

Overview of Literature on Dimensions of Religious Tourism

Name: Sudeshna Gupta

Assistant Professor NITMAS (Neotia Institute of Technology, Management and Science)

D.H.Road, Jhinga, P.O. Amira, Dist.-24 Parganas (S) West Bengal

Email Id: sudeshna6.gupta@yahoo.in

ABSTRACT

One of the major portions of international tourism is conducted because of the religious faith among the tourists. Present-day religious tourism has incorporated the desire of tourists to visit places for different attractive components, while the religious faith also remains at the center. The concept of traditional pilgrimage is also found to undergo philosophical changes. Because of its enormous impact on the socio-cultural and economic ambiance of the tourist spots, as well as on the country and world by large, researchers have found interested to analyze this form of tourism from diverse perspectives. In this quest, several opinions about religious tourism, its origin, and its vast impact have been presented. Several dimensions of religious tourism have been identified. The present study is a survey of literature where the major research works in this field are studied. The perspectives and dimensions presented by different scholars have been noted and illustrated. The study provides a framework of major religious tourism studies conducted so far and also unbolts future research avenues for the identification of new perspectives, opinions, and dimensions to further enrich the research arena on religious tourism by application of mixed methodology approach taking both qualitative and quantitative methodology into consideration.

Keywords: mixed methodology, religious tourism, tourist spots, traditional pilgrimage.

INTRODUCTION

‘Wanderlust’, the term which has its etymological root in the German language, highlights a common nature of every human being, traveling. Ever since the inception of human civilization, man has had to travel a lot for the sake of basic survival needs. But besides this need for survival, human curiosity to discover the places unknown to them, also motivated the spirit of traveling. The nature of traveling from place to place could be observed as a genetically embedded phenomenon, common to every human being. With the growth of civilization, the act of traveling took a more organized shape and the ancient wonderer has been termed a tourist, and the act of wandering received its civilized term, tourism. Tourism is a global activity with a huge socio-cultural and economic impact. Places of tourism are centers of huge financial exchange which enriches the natives of the tourist places through different types of hospitality and other transactions. According to Suradnya, (2011), the demands of the tourists are for basic facilities such as food, places of accommodation, transportation, hospitality-related services, and so on in exchange for money. Besides this, the activity also enriches both tourists and hosts in terms of socio-cultural exchange. With the advent of globalization, places

of tourism are also subjected to a highly competitive atmosphere and are closely related to the condition of the market and the demands of the consumers (Anderson and Mittal, 2000). The purpose of tourism could be manifold and thus it has been imperiled in various forms. Arunmozhi & Panneerselvam (2013), in their research work, have presented a list of tourism which include Adventure Tourism, Wildlife Tourism, Pilgrimage Tourism, Eco-Tourism, Cultural Tourism, Wellness Tourism, Business Tourism, Heritage Tourism, Leisure Tourism, Cruise Tourism, Sports Tourism, Educational Tourism and so on. But amidst this huge list of different types of tourism, religious tourism is found to be the oldest form of tourism (Raj, 2008). Since ancient times traveling for religious devotion was a common practice (Amador et. al., 2018). According to Digance (2003); Turner and Turner (1978) and Turner (1973), religious tourism begins with the manifestation of one's religious belief, and the journey is governed by entirely religious motivation. Religious tourism is a worldwide phenomenon and this is the only form of tourism that contains the highest amount of emotional, social, cultural, and economic involvement. This form of tourism is encouraged by every religion and the innate emotional belief of the tourists is the driving force of this type of tourism. While the other forms of tourism require a huge amount of marketing resources to popularize the places and activities associated with them, religious tourism requires no such effort. It is the belief of the tourists which is the driving force of this tourism and the belief is spontaneous. The present paper aims to survey the relevant research works related to the field of religious tourism. The findings of this paper will be helpful for further investigation on this topic involving both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Religious Tourism: Dimensions of Different Schools of Thought

Literature related to religious tourism is rich with contributions from many social scientists and researchers of other domains. Technically, some of these research works followed the qualitative methodology while a good number of quantitative studies could also be observed. Research works on the relationship between religion and tourism have been an arena of constant evaluation while the perspective of the evaluation was different. According to Collins-Kreiner (2010a, 2018) and Terzidou et al. (2017), the perception of different researchers about religious tourism has created both unison and contradiction and thus the conceptual framework is both broad and rich. Gisbert Rinschede (1992), one of the great contributors to religious tourism literature, differentiated different forms of religious tourism based on several important factors. According to him, religious tourism could be both short and long-term. In short-term religious tourism, people are expected to go to nearby religious locations in the form of an excursion, while in long-term religious tourism, people are expected to visit the religious tourist spots for several months. Besides this, the author also identified the organizational form of religious tourism, where the differentiation was done based on the number of members in the tour, mode of communication to the religious tourism place, the seasonality of the religious travel destination, and also the social structure of the travellers.

Bremer (2005) identified three major approaches to such studies. The first one, according to him was the spatial approach where no substantial differences were considered between the old

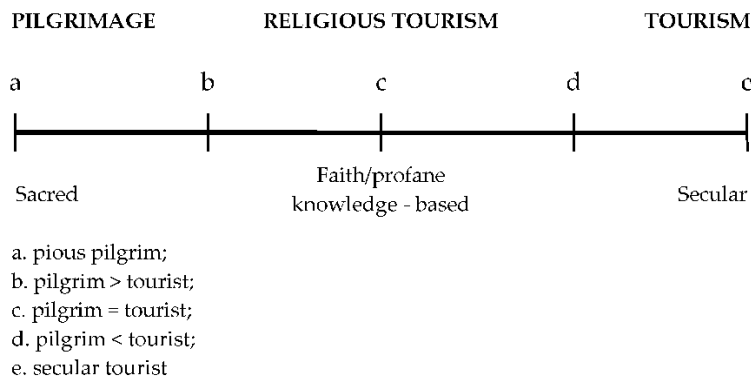
pilgrims and modern tourists, except for their behaviour. The second approach was termed the historical approach where the interrelationship between tourism and religious travels were studied. The cultural approach, the final one among three approaches, studies the relationship and behavioural differences between traditional pilgrimage and modern religious tourism practices. Different schools of study could also be identified in the rich literature on religious tourism. While the study of Rinschede (1992) concentrates on the form of tourism which is partially or completely motivated by religious faith, the research work of Sharpley (2009) studies religious tourism from the perspective of a mystical journey in the contemporary age.

Besides the studies related to the origin and metamorphosis of religious tourism, economic aspects of religious tourism were also studied in several research works. Research works identified the different stakeholders of religious tourism. The classification of religious tourism was also considered an important avenue and studied thoroughly by several researchers. A lot of studies were also conducted on specific geographic regions and sometimes on specific religious places. Perception of religious travellers was also considered to identify several dimensions of religious tourism as well as religious places. To summarise, research works in the context of religious tourism cover a vast horizon and thus, the scope of further research is infinite.

Religious Tourism: New form of Pilgrimage or Metamorphosis

Religious tourism is a term associated with a specific type of tourism that has its roots embedded completely or in some parts, in the motivation related to religious faith (Rinschede, 1992). According to Lanczkowski (1982), tourism which is motivated by religious faith is a phenomenon that is practiced by all religions and may be as old as the religions themselves. Roussel (1972) has pointed out the importance of religious monuments and stated that since time immemorial, religious tourists always search for monuments related to their religions. According to him, in ancient times, religious believers were attracted by memoirs, burial mounds, and so on. Present day the same purpose is served by religious centres like cathedrals. Digance (2003) stated that although there is a worldwide trend toward secularity, routes of religious tourism are still governed by the faith of people. The comment of Digance (2003) is supported by OMT (2014) which identified that the amount of people traveling for religious faith amounts to be 300 to 330 million annually and the annual economic transaction, because of this religious traveling amounts to be 18000 million dollars. Although findings like this bring out the image of traditional pilgrimage, a group of researchers has identified a significant shift of interest in the motive of religious tourism. According to Tala and Padurean (2008), religious tourism owes its origin to 'Pilgrimage', the oldest form of present-day religious tourism. Barber (1993) defined pilgrimage as a journey motivated by a completely religious cause. Pilgrims, according to him had to undergo two separate journeys. The first one is the external physical journey towards the destination of the site of holy values. The second journey of the pilgrims is internal which is directed to achieve a greater spiritual understanding. The religious journey of the pilgrims, as discussed by Collins-Kreiner (2010b) and Morinis (1992), is of high value concerning the principal identity of the pilgrims and such a journey provides them deeper

meaning in their quest for faith. But according to the illustrations of some researchers, this traditional pilgrimage has changed a lot in the modern era. As elaborated by Tala and Padurean (2008), although the motivation for pilgrimage was the faith of people, religious tourism of today cannot be described as completely driven by faith only. The present-day religious tourism is different from pilgrimage as the motive of religious tourism not only centres on religious reasons. Research works of Abbate and Nuovo (2013); Hughes et al. (2013); Olsen (2013); Drule et al. (2015); Wang et al. (2016); Amaro et al. (2018); Kaewumpai (2018); Kim and Kim (2018); Terzidou et al. (2018); identified other important and relevant factors behind the motives of religious tourism. According to the findings of their research works, other factors like the pattern of the natural landscape, traditions associated with the place, the cultural richness of the religious site, and the spiritual offerings of the place are equally important factors, other than the religious belief, which intrigues the tourists in making their choice of their tourist destination. Researchers like Hughes et al. (2013); Hyde and Harman (2011); Fernandes et al. (2012); Geary (2018); Musa et al. (2017); Ramírez and Fernández (2018); Shinde (2007) identified that at the present day, a great number of tourists are paying a visit to the religious tourism spots not because of the religious piety of the place but because of their interest on the history of the place, artistic and archaeological marvels and the ancient cultural richness of the place. This thought was supported by Kaufman (2005) as he pointed out that the places of old-day pilgrimage have gradually changed into tourist sites. Hyde and Harman (2011) stated that as the world is moving towards an era where secularism is a celebrated philosophy, religious tourism is an activity of many people with non-religious faith. This group of people, who, according to them, constitute the segment of secular pilgrims, are motivated to pay their visits to religious places not because of the religious piety of the place but for deeper personal meaning. Furthermore, Collins-Kreiner (2010a, 2010b) stated that there has been a paradigm shift in the philosophy of traditional pilgrimage and the present form of traditional pilgrimage could be subdivided into two different forms, the religious and the secular form. Smith (1992a), in this context, provided us with a continuum of religious tourism where the classification starts from devout pilgrimage to stern secular tourism. Between these two extremes, there lie three more subparts. These subparts show the phases of transition. The parts were designed based on the act, beliefs, and motivations of the tourists. Some segments were identified to conduct the act of tourism mostly dominated by their faith like the traditional pilgrims, although, unlike pilgrims, their act of tourism is not completely driven by the faith. Some segments of tourists are also found to conduct their act of tourism mostly driven by other reasons than faith, although the motivation is not completely faithless like the secular tourists. Religious tourism is found to be placed in the centre, at an equal distance from traditional pilgrimage and the secular motive of tourism. This signifies that religious faith and secular motives, both are the driving forces of such tourism.



The Pilgrim-Tourist Path. (Source: Smith (1992a))

Religious Tourism: The Economic Perspective

Research works related to religious tourism produced several studies which concentrate on economic activities generated through this form of tourism. According to Vukonic (1998), the primary concern of most specialists in tourism studies was analyzing the economic repercussions of religious tourism. Puscasu, V. (2015) states that all the research works on religious tourism are mainly based on four dimensions, and one of the primary dimensions, concentrating on which most of the studies are built up, was the economic dimension. Kavitha, R., and Sugapriya, A. (2019), in their research article on Hindu tourism based in the state of Tamilnadu, discussed the benefits of religious tourism in developing and endorsing national harmony and understanding of the international cultures in generating employment opportunities and thereby helping the economy grow productive. Karar, A. (2010), in his work on the religious tourism of Hardwar discussed how religious tourism has significantly contributed to the development of the hospitality business in Hardwar and thereby helped the development of the overall economy of the place. Kundu, S.K. (2012) added another dimension to the studies of the economic aspects of religious tourism. In his research work on the religious tourism of Birbhum, a district of West Bengal, which is mostly rural, he pointed out that religious tourism plays a pivotal role in developing the economic growth of the place. Besides this, he also pointed out that it is due to religious tourism only, the rural tourism of the different villages of the district, which has many decaying historical marvels, has also witnessed a substantial amount of growth and economic prosperity. Maji, P. et al. (2018) identified the economic contribution of religious tourism in developing the handicraft industries of West Bengal.

Tala and Padurea (2008) were the first ones who tried to identify the economic development caused by religious tourism from a structural point of view. In their study on religious tourism, they tried to identify different stakeholders of religious tourism. The findings demonstrate ten different stakeholders of religious tourism. The list includes Governments, Religious communities, international organizations, Host communities, Local authorities and infrastructure administrators, Internal and external tour operators, Transport companies, Local tourism services providers, the Academic environment, and other stakeholders within the private sector. This large number of stakeholders perform their part of the responsibility and

receive the benefits of religious tourism. Some of these benefits are direct financial benefits while some of them are a long time and indirect financial benefits. According to Fernández (2010), the benefits are twofold. The first one is in the form of direct donations and charity paid to the religious deities and/or entities paid by the religious tourists. The second one is in the form of the exchange of money to acquire souvenirs from religious places. Robles (2001) also highlighted the amount of revenue generated because of the hospitality services provided to tourists.

The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is evident across all sectors and tourism is one of the most affected areas by this global suffering. Researchers like Sigala, M. (2020) have studied the impact of Covid-19 on the economic aspects of religious tourism. A similar study, in the context of Indian religious tourism, was found in the work of Jaipuria, S. & et al. (2020).

Religious Tourism: The Socio-Cultural Impact

Religious tourism also facilitates interaction among different groups of people, people from diverse social classes, cultures, and practices. Huge and continuous acculturation is a consequence of that. Several researchers have covered this dimension of religious tourism in their studies. Researchers like Ambrosio (2007); Cohen (1992); Morinis (1992); Smith (1992b); Turner and Turner (1978) identified the oldest form of religious tourism, pilgrimage, as an obligation that is prescribed by the culture of a society. According to Bond et al. (2014), studies on religious tourism which do not include the social aspect are neglecting a vast area that must be included. Gisbert Rinschede (1992), in his study on different religious tourism places across the world, identified different proportions of gender representation. His study identified that while the number of women religious tourists or pilgrims is observed to be more in Lourdes, France, North America, and Santa Maria in the western part of Europe, Mecca shows the reverse image where most of the pilgrims are men. According to his study, religious tourist spots of West Bengal, like Tarakeswar, Nabadwip, and Tarapith have almost equal representation of both genders. He also focused on the predominant presence of the activity called social contact in religious tourism. To conclude his research article on religious tourism, he admitted the ongoing lesser impact of religious motivation in tourism and the uprise of social tourism. Shinde, K.A. (2010), in his study on religious tourism of Vrindavan highlighted the impact of the socio-cultural exchange. A similar study by Shinde, K.A. (2011), conducted on the religious tourism of Tuljapur and Shirdi in the state of Maharashtra identified the impact of socio-cultural impact in the formation of different communities. The disruptive impact of Covid-19 on the socio-cultural aspect of tourism was also studied by Qiu, R.T.R., et al. (2020) where the respondents study were from Hong Kong and the Wuhan district of China.

Conclusion

Religious tourism, one of the major segments of the tourism industry is and will always remain a point of high interest to researchers. This form of tourism has its origin in traditional pilgrimage and is found to have its movement toward a more secular state. But the large impact of this form of tourism is evident in different important sectors. The present study is an effort

to study religious tourism from the perspectives of different researchers. The different school of thought related to religious tourism was primarily identified in the present study. This portion of the study of literature will provide an understanding of the predominant perspectives and opinions of the researchers, who have significant contributions in this domain. It illustrates different important dimensions of religious tourism and the perspectives from which the dimensions have originated. The discussion is done on the research works where the change of trend in traditional pilgrimage has been identified and the existence of the older version of religious tourism is also acknowledged. Observations of different researchers about the impact of religious tourism on different economic aspects were included and illustrated. Religious tourism has a significant effect on the socio-cultural setup of both the tourists as well as the people of the tourist spots. Research works dedicated to identifying the socio-cultural impact of religious tourism were also tracked and the findings and perspectives of the different authors are illustrated. The present review of existing literature will be helpful for further qualitative and quantitative investigations. Identified dimensions of religious tourism, from all perspectives, could further be studied to find out the relevance of the previous findings and also to identify unique dimensions. The findings of this study could also be used for the measurement of the impact of each dimension of religious tourism on the social, cultural, and economic life of both the devotees and the people of the places of religious tourist spots. The future of religious tourism could also be foresighted with the help of the findings of this study.

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