

External factors in spiritual tourism segmentation: a three country exploratory study

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a combination of theory and practical application of consumer behaviour and market segmentation of spiritual tourists. The Moutinho consumer behaviour model for tourists was employed to identify the factors influencing the decision making of spiritual tourists. A pilot study was conducted to explore the external factors affecting the buying behaviour of spiritual tourists. Semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted with selected stakeholders in three countries, i.e. Australia, United Kingdom and Pakistan. The general observations for Australia and UK were apparently similar, though the behaviour of sub-culture, religious and cultural groups indicates different priorities. However, Pakistan shows a more typical uni-cultural response, though the planning of the Government to attract foreign non-Muslim spiritual tourist segments is interesting.

Key words: Consumer behaviour, segmentation, spirituality, religion, tourism.

INTRODUCTION

The term “spiritual tourism” is largely unheard of in both the academic literature and the tourism trade press, yet more people visit Mecca, the Vatican or Bethlehem/Jerusalem per year than attend the World Cup, for example. Anecdotal evidence is that market segmentation applies to spiritual tourists as much as any other group. A better understanding of consumer behaviour is therefore likely to benefit both tourism operators and spiritual tourists, and may be helpful as well in general marketing theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars from various backgrounds have discussed spirituality for centuries, though it seems to have entered the serious business and management lexicon more recently (Kale, 2004; Konz & Ryan, 1999; Mitroff & Denton, 1999). The interest in spirituality has affected a number of industries around the world (Mitroff & Denton, 1999), including the tourism industry.

The definition of tourism, delivered by the World Tourism Organization (WTO), provides the corner stone for understanding various types of emerging and growing tourism. The WTO conference in 1991, provided the most precise, most widely accepted definition of tourism as people travelling at least 80 kilometres away from their usual environment, for the purposes of

recreation, medical treatment, religious observances, family matters, sporting events, conferences, study or transit to another country (WTO, 1991).

This study follows Dyson, Gobb and Forman, (cited in Pesut, 2003), who concluded from their literature review on spirituality that three key elements are common to most definitions: enlightened attention to God (however described), self and others. This definition is also supported by Kale, who suggests “spirituality is based on four overarching ideas, i.e. a sense of inner self, a sense of meaning, a sense of interconnectedness and a notion of the ‘beyond’, or ‘God’ (Kale, 2004, p.93). Thus, whenever people travel to engage in these ideas, with an objective of some Divine connection, regardless of their religions, either fully or in a large part, this study accepts them as spiritual tourists. Cohen (1996) also discusses and analyses the tourist as a modern pilgrim and concludes that, “traditionally pilgrimage is essentially a movement from the profane periphery towards the sacred centre of the religious ‘cosmos’” (p.182).

Based on the review of the literature, the interviews with stakeholders in three countries, and the outcomes of the conference on “Tourism – a spiritual dimension” held in Lincoln UK, in April 2006, this study defines a spiritual tourist as ‘someone who visits a place out of his/her usual environment, with the intention of spiritual growth, without overt religious compulsion, which could be religious, non-religious, sacred or experiential in nature, but within the Divine context, regardless of the main reason for travelling’.

The well known and established model of travel behaviour by Moutinho (1987) best helps this study to confirm the factors influencing the buying decisions of spiritual tourists. Moutinho (1987, p.5) defined tourism consumer behaviour as the “process of acquiring and organising information in the direction of a purchase decision and of using and evaluating products and services”. The tourist buying decision presents some unique aspects: it is an investment with no tangible rate of return, and the purchase is often prepared and planned through savings made over a considerable period of time. This model will be probed in the research project underway to analyse various personal and external factors (in this paper, mainly) affecting the motivation of

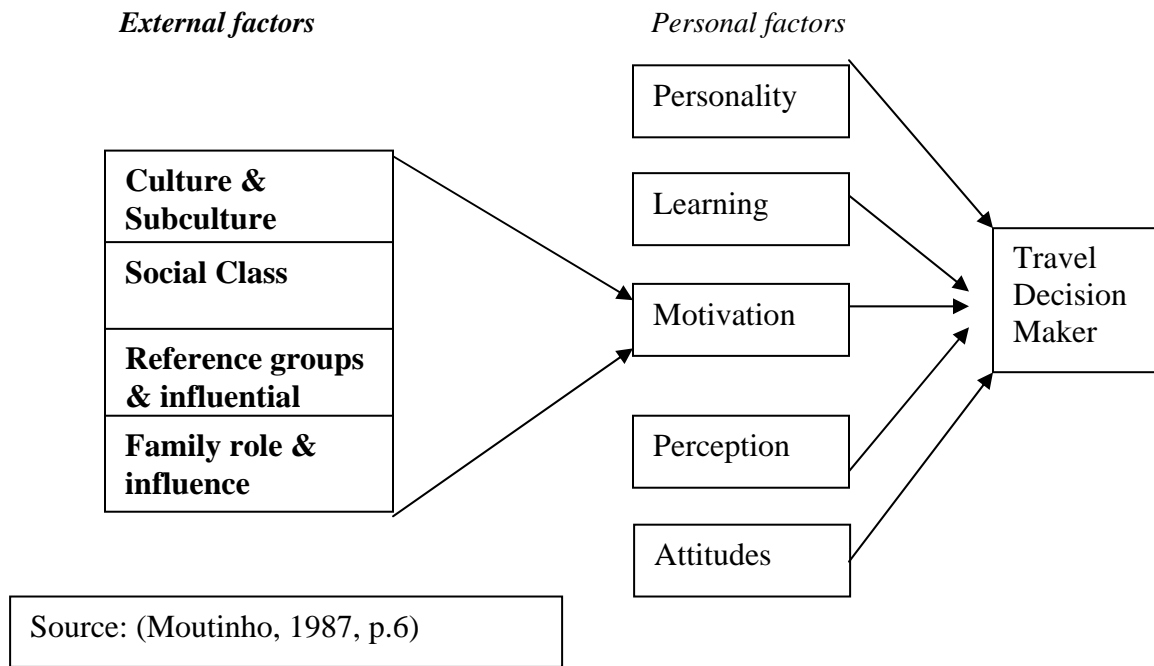
the individual or group to purchase the spiritual tourism service or product. The cost of the service is considered as a critical element by various authors (Warren, Abercrombie, & Berl 1989 and Legoherele 1998), but after discussion with various stakeholders, this study on spiritual tourism suggests that the cost of the service is not particularly relevant for first-time buyers, since people involved in spiritual activities including tourism are probably much less price conscious (Campo, 1998; Hill, 2002). However, the cost of the spiritual tourism packages will influence the frequency and/or repetition of their spiritual journeys. For example, most of the Muslims who had travelled for Hajj and Catholics who had been to the Vatican or Lourdes claim that they would love to travel again and again if they had sufficient financial resources.

The model of Moutinho is given below, which clearly identifies the internal and external factors that influence the decision making of tourists. By employing the Moutinho model of travel behaviour, this study explores the elements involved in the external factors by interviewing the stakeholders in the selected three countries.

METHODOLOGY

As mentioned earlier, all the stakeholders were selected by drawing a purposive sample, building in variety and acknowledging opportunities for intensive study as described by Stake (2005). The purposive sampling helped this study to conduct semi-structured interviews with the people who were well informed and had some solid experience with spiritual tourism. The methodology used by Fernando and Jackson (2006) to investigate religion-based workplace spirituality for decision making was helpful for this study. Fernando and Jackson (2006) conducted in-depth interviews with prominent business leaders, belonging to four different religions in Sri Lanka. The responses were analysed under the various themes to conclude in concepts explaining the religion-based workplace spirituality for decision making in businesses.

Figure 1 Major factors influencing travel behaviour



The specific findings of this paper are based upon a pilot study conducted by semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders in Australia, UK and Pakistan. The purpose of this study was to explore the consumer behaviour of spiritual tourists and attempt to uncover the main elements of the external factors that influence their buying decisions for spiritual tourism products and services. The three countries were selected to present a more culturally diversified and a practically comprehensive account of the findings of this study. The stakeholders included self-described spiritual tourists; academics in marketing, tourism and religious studies; senior officials working for Government Ministries of tourism and religious affairs; and travel agencies offering spiritual tourism packages. Those individuals who were identified as spiritual tourists in the three countries were those who had at least once travelled for spiritual reasons and who fit in the definition of spiritual tourists as discussed in this paper. The interviews with the international academics attending the Conference on “Tourism – a spiritual dimension” in Lincoln, UK, were very critical to this study as they all were experts in related areas of research and scholarship. The

academics in Pakistan were selected from internationally recognised Universities in Islamabad. Their experience and knowledge in marketing, tourism and spirituality/religion has been appreciated in well reputed academic circles. Most of the academics in Australia were selected from Central Queensland University, Rockhampton; however, some critically relevant academics attending the ANZAM Conference in Canberra in December 2005 were also interviewed for this study. The travel agents in the three countries were selected by using referrals and judgemental snow balling techniques. At this point in this exploratory study, the sample size is 59 respondents across four groups identified in the three countries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this study the selected four groups of stakeholders in Australia, UK and Pakistan were interviewed and, amongst other topics, they gave their responses to the four external forces. In this paper, the respondents are identified by their identifier numbers given: i.e. AT1 to the first Australian spiritual tourist respondent, UKT2 to the second tourist respondent in the UK and PT3 to the third tourist interviewed in Pakistan. In the same manner, the academics are identified as AA1, UKA1 and PA1; similarly the related Government officials are identified as AG1, UKG1 and PG1; and the tourism operators are AO1, UKO1 and PO1. Selected findings collected from some of the most interesting of the respondents regarding the external factors in the three countries are briefly discussed below:

Culture and sub-culture

Australia

The first spiritual tourists interviewed in Australia AT1 and AT2 had been to the Vatican and Jerusalem respectively in line a fairly common tradition within Australian Christian culture. They both agreed that Australian culture has its cultural roots in Christianity and more predominantly Catholicism in their cases. AT1 went for “for self-value” and he is planning to go again in the next few years. He was expecting to improve his knowledge about life, culture and people; he thinks that he learnt a lot about people and sub-groups of people, but not much about life. AT2

went to Jerusalem and expressed feelings of personal growth and self-awareness more than cultural benefit issues. AA1 and AA2 agreed that Australian culture historically is based on Christian teachings and they suggested that most Australian spiritual tourists go for “self-value maximization and knowledge of the real world”. AA3 agreed that in accordance with the Australian individual self-actualisation culture, the basic motives for Australian spiritual tourists were self discovery and knowing people around them better.

AT8 travelled to Germany and had a profound spiritual experience at the sites of the detention camps where the Nazis persecuted the Jews during World War II. He claimed that his physical presence at those sites presented him with an invaluable personal and cross-cultural experience that brought him closer to God. AT9 went to Bethlehem and Jerusalem; he is very proud of his trip and has been describing his adventures to all his peers and convincing others to go for a similar trip. Both AT8 & AT9 seem to be following Australian cultural priorities in their quest for spiritual tourism. AA4 expressed his opinion that Australian spiritual tourists, in accordance with the local culture, travelled overseas to “feel happy by visiting spiritual sites” and telling stories about their trips to feel more important and popular among their family and friends.

Now a married couple, belonging to the Baha’i subculture, AT3 and AT4 emphasised that they went for spiritual tourism to improve their own married life and to build up their love for each other. They have twice been to the Baha’i Temple in Sydney and felt that every trip enhances their relationship with each other and with other people around them. AA3 also saw most spiritual tourists travelling as couples trying to explore themselves and their relationships during the journey. AT5, AT6 and AT7 belonging to another sub-culture have been travelling to various Buddhist Temples within Australia and they all claimed that the Temple in Wollongong gifted them the best spiritual richness possible, which was “greater self-respect and respect for others”.

AT10 and AT11 following the Muslim sub-culture, went for Hajj as an Australian Muslim couple and described their motive as a call from God, and the trip itself as a union with God. They still feel that the union was not complete and they shall “go again for a complete spiritual union with

Allah”. AT10 also expressed his increased willingness to go with the local Muslim groups meeting other Muslims to revive the Islamic sub-cultural and religious practices. AG1 and AG2, working for the Queensland Department of Tourism, said that spiritual tourism for Australians was based on various sub-culture religions observed in this multicultural society, and especially that people visited popular spiritual sites related to their distinct religions.

AO1 and AO2 emphasised that in their experience these cultural observations were significant in tourism purchase decisions in that most Australians demanded a complete spiritual tourism package that combined hedonistic or fun tourism with a solid spice or undertone of spirituality. They gave examples of Australians visiting places such as India and Thailand, where they went for all the entertainment and fun and also visited various sub-cultural Temples, Shrines and Mosques. AO3 explained that Australian spiritual tourists generally seek knowledge of various belief systems for their personal development. AO4 pointed out that frequent Australian travellers seem to be fed up with the common tourism themes and wanted to try something different in terms of the spiritual context. However, across most of the Australian respondents it was clear that while spiritual tourists are keen to experience other cultures and sub-cultures, they were ‘driven’ much more by personal and family factors, and seldom was their motivation from external factors such as in terms of any conformity to the expectations of their culture and sub-culture. This has been a consistent and important finding of this particular phase of the research

United Kingdom (UK)

UKT1 and UKT2 said that they travel for peace and have visited various multi-religious spiritual sites such as Jerusalem, Istanbul, Egypt and Morocco to understand various cultural and sub-cultural faiths and their practices. UKT3 travelled in search of ‘her true faith’ that would take her close to God and has been travelling to various religious centres within the UK. UKT4 was not sure of her religion until she visited Tibet and then realised that she was really a member of the Buddhist sub-culture, and since then she has been travelling to various Buddhist sites in Asia and wants to maximize this so as to help her to concentrate better on her job and social relationships.

UKA1 and UKA2 in the context of British culture consider spirituality as “an indescribable experience” and thus consider British tourists travelling experientially or experimentally in search of “new undetermined experiences” as being true spiritual tourists. According to UKA2, such spiritual experience could be gained by wave-surfing when one is close to death and realises the thin boundary between life and death.

UKA3 suggested that the society in the UK was highly divided into religious groups and subgroups that are very distinct sub-cultures. He explained that all these groups had their own exclusive spiritual tourism destinations and they rarely visit each other’s spiritual place. This view was supported by many other respondents. However, UKA4 and UKO1 were of a different opinion, argued that this might have been the case in the past, but that the barriers between various religious sects in UK were breaking down, and people were trying to visit each other’s Holy places to be more spiritually united.

UKT5 and UKT6 as members of the Muslim sub-culture went for Hajj from the UK and realised that Muslims around the world are one big family sub-culturally. UKT7 and UKT8 said that a new trend is rising among the Muslim youth of UK and they travel within the country as groups to visit other Muslims within their tightly-knit subculture and discuss the faith and practice of Islam. They claimed that a large number of Muslims were involved in such local tourism experiences, and had the inspirations of a strong revival of Islam and Islamic culture within the Islamic community. The Islamic Centre in Dewsbury has been the heart of these spiritual journeys; all the trips of the Muslim groups within UK and Europe were planned and executed from Dewsbury. The manager of that Centre (UKO1) claimed that more Englishmen were seeking the spiritual truth and the groups dispatching from his Centre were inviting the mass society to consider the Islamic system as a core solution to the contemporary problems of the world. UKG1, UKG2, UKO1, UKO2 and UKA2 said that since the 07 July 05 train bombings in the UK, the public has become more open to understand the faith and beliefs of other sub-cultures and since then the racial tensions among the youth have also decreased. UKO3 and UKO4 were

very hopeful for the future of spiritual tourism in the UK. They claimed that since the latest Hollywood blockbuster and semi-fiction craze of “The Da Vinci Code”, flocks of people were rushing to the spiritual sites shown in the story, such as the Lincoln Cathedral. UKG2 and UKG3 also expressed the Government’s plans to invest more to upgrade the historical and religious icons to attract more people for their education and self development.

It would appear that, while the UK bears more resemblance to Australia than Pakistan in terms of spiritual tourism, and that the ‘traditional/original British’ are more motivated by personal factors than external sub-cultural factors, the greater diversity of sub-group ethnic and religious people in the UK seems to have resulted in a larger and growing influence of sub-cultural factors both in the motivation to engage in spiritual tourism and the personal and family satisfactions that result.

Pakistan

The significant influence of cultural and sub-group external factors in Pakistan was clearly much more noticeable across all respondent groups. The Pew Global Survey conducted in 2005 indicated that Pakistan had the highest religion vs. nationality identity ratio in the world, where 79% of people identified themselves as Muslims compared to 7% who identified themselves as Pakistanis. PT1, PT2 & PT3 said that they have been travelling to the popular Sufi shrines in Lahore and Rawalpindi on the annual festival of the birth of the city’s Sufi Saint. They expressed their motives as “to significantly reprogram our Islamic (sub-cultural) spirituality and commitment to God and His final religion Islam”. PT4 claimed that he used to visit three Sufi shrines every year until he went for Hajj. Very interestingly, after Hajj he felt so spiritually fulfilled that he never went to the shrines again and concentrated on his prayers at home (thus perhaps he shifted his spiritual tourism destination). PT5 had been to Mecca many times for Umrah and Hajj, and claimed that his trips were multidimensional and served all his spiritual and physiological needs as he had an opportunity to be with God in Mecca. PT6 said that earlier he was not interested in religion and spiritual tourism, but his dead father declared in his will that his son should go to Mecca for Hajj before taking charge of his wealth. On his first trip “I was deeply

touched by the pure spirituality of the place and realised how fortunate I was to be born a Muslim”. Since then he has travelled to other countries in the Middle East with spiritual destinations, and has been helping and guiding other people interested in such tourism.

PA1 said that local spiritual tourism was highly influenced by the subcultures of various Islamic sects and regions where people travelled to attend the annual festivals at the shrines of their family or regional (i.e. a sub-sub-cultural) Sufis. PG1 and PO1 agreed with PA1 and expressed their desires to promote the annual festivals to all groups so that the attendance at the festivals would increase and further attract the spiritual tourists from neighbouring countries such as India, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Iran.

PA2, PA3, PG2, PO1 and PO2 made another interesting point that in accordance with the Pakistani culture, a younger group of Pakistanis was more interested in going for Umrah (that is visiting Mecca at any other time of the year) and the more elderly tourists were only interested to go for Hajj (that is visiting Mecca during a three day special period of the year). Note that here we see an excellent example of market segmentation by both age and the time of year. PT7 and PT 8 said that soon after their marriage they went for Umrah to Mecca rather than for honeymoon to a tourist spot. They both claimed that the Umrah after marriage oriented their lives towards Islamic spirituality and created their life-long partnership. PT8 also said that many of her friends were following this new cultural trend of Umrah soon after marriage to spiritually endorse their life long marital commitment. This combination of market segmentation by age and marital life-stage along with spreading ‘sales’ and product/service across the full year is of course classic marketing strategy activity. PT9 and PT10 claimed that they were also a part of a global movement where younger Muslims were encouraged to travel and meet other Muslims to revive Islam, as it was believed to be the only way to develop Islam and protect it from scandals such as terrorism. The Pew Global Survey conducted in 2005 also showed that 94% Pakistanis favoured the growing role of Islam in politics, compared to merely 4% not in favour. This cultural trend is

very similar to the sub-cultural Islamic community trends in UK and Australia where Muslims travel in groups for mutual meetings to revive the Islamic practices.

Importantly PG2, PG3, PO2 and PO3 also expressed the diversification potential of spiritual tourism in Pakistan for other religions such as Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism. PG2 and PG3 informed the researchers about the Government plans to develop and promote sub-culture Buddhist and Sikh spiritual tourism by developing their historical sites and images. Infrastructure is being developed to provide easier access to popular Sikh temples that attract large numbers of Sikhs not only from India but also the affluent Sikh (sub-culture) migrants in the UK, Canada and USA.

It can be seen that culture and sub-culture are enormously important in spiritual tourism within Pakistan, and between Pakistan and Islamic sites outside the country, and thus marketing strategies here will need to take these external factors into account much more than in the other 2 countries studied. This does not mean that Pakistani spiritual tourism would not be 'marketed to' in terms of personal / family factors, but rather that the external factors will be more prominent.

Social Class

Australia

All spiritual tourists in Australia said that their social class did not influence their decision making for spiritual tourism at all. However, AT1, AT8, AT9, AT10 AND AT11 mentioned or implied that they would probably be able to travel more often for spiritual reasons if they belonged to a more affluent social class. AA1 and AA4 agreed that in Australia the spiritual tourists seldom make the decisions based upon their social class. However, AA3 claimed that the members of the clergy, that is a well recognised occupational social class in Australia, travel more often for spiritual tourism. She further suggested that probably the members of the clergy have another motive for spiritual tourism, which is to enhance their credibility as religious guides and leaders, and moreover their employers or the sponsors of the religious centres would also encourage and often fund their frequent spiritual journeys. The tourism operators interviewed in

this study also agreed that social class in Australia has very little influence on the motivation of spiritual tourists.

Therefore it is quite clear from this study that the external factor of social class does not overtly play a significant role by itself in decision making for Australian spiritual tourists.

United Kingdom (UK)

A similar response was received from the spiritual tourists in UK and most of them claimed that social class did not influence their decision making for spiritual tourism. UKT7 and UKT8 claimed that young Muslims belonging to a type of student social class had more significant barriers to face, such as financing, some family objections and the threat of a scandal that they may join a terrorist cell. UKO1 agreed with this idea and suggested that his organization had been trying to secure funds to invite more youngsters to join their cause of spiritual group journeys. Joint efforts are being organised with other religious groups to cover any threats of religious extremism. UKG1 and UKG2 described the plans of the Government to abolish the entry fee for all spiritual sites belonging to all religions, so that any barrier of social class financially speaking could be removed. UKO1 and UKO2 observed that people belonging to the clergy for various religions were more frequent spiritual tourists probably due to the availability of funds from their respective religious centres.

It is clearly observed that there are remarkable resemblances in the analysis of the social classes between Australian and UK markets of spiritual tourism. However, probably due to the 07 July train bombings in UK, the Islamic student social class interested in spiritual tourism face some extra barriers of suspicion by the Government authorities.

Pakistan

All the spiritual tourists from PT1 to PT6 did not give any clear or definitive response to the influence of social class on their spiritual tourism. However PT7 and PT8 said that the youngsters and the educated social class of Pakistan were much more enthusiastic about spiritual tourism than most Pakistanis. PT9 and PT10 also agreed that the student class and most educated (social

class) individuals were very keen on travelling to enhance their understanding of Islam. Interestingly, this observation is quite similar to the responses of the young Muslims and UKO1 in UK. PA1, PG1 and PG2 claim that the educated class of Pakistan is highly frustrated about the global scandal of 'Islamic terrorism' and the 'war on terrorism', hence they feel the urge to re-study Islamic theology and practice, and what could be a better way, they said, than travelling and meeting other people of the same faith.

PA2, PG2, PO1 and PO2 also claim that many members of the clergy in Pakistan belong to an exclusive class where they enjoy various luxuries of life under the cover of piety and holiness. Moreover, to enhance the credibility of their social class they tend to travel more for religious group motives and probably receive the finances from their religious organisations. Interestingly, this observation is very similar to the statement of AA3 on Australian clergy as a social class.

Hence it is observed that social class plays a more significant role in spiritual tourism in Pakistan compared with Australia and UK. It is apparent from this study that three social classes are more involved in spiritual tourism, and they are the more educated people, the students and the clergy.

Reference Groups

Australia

AT1, AT2, AT5, AT6 and AT7 said that they were impressed by their friends and respected colleagues who have been talking about their spiritual adventures. AT3 and AT4 were convinced by their parents that they had to visit the Baha'i Temple to enhance their relationship with each other. AA1, AA2 and AA3 agreed that the most critical reference group for Australian spiritual tourists is their friends and colleagues. However AA3, AG1, AO1 and AO3 appreciate the role of parents as reference groups (especially in Eastern, Middle Eastern and Indian Sub-Continental groups), which is more significantly clear in Asian subcultures.

AT10 and AT11 claimed that they follow only one reference group and that is the local Islamic community. AG2 and AO3 agreed that some religious subcultures were keen to follow their own religious reference groups that included scholars and members of the clergy. AA3, AA4 and AO4

also suggested that the media is also growing into a strong reference group for Australian spiritual tourists. They claimed that TV shows like “Getaway” and Hollywood movies such as the latest blockbuster “Da Vinci Code” were playing key roles as reference points in inspiring people for spiritual tourism. It seems that amongst (Western cultures), for Australians the most popular reference group is friends and colleagues; followed by the media. However, in many Asian subcultures within Australia, the parents and the religious leaders are the major reference group for spiritual tourists.

United Kingdom (UK)

Similar responses were received in UK where most tourists claimed that their reference groups for spiritual tourism were their friends and colleagues who had some experience or exposure to spiritual tourism. However, UKT3 and UKT4 denied any affiliation to a reference group and claimed that they were self-inspired for their spiritual tourism. UKT5 and UKT6 claimed to be inspired primarily by their families to go for the Hajj. UKO1 explained that, very importantly, all Islamic centres were trying to gain the status of a strong reference group and inspire the majority of the Muslim youth to try the spiritual tourism packages introduced by the Islamic centres.

Most tourism operators agreed that the Asian families gave more importance to the parents and religious leaders as the reference groups, while local English relied more on their friends and colleagues. UKG1, UKG2, UKO2 and UKO3 accepted that like Australians, most English were inspired by TV programs showing spiritual significance of certain destinations and Hollywood movies such as the “Da Vinci Code” were inspiring people for spiritual tourism in the UK.

Although, the significance of reference groups in UK is quite similar to Australia, it is noticeable that some spiritual tourists in both societies do not follow any reference group and insist on making their own decisions without any outside influences.

Pakistan

The influence of various reference groups seems very significant in Pakistan. The strong role of parents and religious leaders is very clear like in most Asian societies. Interestingly, most of the

stakeholders in Pakistan claim that the significance of the religious scholars is just second to the parents. Younger spiritual tourists in Pakistan appreciate the inspiration from their religious teachers who taught them the Islamic beliefs and practice and inspired them to go for Umrah, Hajj or for trips to meet other Muslims for the mission of reviving Islam. PG1 and PG3 mentioned that the Government is planning to launch TV shows that would further inspire the younger spiritual tourists to visit less popular spiritual sites, related to other religions, or less popular Islamic sub-cultures, in Pakistan. PG2, PG3, PO1 and PO2 also suggested that the Government is thinking of actually creating a reference group that would inspire foreign spiritual tourists to visit various spiritual sites belonging to different religions. A virtual information centre is being planned that will hire multi-religious scholars who would be Pakistani spiritual tourism experts and provide guidance to any foreigners interested in spiritual tourism in Pakistan.

It is clear that Pakistani spiritual tourists are very loyal to their reference groups. Interestingly, the Government under the Ministries of Tourism and Religious Affairs is trying to create an International reference group that could inspire foreign spiritual tourists to visit Pakistan.

Family Role

Families as reference groups per se have been covered earlier. The family role in spiritual tourism has been observed to be very indirect or subtle in Australia and UK. Only the Asian families openly acknowledge the central influence of families both in their decision to, and participation in spiritual tourism. The strong influence of families in Pakistan at all stages of the spiritual tourist-consumer behaviour has been discussed earlier.

Recommendations for Further Research

This paper indicates some opportunities available for further research on the personal factors influencing the decision making, as given in the model of Moutinho in Figure 1. It will be interesting to analyse the various responses of the stakeholders in the three countries to the questions about their individual personality, learning, motivation, perception and attitudes, which would influence them to go for spiritual tourism.

CONCLUSION

This exploratory study has shown the importance of assessing each of the external factors within the model. It has emphasized the central role of both links to the Divine as well as links to reference group, family and friends 'travelling similar journeys', both physically and metaphysically. Whilst initially spiritual tourism operators might have assumed that the appropriate marketing strategies suggested by the external factors analysis would be the same for the UK and Australia (being both predominantly Christian historically), yet with a wide cross-section of spiritual tourists from other religious groups, the evidence so far is that there are important subtle differences that need to be taken into account. Clearly the responses from Pakistan are more typical of a more uni-cultural society, though the growing sub-cultures based on Islamic sects and new trends of youth groups travelling to revive Islam is interesting. Moreover, the intentions of the Government are interesting and could be further analysed to study the marketing strategy priorities to further develop spiritual tourism in Pakistan.

Also intriguing are the possibilities that spiritual tourism marketers in all three countries could notice and evaluate not only the differences in their markets but also the similarities. If 'all men are born in the image and likeness of God' most religions claim to be based upon, then the similarities of spiritual tourism consumer behaviour would be more profound than the differences. Interestingly this is more likely to be true with regards to personal-influenced purchases than their external factor counterparts. This has important marketing and metaphysical implications.

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