



Tourist and resident perspectives on ‘slum tourism’: the case of the Vilakazi precinct, Soweto

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Abstract Slum tourism as a topic of investigation has seen significant growth since the beginning of this decade with increasing theoretical and empirical depth. With this growth, some inconsistencies in conceptual framing and use of terminology have emerged. The purpose of this paper is to argue for township tourism in Soweto to be regarded as a form of heritage tourism rather than slum tourism—a notion which has entered the township tourism literature in recent years. This argument is presented through two sections of analysis and debate, using Vilakazi precinct in Soweto as a case study. Firstly, the paper analyses the emergence of township tourism as an academic focus in the literature and how it came to be classified as slum tourism, considering definitional conundrums. Various South African authors emphasise the struggle heritage character of township tourism. Secondly, the historical development of townships and tourism in these areas are interrogated.

The empirical data offer the perspectives on tourism in their area from: (a) residents living in and around Vilakazi Street; and (b) tourists visiting the Vilakazi precinct. The analysis reveals that neither residents nor visitors consider the Vilakazi precinct or the larger area of Orlando West as a slum; rather they perceive tourism is the area to be connected to its struggle heritage. We accordingly stress that the term ‘slum tourism’ to describe township tourism in Soweto is inaccurate and is inconsistent with the views not only of residents and visitors, but also South African authors.

Keywords Slum tourism · Township tourism · Soweto · Vilakazi Street · Heritage · Representation

Introduction

‘Slum tourism’ has burgeoned as a research topic across the globe (Frenzel et al. 2015). The most recognizable feature of slum tourism is organized tours to impoverished or deprived areas (Frenzel 2016). In the context of the Global South, slum tours mainly involve tourists from the Global North who view spaces characterized by urban poverty (Booyens and Rogerson 2019; Butler 2010; Frenzel 2016; Frenzel et al. 2015; Rolfes 2010; Steinbrink 2012). Slum tours often combine history with social issues which afford visitors an altruistic sense of good

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citizenship, thinking that they contribute to the economic development of a deprived area while satisfying their own sense of adventure (Freire-Medeiros 2009). Slum tourism researchers raise several problematics associated with this form of tourism and type of tourism consumption. Attention is drawn to the effects of neoliberalism associated with slum formation in post-Fordist urban contexts (Bolay 2006; Linke 2012; Nisbett 2017). The rights of slum residents on issues like access to basic services, decent housing and a safe environment are stressed further (Holst 2018; Nisbett 2017; Rolfes 2010; Steinbrink 2012). In addition, issues around voyeurism linked to the valorization and commodification of poverty, limited benefits from tourism accrued to locals and questionable practices by slum tourism operators have frequently received attention (Butler 2010; Freire-Medeiros 2014; Frenzel 2013; Frenzel et al. 2015; Giddy and Hoogendoorn 2018; Koens and Thomas 2016; Linke 2012).

With 'slum tourism' growing as a topic of investigation internationally, and with increasing empirical evidence and theoretical development, our aim with this paper is to argue for more circumspect use of the term in the South African context and potentially in other underdeveloped and/or precarious neighbourhoods of the urban Global South. We base this argument on empirical evidence from the Vilakazi precinct in Orlando West, Soweto. The purpose of this study was to empirically test whether the term 'slum tourism', which has emerged in a stream of the tourism literature focusing on South Africa, is appropriate in the case of the Vilakazi precinct in Soweto, the most well-known example of township tourism. Attention is focused on the views of (1) residents who live in and around Vilakazi Street and of (2) visitors to the Vilakazi precinct in the Orlando West area of Soweto. Our results show that neither residents nor visitors consider the Vilakazi precinct, and the larger area of Orlando West, to be a slum. Our results further confirm that township tourism in Soweto is primarily a form of heritage tourism, with an emphasis on the struggle against apartheid, in line with the observations of authors, predominantly South Africans, who do not use the term 'slum tourism' explicitly (see Booyens 2010; Booyens and Rogerson 2018, 2019; Frenzel 2016; Masilo and van der Merwe 2016; Ramchander 2003, 2004; Rogerson 2004, 2013). This said, it should be emphasised that we draw specific

attention to the Soweto case and argue that tourism in this township has a particular character which is not necessarily reflective of township tourism everywhere in South Africa. We acknowledge that there are elements of poverty or slum tourism present in Soweto and certainly in other townships; however we argue that this is not the emphasis in Soweto.

Based on this research we raise concerns about the potential misrepresentation of people and places in the context of 'slum tourism'. We further underscore the importance of recognizing the views of locals (residents and other stakeholders) as well as visitors in slum tourism discourses and investigations in South Africa and elsewhere in the Global South. Indeed, Muldoon (2018: 13) observes that while "researchers use the term 'slum tourism' to represent excursions to underprivileged urban areas, it must be stated that the term 'slum' is highly contested and is rarely used when referring to the impoverished neighbourhoods of Rio de Janeiro (favelas), South Africa (townships), or Tanzania (unplanned settlements)". In fact, part of the impetus of this paper comes from the strong reaction¹ from South Africa's Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr. Nathi Mthethwa, which is a telling example of local sentiments. He stated emphatically and categorically that townships are not slums per se and should not be considered as such.

Tzanelli (2018) argues that the 'gazes' (after Urry and Larsen 2011) of researchers themselves often dominate the debates. This brings the issues of power, agency and of presentation to the fore (after Spivak 1994). Indeed, while the views of tourists have received research attention, the voices of slum residents largely remain absent. Observers point to a dearth in the slum tourism literature on how residents see themselves and wish to be presented (Slikker and Koens 2015; Booyens and Rogerson 2019). The views of the 'gazers' (tourists and researchers alike), often from the Global North, may in fact be inconsistent with the lived experiences of residents in underdeveloped and/or marginalized spaces and their views regarding tourism in their areas (Meschkank 2011, Mkono 2016; Muldoon 2018; Slikker and Koens 2015). Recent debates highlight that the concept of 'slum tourism' is not necessarily representative of the

¹ This was in response to one of the authors' presentations at the South African Cultural Observatory's 2018 conference in Port Elizabeth, 7–8 March 2018.

perspectives of tourists either (see Frenzel 2014, 2018; Hoogendoorn and Giddy 2017).

The paper is structured as follows: firstly, a conceptual framework is provided concerning what we regard as a 'slum tourism turn' in the literature; secondly, a historical background to Soweto and the development of the Vilakazi precinct is offered; and thirdly, the methods and sampling procedures are provided. An analysis of the survey results then follows in the fourth section. A discussion and conclusion are offered in the last section.

A slum tourism turn in the literature

Favelas in Brazil, impoverished neighbourhoods in India and townships in South Africa have received particularly intensive attention in slum tourism research (Frenzel and Koens 2012). While such research has expanded to other Global South cities in countries such as Egypt, Mexico and Colombia (Dürr 2012; Hernandez-Garcia 2013; Mekawy 2012), and Global North cities including New York, Los Angeles and London, the topic remains under-researched and lacks theoretical and empirical depth (Frenzel and Koens 2012; Giddy and Hoogendoorn 2018). The South African case is one such example that requires detailed scrutiny.

Scheyvens (2001) arguably made the first conceptual connection between township tourism in South Africa and poverty tourism. She used examples of tour operators offering a variety of tours taking visitors to view Soweto from luxury coaches, walking the streets visiting residents' houses and ending their tours in 'shebeens' (taverns). Scheyvens had herself been on such a tour in 1998 and it is observed that she did not refer to this type of tourism as 'slum tourism'. Similarly, Ramchander (2004), in his PhD thesis which is one of the first and most authoritative studies on township tourism in South Africa, did not use the term 'slum' either. Briedenhann and Ramchander (2006) made the point that township tourists visit places like Soweto for 'authentic experiences'. Importantly, they noted that these tourists particularly set out to view heritage sites but also to understand the socio-cultural and socio-economic impact of the apartheid regime's practices and the ultimate poverty it created among black people in South Africa. Again, the word 'slum' was not connected to this touristic experience.

Significantly, the most cited paper on township tourism from a South African author (see Rogerson 2004) focuses on small enterprise development for urban tourism entrepreneurs. Rogerson's paper uses the examples of two of Johannesburg's most well-known townships, namely Alexandra and Soweto, yet it does not make mention of the term 'slum' or 'slum tourism'. In fact, Rogerson (2004: 2050) observes that 'township tourism' is a type of tourism that characteristically exposes tourists to 'sights of significance' associated with South Africa's anti-apartheid 'struggle', and also to poverty in 'historically oppressed' areas.

'Struggle' heritage is invariably connected with the democratic South Africa and township tourism. Marschall (2006) notes that monuments and memorials that have been erected in South Africa since the fall of apartheid have commemorated the historical information on the mass resistance against the violence and oppression of the apartheid regime. This has applied especially to the prominent activists that fought against apartheid and those who died in the process. Typical examples of heritage sites erected in honour of these individuals are the Hector Pieterse Memorial and monuments to Rivonia Trialists including Nelson Mandela. Marschall (2006: 148), in addition, makes the valuable point that in the context of a post-apartheid and democratic South Africa, the word 'struggle' is imbued with meaning related to anti-apartheid uprisings and its liberation from the colonial yoke. This sentiment has been echoed more recently by other South African authors who concur with the assertion that struggle heritage has become a key part of cultural heritage tourism in post-apartheid South Africa (Masilo and van der Merwe 2016). Indeed, this also speaks to the argument of Poria et al. (2003) that the perception of key attributes of a particular heritage site by tourists adds to the definition of heritage tourism. Struggle heritage and tourism therefore fit closely with Vecco's (2010: 324) argument that heritage does not just comprise 'historic and artistic values', but also 'the cultural value, its value of identity and the capacity of the object to interact with memory'.

Ramchander (2003: 150) is more explicit about township tourism as a specific type of special interest or niche cultural heritage tourism in the post-apartheid landscape with "beer makers, traditional healers, traditional dancing, arts and crafts centres, taverns,

bed and breakfast establishments, crèches, political landmarks and shanty towns” comprising the primary elements of this type of tourism. These elements fit strongly with definitions of heritage tourism and they furthermore relate to ancestry, culture, arts and history and offer both education and entertainment to visitors (see Poria et al. 2004; Silberg 1995). Importantly, Ramchander (2003) stresses that South African black urban townships are unique in that they can be distinguished from deprived marginal urban areas in other parts of the world. These former ‘Group Areas’ were actively and harshly subjugated under white minority rule during which an extreme style of racial segregation was implemented. Booyens (2010) also considers township tourism, specifically that in Soweto, as a form of cultural heritage tourism and observes that it has substantially changed the nature of heritage tourism in South Africa. Since the fall of apartheid in 1994, there has been more inclusive and diverse expression of heritage other than the ‘White’ heritage which formerly dominated tourism offerings. Accordingly, struggle heritage is considered a central component of township tourism offerings in Soweto (see Booyens 2010; Rogerson 2004, 2013). The moving away from ‘white’ heritage concurs with Waterton and Smith (2010: 13) who argue that heritage may continue to be misrepresented by powerful stakeholders from the past. Thus, although new monuments and memorials are more representative of ‘Black’ and ‘feminine’ in South Africa, powerful stakeholders or ‘community’ may potentially project a dominant narrative that does not allow for equal representation (Hlongwane 2007).

We observe that a stream in the literature has caught on to the poverty component of South African township tourism. Focus is placed on poor neighbourhoods being turned into tourism attractions, a characteristic of slum tourism (Freire-Medeiros 2014; Frenzel 2013, 2014; Rolfes 2010). This body of work tend to either overlook the nuances of struggle heritage tourism in townships or under estimate its significance in the local context. Rolfes (2010: 422) notes that Pott and Steinbrink (2009) stress that township tours can indeed be seen as ‘slum tourism’. Rolfes (2010) further argues that while in the case of township tourism the motivation for tours is not primarily viewing poverty in slums, it certainly forms a key component of/backdrop to this type of tourism. Conversely, South African authors in this field

emphasise the ‘heritage’ rather than the ‘poverty’ character of tourism, especially in the case of Soweto as outlined above (see Booyens 2010; George and Booyens 2014; Masilo and van der Merwe 2016; Ramchander 2003, 2004; Rogerson 2004, 2013). Nonetheless, since 2009 township tourism has increasingly been positioned in the international literature, both theoretically and conceptually, as ‘slum tourism’. This is despite the argument made by Frenzel (2018) that poverty should be the main attraction for it to be considered as ‘slum tourism’. In other words, a ‘slum tourism turn’ can be discerned in the literature. Indeed, Rogerson (2013: 196) observes that township tourism is ‘styled’ as a “variant of the wider phenomenon of ‘slum tourism’” but notes the irony in the case of Soweto where tourists participate in adventure tourism activities and wine festivals, while staying in four-star hotels. These are high-end leisure activities that one would not necessarily associate with slum tourism.

We are arguing that researchers of ‘slum tourism’ have to be more critical about which areas they define as a slum. Dyson (2012) makes a pertinent observation in the case of Dharhavi in India. While this locality certainly fits certain characteristics of a slum, significant financial turnover takes place in Dharhavi which makes it an economically vibrant area. Such a dynamic might not be overtly evident to outsiders at a first glance, yet it raises an important consideration regarding the complexities of place. Moreover, Frisch (2012) notes in the case of Rochinha favela in Brazil, that there are 13 sub-quarters with differing levels of wealth and income. For example, it is estimated that up to 65% of residents in favelas can be considered as ‘middle class’ (BBC 2014). This raises a question about whether favelas can and should be considered as slums overall. Moreover, the importance of voices of local researchers should be underscored. It is noted that the majority of the research on ‘slum tourism’ in Brazil does not come from Brazilian researchers themselves (Freire-Medeiros 2009; Torres 2012 being exceptions).

The politics of representation come to the fore in critical debates on tourism and slum tourism (see Tzanelli 2018). In the context of urban studies, Pratt (2019) stresses that ‘naming’ informality is an inherently political act. A question that arises is whose politics dominate the narrative? We stress in this respect that the power of academics as the producers of knowledge to categorize versus the limited agency of

the subaltern (or ‘subject’) to speak (after Spivak 1994) is of concern.

While certain researchers, and also admittedly residents, use the term ‘slum’ to politicise and draw attention to the depravity of local conditions (see Gastrow 2015; Nisbett 2017; Tzanelli 2018), there are also residents who consider the word ‘slum’ to be a derogatory term which impugns their dignity and stigmatises their environments (see Choplin 2016; Hoogendoorn and Giddy 2017; Selinger and Outterson 2010). Authors like Pieterse (2011) and Selinger and Outterson (2010) allude to interpretations of poverty arising from ‘a distinct class of moral judgments’ as problematic (see Pieterse 2011; Selinger and Outterson 2010). Indeed, several authors call for alternative interpretations of informality and accordingly narratives of people and places in the urban Global South (Choplin 2016; Cirolia and Scheba 2019; Deboulet 2016; Lejano and Del Bianco 2018; Lombard 2014; Pieterse 2011). Authors put forward that slums suffer from ‘negative’ perceptions and stereotypes which render certain socio-economic dynamics and the life experiences of slum dwellers invisible (Choplin 2016; Deboulet 2016; Pieterse 2011). In accordance, Pieterse (2011) observes that a materialist reading of difficult living conditions, to foreground alternative understandings of density, informality, spatiality and becomings in the urban South.

A historical background of Soweto vis-à-vis heritage tourism development

Soweto is the largest township in South Africa, iconic both as an example of segregationist planning and for its political prominence during the struggle against apartheid. South Africa’s townships date back to the establishment of the first ‘locations’ by Theophilus Shepstone, administrator of Native Affairs in the British Colony of Natal during the 1850s (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007). Key pieces of legislation which followed after the unification of South Africa in 1910 were the 1913 *Land Act* and the 1923 *Natives (Urban Areas) Act* which reserved locations (typically on the fringes of cities or towns) for ‘Natives’ while inner cities and the suburbs were regarded as ‘European’ areas (Beavon and Rogerson 1990; Magubane and Lee 1979). Orlando accordingly was established as a ‘model’ location in 1932 in the south-western area of

Johannesburg (Magubane and Lee 1979). In 1954, the apartheid government demolished homes and forcefully removed the Black residents from central areas of Johannesburg (including Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare) to Meadowlands and Diepkloof, respectively situated north-west and east of Orlando (Magubane and Lee 1979). In 1963 these areas were collectively named Soweto, for South Western Townships.

Soweto, like other townships in South Africa, therefore was planned to group and accommodate people by race and ethnicity. Since people were forcefully uprooted from other areas to achieve this, Soweto arguably differs from informal settlements elsewhere in the world that have formed in a more organic fashion as the rural poor migrated to city fringes as part of the broader urbanisation process (see Lejano and Del Bianco 2018). Today, class differentiation is evident in a large township like Soweto; it has middle-class neighbourhoods and gentrified tourism precincts (Booyens and Rogerson 2018; Frenzel et al. 2015; Hoogendoorn and Giddy 2017). This said, there are informal settlements within townships which can be regarded as slums (Turok et al. 2017). These would be areas that have “inadequate access to safe water; inadequate access to sanitation and infrastructure, poor structural quality of housing, overcrowding and insecure residential status” as per the United Nations Habitat (2003: 1) definition of a slum. Our argument is that a place like Soweto should not be considered a slum overall.

It should be realised that townships on the whole in South Africa are not commonly referred to or regarded as slums. With specific reference to Soweto, in post-apartheid times this area has emerged as the epicentre of post-colonial counter-culture in South Africa where ‘Black pride’ sentiments are strong. Soweto has its own television channel and also boasts shopping malls and theatres along with numerous sporting and cultural arts events/festivals and markets. Infrastructure has also improved, including public transport linkages (i.e. bus-rapid transit). Middle-class housing and private hospital developments are also evident (see Booyens and Rogerson 2018). The township has thus transformed and arguably presents a ‘model’ of Black urbanity in African cities. In view of the changes observed, we suggest the notion of ‘slum’ for a place like Soweto as a critique of apartheid urban planning no longer explicitly applies. The post-

apartheid character of Soweto is vividly captured by the following statement: “Soweto is a symbol of the New South Africa, caught between old squatter misery and new prosperity, squalor and an upbeat lifestyle” (City of Johannesburg 2004: p. n.a.). In addition, it is observed tourism in Soweto has expanded in recent years to include a range of activities and offerings as indicated below.

Most of Soweto’s tourism activities are clustered in the Vilakazi precinct (Booyens 2010; Booyens and Rogerson 2018). The street itself is famed for once being home to two Nobel Peace Prize laureates, namely former President Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu, both key figures in the anti-apartheid liberation movement. The anchor heritage tourism attraction in the precinct (and Soweto as a whole) is the *Hector Pieterse Museum and Memorial* commemorating the tragic events of 16 June 1976. That day, approximately 15,000 schoolchildren took part in a protest march against the imposition by the Nationalist Party government of the Afrikaans language as the medium of instruction in township schools. The protest started peacefully but turned violent after the police opened fire on protestors (Magubane and Lee 1979; Ndlovu 2006). Hector Pieterse became the iconic figure of the uprising when a photo of the dying Hector, in the arms of a fellow student, was published around the world. In the months that followed, the aftermath was felt in many other townships around South Africa (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007). The result was that: “By the end of 1976, Soweto, as a place name, had become a significant household name throughout the world” (Ndlovu 2006: 7). Moreover, these events are historically significant since they are widely considered to present a turning point in the struggle (Giliomee and Mbenga 2007).

In the post-apartheid era, tourism was identified as a strategic means of conserving sites of heritage value and stimulating local economic development as part of an integrated approach to urban development in Soweto (City of Johannesburg 2004; Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2005; Gauteng Province 2014). It is important to note that strategic and policy documents emphasise the investment and promotion of heritage tourism as the key tourism product of the Vilakazi precinct, rather than poverty or slum tourism. Booyens (2010) stresses that use of heritage resources is not only significant for tourism

development in townships, but also for conserving heritage resources for education, remembrance and reconciliation purposes. The imperative to promote heritage tourism is mandated in the *National Heritage Resources Act* (South Africa 1999). The Act draws attention to the role that museums and interpretation centres have in promoting an inclusive and tolerant society by highlighting issues of discrimination and human rights abuses. A fitting example is the Hector Pieterse Museum and Memorial which has a strong education focus and is frequented by international visitors, local visitors and school groups alike (Booyens 2010).

Most tours to Soweto stop at the Vilakazi precinct which has expanded considerably in the past decade. The expansion has resulted from public and private investment and the precinct boasts an array of shops, stalls and restaurants in addition to the anti-apartheid struggle heritage sites and attractions (Booyens and Rogerson 2018, 2019). In addition, numerous festivals and events take place in Soweto which include music events and festivals; marathons; wine, book and lifestyle festivals; and also a pride event (see Booyens and Rogerson 2018). There are also food markets and craft breweries, and adventure tourism activities like bungee jumping and helicopter rides. These activities draw locals along with domestic and international visitors alike and are indicative of a growing leisure economy in Soweto. A further nuance *vis-à-vis* township tourism, unnoticed by most slum tourism authors, is that domestic tourists visiting friends and relatives (VFR) far outnumber international visitors to townships like Soweto (Rogerson and Hoogendoorn 2014; Rogerson 2014, 2015).

Method and samples

A non-probability research design was adopted for this study. A total of 154 semi-structured face-to-face questionnaire interviews were conducted over a three-week period in June/July 2018. Fifty interviews were conducted with local residents living in and around the Vilakazi precinct in Orlando West and 104 with tourists visiting the area. The sample targets of 50 resident interviews and 100 visitor questionnaire interviews were purposively determined. Both questionnaires included quantitative and qualitative (open ended questions). While Orlando West is known to

have 11,000 households (Census 2011), simple random sampling techniques were not used to draw the resident sample since the focus was on interviewing residents living in or near the Vilakazi precinct where tourism is concentrated. Note that recent and accurate visitor figures for Soweto are not available. Purposive sampling was also used for visitors. This sampling technique is appropriate when total populations are not known, difficult to determine or when it fits with the research design. In the case of both residents and tourists, researchers relied on ‘available subjects’, that is persons who were willing to participate in the study when approached. Residents were interviewed in their homes in Malie, Bhejane, Bhele, Moema, Rampa and Lembethe Streets (refer to Fig. 1). Residences on streets closest to Vilakazi Street were contacted first by knocking on doors. The identification of interviewees was then systematically expanded outwards from Vilakazi Street to the other street names mentioned. No individuals were approached outside of residences to eliminate the possibility of interviewing persons who are not resident in Orlando West.

We asked residents what they thought a slum is and whether they consider Orlando West to be a slum. Interviews were primarily conducted in English and isiZulu, and in some cases in isiTswana, to ensure that

residents understood what was being asked. Interviews with residents were between 10 and 20 min. All answers were written down by the interviewer on the questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was used for the quantitative data and thematic content analysis for the qualitative responses from the residents’ and visitors’ survey samples.

Table 1 outlines the demographics of the resident survey sample; including the fact that two-thirds of the sample was male. A little over a third were aged 18–30 years, a quarter were aged 31–40 and the remainder fell into older age groups. In terms of employment status, formally employed people were most represented (26%) followed closely by those engaged in informal work (24%), those reliant on social grants (22%) and 18% of residents being unemployed.

Regarding the tourist survey, visitors in and around Vilakazi Street were approached for an interview. These were mostly conducted in English. Table 2 shows the demographics of the tourist sample. Most tourists interviewed were female (57%) and young, aged 18–30 years, which corresponds with column three indicating that the largest proportion of visitors consisted of students (35%). The second largest portion in relation to profession/economic status were

Fig. 1 Study area: Vilakazi Street and surrounds in Orlando West, Soweto (source: authors)

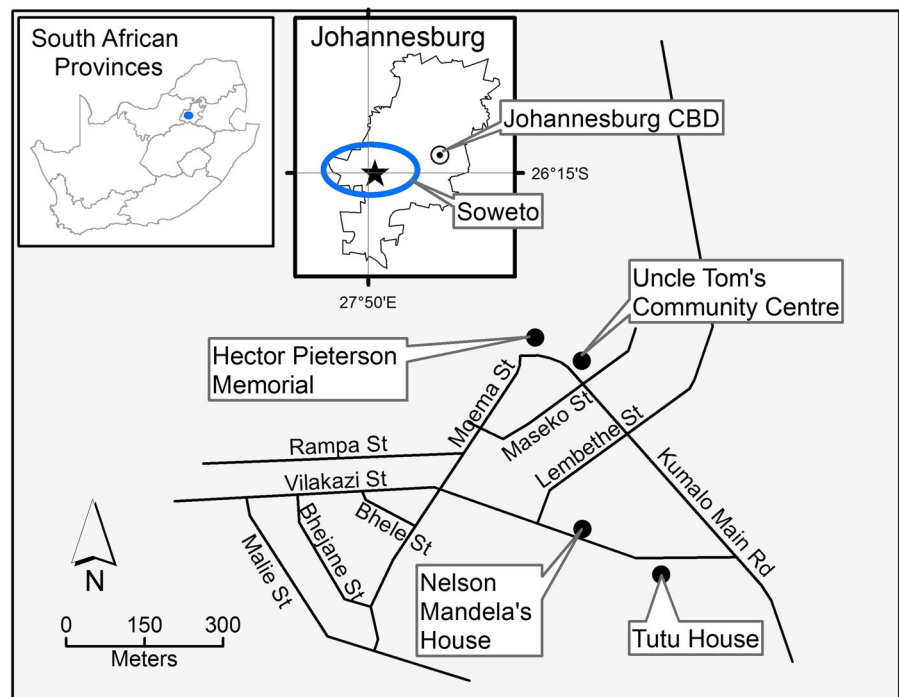


Table 1 Demographics of resident sample

Gender	<i>N</i>	%	Age (years)	<i>N</i>	%	Income status	<i>N</i>	%
Male	33	66	18–30	18	36	Employment	13	26
Female	17	34	31–40	12	24	Informal work	12	24
Not disclosed	0	–	41–50	7	14	Social grants	11	22
			51–60	3	6	Unemployed	9	18
			61–65	6	12	Remittances	3	6
			66+	4	8	Student	2	4
Total	50	100	Total	50	100	Total	50	100

Table 2 Demographics of tourist sample

Gender	<i>N</i>	%	Age (years)	<i>N</i>	%	Economic sector/status	<i>N</i>	% ^a	Region/country of origin	<i>N</i>	%
Female	59	57	18–30	66	63	Student	36	35	Europe	34	33
Male	43	41	31–40	19	18	Business/finance	15	14	UK	10	10
Prefer not to disclose	2	2	41–50	9	9	Creative/media	10	10	USA/Canada	31	30
			51–60	6	6	Educator/academic	8	8	South Africa	17	16
			61–65	0	0	Professional	8	8	Africa (other)	4	4
			66+	4	4	Artisan/engineer/IT	7	7	South America	3	3
						Medicine/social services	5	5	Australasia	3	3
						Transport/aviation	4	4	East Asia	2	2
						Retired	3	3			
						Unemployed	3	3			
						Not disclosed	3	3			
						Admin	2	2			
Total	104	100	Total	104	100	Total	104	100	Total	104	100

^aFigures subject to rounding error

those employed in the business and finance sectors. Creatives were the third largest portion, including persons working *inter alia* in film or as artists, journalists, photographers and activists. Eight percent of visitors were employed in education or academia and a further 8% as professionals (other). Most visitors were from Europe, notably from Norway, and the United Kingdom, Canada or the United States of America. Visitors from South Africa constituted 16% of the sample, followed by visitors from other African countries.

Results

When Orlando West residents were asked what they think slums are, the words *Imijondolo* and

Ematjotjombeni (isiZulu and isiXhosa terms respectively) were used to overwhelmingly point to slums as ‘shack’ settlements or ‘squatter camps’. Residents described these areas as ‘dirty’, ‘unsafe’, overcrowded and without basic services. They further underscored informality, poverty and criminality as being characteristic of slums. The majority of the respondents agreed that there are slum-like areas elsewhere in Soweto, but not one person we interviewed thought that Orlando West is a slum. When asked whether tourists come to the area to see slum-like conditions in Orlando West, all, except two, were of the view that this is not the case. One resident [R46]² remarked that:

² Resident No. 46 (hereafter R with the questionnaire number), young female (18–30), unemployed.

Tourists would not be coming if it was a slum' and added that 'there are no shacks in Orlando West.

Another resident [R1]³ felt that Orlando West is not a slum because:

It is a township which is modernised, with accessible basic needs and the housing conditions are good.

In response to why tourists visit the area, residents were mostly of the opinion that tourists visit Orlando West and Soweto at large because of its political history and struggle legacy (87% of responses; see Fig. 2).

Residents specifically mentioned that visitors come to their neighbourhood because of its association with Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu who both lived on Vilakazi Street (the Mandela House is now a museum). This history of the precinct is something that residents are evidently proud of, with several residents also mentioning that Mandela and Tutu, were both Nobel Peace Prize laureates. They averred that tourists visit to learn about the political history of the area, the liberation movement and the June 16th youth uprising as illustrated by the following quotes from residents. Visitors visit because of:

...the history of Mandela and what he did for the country. [R3]⁴

Mandela and Tutu houses; the 1976 youth uprising; Hector who died on this street; and also the restaurants. [R5]⁵

Some residents felt validated by visitors recognising their heritage as indicated in the following quote [R8]⁶:

It is good to see people from outside the country come to visit our country to know about our history.

The notorious 1976 youth uprising is central to the heritage attractions in the area since this is where the events took place. Figure 3 shows signage (incl. tourism and heritage) with the Hector Peterson

Museum in the background (red brick building—see Fig. 1 for location).

Four residents also identified leisure motivations as a reason why tourists visit, with reference to the museums, shops and 'nice' restaurants in the area (the restaurants were also referred to by R5)—see Fig. 4.

Some residents expressed the opinion that tourists come to see the 'beauty' of the area and 'improved safety in townships'. Only in two cases, were respondents of the opinion that tourists primarily come to see 'how Black people live'.

Of residents interviewed, 44% felt positive about tourists visiting their area. Reasons for residents' support of tourism included observed business growth and job creation in the Vilakazi precinct from which some of the respondents noted they benefitted. Locals observed they were involved in the sale of food and drinks in restaurants or cafés, working in B&Bs, selling crafts and clothing to tourists and providing forms of tourism-related entertainment. A resident who benefitted directly from tourism (i.e. R5 who earns an informal income) said:

They [tourists] buy my stuff, some of which I make myself. I communicate with them and sell in bulks to California.

Some residents alluded to improved safety through police presence because of tourists frequenting the area. However, 38% of the residents indicated that they had negative perceptions about tourism in their area (Table 3). For instance, complaints were uttered about the noise and overcrowding of streets, the area becoming too expensive, and rude behaviour from tourists which includes taking photographs without consent. A quote from a resident who felt this way follows.

They [tourists] buy nothing from me, but only come to see. I hate it when they take pictures of me. [R6]⁷

Furthermore, some residents expressed their discontent about there being few benefits for locals. This corresponds with the sentiment expressed by a little more than half of the respondents (52%) that locals, for the most part, do not benefit from tourism in Soweto, while the rest felt that locals did (48%). The

³ Young female (18–30), relying on remittances.

⁴ Male, aged 41–50, informal income.

⁵ Female, aged 31–40, informal income.

⁶ Young male (18–30), relying on remittances.

⁷ Young female (18–30), informal income.

Fig. 2 Perceived reasons why tourists visit the Vilakazi precinct and Soweto (*source: resident survey*)

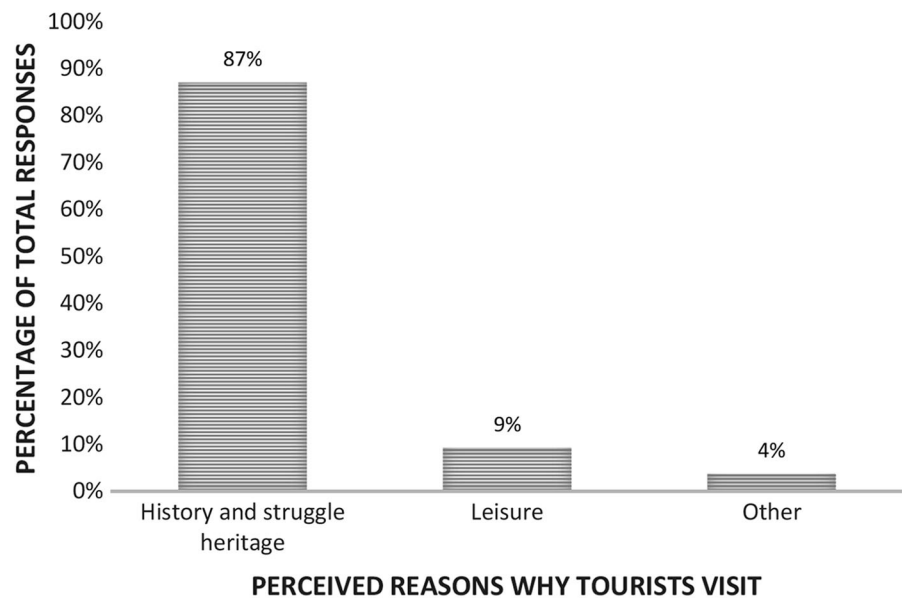


Fig. 3 Hector Peterson Museum and Memorial square (*source: authors*)

18% of residents who were uncertain about tourism impacts indicated that there are both positive and negative effects or that tourism does not affect them in either a positive or negative way.

Our attention now turns to the perceptions of tourists who visit the Vilakazi precinct. Figure 5 outlines the primary reason for visiting Johannesburg.

Most tourists were determined to tour the precinct for leisure purposes (48%), followed by VFR (25%) and business travel (14%).

Figure 6 offers the motivations for tourists visiting Soweto. The single largest portion of visitors indicated that they are broadly interested in the history and culture of South Africa (34%). However, this was



Fig. 4 Restaurant in Vilakazi Street (*source: authors*)

Table 3 Resident sentiments about tourists visiting Vilakazi Street and Soweto

Positive or negative about tourism			Locals benefit from tourism		
Response	<i>N</i>	%	Response	<i>N</i>	%
Positive	22	44	No	24	52
Negative	19	38	Yes	26	48
Uncertain	9	18			
Total	50	100	Total	50	100

followed closely by visitors who visit specifically to see sites of historical significance associated with the struggle against apartheid (31%). In other words, about 30% of tourists knew specifically what they are coming to see, as reflected below in the response of foreign visitors. A visitor from Switzerland indicated that she came to:

...learn more about South Africa’s past struggles and the heroes and heroines of the struggle [V30]⁸; and

A nurse from Canada was there to:

...celebrate Youth Day and learn about South African history. [V51]⁹

Domestic tourists stressed for the most part that they visit Soweto as part of Youth Day celebrations commemorating the events of the June 16th youth uprising.¹⁰ The interviews reveal that it is important for South Africans to visit the sites associated with

⁸ Visitor No. 30 (hereafter V with the questionnaire number), female, aged 30, on holiday.

⁹ Female, aged 30, on holiday.

¹⁰ Note that Youth Day is a National Holiday to commemorate the June 16th uprising, and it was coincidental that some of the fieldwork fell over this holiday. While the fieldwork was carried out over a three weeks in June and July 2018, 44% of the visitor responses (42 international and 17 domestic visitors) were collected on Youth Day due to the number of visitors on the day. We did not detect notable differences in the responses collected on Youth Day in comparison with the overall responses.

Fig. 5 Primary reason for visiting Johannesburg (*source: visitor survey*)*. *Figures subject to rounding error

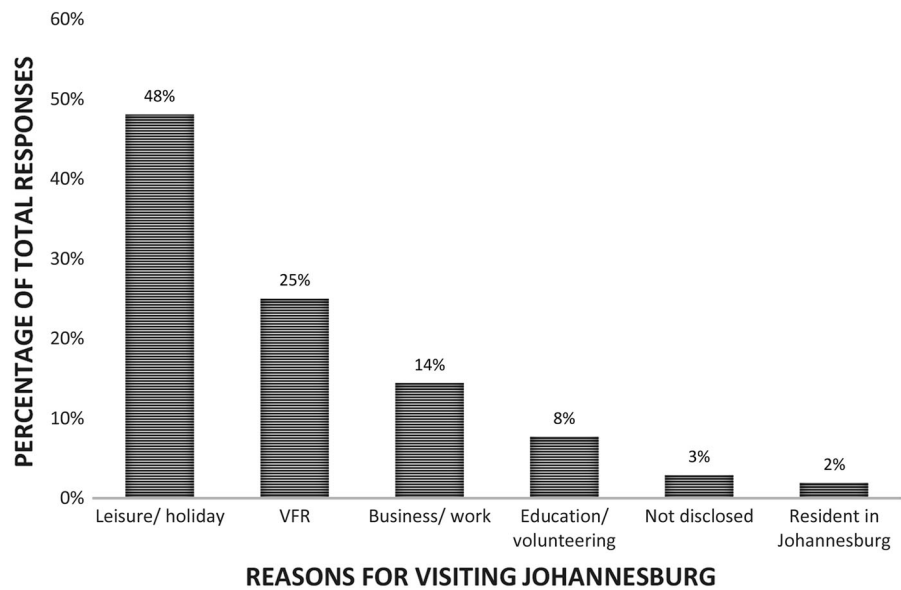
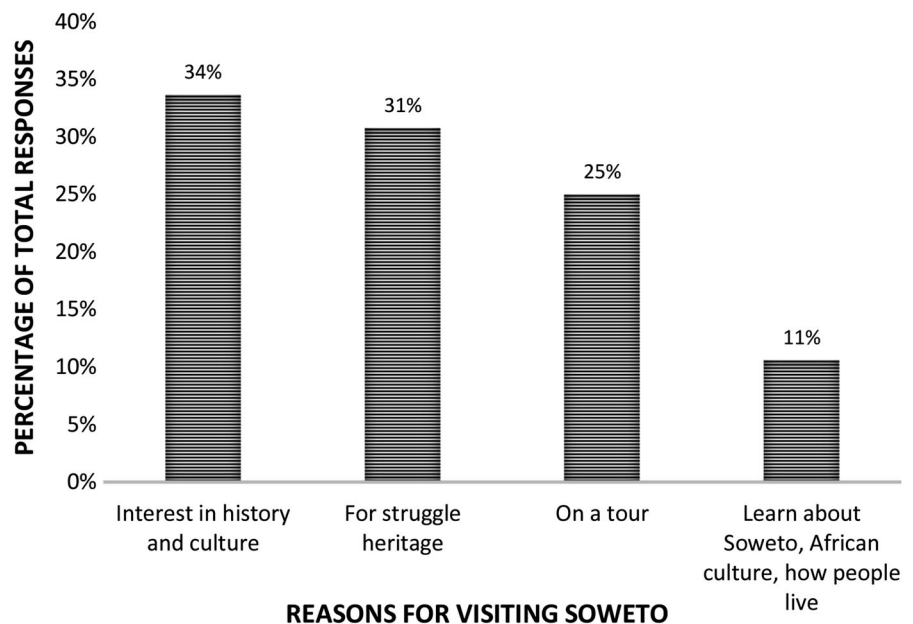


Fig. 6 Motivation for visiting Soweto (*source: visitor survey*)



significant events in the liberation movement. It should be stressed that to the best of our knowledge, no study has to date interrogated the motivations of domestic visitors to townships. This is clearly an under-investigated topic.

A quarter of tourists indicated that they are not interested in history and culture per se, or struggle

heritage specifically, but that they are simply on a tour and engaging in leisure (Fig. 4). Eleven percent of tourists admitted that they are visiting to ‘explore’ African culture, learn more about Soweto and to ‘see how people live’ in townships.

When asked about whether they consider Orlando West to be a slum, 94% of visitors did not think so.

However, 66% admitted that their perceptions of the area had been changed by their visit as illustrated by the response below.

I considered townships to be slums only and I was wrong. [V59]¹¹

Visitors commented that the houses are decent, the area has access to services, and it was noticed by several that the area is economically active. To this effect, a diplomat from Germany said:

I can tell that it [the area] has undergone transformation and it has regenerated to be a tourist attraction and therefore it is not a slum; development has taken place. [V52]¹²

In their qualitative responses, some visitors made references to slums elsewhere. For instance, a visitor from Brazil remarked that Orlando West is:

...way better than some of the slums and favelas in my country. [V33']¹³

In a similar vein, a visitor from South Korea observed that:

...it looks better than slums in Asia. [V25]¹⁴

In addition, several visitors observed the area to be friendly, creative and vibrant, which some admitted that they did not expect as illustrated below.

I thought I was going to encounter outrageous residents, protesting on every corner as we see on the news, but that's not the case. It's a lively place. [V45]¹⁵

A few observers indicated that there is a mix of living standards in Soweto, which is not defined by poverty per se and that Orlando West can be considered as 'highly' developed. Several respondents also said that they had the impression before their visit that townships are unsafe. However, 91% of tourists said that they do not feel unsafe in Soweto, corresponding with the findings of George and Booyens (2014) in Cape Town's townships.

The activities that tourists engage in are shown in Fig. 7. The historical attractions associated with struggle heritage are the most popular, followed by shopping for arts and crafts, and leisure activities which include adventure, local cuisine and entertainments. Only 3% of responses suggested that tourists are visiting informal settlements.

Discussion and conclusion

This research has determined that the term 'slum tourism' to describe tourism in Soweto, South Africa's premier township tourism destination, is neither fact-based nor consistent with the perceptions of most local residents and many tourists. Moreover, it was revealed that most tourists to Soweto do not visit impoverished settlements to tour poverty per se. It was further observed that Orlando West residents are not overwhelmingly negative about tourism to their area, although they do not necessarily benefit directly. This finding corresponds with the observations of Booyens (2010) in Soweto and Muldoon (2018) in Cape Town. Our research demonstrates that residents in Orlando West, and arguably Soweto as a whole, value the preservation of their heritage through tourism. It should be noted that current urban policy directions in South Africa underscore the urgent need to stimulate inclusive urban development and growth, including stimulating economic activity in townships (see Gauteng Province 2014; Rogerson 2019; Turok and Visagie 2018)—tourism is regarded as one avenue towards this. Tourism precinct development and participatory forms of cultural heritage potentially hold opportunities for township upgrading and direct employment as an alternative option to poverty tourism. Indeed, recent observations point out that the tourism mix has expanded in Soweto (Booyens and Rogerson 2018, 2019) which points to a next stage in tourism product and also area development along with a growing leisure economy. The tourism area life-cycle by Butler (1980) and evolutionary perspectives of tourism area development (Ma and Hassink 2013) are worth considering in future investigations.

Slum tourism as a relatively '...young field of interdisciplinary tourism research' (Frenzel and Koens 2012: 195) has gained significant traction in terms of the volume of research conducted on this phenomenon. While urban poverty remains the key

¹¹ Male, aged 52, business owner from Germany.

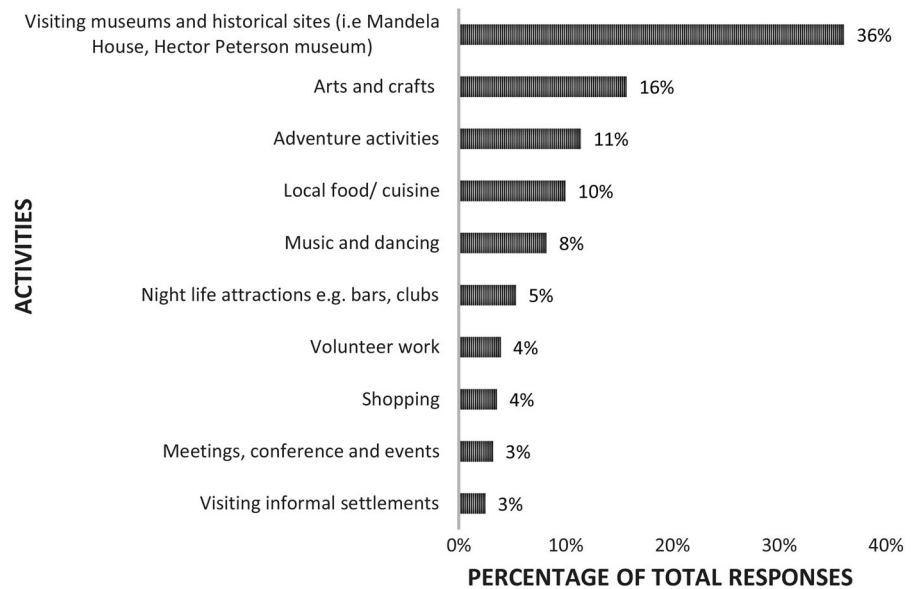
¹² Female, aged 52, on holiday.

¹³ Female, aged 18, student.

¹⁴ Female, aged 40, visiting family.

¹⁵ Male, aged 20, student from France.

Fig. 7 Activities engaged in by tourists to Soweto (source: visitor survey)



dimension of this type of tourism in many areas globally (Frenzel 2018; Jones and Sanyal 2015), based on the findings of this research, we urge that ‘slum tourism’ as a term should be used cautiously and selectively. It can be argued that the term ‘slum tourism’ is not necessarily an inappropriate term but should be used accurately to describe places. We do not argue that certain sentiments expressed in the international slum tourism literature are invalid. However, over-generalisations resulting from an inadequate appreciation of place, should be avoided in urban Global South contexts. Indeed, Rogerson (2014) pragmatically states that it is not entirely possible to develop an all-encompassing definition of slum tourism globally.

We, accordingly, urge for a greater emphasis on ‘place’ to ensure adequate understanding of locational dynamics; and to negate stigmatised views of slums, allow alternative voices to be heard and ensure more balanced views. This is in line with the work of Global South scholars such as: Choplin (2016), Deboulet (2016), Lombard (2014), Lejano and Del Bianco (2018), Pieterse (2011), and Turok and Visagie (2018). The listed scholars, to name a few, take locational complexities vis-à-vis historical developments, social relations, resilience and policy directions into account when researching and discussing issues pertaining to peripheral and/or precarious neighbourhoods. These urban spaces are considered ‘dead’ and

‘deprived’; while the dynamism, vibrancy and creativity of such environments (see Booyens and Rogerson 2018; Choplin 2016; Deboulet 2016; Mkono 2016; Pieterse 2011) either go unnoticed or are underplayed. This latter perspective does not fit the Eurocentric experience or dominant urban theory.

The notion of ‘habitus’ (after Bourdieu 1971) may be useful for future investigations into slum tourism. This notion underscores how space is transformed into place through the experiences of people who live there. This transformation is a vibrant, socially embedded process interwoven with complex, place-based dynamics and identities (see Deboulet 2016; Lombard 2014; Pieterse 2011). Indeed, Aitchison (2001: 141) characterises tourism destinations as “constantly evolving places and people with changing characteristics resulting from the mutually informing process of productive consumption derived from that in-betweenness of global and local, tourist and host”. She draws attention to the misrepresentation of spaces, places, people and culture accompanied by ‘othering’ in the context of tourism and with reference to postcolonial discourses. Indeed, Pratt (2019) draws attention to ‘othering’ in the context of ‘naming’ informality.

Therefore, in closing, an overall characterisation of township tourism as slum tourism is not only undesirable but is potentially detrimental in the South Africa context and arguably elsewhere too. Tzanelli

(2018: 2) cautions that “slum tourism scholars produce perspectives on the social, cultural and politico-economic world they study”, which by extension “may inform or suggest particular forms of action, which make their way into real policy-making contexts (in tourism or other cognate sociopolitical and cultural fields)”. In other words, how we frame social phenomena can have a far-reaching impact with possible unintended consequences. Furthermore, a focus on informality as a distinctive feature reinforces ‘othering’ (Aitchison 2001; Pratt 2019). Moreover, the label of ‘slumness’ arguably impugns the dignity of residents and the memory their struggle *inter alia* for equal opportunities and a decent living. We call for the decolonised use of terminology and also of places. Hlongwane (2007) stress that we need monuments, memorials and museums that represent Black histories. The implication is the decolonisation of heritage in South Africa. This corresponds with Booyens (2010) who point out that ‘White’ heritage has dominated tourism offerings in South Africa in the past and Waterton and Smith (2010) who underscore historical misrecognition of heritage. In addition, South African policies support the commemoration of heritage accompanied with tourism development in townships. In cases where struggle heritage sites are in townships where historical events took place, it is not helpful to liken that visits to these sites, by domestic and international visitors alike, to slum tourism and to not make a distinction between the whether visits are primary to visit heritage sites or to view poverty. In other areas, such tourism are termed heritage tourism. We aver that this issue can also be considered as ‘othering’. We encourage researchers to take greater recognition of locational complexities and the evolution of tourism areas, and not to let the politics of representation (Aitchison 2001; Spivak 1994) escape their gaze in future slum tourism investigations.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical statement All ethical requirements as expected by the University of Johannesburg were followed. No under aged individuals were interviewed, no people that may be considered vulnerable because of economic or social reasons were interviewed. All respondents are kept completely confidential and due diligence was followed.

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