



In Search of Heterotopia Religiosity? Motives for Religious Tourism and Pilgrimages to Zion Christian Church Mbungu Shrine: A Case from Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Religious tourism and pilgrimage are theocentric terms that refer to people visiting holy and sacred shrines seeking; God's indulgence and absolution of sins in the afterlife, spiritual and physical healing, regeneration of the soul and spirit, acquiring new religious and cultural experiences, a shorter stay in the purgatory and a transcendence of one's former frame of reference. Religious tourism and pilgrimage have a strong potential to: create quality employment opportunities, increase local community resilience against poverty, curtail rural flight migration, foster mutual understanding, respect, peace and harmony among tourist, pilgrims, local communities, and even countries, and importantly may contribute to rapid national growth and development. The study used a multiple paradigm approach to investigate motives for visiting ZCC Mbungu Shrine in Zimbabwe by religious tourists and pilgrims. Data was collected using representative focus group made up of 10 participants and revelatory focus group consisting of 5 participants. Our findings show that religious tourists and pilgrims to ZCC Mbungu Shrine are motivated by the quest for spiritual and physical healing, new cultural experiences, piety, religious affiliation and veneration of the founding member. The study recommends improving tourist facilitating conditions, promotion of eco-tourism and cultural tourism alongside religious tourism and pilgrimages to the shrine.

Keywords: Religion, Tourism, Pilgrimage, Socio-economic, ZCC Mbungu, Zimbabwe.



Introduction and background

The theocentric concepts of religious tourism and pilgrimage are as old as humanity itself (Slock & Stark, 1965; Fukuyama, 1961, Eliade, 1969). From a theological frame, a religious visit or pilgrimage can be considered a permanent call from God to his people. The holy book that is, the Bible, is full of interesting stories of people/ prophets making pilgrimages to shrines and sacred sites. Some pilgrimages were voluntary whilst others were undertaken on the command of God. In the book of Kings 20:12-19, King Berodach-Baladan son of Baladan King of Babylon sent messengers with gifts to king Hezekiah of Israel when he had heard that the man of God had been sick and was miraculously healed. In the book of Genesis in Chapter 12 verse 1, Abraham was asked by God to get out from his country and his kindred and his father's house and make a journey to the land God was going to show him. In the books of 2 Samuel Chapter 11 verse 12 and 1 Kings Chapter 10 verse 1 tell of the story of the Queen of Sheba, a seeker of truth and wisdom who travelled on a camel to Jerusalem to meet with King Solomon when she heard of his wisdom and riches. Similarly, in 1 Samuel Chapter 1 verses 1 to 28 there is a story of Elkanah who travelled annually to the shrine of Shiloh to worship and make sacrifices to God. Even in the New Testament there are many biblical stories that can be considered religious tourism or pilgrimages such as; Paul's missionary journeys. In Acts Chapter 2 there is a story of Jews from all over the world going to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.

Even in recent years, many people world over visit holy and sacred shrines perhaps to seek indulgence and absolution of sins in the afterlife (Nicolaidis, 2016), while many also go to garner a sense of well-being (Nicolaidis & Grobler, 2017). Hence, most of the journeys demonstrate a strong will for personal and spiritual regeneration and possibly help the pilgrim or tourist to secure a shorter dwelling in the purgatory. In Zimbabwe which is a multi-faith country, many pilgrims and tourists visit various religious and sacred cultural shrines among them; the Matopos Hills, the Ngomakurira mountain, the Matonjeni, the Njelele, and the Bernard Muzeki for reasons ranging from; seeking among other reasons wellness, repair or maintenance of self, self-awareness and revitalisation of the body, mind and heart. The theological acceptance often given in literature is that pilgrimage is an answer to the call of God by his creation and hence, the focus on spirituality (Wilson et al., 2016; Nyaupane et al., 2015; Bond et al., 2015). Numerous researchers often make a distinction between spiritual tourism and religious tourism (see Norman, 2012; World Tourism Organisation [WTO], 2013). However, others see no major differences and therefore, use the two terms interchangeably (Wilson et al., 2016; Bond et al., 2015; Eid & El-Gohary, 2015b). Religious tourism is generally motivated by religious reasons, hence, the more focus on piety, veneration, spirituality growth, and seeking the heart of God (Taheri et al., 2016; Olsen, 2013). In Zimbabwe, a popular site for both religious tourism and pilgrimage is the ZCC Mbungo Shrine near Masvingo City.

This shrine attracts significant pilgrimage and tourists from all over the world. The shrine was founded by Samuel Mutendi and considered sacred by his followers since it represents a number of attributes such as his place of birth, a place for the founder's calling and spiritual awakening and death, and also a place of his death. The ZCC Mbungo shrine is reported to reward followers and visitors with miracles of healing and spiritual growth. For travelers to the shrine, religious tourism is not an ordinary holiday, but a transformational and life-changing journey. It is expected that during and after the journey to the shrine, spiritual and physical healing takes place, new spiritual insights are obtained, there is a transcendence of one's former frame of reference, a deeper understanding of the word of God is enhanced, and there is also a movement beyond one's own unhealthy egocentricity towards more healthy inclusivity and unity of body, mind and soul (Kruger & Saayman, 2016).



There is no unanimity in the definition and motivation of religious tourism in empirical literature (Sanchez et al., 2017; Terzidou, 2018; Taheri, 2016). The terms religious tourism and pilgrimages, have been defined as travelling for the purpose of finding one's self in the context of a set of beliefs, discourses, and practices which a particular community follows, and which are regulated by a religious corporate entity that works towards the preservation of the said community of followers (Norman, 2012; Olsen, 2013; Nicolaidis, 2016; Digance, 2003). According to Norman (2012), spiritual betterment purportedly takes place mainly through public worship where spiritual experiences are interpreted and given context and meaning by religious leaders. Religious tourists and pilgrims tend to gravitate to ZCC Mbungu shrine, a site that has been given institutional sanction by the founder of the church and recently a stamp-of-approval by the government (Government of Zimbabwe, 2017). The UNWTO (2017) defines religious tourism as a kind of tourism that reflects itself with socially responsible actions by respecting the sacred and through stewardship of sacred sites.

Esteve (2009) defines religious tourism as a tourist activity through which the tourists seek spiritual grace, looking for the proximity, immersion or contact with the sacred aspects of life. In this research, we define religious tourism and pilgrimage as closely interrelated concepts referring to; travel for religious or spiritual purposes to sacred sites such as mountains, holy shrines and temples. Usually, people travel to shrines individually or in groups mainly for spiritual reasons either to seek healing, healing powers, strengthening of faith and to seeking meaning to questions of life and death (Bond et al., 2015; Kruger & Saayman, 2016).

Studies based on religious tourism and pilgrimages have received little attention by researchers in Zimbabwe despite the country attracting significant inflows of religious tourists and pilgrims. Therefore, the purpose of the paper is to fill a lacuna in empirical literature by interrogating principal factors that motivate religious tourism and pilgrimages to Zimbabwe using the case of ZCC Shrine Mbungu Shrine. In addition, in spite of the increased commercialisation of religious and secular shrines in Zimbabwe it appears the lives of some local communities and domestic followers have not improved from imported wealth brought by religious tourist and pilgrims. In other developing countries religious tourism has become a major source of employment creation, foreign currency generation, government revenue, and hence, a critical contributor to the gross domestic product (Musa et al., 2018 for Malaysia; Dafuleya et al., 2017 for South Africa).

Various reasons can be given for the significance of this study. First, religious tourism and pilgrimages to ZCC Mbungu Shrine if appropriately and responsibly developed have a strong potential to: create quality employment opportunities, reduce income disparities between rural and surrounding urban communities, increase local community resilience against poverty and hunger, curtail rural flight migration, prompt product and service diversification in rural areas, and may also nurture a sense of pride among rural communities. Religious tourism and pilgrimages to a country represents opportunities for additional income and employment generation, key factors that affect economic degrowth in developing economies (Olsen, 2013; Egresi et al., 2014; Raj & Griffin, 2015; Tabon & Tabon, 2013).

Second, if local traditions, cultural heritage systems, spiritual values, norms and beliefs are respected, the host local communities are likely to reap direct and indirect benefits due to tourism development around the shrine, particularly the construction of public infrastructure such as roads and schools. Third, the ZCC Mbungu shrine is visited by religious tourists of different religions denominations and religious affiliations, it is possible that tourism and pilgrimage revenue can foster mutual understanding and respect among tourist, pilgrims, communities and countries and hence, contribute to international peace and good international relations. In addition, religious



tourism and pilgrimages can be used as a vehicle of improving the quality of life of both believers and non-believers (Nicolaides & Grobler, 2017). Fourth, the unparalleled and uncontrolled growth of religious tourists and pilgrims to shrines may bring about negative externalities such as: corroding local culture and heritage sites, enhancing unhealthy consumerism, creating socio-cultural disorientation of local communities and damaging the natural environment. Hence, segmenting religious tourism and pilgrimage as a niche market, could enable researchers to understand motives of religious tourists and pilgrims and pave the way for responsible and sustainable tourism in Zimbabwe. Religious tourism is one type of tourism that has numerous latent benefits for including employment growth, an extended economic base, repopulation, and needed social development (Nicolaides, 2020). This may also help policy makers to craft and adopt national policies that maximise the benefits from religious tourism development by raising awareness of socio-economic, cultural and all environmental issues thus supporting the fight against poverty. On the other hand, the study may help to improve the awareness of local culture, develop ownership of domestic tourism and, help local communities and secular religious people to deal with huge inflows of religious tourists and foreign pilgrims. The paper is organised as follows: the first section covers introduction and background. Second section represent empirical literature and the third, fourth, and fifth sections covers methodology, main findings and recommendations from the study respectively.

Empirical literature

One of the most debated topics in tourism literature is the distinction between religious tourism and pilgrimage. Pilgrimage refers to a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally, for spiritual purposes and internal understanding (Barber, 1993; Turner 1973; Turner & Turner 1978). Collins-Kreiner (2010b) defines pilgrimage as a journey undertaken by a religious devotee to a site that embodies spiritual meaning, that is highly valued, and deeply meaningful, and a source of core identity for the traveler. Pilgrimage is not only a religious phenomenon as it may include journeys to the famous sporting grounds, gravesites and memorials of celebrities and sites of political significance (Kaelver, 2006; Digance 2006; Kaelber 2006; Morinis, 1992; Margry 2008a). Collins-Kreiner 2010a, 2010b) recognise two forms of pilgrimage, that is religious and secular. It is estimated that between 300 and 330 million people travel for religious reasons annually, generating total revenues of 25,000 million dollars (OMT, 2017). However, in a broad sense, religious tourism is any trip motivated, either exclusively or partly, by religious reasons (Buzinde et al., 2014; Kohli et al., 2014; Kruger & Saayman, 2016; Nilsson & Tesfahuney, 2016). The connection between pilgrimage and religious tourism has been long established (Eliade, 1969; Fukuyama, 1961; Roussel 1972; Sloack & Stark, 1965). Norman (2012) says that religious tourism is an intensely personal and subjective travel for spiritual betterment and to find one's self through following one's inner path rather than on connection with a broader religious community.

Motives for visiting shrines and sacred places include; spirituality growth (Bond et al., 2015), searching for life experiences (Nyaupane et al., 2015), request for a miracle (Musa et al., 2017), atonement for a sin committed (Norman, 2012), uncovering oneself devotion, spiritual self-enrichment, faith, piety, religious affiliation and acquiring healing power (Lee et al., 2015; Cheng and Chen, 2014). Spirituality development is considered the core of wellness and tires to balance the mind, the body, and the spirit (Bond et al., 2015). Religious tourism and pilgrimage have been characterised as a segmented travel cohort made up of people seeking the fulfillment of contemporary needs and high dimensional desires like spirituality (Bond et al., 2015; Albot et al., 2015; Brown, 2016) contemplation, tranquility, and guidance (Choe et al., 2015; Ballantyne et al., 2016; Hung et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2018).



Religious tourism and pilgrimage have been interrogated using numerous settings, including responsible tourism (see Collins-Kreiner, 2017; Dafuleya et al., 2017; Della, 2012), sustainable tourism (see Brown, 2016; Amaro et al., 2018; Sanchez et al., 2017; Terzidou., Scarles & Saunders, 2017). Islamic tourism (e.g. Battour et al., 2017; Damari & Mansfeld, 2016; Barajos et al., 2014; Battour et al., 2011; Shafaei, 2017; Awais, 2017), ashram tourism (e.g. Eid, 2015a; Eid, 2015b; Gutic et al., 2010), pilgrimage tourism (for example, Choe et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2018; Olsen, 2016; Raj & Griffin, 2015; Hung, 2015; Hung et al., 2017), secular pilgrimage tourism (Olsen and Wilkinson, 2016; Bond et al., 2015; Cheng & Chan, 2014), festival tourism (see Lee et al., 2015; Cheng & Chen, 2014; Lee et al., 2015; Suntikul & Dorji, 2016), ecotourism (e.g. Collins-Kreiner, 2016b; Dafuleya et al., 2017; Kaewumpai, 2018), route-based tourism (e.g. Murray & Graham, 1997; Olsen & Musa et al., 2017, Collins-Kreiner, 2018), slow tourism (see Olsen & Wilkinson, 2016), alternative tourism (see Raj, 2012; Darbellay & Stock, 2012; Damari & Mansfeld, 2016), cultural tourism (e.g. Murray & Graham, 1997; Suntikul & Dorji, 2016), heritage tourism (e.g. Kresic et al., 2013; Kirillova et al., 2014; Choe et al., 2015; Bond et al., 2015), rural tourism (see Musa et al., 2017; Dafuleya et al., 2017), and modern tourism (see Norman, 2012; Amaro et al., 2018; Kruger & Saayman, 2016).

However, the two main reasons that motivate religious tourists are spirituality (Collins-Kreiner, 2018; Choe et al., 2015; Taheri, 2016; Suntikul & Darii, 2016), and piety (Wang et al., 2016; Kruger and Saayman; Wilson et al., 2016; Buzinde et al., 2014). Amaro et al (2018), Abbate and Di Nuovo (2013) and Sanchez et al (2017) contend that religious tourism is motivated by the need to embrace culture and heritage beliefs and values. Other researchers also argue that reasons such as curiosity (Shafaei, 2017; Terzidou, 2010; Wang et al., 2016) and discovery (Musa et al., 2017; Olsen et al., 2016) could explain religious tourism and subsequent pilgrimages. Chen and Chan (2014) concur, the identification of faith and piety drive more tourist to visit religious sites.

Kruger and Saayman (2016) also show that spirituality, faith identification and self-enrichment drive pilgrimages to ZCC shrines in the region. Many studies show that religious motives are multifaceted and heterogenous as some religious tourist are explorers, seekers of knowledge and devotees (Brown, 2016; Battour et al., 2017; Bond et al., 2015; Ballantyne et al, 2016). Buzinde et al (2014) say that most of the motivation comes from spirituality, the need to acquire different religious experiences and to contribute to the development of local shrines. Another motive that has gained currency in empirical literature that focus on developing countries is related to cultural experiences (Wang et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2016; Zamani-Farahani & Henderson, 2010; Fernandes et al., 2012). However, Wang et al (2016) argue that there is no relationship between culture and the degree of religious belief and past experiences. Researchers need to understand pilgrims and tourists by taking into account their different characteristics including; religiousness, religious affiliation, seasons, sites, and culture (Albot et al., 2015; Battour et al., 2017).

Most studies in developing countries concentrate on religious tourism and pilgrimage focus on Islamic tourism, especially religious doctrine and Islamic religiosity (Eid, 2015; Eid and El-Gohary, 2015b; Albot et al, 2015; Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012), Islamic brand equity, perceived values of Muslim tourists (Battour et al., 2017; Eid & El Gohary, 2015a) and religious satisfaction as main motivating factors (Battour et al., 2017; Din, 1989; Eid, 2015; Eid & El-Gohary, 2015a, 2015b; Shafaei, 2017; Zamani-Farahani & Musa, 2012). A number of studies have focused on pilgrimage experiences and destination attributes (Terzidou et al., 2017; Wilson et al., 2013; Terzidou et al., 2018; Bond et al., 2015). These studies argue that understanding religious places and sacred sites is important in appreciating the perceptions of pilgrimages.



The relationship between religion and tourism has also been examined from multi- perspectives. Bremer (2005) interrogated three approaches; (a) the spatial approach where tourists and pilgrims occupy the same space with different behaviors, (b) the historical approach between religious forms of travel and tourism and (c) the cultural approach that views pilgrimage and tourism as modern practices common in the post-modern world. Norman (2012) offers an expanded typology and says that spiritual tourist experiences can be grouped into five general categories. The first category is what he called 'healing,' where the tourist experience is oriented towards practices that seek elements of everyday life that are perceived problematic. In this category spiritual tourists use their time away from home to engage in religious practices or participate in activities that emphasise their desire for psychologic wellness (Norman, 2012).

The second category is called 'experiment', where spiritual tourists seek substitutes to their daily living by travelling to experiment with different cultures and alternative religious and spiritual schools of thought. The third category is called 'quest', where the spiritual tourist's quest is personal discovering and a search for meaning. Pilgrimage then becomes the medium through which spiritual experiences occur. The fourth category is called 'retreat', where the spiritual tourist is concerned with getting away from the everyday life with a special focus on socio-geographic escape instead of emotional or psychologic repair and self-maintenance. The final category is called 'collective' where spiritual tourists travel in groups to establish spiritual tourist hubs, locations and sacred sites where one can go if one wants a spiritual holiday.

Millán-Vázquez de la Torre et al. (2016) link religion to tourism using two angles; first tourism being motivated by exclusively or partially by religious reasons and second tourism as a contemporary spiritual journey. Religious tourism is also linked to other types of tourism, especially holiday, cultural, social, and group tourism, which causes it in turn to be linked to seasonality (Collins-Kreiner 2018; Lois-González & Santos 2015; Olsen & Timothy 2006; Oviedo et al. 2014). Historically, religious trips were always multifunctional trips, even when religious factors seemed to predominate. However, in modern societies, religious motivation seems to be less important than in ancient societies. An earlier study by Andriotis (2009) also argued that cultural, spiritual, secular, educational and environmental experiences were important issues in understanding the motives of religious tourists and pilgrimages. It is significant to understand that religious tourists' experiences are likely to vary depending on whether one is visiting a shrine, orthodox shrines, Israel Holy Sites or participating in religious festival activities, and benefits that are sought. Other religious tourists experience religiousness through tourist performances (Andriotis, 2011).

Terzidou et al (2017) demonstrate that religious tourists' practices can be understood through institutional and unconventional aspects because embodied notions of godliness may pervade tourist performance at sacred sites. Authenticity is also a key issue in understanding how religious tourists and pilgrimages experience heritage and religious environments (Andriotis,2011; Kim and Kim, 2019). Founded on Belhassen et al (2008) the concept of theoplicity as three concepts of authenticity related to Holy sites can be recognised in belief, activities and places.

The religion-based relationship between the subject of pilgrimage and the places is defined as a geopiety concept and infers that one's desire for action is led by someone's religious view of cognitive and emotional attachment to a sacred place based on faith or values (Belhassen et al., 2008). Early studies on religious tourism recognise the importance of an emotional dimension that aligns religious experience with pilgrimage (Glock & Stark, 1965; Fukuyama, 1961). Taheri (2016) also show that religious experience and emotional connections are positively affected by



deeper religious attitudes, such as belief and practice, while they are negatively influenced by material secular attitudes.

Lee et al (2015) posit that religious festivals that offer authentic and emotional experiences are likely to support local tourism development. Kim et al (2016) associate religious tourism and pilgrimage with personal happiness and satisfaction. The socio-economic impacts of religious tourism and pilgrimage are well acknowledged in literature (see Dafuleya et al., 2017; Fourie et al., 2016; Sanchez et al., 2017; Barajas et al., 2014; Saayman et al., 2014). For example, Sanchez et al. (2014) shows the environmental impact, the social impact (Dafuleya et al., 2017) This has led to calls by Henderson (2011), Bardons et al (2018) and Battour et al (2018) to place emphasis on sustainably developing pilgrimage destinations in order to balance traditional practices at religious sites and the demands of an expanding modern pilgrimage industry.

Even though religiousness has been viewed as the main motive for religious tourism and pilgrimages, tourist activities often disparage the sanctity of the place and ultimately bring condemnation to pious acts on a basis of religious traditions (Henderson, 2011). To accrue all the benefits from religious tourists. Shinde (2010) avers that indigenous religious entrepreneurs might need to develop new products and expand the cultural economy of rituals and religious performances that are apropos to specific tourism markets. Services like number of participants, choice of transport, seasonal travel and social structure, and accommodation all support religious tourism and pilgrimages.

Methodology

Most studies that focus on religious tourism and pilgrimage in developing countries often adopt a qualitative approaches. This research follows a similar approach since qualitative approaches offer huge opportunities of understanding complex human and religious phenomenon compared to quantifying their experiences (see Riley & Love, 2000). Nevertheless, our research strategy departs from similar studies by embracing a multiple paradigm model pioneered by Burrell and Morgan (1979). Because each paradigm community defines its research problem differently, the study was adapted in order to focus on the issue of tourist and pilgrim motivation. The four main paradigms adopted for this study are the; First, the functionalist paradigm that focused on spiritual motivation. In this paradigm our objective was to assess tourists and pilgrims' quest for spiritual healing as a motivating factor for uniting the body, mind and spirit.

The second paradigm was the interpretative paradigm, an ethnomethodology approach that sought to understand tourism and pilgrimage as a retreat that allowed the travelers to deepen their spirituality and understand the purpose of life. Daily activities and routines of tourists and pilgrims were observed by researchers in attempt to unravel some latent factors and make sense of the motivating factors. The third paradigm was the radical humanist investigation that was contacted in the style of critical theory. The aim was to describe and analyse the social, economic, cultural and environmental impact of religious tourism and pilgrimage on the local community and domestic worshippers. Finally, the radical structuralist paradigm was represented through empirical literature, focusing on tourists and pilgrims personal experiences in visiting religious shrines.

Eisenhardt (1989) pointed out that many studies adopt a positivistic approach where the main aim is to extract variables from their context in order to generate generalisable proportions and build theory. In this paper, the purpose of the multiple paradigm was to produce rich, holistic, and particularized explanations that were located in situational context. To achieve our overall



objective of collecting many data we conducted multiple case studies in order to improve the validity and reliability of our findings. The other advantage of using multiple case studies in the extant research was the ability to use both group interviews and focused interviews. We first used a representative case study (see Yin, 2003), where the researchers sought to explore cases that exemplify typical religious tourists and pilgrims. The major focus of the sample design was not to obtain a sample of tourists and pilgrims with same cross-national demographic characteristics or even to come up with sample that was representative of the whole population of religious tourists and pilgrims. Rather, we wanted to generate a sample that was representative of the relevant target population, which in this case were religious tourists and pilgrims visiting the ZCC Shrine during the annual festival. More than twenty potential religious tourists and pilgrims were pre-screened using a structured questionnaire, and a sample of ten participants was selected on the basis of their responses to the questionnaire that was designed to measure tourist and pilgrim motivating factors. As shown in Table 3.1, five religious' tourist, five pilgrims and two resident preachers were selected. The objective of including resident preachers who were purposively chosen was to elicit local perspectives of what activities and also what was sought by religious tourists and pilgrimages at the shrine. Morgan (1998a) shows that smaller groups are effective when participants have a lot to say on the research topic. The focus group discussion lasted 30 minutes.

Table 3.1: Representative Focus Group Discussion

Name	number	Gender	Age	Country of Origin
Religious tourist	1	male	40-50	South Africa
Religious tourist	2	Female	61-70	Zambia
Pilgrim	1	male	51-60	Malawi
Pilgrims	3	male	40-50	Botswana
Religious tourist	2	female	40-50	Norway
Pilgrim	2	male	51-60	South Africa
Preachers	2	male	60-70	Zimbabwe

The second case we used was a revelatory case study where the researchers' observed the daily routines of religious tourists and pilgrims. In choosing participants for the revelatory case, snowball sampling technique was used since issues of spirituality and piety are personal, and most participants declined being observed doing their prayers, fasting and other religious and non-religious routines. The snowball sampling procedure involved identifying one potential tourist and one pilgrim who were then asked to refer the researchers on to other religious tourists and pilgrims. Following up on referrals proved to be very efficient and effective, and eventually yielded the participant listed in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Revelatory Focus Group

Name	Number	Gender	Age	Country of Origin
Pilgrim	1	male	50-60	United Kingdom
Religious tourists	1	Female	61-70	Zambia
Pilgrim	1	male	51-60	Malawi
Pilgrims	1	males	40-50	Botswana
Religious tourist	1	females	60-70	South Africa



An observation protocol was used to make notes about the nature of the activity, including visiting local communities, what they bought and did during the festival. The observation took place between 9.00 and 1700 hours. In both focus group discussions, participants were denoted pilgrim or religious tourist for confidential reasons. Anonymity made it easier for participants to discuss potentially embarrassing religious and pilgrimage issues or to divulge potentially unpopular views without being known personally.

Main findings and discussion

The findings in Table 4.1 from representative focus group discussion show that religious tourists and pilgrims agreed on the following motivators; spirituality and piety (1.40), cultural experience (1.40, Physical Healing(1.40); religious affiliation (1.20), seeking for miracle powers; forgiveness of sin (1.35) and personal discovery (1.35). This finding support the framework of theoplacity that demonstrates that religious tourism and pilgrimages are related to experience authenticity, and in addition are shaped by Geopiety, religious beliefs underlying the visit (see for example, Suntikul and Darii, 2016; Taheri, 2016; Nicolaidis & Grobler, 2017; Sanchez et al., 2017; Shafaei, 2017; Wong et al., 2016; Battour et al., 2017; Bond et al., 2015; Kim & Kim, 2018; Collins-Kreiner, 2018; Amaro et al., 2018; Kaewumpai, 2018; Terzidou et al., 2018).

Table 4.1: Motivating Factors

Motivating Factors	Average Arithmetic Mean
Spirituality and piety	1.40
Religious affiliation	1.20
Cultural experiences	1.40
Forgiveness of sin	1.35
Veneration of the founder	2.65
Seeking physical Healing	1.40
Seeking miraculous powers	1.20
Personal discovery (life meaning)	1.35
Powers to get rich quickly	2.05

Source Own

Results from the revelatory case study show that most religious tourists and pilgrims commonly did the following activities at the shrine; visiting the souvenir shop (1.50), visited and prayed at the grave of the founder of ZCC Church (1.50), visited and interacted with local communities (1.50), kept on seeking for better accommodation (1.25), made group prayers (1.25) and bought goods from local communities (1.50). The findings show that most tourists and pilgrims at the shrine also engage in non-religious activities as part of seeking meaning of oneself and also as part of their cultural experiences. Support for these findings are observed in literature (see Brown, 2016; Ballantyne et al., 2016; Hung et al., 2017; Damari & Mansfeld, 2016; Dafuleya et al., 2017). The perceived economic value derived from maintenance factors include; employment creation for the local communities, generation of foreign currency generation and local community development especially reduction of poverty and hunger.

Table 4.2: Maintenance or Hygiene Factor

Observed activities and routines	Average Arithmetic Mean
Visiting souvenir shop	1.50
Visits to local communities	1.50
Seeking better accommodation	1.25
Fasting, singing and prayer	1.60
Group prayers	1.25



Visiting the grave of the founder member	1.50
Visiting local schools and hospital	1.20
Bought goods displayed by local people	1.50
Cutting of trees to build shelters	1.20

Source own

From the second focus group discussion it was apparent that activities in Table 4.2 could be considered as 'maintenance' or 'hygiene' factors. These activities of routines are essential to a religious tourist or a pilgrim but are not necessarily a key motivator for visiting the shrine. The results have important implications such as the the need to involve local communities to provide accommodation and other necessary services required by religious tourist and pilgrims given the small capacity of ZCC Mbungu Shrine. In addition they also suggest the need to invest in supporting infrastructure such as roads, rail, telecommunication and information systems network.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations can be proffered from this study. Since religious tourism and pilgrimages can be considered as specialised niche segments, there is a need to organise packaged tours for pilgrims and religious tourists, build decent accommodation near the shrine and offer supporting services such as building more souvenir shops, offering guided tours that enable the travelers to the shrine to have beautiful memories after the visit. There is all also a need to involve local communities to reduce potential intra-religious conflicts considering that this shrine is surrounded by communities that practice secular religion. Local communities can supplement accommodation and can work as guides since they know the area so well. This is because what can be considered sacred by pilgrims could also be of cultural interest and as an exotic experience by the religious tourists. Marketing strategies to improve ZCC Mbungu brand equity such as adopting digital marketing, through investing in new technologies and capacity building for local guides, refurbishing accommodation sites, respecting local traditions promote peace and reduce conflicts. Tourism development requires a strategy for good environmental management to be in place and this must be both effective and efficient. Additionally, within this notion, the issue of mindfulness should be further promoted so that "greater emphasis can be placed upon mindfulness-based tourism products leading to greater sustainability of the industry and the environment" (Nicolaidis, 2020).

ZCC Mbungu shrine is highly congested during religious festival and hence the potential to cause irreversible damages to the natural, historic and socio-economic and cultural environment. Under such conditions the full revenue potential of this shrine may not be realized. Against this background it is imperative that touristic and pilgrim activities should minimise possible impact on the local culture and other non-renewable resources by promoting ecologically sustainable practices that include allowing religious tourists and pilgrims to combine the search for spiritual piety, religiosity and experiences by providing service to under-privileged local communities and earth-consciousness. This shrine managers should encourage cultural reproachment, use religious tourism and pilgrimage as an instrument of peace building and mutual understanding, encourage local entrepreneurship. This might help local communities not only to seek greater with connectedness to religious tourist and pilgrims and appreciate other faiths but to create employment for themselves, and hence, contribute to national development.

In other regional countries such as South Africa and Botswana that have similar ZCC shrines, religious tourist and pilgrims have been accused of expropriating, misrepresenting, appropriating



cultural symbols for profit. Closer cooperation with local community leaders can reduce the commodifiability of cultural symbols by promoting responsible and sustainable use of cultural assets. At the same time the strategy can help to create new employment opportunities by empowering local communities especially vulnerable and marginalized groups especially, people living with disabilities, women, youth and child-headed families. This might require a multi-actor collaboration involving the government, to manage the provision of public roads, tourist and pilgrim security and accommodation, for the benefit of all stakeholders.

Conclusion

The quest for spiritual healing, knowledge discovery, wealth, piety, cultural experiences, absolutions of sins among other factors have often driven religious tourists and pilgrims to visit various religious shrines and sacred sites. The ZCC Mbungu shrine is a popular shrine that attracts several religious tourists and pilgrims' world over. The purpose of the study was to examine some of the key factors that motivate religious tourism and pilgrimages to the ZCC Mbungu shrine. Some of the factors include; cultural experience, religious affiliation, piety, religiosity, meaning and purpose of life, self-reflexivity, closeness of body, mind and soul and discovery. Our recommendation include the promotion of responsible and sustainable religious tourism and pilgrimage, including local communities to manage intra-religious conflicts and create employment opportunities for locals.

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