



Perceived Economic Impact of Religious Tourism: The Case of Zimbabwe

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Research Article

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the study was to assess the perceived economic impact of religious tourism in Zimbabwe. The research objectives were (1) to determine the nature of religious tourism in Zimbabwe, (2) to determine the key success factor for economically viable religious tourism in Zimbabwe, (3) to ascertain the perceived economic contribution of religious tourism, and finally (4) to propose strategies for economically sustainable religious tourism in Zimbabwe.

Methods: The research adopted a qualitative approach and was descriptive in nature. The study focused on Harare and the study population was made up of a cross-section of tourism service providers in Harare, religious leaders, and the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority. Purposive sampling was used for service providers and as well as religious leaders.

Results: The research findings revealed that there are a lot of religious tourism activities that take place in Zimbabwe, particularly Harare and normally take the form of pilgrimages, religious conferencing, healing and deliverance nights, and worship. The perceived economic value derived includes employment creation for the locals, an increase in foreign currency generation, and an increase in sales revenue. The research findings also show that for religious tourism to be economically sustainable there is a need for government involvement, re-packaging of the product, and investment in local infrastructure.

Implications: Zimbabwe Tourism Authority and the private sector need to take the religious tourism market seriously and make deliberate efforts to harness this growing market.

Keywords: religion, religious tourism, economic impact, sustainability.

1. Introduction

Tourism has been hailed as one of the fastest growing industries globally in recent years and religious tourism has been among the key drivers to this growth. In Zimbabwe, religious-oriented travel has been on the increase since the turn of the century and this has been attributed to the growth in what one would call the 'healing ministries and deliverance ministries' as well as traditional herbalists' trade. The main objective of the study was to assess

the perceived economic impact of religious tourism in Zimbabwe. There has been clear enthusiasm by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) on religious tourism with it being identified as the most effective tool to sustain inclusive and sustainable development in many countries (Griffin & Raj, 2017). Rafia (2005) cites that three key benefits can be derived from religious tourism which are: raising the consciousness of mankind's shared custom, providing resources for conservation, contributing to local development, and building cultural understanding.

According to Tomljenović and Dukić (2017), religious tourism which is sometimes also referred to as divine and belief travel is said to be one of the rapidly developing types of tourism worldwide. For many individuals, religious tourism has become a common motivation for travel (Sledge, 2017).

Globally it is estimated that there are about 600 million international and national spiritual and religious expeditions, with 40% of taking place in Europe and about half around Asia (Rifai, 2011). According to Saayman, Saayman, and Gyekye (2013) irrespective of the motive of any kind of tourism-related activity, the edge for individuals traveling to destinations to take part and spend on tourism-related activities becomes inevitable. Expenditure is typically on tours, accommodation, transports, food, and souvenirs to take home, which is probably the case with religious tourism.

Religious tourism is on the rise in Zimbabwe, the country has seen an increase in the number of people who come for religious purposes. This is mainly attributed to the number of people visiting renowned prophets. Muzapu and Sibanda (2016) suggest that religious tourism in Zimbabwe is growing strongly as evidenced by the number of religious conferences and meetings conducted in the country on a regular basis. Unfortunately, this sector is yet to be recognized despite its potential to develop further. Not much academic literature on religious tourism in Zimbabwe is available and this has been a key motivation for this study.

The former Minister of Tourism and Hospitality Industry, Engineer W. Muzembi quoted by Ncube (2017) highlighted that religious tourism in Zimbabwe was thriving as more individuals flooded into the county for spiritual devotions. The former Minister further highlighted that figures indicated an enormous surge in the number of people coming to see renowned prophets like Emmanuel Makandiwa and Walter Magaya among others. According to the former Minister, statistics indicated that on a monthly basis, 1800 foreigners visit Prophetic Healing and Deliverance only seeking spiritual aid (Ncube, 2017).

According to Ncube (2017), religious tourism was said to be booming in Zimbabwe with most travelers visiting the Prophetic Healing and Deliverance (PHD.) Ministries and United Family International Church (UFIC). Lubinda (2017), a reporter for Zimbabwe News suggested that religious travel is becoming a major type of tourism in Zimbabwe accounting for 5.1% of receipts (Lubinda, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

Despite the much talk about religious tourism in Zimbabwe, little research, if anything, has been conducted to establish its perceived economic contribution to Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe, numerous religious activities occur during the year which ranges from the PHD Ministries'

Night of Turn Around, UFIC's Judgement Nights, Zion Christian Church (ZCC) Defe Annual festival, Seventh Day Adventist annual camp meetings, and the Johane Marange Passover feast among others. Such activities, according to public media, draw many tourists to host cities or provinces. The question is, is the 'noise' about religious tourism justifiable? Are there tangible benefits emanating from religious tourism? Using a qualitative methodology, the study sought to (i) establish the nature of religious tourism in Zimbabwe (ii) determine the key success factors for economically viable religious tourism in Zimbabwe (iii) assess the perceived economic impact of religious tourism in Zimbabwe, and (iv) propose strategies for developing and promoting economically sustainable religious tourism in Zimbabwe.

3. Literature review

This section reviews the published works on the subject of religious tourism. It begins by giving an overview of religious tourism before contextualizing it to the global, African, and Zimbabwean context. In order to understand the concept of religious tourism, it is critical to first decouple the two words, 'religion' and 'tourism'.

3.1 Religion

Religion as defined by Richards (2007) is a system of beliefs in a higher being that are held with great faith and commitment. According to Richards (2007), worldwide, a belief in a higher power or being in all religions exist. Ketola (2008) suggests that religion can be best understood as a set of perspectives that embrace paranormal philosophies and answers related to them that give solutions to the basic questions of human reality. Ketola (2008) divides religion into ten notable societies that are Christianity, Buddhism, Neopaganism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Western Esoterica, Sikhism, and Taoism. One can however argue that Ketola's categorization leaves out some prominent religions, including the African Traditional Religion.

3.2 Tourism

The traditional definition of tourism involves the travel of people to destinations away from their usual dwelling or working places and the provision of facilities created to cater to the needs arising along with this travel (Mathieson & Wall, 1982). A newer definition widens the scope of tourism, defining it as the set of activities performed by people who travel and stay in places outside their usual environment for not more than one year, for leisure, business, and other purposes (The European Commission 2002). The UNWTO (2010) highlights that tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business, and other purposes. This study adopted the UNWTO (2010) definition of tourism.

3.3 Religious Tourism

The Strategic Initiatives & Government Advisory (SIGA) Team, (2012) defines religious tourism as travel with the essential purpose of experiencing religious forms, or the products they induce, like tradition, culture art, and architecture. Sormaz and Yilmaz (2016) bring new light to the definition of religious tourism by looking at the issues of worship. They define religious

tourism as an activity in which people travel for worshipping purposes that is, to participate in worship activities. This is in line with a definition proposed by Stark (2009) which defines religious tourism as a form of travel that is conducted at religious sites and habitually includes aspects of religious worship. Rejman, Maziarz, and Kwiatkowski (2016) suggest that religious tourism is an activity that involves participation in religious proceedings, which influence the diversity of religious tourism offers. Common among the definitions of Yilmaz (2016), Stark (2009), and Rejman et al. (2016) are the elements of participation in some kind of worship, spirituality, and/or belief. These are core to religious tourism.

3.4 The nature of religious tourism

From the various definition of religious tourism, it is evident that religious tourism can therefore take more than one form. The motivations of religious tourism vary from pilgrimage, worship, healing, and deliverance. According to Strategic Initiatives & Government Advisor (SIGA) team, (2012) religious tourism can be separated into the following major categories, pilgrimages, missionary travel, leisure (fellowship) vacations, faith-based cruising, crusades, conventions and rallies, retreats, monastery visits and guest-stays, faith-based camps, and religious tourist attractions. This is in line with the various motives suggested by Nieminen and Holmberg (2012) who also stated that religious tourism can be in form of pilgrimage tours, volunteer or missionary travel, fellowship and religious events travel with missionary travel and pilgrimages being the two biggest forms of religious travel (Papathanassis, 2011). Nazki (2018) is also of the same ideology that religious tourism encompasses pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure (fellowship) purposes. According to the President of the World Religious Travel Association (WRTA) Wright (2009:18) "religious tourism today embraces three definitions which are; travel to a religious destination (religious pilgrimage), travel to a religious gathering (religious meetings, events, conventions) and travel for leisure purposes by a religious group (cruise, sightseeing, group touring, entertainment, adventure, safari, visits to attractions, etc.)".©

3.5 Economic significance of religious tourism

Economic development could be seen as the development of the economic wealth of countries, regions, or communities for the wellbeing of their inhabitants (World Bank, 2013; Todaro and Smith 2009). According to Bello and Bello (2017), economic development explains efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life of host communities especially those of the various religious tourist sites. Whether a place of religious worship is situated in a town, village, or city, religious tourism and pilgrimages become interwoven in its everyday life. Depending on the scope of this phenomenon, it either remains in harmony with that life or causes disturbances (Ptaszycka-Jackowska, 2000).

According to Karar (2010), the most apparent effect of religious tourism is related to the trips to the religious site and the tourist's contact with religious societies. Apart from religious organizations, sacred sites are often surrounded by amenities and ancillary services that are religious-oriented or support religious activities, such as religious souvenir shops, travel agencies, hotels, transport services among others. Domestically, religious tourism can be the

basic foundation for regional growth, employment creation, and entrenchment of cultural values. According to Terzidou, Styliadis, and Szivas (2008), religious tourism can generate the same economic benefits as other forms of tourism and these include infrastructure development and employment creation.®

There are places that have developed as a result of their religious attraction. A classic example is Lourdes, a small village in the French Pyrenees. It has developed into a town with a population of 18,000, maintaining a delineated sacred zone with the basilica and its immediate surroundings. It also has a service zone (60,000 beds of varied standards, restaurants, and other catering services, information points, travel agencies, souvenir shops, banks, health service, post offices, etc.), a zone of transportation services, and a residential zone mainly for people employed in the service sector (Ptaszycska-Jackowska, 2000). Basically, the whole town is a service hub for pilgrims.

The economic contribution of religion tourism could be explained using the four dimensions suggested by Bello & Bello (2017) in their study in Nigeria which include revenue/ income generation, infrastructure development, employment generation, and investment promotion. The development of religious tourism results in an unparalleled likelihood to nurture inclusive and viable development through employment creation, infrastructural development, allowing for investment, and stimulating the local economy (Network of Religious Tourism, n.d).®

From a study conducted in Mashhad by Foruzan (2014) results revealed that there was a positive relationship between religious tourism and economic development. The study conducted by Bello and Bello (2017) in Auchi village in Nigeria which sought to explore the relationship between religious tourism and economic development of a host community concluded that religion tourism encourages entrepreneurial drive while providing both direct and indirect employment opportunities to the local community. Tourist expenditure through religion tourism can enhance the output multiplier of the locals, improve the quality of health and welfare of residents, boosts local business turnover, and income multiplier of the locals. The authors concluded that religious tourism enhances local transportation infrastructure development, and facilitates social and cultural infrastructure development of the host community. ®

The results from Bello and Bello (2018) are partly supported by the findings by Odum, Obieluem, and Ezenagu (2018) in their study titled "Impact of Religious Tourism on Host Communities: The Case of Awhum Monastery". The study revealed that before the closure of the monastery to public visitation and economic activities, it was beneficial to the host community especially in the provision of scholarships, infrastructure, employment opportunities, and industries.®

In a study conducted in India by Haq and Medhekar (2018) on the economic effects of spiritual tourism, it was evident that spiritual tourism-related businesses do not only create new employment opportunities in controlled and uncontrolled sectors in the tourism and hospitality industry but also supports infrastructural development and the development of local transportation. International spiritual tourists also bring in foreign exchange revenue while helping in promoting peace and cultural understanding. ®

4. Methods

The research adopted a qualitative research design that was descriptive in nature. The study population consisted of all registered tourism-related businesses in Harare. The businesses fall under the accommodation sector, food and beverage sectors, and the travel and tours sector. The population also included the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) and key players in religious tourism like leaders of religious ministries and prophets. The sample for the study was 21 and distributed as indicated in table 1.©

Table 1: Sample Size

Population	Sample
Tourism service providers	15
Religious Leaders	4
Tourism Authority	1
Total Sample	21

Since the study is qualitative in nature the theory of saturation was adopted to come up with the sample size. Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend the concept of saturation for achieving an appropriate sample size in qualitative studies. For a phenomenological study like this one, Creswell (1998) recommends a sample size of 5 – 25, and Morse (1994) suggests at least six. Taking this into consideration the total sample size for research was 21 participants.©

The study made use of non-probability sampling techniques. The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority supplied a list of all registered tourist facilities and the researchers purposively selected the service providers while purposive sampling was adopted to select the most prominent religious leaders for participation. The study made use of open-ended questionnaires and in-depth interviews that lasted for at least an hour each. Filed data were analyzed using thematic analysis making use of the six steps of thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006).

5. Findings and Discussions

The findings of this study are detailed in the section below.

5.1 Nature of religious tourism

On the nature of the religious tourism taking place in Harare, the following responses were given;

Pentecostal Church Leader 1: *"We offer a variety of religious activities and these include healing and deliverance being the major reason why people actually visit the church, annually we hold a prayer night which is dedicated to worshipping and healing of people, there are times also when visitors are taken to the prayer mountain for prayers. Every Sunday, Monday, and Wednesday we hold church services during this time members of the church gather to worship, the prophet gives a sermon and heals and delivers people who are possessed by demons. Generally, the services involve the preaching of the word of God, prophecy, healing, and deliverance."* ✨

Pentecostal Church Leader 2: *"we offer services like the healing of the sick and delivering people from spiritual bondages that block their blessings. Annual we have a prayer night which is a monumental Christian gathering"*.

Pentecostal Church Leader 3: *"we offer Christian fellowship and as we speak, we are planning for our annual conference to be held at our center here in Harare. This event is primarily for leaders in the church through evening services will be open for the public. The ministry meets 3 times a year, at the begging of the year for the prayer conference, action conference in May, and the annual conference which is an international Christian conference."*

Traditional Church Leader: *we have Sunday services where we get preaching from the pastor this is accompanied by praise and worship session either before or after the preaching. Yearly the church has an annual conference that is characterized by members attending sessions of worship and fellowship. The conference is also a time where reports are made on past and ongoing church work, programs, and budgets, this session is only attended by deacons, elders, and bishops."* This year's annual conference was at High field grounds.

Zimbabwe Tourism Authority: *"the most common nature of religious tourism is travel seeking healing and deliverance. This is most common among the Pentecostal group of churches. However yearly there are religious groups that converge for annual events like prayer nights, annual conferences like the East African Conference held by United Methodist, centenary celebrations, and finally, as an African national, visits to Nganga's (traditional healers) is common in Zimbabwe"*.

From the responses given the most common type of religious tourism in Harare is religious conferencing which falls under religious events as suggested by the literature. This is particularly in line with findings by Papathanassis (2011) who suggested that religious events, conferences, retreats, and church camps now form a large part of religious tourism today. Religious conferencing seems to be popular among all types of churches.©

The other type of religious tourism as cited by respondents is healing and deliverance. This is in accordance with Ahiabu (2013) who highlighted that the phenomenon of healing and deliverance has become very common and central to the religious activities of most churches. Obieluem and Okpoko (2017) also support this notion having stated that religious tourism is spiritually purposive, and many religious tourists travel to receive healing and be delivered or liberated from all forms of bondage. The authors further highlight that this type of religious tourism is also very common among groups that still value traditional religion.

Worship is another common nature of religious tourism in Harare. This is supported by Wright (2008) who stated that there is an upsurge in the popularity in fellowship tours where individuals of similar interests and aims go on religious tours, which no matter the itinerary, there is always time for prayers or lectures by theologians included in the program.©

The other type of religious tourism that emerged is a pilgrimage, which involves travel to places that hold spiritual significance like holy grounds, holy mountains, and shrines. This finding is in line with studies by Yeoman (2008) and Liguorian (2012) who also concluded that religious tourism involves travel to holy places that have spiritual significance. ©

5.2 Key success factors for economically viable religious tourism in Zimbabwe.

Asked what they thought were the key factors to the success of religious tourism, the respondents had the following response:©

Pentecostal Church Leader 1: *“Accessibility to the religious attraction makes religious tourism flourish. When I say accessibility I am looking at issues of transport to and from, for international travelers the issues of travel documents especially for those that are from outside the SADC region”.*

Pentecostal Church Leader 2: *“I think what really makes religious tourism flourish is the volumes of people that this kind of tourism draws. I would like to believe religious tourism draws a substantial number of tourists. Without these people then religious tourism would not be anything to talk about”.*

Pentecostal Church Leader 3: *“Availability of affordable transport and accommodation. People need transport to get to the event and once they are here they need accommodation for the period of the conferences, if these are not available then some people may be demotivated to travel.”*

Traditional Church: *“willingness from people to take part in religious tourism, the more the people the better the chances of religious tourism flourishing. Their willingness is mainly affected by issues like the affordability of travel, availability of transports, and issues of food and accommodation.”*✍

Tourism Authority: *“Religious tourism is quite a different form of tourism, with most of the travelers not seeking any form of luxury or entertainment. All that is important to them is the actual religious event anything else does not matter. Accessibility to this event becomes of paramount importance”.*✍

Under critical success factors, the key themes picked up from the responses include attractions, accessibility, accommodation, and food. Four out of five respondents highlighted that transport was a necessary factor for religious tourism. This is in line with Tuong (2017) who states that transport in the tourism sector can be widely acknowledged to stimulate economic growth. Sharma and Sharma (2015) are of the same idea also acknowledging that concerns of transportation are a key success factor for religious tourism.

Of the 5 respondents, 2 stressed the need for accommodation and food as key for religious tourism to flourish. The research findings concur with the work of scholars like Ptaszycka–Jackowska (2000) who suggested that religious tourism, like other forms of tourism, is characterized by different durations of stays in one place. These may be short stops for a few hours or more lengthy stays for two or more days when accommodation is needed. This is connected with the need for adequate hotel accommodation at or near to the place of worship, as well as food and beverage services and other amenities.©

Finally, the Zimbabwe Tourism Authority believes that with religious tourism, only the event itself matters. The respondent highlighted that religious travelers are concerned about the actual event only and this is in line with Ramukumba (2016) who states that to a religious tourist, the religious product and its availability is vital.

5.3 Perceived economic contribution of religious tourism to host destinations in Zimbabwe

All the respondents from the accommodation sector highlighted that during religious tourism activities there is an increase in room occupancy, revenue, and foreign currency generated. Three of the five respondents attested to increased Food and Beverage sales, 2 of the 5 to increased Average Daily Rate, and 1 of the 5 to increased Revpar. This is in line with the works

of Chaturvedi (2017) who concluded that hotels are cashing in big from religious tourism. None of the respondents highlighted an increase in employment, investment, and infrastructural development.©

In the case of travel and tour companies, of the three one highlighted that to their particular business, no impact could be attributed to religious tourism activities. However, 2 of the respondents directly serviced the religious market through the sale of religious tour packages and also facilitating travel to and from religious events. The respondents highlighted that there is an increase in the number of air tickets sold, total revenue, foreign currency generated, accommodation bookings, and investment.©

All respondents from the food and beverage sector highlighted that there is an increase in the number of shifts, total revenue, and foreign currency generated. One of the respondents highlighted an increase in sales while another highlighted an increase in superstructure development. This was in reference to the establishment of a new outlet in Waterfalls, where one of the largest religious gatherings take place every week.

From both the interviews and the questionnaire the themes picked up where increase in revenue, foreign currency, increase in superstructure development for the food sector. All respondents from the accommodation, food, and beverage sector and two of the travel and tour sector cited that religious tourism leads to an increase in revenue and foreign currency generation. The religious events attract huge travelers who spend on some of the services, with international tourists using foreign currency. This is in line with the works of Bello and Bello, (2017) who highlighted that religious tourists spend money at the various destinations visited and this is an important economic attribute as it helps generate more income (Bello & Bello, 2017). Moreover, Falade Obalade and Dubey (2014) highlighted, just as Ennew (2003) had cited that tourism is a key source of foreign exchange earnings to local economies.

The ZTA representative and one of the food and beverage sector respondents cited that religious tourism comes with superstructure development. The development was in the building of churches and church-owned hotels and new food outlets. The issues of infrastructural development concur with Bello and Bello (2017) who highlighted that religious tourism enhances the development of local transportation infrastructure and facilitates social and cultural infrastructure development of the host community.©

The ZTA also cited the other perceived economic contribution of religious tourism to host communities in Zimbabwe as employment creation. Local people get employment in church-owned facilities. This is in line with the works of Vijayanand (2012) who purports that employment generation for the host communities is another economic contribution of religion tourism with Bello and Bello (2017) proposing that religion-based travels occasioned by religion programs have a positive and significant relationship on employment generation in host communities.©

5.4 Strategies for economically sustainable religious tourism in Zimbabwe

The following responses were given as strategies for developing economically sustainable religious tourism in Zimbabwe.

Accommodation sector: There is a need for the government to actively participate in the development of religious tourism in Zimbabwe. There is a need for religious tourism specific funding and improved marketing of the religious tourism product. There is also a need to innovatively package the religious tourism packages to involve basic services like shuttle, accommodation, and food.

Food and beverage sector: It all starts with the government, it must invest in religious tourism through availing funds for religious tourism growth. There is also a need for the sector to invest in the expansion of food outlets near major religious sites.

Travel and Tours sector: The government needs to support the development of travel and tour business that want to venture into catering for the religious market. This can be done through funding and enabling policies. There is also a need to involve the local communities as they offer supporting services to the tourism sector. Their buying goes a long way in assuring the peaceful development of religious tourism. The locals must also reap the benefits of surrounding a religious attraction.

The religious tourism packaged must be attractively packaged in such a way that it includes other tourism activities that attract extended stays.

Zimbabwe Tourism Authority: There is a need to capture data related to religious tourism to account for its contribution. Furthermore, there is a need to involve the local community in decision making pertaining to religious tourism development. There is also a need to have religious tourism packages that not only comprise of the religious event but other activities or services that attract tourist spending. As religious tourism grows there is a need for investment in local infrastructure especially around the religious sites this involves refurbishing of roads and other buildings.

All the respondents highlighted that there is a need for government involvement if religious tourism is to be economically sustainable. Government involvement involves the capturing of religious tourism statistics so as to ascertain the actual contribution. Moreover, the respondents argued that through improved government policies that support the growth of religious tourism the country will reap great economic value from it.

From the respondents, only one highlighted the need for community involvement for the sustained economic impact of religious tourism. The community plays a crucial role in religious tourism as they offer support services to tourism. By involving them, service delivery can be improved and this has a positive impact on tourist spending.

Three respondents cited that for religious tourism to be economically sustainable, there is a need to package the actual religious event with other tourism activities to increase visitors' stay as this will in a way push visitors to spend on accommodation, food, and transportation. Packaging the actual religious event with other tourism activities i.e. visiting major attractions of host cities will prolong visitors' stay and increase spending in host destinations. Lastly, one of the respondents highlighted that there is a need to invest in local infrastructure like the roads. © The research findings are supported by the suggestions by (IMF, 2006; Honey and Gilpin, 2009) who suggested that guaranteed sustainable tourism development contribution to the economic progression of any tourism destination.

6. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the most common types of religious tourism are religious conferencing, healing and deliverance, worship, and pilgrimage. It can also be concluded that the 'noise' about religious tourism in Zimbabwe is, to a reasonable extent, justifiable as evidenced by its perceived economic contribution which includes revenue and foreign currency generation, superstructure development, employment creation then lastly investment promotion. However, there is a need to capture religious tourism-related data so as to be able to ascertain just how much religious tourism contributes to the economy of Zimbabwe.

7. Recommendations

Firstly, there is a need for the capturing of religious tourism-related data by both the public and private sectors in Zimbabwe. This can be achieved by carrying out visitor surveys that relate to religious tourism.

For the local individuals in religious tourism host communities in Zimbabwe who wish to venture into entrepreneurship, it is also recommended that small entrepreneurship can be developed for service delivery for the religious tourism market. This can include tent hiring, mobile toilets, and décor. This should also include the development of faith based travel agencies in Zimbabwe who develop faith based packages and develop pilgrimage routes and itineraries.

There is a need for the government to have clear policies that support the growth of religious tourism in Zimbabwe. At the moment religious tourism is regarded as special interest tourism in the Zimbabwean tourism policy hence the need to then have supporting policies. Such policies could be formulated around easy travel for religious tourists and religious tourism funding.

There is a need for effective use of new information communication technologies for the development and marketing of new products and services related to religious tourism by both the ZTA, the private tourism sector, and the religious institutions.

8. Directions for further study

Future researchers can investigate the environmental sustainability of religious tourism in host communities. This is especially important given the large numbers that are involved when people travel for religious conferences and pilgrimages.

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