Chapter 17

Religious Tourism in Africa’s Global South: Indigenous African Traditional Spirituality

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ABSTRACT

International tourist arrivals are projected to surpass 1.8 billion by 2030 on the back of rapid growth in emerging tourism economies. Tourism has emerged as an economic messiah for a plethora of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. It has emerged as a cost-effective means by which countries can diversify their economies, especially countries with low economies that depend on agricultural products to diversify their economies. Religious tourism can contribute to deeper economic benefit for a destination. The synthesis of literature adds to the paucity of academic gaze on religious tourism in Southern Africa. The synthesis takes the reader on a religious tourism journey that includes African spirituality, Pentecostal Christianity, and the interface between Africans spirituality and Christianity. These areas are neglected in the academic gaze and are outside the tourism beaten track, and these forms of religious tourism bring in much needed economic activities for areas on the tourism fringe.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is the world’s largest industry, therefore making big business, located within the tertiary sector of the economy. It is for this reason, where almost all countries have jumped on the tourism bandwagon, seeking to benefit from the positive economic impacts associated with tourism. “Tourism destinations attract tourism because of the positive economic impacts such as labour-intensive jobs, tourism acting

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as a catalyst for other industries, the attraction of foreign exchange, and foreign direct investment that comes with tourism” Henama (2016: 1). The tourism industry, which is a service, depends on human production, which is an experience, which is inseparable. This leads to tourism being labour-intensive and the majority of the value-adding happens to occur at the destination area, which is the site of the tourism consumption. “Tourism is labour-intensive, therefore any growth in tourism is associated with growth in employment” Henama (2014: 1). An increase in the number of tourists arrivals, will lead to an increased demand for more labour, therefore of the labour intensive nature of tourism consumption. In the case of South Africa, it is accepted that one permanent job is created with the arrival of eight international tourists.

This makes it an attractive means of creating job opportunities for a developing country such as South Africa, which has a high rate of unemployment according to Henama (2017). Tourism more than any other industry (Tauoatsoala, Henama & Monyane, 2015) has the potential to create jobs and the sharing of economic benefits. The vast majority of businesses within the tourism value chain are small and medium enterprises (SMMEs), which are known and recognised engines of job creation and economic growth. The continued and sustained growth of tourism, has meant that it had been integrated into the economic growth policies of almost all countries, jumping on the tourism bandwagon. The arrival of tourists at a destination has the impact that government may speed up the development of infrastructure and superstructure. The tourism industry can motivate a destination country to create infrastructure that are shared by the locals and the tourists. “The tourism industry is beneficial to support infrastructure for tourism, such as transport, financial, telecommunications, energy and distribution services” Henama (2013: 230).

As a result, tourism has a positive impact on the Quality-of-Life of citizens. The tourism industry that is owned and managed by locals, is more sustainable as it would retain the majority of the tourism expenditure within the local economy. Spreading tourism’s developmental benefits are imperative to ensure that urban and rural areas benefit from tourism expenditure. Tourism must be developed in such a way that it is locally owned, and that it is not concentrated in urban areas, but tourism must experience geographic spread if it is to become a tool for development. “These locally owned enterprises would not only increase the retention of the tourism multiplier effect, this would lead to lower economic leakages and increase local employment and asset base of the locals. Local ownership of tourism product offerings would assist in reducing the levels of poverty, and inequality that are a key feature of South African society” Henama (2012: 78). African countries have adopted tourism as an economic panacea, to diversify the economies of many African countries, which are still dominated by agriculture and poor exports. African countries still attracts less than 10% of international tourist arrivals, whereas tourism arrivals are disproportionally important for African countries. Tourism remains an attractor of foreign exchange par excellent, and in South Africa the growth of tourism as a sector has led it to be called the ‘new gold’ as it has surpassed gold exports in attracting foreign exchange.

The growth trajectory of tourism is sustained during times of economic decline. This proves that the tourism industry is very resilient, bouncing pack to its perennial growth rates after a slight dip, caused by either economic decline or global health emergencies. The emergence of fast growing economies, and better connectivity through aviation and the wide spread availability of transportation have promoted tourism’s growth. This is because the tourism industry is transport-intensive, linking tourists with places they call home, and the tourism destination area. “The demand for tourism is almost unending, as more and more customers are getting introduced to tourism consumption” Henama, Janse van Rensburg & Nicolaides (2016: 2). “Another advantage is that tourism is a product that has potential to be consumed over the lifetime of an individual as new destinations are visited and old ones are revisited. The institu-
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