



Visitors' perceptions of Religious Tourism in South Africa: The case of Moria in the Limpopo Province

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Abstract

This paper scrutinizes visitors' perceptions on religious tourism in South Africa (SA). The selected research site is Moria, located in Polokwane in the Limpopo Province, which is popular for its annual gathering during the Easter holiday period. Additionally, this paper argues that the area of Moria has much potential in terms of tourism growth and development. Limpopo Province prides itself for the Zion Christian Church (ZCC) annual gathering due to economic spin-offs that are brought by the event. As such, it is suggested that the Provincial Government has to come up with mechanisms on how those economic spin-offs will benefit ordinary people and most importantly the tourism sector. To achieve this objective, 150 questionnaires were administered to visitors who attended the annual gathering in Moria during the Easter season in 2018. Furthermore, a simple random sampling technique was used and the collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The analysis sheds more light on the respondents' profiles and experiences of the visit. For instance, most visitors were from domestic tourists. Interestingly, close family members and friends mostly accompanied the visitors. The findings of this study reveal that the motives for visiting the site were mainly religious. In the same breath, some visitors admitted that they went to Moria to shop and to participate in other activities. It is also interesting to note that visitors were excited about the kind of treatment they received from the locals. This could be seen as something that has a potential to assist Moria to grow and develop in terms of tourism. It is the view of this paper that the Government (more especially at provincial level) has a duty in terms of helping Moria to boost its tourism and thereby attracting more visitors. For example, the areas surrounding Moria are always facing challenges of traffic congestion. The Provincial Government could introduce some mechanisms to alleviate the traffic congestion challenge to promote this area's tourism sustainability.

Keywords: Moria, Zion Christian Church, religious tourism, South Africa, Limpopo, pilgrims



Introduction

Ryan (1995) stated that tourism has been identified as one of the fastest growing industries in the world. In both the developing and developed countries, government authorities have identified tourism as a means of generating employment and income in vulnerable economies as noted by Ryan (1995). According to World Tourism Organisation (2008), the industry has experienced continuous growth to become the largest economic sector in the world.

Unlike agricultural or the manufacturing sectors, tourism is a service industry with the product being consumed at the point of production. Given the tourism industry's structure in terms of a mix of large enterprises and many SMMEs that draw upon domestic and international visitors, and its components of natural and man-made attractions, tourism is complex, cross-sectional and highly dynamic. In particular, as compared to the sectors of mining and manufacturing, which relate to landscapes of production, the tourism sector must be understood as related to the understanding of places or landscapes of consumption (McKelly et al., 2017: 219-220).

Ryan (1995) asserted that Third World Countries such as Gambia in West Africa have placed tourism as a major component of their economic strategies, although religious tourism has been a norm since the medieval period. Almost all countries have jumped on the tourism bandwagon, preparing themselves as sites for tourism consumption as a means of attracting the positive economic impacts associated with tourism. The positive economic impacts associated with tourism include labor - intensive jobs, attraction of foreign exchange and acting as a catalyst for other industries such as manufacturing.

"Tourism is able to create the opportunities that will make small and medium enterprises to flourish. The majority of businesses in tourism are small and medium enterprises that are the main creators of jobs in the economy" (Apleni et al., 2017: 2). Vijayanand (2012) noted that the positive economic impacts of tourism includes the creation of job opportunities, local people are employed in different sectors of the tourism industry, and opportunities for women, tourism is an attracter of investment into a locality. "Tourism is a labor - intensive service sector that can create direct as well as indirect income from tourist expenditure by providing tourist goods and services" (Redman et al., 2016: 339). Redman et al. (2016) noted that travel and tourism would support the creation of 5.5 million jobs over the next decade. "The tourism industry is able to bring in much needed foreign exchange into the country as it is an export product consumed at the destination area" (Henama, 2013: 230). The tourism product is simultaneously produced and consumed at the destination area, allowing for the majority of the value adding to be undertaken at the destination area. This means that tourism allows for reduced leakages for the tourism economy, when compared to other economic sectors. "Since ancient times, travelling for fervor and religious devotion purposes have been present in humanity" (Nicolaidis, 2016; Duran-Sanchez et al., 2018: 1). Rejman et al. (2016) noted that religious motives were and still are the main reasons for such travel. The motivation for travel is so strong that unfavorable weather conditions, terrorism, poor health and other inconveniences can prevent the purpose for travel.

During the Middle Ages from about the 5th-14th century C.E., the Christian church was the primary impetus for travel with the spreading of monasteries and the Christian religion according to World Tourism Organisation (1999). Monks and priests encouraged the public to go on pilgrimages, and by the 14th century, pilgrimages were an organized mass phenomena served by a growing network of charitable hospices with growing ranks of participants from most social classes. Christians went to Jerusalem and Rome, and even though the pilgrimages had a religious basis, they were seen as social and recreational journeys World Tourism Organisation (1999).



Pilgrims and religious tourists come from all corners of life and differ on many levels including age, gender, race, ethnicity and social class (Religious Tourism, Travel and Tourism, 2005). Jackowski (2000, in Rojo 2007) estimates that approximately 240 million people travel every year because of religion, including Christians, Muslims and Hindus. There are two things that they have in common are faith and the need for a certain amount of money in order to participate in a trip (Religious Tourism, Travel & Tourism, 2005). In defining the difference between a pilgrim and a tourist simply visiting a religious site, the key distinction is the fact that a pilgrimage involves the undertaking of a spiritual or sacred journey and is generally motivated by faith and a sense of seeking authenticity (Nicolaidis and Grobler, 2017). In times of personal hardship, when their faith is being tested, pilgrims may arrive at a pilgrimage site with worries they have or questions they want answered.

In many instances, pilgrims travel in groups in order to capitalize upon the benefits offered by solidarity and fellowship, such as the ability to discuss experiences and to challenge ideas (Religious Tourism: Travel & Tourism, 2005). However, modern religious tourism has already attracted non-religious followers as well as religious followers to travel to the religious and cultural relics and tourist sites for the various purposes of pilgrimage, sightseeing to name a few (Religious Tourism, Travel & Tourism Analyst, 2005). Whatever the motivation behind religious tourism, the local and national economies benefit from the expenditure in accommodation, restaurants and shops, and on the transport (Religious Tourism, Travel & Tourism Analyst, 2005). According to Prominent People (2009), the peak season for religious tourism in South Africa is the Easter season. In South Africa, a highlight on the religious tourism calendar is the Zion Christian Church's (ZCC) annual Easter religious gathering at Moria in the Limpopo Province. Millions of people gather at Moria, and the worshipping lasts for several days. Some worshippers come from the neighboring countries such as Lesotho, Botswana, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Mozambique.

Research Methodology: Literature Review

The literature review was a meta-analysis, which according to Randolph (2009) the goal is to integrate quantitative outcomes across studies. "Secondary data analysis is analysis of data that was collected by someone else for another primary purpose" (Johnston, 2014: 626). "Literature review papers are often very helpful for researchers, as the reader gets an up to date and well-structured overview of the literature in a specific area, and the review adds value. This added value can, for example, be that the research gaps are made explicit, and this may be very helpful for readers who plan to do research in the same area for the first time" (Van Wee and Banister, 2015: 1). When undertaking all relevant literature and to determine what is known and unknown about a particular topic. "Conducting a literature review is a means of demonstrating an author's knowledge about a particular field of study, including vocabulary, theories, key variables, and phenomena, and its methods and history" (Randolph, 2009: 2).

Overview of Religious Tourism

The study of world religions requires an understanding of a diverse collection of practices, rituals and ideas that articulate professions of faith (Sherat and Hawkins, 1972). "Religious tourism is a form of travel with the main interest of experiencing religious forms or the products they induce like art, traditions and architecture. Two aspects of this form of tourism can also be listed as: (a) the faith of a tourist, who has a spiritual attachment to the destination in line with his religious belief; and (b) the new spiritual experience of a tourist, belonging to another belief system or a different religion, and for whom the destination and the religious practices have the dimensions



of newness” (Jude, Uchenna and Ngozi, 2018: 40). Intellectualization of professions of faith is more than an understanding of abstract philosophical notions to the emergence of rudimentary religion in which ancient and primitive man’s professions of faith is linked to animism (which they are viewed as belonging to the same as epoch as that of the early evolution of man) and a notion that the living things animated by spirits distinct from living human beings as noted by Sheratt and Hawkins (1972).

On the other hand, Wall and Mathieson (2006) acknowledged that religion has been a powerful force, which causes people to travel to religious centers in many parts of the world. The change on traditional forms of pilgrimage destinations, with diffusion in spiritual motivation has seen cathedrals and churches increasingly becoming tourist attractions as well as places of worship. Another interesting aspect of religious tourism is that of Ramadan. Millions of Muslims worldwide do not eat or drink between dawn and sunset during Ramadan, a month of sacrifice and humility punctuated by joyous family gatherings and vast quantities of food according to 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 and friends and prayer as noted by Francis and Sadiki (2009). In countries such as Iran, *Eid* is generally more conservative and more emphasis is placed on charity and donating to those less fortunate.

According to Vukonic (1998), religious tourism is among the least explored tourist activities in the world of modern tourism. Horner and Swaarbrooke (1999) also state that religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism and has undoubtedly existed long before. Hence, Jackowski (2000) estimates that approximately 240 million people travel every year because of the religion, including Christians, Muslims and Hindus. Although religious tourism is one of the most under studied areas in tourism research, Vukonic (1998) stated that the increases in spirituality-motivated travel have coincided with the growth of tourism in the modern era.

Yes Bank (2012) identified the following as challenges facing religious tourism:

- **Infringement of Carrying Capacity:** Most religious centers in the country, major or minor, suffer from short but intense seasons that alter the dynamics of the region for the rest of the year.
- **Waste Management:** In part, a derivative of the problem of carrying capacity, the waste management problem has aggravated as science and technology grew to usher us into the ‘era of plastic’.
- **Air Pollution:** The sheer volume of travel in this niche makes the figures mind-boggling.
- **Monetizing Religion:** In the race for developing as many niches as possible, there are often the issue of religion being ‘monetized’, as the host community is increasingly driven by the profit margin.
- **Lack of scrutiny of religious trusts:** There is a need to put forward regulations that govern the financial status and regulation of religious trusts as it looks to allay global concerns about money laundering and terrorism financing activities.

Vijayanand (2012) noted that pilgrimage tourism has two conflicting goals: to increase international pilgrimages and tourism use of the site and to enhance the site for local day visitors, all with different goals and needs. This means that carrying capacity must be well planned and managed, in addition to mitigating risks associated with crowd control.



Theoretical Framework: Niche Tourism (or Special Interest Tourism)

According to Apleni et al. (2017), the growth of sub-cultures in the demographic variables of society has also led to the rise in special interest tourism, which is different to mass tourism. "The tourism market is very diverse and can be divided into many segments, all of which share similar consumer behavior patterns. Several of these market segments are also referred to as tourism niche markets. A niche market is a group of consumers within a larger target market who have similar lifestyle characteristics and identifiable tastes. Numerous forms of niche tourism have emerged over the last decade, each with its own adjective" George (2013: 203). Robinson and Novelli (2005) noted that for tourists, niche tourism appears to offer a more meaningful set of experiences in the knowledge that their needs and wants are being met. "The tourism market is very diverse and can be divided into many segments, all of which share similar consumer behavior patterns. Several of these market segments are also referred to as niche tourism. A niche is a market segment, usually with a well-defined product that can be tailored to meet the interest of the consumer" George (2014: 123).

Apleni et al. (2017) noted that the growth of sub-cultures in the demographic variables of society has also led to the rise of special interest tourism, which is different from mass tourism. Henama (2014) noted that the Special Interest Tourism (SIT) has been closely associated with the growth of a forms of "new tourism". SIT are associated with the tourists' personality, attitudes, values and lifestyles, presenting niche markets instead of mass markets for tourism consumption. Niche tourism is regarded as being small scale in nature, in stark contrast to the mass tourism, with its huge economies of scale. "The growth in tourism in South Africa during the past ten years resulted in the development of various forms of tourism such as: eco-tourism, cultural tourism, adventure tourism, business tourism, sports tourism and event tourism" Strydom (2006: 87).

Niche tourism is a means for gaining a competitive advantage, in a highly competitive tourism industry, as almost all countries have jumped on the tourism bandwagon. Niche tourism is associated with meeting the needs and desires of particular tourists through specialist holidays tailoring. The specialist needs of tourists, which brought about niche tourism, have allowed the sector to be dominated by small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) because of their relative low barriers of entry. Popular forms of niche tourism include inter alia shopping tourism, health tourism, adventure tourism, wine tourism, avitourism, youth tourism, Halaal tourism, heritage tourism and dark tourism. Tourist motivation for tourism consumption can be associated with the spiritual attachment to the experience of the journey or pilgrimage. Tshipala and Acha-Anyi (2018) noted that religious travel is less prone to economic difficulties, as faith-based travelers are committed travelers; therefore, they tend to save for their religious or spiritual experiences and travel despite the state of the economy.

According to George (2013), religious tourism is one of the oldest forms of tourism, when people travel for religious reasons to shrines, missions, cathedrals, mosques, temples, missions, cathedrals and attend religious events. "Spiritual motivation includes travel for religious purposes" (Weaver and Lawton, 2020: 28). "Such travels can be broken down into two main categories: first, satisfying one's religious convictions; and second, fulfilling one's curiosity about a particular faith or practice" (Walker and Walker, 2011: 59). "Religious sites present a wide variety of offerings ranging from services, music and other structured activities of a religious nature, to more secular visitors facilities such as museums and treasuries located within their beautiful historical buildings. At many places, visitors are encouraged to respect the sanctity of the site-to pause for reflection, light candles and engage in spiritual practice" (Griffin and Raj, 2017: vi).



The Global Growth of Religious Tourism

Religious tourism has grown rapidly globally due to the increasing numbers of believers in various religions, and the increasing numbers of people who are taking vacations that have to do with spiritualism as noted by Pernecky (2004), and Raj and Morpeth (2007). For example, the Christian population has increased by about ten million believers over the past decade. “In more recent times, religious tourism or more generally, tourism that is religiously or spirituality motivated, has increased in both scale and scope, and now respects a significant sector of the international tourism market” Sharpley (2009: 237). “Religious tourism as a special interest event has a highly complex impact on local communities” Gil and Curiel (2008: 420). Duran-Sanchez et al. (2018) estimated that between 300 and 800 million travel for religious reasons annually. Ojo and Busayo (2017) noted that religious tourism accounted for over 9 million jobs representing 6.1% of total job opportunities generated across the North-East-Asia regions. Vijayanand (2012) noted that many small place economies are highly dependent on pilgrimage tourism as evidenced by the significant share of pilgrimage tourism in their total earnings. In 2009, pilgrimage tourism alone contributed 44.5% of total exports of India’s tourism industry. People of faith are now finding ways to integrate their beliefs into their everyday lives, with the resultant increase in the growth of religious tourism, as people choose to travel to connect with their spirit or guide and find some authenticity in life (Nicolaidis and Grobler, 2017).

Such growth has been evident in recent years, with the astounding success of faith-based films, books, music, and events according to Claudia (2010). Due to the large faith-based populations, and the definitive trend towards people purchasing products and services related to their beliefs, religious tourism has experienced a remarkable increase in recent years, and especially during the past decade. For example, India is one country that has developed its religious sector as a niche for its tourism development according to the Hindustan Times (2012). Its competitive advantage lies in the area of religious tourism, because its religious heritage and culture are unique as noted by Indian Times (2012). Walker and Walker (2011) noted for Muslims, the pilgrimage to Mecca-the Hajj-is the peak of their religious life, and for Catholic faith, the Vatican is a holy land of sorts (Nicolaidis, 2016) These destinations have developed into mega religious tourism destinations such as Lourdes (Nicolaidis, 2016). Sharpley (2009) identified the traditional pilgrimage centers of Mecca, Rome, Jerusalem, Lourdes, Santiago de Compostella, Guadeloupe, and Varanasi (Benares). In the South African context, Dafuleya, et al. (2017) noted that the United African Apostolic Church (UAAC) is the second largest African-initiated church in South Africa, which has its yearly gatherings in the third week of September in the Vhembe District of the Limpopo Province. In the context of South Africa, the Zion Christian Church in Moria and the Shembe Church in KwaZulu-Natal are some of the largest churches in South Africa, specifically being African Initiated Churches. McKelly et al. (2017) noted that within the South African context, health and religious tourism (pilgrimage) represent the smallest category of tourism, with Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal as focal points of religious tourism.

Characteristics of Religious Tourism Events and Festivals

“All over the world there are occasions when people of different religions and ethnic groups come together and celebrate an important event. Such celebrations or events are regarded as festivals, which have to do with the whole community. Festivals are important and significant aspects of life” (Emmanuel, 2014: 525). Jude, Uchenna and Ngozi (2018) identified that the Eyo Festival in Nigeria was a form of religious tourism festival, generating a lot of income both accounted and unaccounted for tourism stakeholders and related establishments. Souvenir shops, travel agencies, hotels and even hospitals, would be located close to religious sites to meet the needs

of pilgrims. Religious tourism event operations differ from other businesses operations that one might encounter. Tourists must travel to a destination in order to consume the tourism products involved, for the lived experience cannot be shipped to the consumer's home as noted by George (2008).

Religious tourism events and festivals are, therefore, like any other type of event, as they are service-dominated characterized by four main components namely: intangibility, inseparability, variability, and perishability as noted Holloway (2002). Figure 1.1 below indicates the characteristics of religious tourism events and festivals. Furthermore, these components have been outlined in detail. Sharpley (2009: 249) "the relationship between tourism and religion can be considered from two perspectives: On the one hand, religious tourism, as defined as tourism that is motivated either partly or entirely by religious or spiritual purposes, is not only one of the oldest forms of tourist activity but has evolved into a significant and growing sector of the global tourism market. Consequently, as a consequence of both its economic potential and the need for appropriate environmental and cultural management policies, increasing attention is being paid to the management and promotion of religious tourism and tourists".

Figure 1.1: Characteristics of religious tourism events and festivals



Source: Adopted from George (2008)

Intangibility

In a service-dominated industry like that of religious tourism, there are a few products to be sold. What is mainly sold to the religious tourist is the event itself, and the experience, which is something that cannot be touched, and which is, thus, intangible according to Fuchs and Weirmair (2004). The tourist returns home afterwards with memories of the event. Pender and Sharpley (2005) further explain that, when experiences are being sold, it is hard for potential religious



tourists to draw comparisons between offerings, because they cannot try the experiences out first, before attending the event. In order for one to be able to appreciate the religious tourism experience, one must pay for it first, and experience it later. This places potential religious tourists at a great deal of personal and financial risk, because they cannot be sure of the quality of the religious tourism service that they are buying.

Perishability

Religious tourism events must take place as scheduled, whether the tourists arrive or not. There is a large loss of money to be dealt with if there are only a few attendees at such events, or if the airlines and the hotels concerned are not in demand according to George (2014). The event seats cannot be saved for another day, and neither can the hotel beds and the flights that the tourists would have used. When revenue is lost because of empty seats or beds, it is lost forever, because the event venue that was not full yesterday cannot be saved and filled today. In addition, the religious tourism industry is often capacity-constrained as stated by Werthner (2004). If too many tourists arrive at a venue for an event, it is very difficult to accommodate them.

Inseparability

To produce a religious tourism experience, the religious tourist must be present to consume it. The religious tourism event experience is very complicated to manufacture and to send to consumers at another destination. This is because the religious tourist must be there when the event is taking place in order for them to consume it. The consumers must always be brought to the site of the religious event. This creates an access problem for many tourists, because travel and accommodation costs can be quite high. Television and the Internet have been used to lessen this problem, as events can be broadcast to consumers according to Green (2002). However, in this case, the consumers concerned are not tourists, and they do benefit the religious tourism destination financially.

Heterogeneity

Another event tourism characteristic is the heterogeneity, or the changeability, of service quality. If a manufacturer is selling a product, the company can test the item before it is sold. Quality is ensured before it leaves the factory. However, when providing religious tourism event experiences, the weather can be bad, the event can be boring, or the directions to the venue can be poor, among many other negative possibilities. Therefore, in a service industry such as religious tourism events, it is extremely difficult to guarantee a quality experience that meets and exceeds the needs of all of the consumers all of the time. There are too many variables to control in order for the experience to be perfect in all situations, and one small misadventure can ruin the whole service package.

Research Design

Research designs are plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis according to Cresswell (2009). Trochim (2006) stressed that research design provides the glue that holds the research project together. Trochim (2006) further outlines that a design is used to structure the research, show how all major parts of the research project that is the samples or groups, measures, treatments or programs, and the methods of assignment, work together to try to address the central research questions. This paper employed a quantitative method research design. Veal (2006) stated that the quantitative approach to research involves statistical analysis and relies on numerical



evidence to draw conclusions or to test hypotheses. In contrast, the qualitative approach to research is generally not concerned with numbers, but involves gathering a great deal of information about a small number of people, rather than a limited amount of information about a large number of people.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study and were as follows:

- ✓ What is the profile of the visitors who attend the religious event in Moria?
- ✓ What are the travel motives of such visitors to Moria?
- ✓ What are the visitors' perceptions of the socio-economic impacts of religious tourism in Moria?

Validity and Reliability

According to Babbie (2007), validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration. Salkind (2006) referred to the truthfulness, accuracy, authenticity, genuineness, and soundness as synonyms for validity, and stresses the fact that these terms describe what validity is all about. Veal (2006) stated that validity is the extent to which the data collected truly reflect phenomenon being studied by the researcher. Reliability, in contrast, refers to the extent to which research findings would be the same if the research were to be repeated at a later stage, or with a different sample of subjects as noted by Veal (2006). Furthermore, Maree (2007) also stated that reliability of an instrument means that if the same instrument is used at different times or administered to different subjects from the same population, the findings should be the same.

In order to ensure the validity and the reliability of the study, the following actions were taken:

- ✓ The questionnaire was designed based on previous questionnaires from other related studies;
- ✓ Problems were identified through a pilot survey prior to data collection; and
- ✓ Fieldworkers were trained on data collection procedures

Sample Selection

A sample comprises of elements or a subset of the population considered for the actual inclusion in the study, or it can be viewed as a subset of measurement drawn from a population in which we are interested according to Unrau, Gabor and Grinnell (2007). Sampling is studied in an effort to understand the population from which it was drawn. Alternatively, a sample is a small portion of the total set of objects, events or persons from which a representative selection is made according Barker (2003). The stratified random sampling method was used in this study. In stratified random sampling, elements are randomly selected after the population is stratified according to some characteristic as noted by Pellisier (2007).

Sample Size

Available previous attendance figures (Nyathi, 2013) indicated that approximately 9.5 million pilgrims had visited Moria in 2013. In this study, a total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to visitors in Moria, and were all answered and analyzed accordingly. Betram and Christiansen



(2015) argue that there are no fixed rules for determine the sample size, although they are guidelines for choosing a representative sample. Therefore, the sample depended on the type of the data that researcher wanted to collect, and how accurately can it be for research purposes. As such, 150 questionnaires were deemed enough, although it was not a representative sample based on the population in Moria.

Zion City Moria

“The Zion Christian Church (ZCC) is one of the largest African Initiated Churches in southern Africa, with members belonging to the main ZCC star and members belonging to the splinter Saint Engenas ZCC. The church’s headquarters are at Zion City Moria in Limpopo Province, South Africa” (Polokwane City, 2020: 1). “The ZCC was formed in 1910 by Engenas Lekganyane, but he only formally named it as such in 1924 after a long journey of trying to find a spiritual home” (Tshipala and Acha-Anyi, 2018: 113). According to Nyikana (2017), Moria is a rural area located approximately 35 kilometers outside of Polokwane on the way to Tzaneen, in the Limpopo Province of South Africa.

Polokwane is the provincial capital city of the Limpopo Province. The African Initiated Churches are reacting against over-Europeanized, over-institutionalized and over-intellectualized churches in Africa as noted by Simon (1996). According to Simon, (1996: 14), “Unlike the Western style churches, the Zion Christian Church has never demanded of its members that they jettison African culture in favor of Western cultures, as a precondition of acceptance into the church. Instead, it has encouraged its members to adhere to their cultures and accept it as a normal way of life, to be cherished and enjoyed and respected”.

Emmanuel (2014) noted that foreign religions brought into Africa have also played down on the significance and relevance of African religion and have diminished the value of many customs, beliefs and practices, while some no longer function and have gone into extinction. Simon (1996) noted that the Church thus expressed Christianity in an African context, and the leadership of the church has continued to be African, entrenching the Africaness of the Church.

According to Ebrahim (2019), the Zion City Moria hosts the largest Christian gathering in the country during Easters (and again for the September festival). The pilgrims that visit Zion City Moria come from all corners of South Africa and neighboring countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana, Malawi, and foreign countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, and Australia according to Ebrahim (2019). Major traffic flows towards Boyne are a major feature as religious pilgrims visiting Zion City Moria over weekends and public holidays. George (2013) noted that every year, over five million Zionists converge on the Zion Christian headquarters in Moria City, Limpopo.



Study area

Figure 1.2: Map of Moria

Source: Google Maps (2015)



Henama and Sifolo (2018) noted that ZCC attracts almost exclusive pilgrims instead of tourists, the appeal of the ZCC gatherings must be expanded to include those that seek to become tourists, this however would have to be negotiated with the Church leadership to increase the economic benefit from the tourists and pilgrims.

Primary Data

Rojo (2007) stated that primary data sources are the collection of facts gathered from the original sources, and are collected specifically for the research problem. Primary sources of data are the lifeblood of historical research, and are further described as those items that are original to the problem under study according to Cohen and Manion (1994). The primary source that was used in the study was a questionnaire survey that was self-administered to Zion City Moria pilgrims.

Secondary Sources of Data

Secondary data is the data that has already been collected, although not necessarily for the purpose you are investigating as noted by Pellissier (2007). Rojo (2007) identified secondary data as sources, which are written or used by other writers. Similarly, Veal (2007) defined secondary data as the data that already exists and were collected for some other (primary) purpose, but, which can be used a second time in the current project. In this study secondary data such as relevant journal articles, maps, published research works and internet were used. These covered a range of related topics on religious tourism, tourism and tourism impacts.

Questionnaire Survey

Veal (2006) suggested that, when designing a questionnaire for respondent completion, great care must be taken with its layout and presentation, since it must be read and completed by



untrained people. In terms of design, respondent-completion questionnaires should ideally consist primarily of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. Open-ended questions are used for complex questions that cannot be answered by indicating one or more of a few simple categories, but which require more detail and discussion. The questionnaire was composed of both open-ended and close-ended questions. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2006) stated that the basic objective of a questionnaire is to obtain facts about a phenomenon from those who are informed on a particular issue.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data for the current study was analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for SPSS software. The software package allows statistical tests to be conducted to generate tables, bar graphs and pie charts. The qualitative data of the study was classified into conceptual categories, based on the use of constant comparative method.

Research Findings

As was mentioned previously, the sample size for the current study was 150. The respondents were surveyed using a random sampling technique. The sample included visitors from the nine provinces of South Africa as well as those from neighboring states.

COUNTRY	TOTAL (%)
South Africa	95
Zimbabwe	2
Botswana	1
Malawi	1
Namibia	1

Table 1.1: Place or country of origin ($n=100$, in %)

The place or country of origin of the respondents is presented in Table 1.1. The majority (95%) of respondents who participated in the study were from South Africa, followed by Zimbabwe (2%), Malawi, Botswana, and Namibia (1%) equally. This was expected considering that the event takes places in South Africa, thus logically, South Africans dominated at the event as they are hosts. The research results confirm previous research conducted by Nyikana (2017) at Zion City Moria, where 95% of pilgrims were South African; Zimbabwe was represented by 2%, whilst Malawi, Botswana and Malawi had 1% of pilgrims equally.

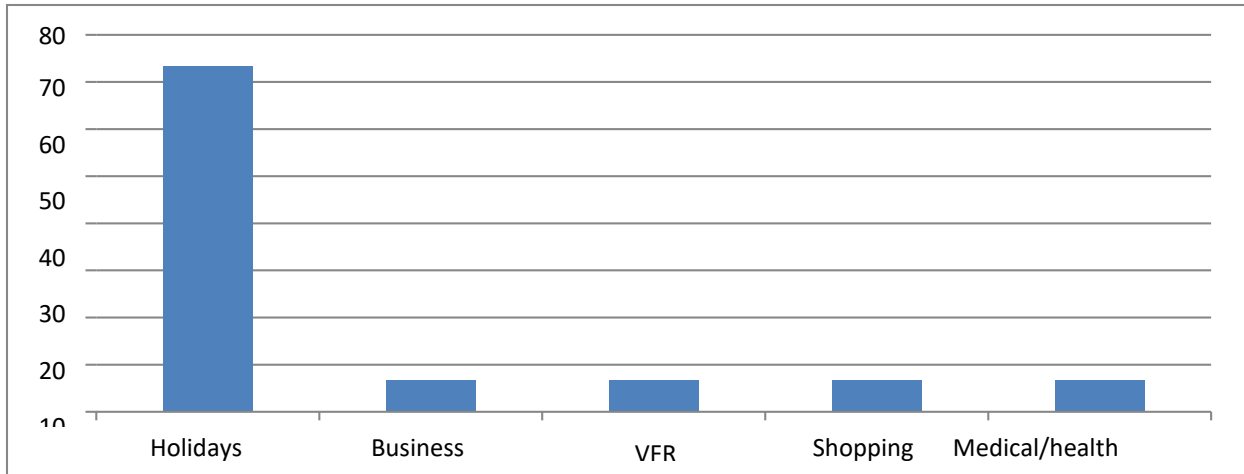


Figure 1.3: Reasons for visiting Moria (n=100, in %)

As clearly depicted in Figure 1.3, respondents were asked about their own reasons for visiting Moria. Of the respondents (n=15), 73.2% indicated that their primary reason was for holiday. On the other hand, 6,7% indicated that they were travelling for business, Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR), shopping and medical/health. The research results confirm research conducted by Nyikana (2017) that the conference attendees have looked at amalgamating religious intentions with other leisure-based interests.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE (in groups)	TOTAL (n=100)
1-10	26.2
11-20	11
21-30	9
31-40	8
41-120	46.3

Table 1.2: Size of travelling groups (n=100, in %)

On table 1.2 above, the respondents were asked to indicate the size of their travelling group. Interestingly, the findings show that a large majority of the respondents travelled in large groups with 46.3% indicating that they were between 41-120 persons in their travelling group. The rest of the sample was made up of those who travelled with a group size of 1-10 (26.2%), 11-20 (11.1%), 21-30 (9.1%) and those who included 31-40 (8.1%).

TYPE OF ACTIVITY	YES	NO
Shopping	26.3	73.7
Visiting natural attractions	5	95
Health	14.1	85.8
Social (VFR)	25.3	74.7
Cultural	3	97
Adventure		100
Religion	98.9	1

Table 1.3: Activities in Moria (n=100, in %)



A question was posed to the respondents asking which other activities they participated during their visit to Moria. Table 4.20 presents the findings obtained in response to the question. It is evident that people are not only travelling for religious reasons, but for other reasons. Of the respondents surveyed, 98.9% indicated that they were visiting Moria only for religious purposes. Although 26.3% of the respondents indicated that they also do shopping on their visit to Moria.

ITEM	GOOD	FAIR	POOR
Friendliness	99	1	
Helpfulness	99	1	
Transport	63.6	36.4	
Personal safety	81.8	18.2	
Cleanliness	43.4	40.4	15.3
Responsible tourism destination	58.6	31.3	31.3
Value for Money	61.6	38.4	

Table 1.4: General impression of Moria (n=100)

Limitations of the Study

One of the major challenges to the study was the limited academic literature on religious tourism. Moreover, the financial resources also limited the study. As such, if it was not for the lack of financial resources, the period of stay (in terms of conducting the research) could have been extended and more people could have been interviewed. The research for the current study was limited to Moria, and visitors who attended the 2014 Easter event. Thus, findings cannot be generalized to all the visitors who attend the annual Easter event in Zion City Moria.

Recommendations and Conclusions

“Religious tourism is one of the least explored types of tourism in this part of the world despite its huge resources, opportunities and attendant benefits” Jude, Uchenna and Ngozi (2018: 39). Rejman et al. (2016) noted that the modern pilgrim is looking for additional attractions as visiting holy places is not enough, it becomes a component of the journey.

There are many destinations and sites that are by their very nature of great religious, cultural, architectural or historical value and thus of great interest to both domestic and foreign tourists. If there are deficits in marketing communication, poor infrastructure and other areas, this could hinder the development of pilgrimage and religious tourism, which is a huge sector and niche market. Changes will invariably arise from the need to meet and exceed the requirements of travelers to holy sites as consumers. Religious pilgrimage tourism is designed to meet the need for spirituality arising out of a highly secular global society and is laden with great personal spiritual and figurative meanings (Nicolaidis, 2016).

Thus, additional services can be provided to the pilgrims, as pilgrims differ in terms of needs and preferences. Businesses such as hotels, motels, food and beverage outlets, transport providers, souvenir shops and travel agencies need to be more involved. Based on the conclusions made from the study, few recommendations have been proposed. The Moria event is an annual event and the government should support it, at least with transport to reduce congestion. This involves



the deployment of traffic officers to control the movement of vehicles on roads leading to Moria. This may be necessary considering that the event boosts income for the locals. The provincial government must introduce other routes for those motorists whose destination is not Moria and make these routes to be up to standard, this is not only going to help traffic congestion but also serves to minimize road accidents as well. The results confirm the research conducted by Nyikana (2017) in Moria, where 99.1% of the raised concerns about traffic congestion during the Easter period were expressed.

Many visitors to Moria visit for religious reasons exclusively, without exploring the local environment. These types of visitors need to be catered for especially, through marketing outlays that would inform, persuade, and remind religious visitors of other tourism consumption services around the greater Moria, Polokwane and Tzaneen area. The focus on marketing must meet the requirements from children to grandparents, as most of the time people who embark on such trips tend to be families. The people who are supposed to benefit mostly from this event are the local people. If the local communities can join hands and open a hub, where they can display their crafts and handmade products, and not only target this event but to produce more products as the number of customers increases. They can achieve this through the help of municipality local economic development office. Lastly, this study was aimed at determining the perceptions of visitors to religious tourism. As such, the data obtained from the respondents could help to improve future events especially in terms of traffic congestion. Relevant stakeholders can also benefit from these findings in terms of planning, preparing and improving for the next events based. It is the view of this study that Moria has a potential in terms of tourism growth and development. The Boyne area has benefitted from infrastructure development to meet primarily the transport needs of the pilgrims to Zion City Moria, such as the development of roads and off-ramps that represent shared infrastructure that can be used by locals and the religious pilgrims.

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