

STUDY ON RELIGIOUS THOUGHTS AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY THROUGH TOURISM

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Abstract

The study of religion through tourism is considered a new approach to carrying out research activities and acquiring knowledge. Tourism, as a tool of study, has a large potential for theological research and exploring universal cultural diversity. Pilgrimage, the extract of religious tourism unveils the truth, science of faith, and doctrines of theology. Factors and dynamics of the social influences, politics, and international events affecting religions can be studied through tourism. In a heterogeneous society, theology and mutual doctrines administer the belief system of people and enrich religious diversity. Tourism intercepts sacred motivations for pilgrimage and exploring the religious and cultural schools of thought. The amount of respect among tourists and local communities creates religious tolerance and the belief system. Studying cultural diversity through tourism indicates the secularity of religious thinking and dynamics inside human thoughts. Ethnic and cultural belongings of religion express the social and economic utilities through tourism. Religious culture is a highly intense and immensely powerful reality with sacred and ethical values. It builds a tendency to reconstruct religious thoughts with cultural diversity to develop the future of mankind. This article endeavors to find out the academic potentiality of tourism to understand the application to exploring religious thoughts and cultural diversity in the contemporary period.

Keywords: Belief System, Theology, Religious Diversity, School of Thought, Religious Tourism.

Introduction

Study though tourism is a present issue of education. Learning through tourism generally includes trips and visiting places with desired components for experiencing the issues (Custer, 2013). Educational tourism is one of the good ways to study religious thoughts and to gain a good perspective of new cultures and experiences by communicating with the indigenous population.

The school of theology is the backbone of a religion. But it needs a diet of religious truths with new responsibilities. All the elements of religion must be consulted in theological research, where tourism may be used as a tool. In this way, research can discover the way of belief and live with faith throughout the age. On the contrary, the school of religious culture is the breath of society, the hope of integration, and building units of peace boat. Tourism can play a great role in social transformation and the administration of religious diversity as an exploring tool. Religious tourism leads to understanding the knowledge that reinforces spiritual prejudices and emphasizes differences in belief systems and therefore their physical manifestation (Andriotis, 2009). Religious tourism creates some special demands in a team with special responsibility to the destination. Skill sets are not much needed for sacred purposes, but cultural components of religion have a large impact on both emphasizing the sacred purpose and mission of maximizing revenues (Levi & Kocher, 2009; Collins-Kreiner, 2010). In all cases, tourism is to be utilized to conduct the study.

The dynamics of religions and the scientific ideas of intellectuals tend to study religions more deeply with the help of tourism. The tendency of reconstruction of religion and social influences, political activities, and international events affect the theological parts of religions. Cultural diversity belongs to the existence of religious thinking dynamics. This is also an effort to understand and practice religion in the context of the time. The scholars point out that

tourism is necessary to understand religions and develop a methodology to experience the dynamics of religious life (Ghazali, *et. al.* 2017).

Scope

Tourism acts as part of a deeper understanding of the concept and components of life. Pilgrimage type of tourism helps individuals aiming to create a philosophy of life with theological thoughts. Education through tourism can play a great role in exploring many assumptions of performances. As a great field, tourism is influenced by the characteristics of theology and religious culture. Conceptualizing religious tourism, commoditization, and consumption involving images, and cultures (Meethan 2001). Tourism researcher Britton (1982) in his seminal works argued that tourism rather than benefiting peripheral destinations and contrary to popular belief in many cases led to new forms of life components. All these can be studied to use tourism as a tool. Awareness of globalization and such derived discourses, directly of cross-cultural contacts changes in the lifestyle of people. In this context, tourism acts as a unique type of cognitive element for studying the satisfaction and interests of a person with religious cults, rituals, and rites, observing, and living with them to obtain religious property.

Review of Literature

After reviewing the numerous articles, a few studies have identified tourism a medium of research. In this context, very few researchers conducted to study on various issues through tourism. Keeping this reality in mind, the following review of literature has been collected.

A theological approach to religion seeks to understand the meaning of believing within its terms, and how that system works. Understanding a set of beliefs, thoughts, attitudes, expectations, and other mental events creates some belief in one's abilities (Masoud, 2014). On the other hand, cultural globalization implies intensity and the daily increase of exchanges of cultural symbols. The status of religions influences society as a changing factor. Kärkkäinen (2003) indicates how beliefs differently engage in society. Religious values and theological viewpoints accept many people without question, but some ask the reasons too. So, Dupuis (1997) explains the perspectives of theology and the form of religion. It has been interpreted as the universal religious experience of humankind and investigates the relationship between the relevance of faith and religion.

Knitter (1974) mentions religion as a cultural-historical, individualistic, and evolutionistic theory to explain the development of religions. He also mentioned that consecutive engagements with specific historical perspectives lead religion to a deeper and more spiritual one. On the other hand, Hendrik Kraemer (1958) divided religions into two main groups: revelation and natural religions. Revelation is the key to theological understanding. He also mentioned that the true religion is worshipping God. Natural religions are manmade from the natural experience of mankind. As a central cultural factor, religion influences perceptions, attitudes, values, and behaviours (Eid and El-Gohary, 2015). So, religious destinations brand their sacred issues to pilgrims normally (Nyaupane *et al.*, 2015). But these sites are not isolated from living communities and consequently residents can be exposed to high volumes of tourists. Few researchers have investigated the impact of religious affiliation on community attitudes (Zamani and Musa, 2012) even as pilgrimage-based tourism (Nyaupane *at al.*, 2015). Scholars have tried to define the concept of cultural diversity of religion and defined dimensions necessary to operationalize, measure, and make significant cross-cultural comparisons (Earley, 2006). Culture operates in a highly complex context with other factors (Bertsch & Warner-Søderholm, 2013). Rysbekova *et al.* (2014) said that religious tourism is a

unique kind of cognitive tourism. It attempts to satisfy incentives and live through a religious process of ceremonies and rituals. Nyaupane *et al.* (2015) explained the motivation for religious tourists is different from that of their conventional thoughts. But tourist behaviors can sometimes provoke the values and beliefs of residents (Zamani and Musa, 2012). But their contribution to the economies, and socio-environmental areas is big.

Tourists motivated by religious theology have a propensity to undertake pilgrimages or visits to religious places (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Relevant religious tourism studies have investigated diverse destinations (Abbate & Di Nuovo, 2013), religious tourist attractions (Bond *et al.*, 2015), pilgrimage routes (Amaro *et al.*, 2018), and festivals (Suntikul & Dorji, 2016). These studies have been done with tourism.

Objectives

- a. To explore the theological approaches of religions and cultural diversity.
- b. To find the uses of tourism as a tool for studying religious thoughts.

Methodology

This is a descriptive study approach to tourism that identifies the correlation between cultural diversification and religious thoughts. Some experienced investigations take place under close control and observation. The study approach of religions through tourism is the path systematic understanding of religion. In the context of religious thoughts and cultural diversity, religions are studied within a variety of religious beliefs. It helps to awaken and can make the vision understand the religion's essence. So, the methodology is the study uses tourism as a scientific tool for gaining knowledge in religious investigation. Methodology deals with the cognitive properties of tourism as the principal features of the study. This is the systematic combination of investigating theology and the cultural part of religion. This process belongs to conceptualization, abstraction, judgment, observation, generalization experimentation, induction, deduction, the argument of analogy, and finally the understanding itself (Ghazali, A. M., *et. al.* 2017).

Discussion

Tourism is commonly treated as a socio-economic and cultural activity that entails the movement of people outside their usual environment. It acts as a process of spending time in pursuit of recreation, relaxation, and pleasure while making use of the commercial provision of services. Modern tourism provides an increasingly intensive, business-oriented set of activities whose roots can be found. But tourism can acts also to introduce secular pilgrimage to religious places. Using tourism as a tool for the study of the self-realization metaphor is a great step toward religious tourism. Contemporary sociology and religion are highly diversified in terms of their philosophical premises. It seeks 'truths' to emphasize perspectives, from seeking the principles of social order to studying social transformations (Cohen and Cohen, 2019).

Park (2008) mentioned that approximately 90% of the world's population is religious. Iannaccone (1998) posits that several global trends in world religions correlate with this high figure. The trends all indicate that even in contemporary society, religious dimensions are still an intrinsic element at the global level (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2009). However, the inner universal meaning of theology and cultural diversity is still undiscovered. The origin, nature, and essence of religion stand on the fundamental theological issues. That's why, religious phenomena have the most important theological theories. Religion has some essence for the understanding itself.

Religious thoughts belong to theologies of certain religions. The value system constructs the influences on religious norms. In addition to other factors language, gender, ethnicity, race, and other social issues belong to religious thoughts and cultural diversity (Søderholm and Kriger, 2014). The sociological study of tourism can diversify the reflection of these trends and topics. While a limited number of theoretical perspectives, gazing, and the creation of modernist tourism are analysed and understood in the depth of sociology.

Religion is one of the key defining factors of culture (Carnegie, 2009). So, no one should avoid religious and cultural diversity. The variables of religion and culture are strongly correlated (Geertz, 2004). Conceptualizing religious values within culture, it is difficult to maintain multifaceted constructs. Consequently, some presumptions of Del Rio and White (2012) on religion and spirituality are implicit elements of cultural diversity. The diversity within each religion will also always be present in a practicing believer of any religion. Religious tourism creates the opportunity for a better life and opens up how religious and cultural values systems are often mirrored in our behaviour. It shows the reflection of different issues of conception, gender expectations, non-verbal behaviour, and expression of emotions (Victor, 2009). Analysis and nature of tourism have undergone a major shift to the point of origin of tourists. However, most religious destinations used to be biased in early tourism theorizing (Winter, 2009).

Factors of socio-cultural religious tourism are the integration of culture aiming to decrease social tension in a place of cultural heritage. A growing interest of people in their historical roots, religions, sacred and memorable places, religious practices, and rituals. The religious purposes of life are a natural attempt of a person to comprehend religious experience and the essence of physical and spiritual life. So, tourist activity is based on the human factors of tourism (Kurmanaliyeva *et al.*, 2014). Religious tourism frameworks the visiting religious centres, functioning cults, and memorable ones. It acts as a unique cognitive tourism allowing observing and living through religious ceremonies and rituals. Religious tourism attracts not only religious places and monuments, but also historical, cultural, and artistic heritages. At the same time, it is compulsory to respect other cultures and perfectly understand the values, and the importance of preservation of historical and cultural heritage. A 'narrative discussion' is an approach that allows for consolidation, summation, and identification of gaps (Grant & Booth 2009).

Religious tourism raises awareness and secularity of common heritage. It also preserves religious resources, because pilgrimage is never over. Pilgrimage connects people to spiritual elements, self-discovering, exploring cultural identity, and visiting holy places (Collins-Kreiner, 2018). Tourist experience largely their emotions and gains greater from spiritual and mental phenomena (Collins-Kreiner, 2018). It is a set of tourism activities arising from the spiritual quest and religious practice in places and events related to institutional religions, regardless of creed or ethnic origin. Onions (1983) stated that Pilgrimage is a journey made by a pilgrim, who travels from place to place. It helps to gain special mental health and peace. The main underlying cause of this is the desire of people to escape from the tense and stressful environment of daily life. Stressful life and other factors cause people to experience various health problems. From this point of view, tourism movements that people carry out to a different place from where they live to protect, improve, or treat their health. Researchers identify tourism as a tool of better mutual understanding, which can drive society to a peaceful destination.

According to estimates from the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2014) promoting the valuable contribution of pilgrimages and religious tourism to intercultural and interfaith dialogue and understanding, universal respect for the spiritual values of humanity, and

socioeconomic development. Travel experiences to a religious place can intensely result in discovering their religion and culture through introspection. The goals show that religious and cultural tourism extends beyond the limiting of the historical study of pilgrimage. It also encourages to promotion of further knowledge of holistic experiences in tourism. The theological part of religion administers pilgrimage tourism, which creates cultural diversity. In all cases, tourism plays an intermediary factor in understanding, experiencing, and owning the universal colour of religion and culture.

Conclusion

This is rare to find a methodological study of religions through tourism. But tourism contributes to the realization of a harmonious religious life, better understanding, and mutual respect in a heterogeneous society. It also plays a great role in studying religion not judging the truth, but understanding the essence of application to society. Implementing the equity of the religious and cultural dimensions, tourism motivates to experience the needs and consumption patterns. The cultural diversity of religions indicates the truth and thinking dynamics. Religious thoughts play the role of driving forces to build a better life and harmonize a peaceful society. The study of religious thoughts through tourism unveils the universal characteristics of theological and secular cultural phenomena. Tourism scholars are trying to develop a tourism model of systemic understanding of religions, the level of mutual tolerance, and the dynamics of religious life to create an integrated society. Religious and cultural diversity makes the theological part of religion much stronger and more acceptable through tourism activities. People in society feel motivated when tourism acts as an interface between religion and socio-cultural phenomena.

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