Impact of Religion on Modern Hospitality and Tourism in India

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Abstract

Purpose: The study sought to analyze the impact of religion on modern hospitality and tourism in India

Methodology: The study adopted a desktop methodology. Desk research refers to secondary data or that which can be collected without fieldwork. Desk research is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources hence it is often considered a low cost technique as compared to field research, as the main cost is involved in executive's time, telephone charges and directories. Thus, the study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. This secondary data was easily accessed through the online journals and library.

Findings: The results show that showed that the current competitive environment, the tourism and hospitality industries are constantly searching for new customer segments and for ways of improving competitiveness. Thus, the provision of religious aspects in the hospitality product could prove a valuable and integral part of the customer's orientation.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Institutional theory and the rational choice theory may be used to anchor future studies in the tourism sector. The study results will also benefit other stakeholders such as the policy makers as well as researchers and scholars from different parts of the world. The top management of religious organizations in the country will also use the study findings to improve tourism performance in all their activities and programs. The study recommends that the adoption of effective social protection development policies in the tourism industry will help to improve efficiency in their major operations and activities.

Keywords: *Religion, Modern Hospitality, Tourism, India.*

INTRODUCTION

Tourism involves people travelling from one region to another for the purpose of recreational, business or leisure. People who travel for these purposes are known as tourists, and they play pivotal roles to the world economy. In fact, tourists prefer travelling to new places in order to experience various environmental changes (Boniface,2016). This means that tourism may be guided by various motivation factors which may include search for business activities. Business people may consider travelling to their preferred destinations in search for business opportunities or religious purposes. Some people also may travel to other places for recreation purposes. Modern tourism has encompassed all the continents and the majority of countries in the world with developing countries gaining the lead in tourism growth. The internationalization of tourism has brought attention not only to the cross-cultural peculiarities that arise from traveling internationally, but also to the inter-religious locus of modern tourism (Camilleri,2018). Religion has been part of human life for an extremely long period of time. In fact, social lives of people are normally influenced by their cultural practices. Cultural practices of any particular group of people are guided by their beliefs, which constitute their religion. Many traditional groups of people believed in existence of gods, and they adhered to their beliefs in fear of these gods (Monastersky,2015). This means that they fear being punished by gods who in most societies are believed to have supernatural powers. Religion has a lot of influence in tourism both in local and international perspectives.

Cultural practices influenced by religions may end up attracting tourists. This is evident in the modern society where people plan for travels to places where traditional religious beliefs are practiced. For instance, modern people who read about animal sacrifices in history may travel to conservative communities where the practice is still prevalent (Farmaki, 2020). Religion also may govern the extent to which foreign influence is allowed in any community. This happens where local people end up being subjected to behavior changes due to influence from foreign visitors. People from secular countries travel to countries where government is ruled by religious law, like in Saudi Arabia or India. Holding particular religion's beliefs influences travel behavior and tourists-local people interactions recognize two mains sources of such influence (Kirillova, 2014). First, taboos and obligations affect individuals' behavior and understanding of the world. Another source of religious influence is related to the fact that religion contributes to the formation of culture, attitudes, and values in society affecting even those who do not practice any particular religion or do not believe in the existence of god. Therefore, the specificities of a religion could also influence the interactions between tourists and the local community (kim,2020) The impact of religion on the development of tourism is really broad, as it affects it in so many ways. Religious sites across many countries of the world serve as attractive tourist sites for both international and local tourists.

The success and growth of these tourist sites is based on the how best these are maintained in other to keep tourists always coming back. Hitherto, religion has kept tourist sites quite active has it gives it life due to how frequent tourists visit. Religious activities like Christians visit to Jerusalem and Muslims visit to Mecca; including festivities contribute towards the development of the tourism and hospitality industry (Eid, 2015). Tourists seek out religious events that include

regularly performed rituals, special dedicatory events, festivals, and carnivals. There seems no end to the types and locales of religious sites and celebrations that appeal to the curiosities of touristic travelers. Tourists also visit the architectural ruins of places where ancient peoples practiced their religions. Tourists often take more interest in witnessing religions in practice than in merely viewing the places of religion. A visit to a church, temple, mosque, or shrine becomes more meaningful and fulfilling if a ritual or some other event happens to be occurring at the time of the visit (Han, 2015). Special celebrations and religious festivals generate even more enthusiasm among visitors. Tourists may also travel to places to satisfy their curiosity in various sectors. For instance, people may decide to tour places with the aim of seeing wild animals or geographic features This means that tourists may be interested in natural things that are unique or absent in their places of residence. Tourism may be instigated by many factors, which include social, economic and political (Line,2016). Historical sites are also known to attract tourists in the world as people desire to travel and witness what they read in historical books. Religion relates to tourism in various ways since almost everybody in the world professes to a certain religion. This means that people conduct themselves in accordance with their religion.

Religious tourists target specific places such as holy cities. These are cities that are associated with religious activities, and in mostly cases they are in holy books. These towns include Jerusalem, Mecca and Varanasi and many believers pay visits to them each year. There are also holy sites that believers pay visits in order to get some reality about their beliefs (Sharpley, 2016). In fact, most religious tourists visit holy cities and sites to understand and appreciate their religion through experiences. This means that by paying visits to cities and holy sites read in holy books gives believers clear pictures on their religions. Some religious tourists travel as missionaries to various places with the aim of spreading the gospel. In fact, most religions send people to various places in the world to spread the good news to people. Their main objective is to spread the gospel and convert many people into their religion. Missionaries travel to places and settle there for some time They get involved in everyday activities of those places in order to win the hearts of the local people in their places of visit (Rashid, 2018). For instance, they may come with ideas and projects aimed at uplifting standards of living of people in their target places. In the meantime, they ensure that they preach to people and build worship centers for the new converts. For instance, Christian missionaries build churches and Muslim missionaries build mosques for their new converts. Missionaries may be interchanged from time to time by their mother organization. This enables them to return to their countries to lead their normal lives (Tang,2017). Tourism has impacted religion in the world in various ways. For instance, there has been the spread of various religions in the world as a result of tourism. This happens when tourists travel to foreign places for their vacations and leave behind a religion.

People carry their beliefs wherever they go and pass it on to others as they interact. Tourists interact with local people in their target destinations; as a result, intermarriages come up. When people with cultural differences intermarry, chances are high that a lot is going to be exchanged. In fact, tourism may influence religion in two ways where by tourists may acquire new beliefs from their vacations. On the other hand, they may leave their beliefs with people in their destinations (Alaverdov, 2020). People in most developing countries have been forced to adopt religions from tourists who visit their places. This has caused many people to abandon their traditional ways of

worshiping. In fact, people have embraced modern religions and they uphold modern practices, as opposed to their olden religious practices. Tourism has played decisive roles in preservation of some religions as tourists travel to witnesses traditional practices. (Sharma,2020). For instance, pilgrimage of the Muslim has been emphasized by tourism as people have to travel to Mecca to see the holy city besides attending to the Hajj. Many people would not turn to pilgrimages year after year if they do not have fun when they travel to attend to such religious functions.

Statement of the Problem

Tourism industry plays a vital role in the economy for all of the countries of the world, providing employment, incomes, taxes revenues and foreign exchange. All of these features come from visitors when visiting the destinations, whereas the visitors will play a role in the income of the economics and increasing the GDP. Tourism has influenced religion in many positive ways. For instance, both local and international religions have been linked hence helping each other in strengthening their faith. Religious leaders in developing countries have been able to interact with their counterparts from developed countries. They have been able to exchange a lot of information regarding how to run their organizations best. Missionaries who travel as tourists have been able to play key roles in development of religion in developing countries. Missionaries have been able to set up schools and health facilities to be run by local religious organizations. Tourism enabled many people to acquire religious education hence helping them to run local religious institutions. Tourism has had negative impacts to religion as people abandon some of their beliefs due to influence from tourists. Increased interaction between locals and tourist has influenced behavior changes, which adversely affected the religion. Sexual immorality has also increased due to increased interaction of locals with tourists. Most religions are strict on sexuality with sex being preserved for married couples. Tourism in many countries has led to increase in commercial sex as locals exchange sex for cash with tourists. This has tremendously affected the religion since there is no much they can do to combat the vice. Youths are abandoning their religions to take part in businesses regarding tourists since there is a lot of money in the tourism sector. Religion has changed shape in the world due to influence from tourists. This happens where tourists work with religious leaders to harmonize local procedures with foreign procedures in running of religions. This brings a lot of confusion as some religious leaders may fight to preserve their traditional ways of conducting their worship. As a result, leaders part ways leading to the emergence of independent denominations allowing some things that were prohibited by their mother denominations.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

This study will benefit from the Institutional theory which was proposed by John Meyer (1970) the rational choice theory by George C. Homans (1960).

Institutional Theory

This theory states that local social issues, local culture, different nationalities, and cultures from visiting tourists, a long and diverse chain of organizations in the industry, governments, and even religion makes tourism a field with high institutional complexity. Destinations will also have degrees of legitimacy under institutional logics that will determine how governments and businesses will compose destination image. Destinations that have a certain image associated with

them for instance, a historical destination for cultural tourism, or a destination that has been a business center for decades for business tourism are the ones that will set the standard for new destinations, having more legitimacy due to their traditional status. On the other hand, destinations that are striving to become cultural or business destinations will face liabilities of newness These destinations will have more difficulties in finding legitimacy then their traditional peers. Gaining legitimacy is not an easy task proposes that entities will pursue legitimacy by conforming to the environment, selecting their environment, and changing the environment. We propose that newer destinations will have an image strategy largely aimed at conforming to the environment, by bending to the will of their stakeholders, acting according to moral standards, and mimicking the best practices of established destinations. Selection of environment is unlikely for destinations, since it is not entirely possible to destinations

The Rational Choice Theory

The theory defines religion as a system of compensation that relies on the supernatural. It has been observed that social or political movements that fail to achieve their goals will often transform into religions. As it becomes clear that the goals of the movement will not be achieved by natural means. Members of the movement will look to the supernatural to achieve what cannot be achieved naturally. The new religious beliefs are compensators for the failure to achieve the original goals. Examples of this include the counterculture movement in America. The early counterculture movement was intent on changing society and removing its injustice and boredom; but as members of the movement proved unable to achieve these goals they turned to Eastern and new religions as compensators. Most religions start out their lives as cults or sects. Over time, they tend to either die out, or become more established, mainstream and in less tension with society. Cults are new groups with a new novel theology, while sects are attempts to return mainstream religions to (what the sect views as) their original purity. Mainstream established groups are called denominations. The comments below about cult formation apply equally well to sect formation. Religions are founded during a period of severe stress in the life of the founder. The founder suffers from psychological problems, which they resolve through the founding of the religion. Founders of religions act like entrepreneurs, developing new religions to sell to consumers According to this theory, most founders of new religions already have experience in several religious groups before they begin their own. They take ideas from the pre-existing religions, and try to improve on them to make them more popular.

Once a cult or sect has been founded, the next problem for the founder is to convert new members to it. Prime candidates for religious conversion are those with an openness to religion, but who do not belong or fit well in any existing religious group. Those with no religion or no interest in religion are difficult to convert, especially since the cult and sect beliefs are so extreme by the standards of the surrounding society. But those already happy members of a religious group are difficult to convert as well, since they have strong social links to their preexisting religion and are unlikely to want to sever them in order to join a new one. The best candidates for religious conversion are those who are members of or have been associated with religious groups (thereby showing an interest or openness to religion), yet exist on the fringe of these groups, without strong social ties to prevent them from joining a new group. Potential converts vary in their level of social

connection. New religions best spread through pre-existing friendship networks. Converts who are marginal with few friends are easy to convert, but having few friends to convert they cannot add much to the further growth of the organization. Converts with a large social network are harder to convert, since they tend to have more invested in mainstream society.

Empirical Review

Mshai (2022) conducted a study to establish the influence of push and pull travel motivation factors on domestic tourism performance in Mombasa County, Kenya. The study used cross-sectional descriptive research to collect data from a sample of 400 domestic tourists. The data was gathered through a well-structured questionnaire administered randomly. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings indicated a significant influence of pull factors ($p=0.000\leq0.05$) and push factors ($p=0.000\leq0.05$) on domestic tourism performance. The pull factors identified include beautiful natural attractions, other diverse attractions, culture of the area, image, ease of access, events taking place, affordability, safety and security and recommendations by others while the important push factors included prestige, knowledge, adventure and novelty, and relaxation and health. The results further revealed that the pull factors had more influence on domestic tourism performance than the push factors.

Mburu (2019) conducted a study to examine the role of stakeholders' participation, identifying stakeholders' collaborations and the impacts on sustainable community based heritage tourism. The study area covered Mt. Kenya region counties targeting the local communities and the park management. The research applied descriptive survey research design to allow comparison of findings of different respondents in different counties. Research questions and interview were used to collect the data which resulted to 85% questionnaire and 100% interview response rate of the total targeted 384 sample size. The respondents indicated to have knowledge on heritage, value Mt. Kenya as a natural heritage site and can interpret heritage based on the availability of community forums and CBO in the region. The respondents indicated to be moderately involve in participating in CBT but highly indicated the desire to be included in Mt. Kenya heritage decision making and the need to have more stakeholders. The respondents indicated availability of local and international stakeholders' collaborations that promote sustainable tourism. Collaboration are importance in the region as a key factor in promoting sustainable inclusion of various stakeholders to promote sustainable community based heritage tourism in Mt. Kenya region.

Chebotibin (2019) conducted a study to investigate the influence of cultural practices on tourism development in Baringo County, Kenya. Exploratory research design utilizing mixed method that is qualitative and quantitative methods was used. The target unit of analysis was the 7 Destination managers, 3 county government officials, 399 Community members and 395 tourists. The sample size used was 804 respondents. Data was collected by administration of questionnaires and interview guide. Data was analyzed using content analysis, descriptive statistics and inferential statistics which are the Pearson correlation and regression. The findings both for tourists and community members indicated that there was a positive and significant relationship between cultural practices (cultural festivals, custom & artefacts and traditional rituals) and tourism development in Baringo County. Cultural festival and tourism development were positively and significant related ($r=0.228$, $p=0.00$). Result also indicated that customs & artefacts and tourism

development were positively and significant related (r=0.223, p=0.00). Similarly, it was established that traditional rituals and tourism development were positively and significantly related (r=0.129, p=0.001).

Abdulkadir (2018) conducted a study to evaluate the influence of cultural festivals on event tourism development in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive research survey design to collect primary data using a mixed quantitative and qualitative method. The study used structured questionnaires to collect primary data from the cultural associations' respondents, while the interview schedule was used to solicit information from government officials. The findings of descriptive quantitative analysis were presented in tables and charts. Qualitative primary data solicited from government officials were thematically analyzed and presented as key voices and verbatim reporting. The study, in conclusion, found that there is a variety of cultural festivals held in Kwara State. However, the cultural festivals, awareness strategies and their influence to tourism contributed to 21.0% to the development of event tourism in Kwara State. Though the three variables explored contributed little to event tourism development types of cultural festivals contributed the most (Beta=0.222) while awareness strategies of cultural festivals (Beta=0.033) contributed the least.

Were (2016) conducted a study to investigate the hospitality industry's client food choices, and the cultural factors that determine food item choices among the clients. A cross-section survey as well as descriptive correlation survey approach was adopted, while the target population constituted hospitality clientele patronizing the food outlets in Kisumu City of Kisumu County. Purposive sampling, systematic random sampling, as well as simple random sampling were employed, with a sample size of 384 respondents. Interview schedules and questionnaires were administered to the study population and recorded a response rate of 97.6%. The results of the study show that there is a relationship between cultural factors and food choices by hospitality clientele in commercial catering outlets within Kisumu City, Kisumu County, hence food choices are determined by cultural factors; traditions, taboos, beliefs and rituals respectively. Conversely, the study results depict that there is influence of environmental factors on the relationship between cultural factors and food choices by hospitality clientele in commercial catering outlets within Kisumu City in Kisumu County.

RESULTS

The results were grouped into various research gap categories namely, geographical and contextual gap and methodological gap.

Research gaps

Conceptual Gaps

A conceptual gap is the missing gap of knowledge which is related to the role a variable play in an already existing body of knowledge and it is a sub-set of research gap. Mshai (2022) conducted a study to establish the influence of push and pull travel motivation factors on domestic tourism performance in Mombasa County, Kenya. Were (2016) conducted a study to investigate the hospitality industry's client food choices, and the cultural factors that determine food item choices

among the clients. This two studies presented a conceptual gap since our study will look impact of religion on modern hospitality and tourism in India.

Geographical and Contextual Gaps

A geographical gap is the missing piece or pieces in the research literature, is the area that has not yet been explored or is under-explored. Chebotibin (2019) conducted a study to investigate the influence of cultural practices on tourism development in Baringo County, Kenya. Abdulkadir (2018) conducted a study to evaluate the influence of cultural festivals on event tourism development in Kwara State, Nigeria. This two studies presented a geographical gap since our study was conducted in India.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The study found out Tourism involves movement of people from their usual places to other places due to various reasons. Some people travel in order to relax while others travel to see historical and geographical sites. Tourism sectors in many countries play vital roles to the world economy. Tourism and religion are related in many ways since both involve social aspects of human life. For instance, people travel to other places for religious purposes hence promoting tourism. There are religious events, which involve mass movement of people from all over the world to specific places. For example, there is the pilgrimage which includes the Hajj for the Muslim and ascending to Jerusalem for Christians. Tourism has a lot of effects to social lives of people including their religions. This is evident where many religions reshape due to influence from tourists' interaction with believers. In addition, may people have changed into modern religions due to influence from tourism. Missionaries who visited places as tourists spread their religion to many people. They built schools and worshiping places hence helping in uplifting lives of people.

Recommendations

Since the institutional theory and the rational choice theory were useful on giving insights on tourism and religion. The researcher recommends that the theories can be used in the future for future studies in the tourism sector.

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