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## Article

### Religious tourism - local economic development nexus : prospects for Atteridgeville Township

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## **Religious Tourism – Local Economic Development nexus: Prospects for Atteridgeville Township**

**Paul Acha-Anyi<sup>1</sup>**

**Abstract:** The long-standing tradition of religious tourism and its exponential growth in recent years are a great contrast with the elusive quest for sustainable development around the world. Similarly, the volume, value and contribution of tourism to many national GDPs has continuously grown, but the same positive impact has not been evident in ameliorating the human condition. It has therefore become apparent that beyond the macro-economic growth data lies the more significant developmental aspects of extending global wealth to less privileged communities such as Atteridgeville township. Herein emanates the goal of this study which aims to explore the prospects of establishing a nexus between religious tourism and Local Economic Development (LED) in Atteridgeville. Grounded on theory on sustainable development and Spiritual Intelligence (SI), the study analyses data on visitor profiles, travel characteristics and travel motivations. The ensuing statistical analysis involves descriptive statistics and factor analysis designed to produce summarised and reliable patterns capable of orientating the religious tourism – LED nexus in Atteridgeville. The two factors of spiritual wellness (1) and physical wellness (2) emerge as the defining motivations for religious tourism in Atteridgeville. The study concludes that these two factors constitute the thread to consolidate the religious tourism LED nexus in Atteridgeville township. This study therefore has implications for tourism planning, product development and tourism marketing professionals in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (CTMM) who should seize the opportunity to fast-track development in the community of Atteridgeville and the surrounding areas.

**Keywords:** religious tourism; sustainable development; local economic development

**JEL Classification:** Z32

### **1. Introduction**

The challenges of poverty, unemployment and economic dependency continue to plague the world unabated despite the concerted global effort to eliminate poverty by 2030. (United Nations (UN), 2010; UN, 2015; World Bank, 2015; WEF, 2016) The implementation of international resolutions aimed at ending global poverty is generally expected to trickle down to local communities through national governments. To this end, governments issue policy directives and take necessary actions to curb poverty among the local people. Governments and other development stakeholders are therefore constantly in search of economic opportunities that could potentially improve the lives of local people. This, in essence, fuels the need for research into new avenues for Local Economic Development (LED).

Extant research has confirmed the favourable attributes of tourism as an instrument for local economic development. (Tichaawa, 2017, Nayomia & Gnanapala, 2015, Rogerson, 2014a) The magnitude of tourism demand around the world has resulted in massive economic gains contributing US\$7.6 trillion (10.2%) to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 292.2 million jobs (9,6%) in 2016. (World Travel & Tourism Council [WTTC], 2018) In addition to the immense value

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contribution of tourism to the economy, the sector's unique attribute of product consumption at the point of production due to the simultaneity of production and consumption makes it quite prone to the development of Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs). It is therefore sequel to tourism's magic traits of volume, value and multiplier effect that the sector has demonstrated its great potential as an instrument of national and local economic development and transformation.

Within the tourism nomenclature, religious tourism has earned its value proposition as being one of the oldest forms of tourism and arguably, the most resilient. While historical accounts of the origin of travel for religious purposes might differ as to when the practice actually started, there is however, unanimity around the fact that the idea of people taking distant trips for the purpose of spiritual gratification has existed for at least a thousand years. (Blackwell, 2007; Ambrosio, 2007; Timothy & Olsen, 2006) If the assertion that religious tourism is the oldest form of tourism is to be considered, so too should its ability to stand the test of time. With approximately six hundred million trips to religious sites around the world in 2016 (United Nation World Tourism Organisation [UNWTO], 2017), the potential impact of religious tourism on local economic development deserves exploration. Hence, this study seeks to close the gap between religious tourism and LED by exploring avenues for the simultaneous growth of both.

South Africa experienced a drop in international tourists' arrivals from 9.5 million in 2014 to 8,9 million in 2015, however, this did not reflect in the sector's potential to create jobs as 32, 186 new jobs were created in the tourism sector in 2015. (Stats SA, 2016) This new addition to the tourism work force brought the total travel and tourism contribution to employment in South Africa to 711, 746 (4.5%) of the total work force in 2015. Similarly, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reveals that the total impact of travel and tourism to the South African economy in 2017 amounted to R412.5 billion (8.9%) to the country's GDP and 1.530,500 (9.5%) jobs from the combined direct, indirect and induced effects of tourism activity. (WTTC, 2018)

Despite this positive tourism outlook, it is evident that South Africa is still a long way from reaching its full tourism potential as seen in the country's unenviable tourism ranking of 34 out of 185 countries with regards to tourism's total contribution to GDP (absolute size in 2017) and 107 out of 185 in terms of relative size contribution to GDP in 2017. (WTTC, 2018) The untenable developmental challenges evident in the high unemployment statistics of up to 45.5% seen in communities such as Atteridgeville, impose both the need and urgency for the tourism sector to devise more creative avenues for growth in order to assist the country get out of the under-development quagmire. This study argues that exploring a more structured approach to the development of religious tourism offers an opportunity not to be missed.

## **2. Background**

Statistics from the national population census of 2011 put the population of Atteridgeville township at 64, 425 and the density at 6, 550 inhabitants per square kilometre. (Stats SA, 2011) Economic data from the township reveals striking similarities with other townships in Gauteng province, with no major industries, high unemployment, and a dominant informal economy. (GPS Architects, 2007) Anyumba (2017) provides further insight into the nature of the local economy with data that reveals that of the 561 estimated businesses in Atteridgeville, 38.6 percent are classified under real estate and support industries, 30.8 percent in wholesale and retail, 11.4 percent in construction and 19.2 percent under other sectors. The unemployment rate in Atteridgeville township is estimated at 45.5 percent.

With regard to the quality of employment and livelihood, Statistics South Africa (Stats SA, 2006) reveals that 24.5 percent of the residents do elementary jobs, 15.9 work in service positions, 13.9 as clerks and 13.9 make a living from crafts and related activities. The average nature of these jobs is evident in the low Weighted Average Income (WAI) for the township which stands at R 2, 369 per month. (Anyumba, 2017)

With close proximity to the Pretoria Central Business District (CBD), infrastructure development in Atteridgeville township can be described as good considering that 99 percent of the households have access to electricity, 96.7 percent have access to pipe borne water, and 99.1 percent have proper sanitation. Similarly, the road network between Atteridgeville and the Pretoria CBD is tarred with a journey time of under five (5) minutes.

### **3. Problem Statement**

There is no gainsaying that the ultimate end of all human endeavour is a better quality of life for community members. This places humanity at the centre of all development efforts. Therefore, all forms of development, sustainable development, sustainable tourism or religious tourism should be conceived and implemented with human benefit as a core value. In this vein, the central problem in this study is the scarcity of economic opportunities and unacceptably high levels of unemployment in Atteridgeville township despite the flourishing tourism situation in South Africa and the world.

### **4. Literature**

In support of the hypothesis that a more structured approach to the development of religious tourism will improve the potential of the sector to contribute more to LED in Atteridgeville township, the following section reviews literature on religious tourism, Spiritual Intelligence (SI) and sustainable tourism development.

#### **4.1. Religious Tourism**

Religious tourism has been severally defined, but underpinning the phenomenon is the common attachment or unity of purpose with regards to a belief system that is manifested in practices, symbols and rituals. (Koenig et al., 2000) Central to religious practices is the desire for greater proximity to the sacred or transcendent world, consciousness of the relationship with the world beyond, and the believer's responsibility to the self, others and the community. On the other hand, recent studies have underscored the difference between religion and spirituality. (Parks, 2000; Koenig et al., 2000; Zohar & Marshall, 2000; King et al., 2001; Sinnott, 2002) Spirituality is said to concern itself with seeking deeper meaning, bonding with the sacred and embarking on a journey in search of a greater understanding of the quintessential of life. (Bhullar, 2015) King (2008) argues that understanding spirituality requires a retrospect on the origin of the word "spirit" which emanates from the Latin equivalent "spiritus" meaning "breathe" or "soul". Spirituality therefore entails a perpetual search for connection with one's soul. It can be inferred that at the core of spirituality is the quest to transcend the physical or material realm of life to the world beyond. Similarly, it seems logical to deduce that while religion is more superficial, spirituality seeks to understand and connect with the deeper things of the unseen world.

However, religious tourism does not occupy itself with the semantics of spirituality as it is defined as any travel that is motivated by the quest to engage, and familiarise with, and benefit from places,

items and belief systems associated with the unseen world. (Božić et al., 2016; Collins-Kreiner, 2010a, Blackwell, 2007) The Strategic Initiatives and Government Advisory (SIGA, 2012) team goes further to point out that religious tourism extends beyond experiencing religious forms as it includes products that induce or refer to art forms, culture, traditions and architecture. Tradition taxonomy of religious tourism was limited to terms such as pilgrimage, missionary travel, fellowship camps and vacation, crusades, retreats and faith-based cruising. However, recent times have witnessed believers travelling long distances and across national borders to attend church services in anticipation of physical and material wellbeing through acts of healing, deliverance from evil spirits and blessings. In some instances, believers actually return to their home environments with “spiritual” items with the expectation of receiving further material benefits through such items. This represents a paradigm shift from previous interpretations, definitions and approaches to religious tourism. Hitherto, the religious or spiritual focus had been to reach out or transcend the physical world to connect and maintain a relationship with forces that occupy the world beyond. However, the current trend in religious tourism seems to suggest the motivation or quest on the part of religious tourists to have the forces from the unseen world visit the material world and effect changes to undesired situations. This shift has not only created a gap in religious tourism literature, but equally has the potential to catch tourism planners off-guard. The significance of this change could be felt in both the demographics, travel patterns and expenditure patterns of religious tourists. For instance, the choice of travel destinations could be influenced by the propensity or narratives attesting to the physical manifestation of spiritual forces. Moreover, the trip duration could also be influenced by the length of time it takes for the spiritual forces to respond to the tourist or believer’s request. These changing factors point to the increased potential of religious tourism to contribute to LED.

#### **4.2. Spiritual Intelligence (SI)**

The prominence of the concept of Spiritual Intelligence (SI) has been attributed to Stevens (1996) and expounded by Emmons (1999). Zohar (2010) defines spiritual intelligence as the additional strength or sharpness that allows one to draw from inner (not obvious) meaning, inherent values and a higher sense of purpose through life practices and dedications. Adopting a more outcomes-based approach, Wigglesworth (2006) purports that spiritual intelligence enables one to maintain internal and external peace by exercising wisdom and clemency. King and Decicco (2009) advance the view that there are four defining attributes of spiritual intelligence, namely: critical existential thinking, personal meaning production, transcendental awareness, and conscious state expansion. Similarly, Emmons (2000) identifies four attributes of spiritual intelligence as evident in: transcendence capabilities, acquisition of a higher state of spiritual consciousness, the ability to approach daily activities, events and relationships with a sense of the sacred, and the acumen to solve problems of life using spiritual resources. Hanefar et al. (2015) go further to point out that there are seven multi-cultural elements that constitute spiritual intelligence, hence: consciousness, grace, meaning, transcendence, truth, peaceful surrender to self and inner-directedness.

Simply put, SI refers to the ability to apply a set of spiritual norms to the resolution of defined tasks in order to achieve specific goals. In the context of this study, the relevance of the discussion on spiritual intelligence lies in the fact that its acquisition as a by-product of religious tourism might trigger greater creativity in the people of Atteridgeville to develop, package and market successful products.

#### **4.3. Sustainable Tourism Development**

Traditional definitions of sustainability have anchored the concept on the triple bottom-line of economic viability, responsible environmental management and social justice. (Acha-Anyi, 2016;

Snyman, 2018; Zaccai, 2012) These studies, among others argue that the success and survival of any business into the foreseeable future requires a conscious and unrelenting balancing act of maintaining the equilibrium between the three pillars of profitability, preservation and social cohesion. This, in essence, is in alignment with the proposal put forth in the Brundtland report “Our Common Future” (WCED, 1987) aimed at ensuring that the present generation does not deplete global resources to the extent that the survival of future generations is compromised. In order to achieve this laudable goal, the Brundtland report (WCED, 1987, p. 57) recommends a global paradigm shift towards a focus on seven principles:

- a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making;
- an economic system that is able to generate surpluses and technical knowledge on a self-reliant and sustained basis;
- a social system that provides for solutions for the tensions arising from disharmonious development;
- a production system that respects the obligation to preserve the ecological base for development;
- a technological system that can search continuously for new solutions;
- an international system that fosters sustainable patterns of trade and finance; and
- an administrative system that is flexible and has the capacity for self-correction.

The general acceptability of the sustainable development guidelines are propagated in the Brundtland report. (WCED, 1987) Consequently, other economic sectors adapted the concept to meet specific industry requirements for sustainability. Hence, sustainable tourism development has been defined as tourism that is developed and managed in a way that tourists and host communities derive optimum satisfaction and benefits both in the present and foreseeable future. It is designed and managed in a way that economic, environmental and social needs are met without compromising cultural integrity, ecological systems and other life support processes. (Fletcher et al., 2013) Thus, bringing tourism into the sustainability bandwagon.

However, despite its obvious merits, the concept of sustainable development has been criticised for, among other shortcomings; opening avenues for multiple interpretations due to its conceptual frailty, failure to duly consider the vast disparities in economic opportunities within and between communities, and its ineptitude in prioritising the human dimension. (Sneddon et al., 2006; Vallance et al., 2011; Holden et al., 2014)

#### **4.4. Research Gaps**

A bird’s view of the theory explored thus far in this paper reveals a number of gaps in literature that this study hopes to address. While existing literature seems to address the difference between religion and spirituality, there seems to be a missing link between religious tourism and visits motivated by spirituality. This link should duly recognise the place of spirituality in the concept of religious tourism. The other gap worthy of recognition in this study is the void apparent in the definition of sustainable development due to the missing human element. Various studies acknowledge the paramount importance of implementing the sustainable development or sustainable tourism development guidelines. However, these studies seem mute on the over-riding human spirit or higher energy that should motivate development stakeholders to act in the interest of future generations.

## **5. Research Method**

### **5.1. Study Context**

Research conducted by the Bureau of Market Research (BMR) at the University of South Africa (Unisa) on behalf of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) recognises the deeply entrenched nature of religion in South African society. (CRL, 2016) It is worthy of note that the aim of the study (CRL, 2016) was to investigate the commercialisation of religious practices in South Africa. Similarly, Anyumba (2017) attests to the multiplicity of places of worship in Atteridgeville township, among which are: AME Church – the Ebenezer Temple, the Methodist Church, the Uniting Reformed Church, the Swiss Mission Presbyterian Church, St Bernard Mizeki Church, and the Evangelic Lutheran Church. Most of the congregants of these denominations are local people who come together to fellowship.

However, the establishment of the Enlightened Christian Gathering (ECG) church founded by Prophet Shepherd Bushiri from Malawi seems to have brought a hitherto unseen dynamism to the understanding and practice of religion in the area. Operating from the “Pretoria show grounds” on the outskirts of Atteridgeville township, the ECG church is said to have attracted a membership of more than 300, 000 in less than three years of its existence in the area. (Maravi post, 2017) The average attendance at each ECG church service is reported to be within the range of 105, 000 congregants. (Maravi post, 2017) In addition to the volume of attendees at the ECG services, the peculiarity and popularity of the church has also been attributed to miracles of healing, deliverance and prosperity that are reported to be experienced during each church service.

### **5.2. Methodology/Study Approach**

This study adopted an exploratory approach through the distribution of questionnaires to visitors to the ECG church. Respondents were vetted as potential church attendees based on their presence at the Pretoria “show grounds” on Saturday (the preparatory day for the Sunday church service) and the respondents personal confirmation that they had arrived in anticipation of the ECG church service. The researcher-designed questionnaire was structured in four parts: section A focused on the demographic profile of the respondents; section B was aimed at gaining insight into their spending patterns while waiting to attend church services; section C delved into motivations for visiting the church and the final section focused on obtaining the respondents’ general opinion of their visit to the City of Tshwane. Under the supervision of the researcher, three field workers were trained to distribute the questionnaire. From an ethical perspective, all respondents were assured of their availability, willingness, anonymity throughout the data collection process. The data was collected in 2017 over three sessions during the weekend on Saturdays. The choice of Saturday was strategically meant to exclude same day visitors to the ECG church and give preference to over-night visitors with a greater potential for contribution to the local economy. A total of 93 questionnaires were duly completed and deemed admissible for analysis. Data from these questionnaires was captured on a Microsoft Excel spread sheet and descriptive statistics obtained using the Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 23.

## 6. Findings

### 6.1. Descriptive Statistics on Visitor Characteristics

The personal attributes of the respondents are presented in table 1 below:

**Table 1. Demographic characteristics**

Attribute	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	30	32
	female	63	68
Age	≤ 19	4	4
	20 – 29	33	36
	30 – 39	26	28
	40 – 49	16	17
	50 - 59	11	12
	60 ≥	3	3
Home language	French	16	17
	English	31	33
	Afrikaans	14	15
	Tswana	18	20
	Other	14	15
Marital status	Single	59	64
	Married	30	32
	Divorced	3	3
	Other	1	1
Occupation	Not employed	40	43
	Self employed	21	23
	Government employee	21	23
	Private sector employee	11	11
Household income	≤ R100000	70	75
	R100001– 200000	11	11
	200001-300000	10	11
	300001-400000	1	1
	400001-500000	1	1
	500001-600000	1	1
	≥ 600001	0	0
Education	No school	18	19
	Grade 1-11	36	39
	Matric/grade 12	10	11
	Certificate	22	23
	Diploma/degree	7	8
Province of origin	Western cape	42	45
	Gauteng	10	11
	Eastern cape	30	32
	Free state	9	10
	Out of South Africa	2	2

*Source: Author compilation*

Descriptive analysis (Table 1) reveals that more females (68%) participated in this survey than males (32%). Most of the respondents (64%) can be described as young or middle-aged as they fall between the range of 20 – 39 years. The home language distribution is quite interesting because apart from the slight edge observed in the prevalence of English (33%), the distribution in the use of the other languages seems almost balanced. This might suggest a broad-base among the attendees of the ECG church. As a faith-based organisation, this finding would be consistent with literature (Bhullar, 2015;



Božić et al., 2016) which points to the fact that affiliation to religious groups tends to draw greater influence from personal conviction than other social commonalities. Further interrogation of the descriptive statistics suggests most of the respondents would be desirous of improving their socio-economic circumstances considering that 43% are unemployed, 75% live on an annual household income of R100, 000 or less, 64% are single and 58% have not attained a grade 12 education. Most of the respondents reported that they came from the Western Cape province of South Africa.

**Table 2. Travel characteristics**

Characteristic	Pattern	Frequency	Percentage
Length of stay (days)	1 - 2	90	97
	3 - 4	1	1
	5 - 6	1	1
	7 - 8	1	1
Group size	1 - 2	79	85
	3 - 4	12	13
	5 - 6	2	2
Transport	Car	50	54
	Bus	38	41
	Motorcycle	2	2
	Plane	3	3
Accommodation	Friends/relatives	62	67
	Bed & breakfast	19	20
	hotel	4	4
	Camping	6	7
	Hostel	2	2

*Source: Author compilation*

An analysis of the travel characteristics of the respondents (Table 2) reveals that a significant majority (97%) stay for between 1-2 days. This confirms that attendance at the ECG church service is the main reason for visiting the destination as there was little or no time allocated for any other activity. Regarding the group size, the study revealed that most of the respondents (85%) travelled alone or with one other person, arrived the destination using private transport (54%) or bus (41%) and stayed with friends or relatives (67%) during the visit. The total minimum spend for all 93 respondents during this visit amounted to R252, 000 (\$20, 110), translating to an average spend of R2710 (\$216).

## 6.2. Exploratory Statistics Based on Motivational Factors for Visiting the ECG Church

This study went further to explore the underlying patterns of the travel motivations or pull factors of the respondents to the ECG church. This insight was considered a prerequisite to making reasonable propositions on the nexus between religious tourism (visits to the ECG church) and the potential for LED in Atteridgeville township. Hence, factor analysis was adopted as the means by which to reduce the twenty (20) sampled motivational elements to a few easily identifiable and definable patterns. Prior to the factor analysis being conducted, it was deemed necessary to ascertain the suitability of the data set for factor analysis by subjecting it to a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) using SPSS version 23. The resultant Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) value of .914 exceeded the recommended minimum value of .6 (Kaiser, 1970, 1974) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity proved significant at a value of (P= .000) (table 3).

**Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test for data suitability**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.914
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2049.117
	df	190
	Sig.	.000

These results therefore validated the data for factor analysis. The Direct Oblimin rotation method was adopted for the factor analysis owing to the emergence of visible correlations between the items.

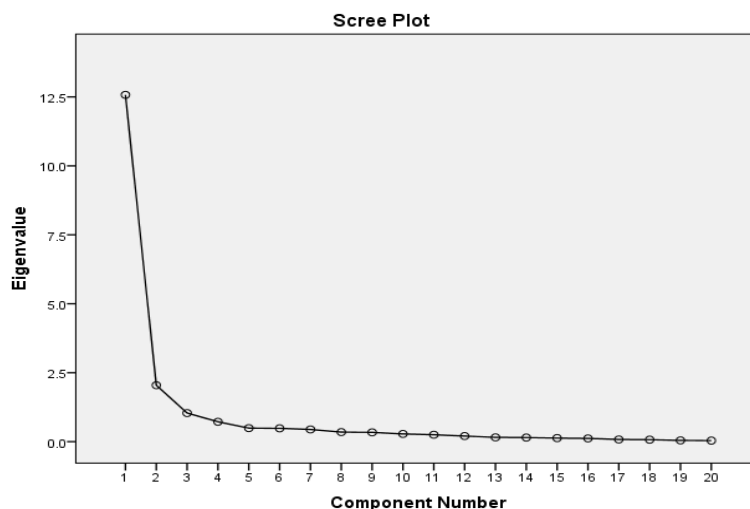
Using an eigenvalue of 1.0 as the factor extraction criterion and loading of 0.30 and above for item inclusion, three factors emerged as the pull factors or motivational elements for travel to the ECG church (Table 4).

**Table 4. Factor analysis for sampled visitors**

	Component		
	1	2	3
faith	1.012		
Praiseworship	.955		
Godpresence	.929		
Holyatmosphere	.877		
Biblical	.826		
Spicomfort	.790		
Devotion	.605		-.478
Salvation	.517		-.426
BreakthroughF	.486		
RelObligation	.449		-.338
offload	.441		
Healing		.968	
Miracle		.961	
BreakthroughB		.877	
Tripm2		.829	
Tripm1		.811	
Forgiveness		.784	
Deliverance		.708	
worship		.438	
familyfriends			-.620

*Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis: Rotation method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization*

These three (demand) factors for religious tourism in Atteridgeville accounted for 78.3% of the total variance. However, further scrutiny of the scree plot (Figure 1) revealed a significant break after the second component prompting the decision to drop the third factor and retain the two.



Considering the fact that the abandoned third factor had a variance of 5.2%, the two retained components together explained a total variance of 73.1% with component 1 contributing 62.9% and component 2 contributing 10.2%. These two components were labelled as “spiritual wellness” (factor 1) and “physical wellness” (factor 2). Furthermore, the reliability of the data and measure of internal consistency among the items was examined using the Cronbach alpha coefficient (table 5). This (Cronbach alpha coefficient) was observed to be .97 suggesting very good internal consistency reliability, as scores of .7 are considered acceptable and .8 preferable. (Pallant, 2013)

**Table 5. Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.968	.968	20

The mean values of all variables were also obtained and examined in order to get a more detailed perspective on the motivational aspects that appealed the most to the respondents. The results revealed that the top five specific motivational elements that attracted respondents were: worship (4.51), sensing God’s presence (4.29), atmosphere of praise and worship (4.26). achievement (4.26) and faith or trust in God (4.21). These findings seem consistent with previous studies (Bhullar, 2015; Matheson et al., 2014) which found spirituality to be a key motivation for religious tourism, but contradict a study by Božic et al. (2016) who found that secular motives such as admiring nature, cultural values and architecture ranked higher than spiritual benefits.

## 7. Implications for Tourism Planning and Development

Based on the results and findings of this study on the nexus between religious tourism and the potential for LED, it is plausible to identify a number of implications for tourism planning and development, among which are:

- Firstly, tourism development officials and product developers in the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality (under whose jurisdiction Atteridgeville township falls), have a clear sense of direction on how to approach religious tourism as an instrument of LED in Atteridgeville township and the surrounding communities. This is portrayed not only in the volume and value data presented

in this study, but more so in the prospects of using the religious tourism factor as a relying point to re-launch tourism products and tourism development in the area;

- Secondly, the results of this study imply a significant exposition on the potential viability of the religious tourism – LED nexus in Atteridgeville township based on the demand profile (visitor characteristics) and the supply environment providing religious tourism products and other hospitality services tailored to meet their specific requirements;
- Thirdly, from a theoretical perspective, this study equally implies a -re-focus and re-structure of the attributes of sustainable development from a triple bottom-line approach to include the fourth element of SI. The inclusion of SI has the potential to bridge the research gap identified in this study and pointed out in literature; (Sneddon et al., 2006; Vallance et al., 2011; Holden et al., 2014)
- Finally, while the semantics of the religious and spiritual tourism dichotomy might be clear, this study seems to imply and suggest the operational distinction between two concepts is not so obvious. This is evident in the high correlation matrix of .614 (table 6) identified in the factors spiritual wellness and physical wellness (associated with religious tourists).

This points to the second research gap identified in this study. For marketing and operational purposes, it might be worthwhile arriving at mutually inclusive term that describes visitors with both attributes.

## 8. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine the nexus between religious tourism and LED in Atteridgeville township. This was based on the growing demand for religious tourism within the periphery of Atteridgeville township, while the community languishes in dire need for economic opportunities. The results of this study affirm the conclusion that there is a potentially viable nexus between religious tourism and Local Economic Development in the Atteridgeville community. This conclusion hinges on a number of factors, prime among which is the strong motivation for religious tourism among the respondents and the conducive supply environment provided by the ECG church. The demand characteristics are also favourable to LED as the “average” economic status of the visitors means Atteridgeville residents can meet their travel needs with relative ease. Finally, a profile of the travel needs of the visitors seems favourable to the development of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). The travel needs expressed by the respondents resonate with basic services such as group accommodation, transport (buses), catering and so on. This study therefore recommends adequate tourism planning initiatives from the local government authorities and entrepreneurship information campaigns within the local community of Atteridgeville in order to size on the opportunity presented by the growth of religious tourism around the community of Atteridgeville.

It is worthwhile pointing out that the low response rate experienced in this study places a limitation on the replicability and generalisation of its findings. It is possible that a similar study conducted with a larger sample size might produce different results. Considering the prospects of religious tourism making a positive contribution to LED, this study recommends that future studies be undertaken with a larger sample to ascertain the sustainability religious tourism – local economic development nexus. It is further recommended that any future studies consider the views of other tourism stakeholders in the community.

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