

Tourists' Profiles and the Potential of Pilgrimage Tourism in Selected KwaZulu-Natal Municipalities

Nompumelelo Linda 

Department of Recreation and Tourism, University of Zululand, South Africa, Email,

LindaNO@unizulu.ac.za

**Corresponding Author*

How to cite this article: Linda, N. (2023). Tourists' Profiles and the Potential of Pilgrimage Tourism in Selected KwaZulu-Natal Municipalities. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 12(4):1307-1321. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.433>

Abstract

This paper reports on a study that explored tourists' profiles (such as gender, age, level of education, employment status, etc) and the potential that they would embark on pilgrimage tourism in selected municipalities in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province of South Africa. The study, which applied the Local Economic Development (LED) and Tourism Value Chains (TVCs) theories, finds that South African religious tourism has the potential to make socio-economic contributions, but it is not yet perceived in that manner by local stakeholders including municipalities and religious leaders. This reveals that tourists are not sufficiently aware of religious pilgrimages and their potential benefits for the country's economic development. The study recommends that stakeholders (municipalities, religious leaders, pilgrims, tourists, local businesspeople and community members) work together to harness the socio-economic potentials of these pilgrimages. It is argued that this would make it possible for pilgrimage sites to be better appreciated in terms of religious and exchange value purposes.

Keywords: Tourism development; pilgrimage; pilgrimage destinations; tourists' profile; religious pilgrimages

Introduction

People usually travel away from their places of residence for different reasons. Each reason for travel is categorised into a type of tourism and the reasons lend themselves to the religious tourism category. Religious tourism can be motivated by a variety of factors, including the need for personal fulfilment, the desire to engage in religious rites and the desire to offer prayers and make vows (Kuo et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2019; Shinde, 2015; Choe et al., 2013; Irimiás & Michalkó, 2013). A pilgrimage is a journey in which pilgrims physically and mentally transcend their daily lives for the purpose of certain experiences associated with reaching the pilgrimage destination (Fedele, 2012). These journeys relate to self-transformation and the acquisition of knowledge and status through contact with the extraordinary or sacred (Collins-Kreiner, 2016; Collins-Kreiner & Wall, 2015; Shinde, 2008; Shackley, 2001). Much of the literature on religious tourism and pilgrimages focus on their multifunctional nature (Nyaupane et al., 2015; Raj & Morpeth, 2007; Rinschede, 1992). Not only worshippers but also tourists' profiles with various motivations and behaviours are drawn to architecturally exceptional ecclesiastical buildings and historically significant religious pilgrimages (Nolan & Nolan, 1992; Poria et al., 2003; Wiltshier & Clarke, 2012). Pilgrimage is also used to refer to religiously driven journeys made by devout believers to spiritually significant locations. Socio-demographic disparities drive demand for tourism items at some pilgrimage destinations (Bond et al., 2015). The purpose of this paper is to assess tourists' profiles and the potential of pilgrimage tourism in selected KwaZulu-Natal Municipalities.

Literature review

Studies that explore the experiences and benefits related to pilgrimage tourism focus mainly on spiritual experiences and have tended to neglect social, educational, or restorative experiences (Durán-Sánchez et al., 2018; Bond et al., 2015; Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2012). Some

modern pilgrims look for contact with the national and cultural identities of the visited places which could be considered as social experiences while others look for experiences linked with an emotional release from personal routines beyond superficial tourism (Nyaupane et al., 2015; Jirásek, 2014; Cohen, 1979). Research suggests that between 200 and 600 million people travel for religious reasons each year foregrounding the need to investigate the connections between religious/spiritual tourism and pilgrimage to sacred sites (Timothy, 2011; World Tourism Organization, 2011).

Religious tourism is linked to other types of tourism, especially holiday, cultural, social, and group tourism, which causes it to be linked to seasonality (Collins-Kreiner, 2018; Lois-González & Santos, 2015; Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Oviedo et al., 2014; Raj & Morpeth, 2007; Raj & Griffin, 2015; Rinschede, 1992; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Temples not only provide benefits to communities at a local level but also have interesting histories or outstanding architecture and can attract many visitors from around the country (Buddhalerd, 2018). According to George (2013) people who travel for religious purposes to visit shrines, missions, cathedrals, mosques, temples, missions, cathedrals and attend religious activities indulge in one of the oldest forms of tourism. Religious tourism is a form of travel with the main interest in religious experiences or the products they induce such as art, traditions and architecture. Pilgrimage destinations are widely believed to have special powers due to the many miracles that are reported by people visiting these places (Fang, 2020; Vijayanand, 2012).

Some tourists gather for thanksgiving masses at pilgrimage destinations because their prayers have been fulfilled (Terzidou et al., 2017; Raj & Griffin, 2015; 2017). The attractiveness of the destination is often what makes visitors decide to go to pilgrimage destinations (Liro, 2021). It is important to note that not all pilgrims have religious reasons or motivations (Olsen, 2020; Amaro et al., 2018; Scriven, 2014). Regarding pilgrimage tourism package tours, the important identifiable characteristics affecting the decision-making of religious tourists are the travel agent's reputation, tour guide, schedule and programme (Pereiro, 2019; Fernandes et al., 2012; Triantafyllidou et al., 2010). Religious pilgrimages, spiritual sites and pilgrimage destinations are often turned into visitor attractions to bring socio-economic benefits to local communities while creating the necessary financial resources to preserve and restore cultural heritage (Trono, 2016; Raj & Griffin, 2015).

The term 'products and services' for pilgrimage tourism can be understood as the package of amenities that pilgrims get while making the decision to go to a pilgrimage destination. Tourism value chains (TVCs) can play an important role during and after the pilgrimage as well as in spiritual experiences (Rejman et al., 2016; Panasiuk, 2010, Olsen & Timothy, 2006, Tilson, 2005). Pilgrimage tourism should be influential for TVCs so that products and services benefit the local communities (Rejman et al., 2016). Organisers of pilgrimage tourism must reckon with the fact that people differ and that they have different needs and preferences regarding the quality and character of the journey (Gonzalez & Bello, 2002). For some people, visiting places of interest such as churches, chapels and roadside crosses is monotonous and unattractive, while for other people, it can be a meaningful experience. Pilgrimages are undertaken for several reasons which include expression of faith, experiencing spiritual enlightenment and deeper understanding of certain beliefs, finding the comfort that is desired to escape from a troubled world and wanting a specific favour such as a cure for an illness.

Physical infrastructure, awareness and local community upliftment are all advantages of local developments. Its world quality airports and roads, as well as the creation of new products, a determined marketing strategy, and a 'scientific' approach have all contributed to the transformation of religion into an economically valuable tourism asset (Choe & O'Regan, 2015; Timothy & Olsen, 2020). Pilgrimage places not only assist local populations but also

have unique histories or remarkable architecture, attracting tourists from all over the country and generating revenue for such temples (Buddhalerd, 2018).

Hundreds of stores open in bustling and colourful communities, providing food to religious tourists. Between formal religious programmes, a hive of economic activity thrives. During the pilgrimage, there are two sessions of prayer and traditional ‘prayer’ dances. Studies indicate that local people are somewhat aware of the tourism opportunities that can provide social and cultural benefits to pilgrimage destinations (Lopez, 2020; Suntikul & Dorji, 2016; Patel & Fellow, 2010; Tarlow, 2010). Pilgrimage tourism can be understood in an elongated and broad meaning as the tourism value chains (TVCs) products and services (Rejman et al., 2016). The provision of products and services in the form of tourism offerings such as accommodation, culinary, transportation, souvenirs and admission to the attractions of pilgrimage tourism. (Rejman et al., 2016; Kartal et al., 2015; Shinde, 2010). The products and services of pilgrimage tourism are interpreted as the territorial product (place). It contains the components of TVCs which are understood as tourist products and services that are essential for pilgrims, local communities and other stakeholders within the pilgrimage destinations (Gonçalves, & Maduro, 2016; Rejman et al., 2016; Panasiuk, 2011; Hall, 2006).

Studies have been conducted to better understand travel preferences and features, such as the relationships between tourists’ profiles, travel motivations, behaviours, and travel barriers (Alén et al., 2016; Ryu et al., 2015). Religious pilgrimage has tremendous growth potential. Both tourism experts and academics have recently focused their attention on the socio-demographics of travel influence (Lee, 2016). Furthermore, when visiting pilgrimage destinations, travellers are challenged to find and adjust to new values, which broadens their spirituality. Some of the pilgrimage destinations they visit during their journey, such as tranquil and quiet churches or temples, may be favourable to meditation. Clearly, different socio-demographic groups have different and unique needs in terms of travel and tourism development. They prefer vacation spots with a wide range of pilgrimage destinations, attractions, excellent pilgrimage service, and pleasant weather. Since pilgrimage is a unique form of tourism that encompasses the need for spiritual fulfilment, the possible benefits for the socio-demographic traveller become another subject of this paper (Padin et al., 2016).

In this paper, tourists’ profiles and the potential of pilgrimage refer to the factors that influence their choices of pilgrimage destinations when planning their journeys and the activities that they do during the pilgrimage. Religious pilgrimages, budgets, and companions are concrete features; on the other side, intangible attributes include atmosphere and pilgrimage destination service so tourism development might have a great influence. As a result, tourism providers should provide services that allow people from different socio-demographic groups to interact with their friends on a regular basis. Word-of-mouth is a highly powerful marketing tactic for attracting more business to the tourist industry.

Theoretical framework

Previous studies have indicated that theories such as neoliberal, social exchange, and empowerment theory have helped explain the contribution of tourism to local communities (Olya, 2020; Hudaefi & Heryani, 2019). The local economic development (LED) and the tourism value chains (TVCs) theories are widely used theoretical frameworks in tourism-related studies (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2014; World Tourism Organisation [WTO], 2014; Christian et al., 2011, Romero & Tejada, 2011). LED theory focuses on ways and means of inclusive development whereas the tourism value chains theory focuses on actions and activities that create value throughout the chain from the origin of the religious pilgrim to the pilgrimage destination. TVCs theory allows us to understand tourist sources and actions such as tourists and the supply for the provision of services (Dong et al., 2020). The

two theories were chosen because they are coherent with this paper's main aim to explore the contribution of African pilgrimages to the study areas' local development through tourism. In this investigation, the LED was considered as the leading theory. LED focuses on local development potentials.

According to a neo-endogenous approach, development is driven by local action groups whose members represent local public and private socio-economic interests (Paula, 2019; Bumbalová et al., 2016). This approach focuses on specific areas of the regions, as community initiatives are based on integrated and multi-sectoral local economic development strategies taking into account local needs and potentials. This is a bottom-up approach that strengthens innovation in the local context (Paula, 2019). Community development approaches particularly emphasize community-led local development in the European Union's rural development policy (Paula, 2019; Bumbalová et al., 2016). The involvement of local communities in development processes is promoted through specific programmes implemented by policymakers and initiatives by local communities and non-governmental organizations (Paula, 2019; Kennedy & Dornan, 2009). Community involvement in development is influenced by many factors such as democratic traditions and societal experience, the distribution of power and the exchange of knowledge between the social agents involved in development processes, the availability of resources and the skills to use them (Paula, 2019; Bumbalová et al., 2016). Community projects are another way in which local agents can participate in improving the quality of life and solving local problems. The development of tourist destinations certainly requires a local development strategy that can accelerate the development of tourism in these pilgrimage destinations (Clausen & Gyimóthy, 2016).

The LED theory helps in determining the benefits, if any, that tourism development can provide to local communities and religious pilgrimages when it occurs within the study area. As a result, the LED was found to be very suitable to the objectives of this study. LED is a theoretically based strategy for economic development aimed at improving rural areas with one of its primary goals being to enhance employment levels for disadvantaged and minority groups (Hudaefi & Heryani, 2019; Nel & Rogerson, 2016). LED is associated with enabling people to participate in their own development. At the core of the concept of development, through the lens of the LED, is the idea of a multidimensional process. This paper defines development as a multifaceted process involving significant "changes in social structures, public attitudes, and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, decrease of inequality, and eradication of poverty" (Todaro & Smith, 2021). Development, as defined by LED in this paper, is the realisation of essential human values and the finding of ways to extend the benefits of these values to the great majority of the world's population (Rasoolimanesh & Seyfi, 2020; Hudaefi & Heryani, 2019; Khambule, 2018; Nel & Rogerson, 2016; Meyer, 2013; 2014; Ivanovic et al., 2009; Cypher & Cypher, 2008).

Methodology

This study used a sequential exploratory mixed-methods research design. In this study, mixed research approach, qualitative and quantitative methodologies were combined. The design is appropriate for collecting the required information on "locals' perceptions of tourism development at pilgrimage destinations," "tourism facilities and products packaged for tourists and pilgrims," "locals' perspectives on the potential of pilgrimages to enhance socio-economic development," "the municipalities with pilgrimage destinations," and "framework for pilgrimage tourism development." Additionally, the approach employed allowed the researcher to investigate the causal connections between the study's constructs. According to the mixed method design, a survey methodology was employed to collect data. This helped the researcher to select a sample of respondents while providing every member of the sample with a

standardised questionnaire. A total of 500 survey questionnaires were distributed to pilgrims and only 410 were fully completed and analysed. A sample size of 410 respondents was considered large enough to reach the study conclusion. Qualitative interviews with 40 respondents were conducted using an audio recorder. The interviews were conducted only with those who were easily accessible and perceived to be knowledgeable about the subject of the research. Respondents were selected face-to-face using a convenience sampling method of a non-probability sampling technique from different regions of municipalities (eThekweni Metro, iLembe, King Cetshwayo and Zululand).

Findings

Through SPSS, the researcher was able to generate frequency tables that were used to show statistical analyses. Using Mann-Whitney U, a correlation between the bivariate variables was evaluated. The most common test for comparing two independent samples is the Mann-Whitney U test (Salkind, 2012). Age group, employment position, and income level of respondents were among the variables that were recoded into two categories. The variable for the age group was recoded. The independent t-test is frequently thought of as the non-parametric selection, however, this rarely proves to be the case, according to (Perri & Bellamy, 2012). Using content analysis to analyse qualitative data, the researcher was able to identify patterns in the open-ended responses.

The presentation and analysis of the socio-demographic data are followed by a description of the demographic traits of the respondents' travel patterns in the preliminary paragraphs of the paper. This was done mostly to assess the research area's demographics and assess whether or not they reflect the subjects that were being discussed. Importantly, the study carried out the aforementioned analysis to determine which demographic group (or groups) contributed most to answering the survey and attaining the investigation's objectives. Gender, age, education levels, employment status, and the respondents' occupation types are among the socio-demographic factors. These attributes are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondents' profile (N=410)

Variable	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	46
	Female	54
Age	18-35	59
	36 and above	41
Level of education	No Western Education	15
	Primary	8
	Secondary	15
	Tertiary education (Diploma)	17
Employment status	Tertiary education (Degree)	46
	Unemployed – Retired	48
Occupation	Self-employed – employed	52
	Unskilled	28
	Semi-skilled	25
	Skilled	19
	Professional	29

According to Table 1, males made up 46% of the total responses, while female participants were 54%. This may be because women made up the vast majority of the pilgrims. Shuo et al., (2009) and Nugraha and Widyaningsih (2021) both claim that a higher proportion of women than men travel on pilgrimage for religious purposes. Regarding the age variable, 41% of people were above the age of 56 and 59% were between the ages of 18 and 35. The results show that youngsters predominated in terms of study participation. Given that young people constitute the majority of the population of the country and are actively involved in any local

development that might be taking place within the study area, Tiessen (2012) and Rinschede (1992) presume that youths visit religious pilgrimages more frequently than other age groups.

As it is well-accepted that education fosters awareness and understanding between people and their environments, the respondents' educational backgrounds were regarded as a significant variable in this study (Aminrad et al., 2013). According to the results, 17% of the respondents held tertiary degrees, 46% post-secondary education, including degrees, meaning that people with post-matric education constituted the majority. 15% of the respondents had a secondary education, and 5% had no formal education. In the previous cohort of responders, only roughly 8% had finished elementary school. This may be because the majority of respondents were young people who had completed matriculation but had not yet had the opportunity to continue their education at higher educational institutions.

Determining the respondents' employment status was significant because the objective of the investigation was to determine how respondents felt about the potential of pilgrimages to improve the socio-economic development of the study area. The results show that 48% of the unemployed were retired people. It's interesting to note that most respondents (about 52%) had jobs and a steady source of income. This is a good finding for the study since it indicates that some of the employed respondents were employed by the pilgrimage destinations in the study area. The results showed that whereas 29% of all respondents were professionals, 28% of the employed respondents lacked technical abilities. Semi-skilled respondents made up 25% of the sample, while skilled respondents made up 19%. Although there were fewer skilled respondents overall (19%) than there were unskilled respondents, this is still a positive conclusion for the study. This implies that the respondents' chances of being hired at the pilgrimage destinations are higher for the more qualified and/or professional individuals.

To ascertain the need for and comprehension of socio-economic development within the communities surrounding pilgrimage destinations, there are several questions about the demographic characteristics of the respondents (see Table 2). The respondents were asked to provide information about their background, the location of their intended pilgrimage, and the dates they travelled. The respondents were prompted to provide their residence details (province or country other than South Africa). According to the results, 38% of respondents are from KwaZulu-Natal, which might be due to the fact they are more familiar with the study area. The Eastern Cape (EC), which made up the second-highest percentage of the total, suggests that travellers and/or pilgrims are aware of and/or hold certain views regarding these holy places. The fact that 15% of all tourists and/or pilgrims are from Gauteng (GP) indicates that these pilgrimage sites are well-known there. Approximately 8% of participants and/or pilgrims were from the Free State.

Western Cape accounts for 5%, whereas Limpopo makes up 6%, approximately 5% of whom were expatriates. Only about 3%, 2%, and 1% of responders, respectively, were from the Northern Cape (NC), Mpumalanga (MP), and the North-West. Zapata et al., (2011) and Scheyvens (2007) attest that pilgrimage destinations have a good chance of seeing faster growth, more sustainable tourist development, and more positive socioeconomic effects if it draws a sizable number of individuals to take part. The inquiry also sought to identify which pilgrimage destination attracted the greatest number of tourists and/or pilgrims. About 26% visited eBuhleni, 20% went to Nhlankazi Mountain, 17% to Ngome, 14% to Mount Khenana, 13% to ekuPhakameni, and 10% went to Fatima, as shown in Table 2. These results suggest that destinations for pilgrimage hold significant potential for the research area's tourism, local development, and socio-economic growth. This shows that a place has a high potential for growth and local development if it draws a lot of tourists (Pourtaheri et al., 2012; Collins-Kreiner, 2010).

Table 2: Demographic characteristics (N=410)

Statements	Categories	Mean	Std. Dev	Frequency (%)
Indicate your place of residence (Province)	Eastern Cape (EC)	3,5171	2,89860	18
	Free State (FS)			8
	Gauteng (GP)			15
	KwaZulu-Natal (KZN)			38
	Limpopo (LP)			6
	Mpumalanga (MP)			2
	Northwest (NW)			1
	Northern Cape (NC)			3
	Western Cape (WC)			5
Outside South Africa	5			
Please indicate the name of the pilgrimage destination visited	Ekuphakameni	3,3195	1,66008	13
	eBuhleni			26
	Nhlangakazi Mountain			20
	Mount Khenana			14.4
	Fatima			10
Ngome	18			
Which mode of transport did you use?	Private car	2,3268	,90395	16
	Taxi			47
	Bus			30
	Train			5
	Airline			3
Where did you stay during the pilgrimage?	In churches	4,0293	2,62658	30
	Private car			7
	Taxi			3
	Buses			13
	School hostel			2
	B&B			24
	Lodge			9
	Hotel			2
Other (Specify....)	10			
On what did you <i>mostly</i> spend your money during the pilgrimage?	Transport	2,2293	1,69167	43
	Accommodation			33
	Food			15
	Souvenirs			5
	Other (specify....)			4
Which facilities, if any exist, are available at the pilgrimage destinations?	Shops for clothes	3,0878	1,14354	14
	Accommodation (type)			6
	Food vendors			49
	Shops for souvenirs			18
	Other (Specify....)			12

The study also examined the type of transportation chosen by tourists and/or pilgrims. According to Table 2, the majority (46%) of travellers used taxis, followed by 30% who used buses and 16% who drove private vehicles. Another 6% used rail roads, and 3% flew. Transportation type could help with local infrastructure and benefit local development. When asked where they stayed during their pilgrimage, the majority of respondents 30% said that they stayed in churches, about 24% stayed in B&Bs that were about 100 kilometres away from the pilgrimage destinations and had to travel there by car. About 10% of the respondents did not specify the type of lodging they used, while 13% said they slept on their buses. Only 9% of people claimed to stay at lodges. In addition, 3% of people slept in cabs, while 2% slept in hotels and school dormitories. This demonstrates the necessity for lodging facilities to contribute to the socio-economic development of the destinations and potentially increase tourism opportunities. Due to the fact that tourists spend a lot of money in places other than the officially recognised tourist industries such as hotels, restaurants, TVCs (craft stores, informal sector hostels, and cafes) may have a positive impact on local economic development (Mitchell & Phuc, 2007).

One hostel at the Ngome pilgrimage destination is capable of accommodating about 100 pilgrims, but it is only accessible to priests during the pilgrimage event. The fact that pilgrims often sleep in the vehicles that transported them to the pilgrimage site is evidence

enough that the Ngome destination needs more lodging alternatives. When asked what they spend their money on most during the journey, the respondents indicated that 43% went to transportation. About 33% of respondents claimed it was lodging and 15% stated it was food, which may have been legitimate if they had already prepared or purchased meals before traveling to the study area. Only around 5% of respondents said they spent most of their money on souvenirs, while about 4% failed to disclose where they spent the majority of their money.

Regarding the availability of facilities (Table 2), about 49% of the respondents chose food sellers, about 18% stated gift shops, 14% named clothing stores, 12% did not identify, and 6% mentioned lodging options. Local development in the pilgrimage destinations is dependent on amenities that raise living standards and reduce poverty. According to Vijayanand (2012) and Binns and Nel (2002) the amenities are being used to promote LED tourism, which could boost the number of travellers and/or pilgrims visiting significant pilgrimage destinations.

Enhancement of socio-economic development

This study used the Mann-Whitney U bivariate test to compare the differences between independent variables (respondents' profile) which are recoded to be nominal (2 groups) in form; and dependent variables (enhancement and contribution of socio-economic development statements), which are ordinal (Likert-scale) in form. The results in Table 3 and Table 4 show that there are some identified differences for some respondents' profile vis-à-vis enhancement and contribution of socio-economic development statements.

Table 3: Reliability test and comparing respondents' perceptions on enhancement of socio-economic development compared with respondents' socio-demographic variables – 'age and gender'

No.	Statements	Significant Results	
		Actual Results	Explanation
1	There is a need to develop pilgrimage destinations in the study area	N.S.	N.S.
2	The development of pilgrimage destinations could enhance the socio-economic status of the study area	N.S.	N.S.
3	Pilgrimage destinations have a potential for enhancing socio-economic status for the study area	N.S.	N.S.
4	Tourism facilities in the study area could enhance the socio-economic development	Z = -2,064 p value = .039	*Age group 18 to 35 significantly agree more than Age group 36 and above.
5	Religious pilgrimages can be seen as socio-economic enhancement	Z = -2,648 p value = .008	**Age group 18 to 35 significantly agree more than Age group 36 and above.
6	Involvement of local people might enhance socio-economy of the study area	N.S.	N.S.
7	Availability of infrastructure could increase the socio-economy enhancement of the study area	Z = -2,513 p value = .012	*Females significantly agree more than males.

Note: ^a Questionnaire were itemised along a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1, Strongly agree; 2, Agree; 3, Neutral; 4, Disagree; 5, Strongly disagree.

^b Mann-Whitney U test significance: N.S, no significant results; *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$.

No socio-demographic influence regarding 'age' and 'gender'

Pilgrims and local community members were asked to indicate their perceptions of the enhancement of socio-economic development within the study area and these variables were compared with the respondents' profile (age and gender). Their responses show no significant relationships with the following statements compared with the respondents' profile:

- 'there is a need to develop pilgrimage destinations in the study area';
- 'the development of pilgrimage destinations could enhance the socio-economic status of the study area';
- 'pilgrimage destinations have a potential for enhancing socio-economic status for the study area', and



- ‘involvement of local people might enhance socio-economy of the study area’.

However, those who are 18 to 35 years old significantly agree more than those who are 36 and above: $Z = -2,064$, p value = .039, with the statements that ‘tourism facilities in the study area could enhance the socio-economic development’. Again, those who are 18 to 35 years of age strongly agree more than those who are 36 and above: $Z = -2,648$, p value = .008, with the statement that ‘religious pilgrimages can be seen as socio-economic enhancement’.

The results also indicate that the females significantly agree more than males: $Z = -2,513$, p value = .012, with the statement that ‘availability of infrastructure could increase the socio-economy enhancement of the study area’. Interestingly, this suggests that pilgrims and local communities’ perceptions of the enhancement of socio-economic development have some relationship with the respondents’ profile (age and gender). These results were supported by the research findings of Sati (2018).

Table 4: Reliability test and comparing respondents’ perceptions on socio-economic contribution compared with respondents’ socio-demographic variables – ‘income level’, ‘age’ and ‘gender’

No.	Statements	Significant Results	
		Actual results	Explanation
1	Socio-economic contribution that can be brought by religious pilgrimages could change people’s perception about the study area	$Z = -2,655$ p value = .008	**Respondents who do not earn more than R10,000 per month significantly agree more than those who earn higher.
2	Availability of tourism facilities might be perceived as an socioeconomic contributor for the study area	N.S.	N.S.
3	Religious pilgrimages can increase the potential tourism developers in the study area	$Z = -1,980$ p value = .048	*Age group 18 to 35 significantly agree more than Age group 36 and above.
4	Tourism development could draw potential stakeholders into the study area and that could contribute to the socio-economy of the study area	$Z = -2,239$ p value = .025	*Females significantly agree more than males.

Note: Mann-Whitney U Test: Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed): *, $p < 0.05$; **, $p < 0.01$; N.S., no significant results. No socio-demographic influence regarding ‘Days of stay’, ‘Level of education’, ‘Employment status’, and ‘Hours travelled’. Tests conducted at 95% confidence interval.

Pilgrims and community members’ perceptions of socio-economic contribution were compared with their socio-demographic status – i.e., income level, age and gender. The perceptions indicate no significant relationships with their profiles with regard to the statement that the ‘availability of tourism facilities might be perceived as a socio-economic contributor for the study area’. The results in Table 4 show that, those respondents who do not earn more than R10,000 per month strongly agree more than those who earn higher are $Z = -2,655$, p value = .008, with the statement: ‘socio-economic contribution that can be brought by religious pilgrimages could change people’s perception about the study area. Moreover, the results also revealed that those who are 18 to 35 significantly agree more than the age group 36 and above: $Z = -1,980$, p value = .048, with this statement: ‘religious pilgrimages can increase the potential tourism developers in the study area’. Furthermore, females significantly agree more than males: $Z = -2,239$, p value = .025, with the statement ‘tourism development could draw potential stakeholders into the study area and that could contribute to the socio-economy of the study area’. These results (Table 4) reveal that there is a relationship between respondents’ profiles (income level, age and gender) and their perceptions.

Vijayanand (2012) asserts that job creation, local work in many sectors of the tourism industry, opportunities for women in this commercial activity and tourism all open up new business prospects and that tourism encourages fresh investment within the pilgrimage sites. It can thus be concluded that the use of the Mann-Whitney U test has significance on the socio-demographic characteristics such as “income level”, “age” and “gender” and can contribute positively on tourism development of pilgrimage destinations. As far as this study is concerned, it seems that female respondents are more goal-driven than their male counterparts, especially

in terms of putting more effort to deliver better and unique services and products to the customers.

Discussion

It was discovered that the respondents were uninformed of the potential benefits that pilgrimage destinations might bring to the tourism industry. Nazareth Baptist Church pilgrims use tents in all their pilgrimages because they are accustomed to that style of lodging. Participants' responses suggest that there is a need for tourism-related amenities or products in the study area. The study discovered that pilgrimage destinations might boost the socio-economic standing of a study area. The study also discovered that perceptions of religious pilgrimage destinations may evolve as an outcome of socio-economic contributions. Based on the data, it is recommended that the study develop a strategic planning document that will incorporate pilgrimage destinations' potential for tourist development into account. It can therefore be inferred that pilgrimage destinations have been perceived as having tourism opportunities in the municipalities under focus. This study proposes a conceptual framework that will demonstrate a new set of selected variables as essential socio-demographic attributes that may enhance socio-economic development. These combined socio-demographic characteristics have the greatest attention in the socio-economic literature and they are frequently used to distinguish local development from local economic development (Kallmuenzer & Peters, 2018; Machin-Martinez & de-Pablos-Herederó, 2017; Omerzel, 2016; Jayeoba, 2015). As a result, the researcher can strongly argue that they are indeed part of the socio-demographic variables that enhance socio-economic development within the pilgrimage destinations. The researcher also observed that there is a relationship between the profiles of tourists and the potential for tourism development within the study area.

Conclusion

The study found that there are no tourism facilities in the study area making visitors and/or pilgrims to travel around 100 kilometres to get the accommodation. Indeed, religious pilgrimages are not seen as a tourism and/or socio-economic development opportunities which is why they are excluded from policy documents. The existing tourism strategies do not include religious pilgrimages among the operational and/or potential tourism and/or socio-economic development opportunities. The study concludes that it is imperative that a strategy to promote religious pilgrimages throughout the study area and farther afield is needed and this would involve the intervention of the provincial government. Participants' responses suggest that there is a need for tourism-related amenities and/or goods in the study area. Furthermore, pilgrimage destinations have the potential to enhance the socio-economic standing of the study area. Perceptions of the locations of religious pilgrimages can also shift as a result of socio-economic contributions. According to the findings, it is inferred that if the study has a strategic planning document that will consider pilgrimage destinations' potential for tourist development into account. Therefore, the municipalities in question can perceive pilgrimage destinations as having tourism potential for local development.

References

- Alén, E., Losada, N. & Dominguez, T. (2016). The Impact of Aging on the Tourism Industry: An Approach to the Senior Tourist Profile. *Social Indicators Research*, 127(1), 303–322.
- Amaro, S., Antunes, A. & Henriques, C. (2018). A Closer Look at Santiago de Compostela's Pilgrims Through the Lens of Motivations. *Tourism Management*, 64, 271-280.

- Aminrad, Z., Zakariya, S. Z. B. S., Hadi, A. S. & Sakari, M. (2013). Relationship Between Awareness, Knowledge and Attitudes Towards Environmental Education Among Secondary School Students in Malaysia. *World Applied Sciences Journal*, 22(9), 1326-1336.
- Binns, T. & Nel, E. (2002), Tourism as a local development strategy in South Africa. *Geographical Journal*, 168(3), 235-247.
- Bond, N., Packer, J. & Ballantyne, R. (2015). Exploring Visitor Experiences, Activities and Benefits at Three Religious Tourism Sites. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 17(5), 471–481.
- Buddhalerd, P. (2018). The Impact of Religious Tourism on Intangible Heritage Within the Temple. (Thai). *KKU International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 8(2).
- Bumbalová, M., Takác, I., Tvrdonavá, J. & Valach, M. (2016). Are Stakeholders in Slovakia Ready for Community-Led Local Development? Case Study Findings. *European Countryside*, 8(2), 160–174.
- Choe, J., Dong, E., Chick, G., Breckenridge Wright, S. & Zhang, L. (2013). Turner's Communitas and non-Buddhists Who Visit Buddhist Temples. *Tourism: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*, 61(3), 245-257.
- Clausen, H. B. & Gyimóthy, S. (2016). Seizing Community Participation in Sustainable Development: Pueblos Mágicos of Mexico. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 111, 318-326.
- Cohen, E. (1979). A phenomenology of Tourist Experiences. *Sociology*, 13(2), 179-201.
- Collins-Kreiner, N. (2018). Pilgrimage-tourism: Common Themes in Different Religions. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 6(1), 8-17.
- Collins-Kreiner, N. (2016). The lifecycle of Concepts: The Case of 'Pilgrimage Tourism'. *Tourism Geographies*, 18(3), 322-334.
- Collins-Kreiner, N. (2010). Researching Pilgrimage: Continuity and Transformations. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(2), 440-456.
- Collins-Kreiner, N. (2010). The Geography of Pilgrimage and Tourism: Transformations and Implications for Applied Geography. *Applied Geography*, 30(1), 153-164.
- Collins-Kreiner, N. & Wall, G. (2015). Tourism and Religion: Spiritual Journeys and their Consequences. In *The changing World Religion Map* (pp. 689-707). Springer, Dordrecht.
- Cypher, J. & Cypher, J. M. (2008). *The process of economic development*. Routledge.
- Hudaefi, F. A. & Heryani, N. (2019). The Practice of Local Economic Development and Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah: Evidence from a Pesantren in West Java, Indonesia. *International Journal of Islamic and Middle Eastern Finance and Management*, 12 (5), 625-642.
- Dong, E., Liu, Y., Li, S. & Jie, X. (2020). Cruise Tourism for Sustainability: An Exploration of Value Chain in Shenzhen Shekou Port. *Sustainability*, 12(7), 3054.
- Durán-Sánchez, A., Álvarez-García, J., Río-Rama, D., De la Cruz, M. & Oliveira, C. (2018). Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage: Bibliometric Overview. *Religions*, 9(9), 249.
- Fang, W. T. (2020). *Tourism in Emerging Economies*. Springer Singapore.
- Fedele, A. (2012). *Looking for Mary Magdalene: Alternative pilgrimage and ritual creativity at Catholic shrines in France*. Oxford University Press.
- Fernandes, C., Pimenta, E., Gonçalves, F. & Rachão, S. (2012). A New Research Approach for Religious Tourism: The Case Study of the Portuguese Route to Santiago. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 4(2), 83-94.
- George, R. (2013). *Marketing Tourism in South Africa*. Fourth Edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

- Gonçalves, E. C. & Maduro, A. V. (2016). Complementarity and interaction Of Tourist Services in an Excellent Wine Tourism Destination: The Douro Valley (Portugal). In *Wine and Tourism* (pp. 123-132). Springer, Cham.
- Gonzalez, A. M. & Bello, L. (2002). The Construct “Lifestyle” In Market Segmentation: The Behaviour of Tourist Consumers. *European Journal of Marketing*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03090560210412700>
- Hall, C. M. (2006). Travel and Journeying on the Sea of Faith: Perspectives from Religious Humanism. In *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys* (pp. 80-93). Routledge.
- Irimiás, A. & Michalkó, G. (2013). Religious Tourism in Hungary-an Integrative Framework. *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin*, 62(2), 175-196.
- Ivanovic, M., Khunou, P. S., Reynish, N., Pawson, R., Teseane, L. & Wassung, N. (2009). *Tourism Development 1*. Cape Town: Pearson Education and Prentice Hall.
- Jayeoba, F. I. (2015). Entrepreneurial Intention and Entrepreneurial Abilities. *IFE Psychological: An International Journal*, 23(1), 219-229.
- Jirásek, I. (2014). Pilgrimage–Tourism Continuum Once Again: Matrix of Sacred, Spiritual and Profane Connectedness to Authenticity. *Ido Movement for Culture. Journal of Martial Arts Anthropology*, 14(4), 46-53.
- Kallmuenzer, A. & Peters, M. (2018). Innovativeness and Control Mechanisms in Tourism and Hospitality Family Firms: A Comparative Study. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 70, 66-74.
- Kartal, B., Tepeci, M. & Atlı, H. (2015). Examining the Religious Tourism Potential of Manisa, Turkey with a Marketing Perspective. *Tourism Review of AIEST - International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism; Bingley*, 70 (3), 214-231.
- Kennedy, K. & Dornan, D. A. (2009). An Overview: Tourism Non-governmental Organizations and Poverty Reduction in Developing Countries. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 14(2), 183-200.
- Khambule, I. (2018). The role of Local Economic Development Agencies in South Africa’s Developmental State Ambitions. *Local economy*, 33(3), 287-306.
- Kirchberg, V. & Tröndle, M. (2012). Experiencing Exhibitions: A Review of Studies on Visitor Experiences in Museums. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 55(4), 435-452.
- Kuo, C. M., Chen, L. H. & Liu, C. H. (2019). Is it all About Religious Faith? Exploring the Value of Contemporary Pilgrimage among Senior Travellers. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(5), 379-392.
- Lee, C. F. (2016). An investigation of Factors Determining Destination Satisfaction and Travel Frequency of Senior Travellers. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 17(4), 471–495.
- Liro, J. (2021). Visitors’ Motivations and Behaviours at Pilgrimage Centres: Push and Pull Perspectives. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 16(1), 79-99.
- Lois-González, R. C. & Santos, X. M. (2015). Tourists and Pilgrims on their Way to Santiago. Motives, Caminos and Final Destinations. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 13(2), 149-164.
- Lopez, L. (2020). Filmic Gendered Discourses in Rural Contexts: The Case of the Camino de Santiago (Spain). *Sustainability*, 12(12), 5080.
- Meyer, D. F. (2014). Local Economic Development (LED), Challenges and Solutions: The Case of the Northern Free State Region, South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(16), 624-634.
- Meyer, D.F. (2014). Local Government and The Creation of an Enabling Developmental Environment. *Administratio Publica*, 22(1), 24- 46.

- Meyer, D.F. (2013). *An Exploration of Solutions for Rural Development: The Case of The Northern Free State*. NWU: Vaal Campus.
- Nolan, M.L. & Nolan, S. (1992). Religious Sites as Tourism Attractions in Europe. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19, 68–78.
- Nugraha, Y. D. & Widyaningsih, Y. A. (2021). The Moderating Role of Gender and Religiosity on the EMA Model: An Indonesian Muslim Pilgrim Perspective. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 13(6), 1201-1223.
- Nyaupane, G.P., Timothy, D.J. & Poudel, S. (2015). Understanding Tourists in Religious Destinations: A Social Distance Perspective. *Tourism Management*, 48, 343– 353.
- Olsen, D. H. (2020). Pilgrimage, Religious Tourism, Biodiversity, and Natural Sacred Sites. *Religious Tourism and the Environment*. (pp.23-41) Boston: CABI.
- Olsen, D. H. & Timothy, D. (2020). The COVID-19 Pandemic and Religious Travel: Present and Future Trends. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 8(7), 17.
- Olsen, D. H. & Timothy, D. J. (2006). Tourism and religious journeys. In *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys* (pp. 17-38). Routledge.
- Olya, H. G. (2020). Towards Advancing Theory and Methods on Tourism Development from Residents' Perspectives: Developing a Framework on the Pathway to Impact. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 1-21.
- Omerzel, D. G. (2016). Sustainable Tourism Business: An Introduction to the Thematic Issue. *Managing Global Transitions*, 14(1), 3.
- Oviedo, L., De Courcier, S. & Farias, M. (2014). Rise of Pilgrims on the Camino to Santiago: Sign of Change or Religious Revival? *Review of Religious Research*, 56(3), 433-442.
- Padin, C., Svensson, G. & Wood, G. (2016). A Model of Pilgrimage Tourism: Process, Interface, People and Sequence. *European Business Review*, 28(1), 77–95.
- Panasiuk A. (2011), Dilemmas of Promotion of the Product of Religious Tourism. *Religious Tourism, Interdisciplinary Issues, Scientific Notebooks of Szczecin University, Economic Problems of Services*, 647 (65), 361 -371.
- Panasiuk A. (2010). *Concept of Religious Tourism Product*. Szczecin University.
- Patel, A. & Fellow, L. (2010). *Religious Freedom in America: Constitutional Roots and Contemporary Challenges*. Norman Publishing.
- Paula, L. (2019). *Community Involvement in Local Development: Theoretical Analysis of Community Development Approaches*. Proceedings of the 9th International Scientific Conference, September 26-28, 2019, Agriculture Academy of Vytautas Magnus University, (pp. 451-457).
- Pereiro, X. (2019). Tourism and Pilgrimage, Two Sides of The Same Coin: The inland Portuguese Way of Santiago de Compostela. *Cuadernos de Turismo*, (43), 407-434.
- Perri, P. & Bellamy, C. (2012). *Principles of Methodology: Research Design in Social Science*. London: SAGE Publication Ltd.
- Poria, Y., Butler, R. & Airey, D. (2003) Tourism, Religion and Religiosity: A Holy Mess. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 6(4), 340–363.
- Raj, R. & Griffin, K. A. (2017). Introduction to Conflicts, Religion and Culture in Tourism. *Conflicts, Religion and Culture in Tourism*, 1-10.
- Raj, R. & Griffin, K. A. (Eds.). (2015). *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management: An International Perspective*. CABI. London.
- Raj, R. & Morpeth, N. (2007). *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals Management: An International Perspective*. Wallingford: CABI.
- Rasoolimanesh, S. M. & Seyfi, S., (2020). Residents' Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Tourism Development: A Perspective Article. *Tourism Review*, 76(1), 51-57.

- Rejman, K., Maziarz, P., Kwiatkowski, C. A. & Haliniarz, M. (2016). Religious Tourism as A Tourism Product. *World Scientific News*, (57), 562-575.
- Rinschede, G. (1992). Forms of Religious Tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19, 51–67.
- Romero, I. & Tejada, P. (2011). A Multi-Level Approach to the Study of Production Chains in the Tourism Sector. *Tourism Management*, 32(2), 297–306.
- Rogerson, C. M. & Nel, E. (2016). Redressing inequality in South Africa: The Spatial Targeting of Distressed Areas. *Local Economy*, 31(1-2), 28-41.
- Ryu, E., Hyun, S. S. & Shim, C. (2015). Creating New Relationships Through Tourism: A Qualitative Analysis of Tourist Motivations of Older Individuals in Japan. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 32(4), 325–338.
- Salkind, N.J. (2012). *Encyclopedia of Research Design*. London: SAGE Publication.
- Scheyvens, R. (2012). *Tourism and Poverty*. Routledge. UK.
- Sati, V. P. (2018). Carrying Capacity Analysis and Destination Development: A Case Study of Gangotri Tourists/Pilgrims' Circuit in the Himalaya. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 23(3), 312-322.
- Scriven, R. (2014). Geographies of Pilgrimage: Meaningful Movements and Embodied Mobilities. *Geography Compass*, 8(4), 249-261.
- Shackley, M. (2001). *Managing Sacred Sites; Service Provision and Visitor Experience*. Continuum. Available at <https://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/9479> [Retrieved 15 August 2023].
- Shinde, K. A. (2015). Religious Tourism and Religious Tolerance: Insights from Pilgrimage sites in India. *Tourism Review*. 70(3), 179-196.
- Shinde, K. A. (2010). Entrepreneurship and indigenous Entrepreneurs in Religious Tourism in India. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 12(5), 523-535.
- Shinde, K. A. (2008). Religious Tourism: Exploring a New form of Sacred Journey in North India. In *Asian Tourism: Growth and Change* (pp. 265-278). Routledge.
- Shinde, K. A. (2003). Environmental Crisis in God's Abode: Managing Religious Tourism. *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, 87-102.
- Shuo, Y. S. S., Ryan, C. & Liu, G. M. (2009). Taoism, Temples and Tourists: The Case of Mazu Pilgrimage Tourism. *Tourism Management*, 30(4), 581–588.
- Smith, B. R., Conger, M. J., McMullen, J. S. & Neubert, M. J. (2019). Why believe? The Promise of Research on the Role of Religion in Entrepreneurial Action. *Journal of Business Venturing Insights*, 11, e00119.
- Suntikul, W. & Dorji, U. (2016). Local Perspectives on The Impact of Tourism on Religious Festivals in Bhutan. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 21(7), 741-762.
- Tarlow, S. (2010). *Ritual, Belief and the Dead in Early Modern Britain and Ireland*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tiessen, R. (2012). Motivations for Learn/volunteer Abroad Programs: Research with Canadian Youth. *Journal of Global Citizenship & Equity Education*, 2(1), 1-21.
- Terzidou, M., Scarles, C. & Saunders, M. N. (2017). Religiousness as Tourist Performances: A Case Study of Greek Orthodox Pilgrimage. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 66, 116-129.
- Tilson, D. J. (2005). Religious-spiritual Tourism and Promotional Campaigning: A Church-State Partnership for St. James and Spain. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 12(1-2), 9-40.
- Timothy, D.J. (2011). *Cultural Heritage and Tourism: An Introduction*. Channel View Publications, Clevedon, UK.
- Timothy, D. J. & Boyd, S. W. (2006). Heritage Tourism in the 21st Century: Valued Traditions and New Perspectives. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 1(1), 1-16.



- Todaro, M. P. & Smith, S. C. (2021). *Economic Development (11th Ed.)*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Trono, A. (2016). *Logistics at Holy Sites*. Pilgrimage and Tourism to Holy Cities: Ideological and Management Perspectives. CABI (pp.113-129).
- Vijayanand, S. (2012). Origin and Evolution of Pilgrimage Tourism Management. *South Asian Journal of Marketing & Management Research*, 2(4), 151-170.
- Wiltshier, P. & Clarke, A. (2012). Tourism to Religious Sites, Case Studies from Hungary and England: Exploring Paradoxical Views on Tourism, Commodification and Cost Benefits. *International Journal of Tourism Policy*, 4(2), 132-145.
- World Tourism Organization (2011). *Religious Tourism in Asia and the Pacific*. UNWTO, Madrid.
- World Travel & Tourism Council. (2014). Travel and Tourism: Economic. Available at <http://www.wttc.org/focus/research-for-action/economic-impact-analysis/regional-reports/> [Retrieved 12 June 2023].
- Zapata, M. J., Hall, C. M., Lindo, P. & Vanderschaeghe, M. (2011). Can Community-based Tourism Contribute to Development and Poverty Alleviation? Lessons from Nicaragua. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 14(8), 725-749.