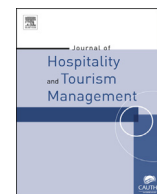


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## Religious tourism and spiritual leadership development: Christian leadership conferences

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### ABSTRACT

Christian leadership conferences are an increasingly relevant form of special events for leaders within ministry roles. Despite considerable anecdotal research, it is largely unknown what intrinsically motivates these leaders to attend a Christian leadership conference and if this motivation/s is homogenous. Through employing spiritual leadership and core competencies to identify intrinsic motivations to attend a Christian leadership conference, five segments are conceptualised. Whilst two motivations that mirror the key event theme and manifest the internal reward for most respondents, the segments differ significantly on key criterion, most notably their usual place of residence. Tourism and event academics and practitioners should carefully use the research findings when seeking to develop theory or attract attendees to Christian leadership conferences.

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## 1. Introduction

Religious tourism is defined as all kinds of travel that is motivated by religion (Rinschede, 1992) that is voluntary, unpaid and for a limited time (Blackwell, 2007). Popular options include pilgrimage to sites of historical and religious significance (Hudman & Jackson, 2002; Raj & Morpeth, 2007). In addition to its historical and spiritual significance, religious tourism's relevance as a form of economic injection to local economies cannot be underestimated. UNWTO (2014) estimated that between 300 and 330 million tourists visit the world's key religious sites each year. Further, approximately 2.7% of Saudi Arabia's Gross Domestic Product is tourism related, with the largest tourism cohort being religious tourists (Jeddah Chamber, 2016).

Despite considerable insight into religious tourism (e.g. Cohen, 2006; Stausberg, 2011), research has largely focused on conceptualising tourists' self-gratifying motivations for attending religious events such as Christian music festivals (e.g. Pastoor et al., *in press*; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). This research seeks to contribute to the tourism and events literature by conceptualising an intrinsically motivated religious tourist. Despite considerable

research focusing on external benefits of attending conferences (e.g. Mair & Thompson, 2009; Severt, Wang, Chen, & Breiter, 2007), these extrinsic "touristic" motivations are not the mission purpose of Christian Leadership Conferences. Consequently, rather than employing existing conference motivational literature (Mair, 2010; Tanford, Montgomery, & Nelson, 2012) to profile religious tourists, this research employs Fry (2003) spiritual leadership framework to identify how religious tourists to a Christian leadership conference are potentially motivated, valued and committed to perform productively within their organisation (e.g. church). It also aims to confirm whether Malphurs and Mancini (2004) four core competencies of character, knowledge, skills and emotions for church leadership development are exhibited within a special religious event context. Therefore, through applying Fry (2003) theory of spiritual leadership, in addition to Malphurs and Mancini (2004) core competencies for church leadership development, this research will conceptualise a tourist that is motivated to attend a religious event (Christian leadership conference) for self-development and altruistic purposes.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Religious tourism

Travelling to a site of spiritual significance such as a cathedral or

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Fig. 1. Fry's (2003, p. 695) Causal model of spiritual leadership.

church (Cohen, 2006; Eade, 1992) or at a non-religious site such as a purpose built attraction, special event site or public place (Shackley, 2003) can be of prime importance for tourists with high religiosity and/or wishing to provide meaning in their lives (Rinschede, 1992; Stausberg, 2011). A religious motive can, however, be complex with multiple meanings that has different intensity levels based on the individual and their level of faith and the social context such as who they are travelling with (Blackwell, 2007). Whilst tourists may exhibit high religiosity and be motivated to travel for a spiritual experience to fulfil their cognitive beliefs and awaken their emotions (e.g. Barnett & Bass, 1996), non-religious tourists may also choose to participate in a religious tourism experience for reasons such as historical understanding, emotional interest, adventure or excitement (Gutic, Caie, & Clegg, 2010).

## 2.2. Spiritual development

A primary concern for religious organisations (e.g. churches) is leadership development (Chand, 2015; Forman, Jones, & Miller, 2007). Individuals within religious leadership positions will often need to perform their roles with little or no financial reward and/or external gratification and at a huge opportunity cost of less time spent with a partner, friends or family. They also need the maturity to share a common vision that they may not wholeheartedly support. These individuals must also tolerate interacting with others that they may not like to fulfil a leadership goal (Watt, 2014). These issues have caused what is termed "leadership pain" (Chand, 2015) that has driven potential or current leaders away from positions of leadership (e.g. ministry) due to burnout, disappointment or lack of interest.

An organisational strategy proposed by Fry (2003) to limit these leadership issues across various organisational contexts is spiritual leadership theory. Although the model has been criticised for being potentially outdated and having a shallow conceptualisation of spirituality (e.g. Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Benefiel, 2005),<sup>1</sup> spiritual leadership theory is seen as a major leadership theory that facilitates both a leader and a follower's character, competence and performance (Strum, Vera, & Crossan, 2017). Both spirituality and leadership are essential for organisational success (Fry, Vitucci, & Cedillo, 2005; Strack, Fottler, Wheatley, & Sodomka, 2002) and utilising spiritual leadership theory can potentially lead to a successful yet transforming and learning organisation (Benefiel, Fry, & Geigle, 2014; Strum et al., 2017).

As outlined in Fig. 1, spiritual leadership theory is a theoretical framework where the actions, values, attitudes and behaviours of leaders represent core organisational values (Strum et al., 2017). Utilising spiritual leadership theory requires an organisation to

create a vision where both leaders and followers (members) experience a calling to make their life meaningful and a benefit to others, which simultaneously establishing a culture based on altruistic love whereby every member is understood and appreciated (Fry, 2003; Fry, Latham, Clinebell, & Krahnke, 2017). In other words, leaders will model spiritual values through their attitudes and behaviour (Fry et al., 2017). Followers will trust their leaders, as it is perceived by followers that leaders will have all members' best interest at heart. These followers are, therefore, motivated to expend effort which gives intrinsic meaning and purpose to life (Afsar, Badir, & Kiani, 2016; Chen & Yang, 2012). Spiritual leadership will ultimately make both a leader and a follower more organisationally committed and productive (Chen & Yang, 2012; Strum et al., 2017).

Empirical research on spiritual leadership has been sparse, with an emphasis on validating Fry (2003) theoretical framework (Anderson & Sun, 2017). Fry (2005) extended spiritual leadership theory by investigating the concept of positive human health and well-being through character ethics, positive psychology and workplace spirituality. Fry et al. (2005) also tested the spiritual leadership theory within the military. Results indicated that spiritual leadership theory produced commitment and unit productivity amongst United States' soldiers. Based on the scale items of Fry et al. (2005) study within the financial and retail industries in Taiwan, Chen and Yang (2012) identified that spiritual leadership positively affected employees' perceptions of meaning/calling and membership, which, in turn, affected their altruism and conscientiousness. Similarly, Chen, Yang and Li (2012) examined 20 companies in Taiwan and 12 in China across the manufacturing, financial/banking and retailing sectors. The authors confirmed that spiritual leadership produced a positive impact on self-career management behaviour and unit productivity.

Bodla and Ali (2012) studied the impact of spiritual leadership on banking executive and their employees in Pakistan. It was concluded that vision and altruistic love positively influenced calling and membership, which resulted in job satisfaction, productivity and organisational commitment. Within a Korean context, Jeon, Passmore, Lee, and Hunsaker (2013) found inner life positively influenced hope/faith, vision and altruistic love of employees of a private corporation. Finally, Egel and Fry (2017) integrated spiritual leadership theory with an Islamic leadership model in cross-cultural organisational fields within Saudi Arabia. This integration can be utilised to advance leadership practices in religious organisations.

## 2.3. Christian leadership conferences

Based on anecdotal research, it can be concluded that internal leadership development has been ineffective for religious organisations such as churches (Hussey & Tkaczynski, 2014; National Church Life Survey, 2012). One strategy that has gained

<sup>1</sup> defined as the "quest for experience of transcendence through the work process, facilitating their sense of being connected in a way that provides feelings of compassion and joy" (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003, p. 3).

prominence in recent years has been the development of Christian leadership conferences. These religious events aim to equip attendees with altruistic human abilities defined as core competencies that can be employed in their usual workplace. These core competencies as articulated by Malphurs and Mancini (2004) include character (being), knowledge (knowing), skills (doing) and emotions (feelings). Although largely prescriptive, Malphurs and Mancini argue (2004) that these competencies facilitate leaders arriving at a unique training model for their particular context, such as a Christian leadership conference. Spiritual leadership is usually promoted as the key theme for these religious events. Further, knowledge, character, skills and emotions are incorporated into the event design and activities (Tkaczynski, Arli, & Hussey, 2017).

Christian leadership conferences have grown in prominence in the past two decades with large conferences (e.g. in excess of 10,000 attendees) such as *Alpha* (United Kingdom) and *Willow Creek* (America) being held annually for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. For example, Hillsong 2015 in Sydney, Australia was themed as “championing the cause of the local church” and attracted over 30,000 attendees for a five day conference from a variety of locations such as Australia, America and Malaysia (Koziol, 2015).

#### 2.4. Religious tourist segmentation

Tourists may have their own reasons for attending an event that may or may not be congruent to the event purpose and theme (e.g. Getz, 2010). For example, research into music festivals has consistently found socialisation as a key motivation for tourist attendance, rather than the core marketed attraction of music activities (Bowen & Daniels, 2005; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). Further, factors such as cost, location and networking opportunities are key motivations or inhibitors for attendance at events such as conferences (Mair, 2010; Severt et al., 2007; Tanford et al., 2012). Consequently, generalisations about motivations to attend events cannot be generalised to each event and tourist cohort.

Market segmentation is frequently applied across different religious tourism contexts such as heritage sites (e.g. Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2004), cathedrals (Francis, Mansfield, Williams, & Village, 2010) and Christian music festivals (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013) to differentiate tourists. Whilst popular variables such as motivations (psychographic) and active participation (behavioural) are frequently utilised due to their ability to predict behaviour (Andereck & Caldwell, 1994), researchers can apply demographic and geographic variables to more strategically conceptualise and target attractive tourist segments (Moscardo, Pearce, & Morrison, 2001). The predictive and descriptive variables employed within the religious tourism literature are now outlined to provide an argument for their inclusion in the conceptual framework.

#### 2.5. Predictive variables

##### 2.5.1. Motivations and active ministry role

Identifying tourists' motivations is important when organisations seek to drive visitation from tourists to a religious event. Whilst tourists may be motivated be better equipped in their current role (Tkaczynski et al., 2017), other motivations that are either altruistic and/or self-gratifying may be relevant. Furthermore, these religious event motivations may be differentiated based on each tourist's experience in their ministry role.

##### 2.5.2. Repeat attendance

Although satisfaction is frequently employed to estimate the likelihood of event revisitation or recommendation to others in

event research (Lu & Cai, 2011; Tkaczynski & Stokes, 2010), satisfied tourists may not return (Dolnicar, Coltman, & Sharma, 2015; Sánchez-García, Pieters, Zeelenberg, & Bigné, 2012). Lack of novelty, the opportunity to experience other events or time and/or financial constraints represent key inhibitors for conference revisitation (Mair & Thompson, 2009). Consequently, past experience is an alternative option method utilised within both tourism (Petrick, 2002; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998) and conference attendance (Lee & Min, 2013; Mair & Thompson, 2009) to accurately predict behaviour due to a potentially linear relationship between attendance and loyalty (Lu & Cai, 2011).

#### 2.6. Descriptive variables

##### 2.6.1. Age and gender

These are the two most frequently used event segmentation variables (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2011) and are particularly relevant for spiritual leadership development. Although roles such as preaching and financial leadership are usually administered by leaders that are older and more experienced, younger leaderships can perform tasks such as young adults, youth and music (Tkaczynski et al., 2017). Whilst male-orientated leadership roles are upheld in some more traditional denominations, egalitarianism that reflects society is present in religious contexts and females are now ordained as ministers or elders and perform the same authoritative tasks as males.

##### 2.6.2. Denomination

Although Roman Catholic and conservative Protestant churches have traditionally comprised the largest church cohort, Pentecostalism has risen in growth in recent years (Bellamy & Castle, 2004; Connell, 2005). Despite Christian leadership conferences being designed and operated by a particular church (and denomination), these religious events are frequently attended by people of different denominations, ministry roles or age and gender due to religious focus exhibited through the ministry training options.

##### 2.6.3. Travel party composition

Fellowship with others is continually promoted within religious contexts for its spiritual health and encouragement benefits (e.g. Ellison, 1995; Francis, Robbins, Lewis, Quigley, & CW, 2004). Whilst intrinsic motivations experienced by an individual can be achieved through attendance at a religious event, attending with others may provide enjoyment and may limit social anxiety or shyness (Burbach, 2015).

##### 2.6.4. Residence

Religious events such as Christian youth-orientated music festivals consistently attract a large cohort of visitors from outside the region due to reasons such as these events not being available in their usual place of residence (Pastoor et al., in-press; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). Whilst tourists may be motivated to attend religious events to obtain spiritual development training skills not available in their usual place of residence, attendees may feel inspired to attend religious events for tourism opportunities such as bonding with friends and escaping from current tasks. Consequently, these religious events will often try to include both intrinsic and external desires when designing marketing material to target key segments in different regions to drive attendance.

### 3. Conceptual framework

Based on empirical evidence identified from sections 2.1–2.4, it can be argued that similarly to other forms of religious tourism, ministry leaders attending a Christian leadership conference may

be motivated for different reasons that may or may not be based on their personal characteristics (e.g. age, gender). Although considerable research (e.g. Mair & Thompson, 2009; Mair, 2010) has aimed to identify both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of attendees to conferences, it has consistently identified that personal gratification such as identifying better employment opportunities or escaping from everyday lifestyle are important motivations for attending the conference (Mair, 2010; Tanford et al., 2012). With limited research identifying why ministry leaders attend a specialised form of a conference, this research contributes to the tourism and events literature by focusing exclusively on the spiritual leadership development motivations exhibited by ministry leaders. Specifically, this research first applies Fry (2003) spiritual development interconnected constructs of hope/faith, vision and altruism as the intrinsic motivations. Through then focusing on the key core competencies of effort (hope/faith), performance (vision) and reward (altruistic love) within a religious context (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004), this process will identify whether knowledge (knowing), skills (doing), emotions (feelings) and character (being) are representative of tourists intrinsic motivations to attend a Christian leadership conference.

**Research Hypothesis 1 (RH1).** The number of segments will increase when intrinsic motivations are incorporated in segmentation analysis.

Differences in conference attendees' motivations to attend a religious event are likely to be evident based on their predictive and descriptive variables (Poria, Reichel, & Biran, 2006; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). Identifying the significance of relevant profiling variables (see Fig. 2) within a religious context is required for theoretical insight and for practical implications.

**Research Hypothesis 2 (RH2).** There are significant differences in tourist characteristics based on their profiling characteristics.

The concept “intrinsically motivated religious tourist” has been

employed to represent the altruistic nature of spiritual development theory and to also encompass the core competencies of leadership development within a religious context. This term differentiates Christian leadership conferences from other forms of religious tourism such as music festivals (Pastoor et al., in-press; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013) and pilgrimage (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Shuo, Ryan, & Liu, 2009) studies. Although these studies include religious motivations that result in positive outcomes such as spiritual awakening and religious education, these studies will largely include extrinsic “touristic” motivations as part of their research which is not an accurate representation of the core competencies of church leadership development.

**4. Methodology**

**4.1. Christian leadership conference**

A Christian leadership conference held annually in Brisbane, Australia, provided the context for this study. This conference was organised by Malyon College, a Baptist theological institution with the purpose of equipping attendees with the necessary ministry skills in their daily workplace environment. This religious one-day conference ran annually between 2013 and 2016 and was held on a Saturday to ensure attendees that are employed during the normal working week and/or involved in Sunday church-based ministries can attend. The conference fee is approximately AUS\$30 each year. Activities include keynote presentations, elective seminars, fellowship, and musical performances. The event is promoted through the state Baptist theology institution, weekly church notices in churches throughout Queensland, and on social media (e.g. Facebook). In 2013 and 2014, the event was held at Nexus (North Brisbane). In 2015 and 2016, it was located at Ashgrove Baptist (Inner West Brisbane) and Gateway Baptist (South East Brisbane) respectively.

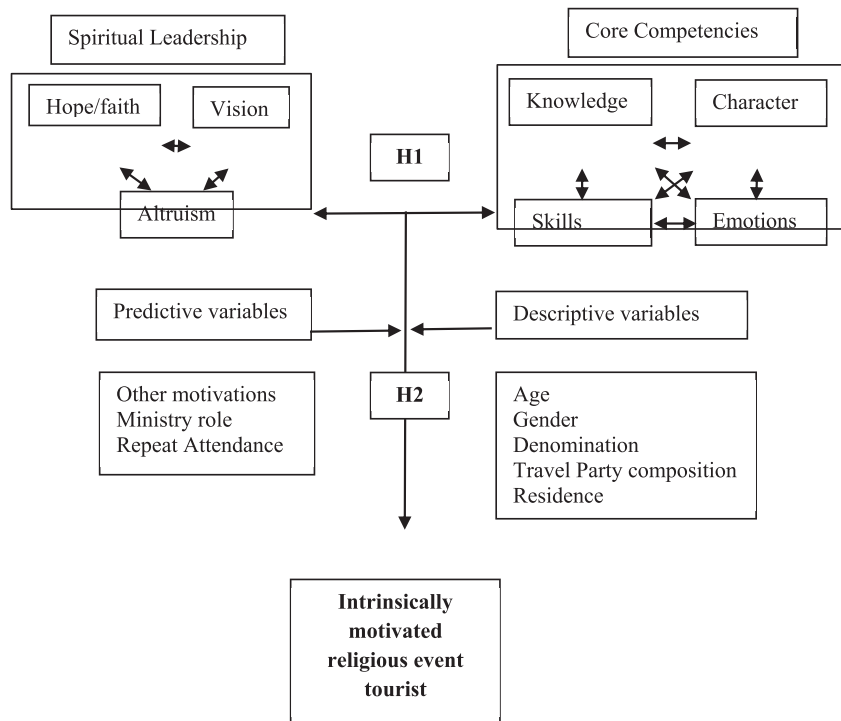


Fig. 2. Conceptual framework. Adapted from Fry (2003) and Malphurs and Mancini (2004) for this research

## 4.2. Questionnaire development

A self-administered questionnaire was designed based on a literature review and discussions with event organisers (Queensland Baptists). The first section which would answer **hypothesis 1** (see Fig. 2), focused upon ten spiritual leadership items that were based on Fry (2003) spiritual leadership model and Malphurs and Mancini (2004) core competencies. For example, the item *better equip me in my organisational role* is representative of both a vision/mission element (Fry, 2003) and skill competency (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004) of an attendee. Similarly to the literature (e.g. Chen & Yang, 2012; Chen et al., 2012), items that did not represent spiritual leadership within the organisational context were removed. Each item was designed in a binary (yes/no) format to identify whether a tourist was motivated to attend for each individual spiritual leadership component. As mentioned previously, although considerable research has focused on external benefits of attending conferences (e.g. Mair & Thompson, 2009; Severt et al., 2007), these extrinsic “touristic” motivations were excluded (see Fig. 2) as these motivations were incongruent with the mission purpose of this event. Furthermore, as a high percentage of attendees would be involved in ministry the next day (Sunday), travelling tourists would have limited opportunity to experience Brisbane. An additional “other” motivation was, however, provided to enable respondents to indicate other possible motivations of relevance not listed. It was concluded, however, that no major additional motivations (e.g. external touristic) were determined when analysing the results.

The second section encompassed five descriptive items that would facilitate answering the **second research hypothesis** (see Fig. 2). Similarly to the literature, gender was dichotomous (Lee & Min, 2013; Mair & Thompson, 2009). Age (Grant & Weaver, 1996; Lee, Choi, & Breiter, 2016), travel party composition (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013; Tkaczynski & Toh, 2014) and past experience (Lee & Min, 2013; Lu & Cai, 2011) were also categorical. Denomination was also categorical based on the religious literature (Bellamy & Castle, 2004; Brewer, Jozefowicz, & Stonebraker, 2006). Alike to the literature (Onyx & Leonard, 2005; Park, Yang, Lee, Jang, & Stokowski, 2002), residence was classed into categories once all churches and where they were located were identified. The third section encompassed an initial active ministry role item designed as binary (yes/no). Respondents that answered “yes” were required to list their ministry role/roles.

The same non-probability purposeful sampling technique was utilised for each of the four religious events held between 2013 and 2016. Prior to the commencement of the afternoon session, a questionnaire and a pen was placed under all chairs in all seminars rooms. All attendees in each of the afternoon events for each conference were asked at the start of the session to take the questionnaire with them and complete it over the main dinner break. These questionnaires were then handed to the data collector at the end of the meal period and prior to the evening session. Due to the anonymity of data collection, the percentage of non-response or refusal to participate responses were difficult to measure. However, based on overall ticket sales, it was estimated that approximately 60% of attendees that paid to attend the event successfully completed the questionnaire for each event ( $n = 617$ ), which constituted a large and representative sample.

## 5. Results

Descriptive statistics for the ten spiritual leadership dimensions are presented in Table 1. The two most popular motivations were to *better equip me in my organisational role* (70.7%) and *spiritual encouragement* (66.0%). The majority of tourists were *actively*

*involved in ministry* (85.4%), *first time attendees* (65.2%), *aged under 25* (70.0%), *Baptist* (78.1%) and *journeyed with friends* (28.0%). Tourists travelled from a variety of locations throughout Queensland and gender was relatively *equal*.

The results were then analysed by using TwoStep cluster analysis using the log-likelihood measure in Predictive Analysis Software 22.0. This method was chosen for two reasons. First, due to its ability to segment data based on any form of data measurement simultaneously. Whilst certain forms of analysis such as k-means clustering requires numeric measurement (Norusis, 2011) and bootstrap analysis needs binary data (Dolnicar, Kaiser, Lazarevski, & Leisch, 2012), to run effectively, the TwoStep cluster algorithm standardises all of the variables unless the option is specifically overridden by the user. Second, the TwoStep cluster algorithm automatically determines the number of clusters within a solution (Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, & Prebensen, 2015). Therefore, if the research is exploratory and the characteristics of groups are not known a priori, such as in the case of this research, TwoStep cluster analysis provides a viable solution to a user in identifying how many clusters are within the data. Consequently, the user's judgement is not the determining factor when identifying the number of clusters. This is extremely beneficial when aiming to identify constructs of clusters and the more relevant segmentation variables in a segment solution (Tkaczynski, 2017).

Three measures are required for validation. First, in employing the Bayesian information criterion (BIC) for statistical inference, the silhouette measure of cohesion was required to be at above the required level of 0.0 to ensure that the within-cluster distance and the between-cluster distance was valid among the different variables (Norusis, 2011). Second, chi-square and *t*-tests are required to be performed on the categorical and the continuous variables respectively to indicate significant differences among clusters. Third, the input (predictor) importance is measured to identify the importance of variables in a cluster. A variable with a rating between 0.8 and 1.0 is highly important to the cluster formation, whereas if the rating is below 0.0 and 0.2 variable is less important (Norusis, 2011).

Five valid segments were produced (see Table 2). The BIC of 0.0 produced statistical inference, and the chi-square tests and *t*-tests for the categorical and continuous variables validated the solution (Norusis, 2011). *Residence* (1.00), *participate in activities* (0.71) and *travel party composition* (0.56) were the most important variable in distinguishing segments, whereas *active ministry role* (0.07) was the least important (Norusis, 2011). Five of the major promoted motivations *spiritual encouragement* (0.13), *hear from the keynote speaker* (0.13), *better equip me in my organisational role* (0.11), *listen to other speakers* (0.09) and *motivate me to be involved in leadership* (0.09) were, whilst valid, similarly rated across four of the five segments. After comparing the results across the four segments based on year of attendance, it was concluded that the segments were analogous ( $p = 0.74$ ) and consequently could be validated. Therefore, both **hypothesis 1** and **2** are accepted.

Next, the cluster solution was compared to attendees' ministry roles. Respondents are actively involved in two ministries ( $u = 2.24$ ) with the three most popular being youth ( $p = .000^*$ ), young adults ( $p = 0.374$ ) and music ( $p = 0.099$ ) being performed by approximately a quarter of respondents in all segments.

The first segment (25.5%) is labelled as *first time Sunshine Coast Baptist group tourists*. They are *Baptists* (94.7%), travel predominantly as a *group* from the *Sunshine Coast* (approximately a one and a half hour drive from central Brisbane) and have not previously attended the religious event (87.3%). This segment is involved in *youth* (48.0%) and *young adult* (32.0%) ministries. The second segment (23.5%) is differentiated based on being *female* (70.3%), *young* (66.7% aged < 21) and travelling as a *group*, predominantly

**Table 1**  
Christian leadership conference motivations and active ministry role.

	First time Sunshine Coast Baptist group attendees	Under 21 female Brisbane group attendees	Moreton Region mixed denominational attendees	Highly motivated/ministry orientated Brisbane males	Experienced older Northern Westerners
Motivation (SL-CC)					
Participate in activities (hope/faith-skills) (0.71)	2.0%	6.5%	9.7%	74.6%	3.4%
Socialise (altruistic love-emotions) (0.55)	2.7%	10.9%	15.1%	78.0%	7.4%
Enjoy the music (altruistic love-emotions) (0.34)	8.7%	16.7%	6.5%	76.3%	22.3%
Meet new people (hope/faith-skills) (0.29)	14.0%	21.7%	22.6%	74.6%	6.1%
Congregate with others (hope/faith-skills) (0.16)	28.0%	37.7%	49.5%	86.4%	28.4%
Spiritual encouragement (vision/mission-character) (0.13)	60.7%	84.8%	52.7%	94.9%	54.1%
To hear the keynote speaker (vision/mission-knowledge) (0.13)	22.7%	29.7%	53.8%	69.5%	52.7%
Better equip me in my organisational role (hope/faith-skills) (0.11)	84.0%	62.3%	53.8%	96.6%	65.5%
Listen to other speakers (vision/mission-knowledge) (0.09)	26.7%	40.6%	41.9%	74.6%	30.4%
Motivate me to be involved in leadership (vision/mission-character) (0.09)	30.0%	35.5%	21.5%	69.5%	27.0%
Active ministry role (0.07)	95.3%	83.3%	69.9%	96.6%	85.3%

Note: Importance (predictive) levels between (1.00 and 0.00) are listed after each variable.

Note: SL = spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003). CC = core competency (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004).

**Table 2**  
Segment solution.

	Residence (1.00)	Travel Party Composition (0.56)	Age (0.43)	Denomination (0.35)	Gender (0.25)	Previous attendance (0.16)
First time Sunshine Coast Baptist group attendees	Sunshine Coast (21.3%), North West Brisbane (12.7%)	Church Group (60.0%), Friends + Church Group (18.7%)	21–25 (41.3%), <21 (26.0%)	Baptist (94.7%)	Male (59.3%)	0 (87.3%)
Under 21 female Brisbane group attendees	North Brisbane (34.8%), South West Brisbane (23.9%)	Friends (52.2%), Friends + Church Group (20.3%)	<21 (66.7%), 21–25 (25.4%)	Baptist (76.1%)	Female (70.3%)	0 (71.0%)
Moreton Region mixed denominational tourists	Moreton Region (31.2%), North West Brisbane (15.3%)	Friends (37.6%), Myself (30.1%)	21–25 (58.1%), 26–30 (15.1%)	Pentecostal (37.6%), Other (32.3%)	Male (94.6%)	0 (69.9%)
Highly motivated/ministry orientated Brisbane males	West Brisbane (35.6%), North West Brisbane (15.3%)	Friends + Church Group (47.5%), Friends (18.6%)	<21 (50.8%), 21–25 (22.0%)	Baptist (91.5%)	Male (78.0%)	0 (55.9%), 1 (23.7%)
Experienced older Northern Westerners	North West Brisbane (65.5%), Moreton Region (15.1%)	Friends (28.4%), Partner (21.6%)	21–25 (50.7%), 26–30 (42.6%)	Baptist (91.2%)	Female (56.8%)	0 (41.9%), >1 (33.8%)

Note: Importance (predictive) levels between (1.00 and 0.00) are listed after each variable.

with *friends* (52.2%). This segment is heavily involved in *youth* (47.8%) and *young adults* (29.7%). They attended predominantly for *encouragement* (84.8%) motivations and a high percentage travel from outer Brisbane regions such as the *North* (34.8%) and the *South West* (23.9%). Consequently, segment two is defined as *under 21 female Brisbane group tourists*.

The third segment (15.8%) is the least active in current ministry (69.9%) and is the most likely to travel *alone* (30.1%). This group is distinguished by their travel from the *Moreton region* (approximately 1 h north of Brisbane), being principally *male* (94.6%) and their non-dominant denomination. This segment is, therefore, classed as *Moreton Region male mixed denominational tourists*. Segment four is the smallest (10.0%) and are the most active in ministry (96.6%). They are mostly *male* (78.0%) and are highly motivated. They rate spiritual leadership components such as to *participate in activities* (74.6%) and *meet new people* (84.6%) highly. This segment was most likely to perform *music* (33.9%) and be involved in leading a *Life Group* (28.8%) as their ministry roles. As the fourth segment is mostly from Brisbane, male and performs

multiple ministry roles, it is labelled as *highly motivated/ministry orientated Brisbane males*.

The fifth segment (25.5%) is classified as *experienced older Northern Westerners*. This larger segment travelled predominantly from North West Brisbane (65.5%) and are the most experienced, with almost approximately a third (33.8%) attending the Christian leadership conference for at least a second time. This segment is slightly *older* (93.3% aged between 21 and 30), least likely to *meet new people* (28.4%) and are the most likely to travel with a *partner* (21.6%).

## 6. Discussions and conclusions

By designing a conceptual framework that includes first spiritual leadership theory (Fry, 2003), second the core competencies of church leadership (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004) and third the key profiling segmentation variables (e.g. Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2011), this research's greatest theoretical contribution is the conceptualisation of an intrinsically motivated religious tourist.

Tourists to these events attend for self-effacing purposes and can be motivated to perform their ministry tasks to serve others more effectively. Coupled with research into external drivers for event attendance (Getz, 2010; Li & Petrick, 2006), the research findings can be applied to different organisational contexts to provide greater understanding of the motivation of a tourist to attend an event that focuses on altruism and leadership development.

The four core competences (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004) of the religious tourist reflect altruistic values which can influence their cognition (e.g. knowledge, development) and affections (e.g. emotions) which will correlate to behaviour (doing). This could produce greater organisational commitment and productivity (Dent, Higgins, & Wharff, 2005; Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013) in the face of potential burnout, depression or discouragement (Chand, 2015; Crank, 2014) which represents the essence of spiritual development (Fry et al., 2017). Specifically, focusing on these core competencies could limit issues relating to workplace conflict, limited financial or social reward, and/or disagreement on vision by focusing on a more altruistic purpose of serving others as the priority.

Whilst the core competencies of knowledge (knowing), skills (doing), emotions (feelings) and character (being) appear mutually inclusive, the two key motivations of *spiritual encouragement* (skills) and *to better equip in my current organisational role* (character) represent key drivers of conference attendance that mirror the event theme. This differs significantly from previous event studies (Bowen & Daniels, 2005; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013) that identify other activities or motivations not promoted as the main event focus. For effective target marketing and positioning, a key clear focus (Chen & Uysal, 2002; Pike & Ryan, 2004) needs to be upheld to “cut through the clutter”, and the spiritual development theory emphasis on altruistic characteristics such as developing skills and character to serve others should be promoted further within religious contexts. Through following this process, religious event organisers and tourism officials can heighten the perceived internal values of ministry leaders that can drive altruistic cognition, emotions and behaviour.

Tourists are actively involved in multiple forms of ministry and are largely not motivated for non-leadership development reasons such as socialisation, musical experiences and participation in activities. Thus, these religious tourists are differentiated from generic business conference attendees where research identifies that more self-orientated, external motivations can drive attendance (Mair & Thompson, 2009; Severt et al., 2007). In addition, the socialisation aspect which is highly important within Christian music festivals (Pastoor et al., in-press; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013) was not replicated within this study. Rather, tourists are attending for personal development reasons that can improve their value and potential workplace productivity.

Music has been identified as an increasingly dominant aspect within a religious setting (Boye-Tillman, 2013; Hartje-Döll, 2013). The opportunity for a Christian music experience has also been consistently found to be a key attraction drawcard for youth orientated Christian events such as Youth Alive in Australia. The findings from this study contradict current research as the opportunity to enjoy music was largely ignored by segments. Interestingly, the segment that listed this motivation as the lowest was the Moreton Region mixed denominational attendees that comprised the greatest percentage of Pentecostals who are traditionally very publicly expressive of their faith. Essentially, music is potentially a hygiene factor (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959) for this type of a religious event that positions itself on leadership development. Music (i.e. praise and worship) is beneficial for a tourist's encouragement and belief, but it is not a primary driver of attendance.

A key theoretical consideration identified retrospectively from this research is that an attendee to this religious event can be holistically defined as a “religious day-tripper”. In considering Sharpley (1994) tourist typology, attendees to a Christian leadership conference represent a specialised tourist type that have specific religious motivations that emphasise spiritual leadership (Fry, 2003; Fry et al., 2005) and the nurturing core competences required for church leadership development (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004). These five intrinsically motivated tourist segments are differentiated from other religious (Raj & Morpeth, 2007; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013) and pilgrimage (Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Shuo et al., 2009) studies that include extrinsic “touristic” motivations.

Although accommodation and tourism attraction expenditure are not evident which will likely limit financial injection into Brisbane, these religious tourists will develop social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2007; Zhao, Ritchie, & Echtner, 2011) by travelling from proximal to semi-distant regions for religious development purposes that are voluntary (i.e. not for financial or personal reward) and for limited duration. Consequently, they first fulfil UNWTO (2016) definition of a tourist and second Rinschede (1992) taxonomy of a religious tourist. This is particularly relevant considering that residence (i.e. place of origin) represented the greatest distinguishing variable in the segment solution. Although tourism (Tkaczynski, Rundle-Thiele, & Beaumont, 2009) and event (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2011) literature reviews have consistently identified that geographic items are rarely the focus of a segmentation study and the least frequently applied variables to profile segments, this variable, whilst not predicting behaviour, is required in combination with predictor variables to provide an accurate profile of an event tourist. Coupled with observed differences such as age, gender and travel party composition, event and tourism practitioners can design marketing and communication strategies within specific regions to target potential tourists to their event.

Age and gender are acknowledged as the two most frequently employed variables within the event tourism literature (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2011) and based on this study's finding, their importance in classifying tourists to a religious event cannot be underestimated. Young Christian leaders of both genders are involved in a variety of ministries and are motivated to attend this religious event to acquire skills that will help them in their ministry. Due to the increasing focus on egalitarianism and Millennials (Howe & Strauss, 2009; McGlone, Spain, & McGlone, 2011) largely representing the greater society, seeking to train intrinsically motivated younger leaders (e.g. under 25s) of both genders with the necessary Christian leadership skills and core leadership development competencies (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004) should be a priority for religious event organisers to attract young tourists to these events.

Whilst echoing previous research that satisfied tourists may not return (Dolnicar et al., 2015; Sánchez-García et al., 2012), an interesting finding is the high percentage of first time attendees across the four conferences. Previous inhibitors to event attendance e.g. lack of novelty or time constraints (Mair & Thompson, 2009) could have limited visitation. Therefore, whilst repurchase intentions and satisfaction can inaccurately measure repeat visitation, past experience as a predicting variable also has limitations within a religious event context. Based on anecdotal research, it is known that amongst Australian Christian congregations, many leaders are involved in sports, weddings or parties on a Saturday afternoon/evening that may limit attendance. Furthermore, several church leaders choose Saturday as a day of rest rather than attend an event that will entail work and learning.

### 6.1. Practical implications

This study has established five unique segments that attend a religious event. Based on the key target marketing criteria of being measurable, substantial, accessible and actionable provided by Kotler (1980) for prioritising market segments, it is recommended that the first and the fifth segment should be focused upon to increase attendance to these religious events.

The first time Sunshine Coast Baptist group tourists are distinguished by their location, first time attendance, group travel and denomination (measurable). It represents the joint largest segment size and is primarily located within a region that has growth potential without any current competing spiritual development religious events (substantial). The Sunshine Coast's population of 286,497, whilst considerably smaller than Brisbane, is one of the fastest regions within Australia (Sunshine Coast Council, 2016). This segment can be accessed (accessible) through event organisers promoting to Sunshine Coast Baptist leaders (e.g. the two major churches located in Buderim) via constant word-of-mouth communication. By promoting the benefits of being able to be better equipped in their current ministry role and/or to feel encouraged to learn more about God and communicating that whilst being young, ministry leaders or elders to encourage their junior leaders or youth to travel as a group to attend this conference. This may then entice travel (actionable).

The experienced older Northern Westerners segment is characterised by its outer Brisbane residence, older age and repeat attendance (measurable). Despite the benefit of being a large segment, these tourists have experienced multiple Christian leadership conferences and know what to expect and consequently may be satisfied with previous events (substantial). Similarly to the first segment, the experienced older Northern Westerners can be targeted through reinforcing the conference theme focusing on leadership development and through promotions in church notices or guest presentations at Youth or Young Adults nights (accessible and actionable). To also develop this segment further, attendees within this segment that are older (e.g. aged between 26 and 35) could also play mentorship roles on the day of the conference for more junior leaders (e.g. aged under 21) within their home church to motivate and encourage them to attend.

Whilst not ignoring the other three segments, it is recommended that the current conference theme and marketing strategy should not be modified to attract these segments. The religious event market is specialised and changing strategies may compromise the growth of the two target segments. Further, these segments reside within varying regions throughout the greater Brisbane region and have polarising gender and age cohorts. Other than the third segment, these attendees are mostly Baptist and are attending for the same reasons as the two targeted segments. It is, therefore, recommended that these segments are monitored and targeted through similar means to the 2013 to 2016 religious events to identify if changes amongst the cohorts are observed.

### 6.2. Limitations and opportunities for future research

This research is not without its limitations. First, the conference is organised by and largely promoted to Baptists within a state of Australia (Queensland). Consequently, the results are biased to religious tourists that reside in or live in proximity to Brisbane. To validate and generalise the research findings across various contexts, it is recommended that a multiple case study research design can be employed. Specifically, religious events organised by different church denominations (e.g. Anglican, Catholic) or religions (e.g. Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism) in different regions (e.g. rural vs urban), cities (e.g. Sydney and Melbourne in Australia),

or countries (e.g. Australia, New Zealand and England) could be targeted to validate the research findings. Furthermore, the key spiritual leadership dimensions (Fry, 2003) and church leadership core competencies (Malphurs & Mancini, 2004) could be applied across different religious and secular contexts. This process could identify whether religiosity (Allport & Ross, 1967) or religion is an extraneous or endogenous variable within leadership development.

Second, by not providing post-purchase evaluation items, reasons for low repeat visitation did not manifest. It is, therefore, suggested that satisfaction and repurchase measures are included in future research. This section may also identify why respondents choose not to return for future events. An additional feedback section could also be provided. Although these additional items may not improve repeat visitation, organisers will have a better understanding of the positives and the negatives of the religious event which can inform future practice.

Third, although Fry (2003) spiritual leadership theory and Malphurs and Mancini (2004) core competencies have been employed for this research, how these theories influence workplace productivity were not tested within this study. Lefebvre (2013, p. 125) recently argued that the 'core of social marketing is the people we intend to serve' and that 'segmentation reinforces and builds on the core tenet of marketing that we should be customer or people focused'. As religion focuses on positive benefits such as improved well-being (Francis, 1992; MacIrvine, Nelson, Stewart, & Stewart, 2013) and altruistic behaviour such as a desire to volunteer in community-orientated activities (Brooks, 2006; Gibson, 2008), a further research opportunity to alleviate the final limitation is to conduct qualitative research with attendees several months after the conference. This process could identify how the religious event has encouraged them or improved their current ministry role such as a greater organisational commitment and productivity (Fry & Nisiewicz, 2013) and to be resilient in the face of church leadership difficulties such as stress and discouragement (Chand, 2015; Crank, 2014).

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