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# Cultural tourism: cultural presentation at the Basotho cultural village, Free State, South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

South Africa is a unique country with a melting pot of miscellaneous cultures. Many of these cultures have been preserved and displayed in the form of cultural villages. To sustain these cultural villages, it is important to invest in a market-based and product-based empirical research. This study therefore, investigates the visitor's responses to the experience and the cultural presentation at Basotho Cultural Village, Free State, South Africa. The population of the study was domestic and international tourists visiting the village. Data was gathered from 305 tourists by means of a self-administered questionnaire. The results gathered provide the visitor's demographic profile, the visitor's experience and the overall satisfaction with the cultural presentation. The village is a drawcard for both local ( $n = 251$ ) and international tourists ( $n = 54$ ) who sees the cultural experience at the village as extremely important. The results indicate the high level of satisfaction with the overall experience as (90.2%) of the visitors were satisfied. However, the research also indicates that there are concerns over the service, facilities and staff portrayal of genuine Basotho culture at the village. The study highlights critical aspects of visitor experience at a heritage site for the village management and destination marketing organisations (DMO's).

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## Introduction

The central interest of this paper lies in exploring the visitor's responses to cultural presentation as a tourism product. Tourism account for 10.4% of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2018, p. 1) and cultural tourism has been explicated as a method to promote cross-cultural understanding (Raymond & Hall, 2008, p. 532). Cultural tourism is not a new phenomenon, for long people have been accustomed to travelling in quest for new experiences from different cultures (Richards & Munsters, 2010, p. 1). As a framework and central focus for this discussion, cultural tourism involves tourists travelling to a specific destinations or places of interest for a cultural experience.

In the last decades, there has been a rapid growth of cultural tourism and this can be seen in the demand for trips to cultural attractions. The cultural tourism has evolved into the combination of production and consumption (Jovicic, 2016, pp. 607–610). According

to Richards (2018, p. 10) the cultural tourism has changed from a niche market with high income travellers to a 'mass market' with a range of people. A United Nations World Tourism Organisation Report on Tourism and Culture Synergies (2018), indicates an assessments of the size of the cultural tourism market to be an estimated 39% of all international tourism arrivals and this market is expected to continue to grow (UNWTO, 2018).

The core of a cultural tourist is based on the visitor engagement and experience (McKercher, 2002, p. 31). It is therefore, important for the experience to be memorable. Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012, p. 2) defines a memorable tourism experience (MTE) as 'a tourism experience remembered and recalled after the event has occurred'. For years, the manner in which cultural experience is carried out has not evolved (Stock, Not, & Zancanaro, 2005, p. 152). Visitor experience in term of satisfaction is extremely important, especially for a repeat visit. Prayag and Ryan (2012, p. 352) state that it is important that destinations ensure that tourists are satisfied with the experience to attract repeat visit. When tourists are highly engaged with their experience, this can develop into favourable perceptions of a destination. Positive experience can also be used to create engagement for the traveller (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016, p. 37).

Although a number of studies have investigated cultural tourism in South Africa through cultural villages, these studies have focused on transforming cultural villages (Van Veuren, 2001); conservation of indigenous knowledge (Mearns, Du Toit, & Mukuka, 2006); representations of authenticity (Saarinen, 2007) and a comparative analysis of cultural villages (Marschall, 2003) rather than the overall cultural presentation and experience. Most of these studies tend to focus on the cultural tourism product (concerned with the village) and as a result neglecting the cultural tourism market (concerned with the consumer). Rust, Zahorik, and Keiningham (1996) state that it is essential for research on satisfaction to investigate each element to the visitors' overall impression of satisfaction. It is also important that the attraction and customer service components of the attraction be evaluated (Whipple & Thach, 1988). Schouten (1995, p. 260) proposes that the evaluation of heritage attraction is more about the effectiveness of the site, cleanliness of sanitation services such as toilets, the effectiveness of the parking facilities, choice of items in the curio shop and the quality of hospitality services. Johns (1999, p. 130) agrees that the overall satisfaction may play an important role in word of mouth recommendations. According to Simpson (2000, p. 7) visitor impression of the overall experience at the museum may be used as a useful management tool especially for a tourism product. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to investigate the overall tourist experiences and responses to cultural presentations at the Basotho Cultural Village in Free State, South Africa.

The term 'cultural tourism' sometimes referred to as ethnic tourism is subject to many definitions. According to Richards (1996, p. 21) defining cultural tourism is challenging as it combines two components, 'tourism and culture' which are also problematic to define. However, Richards (1996, p. 24) illustrated a technical definition of cultural tourism 'all movements of persons to specific cultural attractions, such as heritage sites, artistic and cultural manifestations, arts and drama outside their normal place of residence'. Silberberg (1995, p. 361) defines cultural tourism as: 'visits by persons from outside the host community motivated wholly or in part by interest in the historical, artistic, scientific or lifestyle/heritage offerings of a community, region or institution'. This definition is balanced as it suggests that not all visitors are solely motivated by a cultural offering, many visitors may be interested in certain elements of culture. Ondimu (2002, p. 1036) states that cultural tourism involves

travelling to places to experience people's lifestyle presented either in the past or present. Cultural tourism comprises 'customised excursions into other cultures and places to learn about their people, lifestyle, heritage and arts in an informed way that genuinely represents those cultures and their historical contexts' (Craik, 1995, p. 6).

The multitude of definitions presented shows that cultural tourism is difficult to conceptualise. Although, there is much of a discrepancy in defining cultural tourism, the common thread is that cultural tourism involves people travelling outside the normal place of residence for cultural purposes. For the purpose of this paper, cultural tourism is defined as the activities of individuals outside the normal place of residence, experiencing 'tangible and intangible' cultural elements of a specific culture through museums, heritage sites, villages, arts and crafts. Tangible elements of culture are things that can be touched which include buildings, clothing, arts and crafts. Whereas intangible elements may include elements such as values, language, rituals. In essence a combination of tangible and intangible is multi-sensory. According to UNWTO (2018, p. 93) cultural tourism is a type of tourism activity in which the primary motivation of a visitor is to experience both the tangible and intangible cultural elements in a tourism destination. Culture consists of two elements; tangible and intangible which provides people with different experiences (Ron & Timothy, 2013, p. 235).

The important question, concerning the cultural tourism is, who are the consumers of the cultural tourism product? It is imperative to make a distinctive point in order to differentiate this market from other tourism markets. Chen and Rahman (2018, p. 1) state that the understanding of a cultural tourist can lead to a better manage a cultural tourism site. Even though several studies have looked into elements of general tourist experiences, there has not been an empirical research done regarding the structure of cultural tourist experiences, leaving a gap in the literature (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016, p. 136).

It is however, important to note that partaking in a cultural activity as a tourist does not necessarily mean that is the main reason for travel. According to Gibson and Conell (2005, p. 94) a cultural tourist is 'a person who stayed more than 40 kilometres away from home for at least one night and attended a cultural venue'. McKercher (2002, pp. 32–33) developed a model to identify typologies of cultural tourists and distinguishes between the purposeful cultural tourist (learning about other cultures is the primary reason for visiting and the tourist has a deep cultural experience), the sightseeing cultural tourist (cultural tourism experience is a primary reason for visiting a destination, but the experience is rather shallow), the serendipitous cultural tourist (a tourist does not travel for cultural reasons but while at the destination, ends up having a deep cultural experience) the casual cultural tourist (cultural tourism is less of a motive for travel and the experience is shallow) and the incidental cultural tourist (cultural tourism experience plays no role in travel decisions, however the person participates in some activities and has shallow experiences). It can be said that cultural tourism occurs as a result of tourists seeking different cultural experiences from their own away from their normal place of residence (Prentice, 2001, p. 12).

Cultural experiences of tourists have gained increased attention in scholarly (Armbricht, 2014; Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016; Chen & Rahman, 2018; Zeppel, 2002; and Moscardo & Pearce, 1999) particularly in the form of cultural museums. Museums play an important role in terms of preserving the culture and history of a destination or a specific ethnic group and this stimulates interest from both local and international tourists. The decline of heritage usually begins with loss of interest from the community. However, the

preservation of culture helps to revive interest. Therefore, investigating the visitor's responses to the experience and the cultural presentation is needed, particularly in areas such as museums and heritage sites.

In research conducted by McKercher (2004) the most popular attractions were found to be museums, followed by art galleries and monuments. This also highlights the importance of this research. As previously indicated, this study will investigate the visitor's overall responses to the experience and the cultural presentation at Basotho Cultural Village museum. Today museums serve multiple functions, other than observation, museums now focus on research, creation, educating visitors and research. 'They have gradually acquired visitor-based roles instead of museum based roles' (Sheng & Chen, 2012, p. 53). In essence, visitors get more involved in terms of experiencing the museum rather than just walking around and taking pictures.

Yang (2011b, p. 562) states that the increasing interest of today's tourist to be in close contact with the local people and experiencing culture has fuelled the use of cultural images to attract tourists to cultural settings such as cultural villages, galleries and museums. Yang, Wall, and Smith (2008, p. 764) seem to agree with this statement by alluding to the fact that as the modern world is increasingly attracted to indigenous culture, more tourists are interested in seeing remote villages, 'primitive' customs, and examples of 'uncorrupted' or 'pre-modern' culture. Employees at the museums also play an important role. Yang (2011b, p. 564) explains that employees epitomise their cultures and represent them, while tourists receive and interpret cultures represented. According to O'Dell (2007, pp. 34–45) tourist experiences might be misunderstood, tourists seek more than observing, their curiosity compels them to experience fully in terms of being part of the experience. It is essential to note that museums provide more than just presentation. Other than the exhibition, the museum service involves the other tangible or intangible services (De Rojas & Camarero, 2008, p. 525). Some of these tangible or intangible services includes the tasting of food, learning the language of the locals, wearing traditional clothes. Many museums regard visitor satisfaction as the main goal of the organisation (Harrison & Shaw, 2004, p. 24). However, visitor experience goes beyond a mere satisfaction as visitors have the power to market the museum through a word of mouth. Every element of a museum is an important part of the experience. This presents a value chain which a single unpleasant experience could easily taint the visitor's overall experience. This supports the need for such study at Basotho Cultural Village where all the elements of the museum are taken into consideration when evaluating visitor experience and satisfaction.

### **Cultural villages: South African context**

South Africa is such a diverse country with different cultures. Most of these cultures have been displayed in the form of cultural villages. The notion of cultural villages is that, they can be regarded as part of cultural tourism particularly from a rural context (Saarinen, 2007, p. 139). Usually cultural villages are located in rural settings where the local people may lack economic opportunities and therefore this type of tourism is able to bring about such opportunities. These cultural villages are now the most unique way of capturing the cultural tourism in South Africa. It is a difficult task to define a cultural village. However, Van Veuren (2001, p. 139) defined cultural villages as 'purpose-built complexes intended, with the help of cultural workers, as a simulation of aspects of the way of life of a cultural grouping'. Currently

in South Africa there is no verifiable number of cultural villages. However, Van Veuren (2001, p. 139) estimates that there are roughly 29 cultural villages in South Africa.

The establishment of cultural villages derives from the demonstration of the 'authentic past' usually comprise of the element of nostalgia, basically displaying what life was like in the past (Boonzaaier & Wels, 2018, p. 181). Cultural villages have also been criticised (Cohen, 1988) for commodification of local culture in terms of beliefs and religion for the benefit of tourists and ultimately termed 'superficial'. Commodification of culture refers to the display of culture for the purpose of a sale. In essence, culture is treated as a product with a price tag for the benefit of a tourist. Cultural villages are also responsible for the 'museumification' of identity (Ndlovu, 2013, p. 52). Museumification is defined as 'transition from a living city to that of an idealised re-presentation of itself, wherein everything is considered not for its use but for its value as a potential museum artifact' (Di Giovine, 2009, p. 261). The current study will focus on Basotho Cultural Village which is an open air museum. Although the study touches on authenticity, the main thrust of this paper is not entirely focused on the authenticity but the overall experience of visitors to the village or rather the consumption of cultural villages as a tourism product.

Therefore, this paper investigates tourist responses to cultural presentations at the Basotho Cultural Village in Free State, South Africa. It provides the demographic profile of visitors and cultural experiences of visitors at the Basotho Cultural Village. It also identifies key factors providing a genuine experience, tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity, tourist engagement and satisfaction at the Basotho Cultural Village.

## **Basotho Cultural Village background**

Basotho Cultural Village is a state-owned open air museum located in the eastern part of the Free State province in South Africa, the village is nestled in the heart of the QwaQwa National park just about 20 kilometres from the Golden Gate National Park. The main thrust of the village is to preserve indigenous knowledge, to promote and preserve indigenous performing arts and crafts as well as visual arts through the provision of cultural experience. The museum depicts the life of Basotho culture (which is one of the ethnic groups in South Africa) from the sixteenth century till the eighteenth century. The tour formally starts with a visit to the courtyard where the chief of the village has to give his permission for the visitors to enter the village. The chief is the head of the village; he has an advisor 'right-hand man'. The chief plays an important role of being a ruler and has a final say in the village, hence his hat is different from that of any member of the village. On arrival, the visitors will get to meet three (3) wives of the chief, the chief's advisor, traditional healer and members of the village. Visitors are also presented with traditional beer, food and traditional music as part of the cultural experience (Figure 1).

The village comprises a museum, chalets, sandstone amphitheatre, curio shop and restaurant. The village was integrated into the Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation in 2001. Like many of the cultural villages in South Africa, the staff employed at the village is mainly the local people from the community of QwaQwa, which is a former homeland within a 10-minute drive from the village. The village employs about 30 people, this number includes tour guides, kitchen staff, museum actors, maintenance and administrators.

Some of the activities to be enjoyed by the visitors at Basotho Cultural Village include a 30 minutes to an hour village tour, the herbal trail and the cultural route. The village is also



**Figure 1.** Study Site: Basotho Cultural Village (credit: Nightjar Travel).

open to the public for functions such as weddings and traditional day celebrations. The village tour introduces the visitors to the lifestyle of the Basotho people, intangible and tangible culture in the form of traditional clothes, art, music and food (Figure 2).

The Sotho people are an indigenous group living in Lesotho and South Africa, predominately in the province of the Free State. This ethnic group is called the Basotho and they speak Sesotho as a native language. Tracing back in history, Basotho people lived in villages ruled by chiefs and relied on livestock for survival. This ethnic group is characterised by its traditional clothing in the form of blankets and straw hats (Figure 3).

This study at Basotho Cultural Village explores visitor interest in and responses to Basotho cultural presentations (Figure 4). It tries to identify key factors that promote visitor satisfaction/dissatisfaction with presentations at the Basotho Cultural Village.



**Figure 2.** The Basotho people in their cultural attire from sixteenth to eighteenth century (picture credit: SA-Venues.com).



**Figure 3.** The Basotho people in their cultural attire from eighteenth century (picture credit: Lesotho Tourism & Development Corporation).

Since its establishment in 1996, the village has gone through a number of changes, from facilities to personnel. To date, there is no empirical research done at the village to understand the visitor's experiences. Hence, this research will assist the management with information pertaining to what visitors think about the village and how they find their experience. There has been limited research on the experience of museums' visitors (Rowley, 1999), and this can have an effect on the overall experience. This study aims to contribute to the limited amount of literature on cultural villages from a South African point of view. According to Richards (1996) cultural tourism studies tend to focus on a product rather than a market. This current research is market-based and product-based as the research examines the visitor's overall experience and tries to address the shortfalls hindering the visitor's overall satisfaction with the experience at the village.



**Figure 4.** Location of study area: Basotho Cultural Village (source: SA-Venues.com).

## Purpose and objectives of the study

This research attempted to investigate the overall tourist responses to cultural presentations at the Basotho Cultural Village in Free State, South Africa. In addressing the primary objective, the following secondary objectives were set:

- To establish the demographic profile of visitors to Basotho Cultural Village.
- To investigate cultural experiences of visitors.
- To investigate key factors providing a genuine experience.
- To assess tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity.
- To explore tourist engagement and satisfaction at the Basotho Cultural Village.

## Research setting and study method

The research reported in this paper was conducted at the Basotho Cultural Village located in the eastern Free State over a period of (2) two months (November and December, 2017). It was imperative to conduct the study during this period in order to cover the school holidays which is the peak season. In a similar study conducted by Moscardo and Pearce (1999, p. 421) the study was intended to cover both the peak and off-peak season. This research deployed 'field workers' who were stationed at the exit of the museum, restaurants and parking areas of the village and approached the visitors who had just completed a village tour. The purpose of the field workers was to hand out questionnaire to interested visitors.

Permission from the head of heritage and museum at the Free State Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation was obtained to conduct research at the Basotho Cultural Village. Visitors, both international and local were randomly approached and were asked to participate in the research voluntarily in the form of completing a questionnaire. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005, p. 192) for credible research, it is necessary to ensure that the content of every question is in line with the study and is aimed at addressing the research problem. For the purpose of the study, a self-administered questionnaire was designed, in designing the questionnaire the researcher was guided by literature from similar studies conducted by Zeppel (2002) at the Cowichan Native Village and Moscardo and Pearce (1999, p. 421) at the Tjapukai Aboriginal Cultural Park. The two studies were conducted in villages with similar characteristics and also captured the visitor's experiences. The questionnaire included a total of 24 questions about the visitor experience at the Basotho Cultural Village. The questionnaire collected the demographic and travel information of tourists, along with cultural experience at the Basotho Cultural Village. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were distributed to tourists who visited the village after the tour and 305 (completed) could be used for analysis, giving a response rate of 76%. T. Nyambose, the village manger (personal communication, January 25, 2018) stated that Basotho Cultural Village receives more than 20 000 visitors per year. Based on a population size of more than 5000 Leedy and Ormrod (2009, p. 214) states that in cases where a population exceeds 5 000, a sample size of 400 will be adequate.

A pilot study was conducted a month prior to the main study in order to test and validate field data collection and analysis methodologies. The initial questionnaire was slightly changed due to comments and suggestions from the respondents and the village manager. Some of the questions were found to be too long and some were found to be ambiguous. Similarly, to a study by Zeppel (2002) the researcher was physically at

the village each day of the research period, engaging with the staff and visitors, joining guided tours, and observing Basotho Cultural Village activities.

## Study findings

Table 1 addresses the first objective of the study, identifying the demographic profile of the respondents. The number of respondents is evenly spread amongst male (45.2%) and female (58.2%). The age of the respondents ranged from 16 to 70 with majority aged between the age group of (20–30, 28.6%) and (31–40, 29.8%). In terms of marital status, there was a slight per cent difference between married (51.1%) and single (42.6%) respondents. Almost half of the respondents were professionals ( $n = 167$ , 54.8%). Many of the visitors spoke Sotho (30.8%), and other languages were distributed between South African languages and non-South African languages (13.8%). The majority of the visitors to Basotho Cultural Village came from South Africa (82.3%) and the

**Table 1.** Profile of visitors at Basotho Cultural Village (BCV) ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	Frequency ( $N$ )	Per cent (%)
Gender		
Male	138	45.2
Female	167	54.8
Age		
16–20	12	3.9
21–30	86	28.2
31–40	91	29.8
41–50	40	13.1
51–60	37	12.1
61–70	35	11.5
70 and above	4	1.3
Marital status		
Single	130	42.6
Married	156	51.1
Divorced	11	3.6
Widow/Widower	8	2.6
Occupation		
Student	40	13.1
Retired	30	9.8
Professional	167	54.8
Tourism and hospitality	24	7.9
Unemployed	18	5.9
Self-employed	26	8.5
Language		
English	57	18.7
Afrikaans	29	9.5
Sotho	94	30.8
Setswana	23	7.5
Zulu	24	7.9
Other SA languages	36	11.8
Other non- SA languages	42	13.8
Country		
South Africa	251	82.3
Other countries	54	17.7
Race		
White	109	35.7
Black	184	60.3
Coloured	9	3
Indian	3	1

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

**Table 2.** Travel information of visitors at Basotho Cultural Village ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	Frequency ( $N$ )	Per cent (%)
Which mode of transportation did you use to get to the village?		
Rental car	58	19.1
Private car	221	72.7
Tour bus	25	8.2
Travel party (People you came with)		
Single	13	4.3
Tour group	22	7.2
Friends	84	27.6
Spouse/partner	75	24.7
Family	110	36.2
Is this your first time visiting Basotho Cultural Village?		
Yes (First-time visitor)	256	83.9
No (Repeat visitor)	49	16.1

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

remaining percentage the respondents (54 people, 17.7%) came from other countries such as Germany ( $n = 12$ ), Sweden ( $n = 10$ ), United Kingdom ( $n = 1$ ), Netherlands ( $n = 7$ ), Lesotho ( $n = 2$ ), Belgium ( $n = 8$ ), Canada ( $n = 5$ ), France ( $n = 3$ ), Italy ( $n = 1$ ), Switzerland ( $n = 1$ ), United States of America ( $n = 3$ ) and Zimbabwe ( $n = 1$ ) respondents came from different racial backgrounds, mainly consisted black (60.3%) and white (35.7%).

Table 2 provides information on travel information of visitors at Basotho Cultural Village. Majority of the respondents (72%) used private car and (19.1%) rental car to get to Basotho Cultural Village. With most non-South Africans (10.9%) using rental car. Only (8%) of the visitors came to the village using a tour bus. The visitors came to the village in a family group (36.2%), with friends (27.6%) and with a spouse/partner (24.7%). Few visitors came to the village alone ( $n = 13$ , 4.3%). Those who came with friend were mostly between the age group of (21–30) and those with family within the age group of (31–40). Basotho Cultural Village attracts mostly people who come in groups. A significant proportion of visitors (83.9%) were first-time visitors to the village and a small percentage (16.1%) were repeat visitors. Similarly, to Yang (2011a, p. 327) study, the majority of respondents (80.5%) were first-time visitors and (19.5%) were repeat visitors.

Table 3 indicates the source of information about the village. The majority of the visitors (37.0%) surveyed heard about Basotho Cultural Village from word of mouth and (23.8%) obtained information about the village from the internet. Jovicic (2016, p. 608) states that the growth of cultural tourism is driven by the internet. The village is along the route to Clarens which is the main attraction point in the eastern Free State. The results indicate that (12.5%) of the visitors obtained information from the sign on a highway. Tour operators

**Table 3.** Source of information ( $N = 305$ ).

Source of information	Frequency	Per cent of responses (% of 355)	Per cent of Cases (% of 305)
Internet	72	20.3	23.8
Village brochure	26	7.3	8.6
Radio	12	3.4	4
Travel guide book	60	16.9	19.8
Travel agent	12	3.4	4
Television	13	3.7	4.3
Word of mouth	112	31.5	37
Sign on highway	38	10.7	12.5
Tour operator	10	2.8	3.3

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

**Table 4.** Main reason for visiting the village ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	Frequency	Per cent of responses (% of 540)	Per cent of cases (% of 305)
Enjoy the landscapes	91	16.9	30.1
Experience	155	28.7	51.3
Cultural appreciation	129	23.9	42.7
Education	84	15.6	27.8
Taste cultural food	39	7.2	12.9
Arts and handcrafts	20	3.7	6.6
Dance and music	22	4.1	7.3

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

are often the great source of marketing but the results indicate a small percentage of travel agents (4.0%) and tour operators (3.3%) as a source of information for the village. In a study by Zeppel (2002, p. 95) the results highlighted that many of the respondents obtained information from travel guidebook. When it comes to cultural tourism, accessibility is important. Therefore, destinations should look into utilising the information available to governments in order to create new information portals or applications (UNWTO, 2018, p. 100).

Table 4 provides visitors reasons for visiting the village. The table indicates a split distribution of cultural appreciation (42.7%) and experience (51.3%). Some visitors came to the village for educational (27.8%) purposes. The village is nestled under a huge rock creating a beautiful backdrop for the museum and (30.1%) came to appreciate the landscapes. Overall the respondents demonstrate what Moscardo and Pearce (1999, p. 429) calls the 'Ethnic Tourism Connection group'. This group is interested in all aspects of cultural tourism experiences, from learning about different features of the culture, taking part in traditional activities, tasting traditional food, and experiencing arts and crafts.

Table 5 provides the importance of cultural experience at the village. A significant number of the visitors (73.8%) indicated the cultural experience at Basotho Cultural Village as extremely important.

The Chi-square test was conducted to determine whether there are significant differences in the importance of cultural experiences among the different groups of the demographic variables. The  $p$ -values were considered and compared to the significance level of 5%. If the  $p$ -value is less than the significance level of 5%, then there is a significant association between the two variables in question. But if the  $p$ -value is greater than the significance level of 5%, then there is no significant association between the two variables compared. A significant association was found between the variables of race ( $p$ -value  $0.001 < 0.5$ ), country of origin ( $p$ -value  $0.001 < 0.5$ ), first-time visitors to the village ( $p$ -value  $0.005 < 0.5$ ) and the importance of cultural experiences. Due to different backgrounds, each tourist will have a different tourism experience (Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha, 2008, p. 33). Typologies of cultural tourism consumers visit cultural sides for

**Table 5.** The importance of cultural experience at (BCV) ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	Frequency ( $N$ )	Per cent (%)
Importance of cultural experience at BCV		
Neutral	16	5.2%
Fairly important	64	21.0%
Extremely important	225	73.8%

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

**Table 6.** What are your feelings about Basotho Cultural Village (BCV) ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	What are your feelings about Basotho Cultural Village overall?			
	An important ethnic cultural preservation centre	A popular tourist attraction	Profit-oriented and consumer-driven	
<i>Occupation</i>				
Student	Frequency	26	13	3
	%	8.6	4.3	1
Retired	Frequency	26	7	3
	%	8.6	2.3	1
Professional	Frequency	136	34	4
	%	44.7	11.2	1.3
Tourism and hospitality	Frequency	16	7	2
	%	5.3	2.3	0.7
Unemployed	Frequency	12	5	1
	%	3.9	1.6	0.3
Self-employed	Frequency	21	7	0
	%	6.9	2.3	0

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

different reasons and their cultural experiences differ (Isaac, 2008, p. 285). This may compel Destination Marketing Organisations to market in different ways.

Table 6 captures the overall feelings of the respondents about the village. As can be seen from the table that (4.3%) of the respondents are students who feel that the Basotho Cultural Village is a popular tourist attraction; (44.7%) of the respondents are professionals and feel that the Basotho Cultural Village is an important ethnic cultural preservation centre. Very few visitors ( $n = 13$ , 4.0%) felt that the village is profit-oriented and consumer-driven and these visitors were mostly South Africans. As previously indicated in the literature that cultural villages have been blamed for cultural commodification and museumification (Ndlovu, 2013, p. 52; Prentice, 2001, p. 6; Xu, Yan, & Zhu, 2013), the result rather seem to suggest that the respondents see Basotho Cultural Village as a way to preserve culture.

Table 7 represents the perception of the visitors on the cultural presentation at the village. (12.8%) of the respondents were from South Africa and perceive cultural presentation at Basotho Cultural Village as staged, fragmented or superficial cultural portrayals; In a study conducted by Beeho and Prentice (1997, p. 84), minority of the respondents found the New Lanark World Heritage Village to be commercialised and over-idealised. (4.0%) of the respondents were from other countries and perceived the culture presented as a healthy and progressive aspect of Basotho culture. Overall, (69.2%) of the visitors perceive the village as a genuine and authentic representation of Basotho culture. Experiential cultural tourism is concerned with the quest for authentic experience and therefore, heritage attractions should be positioned as authentic experiences (Prentice, 2001, p. 22).

**Table 7.** The perception of cultural presentation at (BCV) ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	How do you perceive cultural presentation at Basotho Cultural Village?			
	Genuine and authentic representation of Basotho culture	Staged, fragmented or superficial cultural portrayals	Presents healthy and progressive aspects of Basotho culture	
<i>Country</i>				
South Africa	Frequency	188	41	35
	%	58.60%	12.80%	10.90%
Other countries	Frequency	34	10	13
	%	10.60%	3.10%	4.00%

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

**Table 8.** Tourist engagement at the BCV ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	Responses		
	Frequency (N)	Per cent (%)	Per cent of Cases
Tourist engagement at the BCV (what did you do?)			
Took videos or photographs	196	29.6	64.9
Tasted Basotho cultural food	195	29.4	64.6
Talked to Basotho cultural village staff	184	27.8	60.9
Consultation with traditional healer	68	10.3	22.5
Purchased native artwork/souvenirs	20	3.0	6.6

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

The village provides the visitors with a number of things to do from a tour perspective. [Table 8](#) illustrates activities that visitors engaged in at the village. Study by Brodie, Hollebeek, Jurić, and Ilić (2011) established that the level of engagement differs from one consumer to another. 'Visitor engagement activities such as guided tours and other facilities as such must address the cultural interests of the tourists in order to make the cultural tourism experience memorable' (Chen & Rahman, 2018, p. 8). As can be seen the three most popular types of engagements were taking of photos/videos (64.9%), tasting food (64.6%) and engaging with the staff (60.9%) at the village. The results indicate the low activity in the purchase of native artwork/souvenirs (6.6%). The results highlight the 'Ethnic Products and Activities' group of tourists. Moscardo and Pearce (1999, p. 430) state that these cultural tourists are mainly interested in arts and crafts, cuisine and participating in traditional activities. Interestingly, the low purchase of artwork is supported by one respondent who indicated that 'the curio shop is expensive and we are unable to buy souvenirs'.

[Table 9](#) shows the factors that provided the visitors with a genuine experience at the village. A large number of respondents (78.9%) indicated learning about Basotho history provided genuine experience. Traditional houses (50.2%) and food and clothing (47.2%) were also significant factors. Visitors also indicated concerns regarding the deterioration of the traditional houses. One visitor in particular indicated that 'The traditional houses are falling apart; they have to rebuild/renew them.'

Traditional healers are an integral part of Basotho Culture Village experience and it is rather interesting that few visitors (20%) to the village regarded this factor as proving

**Table 9.** Factors that provided a genuine experience ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	Responses		
	Frequency (N)	Per cent (%)	Per cent of Cases
Factors that provided a genuine experience of Basotho culture			
Learning about Basotho history	239	35.7	78.9
Traditional houses (huts)	152	22.7	50.2
Food and clothing	143	21.3	47.2
Traditional healer	63	9.4	20.8
Staff at Basotho cultural village	73	10.9	24.1

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

them with a 'genuine experience'. Another visitor responded that 'The traditional healer is too modern for a village trying to portray the history in the 16th century.' Staff at the village represent both tangible element of culture. As Yang (2011b, p. 564) indicated that employees portray their cultures and represent them, while tourists receive and interpret cultures represented. In a study conducted by Zeppel (2002, p. 97), the results indicated that few respondents regarded the staff at the Cowichan village as one of the key aspects providing genuine experience with 26% of the responses. This is similar to the current study as indicated in Table 9 that (24.1%) of the respondents considered staff at the village as part of the genuine experience.

According to Engeset and Elvekrok (2015), an important attribute to evaluate tourist experience is the perception of authenticity. As indicated in Table 10, the majority strongly agree that the services and cultural experiences offered are authentic. Traditional houses (49.2%), food and clothing (45.2%) and traditional music (40.7%) were regarded as authentic. Some of the respondents ( $n = 88$ , 28.9%) were not sure of the authenticity of the traditional healer and ( $n = 24$ , 8%) disagreed that the traditional healer is authentic and these respondents were South Africans. A quote from one visitor:

I think staff should have dressed for the time period. For example, traditional healer wearing western clothing. They should stick to traditional wear.

This may be because of the familiarity with the South African cultures. As indicated in Table 1, large number of the respondents were Sotho speaking South Africans. When a Chi-square test was done to determine whether there are significant differences in the tourists' perceptions of cultural authenticity among the different groups of the demographic variables. It was found that there is correlation between demographics in the form of country (country of origin of a visitor) and the tourist's perceptions of cultural authenticity. The p-values of all the variables on cultural authenticity were less than the significance level of 5%, indicating that there is a significant association between a country and all five variables on cultural authenticity. The non-south Africans either agreed or were neutral with authenticity on the variables provided. Whereas South African respondents either agreed or disagreed due familiarity with South African culture.

Table 11 provides visitors satisfaction with the cultural presentation at the village. Most visitors were very satisfied with all the variables averaging (55.8%). Educational information ranked high in terms of satisfaction, as (94.1%) of the respondents were

**Table 10.** Tourist's perceptions of cultural authenticity ( $N = 305$ ).

Tourist's perceptions of cultural authenticity		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Traditional houses are authentic	Frequency (n)	9	5	23	118	150
	%	3.0	1.6	7.5	38.7	49.2
Ethnic souvenirs (arts and crafts) are authentic	Frequency (n)	6	10	53	118	118
	%	2.0	3.3	17.4	38.7	38.7
Traditional healer was authentic	Frequency (n)	10	14	88	94	99
	%	3.3	4.6	28.9	30.8	32.5
Food and clothing is authentic	Frequency (n)	8	9	28	122	138
	%	2.6	3.0	9.2	40.0	45.2
Indigenous (traditional) music is authentic	Frequency (n)	8	5	50	118	124
	%	2.6	1.6	16.4	38.7	40.7

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

satisfied with the presentation. One of the most important elements of tourist experiences is education (Barnes, Mattsson, & Sørensen, 2014; Jovicic, 2016, p. 606). When it comes to tourism, 'education-based experiences' are commonly associated with engagement with local culture and heritage (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016, p. 147). In terms of the overall experience the majority (90.2%) were satisfied. Respondents also made comments on the facilities for example; some indicated that Basotho Cultural Village need to improve the restaurant facility and the tuckshop setting. Provision of chairs to sit while waiting for a tour and signage, was another problem for the visitors (see Table 14). Jovicic (2016, p. 608) states that there is now a change from tangible to intangible forms of culture. The preservation of tangible culture is also beneficial for intangible culture such as authenticity and integrity (Yuan, 2008, p. 6). Tourism product owners should pay more attention to sensory aspects. It is significant to create tourism experiences from a sensory perspective of visits such as touch, sights, sounds, tastes, and smells (Barnes et al., 2014, p. 137).

A Chi-square was conducted to determine whether there is an association between the first-time visitors and tourist satisfaction at the village. A significant association was found between the variables of educational information ( $p$ -value  $0.025 < 0.5$ ), tourist facilities ( $p$ -value  $0.054 < 0.5$ ), ethnic food ( $p$ -value  $0.328 < 0.5$ ), indigenous music ( $p$ -value  $0.471 < 0.5$ ) and the satisfaction of first-time visitors. This illustrates the motivation to experience both tangible and intangible components of culture (UNWTO, 2018, p. 93). With regard to tourist satisfaction, a study by Wahid, Aliman, Hashim, and Harudin (2016, p. 629) reveals that first-time visitors are highly satisfied with their trips. In general, first-time visitors tend to be active explorers (Wahid et al., 2016, p. 624).

Table 12 presents the experiences enjoyed the most by visitors to the village. 'The average cultural tourist looks for a mix of cultural activities' (Jovicic, 2016, p. 608). A number ( $n = 228$ , 61.1%) of the respondents enjoyed the guided tour followed by landscape ( $n = 110$ , 29.5%). One visitor alluded to the fact that the tour guide was good 'Our guide made it very interesting.' Curio shop (3.8%), and restaurant (2.1%) were the least enjoyed experiences at the village. A number of respondents made comments on their dissatisfaction with the restaurant. One respondent indicated that Basotho Cultural Village needs to 'Improve restaurant facility and tuckshop setting, we had no chairs to sit while waiting for a tour.'

The results indicated word of mouth as the main source of information for visitors. The visitors were asked to indicate whether they would recommend Basotho Cultural Village.

**Table 11.** Tourist satisfaction with the cultural presentations at BCV ( $N = 305$ ).

Variables	Tourist satisfaction with the cultural presentations at BCV					Mean	Std. Deviation
	Very dissatisfied (%)	Dissatisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Satisfied (%)	Very Satisfied (%)		
Educational information	1.3	0.3	4.3	34.8	59.3	3.91	0.427
Tourist facilities	1.6	3.9	6.6	38.7	49.2	3.77	0.717
Ethnic food	1.3	1.6	7.9	31.8	57.4	3.83	0.563
Indigenous music	1.3	0.7	12.1	33.8	52.1	3.82	0.516
Tour guides	2.3	0.7	3.6	30.5	63.0	3.88	0.536
Entrance fee	1.3	2.3	7.9	37.7	50.8	3.81	0.608
Overall experience	1.6	0.0	8.2	31.5	58.7	3.87	0.462

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

**Table 12.** Experiences enjoyed the most ( $N = 305$ ).

	Responses		
	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Per cent (%)	Per cent of cases
Tourist experiences (what did you enjoy the most from the village)			
Guided museum tour	228	61.1	74.8
Landscape	110	29.5	36.1
Herbal trail tour	13	3.5	4.3
Curio/Gift shop	14	3.8	4.6
Restaurant	8	2.1	2.6

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

**Table 13.** Recommendation prospects of visitors ( $N = 305$ ).

	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Per cent (%)
How likely are you to recommend this place to other people?		
Fairly likely	16	5.2
Probably	37	12.1
Definitely	252	82.6

Source: Author's research, 2017–2018.

As can be seen from [Table 13](#), the majority (82.6%) of the respondents indicated they would definitely recommend the village.

[Table 14](#) captures some of the visitors' comments on their experiences. The comments have been categorised into negative and positive comments. Negative comments are further grouped according to facilities, staff, tour and services as they are more elaborative unlike positive comments that are short and precise. The comments on [Table 14](#), represents the tangible and intangible elements of the museum. In study conducted by Simpson (2000, pp. 19–20) elements of the museum such as the quality of parking facilities, toilets, gift shop and staff performance were rated above average. And the road signage at the museum lacked approval from the visitors. This is similar to this research as one of the respondents indicated that 'they need to improve on the signage, we had to roam around looking for toilets'.

## Conclusion

This paper scrutinised the tourist's responses to cultural presentations at the Basotho Cultural Village by looking at their demographics, cultural experiences, perceptions on authenticity, engagement and satisfaction. Cultural presentation in the form of a museum is rather complex. This research suggests that the overall evaluation of cultural experience is a significant determinant of visitor satisfaction. In essence, every component of a museum, from staff to artefacts does contribute to the overall satisfaction.

The study provided the demographics of visitors to the village, it is clear that the village attracts young and old people from different socio-economic background. The village attracts both international and domestic tourists and most of these visitors travel in groups and are first-time visitors to the village. The experience and impression of the village on these visitors is crucial for marketing purposes as the results indicate that most visitors heard about the village from word of mouth. Basotho Cultural Village does not

**Table 14.** Visitor's comments on the overall experience at Basotho Cultural Village.

VISITOR comments on cultural presentations at Basotho cultural village

**Negative comments***Facilities*

- Upgrade the restaurant even if it still has cultural aspects. A better equipped tuckshop will also improve the experience.
- They should have a waiting area with seats while waiting for a tour to start and we waited for an hour.
- I feel like the village has somehow regressed
- There was no water & toilet paper in the toilet, improve your visitor facilities
- ATM must be installed; they only take cash, no cards. We had to drive to town to get cash.
- There was only one tour guide and we had to wait for 30 minutes before we could take the tour
- Entrance fee is too expensive
- People who don't have cash have to leave because the place does not accept cards

*Staff*

- I don't have a problem with smokers, but if you are going to talk to people rather not. Our guide just had a smoke before the tour, it's not pleasant
- The guide should have showed a bit of enthusiasm
- Although not satisfied with many things like our guide just rushed the tour
- The tour guide was describing things very slow
- My second time here, information is not presented fully, the guide did not explain the Basotho blanket

*Tour*

- Very interesting, but no traditional music was played for us
- Work on the authenticity of culture, like clothing
- They must really improve on the authenticity. Some of the role players are wearing modern clothes like gold ear rings
- Traditional healer wearing sunglasses was rather strange
- The traditional houses are falling apart; they have to rebuild/renew them
- Sotho speaking must be separated from English speaking tourists as this disadvantages the engagement on Basotho culture
- We did not see the medicine man, really disappointing
- People in the village dressed modern does not achieve the purpose of a cultural village
- There is not much of activity going on in the museum like people dancing, playing traditional music
- I would have liked to see the houses from inside to see how the people lived. We only saw them from the outside
- We did not see the third wife

*Service*

- Nice experience but we did not find dipabi (grinded corn) at the kiosk, very disappointing
- We had to stand for 25 minutes waiting for a tour guide
- We tried calling before we came, but the telephone does not work
- They did not have the food we tasted in the village. We wanted to take home some food.

**Positive comments**

- I'm definitely coming back, it's worth the time and money
- Very interesting and good to keep the culture
- It was very educational and enjoyable
- Our guide was excellent
- The tour guide was very interesting to listen to
- I enjoyed being in the village
- Thank you! Very interesting and nicely presented!
- The place and the people around the place were fabulous! thank you very much to all the staff
- Nice balance between tourism and traditional customs without being dull
- In my opinion the entrance fee is cheap, they should increase it a little. Otherwise I am satisfied!
- keep up the good job, well-done Basotho
- Interesting place to visit, especially with children to learn more about culture
- Nice visit, we have learned so much in 60 minutes
- Interesting way of packaging the Basotho history
- A very great experience. Will definitely bring my kids
- Our guide made it very interesting

have an active website, the village relies on the website of (Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation) and limited information about the village and the services are provided. The village may have to develop its social presence on platforms such as Facebook. As the results indicated that the visitors mainly come to the village for cultural experience and appreciation, it is essential that the management of the village should work on strategies that enhance the experience of the visitors as this will result in a positive word-of-mouth.

Visitors regard Basotho Cultural Village as an important ethnic cultural preservation. The study also reveals that visitors love to engage in the form of taking pictures, tasting food and also appreciate talking to the staff at the village. There is a need for management to pay attention to these intangible and tangible features of the museum. The current study recommends that through the use of technology, the village may also capture the experience of the visitors and at the end of the tour present pictures of the visitors taken during the tour for purchasing at a reasonable price. This could be an attractive souvenir for visitors, especially those who cannot afford arts and crafts in the curio shop. Tangible and intangible elements of the museum such as food and music are critical for the visitor's authentic experience. Provision of music and food exhibitions as part of the village experience may be another way of not just attracting visitors but also providing optimum experience.

With regard to managerial implications, the current study advises that visitors satisfaction is based on the emphasis on participation oriented experience and authenticity. This paper focuses mainly on the tourist's cultural experiences at the Basotho Cultural Village, further research may be conducted on how the services are provided by the staff at the village. Further research may also be essential with regard to the international visitors; their expectations, and preferred cultural experiences when visiting a cultural site. This may assist the village management and relevant stakeholders such as tour operators in terms of compiling travel packages for international market. Not excluding the local market, but the marketing efforts should also be aimed at international visitors as there is a potential for growth. The management of the village should consider partnering with other destination marketing organisations (DMO's) to market Basotho Cultural Village. The museum management should also customise its marketing activities according to the visitor experience.

Authenticity as a cultural experience is important. The management of the village should invest in educating the village staff from receptionists to tour guides on authentic cultural display and service. To ensure customer satisfaction, the marketing should coincide with the experiences offered to avoid the dissatisfaction. The study indicates a low visitor engagement with the staff, therefore, the elements of the museum that provided genuine experience for the visitors should be maintained by educating the staff on how to create engaging experiences.

Even though the study concludes that the visitors to the Basotho Cultural Village are generally satisfied with the cultural experiences, it will be a miss not to acknowledge that there is room for improvement. As literature suggest that the modern consumer is seeking more than just observing. It is essential that visitors to the village are fully engaged. The way in which the cultural product is presented, 'contributes to stimulate the interest and the involvement of the visitor' (De Rojas & Camarero, 2008, p. 533). Although cultural tourism is about learning it must be presented in an entertaining manner. Tourism products failing to do will find it difficult to capture a larger market base (McKercher & Du Cros, 2003, p. 57).

Further research on staff involvement in visitor experiences, understanding of authenticity and visitor engagement may be necessary. Therefore, the author would like to extend an invite to future research in applying this research with inclusion of other elements to other cultural villages or heritage sites in South Africa. Basotho Cultural Village is an integral part of the Free State tourism and a feeder to other tourist attractions in the eastern Free State.

This research provides DMO's with an understanding into this particular market as cultural tourist have specific needs. This can assist with tailoring the marketing activities according to the market needs. The Department of Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation should customise its marketing activity for the village and other heritage sites in collaboration with the department of tourism. The image and reputation of the village is really important and a positive reputation may be achieved through exceptional, authentic cultural experiences.

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## Notes on contributor

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