Regional Tourism: The Significance and Profiling of Tourists Travelling from South Africa to Lesotho

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Abstract

Regional tourism is becoming an important source of revenue for many developing countries. Through such tourism, countries can enhance their employment opportunities and increase their government revenue. The objective of this study was to profile South African tourists visiting Lesotho, and their motivations in visiting the country. This research adopted a quantitative research methodology, in terms of which questionnaires where completed by the tourists at the border gates and at the airport. Convenience sampling was used, based on the willingness of the tourists concerned to complete the questionnaire, with a screening question being asked by the fieldworkers to ensure that only South Africans completed the questionnaire. The results of the study revealed that Gauteng province has the most business, leisure, visiting friends and relatives and religious market segments visiting Lesotho. The results also show that the mountains, scenery and culture are the main reasons for South African tourists visiting Lesotho. The findings of the research show that South African tourists contribute positively to Lesotho's economy, highlighting the importance of regional tourism among the regional countries.

Keywords: Regional tourism, Lesotho, South Africa, economic development, regional tourists

Introduction

Rogerson and Kiambo (2007), citing the work of Ghimire (2001a,b), define regional tourism as the movement of tourists away from their usual country of residence, but within the same geographical region. Such movement is seen to be categorised by the authors as being a subgroup of international tourism, which has, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (2004), accounted for an estimated 82% of all travellers during the 1990s. The numbers involved have seen projections by the WTO of a rise in long-haul travel (24%) in terms of international travel by 2020 (WTO, 2004), which has now been negatively impacted on by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, leading to worldwide restrictions on travel. The trend indicated above, together with the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, has led to a shifting demand from long-haul travel to destinations outside the tourist's country of residence to countries neighbouring and nearby (within the region). The above is affirmed by Rogerson and Kiambo (2007), who note that the travel patterns of international tourists have shifted to nearby destinations with cultural identities and traditions similar to their own. They

observe regional tourism to focus on the movement of tourists outside their countries of residence to neighbouring countries. Such movement is influenced by the similarities that are shared between the countries concerned, which may be in religious beliefs, culture, geographic landscapes and elements of history, among other aspects. Such similarity encourages egalitarian contact between the tourists and the locals, with the impact on the host community being realised at the most local level possible (Rogerson & Kiambo, 2007). Such interactions between citizens of the region (such as within the Southern African Development Community [SADC]) is important in building up the regional economies, and in fostering the development of trade, investment and financial stability (Rogerson & Kiambo, 2007).

Regional tourism in context

Regional tourism has seen little activity in terms of research in the developing world, with Africa being at the tail end of the research agenda of regional tourism. Such neglect has led to the phenomenon being placed under the umbrella of international tourism, which is an inaccurate classification (Timothy, 1995). Rogerson and Kiambo (2007), citing Ghimire (1997, 2001a,b), note the significant differences that exist between regional and international tourism, as rooted in the tourists' behaviour and spending patterns. Such variation is shown in Gladstone's (2005) observation of regional tourists' support of informal tourism establishments, their tendency to be satisfied with relatively modest facilities (such as accommodation), and their awareness of, and respect for, the local cultural norms, especially when compared with the expressed needs of their international counterparts. In the light of such findings, a study of this nature has become imperative to undertake for the purpose of contributing to the body of knowledge relating to the phenomenon of regional tourism.

Travel between countries within the same region has had very little recognition as a travel segment, because of the lack of its differentiation from international travel by the WTO (Ghimire, 2001a, b). The result has been the emergence of a new interest in tourism research, as researchers have striven to distinguish between regional and international tourism (Rogerson & Kiambo, 2007). However, Ghimire (2001a) clearly distinguishes between regional and international tourists, in indicating the observable differences between regional tourists from the South and their Northern counterparts, including in terms of the satisfaction levels attained regarding the products and services demanded by the two groups. Ghimire (2001b: 6) notes that differences between regional tourists and international tourists can be seen in such aspects as the type of accommodation that they tend to use during their stay in the destinations visited. While regional tourists in the SADC region are more likely to be satisfied with budget accommodation, or with so-called "no frills" accommodation, international tourists usually prefer to stay at well-established accommodation, like hotels, guest lodges, guest houses and bed and breakfasts. This article will, therefore, focus on the regional tourists travelling from South Africa to Lesotho.

Rogerson and Kiambo (2007) identified the spending patterns of regional tourists as being much more substantial than were those of international tourists, showing the capacity of regional tourism to create economic opportunities for the host destination. Their work confirms Gerosa's (2003) affirmations that regional tourism is a source of opportunity for local economic development. Local economic development, which focuses on tourism as an economic sector, is seen as a key strategy that can help to grow the economy of many developing countries. Such a finding gives credence to the main objective of the current research, which aims to profile South African tourists visiting Lesotho, focusing on how they use their money, so that their contribution to economic growth in the latter country can be ascertained.

The past few years have seen substantial growth in the amount of regional tourism undertaken, which is also referred to intraregional tourism. Such a factor is central to the

present research, since the tourists visiting Lesotho from South Africa can be classified as international tourists, as well as being intraregional tourists visiting another country close to their own country. The above affirms the conclusions drawn by Gerosa (2003) and Ghimire (2001a), who indicate that a significant number of what are considered to be international tourists are, actually, intraregional tourists, who make a substantial contribution to the economic growth of developing countries like Lesotho and South Africa.

The challenge of classifying regional tourists has been seen in the works of scholars like Scheyvens (2002), who classifies them as budget tourists for strategic planning purposes. Given this kind of categorisation challenge, the governments of developing countries have, until now, paid relatively little attention to regional tourism. Such neglect has been based on the perception that regional tourism is less attractive than international tourism, because the former type of tourism provides less glamour and foreign currency than does the latter (Scheyvens, 2002). However, South Africa, in contrast, has undertaken to emphasise domestic tourism, using social tourism programmes like Sho't Left and Via Mzansi. The above has seen Lesotho attempt to undertake a similar approach with limited success, due to the country's small population and high rate of economically inactive citizenry, leaving the country with regional tourism as the next most feasible way of using their natural and cultural splendour for their own economic development.

Regional tourism has emerged in recent times following the growth of domestic tourism, which has seen developing countries following a trend that witnessed a surge in the travelling of people outside the exclusivity bracket of the upper class (Ghimire, 2001a). However, as much as there is ample evidence of regional tourism in the Global North, there is currently only a limited amount of literature on the phenomenon within the African continent (Ghimire, 2001b: 15). The above has seen a respectable increase in the number of studies undertaken into why people engage in domestic and regional tourism, including, but not limited to, the undertaking of pilgrimage, the visiting of friends and relatives (VFR), and business and leisure travel (Rogerson, 2004). Such makes a case for the undertaking of the present study, which aims to profile South African tourists visiting Lesotho, in terms of pull factors (motivations) and their spending patterns at the destination concerned.

Bringing the discussion closer to home, the work of Dieke (1998) gives a basis for the regional tourism phenomenon. Such endeavours reveal business travel as being the main motivation for regional travel for African people travelling on the continent. The finding met with serious contention by the works of scholars like Goldstone (2005), who cite reasons beyond business travel as being the major motivation for regional travel and tourism which includes, but which is not limited to, culture, pilgrimage, VFR and an increasing amount of leisure tourism. Goldstone's (2005) affirmation above is repudiated further by Dieke (1998), who states that the socio-economic challenges faced by the African citizenry include the high unemployment rates and the low income generation capacity of the majority of the population. Nevertheless, the next section discusses the possible reasons for tourists to participate in regional tourism within the SADC region.

Cultural tourism
According to Rogerson and Saarinen (2015), as supported by Novelli (2015), cultural tourism is seen as being a unique and growing tourist market segment within the global tourism economy. The research of Christie, Fernandes, Messerli and Twining-Ward (2013: 58) and Novelli (2005) suggests that cultural tourism can be used to generate opportunities for tourism development that could, potentially, lead to inclusive tourism growth. Rogerson (2012) notes that, in Africa, some countries are advancing cultural tourism as a unique tourism offering to help ensure the diversification of their economies. The researcher cites countries like

Botswana, Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania as being countries that advance cultural tourism for the development of their economies. The above-mentioned assertions of Rogerson (2012) are supported by the findings of Manwa, Moswete and Saarinen (2016), who note that the African continent is blessed with a multitude of diverse cultures.

Jansen van Veuren (2004: 140) estimates that it is possible that the tourists visiting South Africa from other countries could have engaged in cultural activities, or that they could have, at least, visited a cultural village during their stay in the country during the late 1990s. Rogerson (2012) notes that Southern African regional tourism policymakers have taken note of the importance of cultural tourism, and that they are now taking it into consideration in terms of their planning. The aforementioned views of Rogerson are supported by the findings of Manwa et al. (2016), who note that the region's tourism policy has allowed for the successful development of regional tourism in Southern Africa. Such development has come about as a result of regional tourism policymakers noting, and acknowledging, the diversity of cultural tourism, rather than looking at it as a single tourism product. The direct results of Manwa et al.'s (2016) acknowledgement has been additional planned marketing and promotion of the region's diversity. Rogerson (2015) sums up his arguments by concluding that the recent witnessed growth in tourism in Southern Africa has, fundamentally, been the result of the region's tourism policies and its accompanying initiatives.

Rogerson (2015) acknowledges that regional tourism policies have taken note of the importance of cultural tourism and its ability to support both regional and national reconstruction, as well as its ability to contribute to regional development in Southern Africa. The works of Saarinen (2011) and of Visser and Rogerson (2004) emphasise the role that tourism can play in positive socio-economic development, with it, as such, leading to the empowerment of the previously disadvantaged communities. The above assertions are supported by Saarinen and Rogerson (2014), who note the need for local communities to become involved in cultural tourism initiatives. As such, the local community members should be included in any economic opportunity made available through cultural tourism in their localities. The promotion of local economic development through tourism should, accordingly, be central to any development that takes place, with it also being based on the available cultural and heritage resources. It is important to note, however, that the research earlier undertaken by Telfer and Sharpley (2008) led to the cautioning that, when destinations use cultural resources for developing tourism, the negative tourism impacts involved should be taken note of, since they have the potential to derail tourism development ventures. The same authors go further to highlight that the goal of any tourism development exploiting cultural tourism resources is to make a profit, making such development highly likely to compromise the sustainability of the tourism industry itself.

Supporting the work done by Telfer and Sharpley (2008), Van Beek and Schmidt (2012) note that many destinations, when using cultural tourism for developmental ends, can degrade the authenticity of the local culture, ultimately leading to the demonstration effect, which tends to have a negative impact on the host communities concerned. Saarinen (2011) cautions that, in many instances, such cultural interaction between the tourists and the hosts takes place to such an extent that it threatens the sustainability of the culture involved both culturally and socially. Given the above situation, Manwa et al. (2016) note that calls have been voiced in Southern Africa for the sustainable development of cultural tourism. The above further strengthens the views of Tomaselli (2012), who advances that the development of cultural tourism, especially for the previously disadvantaged communities and ethnic groups, should be based on the sensitive treatment of cultural norms, practices and values.

Business tourism

Davidson (1994: 1) considers business tourism as travelling for purposes related to work. Other authors, like Biletska (2011: 185), note the complexity and multifaceted nature of business tourism. Business tourism has, in the past, been key to international tourism economies, as noted by Beaverstock, Derudder, Faulconbridge and Witlox (2010). In support of Davidson (1994), the works of Hackett and Melia (2013) reveal that business tourism can take several forms and that, among them, is travel for the purposes of attending meetings and exhibitions, and as an incentive. No matter the various views of the nature of business tourism, as noted above, Biletska (2011) and Davidson (1994: 1) agree that, central to defining business tourism is the involvement of travel for the purpose of meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE). Christie et al. (2006) note that, across the board (including both domestic and international), steady growth has occurred in the tourism market related to business tourism.

Given the above, Tichaawa (2017), besides acknowledging the role that business tourism plays in the economy, notes that the business tourism market is poorly understood. The above views were earlier noted by Celuch and Davidson (2009), who indicated the minimal amount of research that has, so far, been done by tourism scholars in the field of business tourism. The above assertions are further supported by Stetic and Simicevic (2010: 99), who note that business tourism is important for the tourism economy, but lament that business tourism has, until now, received only a limited amount of research attention from tourism researchers. Similarly, Lew, Hall and Williams (2014) further regret the paucity of research that has, heretofore, plagued the field of business tourism. While the limited degree of business research is noted, Saarinen (2014: 7) alludes to the broad extent of research that has taken place in the past two decades in connection with sustainable tourism.

The relevance and importance of business tourism, especially in Africa, has been noted by Christie et al. (2013), who observe its role in energising the economy and in social development. Coles and Mitchell (2009: 34) note the importance of business tourism in Africa, but lament the limited amount of research that has, as yet, taken place in this field, as they hold that business tourists consistently outnumber leisure tourists on the continent. The authors concerned have, further, found that, in countries like Botswana, South Africa, Kenya and Mauritius, leisure tourism is considered to be mainstream, while the rest of Africa considers business tourism to be their mainstream form of tourism. The above views are affirmed by scholars like Rogerson (2012), Rogerson and Rogerson (2011) and Rogerson and Visser (2011), who note that research in the field of tourism studies is mainly undertaken into leisure tourism.

Religious tourism

Although Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) define religious tourism as travel that is motivated by faith or religious beliefs, they maintain that there is no standard and unifying definition of such tourism. McKelvie (2005) defines religious tourism as travelling to a place, building or shrine that is considered sacred or holy. Wright (2009) notes that religious tourism involves visiting a destination for purposes of spiritual enhancement and nourishment, as well as to participate in fellowship with others. According to Nicolaides (2016), religious tourists or pilgrims seek to escape the stresses of daily work and life in general. Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) and Ambrosio (2007) view religious tourism as consisting of traditional religious practices, including festivals and pilgrimages. Smith (1992 cited in Collins-Kreiner, 2006) notes the link between pilgrimage and religious tourism, concluding that religious tourism is about making a journey in pursuit of spirituality. Vukonic (1998 cited in Rojo, 2007) notes the limited amount of research that has, as yet, been undertaken into religious tourism. Such a

shortcoming can be seen against the backdrop of the recognition that has been granted the increased amount of travel that has occurred on the basis of attempting to satisfy spiritual needs (Lloyd, 1998 cited in Rojo (2007).

Visiting friends and relatives (VFR)
VFR has been viewed, and explained, as a resilient tourism market segment, though it has been criticised in terms of the overall economic contribution that it has made to the tourism economy (Griffin & Humbracht, 2017: 1). The above is supported by Backer, Leisch and Dlnicar (2017), who assert that tourists in this market segment usually stay with their relatives, so that they rarely use formal tourist accommodation. Seaton (2017: 455) notes that, besides such criticism of this market segment, it remains crucial for the tourism industry, since the associated tourists do make use of tourist services and spend money within the local tourism value chain during their stay with friends and relatives. However, although the size of the VFR market is significant, its exact size remains unknown (Backer & Morrison, 2017: 395). Due to its minimal contribution to the tourism economy, the VFR tourism market has received little to no attention from tourism researchers (Backer & King, 2015), resulting in a tourism market segment that is considered to be unstructured. Griffin (2013), Yousuf and Backer (2015; 2017: 436) and Munoz et al. (2017: 1) note and support the above notion, in indicating that VFR is a tourism market segment that is under-researched, and stress the need for an increase in the amount of research that is undertaken within this field of study in tourism.

Lesotho in the context of tourism
The Lesotho National Tourism Plan (2019) describes Lesotho as a country that is rich in diverse natural resources. The country boosts the highest mountain range, the Maluti Mountains, in Southern Africa. The country is blessed with an abundance of leisure tourist attractions, including scenic mountains and many national parks, nature reserves, lakes, waterfalls, hot springs and cave formations, as well as various flora and bird species. The leisure tourist attractions provide opportunities for tourists to engage in a variety of adventure experiences, such as trekking, off-road driving, mountain biking, hiking, quad biking, mountain climbing, abseiling, canoeing and kayaking, among others. The National Tourism Plan notes that Lesotho is blessed with a rich culture and heritage, which is seen as being one of the most valuable tourism assets in the country.

According to the Lesotho Tourism Development Corporation (LTDC), in its 2018 tourism arrivals and accommodation statistics report, released in May 2019, Lesotho welcomed 1 172 648 visitors during the year, exceeding its target of increasing international tourism arrivals from approximately 422 000 to 800 000 by 2019. An additional 35 482 visitors were recorded in 2018, reflecting an increase of 3.1%. Most of Lesotho's international visitors came from Africa and Europe, with South Africa and Germany being the country's top African and European markets, respectively. The same report stated that, in 2018, most visitors to Lesotho came from South Africa (79%). In 2011, the number of international arrivals was recorded as being 398 198 in total, with South Africa being the main source market, accounting for over 90% of the visitors (LTDC, 2012a: 5). A key motivator of the current research was the fact that South Africa, of all the other countries in Africa, contributes the highest number of visitors to Lesotho. The present research, therefore, was undertaken to investigate the profile of tourists from South Africa to Lesotho, their motivation in visiting Lesotho and the nature of their tourist activities undertaken during their stay in Lesotho.

The tourism sector in Lesotho is considered to have great potential for attracting foreign exchange and for creating employment in the country (Lesotho Government Reviews, 2016). However, the sector is small in absolute size. According to the World Travel & Tourism

Council (WTTC), in its 2017 Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Report, the tourism sector in Lesotho was listed 169th out of 185 countries. The WTTC 2017 report further estimates that the direct contribution of travel and tourism to Lesotho's GDP was M1 520.5 million (US$103.4 million) in 2017, translating to 5.3% of the total GDP. According to the Lesotho Central Bank Economic Quarterly Review of 2017, the sector supported approximately 35 000 jobs in 2017, translating to 5.9% of the total employment figure in that year, with the figure being expected to rise by 5.4% in 2018. The main attractions in Lesotho are its unique natural environment, including its montane scenery, its scenic routes, its topology, its snowfalls during its winter months, its waterfalls, its rich culture and its man-made attractions, such as the Katse Dam (Shano, 2014).

Methods

The current study adopted a quantitative research methodology, in terms of which questionnaires were completed at the border gates and at the airport by the tourists surveyed. Informed consent was requested from the potential respondents, and a brief of what the study was about was explained to the respondents. The respondents were assured that their details would remain anonymous, and that the information that they would provide would only be used for the present study. Convenience sampling was used, based on the willingness of the tourists to complete the questionnaire, with a screening question being asked by the fieldworkers to ensure that only South Africans completed the questionnaire. The survey was carried out over a 12-month period from April 2017 to April 2018, at eight different border posts: Calendonspoort; Maputsoe Bridge; Maseru Bridge; Peka Bridge; Qacha's Nek Gate; the Sani Pass; Vanroovens Gate; and Moshoeshoe International Airport. During the survey period, 5 264 questionnaires were successfully completed. The questionnaire was distributed throughout the entire year, with approximately 500 being completed each month. The research focused solely on South African tourists who were visiting Lesotho, with the sample focusing on only those South African tourists who were staying in Lesotho overnight.

Results and discussion

This section presents the findings that were made, and the associated discussions that were held, during the course of the current research study.

Provincial breakdown of tourists

The results of the study, as shown in Table 1, show that Gauteng province has the most business, leisure, VFR and religious market segments visiting Lesotho.

Table 1. Provincial breakdown of tourists, based on their purpose of visit

Province	Leisure (%)	VFR (%)	Business (%)	Religion (%)	Total (%)
Gauteng	52.1	42.8	62.1	37.5	**49.9**
Free State	7.7	21.3	7.4	14.8	**13.8**
KwaZulu-Natal	16.2	10.7	9.2	30.7	**12.9**
Eastern Cape	4.8	11.5	3.2	13.6	**7.7**
Western Cape	7.8	1.5	9.7	2.3	**5.3**
North West	3.1	6.3	4.0	0	**4.5**
Mpumalanga	2.9	3.3	2.0	0	**2.7**
Limpopo	3.1	1.5	1.7	0	**1.9**
Northern Cape	2.3	1.2	0.7	0	**1.4**
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Not surprisingly, in the category of VFR tourism, the highest shares were recorded in the cases of the South African provinces surrounding Lesotho, being Gauteng (42.8%), the Free State (21.3%), the Eastern Cape (11.5%) and KwaZulu-Natal (10.7%). The findings are consistent with those of Rogerson and Letsie (2013), who found that, in terms of purpose of travel, over half of Lesotho's international arrivals had travelled to the country for the purpose of VFR, with only 29.0% having done so for the purpose of holiday travel. Similarly, the findings concerned are supported by Rogerson and Lisa (2005), who indicate that VFR-related travel is an essential component of regional tourism. The same scenario was observed for religious tourists, with the highest numbers also having been recorded for the neighbouring provinces of KwaZulu-Natal (30.7%), the Free State (14.8%) and the Eastern Cape (13.6%), apart from for Gauteng (37.5%). Further to the above, according to Nicolaides (2016), religious tourists, or pilgrims, seek to escape the stresses of daily work and life, in general. In support of the above, Sharpley and Sundaram (2005) note that religious tourism, which is a form of tourism that is motivated by faith or religious reasons, has been in evidence for centuries. Evidently, most regional South African tourists from the Gauteng province were found to visit Lesotho for purposes of business (62.1%). In terms of the overall provincial division of the markets, the highest share of business tourists was found to occur in the case of Gauteng (62.1%), the Western Cape (9.7%) and KwaZulu-Natal (9.2%), while the lowest share was from the Northern Cape (0.7%). Such findings are consistent with the findings made by the LTDC (2012a: 7), which reported that, of the majority of South African arrivals, many had travelled to the country for business purposes.

The above finding is not surprising, since, according to various authors, business travel constitutes an essential component of the contemporary international tourism economy (Beaverstock & Budd, 2013; Biletska, 2011; Celuch & Davidson, 2009; Davidson & Rogers, 2006; Faulconbridge & Beaverstock, 2008; Ho & McKercher, 2014). The above assertions are further supported by Coles and Mitchell (2009: 3), who contend that Africa is "the only continent where the number of business tourists consistently exceeds leisure tourists", and that, accordingly, it still holds true that "business tourism is by far the most important tourism segment in many African countries". The results of the study further reveal that the highest numbers of tourists travelling for leisure purposes were recorded, respectively, for Gauteng (52.1%) and KwaZulu-Natal (16.2%), with the least number having been recorded for the Northern Cape (2.3%). The results involved support Gladstone's (2005) observation that the motivations for regional travel included the ever-increasing desire to participate in leisure tourism. According to Klenosky (2002), the choice of a tourism destination is often made based on factors related to the features, attractions or attributes of the destination itself. The results in Table 2 show that the mountains in Lesotho were the main reason (motivation / pull factor) for the tourists surveyed to visit the country (31.0%).

Tourists' travel motivation

Table 2. Tourists' motivation to visit Lesotho

Motivation	Percentage (%)
Mountains	31.0
Scenery	21.8
Culture	9.1
Curiosity	8.8
Diversity of attractions	8.3
Skiing	7.7
Climate	5.0
Tranquillity	4.8
Visiting friends or relatives	1.9
Value for money	1.6

The above results are supported by the findings of a study done by Rogerson (2009: 23), which notes that marketing for Lesotho stresses the attractions of its "grand mountains". The results further show that many tourists are motivated to visit the country for its scenery (21.8%), while culture (9.1%) and curiosity about the country (8.8%) are the other pull factors. With reference to the findings of culture as motivation to travel to Lesotho, the findings are in line with the assertions made by Rogerson and Saarinen (2015) and Novelli (2015). The researchers concerned note that cultural tourism is acknowledged as being one of the fastest expanding segments of the global tourism economy, with some observers estimating that as much as 40% of international leisure tourism incorporates a cultural component. Further to the above, Christie et al. (2013) observe that, across sub-Saharan Africa, cultural tourism is identified as offering untapped potential for generating opportunities for tourism expansion and inclusive cultural growth. Currently, many African countries, including Botswana, Ghana, Mali, Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania, use cultural tourism as a niche product for diversifying their tourism economies (Rogerson, 2012). In addition, Saarinen and Rogerson (2014) note that several countries in the Southern African region see the promotion of cultural tourism as a viable strategy that can be used for poverty alleviation, inclusive growth and socio-economic development.

The above results regarding motivations to visit Lesotho are in line with the survey results reported by the LTDC (2011, 2012b; Mearns, 2011), which revealed that, for international tourists, the country's major leisure attractions related to skiing, pony-trekking, hiking, abseiling, sightseeing in the mountains, and 4×4 trails. Such results are in line with the vision for Lesotho, which focuses on "successfully positioning Lesotho as a must visit Southern Africa's mountain, culture, adventure and ecotourism destination" (LTDC, 2013). The above is further supported by Shano (2014) and Thetsane (2019), who note that the main tourist attraction in Lesotho is its unique natural environment, including its montane scenery, its scenic routes, its topology, its snowfalls in winter, its waterfalls and its rich culture.

The results of the current study, as reflected in Table 3, show that South Africans, on average, spend above 830 Maloti on sundry things during their stay in the country. Lesotho can, therefore, use tourism as an economic sector to grow and strengthen its economy, especially through the creation of employment opportunities. The results are supported by Lesotho Government Reviews (2016), which note that the tourism sector in Lesotho is considered to have great potential for attracting foreign exchange to, and for creating employment in, the country. South African tourists visiting Lesotho were also found to spend the most of all their purchases on accommodation. On average, each tourist spent 400 Maloti per stay. While their expenditure on food was 188 Maloti on average, their transport, tours, shopping and entertainment were also reflected as being areas on which the tourists spent their money. The financial outlay on various subsectors of the tourism industry clearly indicates that South African tourists positively contribute to the economy of Lesotho.

Economic impacts

Table 3. Expenditure (in Maloti) per stay

Expenditure	Accommodation	Food	Transport	Tours	Entertainment	Shopping	Other	Total
South Africa	406	188	101	30	28	44	42	**839**

The results, in Table 4, indicate the general satisfaction experienced with the visit to Lesotho by the South African tourists surveyed, with 65.7% of the visitors indicating that their holiday was very enjoyable. Of the tourists, 28.3% stated that they enjoyed their holidays in the country, with those who were disappointed, or very disappointed, by the country constituting only 0.6% of the total. The conclusion can, therefore, safely be drawn that Lesotho is an enjoyable country

to visit for a holiday, given the above-mentioned results. The results are not surprising, given the abundance of tourism resources and activities in the country, as outlined by the LTDC (2011, 2012b; Mearns, 2011), which revealed that, for international tourists, the country's major leisure attractions surrounded opportunities for skiing, pony-trekking, hiking, abseiling, sightseeing in the mountains, and 4×4 trails.

Tourism satisfaction levels

Table 4. Rating of visit to Lesotho

Visitors' rating	Percentage (%)
Very enjoyable	65.7
Enjoyable	28.3
Fair	5.5
Disappointing	0.5
Very disappointing	0.1
Total	**100**

Linked to the results of Table 5 above, the degree of enjoyment experienced by tourists on holiday has a bearing on whether they would recommend the destination to friends and relatives. The results obtained, as shown in Table 6 below, show that the tourists, in general, were very satisfied with their holiday, with it, therefore, not being surprising that 83% of them indicated that they would definitely recommend the country to friends and relatives. In addition, 14.5% of the tourists surveyed indicated that they would probably recommend the country to their friends and relatives. In contrast, a combined 0.2% of the tourists indicated that they would probably, or definitely, not recommend the country to their friends and relatives. The results, therefore, appear to reflect that Lesotho, as a country, is doing well in terms of the quality of services and the diversity of the attractions and tourist activities that it has on offer. The country as a whole, therefore, needs to continue to focus on such services, attractions and activities to ensure that tourists revisit the destination. Also, securing good word-of-mouth recommendations from visitors who have had their needs and wants exceeded, and who feel very satisfied with the service delivery that they have received, in Lesotho should prove capable of attracting even more tourists in future.

Recommendation of the country to friends and relatives

Table 5. Possibility of Lesotho being recommended to friends and relatives

Possibility of Lesotho being recommended to friends and relatives	Percentage (%)
Yes, definitely	83.0
Yes, probably	14.5
Possibly	2.4
No, probably not	0.1
No, definitely not	0.1
Total	**100**

Study implications

To develop a tourist profile of South Africans visiting Lesotho, different segments of South African tourists visiting Lesotho were identified, based on the motivations affecting their choice of Lesotho as a holiday/vacation destination. The results confirm the findings made in

previous studies that South African tourists tend to visit Lesotho for the purposes of business, leisure, religion and the visiting of friends and relatives. The identified pull factors (motivations to travel) were ranked in the following order: mountains; scenery; culture; curiosity; diversity of attractions; skiing; climate; tranquillity; the visiting of friends or relatives; and value for money. The findings made in the above connection suggest two clear managerial directions. First, as leisure, business and religion are the main motivators for South Africans visiting Lesotho, they should provide the basis for a valuable overall branding strategy for Lesotho. Across all the market segments, Lesotho's mountains, scenery and culture were found to be the chief pulling factors to the country. The above suggests that the emphasis should be based on such factors in marketing and promoting Lesotho as a tourist destination.

Conclusion

The current paper sought to contribute to the relatively scanty literature on regional tourism, through developing a profile of South African visitors to Lesotho, and through raising the significance/ importance of regional tourism in the case of Lesotho. The making of such a contribution is important, because Lesotho wants the tourism industry to be one of the leading economic sectors for economic growth and employment creation. The importance of regional tourism within the overall context of the African continent was also highlighted. Moreover, the profile and characteristics of regional tourists (from South Africa) to Lesotho were shown to be distinctive in terms of their motivations for visiting the country, among other aspects, so that targeted marketing strategies are required to attract them to the country.

The present study contributes to the limited amount of research undertaken into regional tourism and into the profiling of regional tourists. Prior to the current century, only a limited amount of research was done on tourism studies, in general, in Africa, but, since 2000, significantly more research has been done in the field. Given the limited recent and up-to-date sources of information available, this study is particularly important. Future studies should focus on how developing countries can promote regional tourism, since such tourism can make a positive contribution, not only to the growth of tourism, but, overall, to their entire economy.

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