

MARKET SEGMENTATION - KEY TO IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL TOURIST**Dr.P.Srinivas Rao***Professor & Director (Integrated Development), Administrative Management College, Bangalore.***Dr.S.N.Pathy***Professor, Department of Management Studies, Berhampur University, Berhampur, Odisha.***Abstract**

Today tourism industry plays a pivotal role in the economy of the country. Success of tourism marketing is well associated with tourist of different kinds. The classification and identification of tourist is an important factor for the success of tourism marketing. In this study it has been tried to find out the relationship between market segmentation and identifying of spiritual tourist. Market segmentation is the key to identify and classify the spiritual tourists. The spiritual tourism product needs to be positioned to attract the identified spiritual tourists. Implications for adopting the relationship marketing approach require various types of segmentation tools.

Key Words – Tourism Industry, Economy, Classification and Identification, Market Segmentation.

Introduction

Market segmentation divides a market into well-defined slices. It is a marketing strategy that involves dividing a broad target market into subsets of consumers, who have common needs, and then designing and implementing strategies to achieve the desired result. Tourism is travel for recreational, leisure, or business purposes, usually of a limited duration. Tourism is commonly associated with transnational travel, but may also refer to travel to another location within the same country. The World Tourism Organization defines tourists as people "traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes."¹ Tourism is an activity done by an individual or a group of individuals, which leads to a motion from a place to another. From a country to another for performing a specific task or it is a visit to a place or several places in the purpose of refreshing, change of location, spending leisure time and for spiritual *darshan* which leads to an awareness of other civilizations and cultures, also increasing the knowledge of countries, cultures, and history. For developing countries tourism has a direct impact on the national revenue. It creates work opportunities, industries, and several investments to serve and raise nations performance and cultures, also distributes their history, civilization, and traditions. Tourism is an important industry that depends on culture and science

A pilgrimage is a journey or search of moral or spiritual significance. Typically, it is a journey to a shrine or other location of importance to a person's beliefs and faith, although sometimes it can be a metaphorical journey into someone's own beliefs. Spiritual tourism, also commonly referred to as faith tourism, is a type of tourism, where people travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, or leisure (fellowship) purposes. Modern religious tourists are more able to visit holy cities and holy sites around the world. Pilgrims visited spiritual places for a few reasons: to understand and appreciate their religion through a tangible experience, to feel secure about their religious beliefs, and to connect personally to the sacred place. Beliefs are differing from individual to individual. So to provide need based scope to the tourist in lieu of to achieve the desired result. This study is limited to a particular geographical area of Tamil Nadu State.

Scope and Objective

The scope of the tourism sector is very vast. To cover all the tourist places of Tamil Nadu is a big task. So the study covers the southern region of Tamil Nadu only with limited respondents with the following objectives:

- To study the role of segmentation for identifying spiritual tourist

¹ "UNWTO Technical Manual: Collection of Tourism Expenditure Statistics". World Tourism Organization. 1995. P. 10. Retrieved 26 March 2009.

- To study the role of segmentation for classification spiritual tourist
- To draw a model on the basis of study

Methodology

Spiritual tourism consumers and providers were interviewed in order to establish how to segment the market to deliver unique value to spiritual tourism consumers. Interviews were conducted with spiritual tourists and tourism operators. Point scaling techniques have been adopted for collecting the preliminary information from the respondents personally. The size of the population is limited to 50 only. Out of 50 thirty percent respondents belongs from female spiritual tourist. With regard to religion character 30, 20, 15, 18, and 17 percent respondents were from Hinduism, Muslim, Christianity, Sikhism, and others respectively. Out of total respondents 24 percent is within the age group of 50 years and above, 42 percent belongs from 40-50 years age group, 18 percent between the age group of 30-40 years and the balance 16 percent below 30 years.

The findings on the analysis of the views of the respondents that thirty percent respondents opined they are not feeling any difficulty even if there is no segmentation facilities available for them as per their religion as the purpose of the tour has not been fully spiritual. The facilities what they need they have been getting easily where they visited. All the women respondents have expressed favourness towards segmentation on the basis of religion, if so; they can able to spend most of the time for exchanging the religious approaches each other on every angel. With regards to the opinions of respondents who have 50 years and above, they preferred segmentation on the basis of spiritual believe towards boarding, lodging, transportation, etc., whereas, the respondents between the 40-50 age group opined their favourable views in respect to segmentation tourist in accordance with their spirituality. The respondents to the category of 30-40 years have been opined their positive feelings about segmentation subject to availability of scope. The balance tourist opined positively and paying much importance for fulfilling of needs at the earliest possible times. With this it can be concluded that segmentation is very essential and it can enlarge scope to the tourist marketers to afford need based facilities to the tourist so as to make them satisfied and that inter alia create desire for subsequent visits.

Review of Literature

Spiritual tourism has been observed to be a growing area of tourism (Cochrane 2009; Haq and Jackson 2009; Raj and Morpeth 2007). There is only limited literature on spiritual tourism because the concept has not been widely explored; it has been overlaid with pilgrimage tourism and religious tourism. A spiritual tourist has been defined as 'someone who visits a specific place out of his/her usual environment, with the intention of spiritual meaning and/or growth, without overt religious compulsion, which could be religious, non-religious, sacred or experiential in nature, but within a Divine context, regardless of the main reason for travelling' (Haq & Jackson 2009, p. 145). This paper reviewed the market segmentation literature to identify an appropriate market segmentation management framework. The importance of spiritual differentiation and segmentation to strategic positioning has been appreciated and favoured by the present spiritual tourist with regard to hospitality. It has been clearly stated by Smith that 'differentiation and market segmentation are closely related (perhaps even inseparable) concepts; attempts to distinguish between these approaches may be productive of clarity in theory as well as greater precision in the planning of spiritual marketing operations' (Smith 1956, p. 4). The application of market segmentation continues to be closely tied to the marketing concept paradigm, still regarded by many researchers as the dominant marketing management philosophy. With the maturity of the segmentation literature have come overviews of the segmentation research and a widespread endorsement of segmentation as an important marketing tool (Kotler, Bowen and Makens 2008). While some researchers have suggested that segmentation research has been fragmented and restricted, others have remarked on the lack of methodological rigor in the segmentation processes (Goller, Hogg and Kalafatis 2002; Hoek, Gendall and Esslement 1998). While mindful of this criticism, it is clear that the collection, organisation, analysis, distribution and refinement of data are all important issues in segmentation knowledge management (Shaw, Subramaniam, Tan and Welge 2001).

It has also been observed by various authors that spirituality in general has recently become an important subject of research in social and business areas (Cimino & Lattin, 1999; Hill, 2002; Konz & Ryan, 1999; Pesut, 2003).

The interest in spirituality has affected a number of industries around the world (Mitroff & Denton, 1999), including the tourism industry. Spiritual tourism seems to be a new concept but it is not a new phenomenon.

Tourism Market Segmentation

A typology is a descriptive framework that encompasses various types of people found in a particular market segment of a broad market grouped within the typology on the basis of their motivation, behaviour and attitudes (McKercher & du Cros, 2003; Moutinho 1987). The concept of grouping people into ‘types’ does not usually appeal to people who see themselves as individuals, especially those who perceive themselves to be on a ‘spiritual journey’. However, a typology of spiritual tourism is critical since the development of marketing strategies needs to be based on a valid customer typology describing characteristics of specific segments within the spiritual tourism market (Alvarez & Asugman 2006; Madrigal 1995).

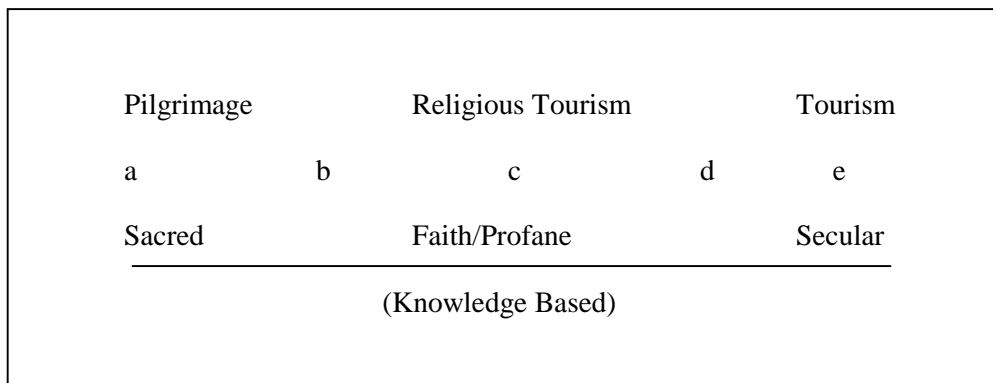
The ontology of critical realism facilitated the study by analysing each spiritual tourist based on individual response only. The epistemology of objective of the study has been maintained and the information dissected regardless of any relationship or prior understanding of the respondent.

After the examination of each case, spiritual tourists were placed in different groups based on their responses. The classifications of spiritual tourists into groupings have been managerially useful since the groups revealed segments targeted for relationship marketing. Subsequently, tourism marketing typologies available in the various literatures have been reviewed for creation of a spiritual tourism typology.

Stages of Religious Tourism

Smith (1992 a, b) concluded from her research on tourism and pilgrimage that these two terms are opposite end points on a continuum of travel, as indicated in figure below. It can be observed that the positions reflected the multiple and changing motivations of the traveler, whose interests and activities may switch individual from being a tourist to a pilgrim and vice versa. These types ranged from sacred pilgrimage, through faith/knowledge based religious tourism to fun based, secular tourism.

The central area (c) is labeled ‘religious tourism’, where the sacred and the secular meet and where tourists enjoy knowledge based decision making position. In drawing from stages of the religious tourism model to develop a spiritual tourism typology, all positions along the continuum (from positions ‘a’ to ‘c’) accommodate different types of spiritual tourists so definitions of each stage ‘a’ through to ‘c’ can be adapted for the spiritual tourism typology.



Stages of religious tourism

Behaviour change model

MacKay & Fesenmaier (1998) suggested the behaviour change model that adopted a process approach to assess how tourists move from one stage of behaviour to another. It was designed to assess relationships between stages of travel behaviour and past getaway behaviour. Different stage composition illustrated systematic relationships among stages and processes of change. Five stages of behaviour change were identified. The research results

indicated that this process model allowed a better understanding of the factors that activated getaway travel behaviour and facilitated market segmentation (MacKay & Fesenmaier 1998). The categories for the five stages in this model could be adapted to a spiritual tourism typology. Spiritual tourists could be classified according to the following:

- Pre-contemplators: Never been interested in spiritual tourism and not considered to be in the spiritual tourism market at the moment (though they could be encouraged to start ‘contemplating’).
- Contemplators: They would consider buying a spiritual tourism product since they considered themselves regular tourists, but have not actively searched or bought yet.
- Ready for action: Decided to undertake spiritual tourism and were looking for options available in the spiritual tourism market.
- Active: These tourists participated in spiritual tourism but not on a regular basis.
- Maintainers: This group is always in the market for spiritual tourism and regularly buys spiritual tourism products and services.

The categories presented by MacKay & Fesenmaier (1998) could be useful in the promotion of generic spiritual tourism marketing; they do not segment the market in a way that supports the strategic positioning of products tailored for particular segments of the spiritual tourism market.

Cultural tourism typology

The model presented by McKercher (2002, p. 29) segments the cultural tourism market ‘(a) according to the importance of cultural motives in the decision to visit a destination and (b) depth of experience’. There are five types of tourists ranging from the ones who had strong purposeful motives for tourism to the ones with no planned motives for tourism (McKercher 2002). While this model is specifically intended for cultural tourism, since spiritual tourism is one type of cultural tourism, the model can be adapted to contribute to a spiritual tourism typology. The five types, in the adaptation of the cultural tourism typology to spiritual tourism, use the tourist’s motivation and experience to group them into segments (McKercher & du Cros 2003). The manner proposed in which the cultural tourism typology can be adapted for spiritual tourism is presented below:

- Purposeful spiritual tourist: Personal spiritual growth is the main reason for visiting and this ‘purposeful’ tourist has a strong intention to seek the Divine.
- Sightseeing spiritual tourist: Personal spiritual growth is the main reason for visiting but this ‘sightseeing’ tourist places less emphasis on the spiritual experience.
- Casual spiritual tourist: Personal spiritual growth only casually motivates the visit and the spiritual experience of this ‘casual’ tourist is weaker than the previous two types of spiritual tourists.
- Incidental spiritual tourist: Personal spiritual growth had no influence on the tourism decision of this ‘incidental’ tourist and during the journey there were only chance or occasional spiritual experiences.
- Serendipitous spiritual tourist: Personal spiritual growth had no element of influence on the tourism decision of this ‘serendipitous’ tourist, but by luck at a particular moment the tourist had a deep spiritual experience as a result of the journey.

The major difficulty with the adaptation of the cultural tourism typology to spiritual tourism is that tourists are categorised without recognition that the tourist’s motivation may be driven by different needs at different times. Moreover, during the journey their motivation may fluctuate, perhaps in response to factors outside the model. Also, there may be multiple motivations influencing the customer’s tourism decisions. For example, the primary purpose of the journey may not be spiritual but nonetheless the tourist may be purposefully motivated to spend the major part of their journey seeking spiritual growth. The spiritual tourist may start as a serendipitous tourist but during the trip may convert into a purposeful spiritual tourist.

Modes of Tourism Experience

This highly regarded typology from Cohen (1979a) separates tourists into five different types. Various researchers in tourism and tourist behaviour have used this model (Gatrell & Collins Kreiner 2006; McKercher & du Cros 2003; Crick 1989; Butler 1980). Different people seek different experiences which have different meanings

depending on their culture. The modes, or types of tourists, range from recreational, through experiential to existential tourists; seeking pleasure to tourists in pursuit of meaning. The benefit of this model is that by focusing on the tourist's experience it does not limit the research to materialistic realities. The five modes have been regarded as a standard model to assess the perception of travellers as tourists or pilgrims. This model could be adapted in this study to create a Modes of Spiritual Tourism Experience typology as illustrated in the following:

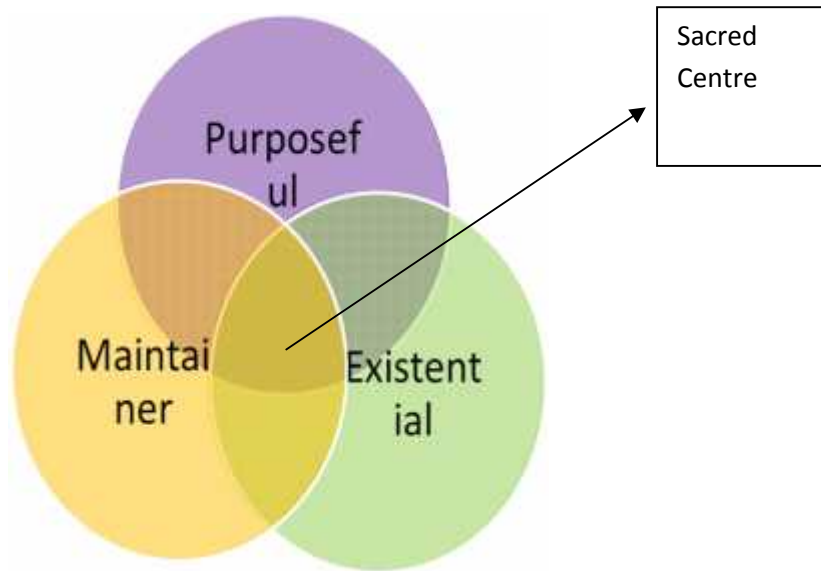
- The Recreational Mode: Leisure travel with a recreational mode of experience. It is more entertainment oriented and the main motivation for the tourist is to have fun.
- The Diversionary Mode: It is a meaningless pleasure, even when sightseeing and experiencing a 'sacred sight'. It is an 'escape from the boredom and meaninglessness of routine existence into the forgetfulness of a vacation, which may heal the body and sooth the spirit' (Cohen 1979a, p. 185-6).
- The Experiential Mode: This is when alienated individuals become aware of their alienation and want to have a profound experience. They still do not have a strong intention to motivate their tourism.
- The Experimental mode: In this mode of leisure travel, the tourist plays the role of an experimental 'seeker' and is engaged in a quest for an alternative experience in many different directions. Cohen (1979b) argued that tourists in the experiential experimental mode could be the ones most easily converted into the existential mode.
- The Existential Mode: This tourist mode can be described as being fully committed towards the sacred or 'spiritual' centre, and they have a deep faith in regular tourism experiences from an existential (i.e. this is the central purpose of life) perspective.

It is conceivable that spiritual tourists could come from all five categories, although it is likely that they would predominantly be found within the last two modes, which were considered in designing the theoretical spiritual tourism typology in this study.

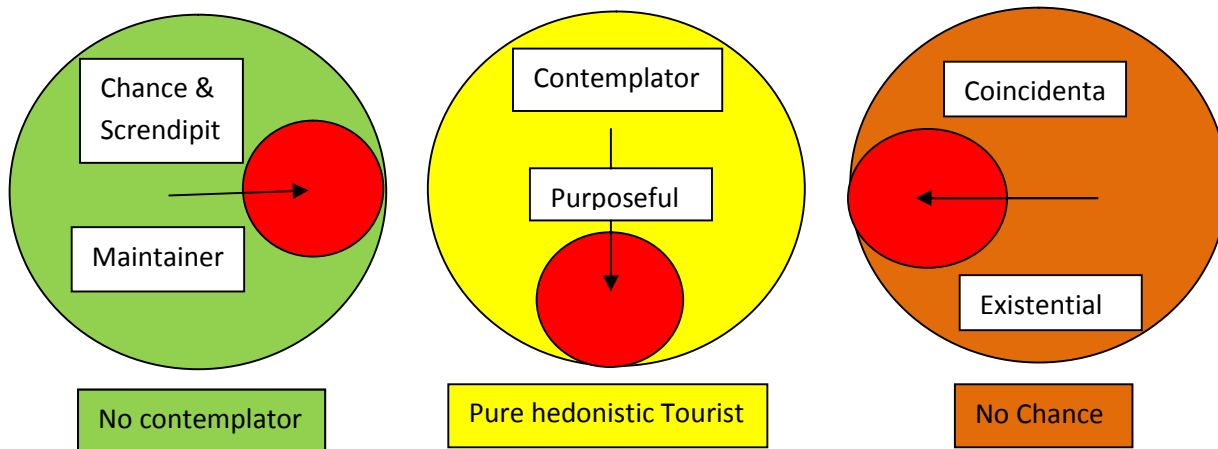
Theoretical Spiritual Tourism Typology

The integration of knowledge extracted from the previous discussion on different typologies created a Venn-diagram model for the theoretical spiritual tourism typology as presented below. The Venn-diagram presents combined information from the four models that could be applied to spiritual tourism. The analysis of various models recognises a focus on the motivation and behaviour of the tourist.

In the figure there are three circles in the Venn-Diagram. The label for each circle uses tourists' motivational behaviour to describe the tourists located in each circle. Thus there is the purposeful motivation, existential motivation and maintainer (regular buyer) motivation. The 'sacred centre' is the overlap between the three circles and is identified as the frequent spiritual tourist and shown as the shaded territory. Spiritual tourists belonging to the sacred centre only travel for spiritual reasons and they can be targeted for different, mostly new, spiritual tourism destinations, events and festivals. The other three overlapping areas portray how motivations of spiritual tourists may consist of more than one type of motivation and how these motivations may be amalgamated. The remaining non-overlapping areas of the three circles represent an individual segment of the market while the overlapping areas represent a different segment of the market. The non overlapping areas present people with low motivation for spiritual travel; however, they are regular tourists and can be convinced to try a new type of tourism, 'spiritual' tourism. It can be observed that the tourists may have already contemplated seeking a spiritual tourism experience or might have had one by chance, or coincidentally, while undertaking a fun-based recreational leisure experience. Their tendency to move towards the sacred centre or the overlapping areas is recognised by arrows in each circle for the serendipitous, contemplator and coincidental tourists. Outside the three circles are those tourists who never contemplate such a tourism experience, and have not had a serendipitous spiritual tourism experience due to their circumstances, behaviour, attitude, or lifestyle. The relationship marketing strategies for spiritual tourism will be applied to the tourists falling in the circle, close or away from the overlapping areas. Tourists sitting out of the circles will not be considered as target customers when marketing spiritual tourism.



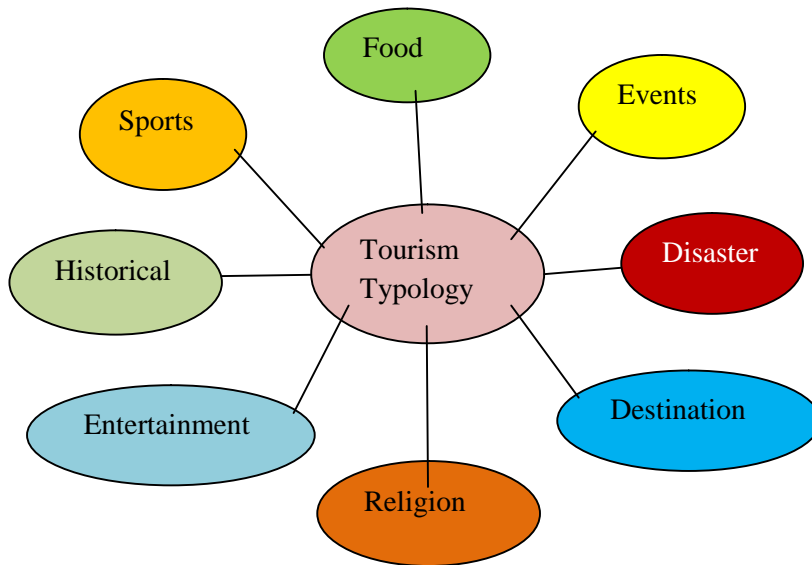
Typology for spiritual tourism: One sacred centre, overlapping areas represent spiritual tourists



Typology for spiritual tourism: The contemplator, by chance and coincidental spiritual tourist moving towards the sacred centre or overlapping areas, no contemplator, hedonistic and no chance, will never be interested in spiritual tourism.

The spiritual tourism typology is a theoretically based conceptual model extrapolated from the foundation of extant literature on the motivation and behaviour of tourists. There are, however, limitations to this model. For example, it should be noted that the people grouped together in each of the three sectors of the theoretical model are not necessarily similar in the specifics of their spiritual tourism needs and practices. Furthermore, while motivation triggers behaviour, it is not solely responsible for people’s behaviour. Literature reported in other research domains has indicated that there are other psychographic and demographic characteristics that also impact on behaviour (Barry & Weinstein 2009; Moutinho 1987). It is therefore likely that exploratory research may reveal that tourists’ attitudes or other demographic factors could also be used to segment the spiritual tourism market.

The theoretical model provides a starting point for establishing a means of segmenting the spiritual tourism market; however, empirical research with spiritual tourists is necessary to test its validity. It has been established that spiritual tourism marketing is based on effective segmentation. Since no data on spiritual tourists is available, it is not possible to place the tourists in well defined segments. Prior to developing segments for spiritual tourists, they need to be recognised. To recognise the spiritual tourists, sampling needs to be conducted to know exactly who will be considered and interviewed as spiritual tourists. The analysis of interviews and its triangulation with other secondary data would drive this study towards identifying the spiritual tourist segments. From below model it can be concluded that segmentation is essential in accordance with the interest of the spiritual tourist.



Source: Megehee & Spake 2008²

Conclusion

Spiritual tourism has been accepted as a type of special interest tourism that covers pilgrimage, religious and non-religious travel. The conceptual framework derived from the literature has indicated the position of spiritual tourism in the overall tourism discipline. Since this study investigates attitudes and behaviours of Tamil Nadu spiritual tourists, their preferences with respect to places, events and people have been studied. The importance of historical, religious, indigenous and modern trends towards spirituality and related travels in Karnataka has been highlighted. Marketing of spiritual tourism has potential for successful business growth since it represents a consistently growing market. Marketing strategies with customer oriented solutions are required to develop the spiritual tourism product. The suggested core marketing strategy is the competitive advantage strategy, focusing on differentiation and positioning of spiritual tourism product for a segmented market. The relationship marketing approach is needed to implement the marketing for each segment. Relationship marketing is applied with respect to four critical elements: products, people, communications and collaborations. Based on the literature a theoretical typology of spiritual tourists was designed to assist with the segmentation of the spiritual tourism market.

Limitation of the Study

The study is having the following limitation –

- Sample size is less.

² Megehee, C. M. & Spake, D. F. (2008), 'Decoding southern culture and hospitality', International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 97-10

- Area of study is small.
- Population religion wise size is very limited.
- It cannot make sure that the views of the respondents are unbiased.
- Further study in this respect is highly essential.

Reference

1. Alvarez, M. & Asugman, G. (2006), 'Explorers versus planners: A study of Turkish tourists', *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 319-338.
2. Butler, R. W. (1980), 'The concept of a tourist area cycle of evolution: Implications for management of resources', *Canadian Geographer*, vol. 24, no. 1, pp. 5-12.
3. Cimino, Rob., & Lattin, David. (1999). Choosing my religion. *American Demographics*, 21 (4), 60.
4. Cochrane J., 2009. Spirits, nature and pilgrimage: The other' dimension in Javanese domestic tourism. *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 6(2), 107-120.
5. Cohen, E. (1979a), 'A phenomenology of tourist experiences', *Sociology*, vol. 13, no. 2, pp. 179-201.
6. Cohen, E. (1979b), 'Sociology of tourism,' *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 6, no. 1-2, pp.18-94.
7. Crick, M. (1989), 'Representation of international tourism in the social sciences', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 18, pp. 307-344.
8. Gatrell, J. D. & Collins-Kreiner, N. (2006), 'Negotiated space: Tourists, pilgrims, and the Bahá'í terraced gardens in Haifa', *Geoforum*, vol. 37, no. 5, pp. 765-778.
9. Haq, F. and Jackson, J., 2009. Spiritual journey to Hajj: Australian and Pakistani experience and expectations, *Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion*, 6(2), 141-156.
10. Hill, Brian (2002). Tourism and religion, by Boris Vukonic. *The International Journal of Tourism Research*, 4(4), 327.
11. Konz, Gregory & Ryan, Francis (1999). Maintaining an organizational spirituality: no easy task. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 12(3), 200.
12. MacKay, K. J. & Fesenmaier, D. R. (1998), 'A process approach to segmenting the getaway travel', *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 1-39.
13. Madrigal, R. (1995), 'Personal values, traveler personality type, and leisure travel style', *Journal of Leisure Research*, vol. 27, no. 2, pp. 125-142.
14. McKercher, B. (2002), 'Towards a classification of cultural tourists', *The International Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 29-38.
15. McKercher, B., & du Cros, H. (2003), 'Testing a cultural tourism typology', *The International Journal of Tourism Research*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 45-58.
16. Raj, R. and Morpeth, N., 2007. *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Festivals Management: An International Perspective*. CABI Publishers, Oxford.
17. Smith, V. L. (1992a), 'Hosts and Guests Revisited' *The American Behavioural Scientist*, vol.36, no. 2, 187-199.
18. Smith, V. L. (1992b), 'Introduction: The quest in guest', *Annals of Tourism Research*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 1-17.