



# Motivation for tourists' participation in religious tourism in Eastern Cape: A case study of Buffalo City, South Africa

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## Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to investigate the motivation for tourists' participation in religious tourism. Religious tourism has economic benefits for the tourism industry as it benefits local economic and social development. Moreover, it is one of the oldest forms of tourism and continues to grow year by year. It is also commonly referred to as faith tourism, for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure (fellowship) purposes. There are a number of religious events taking place throughout the world daily. These events tend to highlight the seriousness of people engaging in religious tourism. The peak season for religious tourism in South Africa (SA) is the Easter season. During this season a large number of people come as far as from Southern Africa visiting different regions of SA including the Eastern Cape (EC) Province. For example, Buffalo City in the EC has witnessed a number of visits by prominent people whose aim was to provide spiritual healing, inspiration and revival of the people. The study will hopefully contribute to the body of knowledge of religious tourism and religious events, as it creates greater awareness of religious events and stimulates interest in the public at large in this important market. The article also enhances understanding about religious tourism's value and what exactly this incorporates.

**Keywords:** Religious, Economic, Tourism, Eastern Cape, South Africa, promotion.

## Introduction

Tourism has grown in South Africa to become a leading sector that creates jobs in the country. This has increased the political importance of tourism in a country with a stubborn and sluggish unemployment rate. "Following the first racially inclusive democratic elections in 1994, the government's efforts to eliminate poverty have been frustrated by the continued shedding of jobs from the formal economy" Aliber (2003). It has been asserted that unemployment, poverty and inequality persist as the fundamental socio-economic challenges facing South Africa. The unemployment rate was about 25 % in 2011 with roughly half of all young people being jobless (Faulkner, Loewald & Makrolov, 2013). According to the South African Reserve Bank (2015b) the formal sector employment decreased by 6, 5 % (or 460 700 job opportunities) during the 2008-09 recession. The decline in jobs has been due to the decline in the contribution of mining and manufacturing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and therefore jobs. "South Africa's economy expanded 1.3% in 2015, the slowest rate of increase since the Great Recession...Unemployment rates remain high and may climb somewhat in the medium term" (South African Reserve Bank,



2016). In addition, government debt was 47, 1 % at the end of 2014. Tourism has emerged as an excellent creator of jobs locally and globally. Binns & Nel (2002) noted that tourism has been widely recognised by local authorities in South Africa as a mechanism through which development can be attained, yielding benefits for local communities. The decline of mining has been an opportunity for tourism to replace those jobs through the labour intensive jobs that tourism creates. The sheer importance of tourism has led to it gaining greater political significance, with the creation of a separate Department and Ministry of Tourism in 2009, in line with the objectives stated in the *White Paper on the Promotion and Development of Tourism in South Africa*. Tourism has been integrated into local economic development (LED) of almost all the municipalities and has been included in the National Development Plan (NDP).

## Why Tourism

Tourism is one of the world's leading industries in the global economy and is mostly promoted for its economic benefits across all countries' (Henama and Sifolo, 2014). Tourism is an industry that is located within the consumption economy, where the tourists consume a multiplicity of services and products at the tourism destination area, whereas the primary drivers of many economies have been production economies, driven my mining, agriculture and manufacturing. According to Akama (2002) the economic justification includes arguments that the tourism sector generates much sought after foreign exchange, contributing to the nation's economic growth, the balance of payments, regional development and in creating much needed employment. Empirical findings also validate that tourism is an important aspect in the factor against the balance of payments (Celik *et al.*, 2013). Tourists undertake travel to a destination and import their foreign exchange into the destination country, just like an exported product. Since tourism is like an export product which is produced and consumed at the destination this is an important consideration. The majority of the value adding happens at the destination area, which means that if a destination uses pro-poor principles, there would be a smaller amount of economic leakage from the local economy (Henama & Sifolo, 2017). The tourism industry is generally fragmented which means that the provision of the tourism product offering includes a variety of stakeholders, because no single operator can produce the total tourism offering.

The tourism product offering is essentially a service that must be simultaneously produced and consumed at the destination area. This creates ample opportunities for value adding at the destination, which would reduce leakage from the local economy, as pro-poor tourism principles are applied. Holloway (1999) noted that the tourism product cannot be brought to the consumer, but rather the consumer must be brought to the product. This means that additional entrepreneurial opportunities occur in the transportation system that caters for tourists. Tourism is seen as an effective source of foreign exchange earnings and is a significant generator of employment according to Ramukumba (2016). Today, South Africa attracts more foreign exchange from tourism than gold mining is able to realise, hence tourism is regarded as the "new gold" (Henama *et al.* 2016). The decline in the economic fortunes of South Africa can be traced to the decline of mining and manufacturing in their abilities to generate jobs. According to Croucamp & Hind (2014) economic growth is predominantly driven by the tertiary sector, with tourism credited as one of the key sectors with an important contribution of 9.5% of the GDP.

Tourism is able to create the opportunities that will make small and medium enterprises flourish. The majority of businesses in tourism are small and medium enterprises that are the main creator of jobs in the economy. Tourism is different from other sectors, in that, it is a highly cross-cutting sector and it includes a large diversity of services and professions, which is linked to many other economic activities (Akinboade & Braimoh, 2010). Tourism linkages to other economic sectors



are deep with backward linkages with basic infrastructure services such as energy, telecommunications and environmental services, agricultural, manufacturing and construction services according to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2010). Ruane (2014) notes that one of the economic benefits to the destination economy of tourism is the amount that tourists spend during their visits. Tourists usually consume a bundle of goods and services while travelling and the significant element of such a consumption bundle may be identified as fitting into five broad commodity areas including accommodation, food, transport, shopping and entertainment' (Divisekera, 2010). The consumption by tourists of several products and services therefore raises the gross national product of the destination. The tourism industry is able to increase the tax coffers of the state through the collection of additional tax revenue as more goods are produced which are then also taxed. According to Lea (1993) duties on alcoholic drinks and petrol and a hotel room tax constitute an extra source of national income from the tourism industry.

There are several sectors of the tourism industry that have low barriers of entry that increase entrepreneurship that creates jobs and provides services to the tourism value chain. Tourism is a catalyst for the development of other sectors of the economy because of its cross-cutting nature. Ramukumba (2016) noted that tourism is relatively free of trade restrictions. It is impossible to create trade barriers on tourism because it is essentially a service that is simultaneously produced and reproduced at the destination area. According to Celik *et al.* (2013) the tourism industry is promoted as an "industry without chimney". Tourism is an industry that does not have a higher carbon footprint when compared to other industries such as mining, manufacturing and electricity production through thermal power stations.

Tourism is usually consumed for selfish reasons by the tourist and is regarded as payment for all the hard work conducted in the year. As a result, the consumption of tourism is associated with the happiness that it produces for those that consume it, which then improves their Quality-of-Life (QoL). In research conducted by McCabe & Johnson (2013) it was noted that 77.1% of respondents agreed that a holiday had improved their happiness, quality of life and optimism, in addition, it led to improvements in family bonds as the holiday was an opportunity to spend time with family. Carneiro & Eusebio (2011) observed that tourism enhances QoL of the travellers, being the psychological and social relationships domains of QoL, the domains more positively influenced by travel experience. In addition, because of the labour intensive nature of tourism jobs, the growth of tourism is associated with the growth in jobs, which leads to better standards of living if the tourism jobs are directed towards the inhabitants of the locality, so that their happiness is attributed to employment attainment. When the tourism industry improves the standard of living and quality of life for the population, it will increase the resident support for tourism. "Tourism development may have both positive and negative impacts on residents such as tourism development generating economic benefits, which will consequently improve resident quality of life. However, tourism development may trigger a variety of economic, socio-cultural and environmental effects on a destination" (Rivera *et al.* 2015).

The aim is to always ensure that the positive impacts far outweigh the negative impacts associated with tourism. Tourism is increasingly being viewed as a possible basic industry, providing basics that may improve the QoL through the development of tourism products that can be appreciated by residents, such as festivals, restaurants, natural and cultural attractions, and outdoor recreational opportunities (Andereck *et al.* 2007). This means that tourism can lead to the development of infrastructure that can be shared by the tourists and the locals. The legacy of the 2010 FIFA World Cup™ left improved communication, stadia and roads infrastructure which is now used by local residents. Once a public good is provided, every tourist is able to enjoy visiting the attractions part of a well-preserved environment (Rigall-I-Torrent, 2007).



Tourism growth is perennial as the undertaking of holidays is part of a dominant consumer culture. "International tourist arrivals have grown consistently, from 25 million in 1950 to 922 million in 2008, with tourism receipts rising from \$2 billion to \$944billion" (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2010). "Higher disposable incomes, smaller family size, changing demographics, lower transportation costs, improved public health standards, infrastructure development, and hospitable environments for tourists in many destinations have made tourism, especially long-distance tourism, and activity within the reach and desires of many members of many nations" (Eadington & Smith, 1992). The development of air travel and the ease of access to the automobile have revolutionised tourism demand, by increasing accessibility to the transport systems that ensure that tourism functions effectively. "The South African tourism industry is valued at US\$10 billion a year and is expected to rise sharply as government and the private sector invest in a marketing and promotional drive" (Snyman & Saayman, 2009). As a result, tourism is regarded as the fourth largest and the fastest growing industry in South Africa according to Akinboade and Braimoh (2010).

Developing countries are becoming increasingly tourism destination orientated, and as outbound tourism markets this applies especially to countries such as India, China, Turkey, Brazil and Mexico. Because of all of the above-mentioned aspects, tourism has been accepted as an imperative economic sector that requires dedicated attention. According to Binns & Nel (2002) tourism development often comes at a price and economic gains must be balanced against social and environmental costs. Booyens and Visser (2010) noted that tourism is increasingly regarded as a viable vehicle for local economic development. Tourism is not a panacea for all the development challenges that face localities. Destinations must plan the tourism development that they seek, with the state ensuring that it works with the private sector to ensure that the majority of the benefits remain at the destination area. Leakage from the local economy is undesirable as such.

### **Special Interest Tourism**

The growth of sub-cultures in the demographic variables of society has also led to the rise in special interest tourism, which is different from mass tourism. "Special interest travel is travel for people who are going somewhere because they have a particular interest that can be pursued in a particular region or at a particular destination. It is the hub around which the total travel experience is planned and developed" (Hall & Weiler, 1992). In fact "The growth in tourism in South Africa during the past ten years resulted in the development of various types of tourism such as: eco-tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, business tourism, sports tourism, and event tourism" (Strydom *et al.* 2006). Township tourism is an example of alternative tourism that has grown in leaps and bounds in South Africa. Rogerson (2000) states that "Township tourism represents one growing sector of tourism in post-apartheid South Africa, which the recent promotion of centres such as Soweto as focal points of international visitors interested in the country's political struggles and heritage".

Township tourism has been associated with "heritage tourism", which is a market that developed post-1994. According to Christo (2006) heritage tourism is a subgroup of tourism, in which the main motivation for visiting a site is based on the place's heritage characteristics according to the tourists' perception of their own heritage. Festivals have been developed by localities as events that would increase the inward migration of tourists and improve the expenditure that happens at the destination, and the most successful include Mangaung Cultural Arts Festival in Bloemfontein, The National Arts Festival in Grahamstown, and the Durban July in Durban.



## Religious Tourism

Religious tourism is among the least explored tourists' activities in the world of modern tourism (Vukonic, 1998). Moreover, religious tourism is probably the oldest form of tourism in the world according to Seyer and Muller (2011). Horner and Swaarbrooke (1999) cited in Rojo (2007) explain how religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism and has undoubtedly existed long before Christianity. Religious tourism also known as faith-based travel is internationally renowned and continues to grow year by year. According to Asiarooms.com (2009) approximately 10 million Muslims visit Mecca annually. Mecca, located near the western coast of Saudi Arabia, is approximately, 45-minute east of Jeddah and is considered the heart of the Muslim world. India as well has long been known as a very spiritual, strong religious area of the world. Jackowski (2000) cited in Rojo (2007) contends that religious tourism is considered as a common motivation for travel. Furthermore, Jackowski (2000) in Rojo (2007) estimates that approximately 240 million people travel every year because of their religion, including *inter alia* Christians, Muslims and Hindus.

Although religious tourism is one of the most understudied areas in tourism research (Vukonic, 1998) cited in Rojo (2007), increases in spirituality motivated travel have coincided with the growth of tourism in the modern era (Lloyd, 1998) quoted by Rojo (2007). In view of the religious activities, SA hosts many in relation to this. The peak season for religious tourism in SA is the Easter season. During Easter season a large number of people come from across Southern Africa and gather in Moria in Limpopo. In SA for instance, a highlight on the calendar is the Zion Christian Church's (ZCC) annual Easter religious gathering at Moria. Millions of people flock together at Moria, and the worshipping lasts for several days. Some worshippers come from the neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique (Prominent people, 2009).

There are number of religious events taking place throughout SA. These events tend to highlight the seriousness of people engaging in religious tourism. Each year during the last three weeks of October over 25,000 Zulu Shembes gather at Judea near Eshowe to meet their leader. This festival takes place at Judea near Eshowe every year during October. Tens of thousands of faithful pilgrims gather and resurrect the village disbanded the previous year. In this very vibrant and colourful village hundreds of shops emerge selling items of food to religious visitors. A hive of economic activity prevails in between a formal religious programme. There are two sessions of prayer and traditional "prayer" dances performed by five distinct groups.

At prayer, all dress in long white robes (elders in green). At the dance, men sport traditional warrior type gear. Older women wear modest black and beautifully beaded dresses and headgear. The younger women are in Scottish attire (Graham, 2009). The Shembe religion is a combination of Zulu culture and Christianity that has been based on the old testament of the Bible. The Shembe pilgrimage welcomes visitors on their road of praise and worship, and members are happy to share their beliefs and traditions with tourists and inquisitive minds. The most colourful Shembe Pilgrimage that is attended by tourists, takes place at the beginning of every year, and is known as the Shembe Pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain (South Africa.net, 2010).

Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) state that religious tourism is a form of tourism that is motivated by faith or religious reasons and has been in evidence for centuries. Whilst no uniform definition of religious tourism exists, it can loosely be described as travelling to visit a place, building or shrine deemed sacred or holy (McKelvie, 2005). On the other hand, Wright (2009), defines religious tourism as: "Travel to a religious destination site (for example: trip to holy land); travel



with a spiritual intent (example: Christian conference) and leisure travel with fellowship intent (faith-based cruise)". Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) suggest that modern tourism has become the functional and symbolic equivalent of more traditional religious practices, such as festivals and pilgrimages. Ambrosio (2007) is of the view that religious tourism is on the basis of: the evolution of the term (from pilgrimage to tourism); the growth of individual faith; the primary motivation of pilgrims, tourists and religious tourists; the image differentiation (tourist versus pilgrim); religious resources as tourist product; territorial and socio-economic impacts.

Smith (1992) in Collins-Kreiner (2006) explains how the link between pilgrimage and religious tourism comes from the Latin *peregrines* which its interpretation is foreign, traveller, newcomer or stranger. The term tourist, also with Latin origins means *tornus* or the one who makes a circuitous journey, usually for pleasure and returns to the starting point. The contemporary use of the terms, identifying the pilgrim as a religious traveller and the tourist as a vacationer, is culturally constructed polarity that veils the traveller's motives. Seemingly, the literature suggests that religious tourism is about embarking on a journey in pursuit of spirituality.

### **Religious motivation**

According to Nicolaides (2016) religious tourists or pilgrims seek to escape the stresses of daily work and life in general. Many thus desire some spiritually invigorating formative and cultural experience in which they grow and become enlightened by what they encounter at a destination. Many enjoy dabbling in diverse world views and lifestyles and experiencing other cultures. On the other hand, Grunewald, (1999) in Rojo (2007) states that for Christianity, the idea of pilgrimage is undoubtedly linked to the belief that "The Church is pilgrim" as the will of people following God. The religious sense of the people has found, its expressions in varied forms of mercy around the sacramental life of the Church such as, among others, the pilgrimages. Horner and Swarbrooke (1999) explain how religious tourism and the motivations to engage in this type of tourism is unique in that it is driven by a sense of duty and obligation rather than a search for pleasure and leisure. Olsen and Guleke (2004) describe how these types are complex. Olsen and Guleke (2004) further explain that some tourists travel in order to maintain an identity, others to satisfy the feelings of nostalgia, to experience the transcendent or to fulfil the teachings of particular faiths as for example, the journeys to Mecca for devout Muslims.

Timothy and Olsen (2006) explain how a quest for understanding has always been an integral part of a pilgrimage, and currently the emphasis on acquiring knowledge as a motivation has increased. During medieval Christian pilgrimage periods, expiating sins, demonstrating faith or the hope to be healed eclipsed the desire to learn by visiting new places. As medieval pilgrimage evolved into modern religious tourism, the emphasis on gaining knowledge as a motivation for undertaking the journey increased (Swatos and Tomas, 2002) in Timothy and Olsen, (2006). Currently, opportunities for learning are often emphasised by organisers of and participants in religious tours (Timothy and Olsen, 2006).

### **Religious Tourism throughout the World**

Another interesting aspect of religious tourism is that of Ramadan. Millions of faithful Muslims worldwide do not eat or drink between dawn and sunset during Ramadan (Francis and Sadiki, 2009). Ramadan is a month of sacrifice and humility punctuated by joyous family gatherings and vast quantities of food (Erdbrink, 2008). Ramadan is by far the holiest month on the Islamic calendar. It signifies strength, patience, tolerance and sacrifice as Muslims across the world give up eating food and drinking water between sunrise and sunset. Eid, which translates to



“festivities”, is the culmination of those thirty days and is spent with family, friends and prayer (Francis and Sadiki, 2009).

The hajj by Muslims to the cities they deem holy in Saudi Arabia is distinctive illustration that involves the mass movement of pilgrims every year. Numbers are strictly controlled, but set to rise as the government pursues a policy of expanding space at certain holy sites and encouraging an increase in the supply of accommodation and other amenities as well as enhancing supporting infrastructure (Henderson, 2011). Furthermore, in countries such as Iran, Eid is generally a more conservative celebration and with a focus is placed on charity and donating to those less fortunate. In Indonesia, Eid is known as Hari Raya Idul Fitri and lasts for days. Lamps are lit as a symbol of Eid, while many families from the cities travel back to their rural villages to celebrate with their elders and families. In Europe, prayers are said in shifts in mosques to accommodate the masses who attend and the day is generally spent with the immediate family. In Malawi, a light breakfast is served. The main meal is lunch, where the destitute and poor are invited to celebrate with wealthier families.

Andriotis (2009) asserts that Mount Athos is the largest, and, by far, most important community of Eastern Orthodox monks in the world, and one of the most world's renowned monastic communities that claims to present the highest form of spiritual life known in the Christian society and where male adherents flock in their droves.

### **Religious Tourism in India**

Religious tourism has emerged as a booming market in India, according to the Delhi based National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) which shows that of the 230 million tourist trips undertaken in India, the largest proportion is made up of religious pilgrimages (Koldowski and Martin, 2008; India Brand Equity Foundation, 2004).

Undertaken by both rural and urban Indians, they outnumber leisure holidays in hill stations, getaways to sea beaches and even trips to metropolitan cities. Approximately 23 million people annually visited Tirupati, a temple town near the southern tip of India to catch a glimpse of a deity known as Lord Balaji (Koldowski & Martin, 2008; India Brand Equity Foundation, 2004). Tirupati's annual list of pilgrims is higher than the total number of travellers visiting Mumbai, Dehli, Bangalore and Kolkata put together. In the northern state of Jammu and Kashmir, annually 17.2 million devotees trek uphill for 15 kilometres to pay respects to a female goddess called Vaishno Devi (Koldowski and Martin, 2008; India Brand Equity Foundation, 2004).

Another place of worship that is very popular amongst religious tourists in India is Akshardham Temple (AT) Complex in New Dehli. The followers of Lord Swaminarayan work over this complex by spreading and enhancing the flavour of spirituality and devotion with complete peace of mind. This monument is based on authentic and modern techniques representing the impression or imprint of Indian architecture with religious culture (Templepurohit, 2017). The AT complex according to Srivastava (2009) is spread over an area of 100 acres. It was completed in November 2005 by the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan (BAPS) movement under the leadership of the spiritual head, His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Furthermore, Srivastava adds that BAPS is one of several subgroups of the Swaminarayan movement, all of who have a global following with a predominance of Gujaratis. It originates from the state of Gujarat in India.



## **Religious tourism in South Africa**

In view of the religious activities available, South Africa hosts many tourists in relation to these. The peak season for religious tourism in South Africa is the Easter season. During Easter season a large number of people come from across Southern Africa and gather in Moria in Limpopo. In South Africa, a highlight on the calendar is the Zion Christian Church's (ZCC) annual Easter religious gathering at Moria. Millions of people flock together at Moria, and the worshipping lasts for several days. Some worshippers come from the neighbouring countries such as Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique (Prominent people, 2009). There are thus number of religious events taking place throughout South Africa. These events tend to highlight the seriousness of people engaging in religious tourism

## **Religious Tourism in Buffalo City**

There have been number of visits by prominent people to Buffalo City whose aim has been to provide spiritual healing. For example, a huge turnout was noted in River Park, when Pastor Benny Hinn delivered a sermon to approximately 8000 people at River Park in April 2016 (Booi and Kopo, 2016) In fact, Pastor Benny Hinn visits the Buffalo City annually to deliver his sermon to the masses in Buffalo City. In the same vein, (Booi and Kopo, 2008) explain that, Taylor Dexter Jakes visited Buffalo City with the purpose to inspire and revive people. Jakes is considered as one of the world's renowned motivational speakers and an internationally renowned pastor.

## **Research Methodology**

In this research, self-completing questionnaires were used as the primary source of data, as they assisted the researchers in obtaining a larger number of responses from willing participants. The questionnaire comprised of both open and closed questions. Hundley, Milne and Leighton-Beck (2000) point out that pilot studies can be based on quantitative and/or qualitative methods and large-scale studies might employ a number of pilot studies before the main survey is conducted.

In the current study, the pilot study was intended to pre-test questionnaires. Its purpose was to:

- Develop and test the adequacy of research instrument;
- Collect preliminary data;
- Establishing whether the sampling frame and technique are effective; and
- Check the feasibility of the investigation by looking at subjects or participants available for interview and their willingness to participate.

In this study, interviews were conducted so as to obtain first-hand information from the respondents that attended the religious event in Buffalo City (East London). Data originally collected for a different purpose and reused for another question is known as Secondary data (Hox and Boejie, 2005) and was also used. Thus in this study, journal articles, maps and the internet were used so as to get more clarity on certain aspects considered to be important.

## **Findings of the study**

Respondents between the ages of 18 – 25 years represented the majority and numbered 44%. Full time workers represented those respondents who actively participated in religious tourism. Women constituted the majority who liked to attend religious events because they constituted 56%, while their male counterparts were only 44%. Based on the findings of the study, it can be



concluded that women are more interested in religious tourism than their men counterparts. Seemingly, couples were the majority because they constituted 52% while single respondents were 48%. This may be attributed by the fact that they had sufficient time and money to attend the event compared to single people. Interestingly, 46% of the respondents were white people while blacks were 34%.

In the case of income, the study was not conclusive because some respondents (22%) felt that it was confidential for them to give details about their financial status. However, it could be noted that 16% of the respondents' income was less than R1000.00. Moreover, 14% of the respondents indicated that they had no income. It could be concluded that of the 14%, some were students who depended on their parents or people who were unemployed and other respondents could have been invited either by a friend, spouse or relative.

In terms of place of residence, 72% of the respondents came from the outside borders of Buffalo City while 22% were from the city. It should be borne in mind that the Buffalo City is a tourist attraction on its own. Apart from the respondents attending the religious event, one of the motivational factors which made them to attend the event, could be that they also wanted to explore Buffalo City. With reference to the qualification obtained, it was noted that those with diploma or degree qualifications comprised some 74% while 24% were respondents with Grade 10 – 12 (formerly known as Standard 8 and 10 respectively). Seemingly, attending religious events were determined by the level of education of the various respondents. Based on the findings of the study, it can be explicated that people who are literate have a stronger preference to go to church or a religious site than those who are illiterate.

The study further indicated that the majority (40%) of respondents travelled with their families and those who travelled alone made up 34% of the sample. While 28% of the respondents travelled with their friends. It is important to note that those who travelled alone were mainly students. Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that students were the ones interested in religious activities. About 70% of the respondents had a strong religious belief. With reference to accommodation used by the interviewees, 28% of the respondents used bed and breakfast (B&B's) and other forms of accommodation. About 26% of the respondents used backpackers. Hotels and lodges were not the first choice, because they were used by 8% and 10% of respondents respectively and this reflects the higher cost involved for such accommodation. Land transport seemed to have played a major role because 94% of the respondents used it. Only 6% of the respondents used air transport. It could be said that those who used land transport drove their own cars to the destination visited. In the same vein, full time workers comprised of 46% of respondents. They opted to save their income and decided to use land transport which was cheaper compared to air transport.

Interestingly, 56% of the respondents strongly agreed that the money spent by tourists in religious events helps to stimulate the economy of Buffalo City. This is in line with the statement by Raj and Morpeth (2007) which states that religious tourism has economic benefits for the tourism industry in that it benefits local economic and social development. Only 38% of respondents agreed that the money spent by tourists helps to create employment opportunities for Buffalo City residents. Whereas 54% of the respondents were also among those who strongly agreed that religious events that take place in Buffalo City help the city to become a "tourist city". In terms of the duration of stay, 54% of the interviewees spent 1 to 2 days while 32% preferred to stay between 3 to 4 days. The significance of this analysis is that the number of days spent by the respondents has boosted the economy of Buffalo City. The activities that respondents engaged in during their spare time were leisure activities, with 56% of the respondents and 32% preferring vibrant nightlife. Approximately 56% spent their leisure time on shows such as concerts and it is



evident that there are a variety of attractive activities that Buffalo City offers its tourists. Furthermore, this highlights that Buffalo City is a tourist attraction that is sought after.

## Recommendations

This paper provides a sound basis for the study to be used by both the tourism industry (national, provincial and local) to more effectively market destinations and for further research on religious tourism. This would create relevance in the context South Africa especially the Eastern Cape Province where there is a dearth of research in the area of religious tourism. As aforementioned, there is a paucity of information regarding religious tourism in South Africa. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted in order to better comprehend the dynamics of religious tourism within the context of tourism developing economy. Moreover, this will enable researchers to conduct longitudinal studies, including those in the tourism industry.

## Conclusion

The results obtained after the analyses, established that people are motivated to participate in religious tourism because they want to uplift themselves spiritually and be closer or connected to God (Andriotis, 2009; Nicolaides, 2016). Religion therefore becomes a very powerful determinant for travel to a destination, a form of tourism consumption that is not leisure based. According to Lui (2013) tourism has become a kind of fashion. Therefore, this paper has attempted to explain what religious tourism is about, where it is today in terms of tourist notions as people desire to have a connection with a Creator God. There is a correlation between tourism and religion because people travel to various areas throughout the world in pursuit of spirituality and to connect to a Higher Being. For example, ZCC in Moria, Limpopo attracts large numbers of people who travel as far as Mozambique seeking healing and spirituality. Furthermore, the study elucidates that religious tourism brings economic spin-offs, for example, Buffalo City given the large number of people who attend these events which in turn creates employment opportunities for local people and uplifts downtrodden communities. From the results analysed, it could be concluded that religious tourism is one of the tourism typologies that is fastest growing globally speaking, in terms of attracting large numbers of tourists, and this is also the case in South Africa.

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