

TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA'S BORDERLAND REGIONS: A SPATIAL VIEW

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Abstract: Borderlands tourism is attracting a growing international scholarship in particular in Europe and North America. This paper adopts a spatial view in order to pursue an exploratory analysis of the geography of tourism in South Africa's borderlands regions. The specific focus is upon understanding the growth and structure of tourism in those South Africa's metropolitan and district municipalities which adjoin the surrounding six countries of Southern Africa. Key results are that borderland spaces are a growing component of South Africa's tourism economy, albeit there is the spatial unevenness of borderlands tourism. The major anchors for borderlands tourism in South Africa are VFR travel, nature-based leisure tourism founded on iconic wildlife assets, and religious tourism. Although short-distance cross-border shopping tourism is in evidence it is far less significant than for borderland tourism in North America or Europe. The study opens up further research questions about tourism in South Africa's borderlands in particular concerning the varying structure of tourism in particular spaces and of the specific geographies of different kinds of borderlands tourism.

Key words: Borderlands tourism; spatial distribution; South Africa; VFR travel; nature-based tourism

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INTRODUCTION

Borderland regions are attracting a rising interdisciplinary scholarship as indicated by viewing the contents of the cluster of specialist journals such as *Journal of Borderland Studies*, *Journal of Borderland Research* and *Journal of Border Studies*. Borderland regions are defined broadly as "subnational areas whose economic life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international frontier" (Hansen, 1977: 2). Of significance is that borderland regions usually exhibit critical challenges for economic

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development (Hansen, 1977). For regional planners border zones or borderlands often are categorised as ‘problem’ or ‘special regions’ (Friedmann, 1966). As highlighted by Gelbman & Timothy (2011: 110), communities living in borderland regions “often find themselves in a complex reality of living ‘in the middle’ between two societies and cultures, between two economic systems and in the shadow of changing international relations”. In many cases geographically marginal borderland regions are some of the poorest and underdeveloped in national space economies. Often poor, sometimes with substantial tracts of land for military usage, borderland areas exhibit particular characteristics, challenges and opportunities as regards local and regional development. Remote geographically from the major centres of economic and political power borderland regions can be highly problematic for governments in terms of generating economic development (Friedmann, 1966; Hansen, 1977). During the 1960s and 1970s era of advancing globalisation and the making of a ‘new international division of labour’ the promotion of manufacturing activities, often situated in special economic zones with tax incentives and deregulated labour regimes, was viewed as a positive strategy for promoting the economic development of border regions (Fröbel et al., 1976, 1980).

The best examples are Mexico’s *maquiladoras* or export-processing factories that were set up in a ring of towns close to the United States border to import materials for processing, transformation and subsequent re-export mainly back to the USA (Stoddard, 1990; Kopinak, 1996, 2003). Clothing, shoes, electronics and motor-car parts were among a range of industrial products undertaken in these assembly plants which are situated on or close to Mexico’s northern border (South, 1990; Wilson, 1992). More recent examples of industrialisation in borderland regions are the ‘growth triangles’ of South East Asia with the Malaysia-Indonesia-Singapore growth triangle seen as one vehicle for local and regional development in such borderland zones (Henderson, 2001; Hampton, 2010). Nevertheless, with the global shift of manufacturing to the even cheaper labour attractions of China, and most recently to Vietnam, the momentum of borderland export-oriented industrial development in Mexico and parts of Southeast Asia has begun to ebb.

Increasingly, an observed trend is that local and regional planners show growing interest in the potential for developing tourism in borderland spaces (Henderson, 2001). This policy concern as well as the distinctive character of borderland regions underpins a rise in importance of these regions for tourism scholars. However, among others Elliott (2011: 1) points out that while the subject of borders is at the heart of international tourism it “remains an understudied component of tourism research”. Likewise, Askew & Cohen (2004) maintain that border tourism demands more systematic attention by scholars and not least as a geographical phenomenon. Indeed, understanding the production and organization of tourism spaces as well as the changing dynamics of the tourism space economy remain central challenges for tourism researchers (Hall & Page, 2006; Hall, 2013; Lew et al., 2014). Against this backdrop the present paper adopts a spatial perspective in order to pursue an exploratory analysis of the geography of tourism in South Africa’s borderlands regions. Over the past 30 years tourism geographical research has diversified in its scope and moved away from issues of spatial analysis *per se* and instead to embrace a range of different theoretical issues, methodological perspectives and empirical agendas (Butler, 2004; Hall & Page, 2009; Che, 2018; Gill, 2018). This said, it remains that the ‘spatial view’ is the most distinctive contribution made by geographical scholars to the international corpus of tourism studies (Butler, 2004; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019). As reiterated recently by Richard Butler (2018: 2) it is “of critical importance to tourism research to keep the spatial element in tourism research strong and visible, thus reminding researchers and others of the importance of the geographical viewpoint” (Butler, 2018: 2).

The changing tourism space economy of South Africa has been scrutinised in a number of research publications which have been produced during the past decade (Rogerson, 2014a, 2015a, 2015b, 2017a, 2017b; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019). No attention, however, so far has been given to the role of borderland regions in the country's tourism economy and the particular characteristics and issues around tourism development in those regions. South Africa shares an international boundary with six other African countries namely Swaziland, Mozambique, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Namibia and therefore the country contains a range of different borderlands regions. The objective of this paper is to undertake an exploratory analysis of the geography of borderlands tourism across South Africa's metropolitan and district municipalities which adjoin these surrounding six countries of Southern Africa. Two sections of material follow. First, as context, an international review of literature and debates concerning tourism and borders and of borderlands as tourism regions is undertaken. The second section unpacks the size, complexion and patterns of borderland regions of South Africa.

RESEARCH ON BORDERLANDS TOURISM

Borders have significant implications for tourism flows as well as for tourism scholarship. As argued by Prokkola (2010: 223) the relationship between tourism and international borders is fundamental as "travel almost always involves crossing some political or other border, and borderlands are often the first or last areas of a state that travellers see". In addition, Timothy et al. (2016: 1) point out that whilst international borders conventionally have been seen as barriers the connections between borders and tourism "are highly diverse" (Timothy et al., 2016: 1). In the environments of borderlands tourism the social, cultural and economic aspects of life of local communities can be impacted by international politics (Sofield, 2006). This said, it is argued both that "border landscapes can also provide opportunities for collaboration and development" and that border areas can be transformed by transnational border crossings (Timothy et al., 2016). Critically, borders and their adjacent regions – borderlands – often function as tourism attractions such that several regions' tourism economies are founded almost entirely on the existence of a political boundary (Timothy, 1995). Arguably, cross-border tourism can be a useful developmental add-on to more conventional forms of international tourism for the growth of certain local and regional economies (Hampton, 2010).

The several works produced by Dallen Timothy (1995, 1999, 2001; Timothy and Butler, 1995) were highly influential in initially alerting the attention of tourism scholars to the importance of borders and of the need to interrogate issues around borderland tourism. Timothy (2001) argued that despite the significance of borders and a long history of foreign travel "very little has ever been written, and thus little is known about them in the context of tourism". Further, it was observed that only since the late 1990s that "scholars started to merge border research with tourism" and that its recent character was explained as a reflection of "the relative infancy of tourism as an area of academic study" (Timothy, 2001). In some of the foundational studies concerning borders and tourism Timothy (1995: 525) highlighted the particular role of certain borders as tourist attractions and "the tendency of various types of international frontiers and their associated environments to attract significant tourist numbers". Examples are the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea (Hunter, 2015), the transformation of some of Israel's hostile borders to inviting tourist attractions (Gelbman, 2008; Gelbman & Timothy, 2010; Gelbman, 2016) and the potential for heritage clusters in borderland regions (Blasco et al., 2014a).

For borderland regions of North America Timothy (1995) and Timothy & Butler (1995) drew attention to the significance of the phenomenon of cross-border shopping

and of bordertown gambling as generators of tourism. This underscores the fact that whilst the borderline itself might not be of great significance to tourism “its socio-economic implications in frontier regions are” (Timothy et al., 2016: 3) with the associated growth of specialist services such as foreign exchange offices to cater to the needs of border tourists. Informality is observed as a striking feature of entrepreneurship as a whole in many borderland spaces, including for informal tourism retailers (Xheneti et al., 2012; Koff, 2015a, 2015b). It is observed that cross-border shopping is significant in many parts of the world primarily because of the different array of products available and often lower prices and taxes on opposite sides of a border, a theme that has catalysed several research contributions on transfrontier retail operations particularly in Europe (Bar-Kolelis & Wiskulski, 2012; Sullivan et al., 2012; Makkonen, 2016; Studzienicki et al., 2016; Bar-Kolelis & Wendt, 2018; Studzinska et al., 2018; Szytniewski & Spierings, 2018). Cuevas et al. (2016) draw attention to the Pink Store as a unique shopping tourism enterprise at the border between the USA and Mexico.

In another early contribution to borderlands tourism scholarship Timothy’s (1999) focus was directed at cross-border partnerships in tourism resource management using the example of international parks along the border between the United States and Canada (Timothy, 1999). During the past decades “border landscapes within European internal borders regions have gradually been transformed into open landscapes, both physically and symbolically, and some have been turned into arenas for co-operative tourism planning” (Prokkola, 2010: 224). For recent research on cross-border tourism particularly in Europe key focus issues have included cross-border tourism governance and destination management (Blasco et al., 2014b; Bujdoso et al., 2015; Stoffelen et al., 2017; Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2017, 2018). Collaborative cross-border projects for tourism development have been explored particularly in the context of peripheral regions in Nordic countries (Ioannides et al., 2006; Prokkola, 2007). In other parts of Europe the potential for cross-border tourism development also has been investigated (Vujko & Plavska, 2013; Bujdoso et al., 2015). In certain regions the expansion of cross-border tourism requires enhanced transport infrastructure as shown for the Polish-Slovak borderland (Michniak et al., 2015). Between Belgium, Germany and Luxembourg Stoffelen (2018) evaluates the potential for leveraging cycling trails as an element in borderlands development. Kozoviy (2018) points to the potential of ‘sentimental tourism’ in terms of cross-border flows of tourists between Poland and Ukraine. Tourism development in the borderlands of Poland is scrutinised by Wieckowski (2010). As is shown by the example of Romania the differential ‘permeability’ of borders can impact on the volume of cross-border tourism traffic (Ilieş et al., 2011).

The above discussion confirms that the largest proportion of existing borderlands tourism research has been pursued in the context of the global North. Indeed, the dominance of research about the global North is confirmed in the examination of the issues around tourism and international borders within two recent edited collections of research papers by Wachowiak (2016) and by Paasi et al. (2019). Arguably, for the global South the issue of informality looms large in borderlands and is exemplified best by the growth of informal cross-border trading in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa (Timothy & Teye, 2005). In South Africa only minimal attention has been given by tourism scholars to questions surrounding borderlands and tourism. The most important research focus has been upon transfrontier game parks, their impacts, conservation and governance issues (Ramutsindela, 2004; Ferreira, 2006; Büscher, 2013). For Ferreira (2004) the establishment of what others have called ‘peace parks’ straddling the borders of several countries in Southern Africa has come to be viewed as a critical base for leveraging the benefits of nature-based tourism for local communities resident in borderlands.

According to Sinthumule (2016) the formation of transfrontier conservation areas, the anchor for borderlands tourism development, is the 21st century approach to the management of protected areas in Southern Africa. In an important contribution Spenceley (2006, 2008) examines the growth, local tourism impacts and prospects for sustainable tourism in one such peace park, the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park that straddles the borders of South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Chiutsi and Saarinen (2017) interrogate the impacts and prospects for sustainable tourism of this park in the south-eastern Lowveld of Zimbabwe. In the same area Chirozva (2015) explores how local communities are engaging in ecotourism entrepreneurship. Nevertheless, the limits for tourism development linked to transfrontier conservation parks in Southern Africa because of government institutional obstacles are highlighted by Vrahimis & Visser (2006) using the example of the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier park which crosses the international border between Lesotho and South Africa. More broadly, Van Amerom & Büscher (2005) critically dissect the multiple severe problems that limit the extent of local impacts from tourism in Southern Africa's marginalised border regions.

BORDERLANDS TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

A key reason behind the lack of prior research on the geographies of borderlands tourism in South Africa relates to data inadequacies. Below that of the country's nine provinces no official sub-national data exists for tourism in South Africa. In interpreting the details of the tourism space economy necessary recourse is made to the extensive data base which is available through the private sector consultancy IHS Global Insight. Indeed, because of the general weakness of official economic data at a subnational level in South Africa this database is used widely for purposes of local and regional development planning (IHS Global Insight, 2015). The tourism data base represents a subset of the IHS Global Insight Regional eXplorer, a consolidated platform of integrated data bases that, in the absence of official establishment and enterprise surveys, currently offers the most useful data at sub-national scale including at municipal administrative scale (IHS Global Insight, 2015). The data base uses the regular collation/triangulation of a suite of primary information which is secured from a wide range of official and non-government sources. This data is reworked to ensure consistency across variables as well as by applying national and sub-national verification tests to ensure that the modelled data is consistent for measuring economic activity (IHS Global Insight, 2015).

For South African researchers the local tourism data base of IHS Global Insight is valuable because it contains details which include the tourism performance of all municipal authorities in the country in respect, *inter alia*, of the number of tourism trips as differentiated by primary purpose of trip (leisure, business, visiting friends and relatives, and 'other'); tourism trips by origin of trip (domestic or international), bednights by origin of tourist (domestic or international); and calculation of tourism spend. From this national data base information for this research was extracted for the period 2001-2015 relating to tourism trips as differentiated for all the group of borderland district and metropolitan authorities across the country. More specifically, the data for 2001, 2006 and 2015 form the basis for this exploratory analysis of borderlands tourism in South Africa. Borderlands tourism in South Africa encompasses seven of the country's nine provinces, namely Eastern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape and North West. Only South Africa's two most prosperous provinces, Gauteng and Western Cape, do not have an international border.

Figure 1 shows that borderlands tourism impacts one metropolitan authority (Mangaung) as well as 20 district municipalities across the country. Of the group of 20 borderland district municipalities two are in Eastern Cape, three in Free State, five in

KwaZulu-Natal, four in Limpopo, two in Mpumalanga, two in Northern Cape and two in North West province. Inevitably, definitional questions arise concerning what constitutes the scope of 'borderland' regions and the extent to which local economic life actually "is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international border" (cf. Hansen, 1977). Here it is conceded that for certain municipalities the geographical territory under their administrative jurisdiction extends some distance away from the border, albeit in many of these cases such as for several municipalities in North West and Northern Cape provinces the extended areas are arid and sparsely populated. This limitation to the study is acknowledged but in the absence of more fine grained geographical data an administrative definition necessarily is applied. The focus is on those metropolitan or district municipalities that are adjacent to one of the following six countries, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland or Zimbabwe.

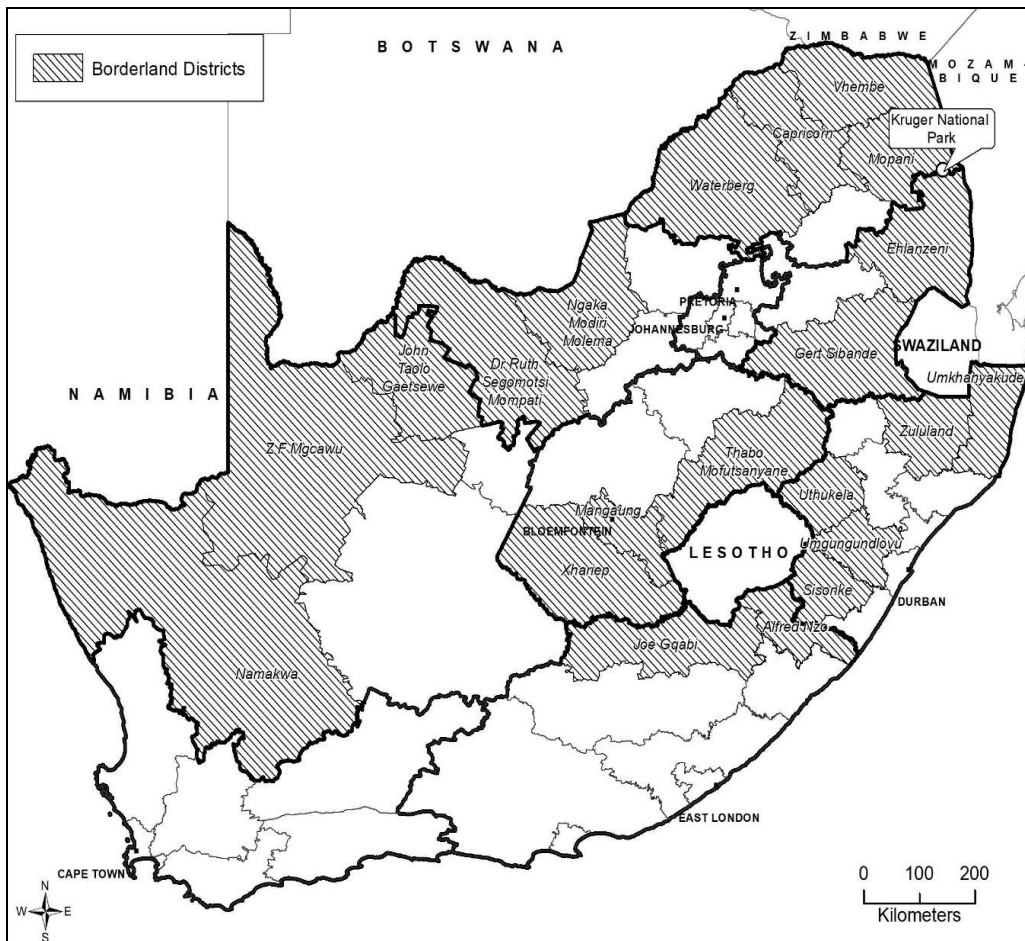


Figure 1. The Location of 21 Borderland Municipalities in South Africa.

RESULTS

The analysis in this subsection represents an exploration of the geography of borderlands tourism for the 21 metropolitan and district municipalities in South Africa which adjoin and in some way are impacted by a frontier with surrounding countries in

the sub-region of Southern Africa. Using the data for the years 2001, 2006 and 2015 Table 1 provides an initial broad profile of the state of borderlands tourism in South Africa. It discloses the size and share of borderlands tourism in the national tourism economy across 11 varying indicators. These relate to total tourism spend; total trips and differentiated both by purpose and origin; and, for total bednights and differentiated by origin.

Table 1. Borderland Tourism in South Africa: Indicators of Size 2001, 2006, and 2015
(Data source: Authors Based on IHS Global Data)

Indicator	2001	%National	2006	%National	2015	%National
Total Spend	R17.48 billion	23.7	R29.07 billion	22.9	R59.17 billion	25.0
Total Trips	8.02 million	34.1	11.00 million	33.2	14.7 million	36.2
Leisure	1.34 million	26.3	1.39 million	23.7	2.24 million	29.9
Business	0.57 million	24.3	0.77 million	23.2	1.36 million	29.4
VFR	4.62 Million	36.4	7.72 million	37.0	9.78 million	39.2
Other	1.48 million	44.7	1.11 million	36.4	1.31 million	36.5
Domestic	7.05 million	34.8	9.59 million	34.8	12.06 million	37.4
International	0.97 million	24.7	1.41 million	25.1	2.64 million	31.3
Total Bednights	37.28 million	28.9	52.39 million	28.2	51.82 million	30.3
Domestic	29.64 million	31.8	43.88 million	31.0	36.50 million	34.3
International	7.64 million	21.2	8.51 million	19.1	15.32 million	23.8

As a whole the best indicators of the volume and impact of local tourism are provided by a review of total trip and tourism spend data (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2019). Table 1 shows that by 2015 borderlands tourism totalled 14.7 million trips which generated a total tourism spend of R59.17 billion (current prices). In terms of national share it is observed that borderlands represent 36.2 percent of total trips but only 25.0 total spend which points to a lower value of trip spend to borderlands than to other regions of South Africa. It is revealed, however, that between 2001-2015 net growth is recorded for both indicators of total trips and spend. Growth in the total numbers of trips is shown for the three major purposes of travel, namely the segments of leisure, business and visiting friends and relatives (VFR) tourism (Table 1).

Only in the residual category of 'other' travel (mainly health and religious travel) is a net decrease recorded in borderland trips between 2001 and 2015. In addition to the absolute growth in importance of borderlands tourism as indexed by total trips and total spend indicators, in relative terms the significance of borderland areas in the national tourism economy is on the rise. This trend is indicated by the growth in the national share for the major segments of leisure, business and VFR travel (Table 1). The highest contribution of the borderlands occurs in the category of VFR travel which in South Africa is dominated by the movements of low-income black travellers between split 'homes' situated in urban and rural areas (Rogerson, 2015a, 2015b, 2017c). Many of South Africa's remote borderland regions in KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and Limpopo contain extensive spaces that formerly represented the 'Homelands' created under apartheid as segregated regions for exclusive residence of Black households. These segregated spaces are the rural residences of multi-locational households and so function as a major driver for VFR travel to the borderlands at certain periods of the year (Rogerson, 2017c).

The 36.5 percent share of national 'other' travel accounted for by the borderlands requires brief elaboration as this is considerably higher than the national share of 15.2 % for such travel purposes. The much higher proportion of 'other' travel in borderlands is explained mainly by the substantial flows of religious travellers to several pilgrimage sites of a number of large African independent churches. The most significant are Moria village (Limpopo), site of the Zion Christian Church, and a number of sacred places in rural

KwaZulu-Natal of the Nazareth Baptist Church (Rogerson, 2014b; Nyakana, 2017). At various periods of the year these (and other pilgrimage) sites attract large gatherings of church followers with Zion City, the most important, attracting an estimated one and a half million church members for several days during the Easter pilgrimage. The largest share of these religious tourists are domestic visitors drawn from residents of urban townships in Gauteng, South Africa's economic heartland who incorporate often a component of visits to friends and relatives as well as the religious event (Saayman et al., 2014). International flows of religious tourists from surrounding countries are also in evidence. Overall, in terms of origin of visits it is noted that the borderlands have expanded both their absolute numbers and relative share of domestic and international trips as well as of bednights across the period 2001-2015. The caveat must be added, however, that the category of 'bednights' includes both paid and unpaid accommodation. As is shown elsewhere, in South Africa a substantial proportion of domestic bednights is linked to VFR travel which is mostly taken in unpaid accommodation staying at the homes of friends or, more commonly, with relatives (Rogerson, 2018). This is especially so in the former rural Homelands which make-up a swathe of borderland spaces especially for Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces as well as parts of North West and Free State province.

Table 2. Structure of Borderlands Tourism in South Africa 2001-2015
(Data source: Authors Based on IHS Global Data)

	2001 %	2015 %
Purpose of Trip	VFR 57.6 Other 18.5 Leisure 16.7 Business 7.1	VFR 66.5 Leisure 15.2 Business 9.3 Other 8.9
Origin of Trip	Domestic 87.9 International 12.1	Domestic 82.0 International 18.0
Bednights by Origin	Domestic 79.5 International 20.5	Domestic 70.4 International 29.6

Table 2 provides further insight into the changing complexion and components of the borderlands tourism economy by comparing data for 2001 and 2015. In parallel with the national situation VFR travel is the largest element of tourism flows to South Africa's borderland regions (Rogerson, 2015b). It is evidenced, however, from Table 2 that the relative share of VFR in total trips is on the increase as is demonstrated by a comparison of 2001 and 2015 results. Of note is that whilst leisure is now the second most significant purpose of travel in borderlands its actual share of overall trips is in relative decline. By contrast, business travel records a small increase in its relative importance in the borderlands. The most notable shift is the decline recorded in the performance of the volatile 'other' category which is largely determined by the fluctuations in the annual numbers of religious tourists. In respect of travel source, a marked growth in relative terms is apparent in the significance of international as opposed to domestic trips to the borderlands (Table 2).

In accounting for this shift three points must be noted. First, is that during the study period, there occurred a mass influx of Zimbabweans into South Africa as a consequence of the country's economic meltdown in the wake of former President Mugabe's disastrous land grab programme and mismanagement of the economy. It has been recorded in another investigation of Limpopo tourism that several of the district municipalities (Vhembe, Mopani and Capricorn) are growing destinations for considerable flows of cross-border Zimbabwean visitors (Tsoanamatsie, 2014). Second,

one further consequence of the economic collapse and hyperinflation in Zimbabwe has been a spiralling in informal cross-border trading from Zimbabwe into South Africa (Chiliya et al., 2012; Chikanda & Tawodzera, 2017). Although most of this informal business trade concentrates around Johannesburg, in recent years there has emerged also a notable smaller flow of cross-border shoppers to Musina, the northernmost town in South Africa located 27 kms from the Zimbabwe border. This new appearance of shopping tourism at Musina is linked to commercial shopping mall developments built in the town and the relocation there of a number of Chinese traders from businesses in Johannesburg (Chikanda & Tawodzera, 2017). Smaller cross-border shopping flows have been observed from Lesotho into the border towns in South Africa's Free State province and even as far as Bloemfontein, the major centre of the Mangaung metropolitan area. Three, in terms of the relative strength of international tourism, it must be understood that there are close ethnic ties between communities across the borders of South Africa and its neighbours, especially Lesotho and Swaziland, which is another factor boosting international VFR travel to the borderlands as a whole (Rogerson, 2017c).

Table 3. Key Indicators of Total Trips (million) and Total Spend (ZAR R billion) for Borderlands, 2001-2015 Source: Authors Based on IHS Global Data

Municipality (Province)	Trips 2001	Spend 2001	%TS 2001	Trips 2006	Spend 2006	%TS 2006	Trips 2015	Spend 2015	%TS 2015
EC Alfred Nzo	0.35	0.37	2.1	0.50	0.72	2.5	0.33	0.79	1.3
EC Joe Qwabi Coast	0.06	0.10	0.6	0.15	0.25	0.9	0.14	0.37	0.6
NC Namakwa	0.07	0.17	1.0	0.09	0.24	0.8	0.11	0.45	0.8
NC ZF Mgcawu	0.15	0.32	1.8	0.18	0.47	1.6	0.19	0.77	1.3
NC John Taolo Gaetsewe	0.06	0.18	1.0	0.13	0.38	1.3	0.20	0.75	1.3
FS Xhariep	0.06	0.20	1.1	0.11	0.40	1.4	0.14	0.98	1.7
FS Thabo Mofutsanyane	0.44	0.78	4.5	0.57	1.21	4.2	0.53	2.11	3.6
FS Mangaung	0.53	1.22	7.0	0.72	2.10	7.2	0.81	4.36	7.4
KZN Uthukela	0.49	1.26	7.2	0.62	2.14	7.4	0.46	2.54	4.3
KZN Zululand	0.40	1.01	5.8	0.56	1.63	5.6	0.47	1.42	2.4
KZN Sisonke	0.10	0.18	1.0	0.25	0.42	1.5	0.28	0.69	1.2
KZN Umkhanyakude	0.29	0.73	4.2	0.44	1.28	4.4	0.39	1.60	2.7
KZN uMgungundlovu	0.50	1.01	5.8	0.75	1.87	6.4	0.71	2.65	4.4
NW Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati	0.28	0.28	1.6	0.34	0.41	1.4	0.31	0.56	0.9
NW Ngaka Modiri Molema	0.52	1.49	8.5	0.57	2.19	7.5	0.45	2.13	3.6
MP Gert Sibande	0.33	0.73	4.2	0.55	1.28	4.4	1.06	3.12	5.3
MP Ehlanzeni	1.22	4.00	22.9	1.40	5.69	19.6	1.98	12.35	20.9
LIM Mopani	0.79	1.45	8.3	0.92	2.23	7.7	1.43	6.13	10.4
LIM Vhembe	0.24	0.30	1.7	0.52	0.78	2.7	1.24	3.38	5.7
LIM Capricorn	0.80	0.91	5.2	1.11	1.71	5.9	2.20	5.52	9.3
LIM Waterberg	0.29	0.78	4.5	0.51	1.64	5.7	1.21	6.48	11.0

Table 3 shows the spatial distribution of borderland tourism in South Africa. For the 21 borderland municipalities it indicates total trips and total spend for the years 2001, 2006 and 2015 as well as the share of each municipality in total spend of borderland tourism for these three respective years. Several points are of note. First, as indexed by tourism spend, at the provincial level by 2015 borderlands tourism concentrates mostly in Limpopo (36.1. %), Mpumalanga (26.2%) and KwaZulu-Natal (15.0%) provinces.

These together account for 77.3 percent of the total spend and are followed by smaller contributions from Free State (12.7%), North West (4.5%), Northern Cape (3.4%) and Eastern Cape (1.9%). Second, is that borderlands tourism in South Africa is both an

urban as well as a rural phenomenon. The urban component is accounted for most importantly by Mangaung, Ehlanzeni and the four borderland district municipalities of Limpopo (Table 3). All of these six districts contain sizeable urban settlements as well as extensive rural spaces. Several of the remainder are remote districts which are mainly with small towns and extensive rural areas. Three, the most significant individual area is Ehlanzeni district municipality, the gateway to Kruger National Park, South Africa's iconic destination for viewing 'big 5' wildlife. Kruger National Park is the catalyst for substantial domestic and international visitor flows to the Ehlanzeni district.

The second most important locality is Waterberg. This is a region with a biosphere reserve that is an emerging destination for wildlife viewing (Lyon et al., 2017). It is also increasingly functioning as a 'leisure periphery' for wealthy residents from Gauteng's major cities. The third most significant district is Mopani, which is again a beneficiary of nature-based tourism including from the northern parts of Kruger National Park.

Table 4. Leading Geographical Areas (Municipality) by Purpose of Travel (% Trips)
Data source: Authors based on IHS Global Insight data

Purpose	2001 %	2006 %	2015 %
Leisure	25.2 Ehlanzeni 10.6 Mopani 7.8 Mangaung	24.6 Ehlanzeni 8.7 Mopani 8.1 Mangaung	22.0 Ehlanzeni 15.5 Waterberg 12.3 Mopani
Business	22.6 Ehlanzeni 11.8 Mangaung 8.7 Gert Sibande	18.5 Ehlanzeni 11.5 Mangaung 7.7 Gert Sibande	18.1 Ehlanzeni 15.8 Capricorn 10.8 Mangaung
VFR	12.9 Ehlanzeni 9.5 Mopani 7.7 Ngaka Molema	10.6 Ehlanzeni 8.8 Mopani 8.6 Capricorn	13.5 Capricorn 11.6 Ehlanzeni 10.2 Mopani
Other	28.9 Capricorn 11.7 Mopani 10.9 Ehlanzeni	29.5 Capricorn 8.6 Ehlanzeni 6.4 Mangaung	38.9 Capricorn 7.9 Ehlanzeni 5.4 Mangaung

Table 5. Leading Geographical Areas (Municipality) by Origin of Travel (%)
Data source: Authors Based on IHS Global Data

Origin	2001	2006	2015
Domestic Trips	13.6 Ehlanzeni 11.0 Capricorn 10.6 Mopani	11.0 Ehlanzeni 10.9 Capricorn 8.6 Mopani	16.6 Capricorn 12.0 Ehlanzeni 9.5 Mopani
International Trips	27.7 Ehlanzeni 11.7 Mangaung 9.4 Uthukela	24.2 Ehlanzeni 10.6 Mangaung 9.9 Uthukela	20.4 Ehlanzeni 10.6 Mangaung 9.9 Uthukela
Domestic Bednights	11.7 Ehlanzeni 9.8 Capricorn 9.4 Mopani	10.1 Ehlanzeni 10.0 Capricorn 7.9 Mopani	14.7 Capricorn 11.6 Ehlanzeni 8.4 Mopani
International Bednights	22.9 Ehlanzeni 14.1 Thabo Mofutsanyane 10.1 Mangaung	20.8 Ehlanzeni 10.1 Thabo Mofutsanyane 9.1 Mangaung	24.9 Ehlanzeni 16.2 Mangaung 10.5 Thabo Mofutsanyane

Overall, it is apparent that the largest flows of non-VFR travel to South Africa's borderlands are driven by local nature-based assets. On Tables 4 and 5 are recorded the three leading municipalities for each purpose of travel (Table 4) and origin of travel (Table 5). It is significant that the three leading district municipalities for total tourism spend are also the same three ranked destinations for leisure travel. For business, VFR

and especially the exceptional case of other travel the Capricorn district is strongly represented. With an urban centre that functions as a business node as well as an extensive rural space (including former Homelands) both the Ehlanzeni and Capricorn districts perform well also in terms of business and VFR travel. In relation to origin of travel Capricorn, Ehlanzeni and Mopani respectively are the leading destinations for domestic tourists. Significantly, for the category of international tourism Ehlanzeni is dominant and is followed by Mangaung which attracts substantial flows of international visitors from Lesotho. In addition, the mobilities of cross-border travellers from Lesotho are responsible for the ranking of Thabo Mofutsanyane district as another of the leading foci for international borderlands tourism in South Africa.

CONCLUSION

In recent years it is evident there has been an expansion of international debates about the relationship between borders and tourism (Timothy et al., 2016). Arguably, the relationships between tourism and borderland regions are complex and can vary geographically (Prokkola, 2010; Makkonen, 2016; Paasi et al., 2019). The existing literature on borderlands tourism was shown to encompass a number of different themes of debate most of which are interrogated in the environments of the global North. Based in the context of the global South the core task in this study was to apply a spatial perspective to interpret the broad development and complexification of borderlands tourism in South Africa. For this exploratory investigation the geography of borderlands tourism was mapped out. It reveals that borderland spaces are a growing component of South Africa's tourism economy. In addition, it shows the spatial unevenness of borderlands tourism. The major anchors for borderlands tourism in South Africa are disclosed as those of VFR travel, nature-based leisure tourism founded on iconic wildlife assets, and religious tourism. Although short-distance cross-border shopping tourism is in evidence it is far less significant than is recorded for studies conducted of borderland tourism in both North America and Europe. This analysis opens up further research questions about tourism in South Africa's borderlands particularly concerning the varying structure of tourism in specific spaces and of the geographies of different forms of borderlands tourism. In future research local level investigations are required to expand the agenda and debates about borderlands tourism in South Africa.

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