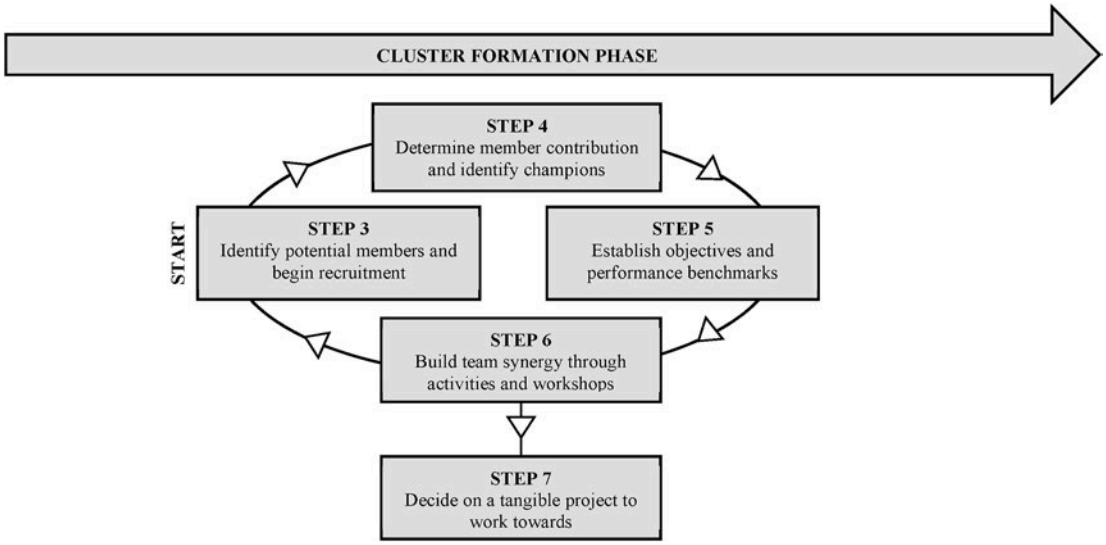

Fig. 4. Cluster formation stage.

3.3. Data analysis

The data analysis is outlined in the following stages. To begin, all audio files (interviews, focus groups, and voice memos) were transcribed with assistance from webpage 'Transcribe'. All other data was already in written format (emails, work activities, researcher diary, Facebook group comments), and did not require transcription. A Microsoft Excel spreadsheet was then created to conduct thematic analysis, where each data collection item was coded inductively to identify broad themes and patterns (Adler & Clark, 2014). The researchers summarised the data, coded it by identify idea groups, and generating key themes (Beyea and Nicoll, 2000). This categorisation of the data occurred by assigning observations into categories (Alder & Clark, 2011). The categories were derived from the reviewed literature. Guiding this coding process were Principals 1 & 2 of PAR, as well as concepts relating to business cluster, collaboration, and stakeholder typologies. This theoretical guiding of the data analysis offered a more holistic understanding of the research problem. The basis of the coding process was to identify the data that informed the business cluster formation stages that arose from the PAR process. PAR was used in the coding process because it offered guidance into the organisation of the data analysis phases. Since PAR is a cyclic process, each phase informed the next stage of data analysis (McTaggart, 1997). As a result, it was important that the data was kept in accordance to the phases by which it was collected. These phases were informed by business cluster and collaboration concepts within the literature (see Fig. 1 above) (Hawkins & Calnan, 2009; Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2020). As such, the suggested guidelines to cluster formation were compared alongside the empirical data to either confirm, disprove, or expand upon original assumptions from the literature.

Finally, to offer additional rigor to the data analysis process, the data was then added and inductively coded in NVIVO. All material was gathered into theme 'nodes' and 'sub-nodes' and their relationships were analysed using queries, explore and compare diagrams, and mind and concept maps features in NVIVO. This was done to confirm the ideas uncovered during the initial thematic analysis in Microsoft Excel and uncover alternative patterns in the data, which resulted in a high consensus level.

4. Findings

The research question was to understand how small tourism businesses progress through cluster formation. The findings revealed that there are three distinct phases to cluster formation and each phase has steps within. The three phases are; the pre-cluster formation phase, the cluster formation phase, and the cluster progression phase, and there are 12 steps in total, divided into each of the phases.

The below respondent profile (Table 2) provides details of the participants in the order that each participant was engaged with. 11 of the participants were owners/managers of local businesses, and 8 participants were representatives for their organizations.

4.1. Pre-cluster formation phase

The most surprising finding from this study is the discovery of a pre-cluster formation phase, which involved Steps 1 and 2.

Step 1 is to seek support and guidance from public sector and regional experts. Participants suggested that initial selective membership would allow the cluster to grow whilst maintaining a positive perception in the region. This approach could eventually lead to open membership, which would then be in line with typical structure of a business cluster (Rosenfeld, 1997). This information helped guide how the cluster would be formed, and which stakeholders to seek and avoid during recruitment for cluster members. Their sentiments are below:

P1 (File #1): "There are some really strong figures … it needs to be selective."

P2 (File #1): "The group needs to be selective, otherwise you will just be putting out fires."

P6 (File #1): "Don't get too caught up in small-town politics … People will try to pull the project in a number of ways."

P7 (File #1): "Be very selective about who you let into the cluster."

This study revealed that step 2 was to 'Engage a subjective facilitator to the convene cluster' prior to the cluster formation Participants unanimously agreed that the cluster would more likely be successful if the primary researcher convened the cluster as a result of their familiarity with the region. It is important to note that the participants expressed the need for the facilitator to have developed trust, a sense of co-ownership, and a collaborative network from previous research and connections in the region.

P2 (File #3): "I think this is great … Let's arrange a meeting with [public sector representatives already familiar to researcher] to tell them about your idea … I want you to be on the committee again this year."

P6 (File #4): "You already have a great group of connections from your last study here to include [in the cluster] … make sure you ask me for help [with the cluster] when you need it."

The first two steps to pre-cluster formation are depicted in Fig. 3 below. Once the pre-cluster formation was completed, the cluster formation began. This phase is described in the following section.

4.2. Cluster formation phase

The cluster formation stage constitutes steps 3–7, and steps 3–6 occur in a cyclic process, meaning that the steps can, and sometimes will, repeat, as depicted in Fig. 4 below. While this phase can end at step 6, the framework also allows for repetition of the first four steps of cluster formation, depending on the goal of the members at the time. For example, if the goal of the cluster was to increase membership or to network with others, the first four steps could be repeated until this goal was satisfied. Because the goal of the cluster in this study was to create an event to help market the region, the members progressed to step 7. The stages are described in detail in the following paragraphs.

Step 3: 'Identify potential members and begin recruitment' was informed by participant feedback in Step 1. From the suggestions, three local businesses were recruited that constituted participants 9–14. These participants then recruited other businesses to join in a snowball sampling strategy, adding participants 15 to 18. During this recruitment, a strong theme surrounding the specific characteristics desirable of cluster members, as depicted by participants' comments below:

P9 (File #9): "We can't have people that are hung up on old issues or who have bad blood."

P10 (File #9): "You get a bit sick of the (drama), and you just want to move on with it. So, we need people that will be happy to just get on with it."

Step 4: The 'Determine member contribution and identify champions' step involved each member explaining their ability to contribute, and proposing cluster champions. It is important to note that while participants were prepared to suggest a cluster champion, they did not really see the value in it. This could have been due to the size of the group and the selectiveness of who was involved at this stage. However, champion identification is still included in the framework for transferability to other regions. While cluster champions were originally identified as participants 9 to 14, only participants 12 and 13 were identified as champions, due to other members dropping out; an issue addressed in the section on cluster challenges.

Step 5: 'Establish objectives and performance benchmarks' revealed that participants were seeking something 'positive' to bring to the community to raise the profile of the region, as depicted by the following comments:

P11 (File #11): "That's the main outcome, I think, for anyone to be – to keep the community alive and vibrant and to let people know that this is the place to come. It will promote our business, our region and keep our town going, particularly given that there's so much negative stuff happening at the moment."

P13 (File #12): "We really want this to be positive. We just want to come together and do something that is positive for the region."

All participants, except for 13 and 14, made positive remarks about joining together to host an event for the region. Participants 13 and 14 raised concerns that the region did not need another event. Given the dominance of participants wishing to host an event (12 out of 14 participants), a schedule was created in consultation with Participants 9 to 14, which informed Step 6 of cluster formation. It is important to acknowledge that only 6 participants were involved in the creation of the Schedule of Activities, because those participants were the cluster champions and felt they had enough experience to contribute to this schedule.

Step 6: 'Build team synergy through activity and workshops' saw the development of a schedule of activity and workshops (see Table 3, below). The 'free session' may not be essential for all clusters, but rather, the schedule should be guided by participant input. Much of the planned information share sessions were about destination marketing, business marketing, and event planning.

For a cluster that had a different objective, a different schedule of activities should be constructed. In this study, the schedule provided a format for discussion to help the group strengthen its bond and get to know one another on a deeper level. The activities provided participants with perceived value from their participation, as they were developing their knowledge, which in turn, increased their confidence to be able to contribute to a larger project in the future. This is evidenced by the following comments:

R12 (File #32): "I think we've gained more knowledge out of it. Sharing ideas and things like that. It's always good to see … other people's ideas, how they interpret whatever the question is. I think that's good … It makes you think a little bit more outside what you know, normal day to day thing. So, I found that's good. Prompts you to think instead of run on remote control."

R15 (File #33): "I think all participants are learning from this experience. I think we need to learn from any successes or failures we encounter from our event and move forward with the knowledge we have gained and try to improve … I definitely doubted my ability to think creatively and contribute ideas. I still have underlying doubt but much less so now."

R16 (File #34): "While we have considered and discussed these things, we have never documented them as such. So, it was an

Table 3
Outline of schedule of activities.

Session	Scheduled Activity
1	Introductory Content and Overview of Group Plan
2	Event Brainstorming
3	Building a Plan#1- Target Markets
4	Building a Plan#2- Objective Setting
5	Building a Plan#3- Marketing Tools
6	Building a Plan#4- Evaluation Techniques
7	Free Session: (General catch-up as busy week for operators)
8	Collaboration Information and Group Check-In
9	Free Session: (General catch-up as busy week for operators)
10	Final Organized Session

interesting exercise to put it on paper."

R18 (File #35): "I got to know other participants a little better and made new relationships, building business and personal connections."

Step 7 to cluster formation is to decide on tangible group initiatives to work towards. After team synergy was built in Step 4 through activities and information share, the group gathered in a focus group hosted by the facilitator where they decided on a way forward for the cluster. Participants had decided they would like to see a tangible outcome in the form of an event that would contribute to the destination's image, and so planning continued for this.

4.3. Cluster progression phase

The steps in cluster progression are 8–12, and all of these are entirely new contributions to the literature. Steps 8–11 are in a cyclic process, meaning that the steps can, and sometimes will, repeat, until cluster members are ready to progress to step 12. The steps are depicted in Fig. 5, below.

Step 8 to cluster progression is to re-engage the public sector for support with the group project. After the group decided on a tangible group initiative to work towards in step 7, the group then decided to re-engage the public sector representatives to see how they could assist with the event concepts the group had worked on, and how it would coincide with the destination brand for the region. The public sector representatives then offered input and guidance on the event plans that the cluster wanted to work towards, and also offered guidance on how to process the plans;

"The events sound wonderful. The workshops in particular are very much aligned to our hero experiences and key messaging … Re: Event Two – I know you have mentioned tourists will be attracted to the event, but the nature of the event (networking) would lead me to believe the majority of attendees will be locals. I'm not sure if the price point is suitable for locals, but this could be lowered with sponsorship, perhaps from the same organisation you are sourcing the founder/CEO speaker from."(File #45)

After receiving this feedback and more within an email conversation, the cluster made considerations and the necessary changes to the event plans, which lead to step 9. For a cluster that was not working towards an event, public sector representatives could offer input on their particular goal/project, or for a cluster that did not have a particular goal/project, public sector representatives could offer advice on some potential projects the cluster could work on.

Step 9 is to establish objectives and member duties for the project, which involved each member explaining their ability to contribute to the project. During this stage, four participants stopped participating in the cluster, leaving six cluster members plus the facilitator/researcher. Two of the participants who left the cluster had been tapering their contribution from Step 5, and the other two participants provided reasons for needed to leave the cluster;

R9 (File #45): "The past few months have been our busy season and along with having kids we seriously have had no time to do anything other than focus on guest facing work. I know what I'm struggling with the most right now is TIME! Our business simply cannot afford to hire or out-source the work I need to get done, so I'm really bogged down."

R10 (File #45): "I've got so much work to catch up on and being honest, I'm tired, or more like exhausted and just wish I could curl up in bed and the business just take care of itself for a week …"

R13 (File #45): "Over the last few months our focus has changed to one of survival and I feel I am not in a position to give your project my full attention that it deserves. [R14] is trying to build another business and is currently also playing 'teacher' while schools are out, so she doesn't have a lot of free time … For us it's been a very tough 5 years and it is now time to look for a steady income – so that's where our focus is at the moment … I do love organising events but in this present climate my main focus has changed. I am always happy to help a bit further down the line if needed."

Remaining participants confirmed that they were keen to continue and outlined their contribution to continuing the event planning by explaining how they could use their connections, resources, or talents.

Step 10 is to progress the project with communication and teamwork, which saw the participants meeting on multiple occasions to refine the project and making progress towards its delivery. Participants met at a local café [File 28], and during COVID-19 restrictions via Zoom [File 40], to continue to plan the event.

Then, step 11 is to engage additional stakeholders. In this step participants engaged additional local businesses to provide their product/services for the event they were planning. Each of the remaining cluster members (6), engaged 3 local businesses that would come together for the event (as seen below). This stage will look very different for each cluster depending on the project they are working towards.

R11 (File #40): "So, we already spoke with [owner] from [local

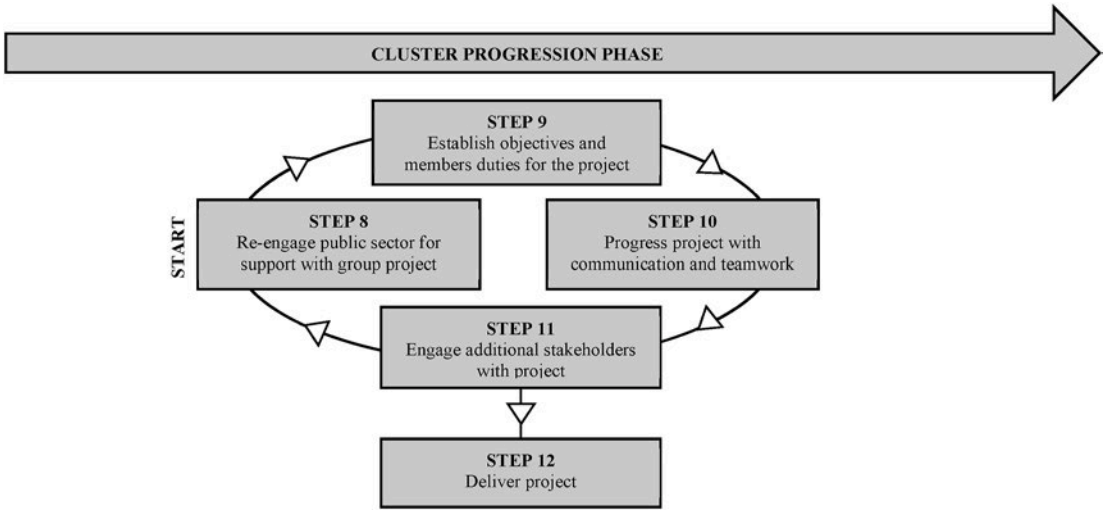

Fig. 5. Cluster progression stage.

business], who at the time when we spoke was more than happy to be involved … And we've also spoken to the people from [local business, and they are at this stage, also keen to host the workshop on potentially germinating seed."

R15 (File #40): "So I spoke to [owner] from [local business] … And she said that she's happy to host a class … I'd be happy to touch base with the baker from [local business]. I know he does classes. Bread making, pastry making and that sort of thing."

R18 (File #40): "I might approach, there is a potter [owner] … he does lovely pottery pieces and he's sold a lot of these pieces down the mill in years past and I'd love to chat to him about having people out there to actually make a wine goblet."

Finally, step 12 is to deliver the project, which, for this cluster, was postponed to March 2021 due to COVID-19. The project will deliver an event called 'Granite Belt Living Lightly' which showcases a series of workshops delivered by local stakeholders that contribute to branding the region as a sustainable tourism destination. Further results will be presented in future papers post the delivery of this event, which has been delayed and to March 2021 due to COVID-19 event restrictions, and is continually modified in line with COVID-safe plans and restrictions. In the meantime, the cluster arranged a collaborative event with Griffith Institute for Tourism, 'Future Normal' Webinar for regional small tourism businesses to adapt to more sustainable strategies, hosted in June 2020. Regardless of the project delivery, participant still feel positively about progress they have made in the cluster;

R15 (File #29): "I feel very positive about the group and the progress we are making. Simple things like meeting the other group members and exchanging ideas has made a positive difference. [I've] met new participants which was terrific and cemented previous acquaintances and feel more like part of the team."

R18 (File # 35): "I got to know other participants a little better and made new relationships. Building business and personal connections."

R17 (File #35): "[I've] engendered some confidence in finding like-minded business people in a new area."

The secondary data analysis completed in NVivo showed a high consensus with the total cluster formation framework phases above, as seen in Fig. 6 below.

Although it depicts a less-linear approach to cluster formation, this NVivo output aligns the phases of total cluster formation depicted by the constructed framework. In this output, the destination branding node has a one-way connecter from business cluster formation, suggesting that business cluster formation feeds into destination branding. And, while this is not untrue, there are actually specific steps where destination branding activities occurred with more of a heightened priority, as the findings indicated. Focus on destination branding activities occurred during Steps 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11 and 12 as outlined within the findings, and the NVivo output does not depict this.

5. Discussion

The framework below (Fig. 7) highlights new contributions and expansions to the literature in relation to the total cluster formation process. In 2004, Wolfe and Gertler referred to a striking lack of consensus over how clusters are formed and how they can be set in motion. Until this study, the conceptual clarity of clusters had been improved, other than suggested guidelines by Hawkins and Calnan (2009) which were not been empirically verified. As such, many of the findings offer new contributions to the literature.

Firstly, the total cluster formation framework is an entirely new contribution to existent literature, as no present study has empirically tested this process prior to this. This contributes greatly to both academia and industry, as discussed in detail below in Section 6.0.

The discovery of the three distinct phases (Phase, 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3) to cluster formation is an entirely new contribution to

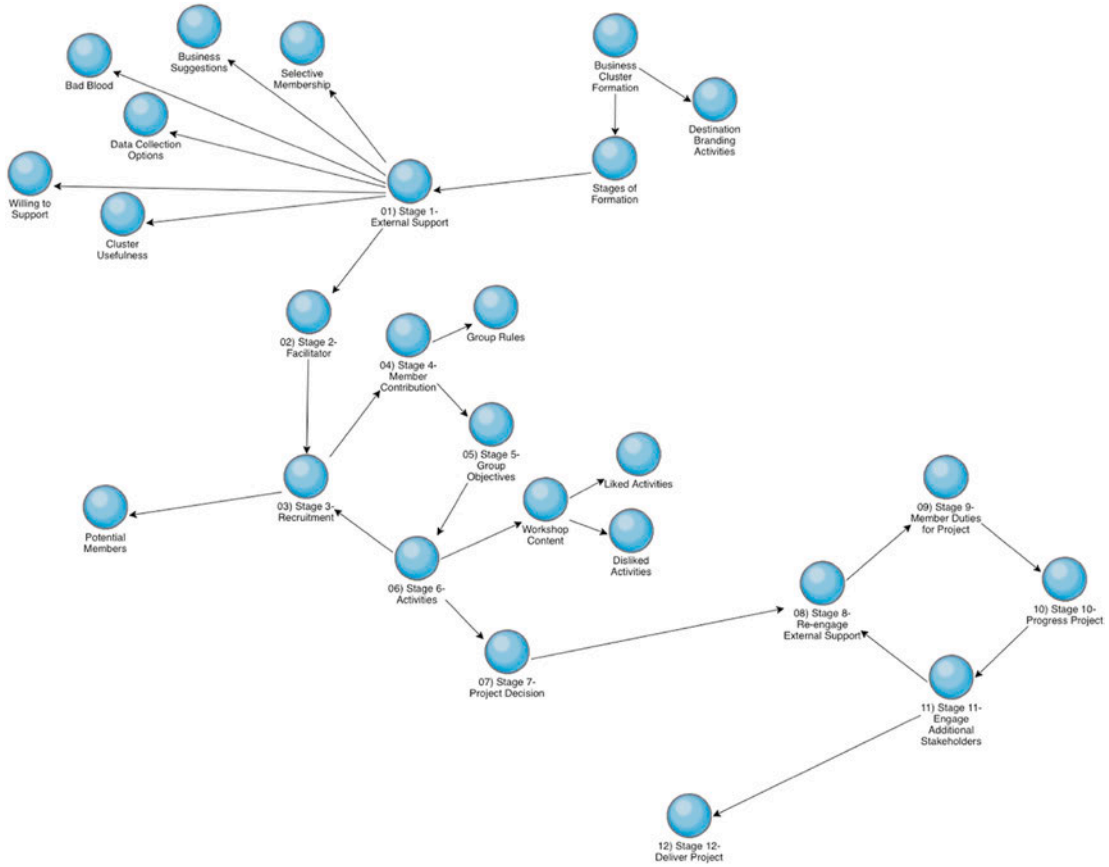

Fig. 6. NVivo output: Node map of formation stages.

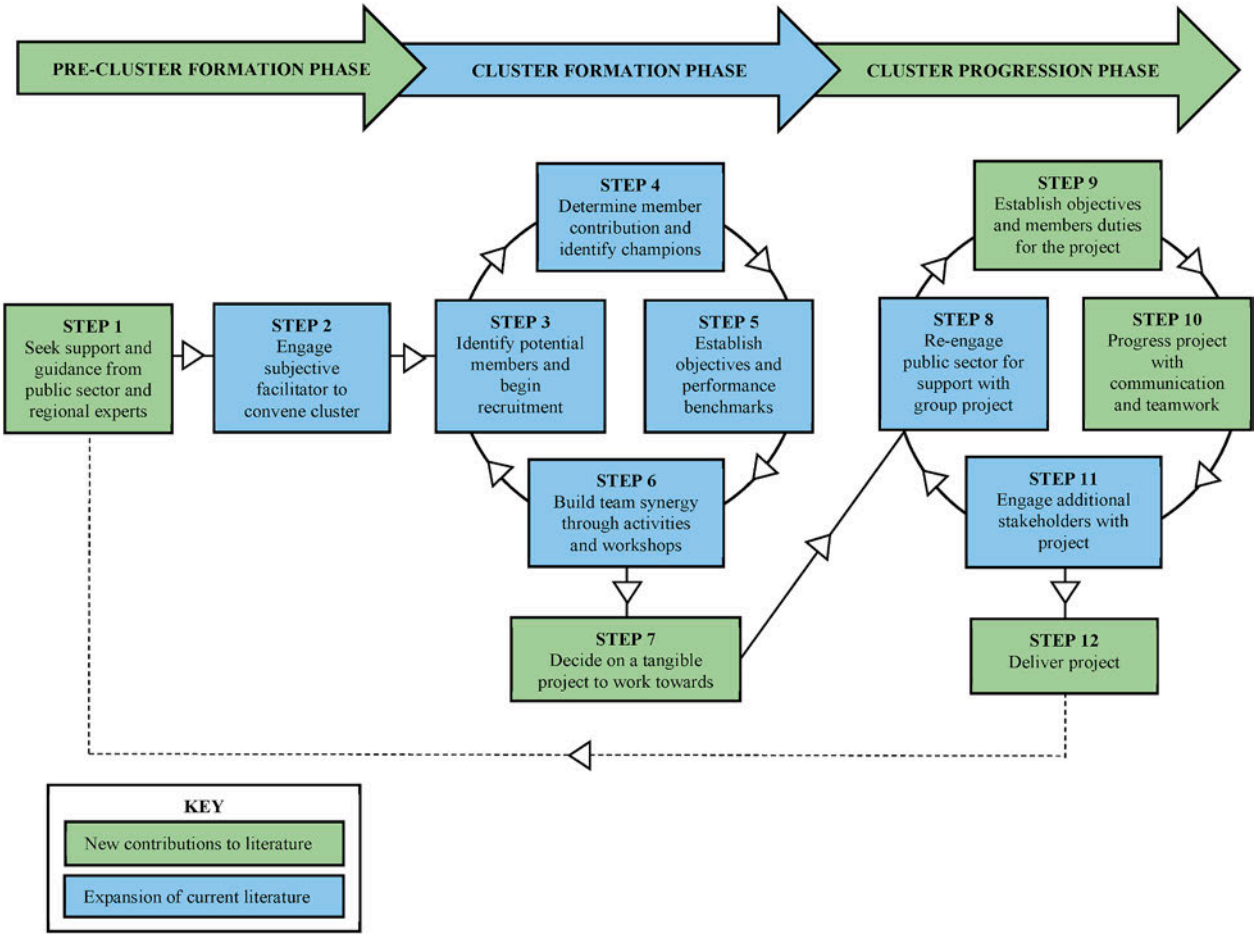

Fig. 7. Total Cluster Formation Model highlighting new contributions and expansions of current literature.

literature, as previous literature had only referred to cluster formation guidelines (Hawkins & Calnan, 2009), without suggesting it may occur in phases. This finding can help to shape future research on collaboration for tourism stakeholders, using this formation model as a foundation for future research to expand. Of the specific phases, Phase 2 and the steps within were an expansion of previous literature, and mostly captured the cluster formation guidelines as suggested by Hawkins and Calnan (2009). Phases 1 and 3 had not at all been suggested in previous literature, although they did possesses stages that had been informed by Hawkins and Calnan (2009) research. Further to this, the finding that Phases 2 and 3 were cyclic in nature and that the steps within these phases could repeat, is also an entirely new contribution to literature, as no literature has previously provided empirically tested cluster formation guidelines. The cluster formation stage constitutes steps 3–7, which align to the suggestions by Hawkins Hawkins and Calnan (2009). In this study, however, these steps are in a cyclic process, meaning that the steps can, and sometimes will, repeat. This cyclic nature corresponds with previous research that suggests collaboration is a circular phase as it grows and evolves (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2020).

Step 1, 'Seek support and guidance from public sector and regional experts' is an entirely new contribution to the literature. This step was not previously suggested by any authors, and as such, offers critical insight into the beginning of cluster formation. Step 2, 'Engage a subjective facilitator to convene cluster' was informed by Hawkins and Calnan's (2009) research, but proved some things wrong. Firstly, Hawkins and Calnan (2009) suggested to be the Step 1 rather than the Step 2, but seeking guidance from public sector is essential in setting the groundwork for successful and useful cluster formation. Secondly, it proved beneficial that the cluster facilitator was subjective, rather than objective to cluster formation as suggested by Hawkins and Calnan (2009).

Step 3, 'Identify potential members and begin recruitment', Step 4, 'Determine member contribution and identify champions', Step 5 'Establish objectives and performance benchmarks', and Step 6, 'Build team synergy through activities and workshops', which formed Phase 2, were all informed from Hawkins and Calnan's (2009) study and the descriptions of each stage proved very accurate. Step 7, 'Decide on a tangible group project to work towards' is an entirely new contribution to the literature, and is essential in progressing the cluster forward, towards a deliverable outcome.

Step 8, 'Re-engage public sector for support with group project' is a new contribution to the literature, although it took guidance from Hawkins and Calnan's (2009) research that suggested engaging the public sector for policy and regulatory advancements. Step 9, 'Establish objectives and members duties for the project' and Step 10, 'Progress project with communication and teamwork' are both entirely new contributions to the current literature and were critical in describing how the group was progressing towards delivering the project. Step 11, 'Engage additional stakeholders with project' is a new contribution to the literature, although it took guidance from Hawkins and Calnan's (2009) research that suggested engaging the community by educating them on the benefits of tourism. Finally, Step 12, 'Deliver project' is also an entirely new step to cluster formation and was critical for the newly formed cluster to feel a sense of achievement in their contribution as cluster members.

Not only has this research advanced the current state of knowledge on collaboration for tourism stakeholders, these steps can also act as a helpful guide for industry. Having this cluster formation model as a

practical guide offers insights into how the collaboration may progress, some suggestions on when to take certain actions, and mitigating relationships between varied stakeholders who may be involved. The contributions of this research are further explored below.

6. Contributions

6.1. Theoretical contributions: the Total Cluster Formation Model

Firstly, this study contributes to the theoretical discussion of what constitutes collaboration within a regional destination brand context, by exploring the concept of collaboration via a business clustering strategy for small tourism businesses. Current literature emphasizes the importance of collaboration for effective destination branding (Caple, 2011; Saxena, 2005; Telfer, 2001), yet there was still a fragmented understanding of how collaboration is constructed, and how collaborative challenges can be overcome for successful destination branding with authors stating that the conceptual clarity of cluster formation was lacking (Wolfe & Gertler, 2004). This study significantly expands on the literature for cluster by offering a complete framework to guide cluster formation, which includes the pre-cluster, cluster formation, and cluster progression phases. This framework is a new contribution to the literature and is illustrated in Fig. 8, below. The dotted line linking Step 12 and Step 1 suggest that the process can be repeated, although this has not yet been empirically proven.

This model provides an in-depth response to the research question, as it furthers the understanding of the phases and steps of cluster formation. This study contributes to further understanding on how the conceptualization of collaboration via business clustering can contribute to the empowerment of regional small tourism firms in contributing to their destination brand. The formation of business clustering has been evaluated within this study, and thus processes of collaboration with the end goal of contributing to the destination brand have been expanded. This study has offered a resolution to a gap in conceptual clarity, and further, offers a platform for future research in this domain to expand. With continual improvements to the body of literature in this field, academia can continue to provide useful and correct theory and frameworks that guide and offer resolution to industry problems, as well as informing future generations on more effective ways to implement collaboration.

6.2. Practical contributions

This research provides industry with a proven process by which regional small tourism firms can establish a tourism business cluster in the form of a step-by-step guide. The cluster formation model framework created within the case of the Granite Belt region in Queensland is expected to provide governing tourism bodies with a thorough assessment of collaborative destination branding processes for the region as a competitive tourism destination. This project contributes practical implications for small tourism businesses and the regional areas in which they are located-beyond the Granite Belt Region, by offering best practice solutions to collaborative challenges through cluster formation. The purpose of providing a best practice process for business cluster formation and operation is to provide industry with strategies for successful collaboration, so that they can effectively contribute to the overall destination brand of the region. While the research may not necessarily be transferable to all regional destinations, the study provides insights that will be useful to small tourism businesses in many regional areas which are affected by tourism growth, including local councils, local tourism organizations, chambers of commerce and local residents, offering effective ways to grow tourism in a manner that is mutually beneficial for all stakeholders involved.

The final stage of total business cluster formation is project delivery, and for the newly formed cluster in the present study, they event they have planned has been delayed to March 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. As such, future papers will report on the clusters ability to contribute to the destination brand and to raise awareness about the region (Caple, 2011; Gardiner & Scott, 2014; Saxena, 2005), and will also report on any increase in tourism expenditure, which is a recognised outcome for regions that have fully adopted clustering (Lade, 2010).

This study has offered a practical solution to an industry issue. Where stakeholders are facing challenges in working together, this paper, and the framework within, can offer a practical guideline on how

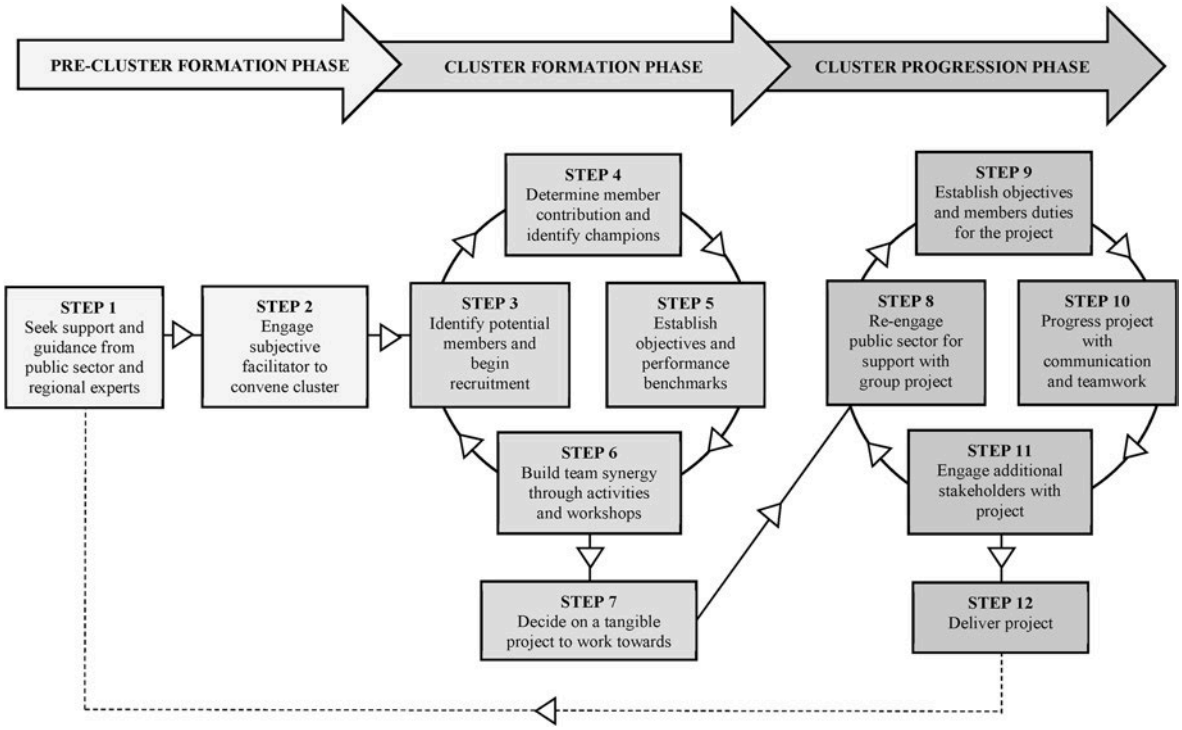

Fig. 8. Total cluster formation model.

collaboration can best be enacted from initiation. For regions where successful collaboration is difficult, or perhaps rarely exists, this framework can be a guiding tool for new collaboration to prosper successfully. This research has responded to an industry problem and thus, has the potential to resolve future issues in this context. In the future, once successful cluster creation is attainable in more regional destinations that have previously struggled to work together, those clusters could inevitably create many benefits for those that participate, and for the regions they belong to.

7. Conclusion and limitations

Time was one of the biggest limitations to this study. There were times during the process where the primary researcher needed to push an agenda to keep the project moving along, and perhaps if the project was not working in adherence to the researcher's timeline, results may have varied. Future research could span a longer period to allow the cluster to develop entirely at participant pace. Next, while PAR proved to be a helpful methodology for this process, it also created an interesting and sometimes challenging power dynamic between the researcher and participants. Furthermore, participants were all at least 15 years older than the primary researcher. Future research could explore cluster formation with a different research methodology or ensure a more similar age range between researcher and participants. Furthermore, there are continual structural changes occurring within governing bodies of the region and as such, frustrations and emotions towards collaboration were often heightened. Future research conducted in different regions could reveal different insights due to different contributions from governing bodies. Importantly, the region was subject to severe drought, bushfires, and COVID-19 during the data collection phase of this study and as such, were focused on survival, disaster relief and recovery, which inevitably diverted focus from the research project. It would be opportune for future research to understand cluster formation post COVID-19, in a 'new normal' business arena. Lastly, it would be beneficial for future research to examine how clusters are formed in different regions using the total cluster formation framework to confirm or falsify suggested phases and steps, enhancing the usability and transferability of the framework.

Despite its limitation, this study has been able to map the phases and steps to cluster formation. This is the first empirical study to examine and understand cluster formation in its entirety, uncovering the pre-cluster formation phase, cluster formation phase, to cluster progression phase, and the steps within each, contributing to the body of literature in this domain. This study presents a clear framework that offers practical guidance to cluster formation, enabling and empowering regional stakeholders to be able to collaborate and combine forces to contribute to destination branding.

Declaration of competing interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Paper 3

Perkins, R., Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Arcodia, A. (2021). Don't hate- collaborate! Exploring stakeholder typologies, relationships and networks during the business cluster formation process. Under review with *Tourism Management.* **(ABDC Rank A*, IF: 7.432)**

The co-authors of this manuscript are my thesis supervisors, Associate Professor Catheryn Khoo (previously Khoo-Lattimore) and Professor Charles Arcodia. My contribution to the paper involved: conception of the theoretical framework, analysing the articles, interpreting the findings, drafting, re-writing and editing the paper and acting as corresponding author.

Signed [redacted] 01 March 2021

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Don't hate- Collaborate! Exploring stakeholder typologies, relationships and networks during the cluster formation process

Abstract:
Business clustering as a collaboration strategy has proven successful in many regional destinations but research is still nascent in this domain. Recently, research has empirically explored the cluster formation process in regions that did not already have a pre-existing cluster, but research is still yet to fully understand stakeholder typologies, relationships and networks and how they contribute to cluster formation. This paper utilised a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach in regional Australia, involving participants from local tourism businesses, local council, the local tourism organisation, regional tourism organisation and state tourism organisation. Findings reveal how different stakeholder typologies and stakeholder networks contribute to cluster formation. Findings from this study expand knowledge on the business clustering approach, offering insights into other forms of collaboration. This study offers advancement of stakeholder theory by presenting the Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum, detailing the degree of helpfulness of stakeholder types during collaboration.

Keywords: collaboration; stakeholder; typology; networks; cluster; continuum

Introduction
Collaboration is a process where stakeholders work together to resolve a problem, and operate with shared rules, norms and structures (Wood & Gray, 1991). The tourism industry involves a diverse array of tourism stakeholders who interact with one another in collaboration (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005) and it is important that stakeholders are understood within these collaborative arrangements. Stakeholder collaboration has been said to be critical to the success of tourism destinations (McComb, Boyd & Boluk, 2017) and understanding the relationships between stakeholders can help to understand a destination, its characteristics and how it is managed now and into the future (Hazra, Fletcher & Wilkes, 2017). Of the many forms of collaboration (e.g. networks, partnerships, alliances), business clusters are unique as they enable both cooperation and competition (Grangsjo, 2003; Rosenfeld, 1997). Business clustering can encourage stakeholders to embrace competition with one another and focus on future success, in addition to assisting businesses in achieving economies of scale by pooling efforts and resources (Palmer & Bejou, 1995). This is incredibly useful in smaller, regional destinations that often lack access to the same resources in metropolitan areas.

From a managerial perspective, understanding stakeholder involvement in cluster formation is essential to knowing how to mitigate, support and move past challenges that arise with stakeholders during collaboration and insights for this can be gained during the business cluster formation process. But much of the industry information and resources are not delivering direct, useful information on stakeholder collaboration, or information on understanding different stakeholder behaviours in collaboration. For example, both the Queensland Tourism

Industry Council (QTIC) and Tourism Events Queensland (TEQ) offer a wide array of useful guides including; Tourism and Hospitality Best Practice Guide (about attracting an appropriate workforce), Tourism Service Quality Toolkit, Be China Ready, The Grants Guide, Planning for Inbound Success, The Big Marketing Guide, Queensland Events Guide, Storytelling Manual, Developing and Creating 'WOW' Experiences and Queensland's Content Framework (offering social media help). Further to this, they also offer an array of Business Capability Programs that are designed for businesses to be "more competitive, adaptive and resilient and visitors can enjoy a consistently high standard of experience across the state" (Tourism Events Queensland, 2021). Although all these guides and programs focus on COVID reopening preparation, pivoting product and innovation, domestic trade and distribution, domestic marketing (QTIC, 2021), they have not delivered on collaboration capabilities.

Industry workshops outside tourism do attempt to teach the 'how-to' of collaboration, but offer little insight into how different stakeholders and the relationships between them, contribute to or hinder the success of collaboration. For example, in the Australian Government's Business webpage 'How collaboration can help your business', insights are offered on why collaboration is helpful to business, how to find collaboration opportunities and/or a collaboration partner, getting finance to support the collaboration including grants and programs, and managing Intellectual Property (IP) (Australian Government, 2021). But there is no mention of understanding or managing different stakeholders or relationships between stakeholders. Even a seemingly excellent program run by Business Training Works called 'Collaboration Skills Training' does not cover the identification and management of different stakeholders and relationships between them, even though it mentions addressing conflict and solving problems (Business Training Works, 2021). It is necessary that research expands in this domain, to provide useful, practical information that informs industry and also develops academic knowledge on stakeholder collaboration. Todd, Leask and Ensor (2017), explain that the management of stakeholder relationships and collaboration is of key importance in tourism academia; "appreciating how and when these engagements occur is relevant to building upon existing stakeholder theory and is pertinent to the tourism management and studies literature" (p. 495). Yet, even though authors emphasize the importance of understanding stakeholder collaboration underpinned by stakeholder theory, it has not yet been empirically explored in the domain of cluster formation. To resolve this gap in understanding, this paper begins with an analysis of academic literature to explore stakeholders, their typologies, relationships between them, and stakeholder networks.

Conceptual Background

Stakeholder Collaboration

There are many benefits to understanding stakeholder roles and the relationships between them. First, it can create opportunity to be more effective in the management of tourism within the destination (Todd et al., 2017) as it allows for a more inclusive consideration of all issues

affecting the host community (Bramwell & Lane, 1993). Secondly, it can offer competitive advantages to those who participate including active participation and a form of management that facilitates widened support for the development of tourism in the region (Keogh, 1990; Lankford & Howard, 1994; McComb et al., 2017). The concept of stakeholder collaboration emerged to understand *how stakeholders formed a group* (Mainardes, Alves & Raposo, 2011), yet, to date there has been a lack of empirical research that explains in detail the intricate relationships between stakeholders as they enter into a collaboration formation process. This section will further explore this gap.

Recent empirical research revealed a 12 step framework to cluster formation (Perkins, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2021) yet, it is still not known the extent to which different stakeholder typologies, relationships between stakeholders and networks, contributed to or hindered the progress of cluster formation and thus a gap in understanding remains. The framework alludes to some stakeholder collaboration in Step 6, 'Build team synergy through activities and workshops', Step 10 'Progress project with communication and teamwork' and Step 11, 'Engage additional stakeholders with project' (Perkins et al., 2021), but there is no information on how different types of stakeholders and their relationships and networks contributed to these steps or other stages of cluster formation.

It is also important to understand stakeholder networks as they exist within clusters (Rosenfeld, 1997) as they can subsequently affect the formation and composition of a cluster. There are two types of networks, dense and centralised. Dense stakeholder networks have multiple links, both formal and informal, whereas sparse central stakeholder networks have all members linked to one focal organisation (Cox, Gryd-Jones & Gardiner, 2014). Dense networks represent more informal connections between stakeholders as these are not controlled by a central network. Research shows that dense networks encourage higher levels of knowledge and resource sharing, and have strong levels of consistency (Timur & Getz, 2008). Therefore, it could be assumed that dense networks can contribute to the formation and composition of a business cluster, but there is no empirical evidence to support this argument or explain the extent of this contribution until the present study. The second type of network, a centralised network, is typically managed by a destination marketing organisation (DMO) (Scott, Cooper & Baggio, 2008). As such, it often faces issues in sharing knowledge and communicating effectively as there is only one central organisation for stakeholders to gain knowledge from (Rowley, 1997). Cox et al., (2014) propose that centralised stakeholder networks marginalise smaller independent operators as the focal organisation controls the information dissemination and encourage greater cohesion among the larger, more powerful stakeholders. As such, it can be assumed that centralised networks contribute poorly to the formation and composition of a business cluster. However, there is again no empirical evidence to support this argument or explain the extent of this contribution. This highlights two clear gaps in current knowledge 1) absence of knowledge on stakeholder typologies, the relationships between them and how

they contribute to cluster formation and 2) how stakeholder networks contribute to cluster formation.

Stakeholder Typology

To study stakeholders, it is essential to be able to identify what type of stakeholder they are based on their characteristics. Stakeholder typology by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) is a popular and well used classification tool that defines stakeholders based on the characteristics of power, legitimacy and urgency, defining eight different stakeholder types: 1) dormant stakeholder, 2) discretionary stakeholder, 3) demanding stakeholder, 4) dominant stakeholder, 5) dangerous stakeholder, 6) dependent stakeholder, 7) definitive stakeholder and 8) non-stakeholder (Mitchell et al., 1997). Recently, a study by Vrontis, Christofi, Giacosa and Serravalle (2020) used Mitchell et al., (1997) stakeholder typology to conduct a stakeholder analysis. Their work also uses a range of other stakeholder analysis techniques but provides no further examination of collaboration or relationships stakeholders, nor insights into how stakeholders would contribute to a cluster as this was not the context of their study. In 2015, authors Nogueira and Pinho used the typology to classify stakeholders in their study of stakeholder networks in rural tourism. Yet, their study did not utilise the typology beyond this and did not examine relationships between the classified stakeholders. Similarly, a study by Elias, Canava and Jackson (2002) uses the typology to classify project management stakeholders but their study also offers no further examination of stakeholder collaboration. Another study by Xue and Mason (2011) uses the same typology classification to analyse stakeholders in the Grand Prix, but again, uses it only to classify and describe the stakeholders, not to examine how the stakeholder types interact.

With a narrower focus of literature on stakeholder collaboration, Saito and Ruhanen (2017) offer insights into stakeholder typology yet only explore the one attribute- power. This does little to help to define stakeholders with consideration for other attributes (legitimacy and urgency), nor does it help to unpack the typologies and their interactions. While Jamal and Stronza (2009) also refer to Mitchel et al., (1997)'s typology within the literature review section of their work, they do not provide insights into how they used this classification to define stakeholders, nor report on collaboration between stakeholder typologies- the same goes for Arajuro and Bramwell's (1999) study on stakeholder collaboration for tourism planning in Costa Dourada, Timur and Getz (2007) work on stakeholder networks in sustainable tourism, and Li, Sau and Su's (2020) work on stakeholders in heritage tourism. These papers are a representation of the current status in this domain. Authors utilise the Mitchell et al., (1997) framework to some degree, but all thus far have not unpacked how the stakeholder typologies interact with one another, relationships between the stakeholder typologies, and how the stakeholder typologies would, could, or have contributed to any sort of collaboration.

As such, there is little research to date, particularly in the tourism domain, that not only defines the stakeholders based on their typology, but offers critical insights into their relationships,

interactions, and collaboration. Within this study, the well-cited stakeholder typology by Mitchell et al., (1997) is utilised for its relevance in the context of this study. The attribute of 'urgency' describes the degree that a stakeholder calls for immediate action, 'legitimacy' refers to how appropriate and desirable a stakeholders actions are in the given social structure, and 'power' is the ability of a stakeholder to get another stakeholder to do something they wouldn't otherwise have done (Mitchell et al., 1997).Table 1 presents the description of each stakeholder type informed by Mitchell et al. (1997, p. 874-878), and then offers an assumption by the researcher on how each stakeholder *might* contribute to cluster formation. This study seeks to empirically confirm the level of contribution from each stakeholder type.

*Table 1: Stakeholder typology and **assumed** contribution to cluster formation*

Stakeholder Type	**Description** Mitchell et al. (1997, p. 874-878),	**Researchers Assumed Contribution to Cluster Formation** (no empirical support nor existent research to support assumption)
Dormant Stakeholder	Possesses power to impose their will, but does not have a legitimate relationship or urgent claim so their power remains unused.	Neutral to cluster formation. Likely not to be helpful, nor harmful to the process.
Discretionary Stakeholder	Possesses the attribute of legitimacy, but has no power to influence, and no urgent claims.	Helpful to cluster formation as long as they can work with others.
Demanding Stakeholder	Has urgent claims but no power or legitimacy.	Harmful to cluster formation due to demands and lack of contribution to the process.
Dominant Stakeholder	Has an assured influence due to their power and legitimacy.	Helpful to cluster formation if they can rely on others to push cluster formation along.
Dangerous Stakeholder	Has both power and urgency, yet lacks legitimacy.	Harmful to cluster formation as due to lack of legitimacy and urgency towards the process.
Dependent Stakeholder	Lacks power but has urgent, legitimate claims. They are dependent as they rely on others for the power necessary to carry out their will.	Helpful to cluster formation as long as they can work with others.
Definitive Stakeholder	Exhibits both power and legitimacy, and when this type of stakeholder has an urgent claim, action is taken to give priority to that claim.	Helpful to cluster formation.
Non-Stakeholder	Does not have a stake.	Neutral to cluster formation.

Importantly, none of the research to date offers insights into the actions of stakeholders that would classify them into a particular stakeholder type, making the stakeholder typology difficult

to navigate, requiring a high level of personal judgement to assess whether a stakeholder possesses the attributes of power, legitimacy and/or urgency. This study seeks to offer further insights to this, unpacking stakeholder behaviour and action that verifies whether they hold an attribute.

Factors That Inhibit Current Stakeholder Collaboration

Spyriadis (2002) stated that over half of all of the collaborative relationships shown in empirical studies have resulted in failure, pointing to the many challenges encountered during collaborative processes. McComb et al. (2017) suggest that the failure of stakeholder collaboration is likely because of the complexities of the stages involved in stakeholder collaboration. The authors suggest that this failure rate in collaboration can be contributed to the complexity in identifying legitimate stakeholders, gaining stakeholder participation, and then working towards effective collaboration (McComb et al., 2017). Given that the success of stakeholder collaboration in practice is limited (Fyall & Garrod, 2004), this study seeks to contribute understanding on how stakeholder collaboration can be effectively enacted during the cluster formation process, acknowledging stakeholder relationships.

While there are legitimate reasons that stakeholder collaboration may fail, this study acknowledges that the simple task of getting stakeholders interested in collaborating would be a difficult task if stakeholders are not understood. Further, Savage, Bunn, Gray, Xiao, Wang, Wilson and Williams (2010) explain that stakeholder relationships in relation to collaboration is complex, as it involves multiple stakeholders with varying interests and goals. Some authors claim that it is necessary to clarify a stakeholder's role within a project as this can then be used to further promote collaboration between key players in the tourism planning and development process (Sautter & Leisen, 1999). The present study argues that not only does the stakeholder's role need to be identified, but that their relationships with one another need to be identified also.

This literature overview offers insights into the domain of stakeholder collaboration, mapping what is known and not known about stakeholder collaboration, stakeholder typologies, stakeholder networks and challenges that inhibit effective stakeholder collaboration. This has led to the overarching research objective, which is to understand how stakeholder typologies and networks contribute to, or inhibit, the success of cluster formation as a form of collaboration. To address this objective, two research questions are formulated:

RQ1: To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation?
RQ2: How do stakeholder networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?

Methodology:

A participatory action research (PAR) approach was selected given it is a useful methodology to gain a deep understanding of the forms of collaboration and in creating a climate of collaboration in region (Capriello, 2012). PAR design offers an opportunity for stakeholders to be involved (Ho, Chia, Ng & Ramachandran, 2017; Jaafar, Rasoolimanesh & Ismail, 2017), and such framework is highly suitable for the present research as it is expected that this focus on local stakeholders will also reveal insights into the stakeholder typologies that drive or hinder cluster formation. Within PAR, researchers work in partnership with communities to generate knowledge through systematic inquiry to solve the identified problem at hand (Chambers, 1994; Fals Borda, 2001; MacDonald, 2012; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Participants' opinions are shown without manipulation from the researcher, and participants are active in making decisions throughout the research process (MacDonald, 2012).

Community in Focus

In all PAR studies, it is essential to define the target community (Penrod, Leob, Ladonne & Martin, 2016), specifically because the planning cycle involves assessing the target community and working with it to create strategies to move forward (MacDonald, 2012). The Granite Belt Region in South-East Queensland is the community in focus and the participants are the stakeholders involved in business cluster formation. Justification for the selection of this region is threefold; 1) the primary researcher was familiar with the region due to family ties, 2) previous research had revealed that this region was facing many challenges to collaboration (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019) and 3) it could be assumed that this region would benefit from forming a tourism business cluster as the organization element would offer a solution to some of the issues identified in previous research (Perkins & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019).

Participants were recruited via familiar face to face contact and snowball sampling, as the primary researcher had pre-established connections within the region. For this study, non-probability sampling was more appropriate due to its cost efficiency and convenience, and also because the researchers are able to be purposeful when selecting the sample, using knowledge about the region and its tourism industry to advantage. Once the participants were selected, to unpack RQ1, the researcher classified the participants into different stakeholder typologies influenced by characteristics they possessed; power, legitimacy and urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Data Collection

Figure 1 below depicts the data collection process, and Table 2 following depicts the data analysis.

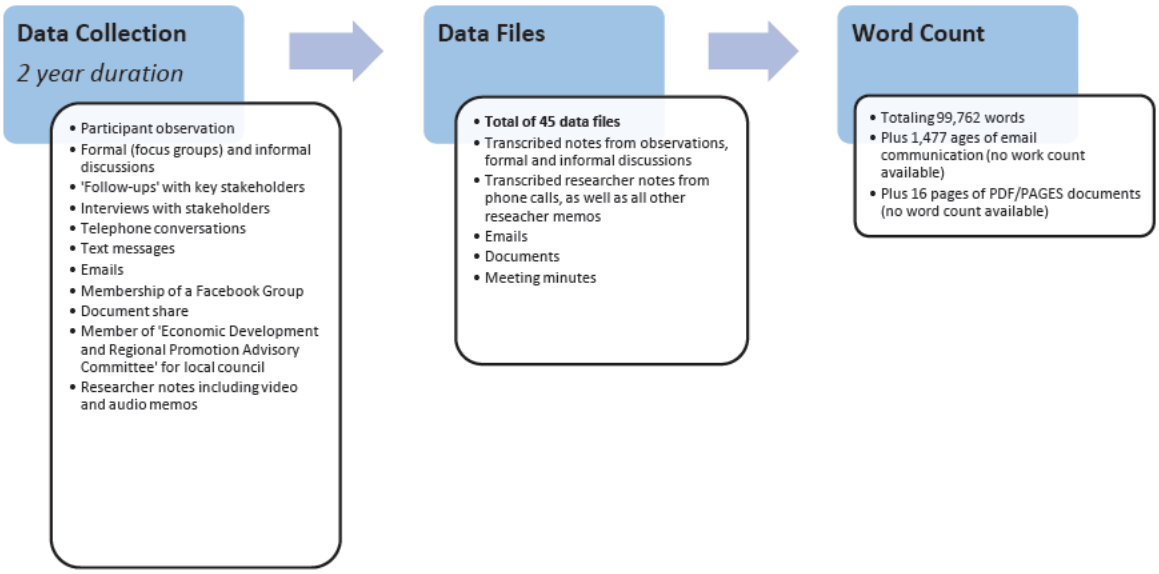

Figure 1: Data collection

Table 2 Data analysis

Step	Action	Program
1	All audio files transcribed (interviews, focus groups, and voice memos). All other data was already in written format (emails, work activities, researcher diary, Facebook group comments).	Webpage 'Transcribe'
2	Thematic analysis to code each data collection item inductively to identify broad themes and patterns (Adler & Clark, 2011). Summarized the data, coded it by identifying idea groups, then generating key themes (Beyea & Nicoll, 2000). Guided by concepts of stakeholder collaboration.	Microsoft Excel spreadsheet
3	Inductive coding, gathering all material into theme 'nodes' and 'sub nodes' to analyse relationships using queries, explore and compare diagrams, and mind map concept map features.	NVIVO

Respondent Profile

Table 3 details the 19 participants. 11 participants were owners/managers of local businesses, and eight participants were representatives for their organizations. Caple's (2011) business clustering study within the Central Otago Wine Region reached saturation with 24 participants, but other qualitative studies have suggested 15 as the smallest acceptable sample for qualitative research (Bertaux, 1981). Further, Caple (2011) study did not form a cluster, but investigated pre-existing clusters in the region, indicating that a smaller sample size may be

acceptable for an action research project for cluster formation process. As such, 19 is considered acceptable and reasonable particularly as saturation was reached. *Note: Respondents were classified into different stakeholder types, but their typology is not shown in the table below to protect their anonymity.*

Table 3: Respondent profile

Participant No.	Business Type	Role in Business
1	Café/Attraction	Owner/Manager
2	Local Council (SDRC*)	Representative
3	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
4	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
5	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative
6	Regional Tourism Organisation (SQCT**)	CEO
7	State Tourism Organisation (TEQ***)	Destination Director
8	Local Tourism Organisation	Representative
9 & 10	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
11 & 12	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
13 & 14	Attraction	Owner/Manager
15	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
16 & 17	Accommodation	Owner/Manager
18	Winery	Owner/Manager
19	Local Council (SDRC)	Representative

**SDRC: Southern Downs Regional Council; **SQCT: Southern Queensland Country Tourism, ***Tourism Events Queensland*

Findings:

RQ1: To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation?

To first establish stakeholder helpfulness, it is essential to classify stakeholders. Through analysis, participants were classified as 6 x dominant, 8 x definitive, 3 discretionary, 1 x dormant, and 1 x dependent stakeholder. There were no demanding, nor dangerous stakeholders within the present study, and there were also no non-stakeholders (i.e. a stakeholder who doesn't have a stake in the topic at hand). The table below separates the attributes of each stakeholder typology present within the study, indicating what actions and behaviours the stakeholder displayed that classified them into that typology.

Table 4: Identification evidence of stakeholder typology

Attribute	Stakeholder Action and Behaviour
Definitive	
Power	○ Confident to share opinions at meetings and in front of a crowd ○ 2/8 definitive stakeholders hold positions within local tourism organisations. Those that don't are still actively involved in community campaigns and projects.
Legitimacy	○ Well respected within the industry- other operators speak highly of them and recommend talking to them ○ Voluntary contribution to community projects and committees
Urgent Claims	○ History of achieving things in their business and for the region ○ Active involvement in organisations
Dominant	
Power	○ Hold positions of power within tourism organisations ○ 2/8 dominant stakeholders are considered 'outspoken'
Legitimacy	○ Focused roles for the betterment of the region ○ Some questions arose from other participants about the long term legitimacy of those in council positions (elected for a period of time)
No Urgent Claims	○ Preoccupied with projects from the strategies of their own organisations, with little time to contribute to additional community projects
Discretionary	
Lacks Power	○ New to the area, not well-connected with others. ○ When 2 of the discretionary stakeholders joined the cluster and became more connected, they did, however, gain more power
Legitimacy	○ Want to be involved in projects that allow them to network with others, and provide benefit for their business/organisation and for the region
No Urgent Claims	○ Preoccupied with the happenings of their own business/organization ○ When 2 of the discretionary stakeholders gained traction with the cluster project (event planning) they had more urgency to act and encourage others to act
Dependent	
Lacks Power	○ New to business owning in the region and new to tourism industry ○ Expressed a lack of confident to contribute ideas ○ Holds no positions on tourism organisations, only membership
Legitimacy	○ Want to be involved in projects that allow them to network with others, and provide benefit for their business and the region
Urgent Claims	○ Willing to contribute time to worth projects that will benefit their business and the region ○ When the cluster project gained traction (event planning) this stakeholder was somewhat preoccupied with a busy business and had less urgency to act and encourage others to act
Dormant	
Power	○ Hold positions of power within tourism organisations ○ Considered 'outspoken'
Lacks Legitimacy	○ Extreme focus on benefits for themselves, no evidence of acting towards benefits for the region
No Urgent Claims	○ Preoccupied with projects from the strategies of their own business/organisation, with little time to contribute to additional projects

Following this, findings reveal that rather than certain stakeholders being either solely helpful or harmful, stakeholders instead displays a range of behaviours that are helpful and/or harmful. Table 4 informed the creation of the 'Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum' (SHC) (Figure 2 below) that reveals actions/behaviours from stakeholders that were either 'very harmful', 'harmful', 'helpful', or 'very helpful'. The continuum presents insights on five items; 1) communication responses, 2) the ability to deliver on agreements, 3) the willingness to connecting the researcher with others, 4) transparency of information, and 5) the development of relationship between the researcher/ cluster facilitator and the stakeholder.

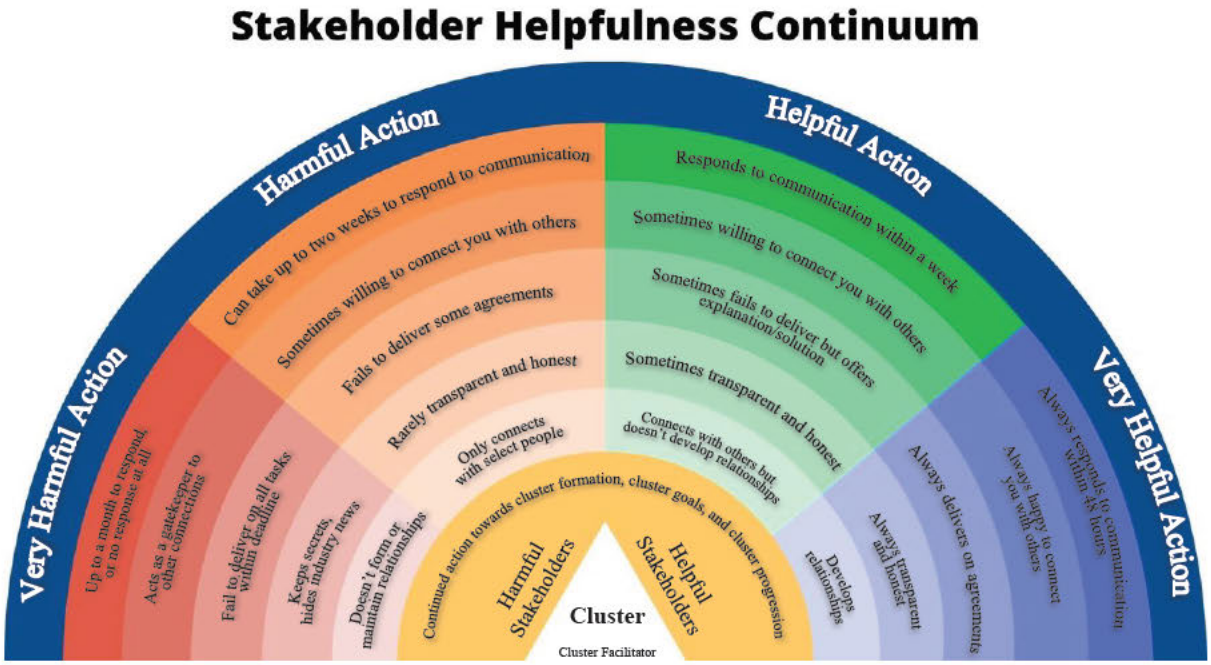

Figure 2: Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum

An example of how an action was derived for this continuum is as follows (gender has been neutralized to she/he to protect participant identity);

> *"[She/he] has been delaying me and delaying me and delaying me, saying... I'm going to do this, I'm going to do that. I've wasted so much time... waiting for them to get back to me, which has not happened."*

Within this excerpt, the following two actions were identified that were harmful towards cluster formation;

- Up to a month to respond, or no response at all
- Fails to deliver on all tasks within the deadline

This was then compared to stakeholders who were helpful in those ways, and the opposite end of the spectrum was created;

- Always responds to communication within 48 hours
- Always delivers on agreements

And following that, actions in between were infilled based on participant observation. This process was repeated for various researcher notes that commented on stakeholders actions towards cluster formation, from very harmful to very helpful actions and in between.

Within this study, a stakeholder never consistently presented characteristics in line with one specific action group ('very harmful', 'harmful', 'helpful', or 'very helpful'), however some stakeholders displayed actions that were *mostly* in line with one of the spectrums on the continuum. It was revealed that discretionary, dominant, dependent and definitive stakeholders were mostly helpful or very helpful to cluster formation on most occasions, rarely displaying harmful or very harmful behaviours. The dormant stakeholder on the other hand, displayed mostly harmful or very harmful actions towards cluster formation, and rarely performed actions that were helpful or very helpful.

RQ2: How do stakeholder networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?

Prior to the beginning of cluster formation within this study, there were three sparse central stakeholder networks. These included the local tourism organisation, the regional tourism organisation, and the local council, which were linked to members of the cluster as indicated by Figure 3 below. Figure 3 maps out the central networks that existed between stakeholders involved in this the current research prior to the beginning of cluster formation, and depicts the stakeholder typologies that formed the networks. This figure is an output from NVIVO, overlayed with stakeholder typology.

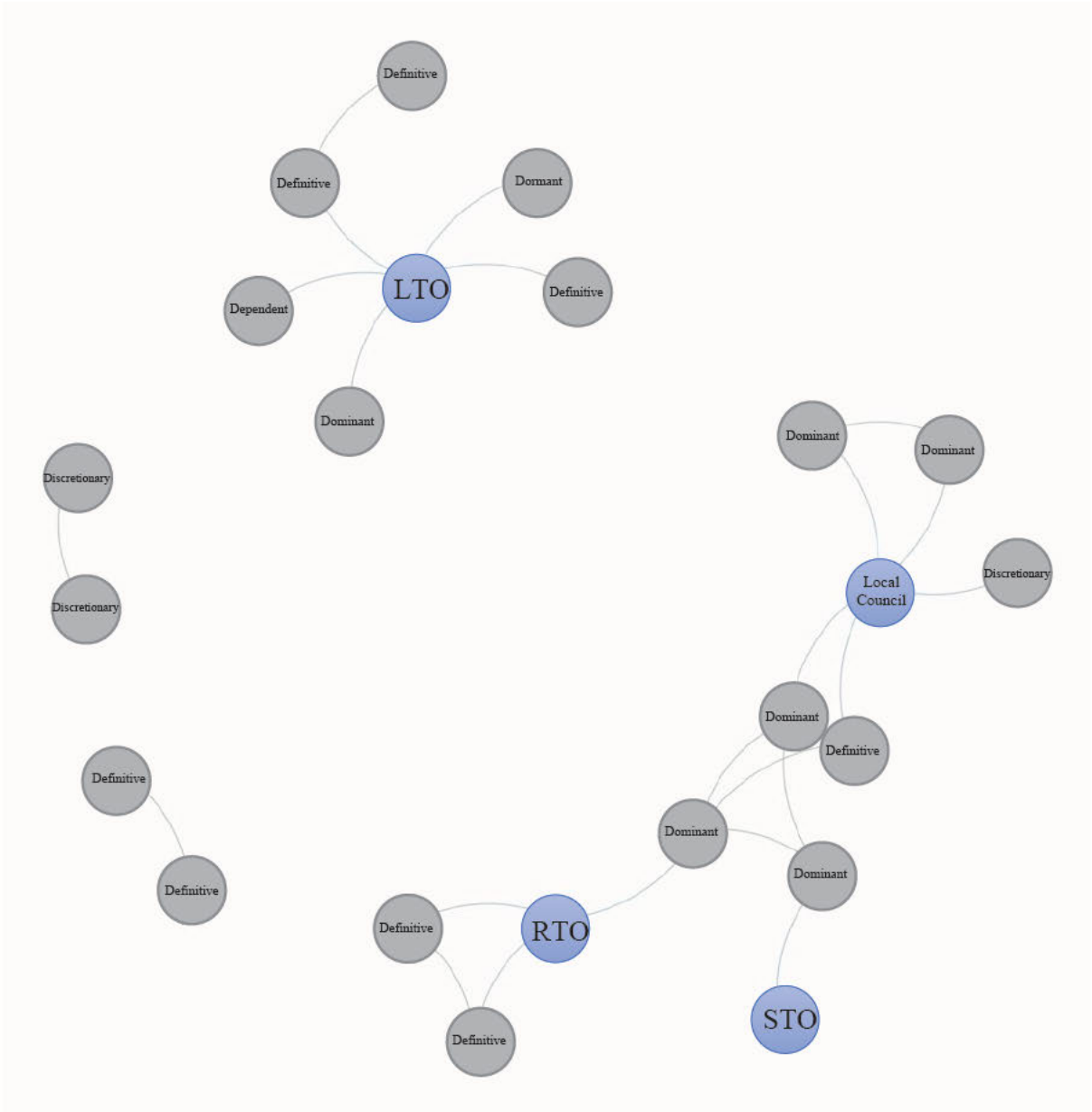

Figure 3: Central networks pre-cluster formation

Within the stakeholder mapping, it is evident that most of the dominant stakeholders were connected to the local council, regional tourism organisation and state tourism organisation, perhaps not surprisingly as these organisations naturally possess some power, through governance or other tourism instruction.

Then, Figure 4 below represents the central stakeholder networks, post-cluster formation. Through visual comparison, it is evident that the cluster offered an additional central network for stakeholders to be a part of, resulting in more stakeholder connectedness than pre-cluster. This figure is an output from NVIVO, overlayed with stakeholder typology.

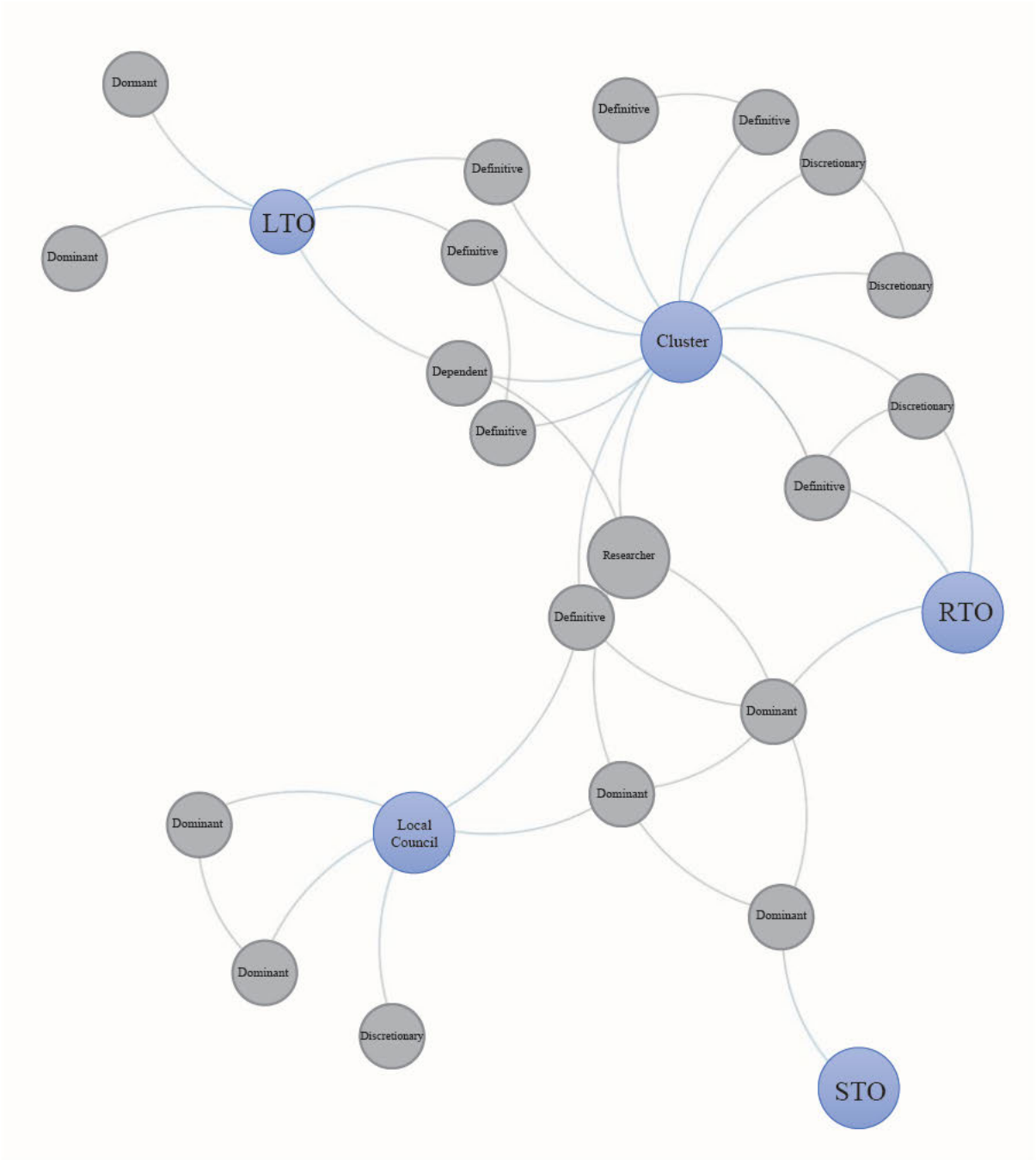

Figure 4: Central networks post-cluster formation

The cluster in this study offered opportunity for definitive, dependent and discretionary stakeholders to be connected to a central network, regardless of if they had involvement in local tourism bodies or organisations. While existing central stakeholder networks pre-cluster were certainly not a hindrance to cluster formation, they were also not a significant contributor to success of cluster formation, other than keeping up to date with other happenings in the region. There were no dominant stakeholders within the cluster and this was due to purposeful selection. Cluster members requested that no dominant characters were included in the cluster to begin with, worrying this would derail cluster formation with a lack of collaborative decision making;

> **P15:** "There are lots of strong personalities here… I have been in meetings where some characters completely dominate and don't let others speak… I can't see how this would be helpful in our group."

Prior to cluster formation within this study, there were also multiple dense networks that existed between participants. Some of these connections were personal friends, some were professional business relationships, and some connections even dated back to friendships formed in high school for some participants who had lived in the region their whole lives, and these relationships are indicated in the responses below:

> **P15:** "I've let [P13] know about the video idea and they are keen to be a part of it"
> **P11:** "I've been speaking with [P18] about that"
> **Researcher Notes:** "P11 interacts with P15 to chat about business, and often send each other customers when their businesses are full… P13 and P14 have liaised with P6 to get advice on marketing… P11 knows P16, P17 and P18 and comments positively on their desire to work on collaborating with others"

Figure 5 offers a visual representation of the multiple dense networks that existed between participants prior to cluster formation. It is evident that definitive and dominant stakeholders are more connected than dormant and discretionary stakeholders. This figure is an output from NVIVO, overlayed with stakeholder typology.

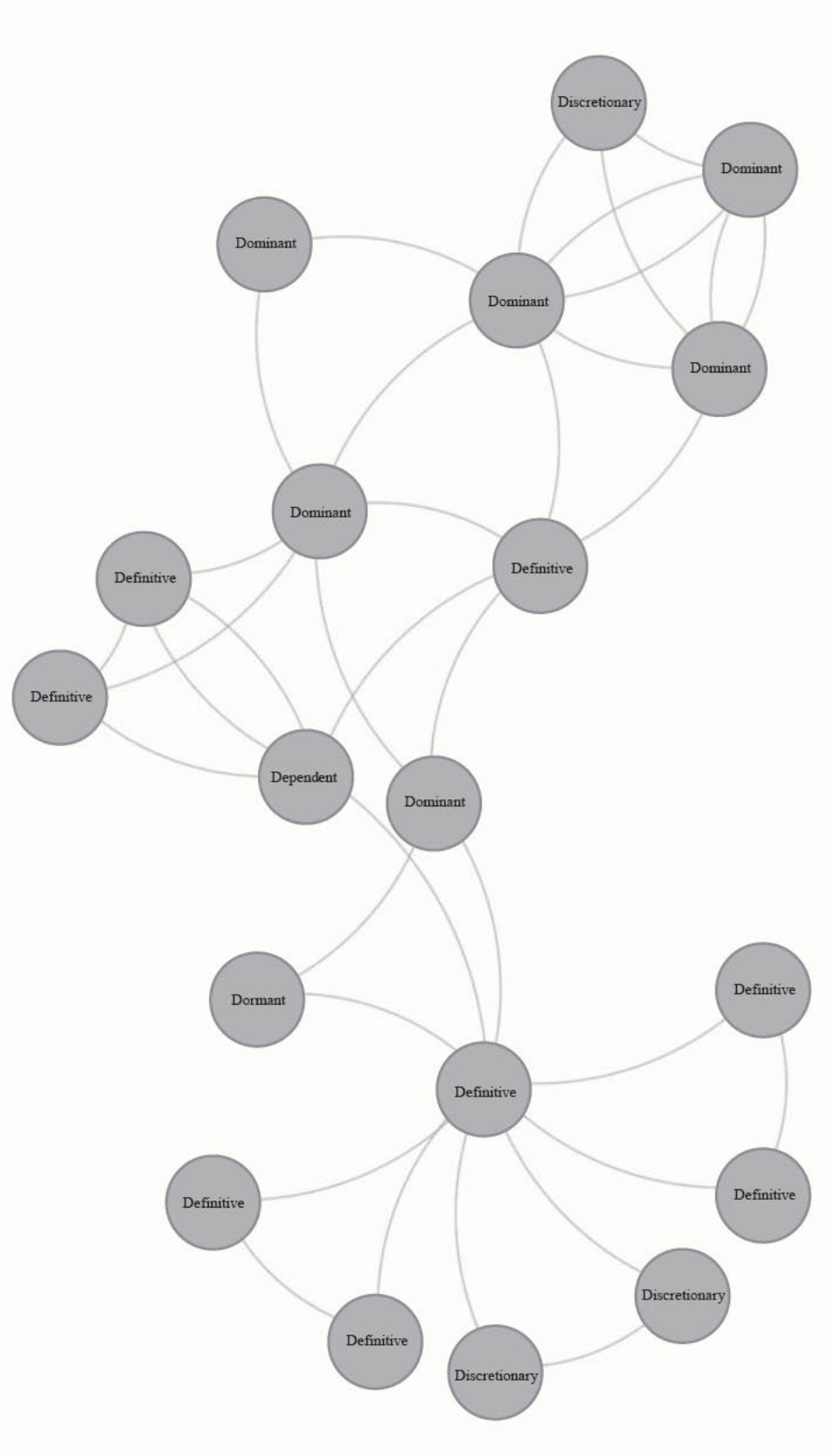

Figure 5: Dense networks pre-cluster formation

Then, Figure 6 below represents the multiple dense networks post-cluster formation. Through visual comparison, it is evident that through cluster formation these multiple dense networks

grew significantly, also resulting in significantly more connectedness than pre-cluster. This figure is an output from NVIVO, overlayed with stakeholder typology. With the cluster in play, the discretionary stakeholders were then more connected, but the dormant connectedness only increased by one connection, further describing the lack of collaborative efforts that dormant stakeholders contribute. The figure also depicts much more interconnectedness between the definitive, discretionary and dependent stakeholders, with looser connections between the dominant stakeholders. This indicates that the cluster offered participants an opportunity to connect and collaborate with others, not controlled by dominant stakeholders. Dense networks of stakeholders were helpful to cluster formation as they create a climate of collaboration.

Figure 6: Dense networks post-cluster formation

Participants expressed their enjoyment of being able to connect with other like-minded people in their region in these informal, dense stakeholder networks:

> **R15**: "I feel very positive about the group and the progress we are making. Simple things like meeting the other group members and exchanging ideas has

made a positive difference.. [I've] met new participants which was terrific and cemented previous acquaintances and feel more like part of the team."
R18: "I got to know other participants a little better and made new relationships. Building business and personal connections."
R17: "[I've] engendered some confidence in finding like-minded business people in a new area."

Additionally, one participant explicitly noted a transformation in way of thinking, from a competition mindset to one of cooperation:

> **R15**: I feel that my collaborative thinking will change and improve as things progress and our event enters the planning stage. The process has certainly made me think more in terms of 'we're all in this together' rather them 'me against them'… I realise we are all working toward the same goal and as such are partners in this industry rather than competitors."

Participants also noted that they were able to be more open minded about others' ideas and their own ideas as well:

> **R12**: "You think, '[person], you've have an idea, go away and think about it'... Initially you go, 'I don't think [this will work]… but you think 'I can see where she's coming from'… it does it open your mind.."
> **R17**: "I can always think bigger, [I've learned] don't limit my ideas."

These findings are now be compared to the literature, to highlight significant contributions of this study.

Discussion and Contributions

The study first revealed actions and behaviours that defined the classification of stakeholder typologies, based Stakeholder Typology by Mitchell et al., (1997). Prior to this study, the Mitchell et al. (1997) stakeholder typology required a high level of a researcher's personal judgement to establish if a stakeholder possesses an attribute, and this study offers advancement to the usability of the stakeholder typology by offering tangible actions that indicate how each of the five stakeholder type present in this study depicts if they possess that certain attribute of power, legitimacy and/or urgency. For each attribute, this study offers an action/behaviour that stakeholder displays, which is a more concrete, tangible way to establish stakeholder typology, particularly for studies that examine stakeholder collaboration. This study also sought to understand how stakeholders contributed to cluster formation. Table 4 below is an adaptation from Table 1 and indicates how the findings compare with the assumptions presented earlier in this paper.

Table 5: Stakeholder typology and assumed vs actual contribution to cluster formation

Stakeholder Type	Assumed Contribution to Cluster Formation	Actual Contribution to Cluster Formation	Theoretical Implications
Dormant Stakeholder	Neutral to cluster formation. Likely not to be helpful, nor harmful to the process.	Displayed mostly very harmful and harmful actions towards to cluster formation, rarely displaying helpful or very helpful actions.	Offers an entirely new contribution to **dormant stakeholders** and their mostly harmful actions towards collaboration.
Discretionary Stakeholder	Helpful to cluster formation if they can work with others.	Displayed mostly very helpful and helpful actions towards to cluster formation, rarely displaying harmful or very harmful actions. While they typically need to rely on other stakeholders for power and urgency (Mitchell et al., 1997), it was found that they were helpful to cluster formation without needing others.	Offers an entirely new contribution to **discretionary stakeholders** and their mostly helpful actions towards collaboration.
Demanding Stakeholder	Harmful to cluster formation due to extreme demands.	No demanding stakeholders in present study- not yet empirically confirmed.	NA
Dominant Stakeholder	Helpful to cluster formation if they can rely on others to push cluster formation along.	Displayed mostly very helpful and helpful actions towards to cluster formation, rarely displaying harmful or very harmful actions. While they relied on others for urgency, this was not hugely noticeable within the cluster as other stakeholders possessed urgency.	Offers an entirely new contribution to **dominant stakeholders** and their mostly helpful actions towards collaboration.
Dangerous Stakeholder	Harmful to cluster formation due to lack of legitimacy and urgency towards the process.	No dangerous stakeholders in present study- not yet empirically confirmed.	NA
Dependent Stakeholder	Helpful to cluster formation if they can work with others.	It was proven that this stakeholder was helpful to cluster formation, without having to relying on others for power as previously assumed (Mitchell et al., 1997), as they possessed unique insights.Displayed mostly very helpful and helpful actions towards to cluster formation, rarely displaying harmful or very harmful actions.	Offers an entirely new contribution to **dependent stakeholders** and their mostly helpful actions towards collaboration.
Definitive Stakeholder	Helpful to cluster formation.	Displayed mostly very helpful and helpful actions towards to cluster formation, rarely displaying harmful or very harmful actions.	Offers an entirely new contribution to **definitive stakeholders** and their mostly helpful actions towards collaboration.
Non-Stakeholder	Neutral to cluster formation.	No non-stakeholders in present study- not yet empirically confirmed.	NA

Further to this, with these findings the researcher developed the Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum (SHC) that details a range of helpful and harmful behaviours that stakeholders enact towards cluster formation. Figure 7 below shows where the stakeholder typologies mostly fit on the SHC. The SHC offers an entirely new contribution to the literature on stakeholder collaboration and offers significant advancement on stakeholder typology, offer insights into the actions and behaviours of different stakeholder typologies which research has not broached prior to this study.

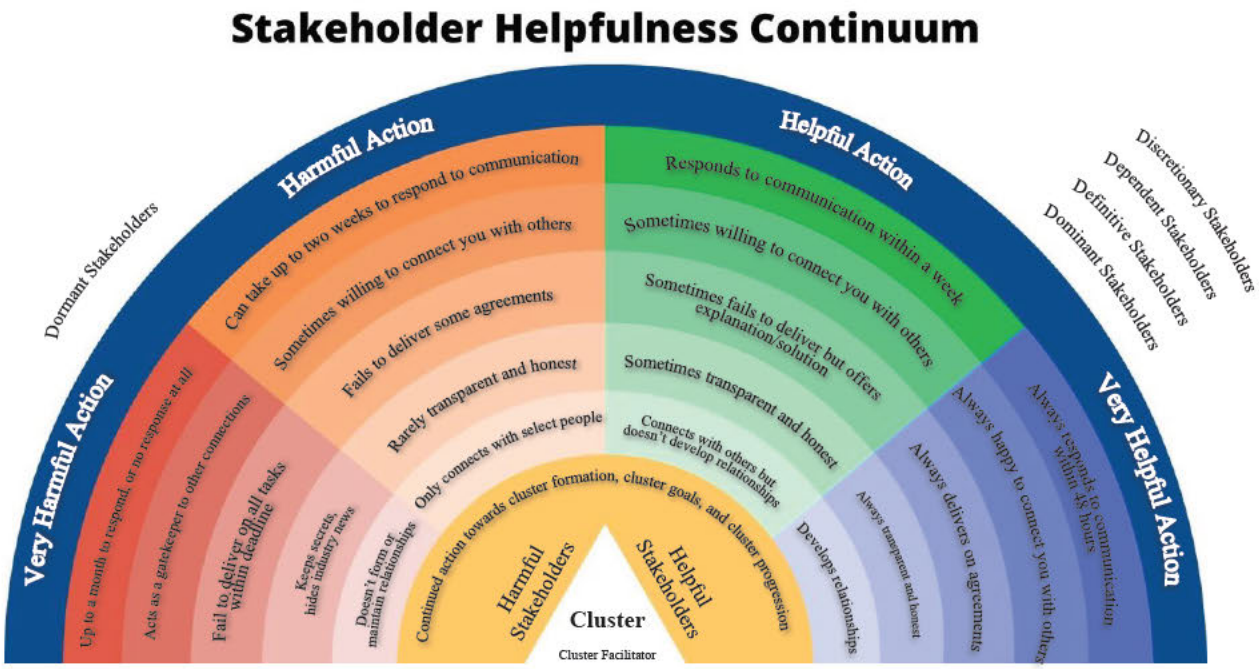

Figure 7: Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum with stakeholder types

The study also sought to understand how stakeholder networks contributed to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster. This study analysed both formal and informal stakeholder networks, as well as the stakeholder typologies that made up these networks. Existent literature had explained that networks fit within a cluster (Rosenfeld, 1997) but prior to this study it was unclear how these networks contribute to cluster formation. Findings revealed that prior to cluster formation there were three sparse central networks; the LTO, RTO and Local Council, and also revealed that most of the dominant stakeholders were connected to the local council and the RTO. Once the cluster was formed, it connected definitive, dependent and discretionary stakeholders, with the cluster acting as another central stakeholder network. Results showed that while pre-existing central stakeholder networks were not a hindrance to cluster formation, their main contribution was keeping stakeholders cluster informed on other happenings in the region. Clusters members had also requested that no dominant stakeholders were present in the cluster, worrying this would de-rail cluster success. These insights have not been presented in the literature before and thus offer new contributions.

Significant findings were also revealed in relation to the dense stakeholder networks, which represented more informal connections between stakeholders, like friendships or business relationships. Multiple dense stakeholder networks existed prior to cluster formation, but the cluster created a significant increase in dense stakeholder networks. The cluster generated more interconnectedness between the definitive, discretionary and dependent stakeholders and this offers new insights into the ability of a cluster to foster connection between stakeholders, regardless of their power, and regardless of their connection or membership status to local governing tourism bodies and councils. The findings also revealed little increase in connection for the dormant stakeholder, further indicating their lack of helpfulness to cluster formation and offering new insights into this stakeholder typology.

An opportunity to network with other stakeholders as a benefit to the cluster formation process aligns with existent literature by Taylor and Miller (2010) that suggested that business clusters encouraged togetherness within the community and participants in this study expressed their enjoyment of being able to network with other like-minded people in their region. Participants also reported an increased critical thinking ability, and this echoed existent literature that suggested business clusters promoted forward thinking discussion (DeAraujo & Bramwell, 2002) and encouraged innovation (Jackson, 2006).

Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research

The research questions in this study sought to understand the degree to which different stakeholder typologies were helpful or harmful towards cluster formation, and to understand how stakeholder networks contributed to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster. Findings first revealed the actions and/or behaviours that defined the classification of stakeholder attributes using Stakeholder Typology by Mitchell et al., (1997). There were five stakeholder typologies represented in the study: dominant, definitive, discretionary, dependent and dormant. Prior to this study, Mitchell et al (1997)'s stakeholder typology required researcher judgement to interpret whether a stakeholder possessed the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency, to define them into a stakeholder typology. This study offered new insights into the stakeholder typology, by describing tangible actions and/or behaviours that the different stakeholder typologies enacted, resulting in their classification.

From this classification, the researcher used the actions and/or behaviours of stakeholders to develop the 'Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum' (SHC). The SHC is an entirely new contribution to the literature on stakeholder typologies and stakeholder collaboration, that indicates different actions and/or behaviours from stakeholders and their degree of helpfulness or harmfulness towards cluster formation. Dominant, discretionary, definitive and dependent stakeholders contributed actions that were mostly very helpful or helpful, whereas dormant stakeholders displayed actions that were mostly very harmful or harmful. This study, however,

did not have any demanding or dangerous stakeholders, and as such, offer no identifying characteristics of these two typologies, highlighting an area for expansion for future research.

Secondly, this research sought to understand how stakeholder networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster. The study investigated sparse central networks, and multiple dense networks. Prior to cluster formation, three central stakeholder networks existed; the LTO, RTO and local council and most of the dominant stakeholders were connected to the RTO and local council. Once the cluster was formed, the cluster was a fourth central network, connecting definitive, dependent and discretionary stakeholders. The cluster did not have any dominant stakeholders directly connected, as cluster members had not wanted them to be included, fearing their dominance would hinder the cluster's successful formation. The pre-existing central stakeholder networks did not offer significant contribution to cluster formation, other than keeping the cluster informed on regional activity. The study also offered new insights into dense stakeholder networks, with these representing more informal connections between stakeholders (friendships, old high school connections etc). There were many dense stakeholder networks prior to cluster formation, but the cluster created a significance increase with more interconnectedness between definitive, discretionary and dependent stakeholders. This offers new insights to stakeholder collaboration, stakeholder network and clustering literature, in that clusters enable connection between stakeholders regardless of the power they possess, and regardless of their connection or membership to local governing bodies and organisations.

This study also offers managerial contributions. First, the identification of stakeholder behaviour offers tangible insights into actions and/or behaviours that help management to define stakeholder types, useful particularly in collaboration. Secondly, the SHC offers critical insights to industry on managing stakeholder interaction and engagement in collaborative projects. The continuum helps to identify actions and/or behaviours from stakeholders that are helpful and harmful, making the management of collaboration easier to monitor. It is assumed that this continuum will be useful not only in a tourism context, but transferrable to all contexts where stakeholder collaboration is prevalent, which is numerous sectors.

This research is not without limitations, but rather than see these as a setback, these represent a platform for future research to develop. The results are representative of the region in which it was conducted. As such, there are many elements of the study that are transferable to other small, regional tourism destinations in Australia, but not all destinations would be able to apply the learnings. Future research could expand to different contexts to confirm, deny, or expand on the findings in different settings, which would be useful from both a theoretical perspective, and a managerial perspective. Nevertheless, this study is the first to understand how different stakeholder typologies, stakeholder collaboration and stakeholder networks contribute to cluster formation.

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PART V. CONCLUSION

1.0. Introduction

This thesis is structured as a series of papers, two published and one under review, where the traditional chapters of literature review and empirical findings are presented as manuscripts. Part I presented the Introduction to the thesis. Part II presented the published systematic narrative literature review which responded to RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3, mapping the extent to which collaboration contributes towards successful regional destination branding and to understand collaboration strategies. Importantly, this paper also revealed research gaps in existing knowledge in this domain. To resolve gaps established, the methodological chapter, Part III, presented the most suitable research method; a participatory action research (PAR) design with stakeholders from the Granite Belt Region in South-East Queensland, Australia. Results from this were presented in two papers in Part IV, Findings. The findings section presented two empirical papers that collectively responded to RQ4, RQ5, and the overarching research question. This thesis offers theoretical, methodological and practical advancements which will be outlined in this section, as well as covering limitations, future research, and concluding with final author remarks.

2.0. Revisiting the Research Questions and Response Process

This thesis noted early the importance of regional destination branding to ensure the longevity of regional locations that rely on tourist expenditure for economic development. But it also noted there were many challenges to achieving successful destination branding. Small tourism businesses in these regions could portray their own understanding of the destination brand, often resulting in a diluted marketing message. Scholars advocated for collaboration as a strategy to contribute to destination branding, yet the collaboration literature did not provide a comprehensive understanding of business clustering, which was widely noted for its success in achieving regional destination branding. Business clustering was only researched in regions where a cluster pre-existed and as such, regions that did not already have a cluster were missing out on its benefits. The overarching research question was therefore:

How do small tourism businesses progress through the steps of cluster formation to contribute to destination branding?

There were 5 research questions that needed to be addressed in order to comprehensively resolve the overarching research question:

RQ1: To what extent does collaboration contribute towards successful regional destination branding?

RQ2: To what extent are there differences between collaboration strategies; networks and clusters?

RQ3: To what extent do stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration play a role in regional destination branding?

RQ4: To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation?

RQ5: How do networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?

Figure 1 below is a visual representation of the process undertaken to fulfill the research questions and indicates which paper addressed which questions.

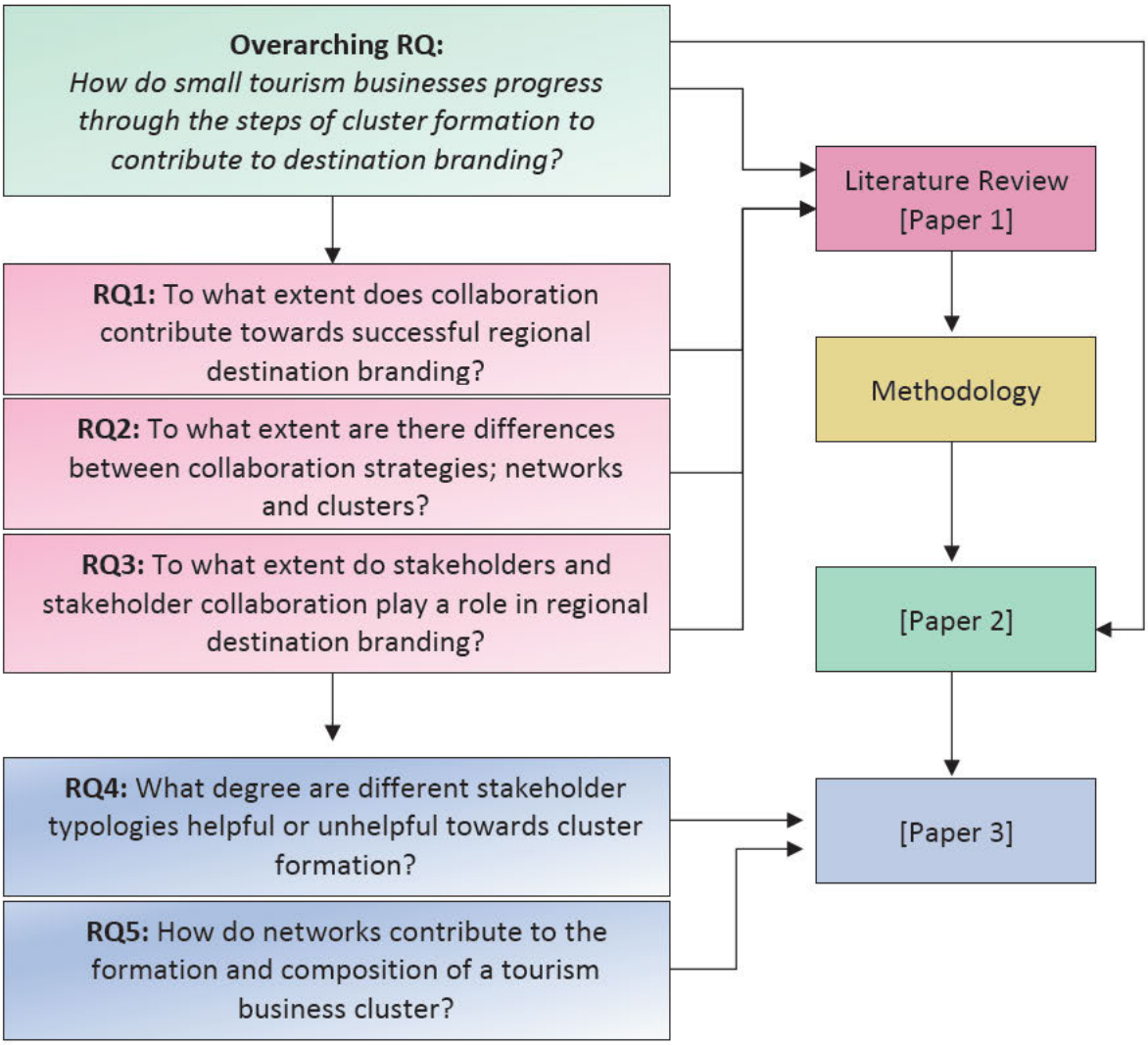

Figure 1. Summary of research process

The research process began with the overarching research question and subsequent research questions: RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, RQ4 and RQ5. A systematic narrative literature review was then conducted and published as Paper 1, resolving RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3. The paper resolved the research questions by understanding how collaboration contributes towards successful regional destination branding and exploring the network and cluster collaboration strategies. The paper also outlined gaps in existing academic knowledge and proposed a conceptual framework for future research to be built upon. This led to the methodology where the participatory action research method was selected for its appropriateness in addressing the remaining research questions. Paper 2

is the first empirical paper in this thesis that revealed results to the overarching research question by offering a detailed framework, 'Total Cluster Formation Framework' (TCFF) of the phases and steps to cluster formation. Paper 3 is the second empirical paper in this thesis and resolves RQ4 and RQ5 by offering understanding of stakeholder typologies and their helpfulness towards cluster formation, offering the 'Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum' (SHC) and insights into stakeholder networks, their composition, and their contribution to cluster formation. The following sections summarise how each of the research questions have been addressed, and the subsequent contributions to theory, method and practice.

3.0. The Findings

3.0.1. RQ1, RQ2 and RQ3

Paper 1 was a systematic narrative literature review published in 2020 in the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, titled 'Understanding the contribution of stakeholder collaboration towards regional destination branding: A systematic narrative literature review'. This review paper had the purpose of responding to the following research questions:

RQ1: To what extent does collaboration contribute towards successful regional destination branding?

RQ2: To what extent are there differences between collaboration strategies; networks and clusters?

RQ3: To what extent do stakeholders and stakeholder collaboration play a role in regional destination branding?

The review highlighted the importance of collaboration for successful regional destination branding, but proposed many questions on how it is actually enacted in practise. Importantly, while much of the literature reported on how beneficial collaboration was for the purpose of destination branding, it was not clear how the collaboration was set in motion, nor did the literature provide empirical guidance on beginning organised collaboration in a region where it did not already pre-exist. The review then mapped what was known about collaborative strategies, honing in on

networks and clusters. It revealed that networks and business clusters have been proven as successful collaboration strategies but many challenges to these strategies were identified. Suggestions were made within the literature to overcome these collaborative challenges but there was no empirical evidence on how effective these were. Finally, the review revealed many challenges associated with stakeholder collaboration in terms of communication, power imbalance and the legitimacy of stakeholders involved. A key finding from this review was that stakeholder collaboration for destination branding is underdeveloped within the research and as such, while collaboration may have been reported as successful in some regions, results cannot be duplicated until there is a more comprehensive understanding of stakeholders and their collaboration and particularly, how collaboration can be set in motion.

The review suggested that future research should expand to consider how collaboration can be enacted from initiation in a practical setting, with importance on what form the collaboration takes and how it can be set in motion. This thesis endeavoured to build upon this platform by focusing on business clusters as a collaboration strategy and unpacking precisely how business clusters are formed in a practical setting.

3.0.2. Overarching Research Question

Paper 2 is entitled 'Collaboration in marketing regional tourism destinations: Constructing a business cluster formation framework through participatory action research' and was published in the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* in 2021. It responded to the overarching research question:

How do small tourism businesses progress through the steps of cluster formation to contribute to destination branding?

The paper contributes the 'Total Cluster Formation Framework' (TCFF), detailing three distinct phases to cluster formation; pre-cluster formation, cluster formation, and cluster progression stages, with 12 respective steps within. This offers entirely new contributions to literature as previous literature had only referred to cluster formation guidelines without empirically testing them (Hawkins & Calnan, 2009). The phases and steps are summarised from Paper 2 into the table below.

Table 1: Phases and Steps to Total Cluster Formation

Phase	Step	Action
1	1	Seek support and guidance from public sector and regional experts. Information gathered in this step was useful in identifying suitable cluster members.
1	2	Engage a subjective facilitator to convene the cluster. The subjectivity of the facilitator allowed for trust, co-ownership and a collaborative climate to be developed.
2	3	Identify potential members and begin recruitment. Cluster members expressed that this process should be selective to avoid strong figures.
2	4	Determine member contribution and identify champions, which is an action that members did, but did not recognize any value in.
2	5	Establish objectives and performance benchmarks. Here, it was established that cluster members would like to contribute something 'positive' to the region.
2	6	Build team synergy through activity and workshops. In this step, a schedule of activities was created, guided by cluster member input. Members decided in this stage they would like to create an event concept for their region.
2	7	Decide on tangible group initiatives to work towards. Here, the cluster solidified their decision to host the event they would conceptualize.
3	8	Re-engage public sector for support with the cluster project. Public sector representatives offered input and guidance of the event planning the cluster had done.
3	9	Establish objectives and member duties for the project. Each cluster member articulated and agreed on their duties in the project.
3	10	Progress the project with communication and teamwork. Members continued to meet to refine the project and make progress towards delivery.
3	11	Engage additional stakeholders. Cluster members engaged local businesses to provide their product/service at the event.
3	12	Deliver the project.

Phase 1 was an entirely new contribution to literature, as was Phase 3, and the subsequent steps within. Phase 2 offered expansion of Hawkins and Calnan (2009) research. Step 12 for the cluster in this study is to host an event called 'Granite Belt Living Lightly' (Appendix 6) which showcases a series of workshops delivered by local stakeholders that contribute to branding the region as a sustainable tourism destination. Step 12 for this cluster had not yet been realised due to COVID-19 causing considerable disruption to the event planning. An alternative event has been hosted in the meantime

(Appendix 7). All phases and steps to cluster formation are shown together in the 'Total Cluster Formation Framework' in Figure 2 below. **Note: The TCFF is taken from Paper 2.**

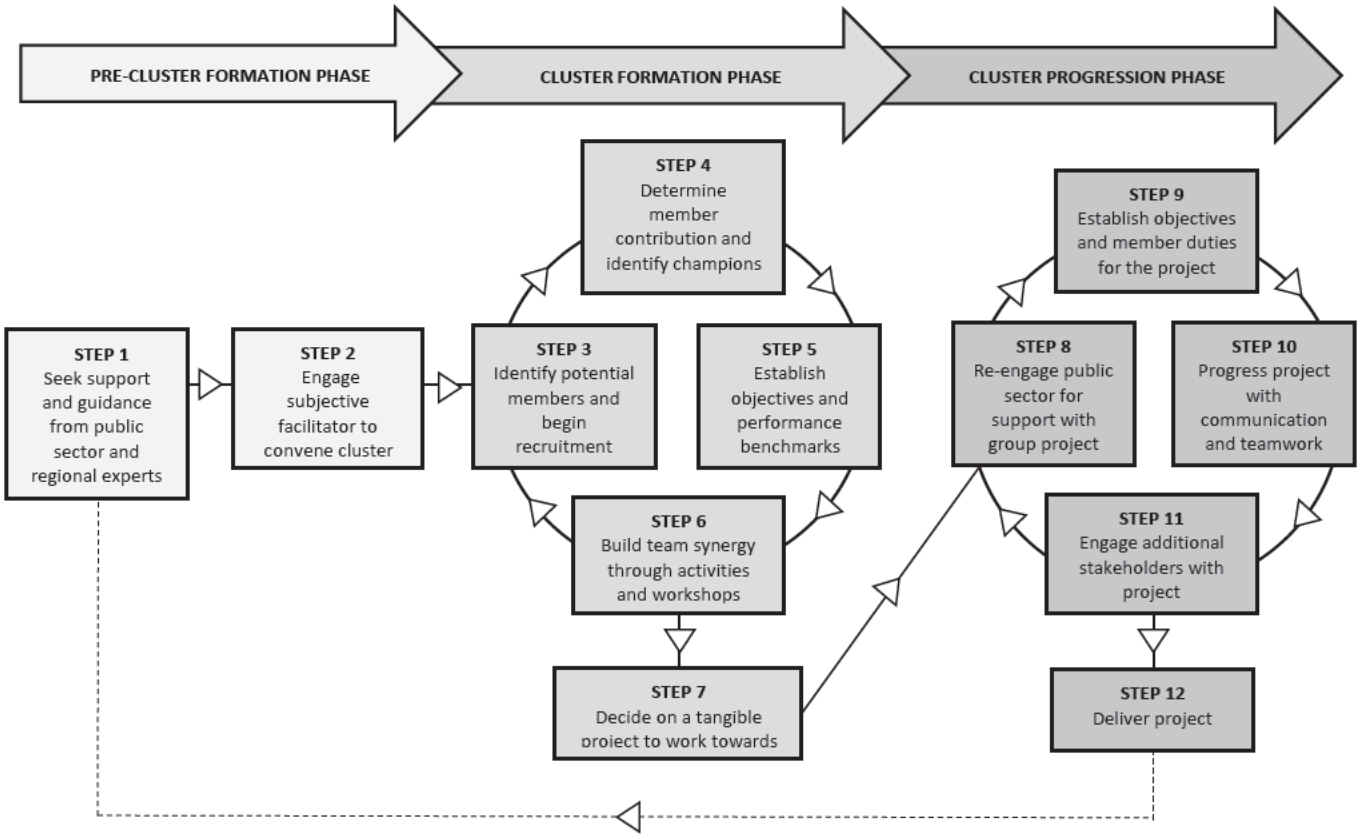

Figure 2: Total Cluster Formation Framework (Source: Perkins, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2021, a)

3.0.3. RQ4 and RQ5

Paper 3 is entitled 'Don't hate- Collaborate! Exploring stakeholder typologies, relationships and networks during the cluster formation process', and is currently under review by *Tourism Management.* Paper 3 responded to RQ4 and RQ5. First, RQ4 results are presented:

RQ4: To what degree are different stakeholder typologies helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation?

The paper first revealed the process by which stakeholders were classified using Stakeholder Typology by Mitchell, Agle & Wood (1997). Participants were classified as 6 dominant, 8 definitive, 3 discretionary, 1 dormant, and 1 dependent stakeholder. Prior

research has required a high level of judgement from the researcher to classify each stakeholder, but this paper presents tangible actions and/or behaviours that each stakeholder typology enacts that assists in identify if they possess an attribute of power, legitimacy and urgency. These are displayed in the 'Identification evidence of stakeholder typology' table (see Table 4 in Paper 3). There were no demanding nor dangerous stakeholders within this study and there were also no non-stakeholders (i.e. a stakeholder who does not have a stake in the topic at hand). This is not unsurprising for a study that focused on collaboration as these stakeholder types are assumed to be uninterested in collaborating with others.

Paper 3 also presents the 'Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum' (SHC) (Figure 3 below) which maps actions and/or behaviours from stakeholders that were either 'very harmful', 'harmful', 'helpful' or 'very helpful' in relation to communication responses, ability to deliver on agreements, willingness to connect a cluster facilitator with others, transparency of information and development of relationship between a cluster facilitator and stakeholder. Results showed that rather than a stakeholder type *always* behaving and/or showing actions of a helpful or harmful stakeholder, the continuum indicates that stakeholders can possess a range of characteristics that can be deemed to be either helpful or harmful to varying degrees. **Note: The SCH is taken from Paper 3.**

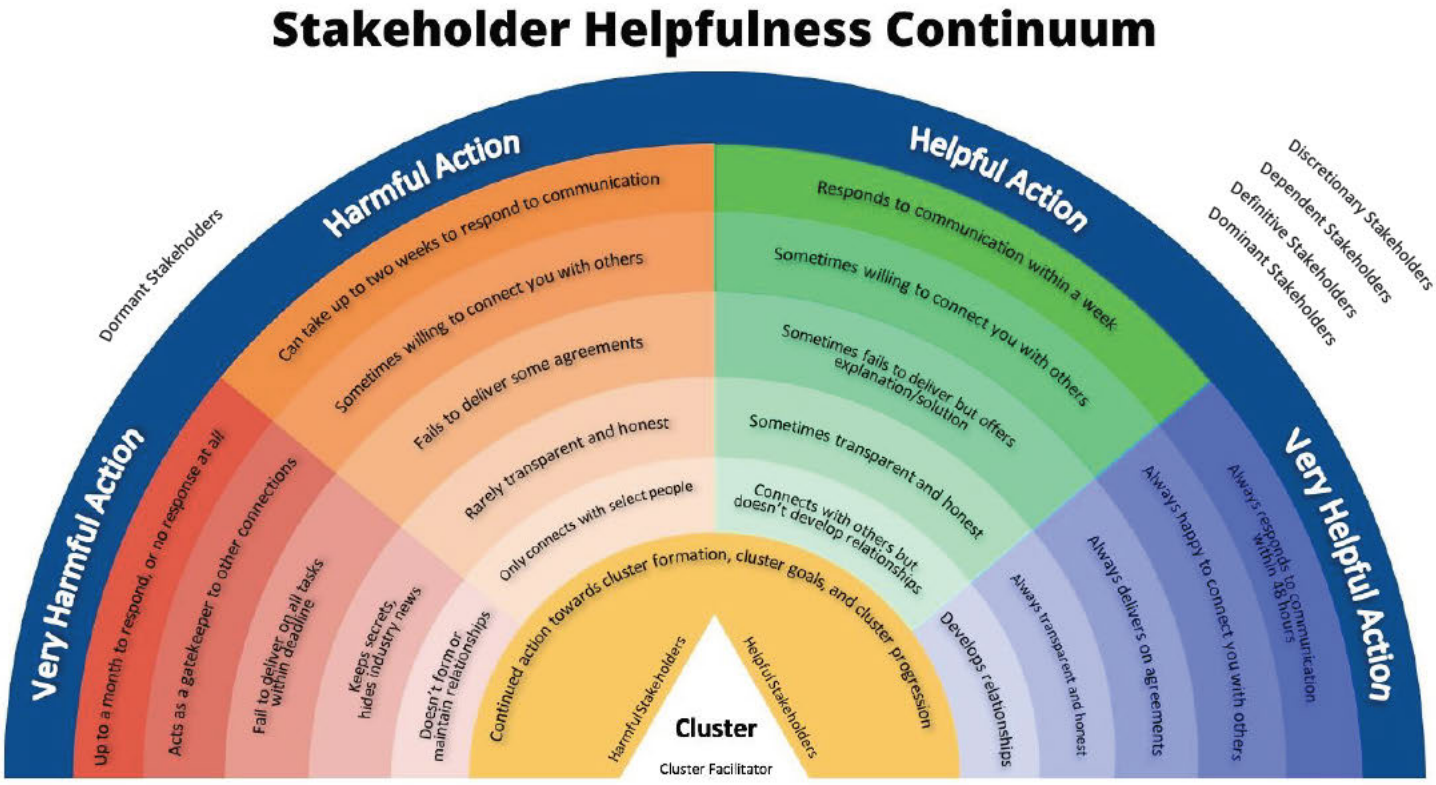

Figure 3: Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum. (Source: Perkins, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2021 b)

Results indicated that a stakeholder never presented characteristics in line with one specific action group (for example, 'very harmful', 'harmful', 'helpful' or 'very helpful') but some stakeholders displayed actions that were *mostly* in line with one of the spectrums on the continuum. Discretionary, dominant, dependent and definitive stakeholders were mostly helpful or very helpful to cluster formation on most occasions, displaying behaviours that were mostly helpful or very helpful and rarely displaying harmful or very harmful behaviours. The dormant stakeholder on the other hand, displayed mostly harmful or very harmful actions towards cluster formation, and rarely performed actions that were helpful or very helpful, as seen in Figure 3 above.

Paper 3 also sought to understand how stakeholder networks contributed to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster to address the following research question:

RQ5: How do networks contribute to the formation and composition of a tourism business cluster?

Prior to the beginning of cluster formation within this study, there were three sparse networks and these were the local tourism organisation, the regional tourism organisation and the local council- all linked to members of the cluster. Most of the dominant stakeholder types were connected to the these central organisations, which is not unsurprising given their positions of authority over the region. Figure 4 [Left] maps out the central networks that existed between participants and organisations involved in this study prior to the beginning of cluster formation, and Figure 4 [Right] represents the central networks post-cluster formation. Through visual comparison, it is evident that the cluster offered another central network for stakeholders to be a part of, resulting in an increased interconnectedness compared to pre-cluster. The cluster, as a central network, created an opportunity for definitive, dependent and discretionary stakeholder types to be connected to a central network. There were no dominant stakeholder types connected to the cluster directly, and this is purposeful as cluster members requested that no dominant characters were included, worrying such a

stakeholder would derail the success of cluster formation. **Note: The network maps are taken from Paper 2.**

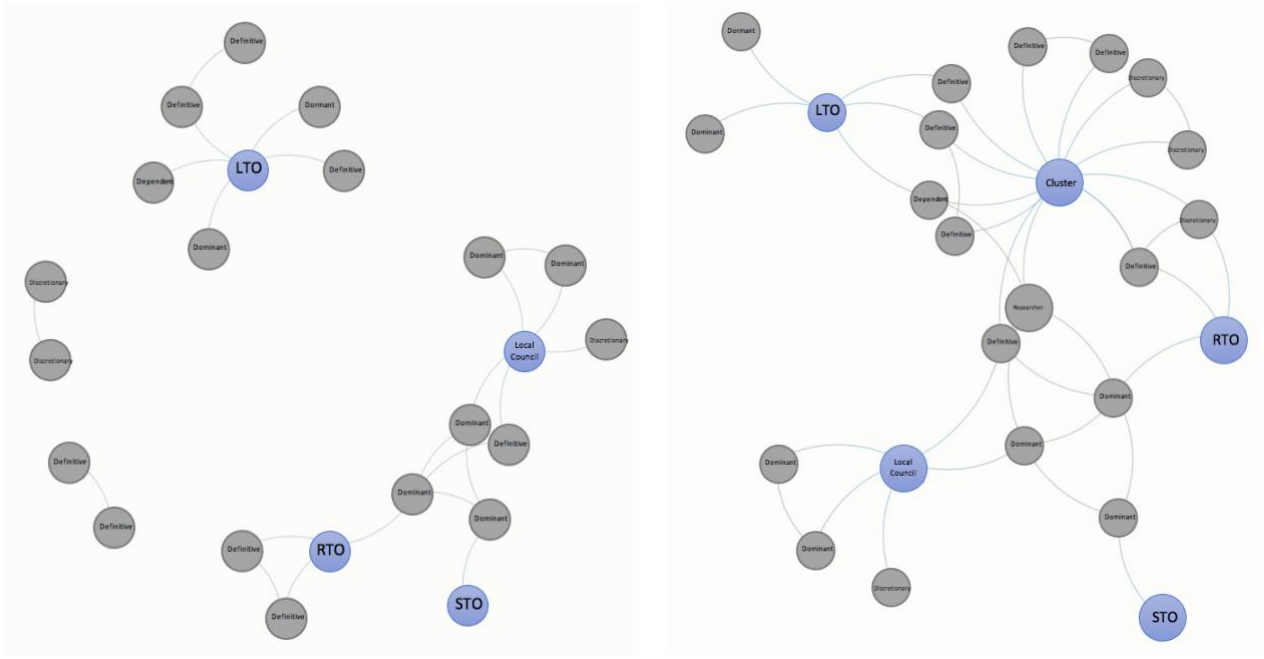

Figure 4: [Left] Central networks pre-cluster and [Right] post-cluster. Source (Perkins, Khoo-Lattimore & Arcodia, 2021, b)

There were also multiple dense networks that existed prior to cluster formation between participants. These networks represented friendships, business relationships, and old acquaintances from growing up in the region. Figure 5 [Left] shows the multiple dense networks that existed between participants prior to cluster formation and Figure 5 [Right] represents the multiple dense networks post-cluster formation. Through visual comparison it is evident that through cluster formation, multiple dense networks grew significantly, resulting in more connectedness than pre-cluster. There were almost double the connections post-cluster. The cluster created more connections between discretionary stakeholders but the dormant stakeholder only gained one connection. There was also significantly more connection between the definitive, discretionary and dependent stakeholders, all stakeholder types that were mostly helpful and very helpful towards cluster formation. It is evident that there are limited connections to and from the dormant stakeholder. This due to dormant stakeholder characteristics which inhibit their collaborative ability, mapped out in the 'Identification evidence of stakeholder typology' (See Table 4 in Paper 3). The identification table outlines each stakeholder, offering evidence of how that stakeholder type possesses power, legitimacy and

urgency. For dormant stakeholders, they are considered 'outspoken', have extreme focus on benefits from themselves and are preoccupied with projects of their own business, subsequently inhibiting their collaboration abilities. There is also limited connections to and from one of the dominant stakeholders. This stakeholder is a representative from the state tourism organisation, therefore, given the geographical scope of their role, they naturally have fewer connections than closer regional representatives. **Note: The network maps are taken from Paper 2.**

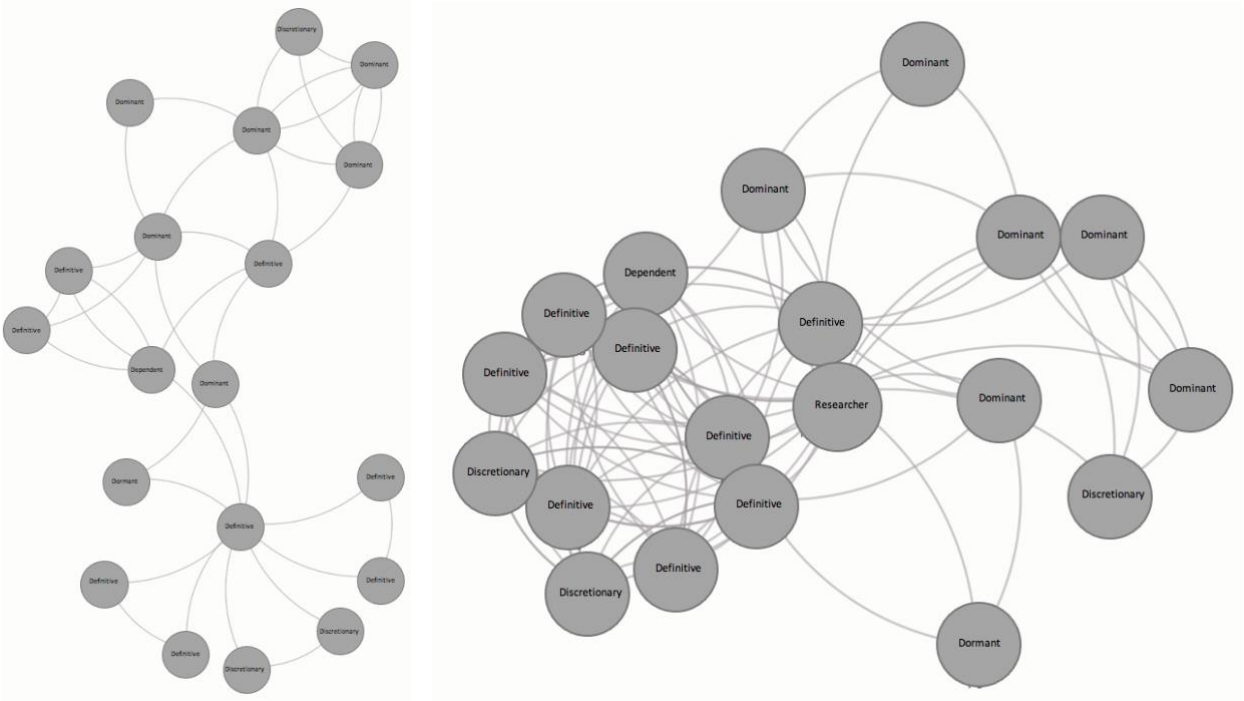

Figure 5: [Left] Dense networks pre-cluster and [Right] post-cluster

Cluster members also noted varying benefits from being involved in the cluster formation process, including an opportunity to connect with other like-minded people, a transformation in their thinking from competition to cooperation and an ability to be more open minded about their own and others ideas.

Figure 6 below displays a total figure that presents all of the findings in one framework. It shows the cluster formation framework and at each stage, the degree to which different stakeholder types were helpful and harmful to the cluster. The framework also depicts stakeholder networks and changes to these networks throughout the different phases of cluster formation.

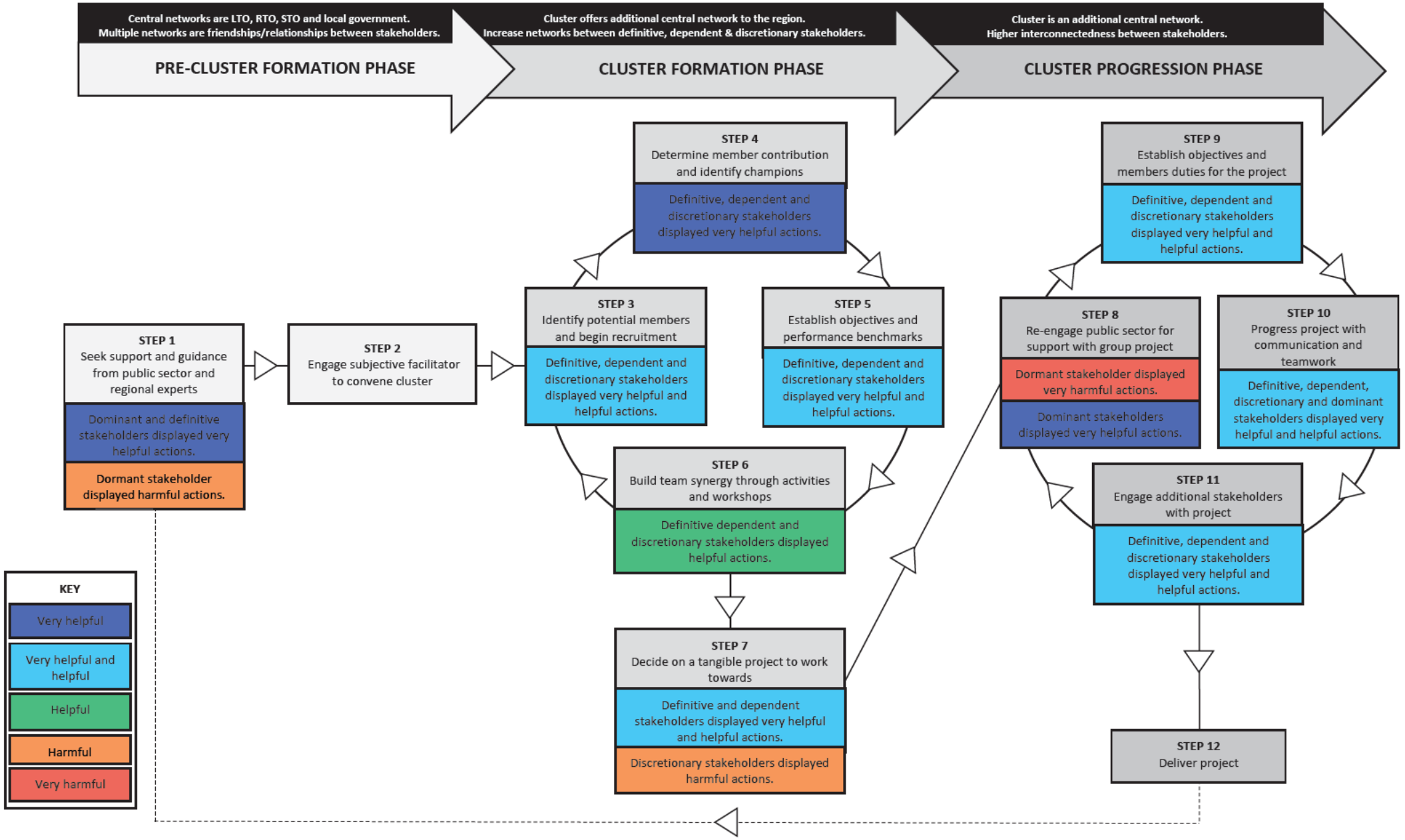

Figure 6: Stakeholder typology contribution to total cluster formation process and subsequent networks within

4.0. Contributions

4.0.1. Theoretical Contributions

From a theoretical perspective, this thesis has contributed to the research domains of business clustering, stakeholder collaboration and stakeholder networks as it pertains to regional destination branding. Literature had emphasized the importance of collaboration for effective destination branding (Caple, 2011; Saxena, 2005, Telfer, 2001) yet there was still a fragmented understanding of how collaboration was constructed and how collaborative challenges could be overcome for successful destination branding with authors stating that the conceptual clarity of cluster formation was lacking (Wolf & Gertler, 2004). This thesis contributes to theory in this domain by addressing the call to enhance the conceptual clarity of a cluster (Martin & Sunley, 2003). Prior to this study there was a of consensus over cluster emergence (Wolfe & Gertler, 2004) and this research is the first to present empirically tested steps and phases to cluster formation. This contributes to the theoretical discussion of what constitutes collaboration within a regional destination branding context, by exploring the concept of collaboration via a business clustering strategy for small tourism businesses. This study significantly expands the literature on clusters by offering a complete framework to guide cluster formation, including the pre-cluster, cluster formation and cluster progression phases, with 12 respective steps within.

Through the newly constructed, comprehensive 'Total Cluster Formation Framework' (TCFF), this study contributes to further understanding of how the conceptualization of collaboration via business clustering can contribute to the empowerment of regional small tourism businesses in contributing to their destination brand. The formation of business clustering has been evaluated within this study and thus, processes of collaboration with the end goal of contributing to the regional destination brand have been expanded. This study has offered a resolution to a gap in conceptual clarity through the TCFF and further, offers a platform for future research in the cluster and collaboration domain.

This thesis also sought to understand the degree to which different stakeholder typologies were helpful or unhelpful towards cluster formation and to understand how stakeholder networks contributed to the formation and composition of a tourism

business cluster. In responding to RQ5, this thesis revealed that the cluster can offer another central network for stakeholders to be a part of, which results in more interconnectedness for stakeholders who were not previously connected to a central network. This thesis also showed the significant increase in multiple dense networks, again offering more interconnectedness between stakeholders who are forming the tourism business cluster. This contributed to the bodies of literature on stakeholder typologies and stakeholder collaboration. The researcher classified stakeholders into their typologies using Stakeholder Typology by Mitchell et al., (1997), a process which had historically required a high level of judgement from the researcher to allocate each stakeholder into their type. The researcher in this study describes the tangible actions and/or behaviours of various stakeholders. This information is presented in the 'Identification evidence of stakeholder typology' table in Paper 3, offering empirically tested, tangible guidance on identifying stakeholder attributes and subsequently classifying them, a tool that can be utilised by both academia in the classification of stakeholders in future research. Stakeholder actions and/or behaviours were also monitored and developed into the 'Stakeholder Helpfulness Continuum' (SHC) which offers entirely new insights into the literature in this domain. The continuum indicates different actions from stakeholders and their degree of helpfulness or harmfulness towards cluster formation. These findings contribute significantly to the bodies of literature on stakeholder typologies, with specificity to how stakeholder types contribute to cluster formation.

4.0.2. Methodological Contributions

From a methodological perspective, this thesis contributes in two ways, first, via an alternative literature review process, and secondly, by using a PAR design. First, the combination of a systematic and narrative approach to the literature review offers a new perspective and method by which to perform a literature review that benefits from both approaches. Narrative and systematic are the two main types of review articles in academia, and a paper typically adopts one of the two methods. This paper, however, differs from this by offering a narrative approach to literature review, with integration of systematic methods in a later stage of the review. Rather than a conflict between the two review types, it has been suggested that narrative and systematic review types can work together to provide the best information to academia and industry (Henry et al.,

2018). This literature review acts as proof of this statement and can act as an example for future researchers that do not wish to 'choose a side' and would benefit from the incorporation of both review styles into the one paper. Where one element of a domain research problem should require more extensive review, adding a systematic element to a narrative can be incredibly useful and in the same vein, systematic data of literature can be made more impactful with the integration of narrative writing by the researcher.

Second, using a PAR design has contributed toward advancing methodological approaches in destination branding and collaboration domains of research. Literature had highlighted the successes of PAR for the progression and development of communities, yet this methodology still remains lacking in tourism (Capriello, 2012). Gardiner and Scott (2017) made a call for academic researchers to engage in industry-academic relationships in research and this thesis responds by adopting the PAR approach. PAR fostered knowledge creation in a relationship between academia and industry in this thesis, thus contributing to the literature on this methodology by exploring the application for PAR achieving the goal successful collaboration that has strengthened ties within the community. Subsequently the success of this PAR research project contributes support to the arguments for using PAR in tourism studies.

4.0.3. Practical Contributions

In terms of practical significance, this thesis offers an array of important contributions. This study has offered a practical solution to an industry issue. Where stakeholders are facing challenges in working together, this paper and the frameworks within can offer practical guideline on how collaboration can best be enacted from initiation. For regions where successful collaboration is difficult or perhaps rarely exists, the TCFF framework can be a guiding tool for new collaboration to prosper. This research has responded to an industry problem and thus, has the potential to resolve future issues in this context in an array of varying regions. In the future, once successful cluster creation is attainable in more regional destinations that have previously struggled to work together, those clusters could inevitably create many benefits for those that participate, and for the regions they belong to.

This research provides industry with a proven process by which regional small tourism firms can establish a tourism business cluster in the form of the step-by-step TCFF. The framework was created within the case of the Granite Belt region in

Queensland and is therefore a reliable account of how theory plays out in a practical setting. This project contributes empirically tested, practical implications for small tourism businesses and the regional areas in which they are located- including those beyond the Granite Belt Region. The purpose of providing a best practice process for business cluster formation and operation is to provide industry with strategies for successful collaboration, so that they can effectively contribute to the overall destination brand of the region. While the research may not necessarily be transferable to *all* regional destinations, the study certainly provides insights that will be useful to small tourism businesses in an array of regional areas that are affected by tourism.

An additional contribution for industry is that participants reported an opportunity to network with others as a benefit to the cluster formation process, aligning with existent literature by Taylor and Miller (2010). Participants also reported an increased critical thinking ability, echoing existent literature that suggested that business clusters promoted forward thinking discussion (DeAraujo & Bramwell, 2002) and encouraged innovation (Jackson, 2006). On a micro scale, these benefits provide some compensation to participants for sacrificing their time towards this research project, but on a macro scale, they provide legitimate incentive for those who are willing to contribute their time and effort towards cluster formation processes within their own region. These benefits can also be highlighted by the cluster facilitator during the recruitment process as incentives for participation.

In addition, participants from this study will receive direct benefits from the event that will be hosted as part of Step 12 to cluster formation. The final step is project delivery, and for the newly formed cluster in this study, that is the event 'Granite Belt Living Lightly' (Appendix 6). As such, future papers will report on the clusters ability to contribute to the destination brand and to raise awareness about the region (Caple, 2011; Gardiner & Scott, 2014; Saxena, 2005) and will also report on any increase in tourism expenditure, which is a recognised outcome for regions that have fully adopted clustering (Lade, 2010). Should the event be successful and report of its outcomes, these results can also be used to encourage future cluster formation processes in other regions.

In addition, this thesis also contributes guidelines on identifying stakeholder typologies based on their characteristics. These are very practical guidelines with direct applicability for small tourism businesses in regional destinations. The guide describes

tangible stakeholder actions and/or behaviours, presented clearly in the 'Identification evidence of stakeholder typology' (see Table 4, Paper 3). This can be used by small businesses and other tourism stakeholders in helping them to decipher who they should try to collaborate with and who they should avoid, and can be used by governing bodies for the same purpose, helping to guide which businesses to include in collaborative projects. In addition, further actions and/or behaviours of the stakeholders types were monitored and developed into the SHC which offers a clear model for identifying desirable and undesirable actions when engaging in collaboration. The continuum is easy to read and could be displayed nicely on an office wall, guiding both small business operators and representatives from governing bodies alike on what actions are helpful and harmful towards stakeholder collaboration. This can be monitored to help with decision making processes of when particular stakeholders should be included or excluded from collaborative initiatives, for the benefit of all. Further to this, the cluster offered significant increase in the connections between stakeholders in stakeholder networks, proving to industry that clusters are a successful strategy to implement when the goal is to foster stakeholder connectivity.

5.0. Limitations

Despite the contributions of this thesis, it does have limitations. First, the time constraints of a PhD was a limitation to this study. This thesis will be complete in 3.5 years and due to this, there were times during the process where the primary researcher needed to push a time agenda to keep the project moving along. Perhaps if the project was not progressing in adherence to the researcher's PhD timeline, results may have varied and it may have offered different insights into the cluster formation process.

Secondly, while the researcher's position enabled a richness of data to be gathered as the researcher was welcomed warmly by participants due to familiarity and personal connections within the industry (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Archer, 2007), this may also have been a limitation to the research at times. The familiarity of the researcher to participants likely offered a different outcome than if the researcher was impartial.

In addition, while the PAR design chosen for this project proved to be a successful method for the cluster formation process, it also created some interesting challenges for the researcher. PAR is still a newer research method for industry and as such, participants were often confused about the way in which in the research was conducted.

PAR does not fit a common perception of 'normal' research (i.e. a questionnaire or a survey) and so articulating what the research project would involve- particularly when PAR projects are subject to change and often do not begin with an end goal in mind (Eden & Huxham (1996)- was challenging for both the researcher and the participants. In this way, PAR was a limitation in some aspects as it halted participant action in the beginning as they did not understand how they could 'participate'.

Further to this challenge was interesting age dynamics between the primary researcher and the participants. All participants were older than the primary researcher, who facilitated the cluster. This did not seem to matter most of the time but it certainly affected the way participants reacted to the facilitation of the cluster by the researcher. One participant even referred to the researcher as 'his daughter's age' and also recommended she get some life experience after her studies; creating a challenging power dynamic (Wilinksha, de Hontheim & Anabacken, 2018).

In addition to these challenges are continual structural changes occurring within governing bodies of the region and as such, frustrations and emotions towards collaboration were often heightened. In addition, a new council was re-elected during the period when this research was occurring (October 2020). The primary researcher was a member of the 'Regional Promotion and Tourism Advisory Committee' for the local council in the first years of the project, but since the new council was elected, an invitation to join the committee has not been extended to the researcher. These types of changes can impact heavily upon how integrated the council is with tourism initiatives and how involved the research team can be with the local council.

Furthermore, and importantly, the region was subject to severe drought, bushfires and COVID-19 during the data collection phase of this study and as such, participants were often inevitably focused on survival, disaster relief and recovery, which diverted focus from the research project and likely altered research results.

In relation to the stakeholder element of this research, this thesis did not provide any insights on how demanding stakeholders, dangerous stakeholders, and non-stakeholders would contribute to cluster formation, as these typologies were not present within the participants of this study. While it is probably best that these stakeholders are not present within collaborative efforts as they are assumed to create challenges, it would provide more insights should research be able to report on this.

Despite its limitations, this study has been able to map the phases and steps to cluster formation. This is the first empirical study to examine and understand cluster formation in its entirety, uncovering the pre-cluster formation phase, cluster formation phase and cluster progression phase and the steps within each, contributing to the body of literature in this domain. This study presents a clear framework that offers practical guidance to cluster formation, enabling and empowering regional stakeholders to be able to collaborate and combine forces to contribute to destination branding. It is also the first to understand how different stakeholder typologies contribute to cluster formation, mapping helpful and unhelpful actions and/or behaviours on a continuum, contributing to the bodies of literature on stakeholder collaboration and stakeholder typologies and stakeholder networks.

6.0. Future Research

There are many avenues for future research to extend to, many of them arising from the limitations. Given that time was a limitation of this research, future research could span a longer period to allow the cluster to develop entirely at participant pace. In relation to the PAR approach, it would be valuable to see this research conducted with a different methodological approach and further, to have the research conducted by an older researcher, or at least, a researcher in closer age proximity to the participants to compare the results and outcomes. In addition, future research conducted in different regions could reveal different insights due to different contributions from governing bodies. It would also be opportune for future research to understand cluster formation post COVID-19, in a 'new normal' business arena. Given that the study did not provide any insights on demanding stakeholders, dangerous stakeholders, and non-stakeholders, this is also an area that future research could extend to. It would also be beneficial for future research to examine how clusters are formed in different regions using the TCFF to confirm or falsify the phases and steps to cluster formation, enhancing the usability and transferability of the framework.

It would also be interesting to explore cluster formation when money was involved. There are various ways that an economic input would create for an insightful addition to this research. An option is that participants could be required to pay a membership that may give them more ownness over their participation in cluster formation. Another option is that the research could secure a grant prior to

commencement and then the cluster could use the grant to put towards the cluster 'project' or deliverable. This would provide interesting insights into the motivation of participants in the latter stages of cluster progression. Another option could be a partnership with a local governing body or tourism body where participants are eligible for a rebate for involvement in the study, as a reward for their time.

In addition, it would be interesting for research to delve deeper into the empowerment of regional tourism operators in a PAR approach such as this one. This research project had a scope of investigating cluster formation processes as it pertained to destination branding and while social transformation and human flourishing were guiding aims of this project (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991), it was not the entire focus and research could provide valuable insights by understanding the extent of participant empowerment through cluster formation and the PAR design.

A final note on time- it would be useful for a research project that had an extended period of time to allow a newly formed cluster to work together to formulate and implement a destination branding strategy for the region. When participants in this research came together, they shared profound ideas on the branding of their region- ideas that could have significant impact on their long term success as a tourism destination if they had more time to bring these ideas together in a comprehensive destination branding strategy for their region with funding behind them to enact the strategy.

7.0. Concluding Personal Remarks

As this section reflects the researcher's personal remarks from this thesis, it is written in first person.

In these concluding personal remarks, I would like to re-share two excerpts from participants that were particularly powerful:

"The process has certainly made me think more in terms of 'we're all in this together' rather than 'me against them'… I realise we are all working toward the same goal and as such are partners in this industry rather than competitors."

"We did it!" I remember thinking to myself after we had been working as a group for five months. We had gotten together to brainstorm events ideas that would be helpful for the region and would be an opportunity to contribute towards the destination brand. I was quite taken aback as I had never been in a meeting before were everyone seemed to have the same amount of 'air time'. Cluster members were confidently expressing themselves, with no one dominating or silencing others. It was really nice. The event ideas were getting bigger and crazier and maybe somewhat unrealistic but nonetheless, it was exciting that the cluster was now alive. Participants were no longer holding their cards close to their chest but were very open with their ideas and also chatted openly about business operations- cleaning fees, listing fees, challenges and strategies to overcome them. They were working together. They had realised that they were on the same team. Certainly, it was not always great and no doubt there will be challenges in the future but I feel in immense sense of accomplishment that we at least now know how we can bring people together. I hope that this research can be a first step to figuring out more of the many complexities of collaboration.

"I can always think bigger. Don't limit my ideas"

What a wonderous world it would be if more people realised their brilliance. When I first suggested to Mum that she should purchase and take over the operations of Briar Rose Cottages, a run-down tourism accommodation business that was for sale in Stanthorpe- she rejected the idea sooner than I could articulate it. "*Who am I to take over a tourism business? I don't know the first thing about tourism business ownership".*

The story was the same when I suggested she should acquire another cottage a little while later; *"Don't be silly, I don't want to bite off more than I can chew. I am still a newbie to this!"*. And again, when I asked if she would like to join my research project as a participant; *"What could I possibly contribute to this? Other operators have much more experience than me- I don't have anything to share!".* With a 'Super Host' status on Airbnb, a Guest Review Award from Booking.com in 2017 and 2018, a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence in 2019 and a TripAdvisor Traveller's Choice Award in 2020 under her belt, I guess she really *did* know what she was doing all along.

Mum's story is not unlike many others, doubting their ability to contribute, doubting their ideas have any value and often doubting they can actually do it. The good news is, they are often proven wrong. Forming a tourism business cluster within this research didn't just bring people together, but it empowered them to realise their suggestions, ideas, thoughts and opinions were valuable. And- that value was amplified by collaborating with others. I am eager to see to what extent collaboration can be used as an empowerment tool. Perhaps this is just the beginning of my research in this domain.

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8.0. References from Introduction, Methodology and Conclusion

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Griffith University Thesis Guidelines

REQUIREMENT FOR INCLUSION OF PAPERS WITHIN THE THESIS

Inclusion of papers within a thesis is not a suitable thesis format for all research projects (e.g. collaborative projects where there may be several co-authors for each paper which may make it difficult for the examiner to establish the independence of the candidates work; where primary data is not collected or results obtained until late in the candidature; or where the research will not produce a logical sequence of papers that are able to be presented as an integrated whole).

Candidates should also consider whether this thesis format is an accepted practice within their discipline and likely to be received well by the thesis examiners (refer also to the examination requirements below). Candidates are required to consult with their supervisor(s) early in their candidature to determine if this thesis format is appropriate. It is expected that candidates will identify as part of the confirmation of candidature milestone if their thesis is to be prepared in this format. Candidates should consult their Group specific guidelines in addition to the requirements detailed below. Candidates are also encouraged to attend the workshop: 'Inclusion of papers within a thesis' offered by the Griffith Graduate Research School.

Refer also to the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, specifically the sections pertaining to publication ethics and the dissemination of research findings, and authorship.

Status of papers

A thesis may include papers that have been submitted, accepted for publication, or published. Some disciplines may specify a variation to the status of papers requirement, refer to your Group specific guidelines.

Type of papers

For the purpose of this requirement, papers are defined as a journal article, conference publication, book or book chapter. Papers which have been rejected by a publisher must not be included unless they have been substantially rewritten to address the reviewers' comments or have since been accepted for publication. Some disciplines may specify a variation to the type of papers requirement, refer to your Group specific guidelines.

Number of papers

A thesis may be entirely or partly comprised of papers. A paper maybe included as a single chapter if the paper contributes to the argument of the thesis, or several papers may form the core chapters of the theses where they present a cohesive argument. Where a thesis is entirely comprised of papers, there is no minimum requirement for the number of papers that must be included (except as noted below) and is a matter of professional judgment for the supervisor and the candidate. Overall, the material presented for examination needs to reflect the research thesis standard required for the award of the degree.

Where a thesis is entirely comprised of papers, some disciplines may specify a minimum number of papers to be included, refer to your Group specific guidelines.

Authorship

The candidate should normally be principal author (that is, responsible for the intellectual content and the majority of writing) of any work included in the body of the thesis. Where a paper has been co-authored, the candidate is required to have made a substantial contribution to the intellectual content and writing. Co-authored work in which the candidate was a minor author can only be used and referenced in the way common to any other research publication cited in the thesis. A signature from the corresponding author is required in order to include co- authored material in the body of the thesis, refer to the declarations section below.

For co-authored papers, the attribution of authorship must be in accordance with the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, which specifies that authorship must be based on substantial contributions in one or more of:

- Conception and design of the research project
- Analysis and interpretation of research data
- Drafting or making significant parts of the creative or scholarly work or critically revising it so as to contribute significantly to the final output.

Some disciplines may specify a variation to the authorship requirement, refer to your Group specific guidelines.

Quality of papers

Candidates should endeavour to publish their research in high quality peer reviewed publications. Papers to be included in the body of the thesis should be published (or submitted for publication) in reputable outlets that are held in higher regard in the relevant field of research. Candidates should consult their supervisor(s) for advice on suitable publications specific to their research discipline. Some disciplines may specify quality standards that must be met for papers to be included, refer to your Group specific guidelines.

The library also provides support and advice to candidates on choosing a journal. Candidates should avoid 'predatory' publishers.

- Strategic Publishing Guide for Authors
- Publishing in Open Access journals

Copyright

As copyright in an article is normally assigned to a publisher, the publisher must give permission to reproduce the work in the thesis and put a digital copy on the institutional repository. Information on how to seek permission is available at: Copyright and Articles in thesis. If permission cannot be obtained, students may still include the publication in the body of the thesis, however following examination the relevant chapter(s) will be redacted from the digital copy to be held by the Griffith University Library so that the copyright material is not made publicly available in the institutional repository. Students are required to advise the copyright status of each publication included in the thesis via a declaration to be inserted in the thesis, as detailed below.

Students requiring further advice regarding copyright issues can contact the Information Policy Officer on (07) 3735 5695 or copyright@griffith.edu.au.

Group and discipline requirements

Some Groups or Elements may specify additional requirements for including papers within a thesis, refer below:

- Arts, Education and Law
- Griffith Business School (PDF 214k)
- Griffith Health
- Griffith Sciences (PDF 271k)

PRESENTATION OF THESES WHEN INCLUDING PAPERS

General

Consult the thesis preparation and formatting guidelines for general information about the requirements for formatting the thesis. Some disciplines may specify a variation to the thesis format requirements below, refer to your Group specific guidelines.

Structure of thesis and linking chapters

The structure of the thesis will vary depending on whether the thesis is partly or entirely comprised of papers. Whatever the format, the thesis must present as a coherent and integrated body of work in which the research objectives, relationship to other scholarly work, methodology and strategies employed, and the results obtained are identified, analysed and evaluated.

A thesis should include a general introduction and general discussion to frame the internal chapters. The introduction should outline the scope of the research covered by the thesis and include an explanation of the organisation and structure of the thesis. The general discussion should draw together the main findings of the thesis and establish the significance of the work as a whole and should not just restate the discussion points of each paper.

It is important that candidates explicitly argue the coherence of the work and establish links between the various papers/chapters throughout the thesis. Linking text should be added to introduce each new paper or chapter, with a foreword which introduces the research and establishes its links to previous papers/chapters.

Depending on the content of the paper(s) and nature of research, a research methods chapter may also be necessary to ensure that any work that is not included in the paper(s), but is integral to the research, is appropriately covered. Any data omitted from a paper may also be included as an addendum to the thesis.

For further information on the thesis structure, refer to the following examples of acceptable ways to format the thesis when including papers.

- See Examples of Table of Contents

Format of papers

The papers may be rewritten for the thesis according to the general formatting guidelines; or they can be inserted in their published format, subject to copyright approval as detailed above.

Pagination

Candidates may repaginate the papers to be consistent with the thesis. However, this is at the discretion of the candidate.

Declarations

All theses that include papers must include declarations which specify the publication status of the paper(s), your contribution to the paper(s), and the copyright status of the paper(s). The declarations must be signed by the corresponding author (where applicable). If you are the sole author, this still needs to be specified. The declaration will need to be inserted at the beginning of the thesis, and for any co-authored papers, additional declarations will need to be inserted at the beginning of each relevant chapter. You may wish to consult the declaration requirements for inclusion of papers under Thesis Structure to ensure that you insert the correct declaration(s) within the thesis. Please note that completion of the declaration(s) does not negate the need to comply with any other University requirement relating to co-authored works as outlined in the Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

Assessment by examiners

Candidates who wish to include papers within their thesis, and who have determined that this thesis format is appropriate to the research project, should also consider whether this thesis format will be well received by the thesis examiners. The inclusion of papers may negatively impact on the thesis upon assessment by the examiners where: the thesis format is not a common or accepted practice within the candidates discipline area; where the inclusion of co-authored papers makes it difficult for the examiner to establish the independence and originality of the candidates work; where the thesis does not present to the examiner as an integrated whole; or where there is too much repetition in the thesis which an examiner may view as a weakness.

Theses that include papers are subject to the same examination criteria as theses submitted in the traditional format. It should also be noted that the inclusion of published papers within the thesis does not prevent an examiner from requesting amendments to that material.

Candidates should discuss the suitability of this thesis format for examination with their supervisor(s).

Nomination of examiners

It is the responsibility of the principal supervisor to nominate thesis examiners, and the process dictates that the principal supervisor must approach all nominees to determine their willingness to examine. Where a candidate's thesis is formatted to include papers, the principal supervisor must also ensure that the examiners are familiar with and/or accepting of, this thesis format.

Upon dispatch of a candidate's thesis to an examiner, the examiner will be reminded that the thesis has been formatted to include papers. The examiner will also be provided with the relevant information and regulations regarding this thesis format.

(Inclusion of papers within the thesis (griffith.edu.au))

Griffith UNIVERSITY

Inclusion of Papers within the Thesis

Griffith Business School Guidelines

The Griffith Business School (GBS) does not have a preferred or required model for formatting a HDR thesis. This document is supplementary to the Griffith University 'Inclusion of papers within the thesis' guidelines.

Two models are outlined below; a thesis partly comprised of papers and a thesis predominantly comprised of papers. While it is a requirement to have at least one paper published or accepted for publication during candidature paper/s are included in the thesis at the discretion of the candidate in consultation with their supervisors. The candidate must discuss the format of the thesis with their supervisors early in candidature and not later than during preparation for confirmation of candidature. Significant disputes between a candidate and supervisors should be referred to the HDR Convenor or Head of Department. Disputes about the format of a thesis that cannot be resolved at Department level should be referred to the GBS Dean (Research) offie.

	Thesis PARTLY comprised of papers	**Thesis PREDOMINANTLY comprised of papers**
Status of papers	At least one of the included papers must be published or accepted for publication, while the remaining papers (if any) must have been submitted and awaiting a final outcome.	Three of the included papers must be published or accepted for publication, while the remaining papers (if any) must have been submitted and awaiting a final outcome.
Type of papers	Only peer reviewed refereed journal publications and book chapters may be included in the body of the thesis. Conference publications may not be included in the body of the thesis.	
Number of papers	At least one publication.	Typically from 3 to 5 publications.
Authorship	Where a paper to be included in the body of the thesis has been co-authored, the candidate is required to: • have made a substantial contribution (at least 60%) to the intellectual content and writing of the text, AND • be the 1st named or principal author. A signed declaration must be completed for each paper submitted as part of the thesis (see Griffith University guidelines)	
Quality of papers	Candidates should endeavour to publish their research in high quality peer reviewed publications. Normally only journal papers in the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC) or the Australian Political Studies Association (APSA) journal rank lists may be included in the body of the thesis. Published papers should preferably be in B ranked and above journals. Journal papers not listed on ABDC or APSA and book chapters to be included in the body of the thesis must be approved by the lead principal supervisor based on the impact factor of the journal or the quality of the publisher of the book or other markers of publication quality.	
Format of papers	As per Griffith guidelines. It is important to ensure the seamless integration of your papers into the thesis.	
Other	Refer to 'Inclusion of papers within the thesis' guidelines.	

Appendix 3: Focus Group Protocol for Initial Enquiry

Responding to <u>all</u> research questions.

Formation of a Business Cluster to Overcome the Collaboration Challenges of Regional Small Tourism Firms for Successful Destination Branding

Initial Focus Group Questions and Discussion Guide

Time Anticipation: Approximation 90 minutes

This focus group will be recorded for data collection purposes. This discussion guide is used to drive the focus group through the content to be delivered, beginning with providing information about collaboration, business clustering, and business cluster formation, addressing and working through any initial concerns, and finalizing with a plan for future development of the cluster.

Location: To be organized in collaboration with Southern Queensland Country Tourism(SCQT) and Southern Downs Regional Council (SDRC)

Participants will be owners/managers of small tourism businesses within the Granite Belt, as well as key representatives from SCQT, SDRC and other relevant tourism organisations.

<u>SESSION 1: Aim 1 of PAR: To encourage self-reflection and self-inquiry among participants</u>

Introductions

a) Although most people know each other, it is important to have an understanding of who they are, and why they are here.

Goal and overview of the focus group

a) Ask people to share their individual goal, and their goal for being a part of this cluster. Get them to detail what they are hoping to gain, and what specific challenges they are hoping to overcome.
b) Explain the purpose of the overall research study, and explain the purpose of this initial focus group

<u>SESSION 2: Aim 1 of PAR + Aim 2 of PAR: To provide education for social transformation & Aim 3 of PAR: The production of knowledge and actions useful to the group.</u>

1) Provide information about collaboration, business clustering, and business cluster formation

a. Explain the concepts of collaboration and business clustering
b. Provide results from 2017 study and the challenges that are currently encountered during collaborative efforts, and explain the barriers they are facing to collaborative destination branding successes
c. Explain how business clustering will be used as a potential solution to overcome the identified challenges, as it will add the structure that previous collaborations lacked
d. Talk participants through the anticipated guideline for business cluster formation, and explain that challenges will arise during the process, and the aim of this study is to establish how to overcome the challenges that arise in order to form a successful cluster

2) Explain why these participants were chosen for this group, and how they will be involved during the processes of the business cluster formation

a) Provide a brief summary of the types of participants in the room and explain their commonalities, that is, they all participate in, and have an eagerness to participate in, collaborative behaviours and activities.

3) Explain how the information from this focus group will be used

a) Explain that the results from this focus group will be transcribed, and participants will receive a copy of the transcription once complete. These results will contribute to the overall research project, and will be used in this PhD thesis.

4) Set ground rules

a) Be respectful to one another and speak kindly and constructively
b) Leave old issues in the past- from this day we will be moving forward collectively
c) Agree to disagree when applicable- don't sweat the small things
d) No talking at the same time- don't talk over one another

5) Formalize Communication Lines

a) Explain how important communication is (this will be explained in step 2 also), and seek to establish formal communication lines between members- ask for feedback on what forms of communication they like best, potentially emails and/or closed Facebook Group
b) Talk about tentative dates for the enduring data collection phases, and stages of the business cluster formation- seek feedback

6) Conclude the Focus Group

a) Conclude the group
b) Show appreciation and end on a positive note with a strong focus for the future
c) Encourage communication in the established communication lines between now and the next stage

Post Focus Group:

Ensure formal communication lines between all members have been constructed and are being utilized by all members. Ensure accountability. Discussion from the day will be transcribed and analysed to be included in the research project, and all participants will receive a copy of this transcription. A summary report will be prepared and shared with all members of the business cluster, as well as SQCT and SDRC.

Appendix 4: Individual Interview Protocol

Stakeholder Response to Collaborative Business Cluster Arrangements in Relation to Collaborative Destination Branding Activities and Self-Growth

In-Depth Individual Interview- Proposed Questions

Aim 4 of PAR: Understanding human flourishing

Responding to RQ3 & RQ4

Time Anticipation: Approximation 30 minutes

Interviews will be recorded for data collection purposes. The proposed questions are used as a guide to understand participant experience in the business clustering process, with attention on collaboration between stakeholders

Location: TBC

1) **Can you tell me about how you feel as the research project comes to an end?**
a. How would you describe any changes to your knowledge about collaborative processes?
b. How would you describe any changes to your behaviours?
2) **How has this project experience been for you, in terms of your development?**
a. How would you describe any changes that have taken place for you over the duration of the project?
b. How have your views changed?
c. Would you say you have 'flourished' as an outcome of this project? If so, how? If not, why not?
3) **What types of barriers, if any, do you feel you encountered during this process, and what barrier was most difficult for you to overcome?**
a. Why did this barrier arise? Do you think anything could have been done to avoid this?
4) **How would you rate your collaborative behaviours and knowledge now, in comparison to the beginning of the project?**
a. What was the most important insight you gained, and why?
b. What was the shocking realisation for you, and why?
5) **How have any of your relationships with other stakeholders in the project changed throughout the process?**

a. Why did they change?

b. Did you expect the change?

c. Can you pinpoint the moment that things changed?

6) Were there moments during the process where you doubted yourself? If so, why?

a. Do you still have that underlying doubt?

b. If you have overcome that, what exactly prompted that response from you?

7) How do you see yourself continuing in collaborative relationships in the future?

a. Who will you continue to collaborative with, and why?

b. Is there anyone you do not wish to collaborate with? If so, why?

8) Do you have anything you wish to add?

Appendix 5: Ethical Clearance

Subject: Full Research Ethics Clearance 2018/529
Date: Monday, 25 June 2018 at 9:35:31 am Australian Eastern Standard Time
From: RIMS Griffith <rims@griffith.edu.au>
To: Charles Arcodia <c.arcodia@griffith.edu.au>, Rachel Perkins <rachel.perkins@griffith.edu.au>, Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore <c.khoo-lattimore@griffith.edu.au>
CC: research-ethics <research-ethics@griffith.edu.au>, Kim Madison <k.madison@griffith.edu.au>
Priority: High

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW

Dear Dr Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore

I write further to the additional information provided in relation to the provisional approval granted to your application for ethical clearance for your project "Business Cluster Formation for Regional Small Tourism Firms to Overcoming Collaborative Challenges" (GU Ref No: 2018/529).

This is to confirm that this response has addressed the comments and concerns of the HREC.

The ethics reviewers resolved to grant your application a clearance status of "Fully Approved".

Consequently, you are authorised to immediately commence this research on this basis.

Regards

Kim Madison | Human Research Ethics

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Granite Belt Living Lightly: Event Overview

Date: March TBC
Where: Railway Station (Hub), Art Gallery (Welcome Reception) + Various Venues for workshops
Themes: 'Sustainable', 'Home-Grown', 'Artisan Producers', 'Workshops'
Expected Attendees: 500 (including expo and workshops)

Why: Granite Belt Living Lightly (GBLL) aims to further promote the Granite Belt Region as a tourist destination, by attracting visitors to learn more about what is home grown and home made in our region. The event focuses on 'Living Lightly', that is, treading a lighter path on this earth, so that our natural environments are preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. Within the Granite Belt region, there are many operators who have local supply chains, are resourceful and minimize their waste with product creation and consumption, and are connected to the earth through growing and harvesting produce. GBLL aims to shine a light on these local artisans, encouraging visitors to learn about the region, learn a new skill, and take a piece of the Granite Belt home through them- both through education they have gained, and something they have made.

Purpose/Goals:

1) To raise the profile of the Granite Belt region as a sustainable tourism destination
2) To connect visitors with local artisans to offer memorable experiences
3) To increase profits for local artisans and providers that host workshops or sell product
4) To increase profits of accommodation, retail, and tourism sectors by increased visitation to the region during the event
5) To made enough profit to host the event bi-annually
6) To be a model for other sustainable events in the region into the future

Event Overview:

Date	Event	Info
TBC	Welcome Reception at Art Gallery	Ticketed Entry (Pre-Purchased)
TBC	Workshops all held at own venues	Ticketed Entry (Pre-Purchased)
	Markets at the Railway Station	Opened all day (free entry)
	Dinner in the Hopps	Ticketed Entry (Pre-Purchased)
TBC	Workshops all held at own venues	Ticketed Entry (Pre-Purchased)
	Markets at the Railway Station	Opened in the morning (free entry)

Workshop Profiles

Workshop No.	Workshop Type	Business Hosting
1	Wine Blending	QCWT
2	Cooking Demo	QCWT
3	Bicycle Care	Granite Belt Bicycle Tours
4	Painting in the Vineyard	Local Artist
5	Breadmaking	Zest Bakery
6	Vineyard Walk + Wine Tasting	Twisted Gum Wines
7	Lip Balm Making	Paperbark Love
8	Farm Walk	Neil Jenkinson
9	Belt Making	Kent Saddlery
10	Soap Making	Wash Pool

Appendix 7: Future Normal Webinar Invitation

"FutureNormal" Webinar for Regional Small Tourism Businesses

Thursday 11 June | 5.30pm–6.30pm

REGISTER HERE

Director of Griffith Institute for Tourism, Professor Chris Fleming, along with Professor Nick Barter, will host a live "FutureNormal" Business Webinar for Regional Small Tourism Businesses in the Granite Belt Region. This webinar will offer guidance to transform your business to one that future generations will be proud of- and this transformation starts with conversation.

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In adapting to a "FutureNormal" Chris and Nick will discuss various questions that offer an opportunity to self-reflect on your own business that relate to your organisations money, stakeholders, wellbeing, vision, and pathways forward. Businesses will have the opportunity to ask questions and join in on a discussion of the "future normal".

GRANITE BELT WINE & TOURISM