

## **Spiritual Motivation for Religious Tourism Destinations**

IDRIS, Jaffer

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## **Chapter 7**

### **Title: Spiritual and Religious Tourism: Motivation and Management**

#### **Introduction:**

We live in a world where we are constantly looking for balance, approval and answers; some are easy to find and others often require a leap of faith. Therefore, it is of no surprise that in an age of advance technology, scientific breakthroughs, social media and mass entertainment, many still choose religion and spirituality as a source for answers, direction and even comfort. According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, as of 2017, the world population currently stands at 7.6 billion which is expected to reach 8.6 billion in 2030 (UN.org). According to research conducted by The Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, there are 5.8 billion religiously affiliated adults and children around the globe. According to Poria, Butler, & Airey (2003) religion is a fundamental element of culture and is linked with various elements of people lives. With many world religions, there is often a physical connection that binds the faith with its followers. This takes many shapes and can often be observed in the form of places, texts and religious figures.

This chapter will examine the concept of sacred sites and what makes them important to travellers and as to why travellers make such difficult journeys to such destinations (motivations). The chapter will explore literature on the challenges that have arisen in a consumer society where religious tourism is on the increase as well as the expectations that come with it. The chapter will conclude by looking at the infrastructure that has to be constructed in order to meet the demands, the challenges of managing mass influx of

religious pilgrims, as well as the preparation that goes behind organising and managing large scale religious events.

### **The concept of sacred sites and pilgrimages:**

These sacred affiliations often define the religion in form of origin, birth place of its founder, passing of a key religious figure or in some cases, a place of divine intervention. In many religions, people are actively encouraged to visit such sacred places, which in part give rise to the concept of pilgrimage (Park 2004). There are huge numbers of different religious sites associated with different religions dotted across the globe. It is these physical spaces that often ignite or reignite the affiliation with the religion and helps to bind the devotees to their belief by strengthening their faith and connection. Let us first understand and determine what we mean by sacred? Yi Fu Tuan (1977 p84) argues that the true meaning of 'sacred' goes beyond the general notion of perception such as temples and shrines, because "at the level of experience, sacred phenomena are those that stand out from the commonplace and interrupt routine". According to Park (2004, p20):

*Some sacred sites are selected because they are associated with people who have some particular religious significance or credibility. For example, many individual pilgrimage sites in Islam and Hinduism mark significant places in the lives of religious founders or leaders. Sites associated with the life of the Buddha - such as his birthplace at Lumbini in Nepal, Bodh-Gaya in India where he received enlightenment, and Sarnath (near Varanasi) where he first preached - are both sacred and heavily visited.*

People have long travelled to sites they deem as sacred, special, or set apart from the mundane, everyday world (Eliade 1961). Original spirit-seekers visited hallowed places

based on a desire to become closer to divinity, seek forgiveness for wrongdoing, worship ancestors and nature gods, or petition deity for blessings (Nyaupane, Timothy and Poudel 2015). Jackson and Henrie (1983 p94) define sacred spaces as 'that portion of the earth's surface which is recognised by individuals or groups as worthy of devotion, loyalty or esteem'. The perception of sanctity is central to this idea since sacred space exist only for those who know its characteristics and the reason for its delineation (Shackley 2001 p13). Sacred sites perform many functions for their visitors but dependent on the type of visitor and intention. According to Shackley (2001) visitors may travel for the purposes of worship, or adherent of a particular religious tradition, a site that has witness a message or value system, as well as being a place of encounter with the numinous and an interesting artefact. For others, in the form of a tourist, may travel to a site as it may contain great works of art, exquisite architecture, and atmosphere or simply as part of a great day out (Shackley 2001 p1).

By definition, sacred spaces are deemed worthy of visit and reverence by their affiliation with a certain religion and practice. It is worth noting that we as humans will often have a different interpretation of how and what we class as sacred. A space may have become sacred for a number of reasons and contexts. It could be the founding place of a certain religion, or a birth place of a religions figure that is central to its faith, or equally a burial place, or a place of a miracle occurrence. Shackley (2001) puts forward a clearer classification by assigning certain sacred places. By doing so, one can begin to understand the potential reasoning for a certain space to be viewed as sacred by its visitors.

Barber (1993 p1) defines pilgrimage as “a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding”. Morinis (1992

p2) presents pilgrimage as a 'quest for the sacred', characterised by a 'pursuit of the ideal'.

He further states that (1992 p15) all pilgrimages must contain both a journey and a goal.

Dubisch (1995 p38) argues that pilgrimage depends on the following:

(1) the association created within a particular religious tradition of certain events and/or sacred figures with a particular field of space, and

(2) the notion that the material world can make manifest the invisible spiritual world at such places'.

Not only is it one of the oldest forms of population mobility (Collins-Kreiner, 2010), it exists in all of the main religions of the world (Pavicic, Alfircic, & Batarello, 2007). The intention to travel to a religious or sacred place can be of many reasons. Some journeys are bound by duty and required as part of the belief system, other may intend to travel increase and often strengthen personal affiliation and commitment to a religion, whereas some sacred places may hold the essence of miracles to cure and heal. According to Park (2004, p22)

*It is important to distinguish between pilgrimage that is obligatory (as in modern Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca) and pilgrimage that is a voluntary act involving a vow or promise (such as early Christian sacred travel to Palestine or Rome).*

Pilgrimage to a sacred destination, is seen by many as a temporary escape from the general harsh existence in an agrarian-based society (Digance 2006 p36). Pilgrimage is also a journey 'in there', a spiritual interior quest within the heart of those who feel something lacking in their lives - a sense of mystery and wonder, power, health, meaning and connection with others (Turner 1973: Coleman and Elsner 1995). A pilgrimage is, in one sense, a very regular

sort of journey, often taken amidst a big crowd of other people all with their eyes on the same goal (Hall 2006 p64).

### **Motivation: religious, spiritual or other**

Religious travel is not a new phenomenon and has been around since people decided that a certain place or space holds fundamental values to their beliefs. This could have been as a result of divine direction or simply an event that helped to outline the earlier parameters of the religion itself. It is important to understand what motivates individuals to make such pilgrimages to sacred sites that are often at a distance and requires a substantial amount of revenue and preparation to be carried out.

Vukonic (1996 p80) argues that traditionally and historically, pilgrimage has been defined as a physical journey in search of truth, in search of what is sacred or holy. Sallnow (1987 p3) argues that people are drawn to sacred places "where divine power has suddenly burst forth". Others such as Preston (1992) argue that is due its spiritual magnetism. Often the motivation is to seek out the truth, be enlightened, or to escape from the everyday rat race in search of authenticity (Olsen and Timothy 2006). Yi Fu Tuan (1984 p5) sees religious pilgrimage as a ritual by which one is able to break up "the drowsiness of routine" from our daily life. He contrasts being 'in place' and 'out of place', by suggesting that in general routine we will spend most of our lives in place which is often surrounded with elements we need and consider important i.e. familiar relationships, habits and routines etc. He also argues that we then also have a periodic need as individuals and as society to transcend place (and then be out of place). This can be categorised as a place where we are able to break up our daily routines and in some sense, find ourselves.

*Pilgrimage represents a particular religious rite of passage, which involves separation (leaving home), transition (travel to the sacred place) and incorporation (arrival). The very act of engaging in the pilgrimage changes many pilgrims. They begin in a Familiar Place (at home), journey to a Far Place (the pilgrimage shrines, which are usually distant and peripheral to the rest of their lives), then return - ideally changed - to the Familiar Place (Park 2004 p.23)*

It is important to note that someone embarking on a spiritual journey can be quite different when compared with a religious pilgrimage. As Heelas (1998 p5) notes, "people have what they take to be 'spiritual' experiences without having to hold religious belief". This is further explained by Hervieu- Leger (1999 quoted in Voye 2002 p124) that spirituality is an individual experience that is outside "preconstituted discourse[s] of meaning". Similarly, many people who consider themselves spiritual would not see themselves as religious and vice versa (Olsen and Timothy 2006). Other factors may include an educational interest where travellers want a deeper understanding about the history of a site or understanding a particular religious faith and its culture and beliefs (Olsen and Timothy 2006 p5). Tomasi (2002 p1) states that that 'the desire to travel in order to satisfy the need to know both mundane reality and celestial mystery is an impulse that has constantly driven humankind'. According to Sumption (1975), by the end of the fifteenth century the motivation for pilgrimage had changed with the traveller's intention moving from spiritual to one of curiosity, the desire to see new places and experience new things. Tourists also visit sacred sites seeking authentic experiences whether that be by watching religious leaders and pilgrims perform their rituals or by simply experiencing a site's "sense of place" or sacred atmosphere (Shackley 2001a, 2002).

It is clear from the above literature that the intentions shown by those making such journeys are more than just a religious obligation. It is clear that one does not necessary need to be religious or even affiliated with a religion to make such a journey. Stausberg (2011) presents quite an interesting list of reasons and intentions that would encourage someone to visit a sacred space.

Some of the more common purposes of religious travels/tourism as outlined by Stausberg (2011, p25) include (in alphabetical order):

- education and training
- events (gospel concerts, papal visits, melas, etc.), fairs and expositions
- feasts and festivals
- healing and seeking other this- or other-wordly benefits
- holidaying in a religious environment (camps, etc.)
- mission and other forms of propaganda/evangelism
- pilgrimages
- purchase of religious objects
- retreats
- rituals
- seminars, conferences, meetings, conventions
- spiritual self-discovery and growth
- visits to religious authorities for counselling, confession, etc.



From the above, it is quite clear that the overall intention and motivation to visit sacred spaces, whether that be from a pilgrims perspective or a religious tourist can be of many. From the above list, the theme of educating oneself and retiring to a place of self-reflection and rest seems to be a common purpose. It has been noted that the main difference in the traveller's motive for visiting a specific site is varied, with pilgrims being driven by sacred or spiritual desires, while tourists are motivated by secular interests, or pleasure (Cohen, 1992a; Turner, 1973; Turner & Turner, 1978).

Muslims travelling to Jerusalem to visit the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, where it is believed that Jesus was temporarily entombed for the three days before he was raised from the dead is not an Islamic ritual. This journey is not considered religious or even obligatory when referring to Islam but is done so more from an educational perspective. Similarly, travellers (either associated with a religion or not) will visit religious sites for a number of reasons ranging from, appreciation of design, architecture and in some case the sheer scale of construction; the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi, U.A.E, or the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey, as well as the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain etc. Whatever the motivation, there is no denying that there must be a sense of achievement and satisfaction associated with such journeys hence why the huge increase in numbers year on year. Making such long and often difficult travels requires high level of mental strength, physical endurance and financial support for them to be successful. Travelling to religious destinations (festivals, events, pilgrimage etc.) where huge crowds of individuals are expected still throws up its own unique challenges despite a majority of them being associated with the same belief system. Different cultures, regional etiquettes, languages are just some of the differences one would encounter when travelling.

## **Management and expectations: pilgrimages and religious tourism**

Today, travel to major pilgrimage destinations has seen a rapid increase, in part because of the coinciding growth of both religious pilgrimage and other forms of tourism (Lloyd 1998). This increase in travel and spending also brings a whole different perspective to the intention behind the journey in the first place. In countries around the world, religion and its associated sites, ritual, festivals, and landscapes are seen by many government officials and tourism industry promoters as a form of heritage (Timothy and Boyd 2003). This is often easily identifiable through scores of marketing materials, pamphlets, promotions etc. that are attached to certain sites, and locations (Olsen 2006). Many people travel to sacred sites not only for religious or spiritual purposes but do so due to the way they are marketed i.e. as a heritage or cultural attraction to be consumed (Timothy and Boyd 2003).

In today's consumer society, religion is just another marketable commodity or meaning system (Olsen 2003), with individuals being able to choose packaged meaning systems, with 'Buy this product and change your life' being a common marketing theme (Aldred 2000). Others have called it 'spiritual smorgasbording' (McColl 1989), as well as 'spiritual promiscuity' (Solomon 1999). Caplan (2001 p51) sees seeking spirituality as a fad and a 'commodity that is bought is bought and sold for millions of dollars, an identity, a club to belong to, an imaged escape'. In today's current context, modern pilgrim is not necessarily motivated by religion (Stefko et al., 2015) and travels for many other reasons than religious ones (Oviedo et al., 2014). Even when pilgrims travel with religious motivations, there are many secular aspects such as finding accommodation or a place to eat, that are the same as a tourist (Stefko et al., 2015).

For these reasons and many others (c.f. Olsen & Timothy, 2006; Turner & Turner, 1978), it is difficult to distinguish a pilgrim from a tourist. Turner and Turner (1978, p20) weigh in to this discussion by adding that 'a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist'. Tourism and pilgrimage can be identified as opposite end points on a continuum of travel (Smith 1992). This takes us nicely in the realms of religious tourism which according to Rinschede (1992) and Shinde (2007b) refer to contemporary patterns of visitation to places of religious importance or pilgrimage sites where visitors aim to fulfil religious needs and recreational needs. Urry (2002, p141) refers to tourism as, “the largest ever movement of people across national borders”, as well as an elementary form of modern global life (Stausberg 2011 p12). Tourism and religion are historically related through the institution of pilgrimage (Smith, 1992; Fleischer, 2000). Religious pilgrimages are considered to be the early roots of tourism today (Digance, 2003; Timothy & Boyd, 2006). Thus, pilgrimages are considered to be one of the oldest forms of tourism (Mustonen, 2006; Rinschede, 1992; Stefko, Kiralova, & Mudřík, 2015). Vukonic´ (1996 p75), states that:

*'not every tourist who is a religious person qualifies as a homo turisticus religiosus, but only such a person who (a) undertakes his/her journey for religious motives and who (b) “demands that certain religious content be included in the obligatory range of touristic supply amenities”.*

He further adds that there are three main forms of religious tourism:

(1) pilgrimages

(2) religious events (“large-scale gatherings on the occasion of significant religious dates and anniversaries”)

(3) “a tour of and visit to important religious places and buildings within the framework of a touristic itinerary” (Vukonic’ 1996, p75).

Travelling to a sacred site is classed as a pilgrimage and the person undertaking such a journey as a pilgrim. The word pilgrim originated from Latin word ‘peregrinus’, which means traveller or stranger, although these two terms can be a probable combination for the best explanation. The Latin term can also be referred as “the idea of wandering over a distance” (Yeoman, 2008; Liguorian, 2012 in Katri Nieminen 2012). Interestingly, in today's global concept of travel, Bremer (2004, p144) has appropriately stated that “for many people, religion slips imperceptibly into touristic practice”. Pilgrimages to sacred sites are obviously related to religious tourism considered as a “type of tourism whose participants are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons” (Rinschede, 1992, p. 52).

An estimated 300-600 million people a year visit religious sites as part of an \$18 billion dollar industry (McKelvie, 2005; Wright, 2008; Timothy, 2011: 387). Jackowski (2000) estimates that approximately 240 million people a year go on pilgrimages, the majority of which are associated with Christianity, Islam and Hinduism (Olsen and Timothy 2006). With the increase in mass media, transportation and general competition amongst travel companies, visiting religious sites, be it for pilgrimage or strengthening religious affiliation has become more and more popular in the last couple of decades. Managing huge numbers of devotees as well as their expectations is no easy task.

As religions grew over time, more and more people became aware of their associated religious sites. With the increase in population, faster and cheaper modes of transport as well improved economics; more and more people have started to embark on spiritual and religious

journeys (pilgrimage). This is evident on the number of people making the annual pilgrimage to Mecca every year for the purposes of the Hajj. The number of pilgrims arriving from other lands has multiplied exponentially in recent years, from as few as 24,000 in 1941 to 2 million pilgrims in 2017 (statistics from the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah, 2018). Shackley (2001) compares this to the millions of ordinary tourists who visit the cathedral of Notre- Dame in Paris, which according to the venues official website, has increased to 13 million per year. That is an annual average of more than 30,000 people per day. Such statistics clearly highlight the rise in the total number of people who are attracted to such sites. The Holy Land generally defined as the area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, has long been the destination for pilgrims (Wilkinson, 1977; Hunt, 1984; Stone, 1986; Vogel, 1993; Stemberger, 2000; Kark, 2001; Bar and Cohen-Hattab, 2003; Kaell, 2010).

According to Olsen (2013) approximately 2.8 million visitors travelled to Israel in 2010, creating \$3.7 billion in tourism-related income for the country. Of these 2.8 million visitors, 66% came for either pilgrimage or tourism-related reasons (38% pilgrimage; 28% touring) (Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Travellers making the trip to Camino de Santiago in Spain are not all necessary pilgrims and have various motivations in making the trip.

According to the Pilgrim's Welcome Office's (2017) the reasons that pilgrims most indicated were religious and others (47.75%), followed by religious (44.26%) and non-religious (8%) (as cited in Amaro, Antunes and Henriques 2017). Statistics and traveller behaviour clearly indicate that religious places have become some of the most visited and appreciated destinations in the world, not only for those who are followers of a faith but for others who also seek an interest which in this case is the general tourists (Griffiths, 2011). This is also evident by the mass influx of travellers visiting world famous religious and secular sites such as The Ganges River, St Peter's Basilica, the Salt Lake Temple, Borobudur and Prambanan,

Angkor Wat, Old Jerusalem, the Taj Mahal and the Baha'i Gardens (Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006; Olsen, 2009; Shinde, 2008).

### ***Transport infrastructure***

With the increase in air travel, rise of low budget airlines, better road systems with improved modes of transport means that travelling from one place to another is no longer an issue.

Long gone are the days when pilgrims would have to travel for several months of the year to visit their religious affiliated sacred sites. In the past pilgrimages were often associated with asceticism, self-denial and physical penitence, but today most pilgrims like to travel more comfortably (Vorzak and Gut, 2009). Such journeys can now be made in a matter of hours (most of Western Europe from the UK) compared to the lengthy pilgrimage trails by foot (Russell 1999). However, there are still those who prefer the authenticity of the pilgrimage route. Travelling on foot or bicycle is 'valorized' by pilgrims because it symbolizes authenticity and genuine empathy with others (Badone and Roseman 2004 p14).

The most famous of the pilgrimages in Japan is the “88 places of Shikoku,” dedicated to Kukai (774–835) on the island of Shikoku, Japan. Pilgrims have been following the trail along the coastline of the island Shikoku to honor and commemorate the life and work of Kukai. Today, people perform this pilgrimage—which is some 1,400 kilometers long—by either bus, car, motorbike, or bicycle, or on foot. The whole journey takes approximately one to two months to complete the route in its entirety (Digance 2006 cited in Timothy and Olsen 2006). Lourdes, a well-known Christian pilgrimage centre in the south west of France, where many travellers seek miraculous cures at the famous grotto where the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared attracts up to five million pilgrims each year (Park 2004) with current statistics from the official venue standing at an estimated six million pilgrims a year.

Pilgrims travel to Lourdes by rail, bus, private car and (since 1948) by plane and in recent decades around two-thirds of all pilgrims arrived by train (Park 2004 p27). Lourdes is served by Tarbes-Lourdes-Pyrénées Airport although many visitors also fly to Pau Pyrénées Airport. The town's railway station Gare de Lourdes is served by SNCF and TGV trains, including overnight 'sleeper' services as well as a high-speed TGV service from Paris which takes five hours. Many pilgrims also arrive via bus service from France and Spain.

Santiago de Compostela, one of Europe's most important pilgrimage routes and the supposed burial site of the Biblical apostle St. James, attracts an estimated 3.5 million pilgrims per year (Bywater 1994) with an estimated 170,000 people walking the actual route Camino each year (Crowley, 2012). The complete pilgrimage route of the Camino de Santiago, which begins at the Camino Frances from St. Jean Pied de Port in France to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, could take up to 30 to 35 days. This is provided the traveller covers a distance between 23 and 27 kilometres per day (14 to 16 miles) in order to achieve this time (Damian Corrigan 2018). By doing so, many pilgrims hope that the physical act of traveling would help them achieve a parallel inner journey of self-discovery and self-transformation (Badone and Roseman 2004 p14).

The Hajj has a long history (Peters, 1994; Bianchi, 2004) and was once organized informally whereby local family clans took charge of separate components (Woodward, 2004).

Difficulties of making the journey and a lack of supporting amenities limited pilgrim numbers, yet these were still sizeable. The number of pilgrims arriving from other lands has multiplied exponentially in recent years, from as few as 24,000 in 1941. Responsibility for hajj management belongs to the Ministry of Pilgrimage, supervised by the Supreme Hajj

Committee, which reports to the king as Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (Henderson 2010). The statistical image below shows the total number of domestic and foreign Hajj pilgrims in Saudi Arabia between 1999 and 2018. In 2018, an estimated 2.3 million pilgrims fulfilled the Hajj.

To deal with the huge influx of pilgrims during the Hajj as well as all year round travellers (Umrah), Saudi Arabia continues to invest heavily in infrastructure. Considerable sums were subsequently spent on the modernization of airports, seaports and road networks and provision of apartments and hotels. Dedicated pilgrim terminals (Hajj and Umrah) have been constructed at Jeddah and Medina airports that allow the registration and processing of pilgrims. The Hajj terminal at Jeddah's King Abdulaziz International Airport is capable of accommodating 50,000 pilgrims for up to 18 hours upon their arrival and as many as 80,000 pilgrims for up to 36 hours upon their departure (omrania.com). The terminal has the capacity to process 3,800 arriving passengers and 3,500 departing passengers per hour (World Bank Group 2017).

Saudi Arabia has also invested in a new \$16 billion (SR60 billion) high-speed train called the “Haramain Express” between the cities of Mecca and Medina and is expected to come in to operation in 2018. The service is expected to carry up to 60 million passengers a year, including millions of Hajj and Umrah pilgrims. Using electric propulsion that will drive the trains to an operating speed of 300kph, the express train is expected to cut travel time between the cities of Makkah and Madinah to under two hours, instead of six hours by bus (Gulf News, 2018).



### *Accommodation*

With the increase in traveller numbers, many sacred sites and locations have had to further develop their infrastructure to keep up with the huge demands of those making such trips. One such requirement is accommodations that would house these travellers whilst visiting such sites. The hospitality industry, as a part of the service industry, goes to great length to satisfy customer needs in a competitive environment (Buttle 1986; Heo et al 2004; Lockwood and Medik 2001; Powers 1997; Shoemaker and Lewis 1999). Lourdes hosts around six million visitors every year from all corners of the world and with this constant stream of pilgrims and tourists, the landscape of Lourdes has seen a dramatic transformation from once a small quite market town into a small city. It has now become the second most important centre of tourism in France, second only to Paris, as well as having the second largest number of hotels in France after Paris (Park 2004).

Varanasi, the holiest city in India and the epicentre of Hinduism is a great attraction for tourists and caters for not only individuals but groups who are in search of recreation and a cultural experience. It has over 487 listed hotels from 1 star to 5 star abodes (data obtained from yatra.com and travel guru homestays).

Whereas during the Kumbh Mela in 2013 saw a record crowd of approximately a record 120 million devotees wash their sins away in the holy waters near Allahabad (Sridhar, Gautret and Brouqui 2014). During this religious event a number accommodation options were available to devotees ranging from hostels, guest houses, temporary / permanent camps, budget and economical hotels to luxurious stays etc. A large amount of people stayed near the river in camps and tents either provided by agencies or spots where people were able to pitch

their own tents. Visitors can choose from luxurious, deluxe and economy class camps depending upon price and provider.

Due to its ever increasing number of visitors, be it for the annual pilgrimage (Hajj) or Umrah, accommodations in Mecca is also constantly changing. There are over a 165 hotels in Mecca ranging from unrated to 1 star to 5 star accommodations (data obtained from booking.com). Generally, the closer you are to the Grand Mosque, the more expensive the stay. According to the Saudi hospitality sector report (2015) about 43% of the hotel supply in Makkah and 46% in Madinah is three stars and above, highlighting that there could be oversupply of premium hotels which may explain the growing popularity of branded economy hotels and apartments in both the regions. The properties located near Masjid Al Haram (Central area) are dominated by five-star hotels, with higher average daily rates (ADRs) during the Hajj season, whereas properties outside the central area command lower ADRs. In Madinah, the total supply of rooms was 46,536 at the end of February 2014, with 17% (five-star), 6% (four-star), and 23% (three star). However, Madinah also has a higher proportion of one - and two - star hotels accounting for 45% of the overall supply.

### ***Security***

According to Timothy (cited in Buhalis and Costa, 2006 p19) 'crises are unexpected, although potentially predictable, management failures that might have been averted with proper management'. However, disasters are unpredictable, catastrophic events that cannot be foretold (Faulkner, 2001; Prideaux et al., 2003). In both cases, it has a significant effect on how travellers decide when it comes to choosing a destination to travel. International risks,

such as threat and terrorism effect the tourist mind-set in a multitude of ways (Clayton, Cisneros-Mustelier and Korstanje, 2014),

In many cases, the most common recurrence of accidents, in which tourists are severely injured or killed, can create a negative image associated with specific destinations even when the most of the accidents are caused by the tourists themselves (Bentley and Page 2001). It is clear that the more dangerous a destination is perceived, the more reluctant traveller to that destination will be. As mentioned by de Albuquerque and McElory (1999) as tourism grows in a certain area, so will crime, resulting in a negative, but interdependent relationship.

One of the major challenges facing global tourism, be it for religious or recreation purposes or both is the threat of terrorism. Terrorism, a form of political instability and war, attempts to enact changes in policy and practice through intimation and fear (Buhalis and Costa, 2006 p21). In the past decade we have seen a huge increase in the number of terrorist attacks on large scale gatherings including religious events and sacred sites. Religiously motivated terrorism is a complicated, multi -dimensional phenomenon and there is no unified theory that explains it (Chowdhury, Raj, Griffin and Clarke 2017 p2). Religion is one of many factors in the explosive brew of politics, culture and psychology that leads fanatics to target the innocent and take their own lives in the process (Baker 2014 p60). Terrorism exists because the politically weak and disenfranchised have no other means by which to realize their objectives since they will not be taken seriously by the normal population (Baker 2014). Terrorism, therefore, can place political change on the agenda (Crenshaw, 1998). Violence can also be fuelled by the lack of opportunity for political participation in a society (Crenshaw, 2003).

## ***Management***

Managing religious events is no easy task and requires exceptional planning and execution. Pilgrimages such as the Kumbh Mela in India and the annual Hajj in Saudi Arabia require months of planning and preparation beforehand for the event to be safe and successful. The Kumbh Mela in 2013 created approximately 650,000 jobs, before and during the event. Due to the large scale of attendees, officials set up 14 temporary hospitals, staffed with 243 doctors, more than 40,000 toilets, and stationed 50,000 police officials to maintain order. The infrastructure of the city, including pipelines, electricity, sewage and healthcare facilities, was either re-built or developed in order to provide appropriate facilities for the attendees.

Due to the huge numbers of pilgrims attending the Hajj, planning and successful operation for such a major event is very difficult. With such large numbers of people descending in one location, performing the same rituals in the same place at the same time presents a challenge that is near impossible for any incident not to happen. In 2017, almost 2 million pilgrims made their way to the city of Mecca for the annual pilgrimage. Another major complication when taking about mass number of pilgrims is regional and cultural differences. This can often mean a breakdown in communication, understanding the needs to different pilgrims, language barriers and more. Here below are just of the incidents that have taken place during the Hajj over the last three decades:

## ***Expectations***

With so much money being spent in travelling and staying at such sites, also increases expectations. Managing the huge number of travellers as well as meeting their expectations is a huge task that requires effort and meticulous planning. Vukonic (1996), in a study on religious tourism, recommends that pilgrimage destinations are modernised in order to meet

the ever changing needs of the tourists as well to put on a delighting experiences to the visitors who visit for religious purposes in order to guarantee their repeat visits. However, modernising a certain place, city, or region can often lead to losing the main essence for which the intention of travel was made for in the first instance. Modernisation sometimes leads to the loss of key historical components such as buildings and environment that helped shaped the specific belief system. In order to keep up with the demands of pilgrims and space, the Saudi government have continuously removed historical buildings and in and around the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Weidenfeld (2005) suggests a focus on meeting the exceptional desires, needs and wants of pilgrims throughout their sacred journey to create a win-win situation in the pilgrimage tourism market for all stakeholders.

When taking about expectations, it is quite difficult to put forward a checklist of what organisers should have in place when presenting a travel package. The average Hajj package from the UK is around £4000 depending upon duration, how many stars a hotel has, the close proximity to the Grand Mosque in Mecca to the general amenities one desires whilst out there. Due to the vast expansion of the Grand Mosque, many low budget hotels have been demolished to give way for this purpose. While such measures have improved the Hajj for many, the city's development has been detrimental to those living in Mecca. Thousands of traditional homes have been demolished to make room for enormous luxury hotels, while the hefty bills that come with five-star accommodation and fine furnishings have priced out many Muslims visiting Mecca. As such, those without the means to afford accommodation that ranges in price from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per night are confined to the outskirts of the city, facing a difficult commute to the Grand Mosque each day through gridlocked roads (Matsangou 2015).

**Summary:**

Travelling to sacred spaces; be it as a pilgrim, traveller or both comes with different expectations and intentions. In an age when travel is both affordable and accessible, has increased the not only those who are curious but also those are devote. In a world where change is constant whether that is technological or social, we all face challenges and in order to make sense of the chaos, so many of us try to connect to something that is much greater than we have around us. That something in many cases tends to be our faith, beliefs, spirituality etc. where we look for direction and answers.

This will also determine our motivation to undertake such journeys; some more difficult and challenging than others. The cost of travelling to such destinations, accommodation, food, etc. all adds to the final amount. As we live in a consumer world and where the mantra, the customer is always right, expectations from such travels is considerably high. Therefore, management of such sites and festivals has become more and more important from the maintenance of sites and facilities to meeting the expectations, security and wellbeing of the visitors. With the increase in global terrorism, this is by no means an easy task.

## Reflective discussion:

1. Does pilgrimages to sacred sites and spaces improve our emotional wellbeing?
2. Are organisers able to meet the expectations of their visitors? Do they care?
3. Does rising costs associated with the Hajj have a negative effect on pilgrims? Should you pay more for a religious undertaking?
4. Does the threat of terrorism affect determined pilgrims?

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