

The South African Nguni Female Body and Traditional Dress as a National Identity 'Exploit'

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ABSTRACT Most South African public places portray multiple images of what the country offers as one of its identity and heritage. The images depict carefully chosen colours many of which signify Nguni female clothing artefacts. Within the country, any person asked to identify some of the country's national symbols, though vaguely familiar with what embodies the country's identity and heritage, would most likely think of Nguni female dress artefacts or the colours that are commonly used with the artefacts. Such is the regard for this symbolic identification that many feel patriotic at its exposé – often seen at public places that 'sell-off' South Africa, for example, airports, tourists' centres, hotels, etc. Whilst acknowledging affection for the images, the paper questions what they represent and who the beneficiaries of the images are, arguing that women who are in most cases bearers of the images, either as producers or models for the artefacts are accorded little or no regard. Although democratic South Africa through its legislation fosters a liberated expression and representation of its citizenry - the essence of who women are; that is, their bodies, dress and crafts are employed to exploit their quintessence whilst giving back very little to them. Employing Marxist feminism and post-colonial theories the researcher explains how the tourism industry has 'ab/used' the Nguni female identity and its related artefacts for commercial benefits. Drawing on data gathered from selected women traders as well as images found at public places the paper argues that the Nguni female body, her dress and the craft maker of her artefacts have been unfavourable used – employing one of the 'taken-for-granted' national identities

INTRODUCTION

South Africa's return to the global village following the new era 'created an interest ... on a scale never seen before' (Bennett 1996: 222). South Africa, as a democratic country re-entered tourism with enthusiasm eager to show the world that a new nation was born, mostly and fondly referred to as the 'rainbow nation' at the inception of the democratic dispensation. A visitor in a new country learns about the intended destination through public spaces, hereafter to be referred to as tourist sites. Tourist sites are an interesting space from which we are able to decipher the past, ongoing and shifting social hierarchies formulated among the people of a hosting country.

Most of South Africa's public places portray multiple images of what the country can offer as well as its identity, whether it is a collective or selected kind of identity. The images depict carefully chosen colours many of which signify Nguni female clothing artefacts. Any seasoned traveller asked to identify some of the country's national symbols, though vaguely familiar with what embodies a South African traditional identity or heritage, would most likely im-

mediately link it to Nguni female dress artefacts or the colours that are commonly used with the artefacts. These colours resemble the country's national flag. It may be argued that the 2010 soccer world cup heightened the country and its flag's international recognition. Gathering from the ubiquitous images it may be supposed that there is high regard for this symbolic identification that many feel patriotic at its exposé. These colours are often seen at public places that 'sell-off' South Africa, for example, airports, conference centres, hotels and tourists centres, amongst others. This begs the questions: is the representation truly and essentially symbolic of the country's national identity; why is it mainly the Nguni dress that is portrayed and ... why the female? Del Casino and Hanna (2000) submit that spaces and identities are interrelated processes. They may also be full of ambiguities in their formation of identities. Acknowledging these facts this paper, first, aims to question an identity that is largely used at tourist sites arguing that it is a distortion of who South Africans are; argues that it is a depiction that fosters women as an article of trade; and presents selected views of women who have created some of the crafts found in tourist sites.

METHODOLOGICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Hjalager and Richards (2002), Novelli (2005) and Burns and Novell (2007) acknowledge that case study as a research method is best for tourism studies as it identifies, amongst other things causal and effect issues, thus allowing an opportunity for a student of tourism to forge links between theory and practice. Taking a lead from these key tourism studies scholars, a case study approach was used to study selected tourist attraction sites of four South African towns; that is, Durban, East London, Mthatha and Witbank. For the purpose of this paper, verbal data and associated pictorial evidence was drawn from the sites of these towns due to the fact that the population of these areas is largely Nguni speaking. Nguni languages include Hlubi, Phuthi, Ndebele, Xhosa, Swati and Zulu – with the last four enjoying dominance in relation to the former. Nguni languages are closely related, with a number of writers like Kohler (1933), Guthrie (1967), Msimang (1975), Mesthrie (1995) Magwaza (1999) and Carton et al. (2008) suggesting that the fact that this group of people, though varied, are mutually intelligible indicates some historical unity. This suggestion has some credence as the group's traditional clothing colours as well as preference for the manner in which they are combined is strikingly similar.

It is impossible to miss visual images of Nguni women and girls at South Africa's tourist sites. An interest to conduct a study of this nature was birthed through these observations. At first, several tourist sites were visited and observed for the purpose of examining and comparing their displays. Pictorial data of artefacts and wall pictures were taken using a digital camera. Additional images were downloaded from various internet sites. This process led to a database of 46 still images which were collected from airports, conference centres, cultural villages, game reserves, hotel curio shops, public market places and tourist information centres. The still pictures were used as 'discussion triggers' to facilitate interview sessions with 17 female artefacts traders/makers found in trading spots adjacent to the tourist sites. Three key leading questions were posed to the traders, followed by a few other questions that were informed by the responses they had given:

1. Do you recognise any of the artefacts and/or wall pictures captured in these pictures,
2. What is your opinion on the portrayal of these representations,
3. Have you or any of your colleagues been involved in the production of these or similar products?

Initially, on approaching the first two respondents, it was only the first two questions that were asked. However, the researcher realised that interest was equally expressed on issues related to the production of the artefacts. A decision was then taken to incorporate the third question. Responses gathered from the traders were used to determine their involvement and perceptions on artefacts and pictorial evidence of objects that adorn sites used for the study. In line with feminist research principles and taking a lead from Stanley and Wise (1983), Charmaz (1988), Strauss and Corbin (1990), and Magwaza (2006), the participants of the study were encouraged to share their experiences and opinion on this issue. These scholars are of the view that, it is crucial for researchers to allow interviewees to discuss matters that are of interest to them, rather than insist on inflexible research plans. Responses generated from the interview sessions, juxtaposed with pictures captured at tourist sites were used to understand intricacies of issues related to the Nguni female body and her dress.

Urry (2002: 161) is of the view that the modern tourist holds photography and pictures essential as it speaks to the sense of sight, the 'noblest of the senses'. Concurring with Urry, Mark Ingle, writing about a tourist destination that was transformed from 'nothingness' to a 'trendy desirable destination' says photography appeals to a sense that is not only essential for cultural but other kinds of tourism like astro-tourism, thus enhancing delight and appeal for the modern tourist (2010: 91-92). Thus, the decision to use photography, albeit not intended to probe tourists, was used in this study as it was found consonant with sentiments shared by these tourist studies scholars.

This research and aligned analysis was conducted employing ideological underpinnings of Marxist feminism and post-colonialism. In particular, the study was influenced by specific ideas expressed in the works of scholars that subscribe to both these schools of thought, that is, Gayatri Spivak (1988) Judith Butler (1993,

1999), and Bell Hooks (2000). These Marxist feminism and post-colonialism theorists take an interest in women, as well as social processes that prevail in their lives. In the context of this study they would define the Nguni woman and the street-based producer and trader of her clothing - as a group whose oppression should not simply be understood as the results of individuals' actions but as a product of historical, political, social as well as economic forces that are associated with structures that fail to treat women fairly. As these women are of the working class, issues related to their work (as producers and bearers of Nguni female traditional artefacts) are of concern to these theorists. The studied women's class status better explains reasons for their exclusion, even in matters that directly affect them. It also explains their functions and oppression within the tourist industry. From this standpoint and these theorists' ideas, one can assume that the oppression within the tourist institution is a 'gender politics affair', were-in patriarchy rules and decides economic relationships between the *woman subaltern* (that is, women of the study) and her *provider* (that is, business owner/employer). It is suggested that these relationships are intensive and related to economics, emotion and power. Unlike in similar relationships where there are organised labour unions, for the women of this study it was apparent that there is no opportunity of resisting or challenging the *provider*. These relationships are understood to be a 'gender politics affair' due to the fact that, in the context of this study, it is largely women and girls who are the article of tourist sites. Pictures found in the studied tourist sites are sex-typed and the content is gendered. It is for this reason that, for these Marxist feminists and post-colonial theorist, the mission should be - to identify where such gender relations operate and work towards (with the subaltern) facilitating freedom in order for the subaltern to participate justly in the tourist industry. It was in the spirit of embracing these ideological views that this study deliberately sought perceptions of women traders.

Barnes and Gregory (1997: 2) have brought brilliant thinking to what is cardinal among these theories, that is, the belief that responsible tourism research ought to reject the 'dominant constellation of objectivity and truth we describe as positivism'. Influenced by this publication, Degen and Wainwright's (2010) paper on 'gender-

ing the urban aesthetics' speaks of gender-laden and socio-cultural constructions of tourist physical space. Their critique of urban tourist spaces has been differently expressed by a number of theorists however not necessarily writing in the context of tourist studies. Like Beall (1982) and Nongbri (2010), Monica Degen and Emma Wainwright hold that such spaces ought to be understood and explained in contexts bigger than what meets the eye. Advancing this view, Degen and Wainwright (2010: 155) thus note that it is crucial that urban spaces are subjected to gender analysis, specifically pointing out that failure to do so 'simultaneously reinforce, subvert and expand binary gendered thinking through the tensions between representations and experiences of urban place ... (and thus) create gendered specific aesthetic boundaries and practices'. Adhering to and informed by these ideologies the researcher adopted an approach which was inclusive of participant observation, a process in which the researcher has been involved in for the past six years (2006 and 2011).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As discussed above, Marxist feminism and post-colonialism bring issues of oppression to the fore, appealing that it is crucial that, where relationships are unequal, a critical analysis of this state of affairs is explored. In such relationships as it is the case between the subaltern and provider as defined above, it is crucial to understand that the interests are not the same. This discussion explores this relationship by looking into the relationships within the tourism industry; that is, the role and/or representation of the South African government, business owners, the Nguni female and her dressmaker. Arguing that the Nguni female body, its artefacts and her dressmaker have been unfavourable exploited, data gathered from tourists sites are used to understand the intricacies of this relationship. By examining some of the precepts of the South African Constitution, there is also probing on the positionality of an identity that has come to be a 'taken-for-granted' national representation. On analysing these elements, it was found that the Nguni female identity that is widely used is that of the Ndebele, Xhosa and Zulu language-speaking groups. There is an indication that this identity has been 'ab/used', firstly for commer-

cial benefits, and arguable a national symbol. It was also found that where she is positioned and displayed, the representation is convenient for this purpose - a trend that is repeated in many tourist sites.

This issue brings to mind Judith Butler's reference to performativity that should be understood within a process of iterability, adopting Derrida's theory. This conceptualization is based on a regularized and constrained repetition of norms, processes and activities. Butler maintains that the repetition maintains the status quo thus ensuring that the subaltern is controlled by those in authority or positions of power. Accordingly, she claims that:

This iterability implies that 'performance' is not a singular 'act' or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance (1993:95).

Butler's description of an unequal and unreal performance is reiterated by Tim Edensor – a concept that was also made reference to by the participants of this study. Some of the interviewees' comments were found to be consonant with Edensor's (2001) view that tourism is a 'performance'. In a paper entitled, *Performing Tourism, Staging Tourism (Re)producing Tourist Space and Practice* Edensor, a cultural anthropologist, employs the metaphor of performance to explain the concept of tourism as a set of dramatic activities that, to a large extent, replicate long-held conventions. It was found that this was the case with images displayed at tourist sites, with the 'performance' either overt or easy to infer. These sentiments have been noted by Lacy and Douglass (2002: 17) who insist that '...tourism sights and sites communicate more than 'truth' about a 'real' culture'. It was also along these lines that comments of the interviewees of this study included statements like: 'that is how this town thinks and wants women to be, but it is more about views (of the tourist sites) than what is real' (Gugu); and 'it is an act, actually some form of drama, once played-out somewhere but now repeated in these pictures'. These comments illustrate that, although some traditions still stand and are upheld by people of influence, some women are undoubtedly aware

that representations of the female body reinforce gendered conventions. They were undoubtedly aware that the images are an 'act', despite having minimal ways of challenging it. This awareness can be interpreted as a form of agency that is not directed at anyone but geared towards self-empowerment, amidst the government and tourist industry's trading, manipulation and performance of the image of the Nguni female body.

The Constitutionality of Promotion Cultural Heritages

At the onset of the democratic dispensation South Africa was set on developing new models of identity, that were respectful of all its people. This, in my opinion should be an ongoing project where nation-building and multiculturalism are not only compatible, but where specific cultural expressions are seen as part of the country's identity and heritage. The role of a heritage therefore does not only give expression to the self, but also affects one's participation and sharing in ones community, social, and ethnic group or in the nation. Self-identity, should ideally not only be self-constructed, but derived in large part by perception of group membership. Culture and its expression therefore represent the individual's most powerful lien on the group. Taking cognisance of these fact, in a recently published book, *Linguistic Landscape within the City*, the editors, Shohamy et al. (2010) warn of the need for analysts to investigate the manner in which public urban spaces are structured and the aligned signs that accompany such structures. They argue that signs used at public spaces may be an indication of how signs are used to control meaning, thus manipulating the masses – unconsciously or not. The discussion of this study takes cues from this alert and relates it to the manner in which, in South Africa, those in authority and in business could manipulate certain cultural items within tourist sites.

Providently, these were issues that were on the minds of committees that put together the South African Constitution of 1996. Providentially, it provides for identity/cultural rights. It acknowledges that the "South African nation consists of a diversity of cultural, religious and linguistic communities" and seeks to promote respect for, and protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities.

Hence, it encourages communities to protect their cultures and promises to recognise all heritages. With reference to languages, Chapter 1 Section 6 of this Constitution states that the “official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu”. The recognition of the existence of diverse groups and need to respect their cultures is further captured in the Constitution’s Chapter 2, section 31, (1) – which states that: “persons belonging to a cultural, religious or linguistic community may not be denied the right, with other members of that community to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language”. In addition, through the Constitution there was cognisance of the importance of these cultural rights and heritages. Consequently the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities was established to realise and promote these rights. The Commission’s Act of 2002 thus mandates that, one of the objects of the commission, amongst others, will be to “promote the right of communities to develop their historically diminished heritage” (section 4, d).

Although this paper focuses on the Nguni female body and dress, following this intended research delimitation, the decision to limit the study to this group was also due to its relative overrepresentation at tourist attraction sites. This was found to be the case even outside the main towns in which they are found. However, artefacts that are most featured amongst these groups are those of the Ndebele and Zulu; and in particular of the women. This is worth noting as South Africa is in essence multilingual and multicultural. It espouses, as its Constitution refers, language and cultural rights of all its citizens. Further, the fact that the country ‘champions’ these rights is first supported by the fact that it subscribes to national and international legal frameworks¹ seeking to protect ‘linguistic and cultural rights of all’. Furthermore, concerted efforts have been made in establishing and/or supporting structures for the promotion and protection of cultural and linguistic rights.²²

South Africa, unlike many countries in the continent spends huge resources on these kinds of organisations, for instance The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic

Rights (CRL Commission). In a report compiled for PanSALB by Lubbe et al. (2006), commitment to linguistic rights and aligned legal statutes are tabulated.

However, in practice, the good intentions do not match advocating for the equality and cultural rights that are expressed by the legal frameworks and the established bodies. In contrast, it is cultural elements from the Nguni language group that were found to repeatedly appear at the studied tourist sites. Amtaika and Meyiwa, in a forthcoming publication on a study of national South African assets, lament this status quo. They suggest that tourist sites artefacts should be understood as ‘national symbols’ on which most citizens ideally ought to pride themselves. It is in this vein that in this paper, the researcher invites readers to equally investigate the selected ‘national symbols’ with the intention of appreciating the fact that it is, at most, cultural expressions from the same language group that dominate these symbols. In addition, it is the Nguni female body and/or dress that are mostly presented at these sites. It is to this end then that the question that this paper poses is: Is this by default? I suggest that the South African Nguni female body and dress is used on one hand for continuity as the previous government had, albeit with a lesser focus, used these symbols. On the other hand this decision is an easy option as it is of the female folk – the object of the male gaze.

A study of tourist sites indicates the government and industry’s tendency to minimally feature and/or blatantly disregard all the other cultures, thus going against what is enshrined in the culture statutes and Constitution to which they subscribe. Although democratic South Africa through its legislation fosters a liberated expression and representation of its citizenry - women are not only portrayed in the manner as discussed above - but the essence of who they are; that is, their bodies, dress artefacts and crafts are employed to exploit their quintessence whilst giving back very little to them.

It was found that there is uncertainty as to whether what is portrayed at the studied sites constitute cultural authenticity and doubt regarding the impact it has on intended tourists and visitors. Interviewees were split on whether the representations constitute national identity, with some arguing that as South Africa is a multicultural and multilingual such representations

are a distortion. Equally, of concern is a sense that the Nguni female body is commodified. Scarlett Cornelissen (2005: 674) laments this fact, noting that the tourist imaging in South Africa is imbued with what he refers to as 'political economy'.

The Nguni Female Body as an Article of Trade; Her Dressmaker, an Invisible Trader

It has been suggested (Green 2002: 271) that public festivals and spaces are a good indicator of what lies at the heart of a nation as they 'provide not only the occasion to make statements about national identity', but are in essence assertions of the values its people hold. Green's statement makes a crucial point in this regard and speaks to the essence of this paper that is, that the female dress and body under discussion is a representation of a culture that is being used both, as an article of trade for commercial purposes as well as a source of national pride. Underlying these factors are held values about women in general and the female body in particular. For, as Sally Everett (2010: 345) best expresses in a publication that challenges her tourist studies colleagues to 'look beyond the visual gaze' of tourist sites: 'the body, both in the physical and emotional sense is employed in the encounter of space. Consonant with Everett's sentiment, Alistair O'Neill's (2008) caution comes to bear: that most exhibitions and spaces in which the exhibitions are found ought to be understood as having 'another kind of dialogue'. Eager to 'look beyond the visual gaze' and understand 'another kind of dialogue', this study set to solicit views of some of the women who, through their trade in the informal sector, provide Nguni female dress artefacts to tourist sites. The decision to choose this group was due to the fact that as there has been little focus on them we know little about how they perceive the visual display of their work. They were found to be active in the tourist sector but invisible due to their status as informal street-traders and their female gender. Post-colonial theorist, Gayatri Spivak defines this group as '*the subaltern* – the cultural others', that is, those who are often ignored despite the significant contributions they make. In one of her most quoted papers entitled, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak (1988: 48) questions exclusionary practices and decries the fact that 'the subaltern as female is

in deep shadow'. Spivak strongly criticizes the fact that *the subaltern* never gets to express herself as her way of understanding is marginalized.

Embracing Spivak's views, this study sought the invisible street-based woman whose trade is, however, visibly displayed at tourist sites. Hence, the researcher embarked on this study and this discussion mainly led by views expressed by the women traders that formed part of the participants of this study. It was found that many of these traders had made and/or sold Nguni female dress artefacts for more than two decades to tourist sites but had little to show for these efforts. They claimed their lives had not improved for the better but were of the view that those who 'took away their crafts had a good life' commented a fifty-six-year-old woman. Some women reported that, at times business owners or their representatives had taken the artefacts promising to pay a later stage. Being vulnerable and eager to sell their crafts, they would go along with such requests. Cognisant that Robert Shepherd (2002) is of the view that suggestions of a cause and effect relationship between tourism and cultural commodification are problematic, the analysis of this paper leans on views and perceptions of the participants of the study. Amongst these traders exists a strong view that there is commercialisation of their work, and that very little is given back to them despite the fact that, exclaimed one interviewee, *singabaqambi ngqangi nabanikazi bale misebenzi* – meaning, we are the key originators and owners of these crafts or artefacts.

It could be argued that, it is such disquiet that led to some tourist studies scholars (like Del Casino and Hanna 2000; Cornelissen 2005) to have called for the redefinition of tourist spaces, arguing for a balance between beneficiaries, reality and identities such tourist spaces claim to represent. This concern has contributed towards a shift in recent trends and critical criticism of what goes on in these spaces. The shift seems to happen at a slow pace as pointed out by Cornelissen (2005).

From studying the Nguni female dress artefacts and pictures, what comes out strong is that there is a globalization of sexuality (Waitt 2008) and in particular the female body, as her identity is an article of trade. It is a form of 'putting the female body in the tourist industry for a global market', a practice that indicates the man-

ner in which the female body is valued. What is conspicuous about these spaces is that the female body and her artefacts whilst bearing the brunt of the responsibility of upholding a national identity, she is also a commercial trade article. There is juxtaposition of tourist attraction with the Nguni women and her traditional dress. This is, of course, not a new concern. Several writers began recording their concern about this fact prior to the new democratic dispensation. They include Angas (1974), Beck (1989), Finnegan (1992) and Cornelissen (2005) amongst others. The female body, bright colours and blackness adorn many of South Africa's public places. They are showcased in a spectacular manner. These descriptions reflect some but not all of the country's citizenry. They thus do not tell the 'whole story' about the people of South Africa. It is against this background that this paper poses the questions as listed above in the introduction section. Hence, the study's use of a case study research approach - on the manner in which tourist spaces are constructed for economic importance. The Nguni female is thus constructed in this manner, presented and represented for the 'consumption' of tourists and visitors of the studied sites.

Mixing a cultural heritage with tourism is not good practice. A question to pose is: what could be understood, missed or implied by the pictures that reveal a significant amount of the female body in stances, especially where she is thinly dressed? Debatable as this may be the case, we cannot ignore international trends where the tourist sector is fraught with sex trade. Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, and India are amongst key countries that attract tourists - concurrently the sex industry flourishes in these contexts. Without attempting to bedevil the sex industry, a question may be asked whether South Africa (possibly unconsciously) is trying to follow this trend by presenting thinly dressed women at tourist sites. It could not be established whether this is a concern for the government and/or business or if authority structures within the industry are aware of this danger. Considering that every advert and display tells a story, it is of concern that an identity that is meant to be respectable heritage is branded as it is currently the case within the tourist sector. A tourist who is not aware of the traditional Nguni female identity could read and may construe the display as

'naked women on display'. This could be easily mis/interpreted as 'mixing tourism with naked women' or 'mixing heritage with naked women'.

This issue brings to mind the important work of Judith Butler (1999) in the publication, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. She laments the coherence of the categories of sex, gender and sexuality where the desire for gendered bodies is culturally constructed through repeated 'performativity'. It was found that as tourist sites present the Nguni female body, the text repeats that presentation - which is indeed a sequence of repeated 'performativity'.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper the researcher explored views and ways in which the Nguni female body and her dress are not only commodified but gendered, sexualised as well as, set as some kind of a South African national pride. The 'new South Africa', in an attempt to revitalise and present a different nation than the previous separated nation, found itself reinforcing gendered conventions and female representations - a project that is hard to discern from the tourist attraction efforts of the previous regime. The interviewees' responses demonstrate a strong wish for a necessity of opening-up communication channels among people who work within the industry at various levels and do so with an honest intention of embarking on business and culturally responsible behaviours.

Data gathered from this study suggest that, dating before the new South African era, the Nguni female body and dress has been expressed at tourist attracting sites as an article of trade that advances multi-purposes, that is, commercial, political and cultural. This, however, has been happening without necessarily furthering economic goals of the female who owns the body and street-based trader, who makes and, as some respondents have claimed, own the artefacts. It is essential that this is managed well and better than is currently the position right now.

Some questions were left unanswered by this study. The women whose pictures are used for display could not be consulted to establish what opinions they hold about the manner and areas in which they are portrayed as well as spaces at which they are displayed. Futile attempts were made to contact them as most business owners

and people working at tourist sites could not give any concrete leads. Only one woman could be contacted whose response was brief: 'you mean that, that picture? The respondent could not recall much about it except that I earned some money for it'. This left me wondering if what we, as researchers probe is of any significance and reflected upon by the people we seek to study. It was obvious from this response that what may be of concern to researchers does not bother some of those who become the 'objects of display' and article for trade.

Some of the pictures displayed at tourist sites seemed to have been taken at public events, most likely without the knowledge of the bearers. It is a wonder if the women who are the objects of the displays are aware of the existence and use of these pictures. The issue of whether permission was sought from them for display purposes is also hard to establish. In addition, another question that still stands is: who are the real owners of the pictures and artefacts on display? A glaringly common characteristic that was found at the tourist sites that were studied, was that, although the tourist sites business players benefit from the economic results, they know practically little about objects that sit on their display or the craft traders who produce them. Obviously, opinions that these small but significant players within the industry may have is a matter of little concern to the big players in the tourist industry.

Yet the manner in which we reconstruct the past need not lead to a violation of the key values that are enshrined in the South African Constitution. While displaying the Nguni female traditional dress may be primarily economic or political, processes of culturally objectifying the female body were found to be quite obvious at the tourist sites – thus undermining important African renaissance project the country seeks to advance.

NOTES

- 1 See the South African Constitutions. The country has also signed the Charter of the African Cultural Renaissance which has amongst its specific objectives a commitment to 'ensure that African cultural values including African languages are promoted to maximum effect in order to reinforce a sense of identity among Africans' (http://www.au.int/files/CHARTER_FOR_AFRICAN_CULTURAL_RENAISSANCE_0.pdf).

2. South Africa, unlike many countries in the continent spends huge resources on these kinds of organisations, for instance The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Rights (CRL Commission). In a report compiled for PanSALB by Lubbe, Truter and du Plessis (2006) commitment to linguistic rights and aligned legal statutes are tabulated.

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