

# History, Tourism, and Culture

*Between Conservation and  
Commodification in Southern Africa*

By

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**History, Tourism, and Culture: Between Conservation and  
Commodification in Southern Africa**

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# Preface

This book explores the relationship between local communities' heritage and tourism in Southern Africa. Local communities play an important role in shaping how natural and cultural resources are governed. Engaging local communities can help effectively align state development goals with local livelihoods and environmental sustainability. This book also examines the role of cultural heritage tourism in promoting community welfare. The themes explored in this book have broader application to the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as they address many of the challenges encountered in reconstructing cultural identities through heritage tourism and creating new heritage values aligned with development and the formation of national identity. Heritage tourism management in Southern Africa is conspicuously underrepresented in scholarly research. More importantly, the role of both personal and collective memory in tourism studies is neglected. This book contributes to the body of knowledge on heritage tourism in Southern Africa.

Situated at the nexus of the politics of culture, memory and identity, the book engages with heritage places as zones where tourism, culture, and memory intersect and construct notions of identity. The book navigates the contestations between conservation and commodification of heritage resources, which are often highly contentious. Conservation involves protecting heritage resources by safeguarding, maintaining, and sustaining historical, cultural, and natural assets in their original form, with particular attention to meaning, context, and community rights.

Commodification involves extracting economic value by turning history into marketable products or experiences (such as tourism, memorabilia, or branded experiences), often driven by profit, branding, or external demand. The book presents a structured approach which seeks to balance heritagization, livelihoods and economic development. The intriguing question is how to balance intrinsic cultural value (significance, memory, identity) with monetary value (tourism revenue, branding). The gap lies in who benefits from heritage commodification and how commodification can enhance or undermine conservation. Therefore, the analysis in this book is premised on the broader context of tourism-making, cultural appropriation, identity formation, nation-building, and governmentality.

The book explores the impact of social cohesion and identity by examining how commodified heritage activities can strengthen or fragment local identities and affect the transmission of intergenerational knowledge. The contention is on the fact that national identity is usually defined by dominant social groups and the political elite. While identity is constructed, it can also have primordial (traced from history), constructed (heritage factor) or imagined (heritage factor) premises. Cases from Southern Africa demonstrate how cultural heritage sites have frequently surfaced conflicting views among stakeholders, politicians, legislators, scholars, communities, heritage practitioners, and tourism officials, on the construction of personal and national identity, nationalism, ownership, development, and the political, economic, and other uses or misuses of heritage landscapes. At the heart of the conflict is the politicisation and commodification of memories as tourist attractions.

This book analyses and evaluates the relationships among heritage, memory, and identity in post-colonial Southern Africa. It examines how Southern Africa's historical sites are represented in local memorialization practices, heritage, and the (re)construction of local and national identities. Heritage tourism is a powerful force in the construction and maintenance of national identity because it relies on the nation's historical symbols to attract tourists. This book explores the production and consumption of tourism in Southern Africa, focusing on the influence of identity, memorialisation and the manifestation of nationhood. It examines the roles of tourists, communities, and state actors, such as the National Heritage Council and the National Department of Tourism in South Africa, that represent collective memories and leverage heritage tourism to forge national unity.

This book discusses the entanglement between tourism and heritage management in Southern Africa. This is reflected in inter and intra-community relations and contestations among stakeholders, including visitors, local communities, government authorities, tour operators, and institutions. The book also examines the historical, cultural, socio-economic and political processes through which communities or individuals construct identities and individual and collective memories about the commemorative representation of heritage sites.

In the post-colonial context, the state employs heritage as a tool for social cohesion, while local communities use it to demand rights and access to resources. This book demonstrates how heritage has become a platform for claiming resources and restitution for marginalised communities. It highlights debates

over the representation and preservation of colonial and immigrant cultures in post-colonial contexts, as constructing a new, authentic national history and heritage is a key aim of the state. In this context, the practice of heritage becomes a form of cultural politics.

This book demonstrates how the state's use of heritage surfaces dissonant perspectives and privileges some memories while silencing others. In political contexts undergoing profound change, memories may be prioritised at both the state and local levels, leading to the formation of new identities and contestations. This book also explores how information about tourists' collective memory can reveal perceptions of quality that are not always defined by the supplier's objectives or generic criteria of excellence. Tourists become the audience for whom the past is represented in a specific way. They prefer certain destinations because of personal memories rather than marketing factors. The book also addresses the need for understanding the value of heritage from tourists' perspectives, which can be shaped and altered by present-day perspectives and identities.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

*This chapter introduces the topics of tourism, cultural heritage, and memorialisation, and explores the complex relationship among them. It provides an overview of the development of tourism from the ancient Empire era to the present. While mass tourism has dominated the industry in modern times, this chapter explores the special-interest sectors within the industry that focus on cultural, educational, heritage, and memorial tourism. It investigates how heritage and the memorialisation of history have been commercialised and commodified as tourism products, along with the accompanying benefits and risks. Focusing on Southern Africa, the chapter explores key features of the cultural heritage landscape and the packaging of cultural heritage, commemoration, and memorialisation for tourist experiences in this region.*

### **The History of World Tourism**

The travel, leisure, and tourism industry spans the globe and relies on significant infrastructure to ensure accessibility, safety, and the provision of utilities and services for tourists. Tourism impacts virtually every aspect of society, including politics, culture, and, most notably, the economy (Ndlovu, 2009; Gyr, 2010). According to the World Tourism Organisation, tourism generated approximately 1.4 billion international arrivals and total export revenue of US\$1.9 trillion in 2024 (UNWTO, 2025). Tourism has the potential to generate jobs, enhance the local economy, contribute to the development of local infrastructure, and assist in the preservation of the natural environment, cultural

assets, and traditions<sup>1</sup>. Tourism revenues can be used to fund roads, water, sanitation, health clinics, schools, and cultural preservation to enhance sustainable development.

Exploring the history of tourism across the centuries not only enables a deeper understanding of the past, but also the forecasting of the future that is needed to design viable tourism offerings<sup>2</sup>. The evolution of the tourism industry has been shaped significantly by Western culture (Towner, 1995). European elites pioneered early travel; as they encountered distant lands previously unknown to them, they formed stereotypes of other societies as exotic and primitive.

Scholars have classified the development of tourism into six periods: the Empire period (BC to the 5th century), the Middle Ages (5th to 14th centuries) the Renaissance (14th to 16th centuries), the Grand Tour period ( 1613 to 1785 A.D.), the Mobility period (1800 to 1944), and the Modern epoch, beginning in 1945 and continuing to the present (Gyre, 2010). The Empire era featured the Egyptian and Greek empires and ended with the collapse of the Roman Empire. During this era, people travelled for business, recreational, educational, and religious reasons (Gyr, 2010). A relatively wealthy population with the means to travel was attracted by the allure of safe, stress-free travel, strong

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<sup>1</sup>Bakalo et al. Local tourism as a financial and economic development driver of the local economy: management aspects. 2025. World Development Perspectives. 38

<sup>2</sup> Christou, A. P., The History and Evolution of Tourism. 2022. CABI Publications.

and widely accepted currencies, a common language, and a legislative environment that protected individual rights<sup>3</sup>.

Travel declined dramatically during the Middle Ages due to the greater risks involved. Without the broader frame of an empire, travellers faced greater barriers in transportation, currency, and language. Trade between regions was hampered by volatile exchange rates, hindering long-distance trade and budgeting. Cross-border trade became complex and costly as city-states and kingdoms minted their own currencies with varied standards<sup>4</sup>. Different weights and fineness required merchants to continuously weigh and assay coins or rely on expensive exchange rates. Rulers frequently devalued coinage by reducing their precious metal content to fund wars or deficits, resulting in more coins with lower intrinsic value<sup>5</sup>. Debasement inflated prices and eroded trust in money.

Marco Polo's extraordinary expedition to the Holy Land took place in the late 13th century. His voyages transformed distant, exotic places into tangible destinations in the European imagination, making the notion of travelling to far lands credible and desirable<sup>6</sup>. He travels in combined commerce and exploration. His ambitious travels of the Silk Road and maritime

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<sup>3</sup> Christou, A. P., *The History and Evolution of Tourism*. 2022. CABI Publications.

<sup>4</sup> Flesher, Dale L, *Trade and Commerce in the Ancient World*. 2022. Economics. Research Starters. EBSCO.

<sup>5</sup> Flesher, Dale L, *Trade and Commerce in the Ancient World*. 2022. Economics. Research Starters. EBSCO.

<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, B.J., *European Exploration*. 2026. Britannica Editors.

routes were portrayed as journeys to gain knowledge, prestige, and opportunity.

In 1453, the Ottoman capture of Constantinople disrupted the overland trade of European merchants on the Silk Road<sup>7</sup>. The Portuguese established alternate maritime passages around Africa, providing direct access to Asia, with Bartolomeu Dias rounding the Cape in 1488 and Vasco da Gama reaching India in 1498. The Dutch, English, and later French and Spanish fleets expanded their networks across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Towards the end of the Renaissance era, trade routes were slowly revived as commercial ventures flourished and dealers expanded into new territories, generating interest in travel for both business and leisure.

The Grand Tour era, which began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and continued into the 18<sup>th</sup> century, saw young European nobles and affluent visitors travel extensively across Europe to experience its art, culture, and history. This represented the start of tourism as an industry<sup>8</sup>. Educational journeys, called 'Bildungsreisen', became popular among the upper German-speaking middle-class professionals and played a significant role in the development of tourism from the Enlightenment to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Gyr, 2010). People travelled by train and visited both rural and urban regions. They travelled to historical sites and landmarks to learn about art, culture, and the environment. Their travels also explored painting, sculpture, architecture, and manufacturing. Gyr (2010) explains: "The travels of the learned

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<sup>7</sup> Barzun, J., History of Europe. 2026. Britannica Editors. History.

<sup>8</sup> Austin, G. From commodity to colonial currencies in the West Africa. 2025. African Economic History.

middle classes copied those of the prominent poets and philosophers of the time, such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles Baron de Montesquieu, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Johann Gottfried Herder” (p. 1).

Tourists visited Italy and France in search of education, where they shared their knowledge and experiences through literary works and travel accounts. New segments of the population, such as younger clergy men, artists, and craftsmen, began to travel for educational purposes. A segment of the middle-class business sector travelled from various countries to Britain, France, and Germany to learn about technological advancements and industrial innovations. The affluent English pioneered the culture of visiting, which expanded throughout Europe as a symbol of status<sup>9</sup>.

The Mobility Era began in the early 1800s and continued until 1944. It was characterised by rapid advancements in transportation technology, which made travel easier and more economical. Commercial aircraft transformed the way people travel. Thomas Cook, who has been called the ‘father of tourism’ pioneered the group travel package model<sup>10</sup>. In 1841, he organised the first tour for 570 members of a local temperance society from Campbell Street Station in Leicester to attend a temperance rally in Loughborough, England (Gyr, 2010).

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<sup>9</sup> Flesher, Dale L, Trade and Commerce in the Ancient World. 2022. Economics. Research Starters.

<sup>10</sup> Norah, J. Thomas Cook History: The Tale of the Father of Morden Tourism. 2021. Travel History and Research. Independent Travel Cats.

The Modern Era began in 1945 and continues to the present. It has been characterised by mass travel to global destinations. The rise of package tours and affordable airlines has made foreign travel more accessible to the general public, and the Internet has simplified the process of booking and travelling<sup>11</sup>. As a result, tourism has emerged as a global economic leader, with intercontinental tourist arrivals estimated at 1.52 billion, nearly 60 billion more than in 2024, representing a 4% increase (UNWTO, 2025). While this has led to economic gains for many destinations, it has also raised concerns about overtourism—where the number of visitors to a destination surpasses its capacity to accommodate without compromising the environment, local quality of life, or visitor experience.

## **Special Interest Tourism**

Since the end of World War II, special interest tourism has gained popularity, giving rise to new forms of tourism that meet the needs of tourists and hosts. Cultural tourism, educational tourism, heritage tourism, and memorial tourism are key special interest sectors within the tourism industry<sup>12</sup>.

## **Cultural Tourism**

The World Tourism Organisation (2012) states that cultural tourism is one of the most important and diversified sectors within modern tourism. It has shown innovation in response to

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<sup>11</sup> Christou, A. P., *The History and Evolution of Tourism*. 2022. CABI Publications

<sup>12</sup> Brooks c. et al., *Exploring the relationship between heritage tourism, sustainable community development and host communities' health and well-being: A systematic review*. 2023. 18(3), e0282319.

tourists' demand for new experiences. While some claim that tourism degrades heritage sites (Kim, 2011; Zhuang et al., 2019), it can also be argued that cultural tourism results in tourists becoming more educated about the preservation and conservation of heritage sites and valuing the sites they visit. (Brooks, 2012; Ramli & Badarulzaman, 2023). As the appreciation of intangible heritage assets is typically part of the cultural tourism experience, some argue that the globalisation of heritage through tourism has resulted in a greater respect for both tangible and living culture than was previously achievable<sup>13</sup>.

Tourism and globalization can also influence the aesthetics of places of a place by accelerating structural and visual changes, which often lead to a homogenization of urban landscapes while simultaneously creating new curated identities for visitors (Azcarate, 2025). Heritage and museum projects are affected by popular media, including earlier forms, to develop a lingua franca that spans national and international boundaries (Hlongwane & Ndlovu, 2019). Thus, globalisation has brought both opportunities and risks for historic and cultural heritage tourism destinations.

### **Educational Tourism**

Educational tourism, or 'edu-tourism', refers to any program in which participants travel to a location, either individually or as a group, with the primary goal of engaging in a learning experience directly related to the site (Rodger, 1998). Educational tourism

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<sup>13</sup> Brooks c. et al., Exploring the relationship between heritage tourism, sustainable community development and host communities' health and well-being: A systematic review. 2023. 18(3), e0282319

dates to the 18th century, when it became popular among the middle class to travel to Italy or France for education and leisure. Marunda (2014) identifies several types of educational tourism: countryside or ranch tourism, ecotourism, student exchange programs, and heritage tourism. Educational institutions and programs have used historical tourism sites, particularly those associated with famous individuals, for educational purposes<sup>14</sup>. In Zimbabwe, for example, schools organise field trips to National Heroes Acre and Chinhoyi Caves, among other places.

### **Heritage Tourism**

'Heritage' has become a buzzword in South Africa, evoking a range of emotional associations and benefits for various stakeholders and local communities. Heritage is not a static concept, but rather a culturally and socially produced process (Smith, 2006). Heritage is open to different interpretations by different groups. Heritage is seen as a source of empowerment for the historically marginalised black majority (Marshall, 2010). It involves valuing and preserving cultural beliefs and values, honouring heroes and contributions, authenticating neglected stories and memories, and acknowledging suffering and sacrifice<sup>15</sup>. Heritage is also a loaded discursive marker of our time, one of the 'keywords' now commonly accepted to describe

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<sup>14</sup> Abos, A.I. The importance of educational tourism in cultural heritage preservation and sustainable Tourism. Case study of the Mures Valley's cultural Heritage: Five Castles, Five Stories. 2023. Research and Education. 120-137.

<sup>15</sup> Bolarinnwa, O, F.O and Olaniyi, O.F. Participation in the preservation of cultural heritage and values: The Missing Link of Adult Education. 2021. 3(4), 2663-6743.

South African society, alongside race, culture, gender, tradition, and truth and reconciliation (Shepherd & Robins, 2008).

Cultural heritage encompasses both immovable and movable resources, including monuments and man-made things (Ndlovu, 2015). It also includes intangible customs passed down by tradition. UNESCO (2003) states that intangible cultural heritage takes the form of manners, activities, drama, visual arts, festive events, protocols and conventions regarding fauna and flora, and skills for producing traditional crafts, music, and dance. Cultural heritage and cultural landscapes are the most popular tourist destinations globally (Ivanovic & Saayman, 2013). A focus on cultural heritage in tourism can affirm the local and national identity of communities and indigenous groups (Zhang & Mohamad, 2025).

Heritage tourism has gradually become a feature of international tourism, particularly in countries looking to diversify their tourism industries<sup>16</sup>. Heritage tourism is closely tied to state formation, as it involves preserving and promoting monuments and symbols that are associated with a country's history and culture, legitimize authority, and foster collective memory (Ndlovu, 2015; Hlongwana & Ndlovu, 2019). Preserving buildings and symbols are ways that a state reinforces its identity and history while also encouraging its citizens to identify with the state and its principles.

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<sup>16</sup> Zhang, Q., & Mohamad, D. B. Mapping identity dynamics in heritage tourism: a bibliometric and theoretical review. 2025. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2025.2598726>

Several writers have proposed definitions of heritage tourism. Zeppel and Hall (1992) describe it as a “special interest in travel, which ranges from the investigation of physical remains of the past and natural landscapes to the experiencing of local cultural traditions” (p. 49). Park (2014) defines heritage tourism as an interest in examining the material and non-material vestiges of a bygone era. Ndlovu (2015) and Palmer (1999) consider heritage tourism to involve visits to destinations deemed historically significant or heritage sites. McIntosh and Prentice (1999) describe heritage tourism as tourism based on a cultural legacy. Poria (2001:57) defines heritage tourism as "tourism to places categorised as heritage or historic places" and defines a heritage tourist site as "a place that attracts tourists by its heritage characteristics or by the heritage characteristics of the artefacts contained within it, which the tourists perceive as part of their heritage." This book uses Poria's definition of heritage tourism.

### **Memorial Tourism**

States typically commemorate the histories and legacies of prominent individuals, thereby increasing their appeal as tourist attractions. Death and suffering sites have emerged as a niche in tourism, attracting an increasing number of visitors (Yuil, 2003; Lischer, 2019; Dresler & Fuch, 2021). Tourism that involves the sites of murders or other tragic deaths, natural disasters, death, and other tragedies has been called dark tourism (Lennon & Foley, 1996). Other terms for memorial tourism include thanatourism, black spot tourism, grief tourism, and atrocity heritage (Drvenkar et al., 2015).

Tourists are often motivated to visit memorials that connect with a part of their identity: for example, those whose families survived the Holocaust may be more likely to visit holocaust museums; battlefields are common destinations for those whose family or country fought in the battle<sup>17</sup>. Memorials can serve as 'sites of memory' for people affected by major disasters (Nora, 1989; Winter, 2009). Dark tourism acts as a mechanism for resuscitating mortality by providing recreated spaces for reflection and remembering tragedy and death (Stone, 2012). These curated spaces are often re-enacted and presented to symbolise suffering, war, confrontation, disasters or memorials to allow tourists to engage and remember the tragedy which is often ignored in traditional tourism<sup>18</sup>.

In South Africa, some have advocated for the site of the 2012 Marikana massacre to be developed as a tourist destination (Henana, 2017). On August 16, 2012, the South African Police Service (SAPS) opened fire on a gathering of striking mineworkers in Marikana, North West Province. The police killed 34 mine workers, and 78 others were critically injured. The development of a Marikana Heritage Site is motivated by the need for a physical reminder of this tragedy as a warning to not allow it to happen again (South African History Online, 2013), August 16). Marikana is thus a potential dark tourism destination in South Africa's post-apartheid landscape that could be developed, commodified, and commercialised for both domestic and international tourism (Henana, 2017). In Zimbabwe, at the

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<sup>17</sup> Ashworth, G.J., and Tunbridge, J.E. *Dissonant heritage: The management of the past as a resource in conflict.* (1996). Wiley.

<sup>18</sup> Henama, S.U. Marikana: Opportunities for Heritage Tourism. 2017. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure*, Volume 6 (4) - (2017).

National Heroes Acre, tourists can view the tombs of War Heroes and read about the liberation struggle in the years leading up to independence.

## **Heritage and Memorial Tourism as Tourism Products**

Heritage is an important tourist attraction and can thus drive tourism growth (Ching-Fu & Pei Chun, 2010). The expansion of historic tourism has affected the display and representation of tangible and intangible heritage within tourism. Heritage products provide potential for economic, social, and political progress in certain regions or countries (Boucher et al., 2018). In the context of tourism, the term 'heritage' refers to products (Santos et al, 2020), attraction (Liu et al, 2017), motivation (Changuk, 2001), resources (Chaudhary, 2000), industry (Light, 1995), business (Prentice, 1993b), and tourist segmentation (Getz, 1991). Park (2014) and Ndlovu (2015) argue that the idea of heritage, which varies across political, economic, and socio-cultural contexts, must engage with globalised communities and societies. The same globalised cultures have been absorbed, yet they still strive to maintain their individual identities.

John Urry discusses the 'tourist gaze', which refers to how tourists visually consume, interpret, and shape locations through socially produced 'out-of-the-ordinary' experiences (Pomeroy, 2013). Gaze structure visitors' interactions with the other, bringing a sense of competence, pleasure, and structure to those experiences<sup>19</sup>. Similarly, the concept of authenticity in the construction of heritage assets for tourist consumption is neither

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<sup>19</sup> Pomeroy, A. A review of: 'The Tourist Gaze 3.0'. 2013. *Tourism Geographies*, 15(4), 691–693. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2012.699095>.

static nor rigid. Amenities influence how tourists see and experience a site, often diverting their attention to well-serviced areas (Ndlovu, 2015). When planning heritage product routes, it is critical to create circuits that incorporate attractions with comparable characteristics to better please visitors. Tourism attractions include natural, man-made and intangible assets essential for tourism growth.

Chen and Chen (2010) suggest that the success of historical tourism depends not only on tourism policy, attractiveness, and distinctiveness, but also on local support for tourism development. Boucher et al. (2018) argue that stakeholder engagement is essential for the success of heritage tourism. Stories may be myths, folktales, simple narratives, songs, taboos, or proverbs and idioms. Myths describe the origins of specific qualities, beliefs, and traditions, as well as the interaction between the divine and human worlds. Myth and history are often considered antithetical modes of explanation (Heehs, 1994). The major myths are poetic representations of the profound perspectives of early people regarding the universe and life. Myths interpret creation, divinity, and religion; explain the meaning of life and death; explain natural events; and recount the exploits of ethnic heroes<sup>20</sup>. Myths are less historically based and contain more magical elements than legends. They are less concerned with moral teaching than with fables<sup>21</sup>. They explain the world's origins, natural phenomena, or cultural beliefs, featuring gods, goddesses, and supernatural heroes (Bascom,

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<sup>20</sup> Heehs, P. Myth, History, and Theory. 1994. *History and Theory*, 33(1), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2505649>

<sup>21</sup> South African History online. Oral tradition and indigenous knowledge. 2011. South African History online.

1954). Most myths are associated with social rituals, which are fixed forms and procedures in holy rites. Nevertheless, anthropologists dispute whether rituals originated from myths or whether myths have generated rituals.

Folktales are traditional stories with fundamental narratives of adventure, frequently centred on character and story components<sup>22</sup>. If a story involves magical beings who are not gods and is not part of formal mythology, it is generally regarded as a folktale. Folktales are mostly intended for entertainment, but they may also convey a life lesson. Folktales are transmitted orally as a means of passing culture down to current and future generations.

A legend is a fabricated story about a historical person or location. When the protagonist is human rather than a supernatural figure, the story is called a legend rather than a myth. Legends often exemplify the characteristics of highly esteemed individuals throughout a society's history<sup>23</sup>. Traditionally, a legend contains villains and protagonists that symbolise various roles and people and are intended to teach the listeners about acceptable and inappropriate behaviours. Legends can take the form of simple narratives, songs, taboos, or proverbs and idioms<sup>24</sup>.

Poria (2001) considers heritage in terms of supply and demand, with the supplier wanting to supply something (legacy) and the

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<sup>22</sup> South African History online. Oral tradition and indigenous knowledge. 2011. South African History online.

<sup>23</sup> Dahal, H. Folktales: A Moral Message from the Past to the Future generation. 2021. 4(10), 2705-4691.

<sup>24</sup> Dahal, H. Folktales: A Moral Message from the Past to the Future generation. 2021. 4(10), 2705-4691.

client potentially purchasing the supplied product (heritage). Four responses can occur between a provider and a consumer: the suppliers want to supply and the customers want to consume the suppliers' heritage; the suppliers want to supply but the customers have no demand for their heritage; the suppliers do not want to supply heritage but the customers want their heritage; and finally, the suppliers want to supply one type of heritage and the customers want a different type of heritage (Ndlovu, 2015).

## **History, Prominent People and Tourism in Southern Africa**

In Southern Africa, case studies have shown that immovable cultural assets have long been contested by various stakeholders, such as politicians, lawmakers, scholars, communities, heritage practitioners, and tourism officials (Fontein, 2006; Ndoro, 2005). Typically, the debates revolve around topics such as the construction of personal and national identity, nationalism, ownership, development, and the political, economic, and other uses or misuses of cultural landscapes<sup>25</sup>.

Hamilton (2011) advocates that the role of cultural heritage in the socio-economic development of people and their sense of identity and cohesion should be recognised. In South Africa, Marschall (2010) and Ndlovu (2015) observe that heritage has evolved into a resource with numerous advantages for all stakeholders, including local communities. Throughout the apartheid era,

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<sup>25</sup> Yacoob, O.A. An examination of the relationship between identity and sovereignty: debates around the South Africa nation state from 1990 to 2010. 2017. PhD Thesis, University of Witwatersrand.

white South Africans easily associated with their own cultural symbols, while Black South Africans were forced to the margins as outsiders (Henana, 2017). In the democratic era, the state has used heritage to create social cohesion, while local organisations have exploited it to assert rights and access to resources (Collet, 1992; Eichler, 2020). Heritage serves as an avenue for marginalised communities to go beyond financial return to include symbolic, psychological and economic healing (Witz & Murray, 2015). Local communities have used it as a tool to redress historical inequalities, allowing them to reclaim stolen narratives, identities, sacred objects, and postcolonial contexts.

Across Southern Africa, European heroes have been immortalised, valorised, and canonised, then commercialised and packaged as tourist attractions. David Livingstone (1813-1973), a Scottish surgeon, missionary, and explorer who travelled across Southern Africa, is revered in Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. He was the first European recorded to visit the Victoria Falls. Tourist sites in Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and the United Kingdom memorialise Livingstone. In Zambia, a town and museum have been named after him (Lewis, 2011). Cecil John Rhodes, the founder of the colonial Rhodesian state, is a notable figure in Southern African heritage tourism. Memorials to Rhodes are found in both South Africa and Zimbabwe. Monuments to Rhodes remained in public spaces in South Africa in the democratic era<sup>26</sup>. However, in 2015, students at the University of Cape Town debated the relevance of Rhodes in an independent South Africa. Today, Southern African

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<sup>26</sup> Mushonga, M. From Barbarism to Civilisation: An Interpretation of Colonial Statues and Monuments in Southern Africa. *Sabinet African Journals*.

countries are expanding their tourism industries by focusing on heritage-based tourism as a speciality product, often capitalising on their struggle for liberation from colonial or white-majority rule.

One strategy for diversifying the heritage sector has been to use famous figures as tourism platforms. Examples across the region include heroes of the liberation struggles, such as Agostinho Neto in Angola, Seretse Khama in Botswana, Eduardo Mondlane and Samora Machel in Mozambique, Sam Nujoma in Namibia, Kenneth Kaunda in Zambia and Joshua Nkomo in Zimbabwe. In South Africa, struggle leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe, Steve Biko, Albert Luthuli, and Tiyo Soga have been memorialised. In Angola, the memorial to Antonio Neto is a modern, 120-meter Brutalist structure which often functions as a mausoleum and national monument<sup>27</sup>. Primarily, it is a tool of official doctrine and culture with a museum that reflects four aspects of Neto's work: poet, healer, liberator, and statesman. In some cases, heritage sites attract a substantial number of domestic and international tourists, making these tourism initiatives quite lucrative (Mgxeke et al., 2019). In terms of gender, only a few women, such as Charlotte Maxeke in South Africa and Mbuya Nehanda in Zimbabwe, have been memorialised at sites that serve as tourist attractions. In some cases, the struggle history is complex, for example, Zimbabwe, where two competing

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<sup>27</sup> Martins, V. and Cardina, M. A memory of concrete: Politics of representation and silence in the Agostinho Neto Memorial. *Kronos*, 45 (1), <https://doi.org/10.17159/2309-9585/2019/v45a3>.

liberation movements each promote their own narratives and identities<sup>28</sup>.

Connecting cultural heritage monuments to tourism has led to increased employment and property values for local residents. Mgxekwa et al. (2019) conducted research to examine the qualities of the Nelson Mandela heritage sites and better understand why users are drawn to them. Nelson Mandela's home is one of the most iconic heritage sites in South African tourism. Visitors were classified as experience seekers, convenience experience seekers, and auxiliary experience seekers<sup>29</sup>. Experience seekers look for experiences that are deeply significant and immersive. They look for authentic interactions, novelty, and personal development. Convenience experience seekers seek experiential value characterised by exceptional ease, efficiency, and comfort<sup>30</sup>. For instance, they prefer guided tours or well-planned city tours that require less planning on their part<sup>31</sup>. Auxiliary experience seekers seek experiences that support, enhance, or complement the core experience by focusing on products that augment the primary activity. Comprehensive experience seekers were willing to pay higher rates for more memorable experiences.

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<sup>28</sup> Ray, M.A. Zimbabwe's struggle for liberation. 1997. *Global colonial studies*.

<sup>29</sup> Kruger, M. et al., A Whale of time! An experience-based typology of visitors to a South African whale -watching festival. 2018. *Journal of outdoor Recreation and Tourism*. 24(2018) 35-44.

<sup>30</sup> Córdoba Azcárate, M. Tourism, space, and place: bridging past, present and future research. 2025. *Tourism Geographies*, 27(3-4), 735-755.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2024.2404644>

<sup>31</sup> Kruger, M. et al., A Whale of time! An experience-based typology of visitors to a South African whale -watching festival. 2018. *Journal of outdoor Recreation and Tourism*. 24(2018) 35-44.

Struggle heritage attractions have been reported to be the most distinctive and contentious cultural products in urban South Africa, forming an important part of the country's township or slum tourism sector (Khumalo et al., 2014; Marschall, 2006). Some communities believe that struggle sites honour important figures, such as Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo, while others remember state violence, displacement, and continued inequity. Robben Island and Liliesleaf have become major tourist attractions. Some scholars (Marschall, 2006; Mgxeke et al., 2019; Henana, 2017) argue that this sanitises or commercialises trauma for profit by reducing attention to and diverting it away from ongoing injustices such as poverty, inequality, and land reform.

During the early post-apartheid period, the African National Congress (ANC) prioritised and displayed its own narratives. Communities historically excluded from decision-making have advocated for co-curation, community-led museums, and the reuse of sites to represent diverse experiences. The way representation and portrayal of identities is approached is central to post-apartheid South African heritage tourism (Marschall, 2006). The homes of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, Solomon Mahlangu and Steve Biko's parents have been converted into museums. Statues have also been erected in remembrance of struggle leaders such as Saul Mkhize (Hlongwane & Ndhlovu, 2019).

In Mozambique, liberation heritage has been memorialised by designating historical places associated with the country's struggle for freedom as national monuments. Jopela (2017) states that thirty years after independence, Mozambique began to memorialise liberation history through several initiatives. One, a

series of publications titled 'Vida e obra' ('life and legacy'), was designed to raise the profile of national heroes and teach a philosophy of liberation by telling the stories of their lives and legacies, with the aim of strengthening national identity. Two founding fathers were memorialised: Eduardo Mondlane has a monument and statue in Maputo, and Samora Machel has monuments and sculptures in almost all the provincial capitals of Mozambique (Jopela, 2017).

Namibia has also developed its heritage tourism sector based on the memorialisation of struggle heroes such as Sam Nujoma, Hosea Kutako, Nehale Mpingana, Mandume ya Ndemufayo, and Limpumbu Ya Tshilongo. Some statues, such as the Sam Nujoma statue at the Independence Memorial Museum, have become important tourist attractions (Niezen, 2017; Becker, 2018), displacing the colonial memorial of the Windhoek Rider.

In Malawi, the tourism industry has also capitalised on the memorialisation of historical figures that embody the Malawian imagination and political change (Lipenga, 2009). Sculptures honour former presidents Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda and Bingu wa Mutharika.

In Zambia, the legacies of Kenneth Kaunda and other iconic figures constitute part of the country's national heritage, conserved through museums and other forms of memorialization (Simakole, 2012; Mbewe et al., 2023).

It is important to understand the colonial history of Southern Africa because it brings people's experiences together and transcends geopolitical boundaries. However, despite the global

expansion of heritage tourism, it remains underdeveloped in Southern Africa (Viljoen & Henama, 2017).

## **The Nexus between Memorialisation, Commemoration and Tourism**

A complex relationship exists between memorialization, commemoration, and tourism. Commemoration and memorialisation are concerned with honouring the past. However, they differ significantly in their scope and duration. Commemoration involves specific events that are repeated frequently, such as ceremonies honouring certain people. Memorialisation is broader and refers to the continuous process of preserving memory by constructing physical or social structures (monuments, archives, and locations) related to war, trauma or tragedy. Nora (1996) argues that remembering, memory, and forgetting are all important aspects of memorialisation. Memorialisation involves preserving and honouring the memory of a person or event through physical monuments or symbolic gestures (Berliner, 2005), while commemoration refers to the public recognition and celebration of a significant person or event. In this book, the term 'memorialisation' refers to everything that contributes to the remembering of a person or event.

French historian Pierre Nora's seminal seven-volume work, *Les lieux de mémoire*, published in 1984, establishes memorialisation as the bedrock for the field of memory studies. The recognition of the relationship between memory and tourism resulted in the development of memorial tourism in France (Gonzales, 2018). Memorialisation has existed since time immemorial as one of

humanity's first imaginative creations, honouring the lives of people or events via the preservation of their memory. Monuments, museums, public landscapes, and memorial museums have been built and dedicated to remembering the past (Ndlovu, 2015).

Some well-known examples of memorialization include the Great Zimbabwe Monuments, Stonehenge, and the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt. Common forms of memorialization include headstones and gravestones, remembrance trees, plaques, urns, remembrance ceremonies, war memorials, and charitable funds. New ways to memorialise include digital and virtual memorials, physical keepsakes and personalization, living and sustainable memorials, interactive and experiential tributes, and alternative ceremonies.

Memory and commemoration are inextricably interwoven with the heritage process, as they involve the selective use of the past (McDowell, 2008; Morgan, 2001). French philosopher Serge Thion (1993) posits that history is the reconstruction of the past using texts and physical evidence, while memory is the "story of the past based on personal remembrance and subjective feelings" (pp. 181–182). As the effects of economics, time, culture, and politics shape, direct and dictate the representation and interpretation of history, the message portrayed through memorial design is often better described as 'memory' than 'history', as multiple levels of remembrance and interpretation are represented. Philosopher and art critic Arthur Danto (1998) writes, "We erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget" (p. 153). Paul Williams, in his 2007 book *Memorial Museums*, observes that while

some scholars distinguish between 'memorial' and 'monument' based on their political function, "memorial often signifies loss and mourning, whereas monument signifies greatness or valour - we often see measures of both in any single structure, making this distinction fuzzy" (p. 8).

Memorialisation can thus take many forms, ranging from permanent expressions—such as graves, museums, and works of art, literature, or film—to temporary activities, including theatre, song, dance, or ceremonies (Steele, 2006). Place names represent another type of commemorative and instructive transcript in the practice of memorialization. Halbwachs (1950) views memorialization as an effort to revive public interest in national history at a time when such connections to the past are fading. Halbwachs (1947) describes this process as collective memory, which is "a reconstruction of the past [that] adapts the image of ancient facts to the beliefs and spiritual needs of the present" (p. 7).

A commemoration, which is a ritual or display intended to celebrate the memory of a person, a group, or an event, operates in the same way (Denis, 2015). It refers to the past in order to address the present. Commemorations, like individual memory, select, shape, and orient past experiences with a specific purpose. Commemorations can affect society, but they can also be influenced by the society in which they occur (Evaldsson & Wessels, 2003). Historical context can influence both commemoration and society at a particular point in their development.