

## THE POTENTIAL OF AFRICAN RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGES AS A TOOL FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN KWAZULU-NATAL, SOUTH AFRICA

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**Abstract :** Religious pilgrimages are components of religious tourism and a revenue generator for different countries. The study aims to explore the contribution of African religious pilgrimages towards tourism development of the study areas. Sequential exploratory mixed method research design was applied in this paper. The study used a convenience sampling method of the non-probability sampling design in selecting 210 respondents. Additionally, convenience sampling was used in selecting 40 participants that were readily and easily accessible in the study area. Lastly, the elucidates that there is a need for tourism development for African religious pilgrimages.

**Key words:** tourism development, pilgrimage, pilgrims, tourist, tourism facilities, religious tourism.

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### INTRODUCTION

The histories of both phenomena are closely interwoven, and it can be argued that the activities of religious pilgrimages were transformed into religious tourism. As an example, religious pilgrims that travelled for spiritual purposes often engaged in sightseeing which is largely, a tourism activity along the way. Studies have indicated that religious issues are not the only ones considered by visitors to religious sites or events, and their motivation is composed of religious, cultural, traditional, spiritual, and landscape patterns, which often interact in the intention and decision to set out on a trip (Abbate and Nuovo, 2013; Amaro et al., 2018; Drule et al., 2015; Hughes et al., 2013; Kaewumpai, 2018; Kim and Kim, 2018; Olsen 2013; Terzidou et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2016). Religious pilgrimages which are a component of religious tourism are a big revenue generator for different countries. The researchers (e.g. Bremer, 2005; Shinde and Pinkney, 2013; Shinde, 2015) developed a personal interest for religious pilgrimages which is demonstrated in this paper as having a potential for tourism development. African religious pilgrimages with a strong component of religious tourism are a big revenue generator for developing countries such as South Africa (SA), as suggested by (Shinde, 2015). The researcher developed a personal interest for African religious pilgrimages which should be demonstrated here as having a potential for tourism development. It is the view of this study that it is important to create an opportunity for people and the tourism stakeholders to understand that the African religious pilgrimages can contribute to tourism development and subsequently to the general local economic development of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) as there are various religious pilgrimages.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious tourism is a big revenue generator for different countries (Telfer, 2002; Brouder, 2013). Tourism can be a potential and fruitful tool for provincial development, it may not be the most favourable use of resources in specific locations (Saarinen, 2014). The researcher's perspective about the African religious pilgrimages have not been seen as a big revenue generator because in the surroundings of these pilgrimages there are no tourism facilities that are in place for tourism development purposes in KZN. While it is viewed that the tourism sector that employs the largest work force in the world. Religious tourism draws huge crowds in the form of tourists and hence has an edge over other kinds of tourism (Telfer, 2002). The researcher felt that there is no contribution that is brought by the African religious pilgrimage destinations towards the tourism development while it stands to contribute a lot. The stakeholders who are supposed to facilitates this kind of contribution seem not to be aware of the value that can be brought these African religious pilgrimages. The expansion of domestic tourism holds considerable promise for stimulating economic development outside the existing tourism nodes (Rogerson and Lisa, 2005). Those studies that explore the experiences and the benefits related with religious tourism focus mainly on spiritual experiences, neglecting others such as social, educational, or restorative experiences (Bond et al., 2014). Although the studies that address the other three types of experiences are scarcer if this could be address, for example, in relation to educational experiences, as in the studies of (Nyaupane et al., 2015; Ramírez and Fernández, 2018). In spite of recognizing that managers of religious sites should offer visitors a wide range of activities, both spiritual and non-spiritual, that compliments each other with the aim of providing a holistic experience (Tirca and Stanculescu, 2011). There are various levels of religious tourism-international, national, regional and micro-level religious tourism (National Department of Tourism, 2012). The relationship between both terms, religion and tourism, has been studied from different perspectives (Collins-Kreiner, 2010, 2018; Terzidou et al., 2017). In traditional societies like ours, the pilgrimage journeys performed to God's grace and to learn moral values and to get respect in the individual community.

The religious tourist, in addition, is more faithful to pilgrimage destinations than the traditional tourist with motivations different to faith, returning to the site in a shorter period of time (Robles, 2001). With this long and religiously embedded tradition, the flow of people started to places of religions importance. The researcher's perception about the African religious pilgrimages, it is where pilgrims connects with God and where they find the comfort. In addition, the increase in tourists increases the income and benefits obtained by the companies dedicated to hospitality services in the area. The African religious pilgrimages around KwaZulu-Natal are not well built and the worst scenario with the Nazareth Baptist church religious pilgrimages are not well-built. This is what this paper is intending to do in making the locals to see the potential of tourism around these African religious pilgrimages. Sustainable livelihoods work, could be an attempt to draw economist colleagues and institutional dimensions of tourism development and environmental change. The local municipalities in KZN should be able to promote these sites and draws some integrated development plan that could make the tourists and the locals see the African religious pilgrimages potential. Since the rise of tourism in the global economy, the popularity of tourism as a vehicle for promoting provincial

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regional economic development. If these African religious pilgrimages can be well promoted can portray a great potential and increase in demand by general growth in business activities as well as the demand for travel, in terms of not desire but also the ability to participate in tourism activities and an expanded supply of tourism infrastructure that is purposefully created by provincial tourism entities.

It is cautioned that the desired goals of provincial development are not necessarily the same as the tourism industry's outcomes are specific economic activity, which in many cases on non-locally set priorities, values, needs and goals (Saarinen, 2003). A sustainability perspective, tourism-led growth does not necessarily translate into benefits for local communities and the environment. The interest of the researcher is not to commodify these African religious pilgrimage but to benefit the local communities and the religious pilgrimages. The researcher felt that there is a need of an Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) which pays attention to the contribution of African religious pilgrimages towards tourism development of all the surrounding local municipalities. These African religious pilgrimages have a potential of tourism growth because these pilgrimage destinations are visited annually by different kinds of tourists and the pilgrims which contributes a lot to the gross domestic product of the country. Since the rise of tourism in the global economy, the popularity of tourism as a vehicle for promoting provincial regional economic development. The local municipalities that surrounds these African religious pilgrimages have to come up with a tourism development plan that could develop the area and these pilgrimage destinations. The plan could make the tourist want to explore the contribution of African religious pilgrimages towards tourism development of the study areas. This study is in an endeavour to fill in the gap by exploring and elaborating on the religious tourism as another form of tourism that could contribute to the local economic development in the study area. By linking tourism to other local productive livelihoods, not only can the positive economic and employment impacts of tourism be maximised but also the negative impacts of tourism monoculture can be tempered (Lacher and Nepal, 2010).

According to Nazarites (2016), there are three hold festivals, which are in January, July and October, when bread is not eaten, is unleavened, made without yeast. Members of Shembe do participate in pilgrimage. According to Sithole (2015), thousands of people are baptised every Sunday in July and in January, the two biggest annual meetings of the church.

The pilgrimages in INanda have been a religious tourism benefit to the local economy.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Religious pilgrimages have been playing a significant role towards the development of tourism. The study aims to explore the contribution of African religious pilgrimages towards tourism development of the study areas. It is the view of this study that there is no contribution that is brought by the African religious pilgrimages towards the tourism development in KZN, whereas it has a potential to have an immense contribution. The stakeholders who are supposed to facilitate this kind of contribution seem not to be aware of the value that can be brought by these African religious pilgrimages.

### AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This section discusses the aim and specific objectives of the study.

Aim of the study

The study aims to explore the contribution of African religious pilgrimages towards tourism development of the study areas.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- (a) To ascertain the awareness of local people at the pilgrimage destinations of the tourism opportunities of pilgrimages within the study area;
- (b) To find out if there are any tourism facilities and products that are packaged for tourists and pilgrims in the study area;
- (c) To establish a perception of local communities towards the potential of pilgrimage destinations in enhancing economic development of the area;
- (d) To find out if the IDPs of the study area include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This paper, helps the researcher and the reader to understand the processes of the research thus giving it scientific merit. Research methodology is a set of procedures and methods that is used to carry out a search for knowledge and to achieve the research objectives (Jennings, 2010). Research design is the overall plan that spells out the strategies that the researcher uses to develop accurate, objective and interpretative information. Therefore, sequential exploratory mixed method research design was applied in the study. The mixed method originated as triangulation, which is the application and combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Morgan, 2014). This research used the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Mamabolo et al., 2017). A survey design was adopted for this study. According to (Ntshangase and Ezeuduji, 2020); the survey entails a researcher selecting a sample of respondents and administering a standardised questionnaire to each person in the sample. A questionnaire with both open-ended and close-ended questions was used to collect primary data. Close-ended questions were in form of a matrix in order to save time for respondents, and to increase the comparability of responses (Chawla and Sondhi, 2011). A sequential exploratory research design was applied in order to follow a strategy whereby qualitative interviews were conducted followed by a quantitative survey (Creswell, 2009). In most cases, tourism research needs quantitative data to get the required information to achieve the objectives of the study (Nkwanyana et al., 2016; Ezeuduji and Mbane, 2017).

After collecting data through face-to-face interviews, a quantitative approach allowed the researcher to generate statistical data that was presented in frequencies, percentages and tables. Data analyses was done using Statistical Packaged Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 software for statistical purposes. After data collection, there were (N=250) samples who participated in the study. Qualitative data was subjected to content analysis. This study used a convenience sampling method of the non-probability sampling design in selecting 210 respondents. A convenience sampling was used in selecting 40 respondents that were readily and easily accessible in different areas of the study area (Mertens, 2014; Taherdoost, 2016) advocates that convenience sampling often helps to overcome many of the limitations associated with the research. The respondents were therefore chosen based on convenience and availability. The respondents that participated in the study were pilgrims, municipality officials, Roman Catholic Priests and Nazareth Baptist church Ecclesiastes.

Furthermore, respondents were given assurance of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity with regards to the information provided. The participants chosen were between the age of 18 and 56 + years who were at the destination /shrine between 08h00 and 16h00 during the time when you were collecting data who could speak isiZulu and English, the languages the researcher is well conversant with.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of this section focuses on the socio-demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. For the purpose of this paper, specific attention was paid to the distribution of gender, age, and education of the respondents. The findings indicate that females

were the majority (66%) in terms of participation in the study as opposed to males who accounted for 34%. Based on the researcher’s observation is the females are most active in religious activities and the finding has been attributed to two reasons, which are: (a) the males slightly participates in religious pilgrimages, and (b) the fact that the total number of females surpasses that of males in the KZN Province and the country at large. The study found that the approximately 36 % of the respondents indicated that they varied between 22-35 of years whereas 29% of the respondents ranged between the age of 36-55, group 22% of the respondents 18-21 group. Lastly, the least response 13% was from the 56 years and above group. It is fascinating to note that the young adult age-group were leading respondents. This is mainly because they were more accessible than the other groups. According to Creswell (2009) and Taherdoost (2016), age is the important factor when one is conducting research. In Figure 1, it depicts the gender percentages. The respondents added up to a total sample of 250 subjects. The study starts by looking at the dynamics that occur within the municipality officials, pilgrims, Roman Catholic Priests and Nazareth Baptist Ecclesiastes. The socio-demographic characteristics of the municipality officials and pilgrims are important in the sense that the researcher can determine the extent to which the socio-demographic characteristics have a bearing on making the subjects respond the way they did. As indicated in Table 1 a number of demographic variables were analysed and the results were described below.

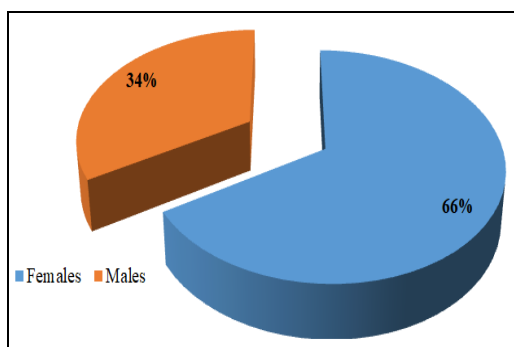


Figure 1. Gender of respondents

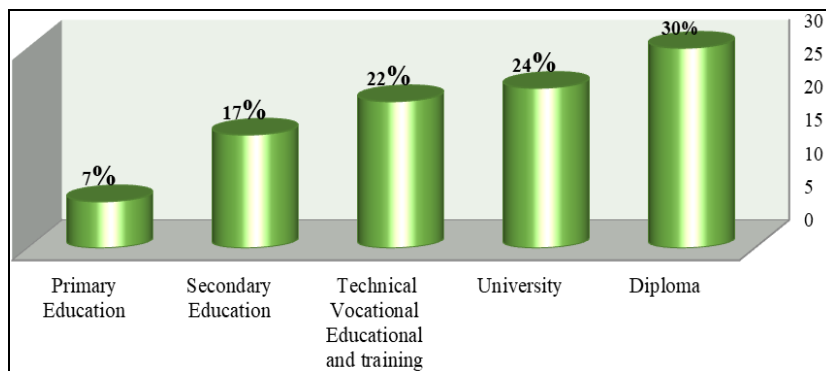


Figure 2. Level of education

Table 1. Profile of the respondents (N=195)

Variable	Sub-variable	Frequency	%
<b>Marital status</b>	Single	97	50
	Married	63	32
	Divorced	12	6
	Separated	11	6
	Widowed	12	6
	<b>Total</b>		<b>195</b>
<b>Level of education</b>	Primary Education [Gr 08]	14	7
	Secondary Education [Gr12]	33	17
	Diploma/ Certificate	60	30
	Technical Vocational Education and training	42	22
	University/ University of Technology	46	24
	<b>Total</b>		<b>195</b>
<b>Occupation levels</b>	Unskilled	24	12
	Semi-skilled	35	18
	Skilled	39	20
	Professional	54	28
	Retired	24	12
	Unemployed	19	10
	<b>Total</b>		<b>195</b>
<b>Monthly income status</b>	Less than R2000	67	35
	R2001- R5000	15	8
	R5001- R8000	16	8
	R8001- R10 000	26	13
	R10 001- R20 000	47	24
	More than R20 000	24	12
<b>Total</b>		<b>195</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The respondents were asked to reveal their marital status with the view of establishing their participation level in religious tourism activities in the study area. As shown in Table 1, the marital status of the respondents indicated that about 50% of the respondents in the study area were single. The next largest group was 32% were married. About 6% were divorced, widowed 6% and lastly 6% were separated. In the light of the above discussion, it would be interesting to establish whether the responses to religious tourism related matters would be influenced by the respondents’ marital status. The importance of education in the development of any community cannot be overemphasised.

The distribution of the education levels of the respondents emerged as shown in Figure 2 and is described below. The majority of the respondents in the education column (30%) indicated that they had only obtained the post matric diploma/ certificate of education. In the same token, about 24% of the respondents had acquired university/ university of technology qualifications and 22% had achieved the Technical Vocational Education and training qualifications (TVET). Furthermore, 17% of the respondents had only achieved the secondary standard of education. Lastly, the respondents which constitute 7% had a primary education. These findings were expected to assist in determining if education played a role in responding to religious tourism matters as well as the potential of African religious pilgrimages as a tool for tourism development in KZN. The data collected was analysed to provide insight into the research objectives as well as to the research questions which were discussed. The first objective was to ascertain about the awareness of local people at the pilgrimage destinations of the tourism opportunities of pilgrimages within the study area. The related hypothesis stated: “That the local people are not aware of the value of

these pilgrimages". The respondents were given a question where they were supposed to designate the key players responsible for creating awareness of tourism opportunities in the study area. Generally, the majority of respondents rated that the local community are the key players for creating awareness of tourism opportunities in the study area. In Table 2 below, it reflects the percentages of the respondents rating. Additionally, it is indicating the respondents who are key players in creating awareness of tourism opportunities within the study area.

Table 2. Creating awareness of tourism opportunities

Key players	Frequency	%
National Government	19	10
Provincial Government	47	24
Local Government	71	36
Private Sector Agencies	14	7
Churches	16	8
Hawkers	12	6
Tourists themselves	3	2
General Public or Citizens	7	4
Unemployed people	6	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The findings as shown in the above Table 2 indicates that 10% of the respondents revealed that national government should play a key role in creating tourism opportunities within the study area. These were followed by those who stated that it should be the provincial government that plays a key role in creating tourism opportunities within the study at 24%. Those who were of the view that local government that plays a key role regarding the question under discussion accounted for 36%. It was followed by those who stated that the private sector agencies should play a key role in this regard at 7% of the total respondents. Those who said churches should be the key role players regarding the said question were 8%, followed by those who were of the view that hawkers should also play a key role in this regard at 6%. Those who indicated that tourists should play the key role players in terms of creating tourism opportunities within the study area were only 2%, followed by those who held a view that general public plays a key role in this regard at 4%. Those who felt that unemployed people are the key role players regarding creation of tourism opportunities within the study area constituted 3% of the total respondents.

In line with the above findings, the study deduces that local government is expected to play a significant role in creating tourism opportunities within the study area. Perhaps, this finding is resulting from the fact that local governments are entrusted with the task of ensuring that local economic development initiatives are executed to benefit the nearer communities (Nel and Binns, 2001).

Objective two: To find out if there are any tourism facilities and products that are packaged for tourists and pilgrims in the study area. The related hypothesis stated: That the tourism facilities can be made available along the route of the pilgrimages. It was therefore important for the researcher to find out if there are any tourism facilities and products that are packaged for tourists and the pilgrims in the study area. Figure 3 displays the analysis of data that was collected from the pilgrims and they responded by using "Yes, No or Not Sure). The respondents had to respond on the visibility of tourism facilities and tourism products that are in the study area. In Figure 3, the respondents had to indicate by saying "Yes, No and Not sure" and the findings are reflected in the graph below.

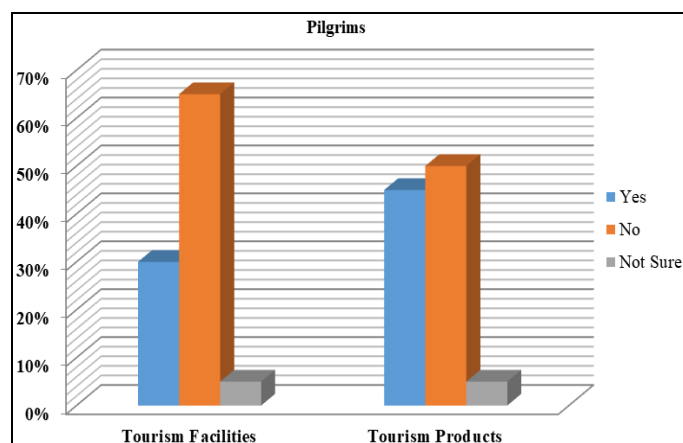


Figure 3. Visibility of tourism facilities and products

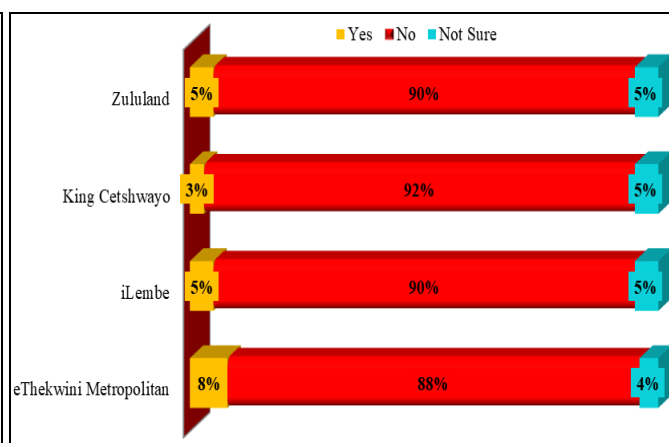


Figure 4. Inclusion of the potential of pilgrimage destinations in the IDPs

The response was 30% of the respondents acknowledged that there are tourism facilities 45% agreed that there are tourism products that area visible in the study area. The majority of the respondents indicate that there are no visible tourism facilities 65% and tourism products 50%. Only about 5% of the respondents are not sure whether the tourism facilities and tourism products exist in the study area. These findings reveal that the study area does not have the tourism facilities and tourism products or it is either that are not visible to the respondents. The data collected was analysed to provide insight into the research objectives as well as to the research questions which were discussed. Objective three: To establish a perception of local communities towards the potential of pilgrimages in enhancement of economic development within the study area. The correlated hypothesis indicated: That there is a perception of local communities towards the potential of pilgrimages in enhancement of economic development the study area. The respondents were provided with statements that allowed them to reveal their level/s of agreement and/or disagreement regarding the potential of pilgrimage destinations for enhancing economic development of the study area. Generally, the findings of the study revealed that the respondents agreed that African religious pilgrimages have the potential. The Table 3 has collapsed the 5point scale by adding the percentage the respondents who strongly agreed and those who agree (Agreed) and who are neutral and the respondents who disagreed strongly and disagreed (Disagreed). What is revealed in Table 3 is that the majority of the respondents identified the need to develop the study area. This shows that the majority of the respondents 80% agreed that there is a need to develop the African religious pilgrimages it is revealed in Table 3 below. About 10% disagreed that there is a need of development, 10% of the respondents remained neutral. It has been tabled in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Enhancement of economic development

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
There is a need to develop pilgrimage destinations within the study area.	45%	35%	5%	3%	7%	100%
The development of pilgrimages could enhance the economic status of the study area.	52%	37%	8%	1%	2%	100%
The pilgrimages have a potential in enhancing economic status of the study area.	57%	33%	6%	3%	1%	100%
Some people do not perceive the potential of economic enhancement in the religious pilgrimages.	65%	25%	7%	2%	1%	100%

This shows that the majority of the respondents 89% agreed that the development of the African religious pilgrimages could enhance the economic status of the study area. The results shown in Table 3 indicate that 8% of the respondents remained neutral about this matter, and about 3% of the respondents disagreed. The African religious pilgrimages have a potential in enhancing economic status, the majority of respondents 90% agreed, 6% remained neutral, then the least 4% disagreed.

Table 3 shows that with regard to the enhancement of economic development in the study area most of respondents 90% agreed that some people do not perceive the economic enhancement of the religious pilgrimages. Only about 7% of the respondents remained neutral and the minority 3% disagreed as shown in Table 3 above. In view of the response-rate as presented in Table 3, the study concludes that pilgrimage destinations have a potential for enhancing the economic status for the study area. The findings, therefore, corroborate the assertion made by Niezgoda (2011) that tourism activities including religious pilgrimages have been widely perceived as a strategy by which socio-economies of various regions could be enhanced. Objective four of the study sought to find out if the IDPs of the study area include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development within the study area. In order to obtain relevant and credible data required to achieve this objective, Officials of the four district municipalities i.e. eThekweni Metropolitan, iLembe, King Cetshwayo, and Zululand were surveyed. The respondents were provided with options to express their views on the said question by stating their level of agreement, disagreement, or uncertainty using “yes”, “no” or “not sure” as shown in Figure 4.

The findings indicate that 5% of the total respondents within the Zululand District Municipality agreed that the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development. However, the majority (90%) of the respondents surveyed within the said municipality were of the view that the IDPs do not include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development. Those who were not sure whether the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development or not were 5%. Those who agreed that the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development from King Cetshwayo District Municipality were 3%, whereas 92% of the total respondents held a contrary view. Those who were not sure in this regard accounted for 5%. At iLembe District Municipality, 5% of the total respondents affirmed that IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development. Those who held an opposite view in this regard were 90%, while 5% of the total respondents were not sure whether the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development or not. At eThekweni Metropolitan, 8% of the total respondents agreed that whether the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development. A significant percentage (88%) of the total respondents disagreed with the said question, while 4% of the total respondents were not sure whether the IDPs include the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development or not. In line with the above findings, the study concludes that the potential of pilgrimage destinations for tourism development is not included in the IDPs of the study. The respondents were also provided with open ended questions which required them to express themselves regarding the issues that relate to the tourism development of the study area. Notes were taken during the interviews and transcripts written immediately thereafter to ensure the accuracy of data and facilitate the analysis process. All interviews were guided by interview guide/checklist of topics. The summary of responses to open ended question is presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5 Summary of responses to qualitative questions

Checklist of topics	Responses	Supporting sources
<b>The tourism opportunities of African religious pilgrimages</b>	African religious pilgrimages have excessive tourism opportunities for South Africa if they can be developed. These sites are visited by international tourists and are known worldwide. Tourism opportunities can be developed for pilgrimage destinations, it could create job opportunities, tourism facilities, welfare and signage's etc. The sustainability of African religious pilgrimages can be the results of tourism development.	Bryce et al., (2013)
<b>Need for tourism facilities and products on the routes of pilgrimages</b>	There is a need for tourism facilities and tourism products because these pilgrimage destinations are visited by tourists and pilgrims who are coming from far. Other pilgrims visit these pilgrimage destinations with different health hitches, so they would need the place to stay during the visits.	Melian et al., (2016)
<b>The IDPs for local municipalities with pilgrimage destinations</b>	The IDPs would make these pilgrimage destination to be known and would benefit the tourism sector and the province at large.	ParthaSarathy (2006)
<b>The tourists visit these pilgrimage destinations</b>	The tourists are motivated by faith to participate in the resident trade by buying some souvenir or leaving some votive offering, which helps the reactivation of certain local craft activities	Fernández (2010)

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of the study was to explore the contribution of African religious pilgrimages towards tourism development of the study area. Moreover, conclusions were guided by the aims, objectives and findings of the study. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that there is a need for tourism development for African religious pilgrimages and it has a potential to benefit the pilgrimage destinations and KZN province at large. Through a better understanding that there is a need for the development of the pilgrimage destinations and it could benefit the study area and the visitors. The findings of the study elucidate that there is also a need to create an awareness for the tourism development and this could be the contribution for the pilgrimage destination.

As such, the study recommends that there is a need for the municipality officials, pilgrims, the Roman Catholic Priests and Nazareth Baptist church Ecclesiastes to work together in devising the strategies that can create an awareness of the tourism development for these pilgrimage destinations. By creating these information sharing platforms, community members, priests and Ecclesiastes with limited understanding should see a need of these tourism development for the pilgrimage destinations. The tourism development would enhance the employment opportunities, the welfare, the increase number of tourists and the local revenue for these pilgrimage destinations. It also became clear from the findings of the study is the significance for the inclusion of the African religious pilgrimages could be the prerequisite to visit these sites and to be recognised. The development of tourism facilities and tourism products could create the employment opportunities and increase number of visitor to these pilgrimage destinations.

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