

Spiritual well-being through vacations: Exploring the travel motives of the young Christian travellers

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SUMMARY

This study focuses on UK based young Christian tourists and their religious travel behaviour. Through focus group research it was established that religious travel motives are changing from a religious perspective to a holistic spiritual one. The key motivations for these journeys could be featured around Self, the Other (i.e. interaction with local community, people and the nature) and God. Moreover, demand for more complex religious travel opportunities was evident and future religious holiday packages should be packaged to involve educational improvement (i.e. learning something new through contact with other cultures and people), relationship development (i.e. communication with other travel party members, local people or tour guides) or spiritual renewal (through the beauty of nature, people and new cultures).

Key words:

religious travel; travel motivation; modern pilgrimage; young Christians

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this paper is to explore the motivations of religious tourism, and to offer guidance regarding packaging religious holidays. Concepts of pilgrimage are to be found in most religious traditions however they have been particularly strong within Christianity and Islam. It would be argued that the concept of pilgrimage itself regardless of its religious association

is an important rite of passage for the youth of many cultures. This is particularly evident in the backpacker movements. The central element of this process (both sacred and secular) is the discovery of self in relation to the others. In effect the experience of different cultures and settings allow the individual to grow and mature, thereby 'find themselves'.

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While the points we make in this paper are applicable to a wide audience, e.g. those from other religious traditions and from those who are not specifically religious, this paper focuses on the experiences of young British Christian tourists. In particular we address how young, UK based Christian travellers use vacations to achieve long term spiritual well-being. In the social context of long working hours and fragmentation of traditional communities (Smith 2003) travel can be used as an escape from daily routine and provide an opening for the exploration of self and potentially satisfying spiritual needs. These trends are supported by steady increase in travel for pilgrimage, personal growth and non-traditional spiritual practices since the 1980s (Attix 2002).

While the first or material motivations for pilgrimage seems to have mostly disappeared in the modern setting these second or inner-motivations remain and have grown, especially among the young (Tacey 2004). With the changing values of society, the merging trend today is the interest on a more individualistic or experiential approach rather than an institutionalized one. It is this distinction between the institutional structure and the individual experience that illustrates the difference between religion and spirituality. In essence spirituality describes the experience of the transcendent or divine and therefore is clearly not restricted to the institutional structures of formal religion.

Although the focus of this paper is on young British people drawn from the Christian church, religious travel is defined from a broader spiritual sphere as *any form of travel or time away from one's normal life in order to nurture one's personal spiritual journey*. The justification for focusing on young British Christians is that contemporary western Christianity has the largest share of religious tourists (Rinschede 1992).

BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

Religious tourism has been defined as a subgroup of cultural tourism, where participants are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons (Rinschede 1992). Turner and Turner (1978: 20) further refine the relationship between religion and tourism as: "a tourist is half a pilgrim" and "a pilgrim is half a tourist" where religious tourists have a duality which combines elements of the pilgrimage process and

elements of the typical tourists' behavior. In other words, religious tourism is travel that is strongly motivated by search for spiritual knowledge (Vukonić 1996; Jackowski and Smith 1992).

Much of past research into religion motivated travel has been focused on 'traditional' pilgrimage. Yet, 'pilgrimage', has no universally accepted definition due to the complexity of potential activities (Stoddard 1997). Thus the term 'pilgrimage' is used in at least three senses: 1) the "interior pilgrimage", the "journey of the soul" in a lifetime of growth from spiritual infancy to maturity; 2) the literal pilgrimage to some sacred places as a paradigm of the intent of religion itself; 3) every trek to one's local sanctuary on a small scale. Unfortunately, tourism statistics do not provide reliable figures on pilgrimage as records are only kept in some significant religious centers and sites (Crim 1981: 501). Traditionally it is the temples, cathedrals, and palaces that are regarded as sacred space where an individual finds access to God or the divine.

However, as argued by Eliade (1957) this is an experiential or phenomenological distinction rather than a structuralist one. Sacred and profane are essentially an issue of perception and what one person considers sacred another might consider profane. The sacred space is not necessarily the opposite of the profane due to the unavoidable intertwining of daily political and social realities (Eliade 1957; Chidester and Linenthal 1995). For example, Digance (2003) states that the natural landscape (particularly mountains) are also an important locus for the experience of the sacred. This view is in accordance with the Schama's (1995) concept of landscape's cultural memory and Tuan's concept of geopiety (Knowles 1992). In other words, wilderness experiences are conducive to physical, mental and spiritual development and that positive interpersonal relationships together with total immersion into wilderness facilitated the perception of landscape elements as potential sources of spiritual inspiration (Digance 2003; Frederickson and Anderson 1999; Fox 1997; Stringer and McAvoy 1992). Tacey (2004: 181) further emphasizes the importance of eco-spirituality to young people:

"Many of the writings I receive are concerned with 'ecospiritual' encounters. Such encounters change lives and expose young people to the mystery and presence of the sacred within themselves, even as they are moved by the sacred in nature".

There is a further problem of definition, the terms religion, faith, spiritual(ity) and God are clearly complex and problematic. Clear definitions of these issues have evaded most theologians as well as religious thinkers and therefore are beyond resolution within this paper. Furthermore within the postmodern context the agreed definitions have also become challenged and contestable. Within this paper and the limits of our ability to resolve this we regard these terms as experiential although grounded in the particular Christian tradition of the respondents. Within the literature 'spirituality' tends to be presented as a broader category than religion and as not being specific to any given religious tradition. Tacey (2004) argues that rather than a return to religious fundamentalisms or organized religion this represents a spontaneous social movement. In a reaction to secular perceptions and notions young people are increasingly embracing a view of society that allows the possibility of the sacred. It is wrong to see this as a specifically Christian or even monotheistic trend although all of the major religious traditions have a fundamental place for spirituality. Eliade (1957) argued that it is the very distinction between or experience of the sacred that makes us human. Fowler (1981) further argued that stages of spiritual development are not specific to religious tradition, but reflected a common pattern across all traditions. As part of this pattern all religious traditions lead to a mystical stage where aspects of spirituality such a pilgrimage have a central place. In this context, simplistic questions of the nature of God are unanswerable because the point is to address the question raised by the Christian Church Father Augustine "what do I love when I love my God". This spirituality turn has been recognized in both sacred and insecular circuits. Derrida has hailed the return of the religious and his deconstruction of culture has lead to a deeper awareness and regard for the presence of mystery. Religion according to Derrida and Vattimo's definition is "what succeeds in returning" (1998: 39). Within the circles of traditional religious structures the Catholic theologian Rahner (1981) argues that the Christian of the future will be a mystic or nothing at all. However, Tacey (2004) illustrates that to confuse this movement with the New Age is a gross oversimplification. While the spirituality movement offers a genuine place for the sacred in daily life the New Age movement tends to be dominated by new consumerism and externalization of the religious experience.

CURRENT TRENDS IN RELIGIOUS TOURISM

With the declining significance of religion within the social system, contemporary pilgrimage is undertaken in an increasingly resacralised world. Nowadays, pilgrimages are often thought of as journeys undertaken in anticipation of a future betterment, but they need not necessarily be sacred (Diagance 2003). While representing the non-ordinary and sacred interludes to make life worth living, even the touristic journeys constitute a pilgrimage (Graburn 1989). In other words, the key elements in this cultural construct are belief and knowledge.

The contents of the pilgrimage are varied, besides the appreciation of the greatness of God through the natural beauty; a positive attitude towards intercultural exchange in travel is a modern phenomenon (Cohen 1998). This is found especially in the liberal streams of contemporary Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism, which favour "dialogue" between the world's cultures and faiths (Pzeclawski 1994: 82-89). Moreover, only in these streams a positive theological attitude towards tourism can be found.

In the theoretical views, tourism is regarded as a means to realize religious values, self-expression and as an opportunity to widen the spirit through contact with other people or religions (Simon, Barral-Baron and Barbier 1985). However, the present is already a time of indifference within the Christian tradition especially in developed societies, although people are not indifferent to their faith. In other words, "the direction of the change taking place in religion is toward the individualization of religious ideas, beliefs and experiences" (Vukonić 1996: 189). The new type of believer tries to achieve contact with the sacred, but in a direct and independent experience of the divinity. In the search for the sacred, there has been a great change in the content of the religious experience, which is constituted mystically and spiritually.

Moreover, the desire for the sacred, for meaning and for spiritual values is growing especially among the young, who are more dynamic and mobile (Vukonić 1996).

MOTIVATION FOR RELIGIOUS TRAVEL

Traditionally, the aim of pilgrimage was for believers to follow their religious needs, or to perform acts designated by their religion in specific holy places (Davies 1994). Usually, believers went on pilgrimages for two basic reasons: to satisfy their spiritual and material needs. On one hand, the spiritual motive was in the sense of feeling closer to the presence of the divinity and of actively participating in a wider community through their prayers and rituals with other worshippers (Davies 1994; Vukonić 1992). On the other hand, the material motive was to vow for physical healing or mundane advancement, through the rituals of promise and hope for the holy or divine intervention (Vukonić 1992). Particular places that have held a strong historical appeal have been clearly associated with the biblical narratives such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem, with the established church such as Rome and Canterbury and with well known saints such as Santiago de Compostela (St James), or noted miracles such as Lourdes and the Basilica of Our Lady of Fátima in Portugal. However, most areas had their local pilgrimage centres where particular miracles or events were reputed to occur. Certain locations such as the island of Iona have been described as 'thin places' where through either historical association or through physical environment God is perceived to be closer. The Iona Community (1996: 7) describes it like this:

"God is present everywhere, and can be sought and encountered even, and perhaps most vividly, in the places of greatest need. But there are also some places where in their clarity and peace render people particularly open to encounter with God where the veil which separates the earth and the kingdom [heaven] seems tissue-thin".

While some aspects of this still hold true in the modern context, particularly for the old and the sick, the focus for the youth pilgrimage tends to be a little different. Many of the historical locations still have a powerful attraction and draw millions of visitors (Tilson 2005). However, other centres such as the religious community in Taizé in France and the island of Iona in Scotland have emerged offering the opportunity for self exploration and spiritual development. Moreover, there is a wide network of retreats and conference centres around the world which also cater for this market.

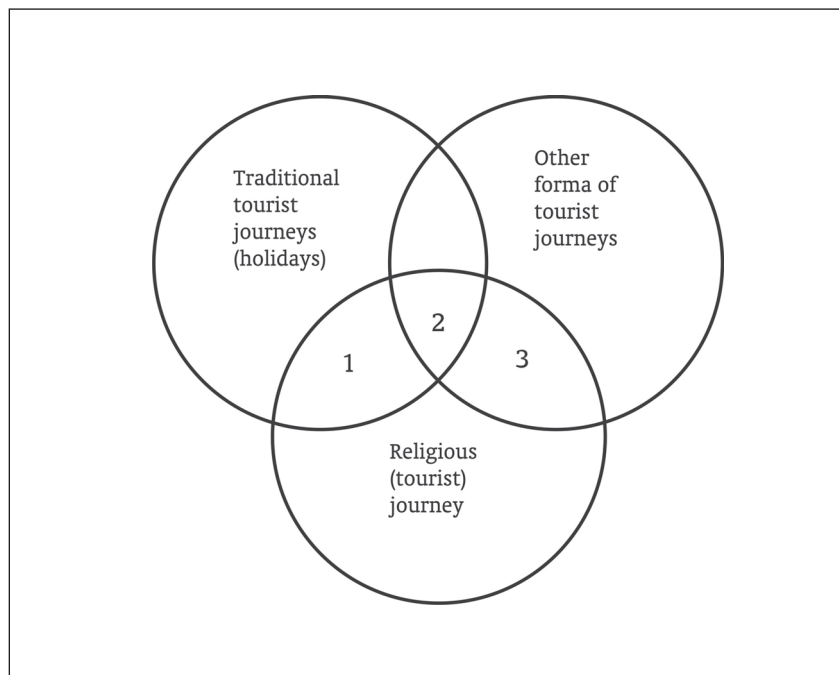
The pilgrims of today use modern transportation to holy places, use existing tourism infrastructure and participate in some leisure activities. Even for the participants of organized pilgrimages, a free day is often planned in the program so that the pilgrims can also make day trips into the surrounding areas. Religious vacations and secular tourism are especially interconnected in the United States, where many significant pilgrimage centres are located in the immediate area of large tourist attractions (Niagara Falls, St. Louis, Washington DC, Miami, Orlando, Salt Lake City, etc.). In Rome, where the religious sites are simultaneously significant cultural sites, the connection between pilgrimage and cultural tourism is especially pronounced (Vukonić 1996).

For many pilgrims today, it is important to travel with a group of believers who think similarly and who are consequently in the same age division. In some ways this is a re-creation of the community aspect of the tradition of pilgrimage. What is important here is the companionship and community of believers, while the destination need not have obvious religious character. Such journeys are mostly of a tourism nature, although the itinerary often includes visits to sacral buildings. However, the historic pilgrimage sites still play an important role in the travel motivation (Davies 1994; Vukonić 1996)

Today, pilgrimages and other religious journeys are tied to other types of tourism more closely than ever before (Vukonić 1996; Rinschede 1992) and the pilgrimages are more multifunctional when trying to delineate individual motives (Nolan and Nolan 1992; Smith 1992). Apart from the religious motivation, the pilgrims' behaviors do not differ from other segments of tourist demand during the journey (Vukonić 1996).

Further, Vukonić (1996) states that a religious tourist may also generate demand for another segment of tourist demand, where religion is not the major, not even an important motive. Besides the intensity and degree of the religious belief, the religious tourists may express their religious needs in a tourist destination, or they just behave like ordinary tourists in some aspects. Taking into consideration all the variants of religious feeling and the travel motivation, a unified segment is identified by Vukonić (1996) where the relationship between this unified segment and other segments of tourist demand are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL SEGMENTS OF RELIGIOUS TOURISM

Source: Vukonić 1996, p 58.

In Figure 1, the numbers from 1 to 3 demonstrate the three possible cases, arising from the mutual interrelationship of particular basic kinds of journeys. In the first case (1) there are two interwoven motives in two types of journeys: the traditional tourist motive of taking a rest and the traditional religious motives of visiting a holy site.

This interaction is clarified in two ways: either in the tourists' need to satisfy their religious needs during the ordinary holiday, or in the need for religious travellers to meet their traditional tourist needs as well as their religious needs in part of their religiously motivated journey.

A similar situation is found in the third case (3): the interrelationship is between traditional religious motives and specific kinds of tourist motives. Number (2) designates the unified area that all three categories of motives meet and interact: traditional holiday, specific tourist motives and religious motives. In this area, it should be considered quite normal for a traveller to combine various motives. However, the size of these segments depends on certain limitation of different religions, with different degrees of obligation (Vukonić 1996).

METHODS

It is difficult to understand the diversified and changing demands of contemporary religious tourists. Traditionally, the purposes of pilgrimage have been spiritual (strengthening the faith or belief) and material (fulfilling of vows). Hence this study aims to explore the religious and spiritual goals of young tourists through focus group interviews.

This study adopts a case study focus on the vacation taking behaviour of young Christians living in South Eastern UK. Case study research was selected as there is little evidence about the modern religious travel phenomenon and the traditional understanding of pilgrimages may not explain this behaviour (Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 1989).

The case study approach reflects the study design where flexibility (Hartley 1994), deeper understanding and fuller contextual information (Miles 1979) is required. In this exploratory phase of research the desired outcome is to facilitate a deeper understanding of the 'modern' religious travel and, hopefully, facilitate theory development (Van Maanen 1979).

By adopting focus group interviews this study utilised the informal and spontaneous responses enabled by the focus group situation. Therefore, recorded responses are expected to reflect the genuine opinions, ideas, and feelings of the members regarding their religious travel experience (Blackwell, Miniard and Engel 2001; Parasuraman 1991; Patton 2002; Sekaran 2003).

According to Patton (2002), a series of different focus groups should be conducted to get a variety of perspectives and to increase confidence in whatever pattern emerges.

Moreover, three sessions are deemed appropriate by Aaker and Day (1990). They further state that from the first discussion a great deal is learnt, the second session produces much more, but not much is new, and usually by the third or fourth session much of what is said has already been heard before and there is little to be gained from continuing. Thus, in this study, three focus group sessions were conducted with six people in each group.

The interviewees were allocated into three focus groups according to their reported expertise in religious travel (Sekaran 2003). Thus establishing groups, who already

have something in common and, therefore, create an initial psychological comfort for the group to enable free flowing conversation (Clark, Riley, Wilkie and Wood 1998).

Considering that the young people possibly have less travel experience due to limited travel opportunities and budget, the subjects' travel experience was inferred from all holidays and short breaks taken during the past five years. Thus resulting in 'Group One': the inexperienced religious travellers, 'Group Two': the less experienced religious travellers, and 'Group Three': the experienced religious travellers.

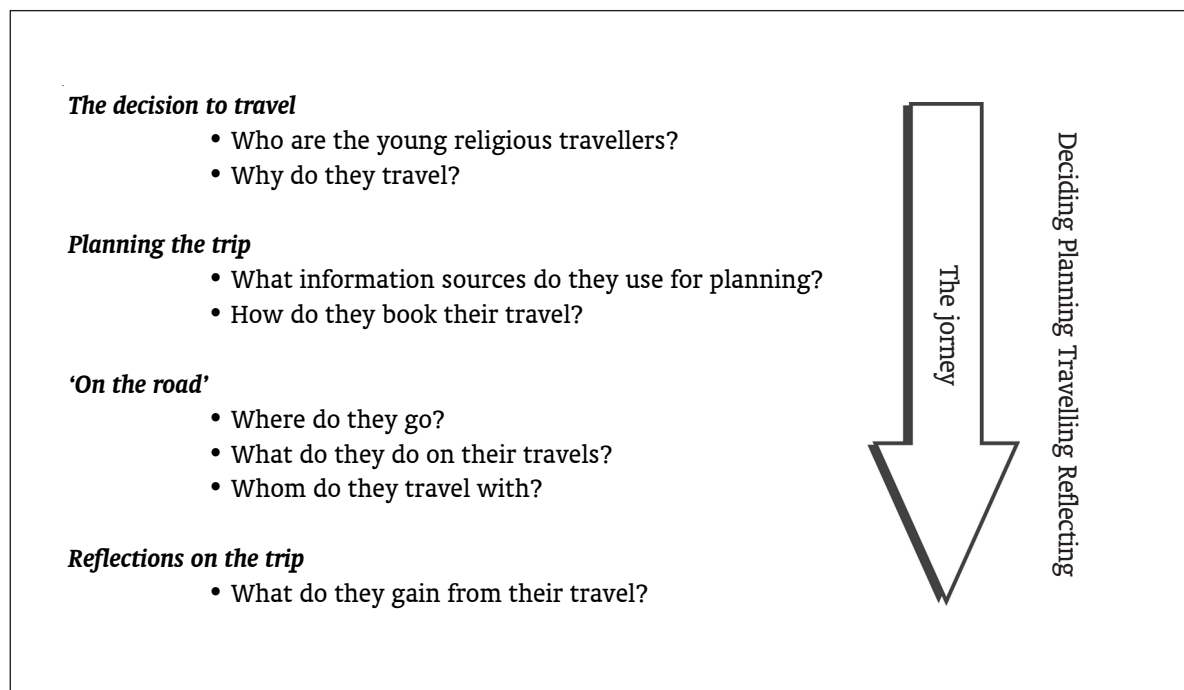
Besides the expertise of travel experience, age ranges (20-25 and 26-35) and gender (male and female) were also considered for participation in the three focus group gatherings (See Table 1).

To explore the interviewees' ideas and attitudes broadly, the question design reflected a religious journey as a whole (See Figure 2). A pilot-tested was conducted prior to execution in order to identify and correct any ambiguities that might exist in the research design.

Table 1
FOCUS GROUP CATEGORIZATION

Focus Group One (Inexperienced Religious Traveller)	
Participant 1: Male (age 20-25)	Participant 4: Female (age 20-25)
Participant 2: Male (age 26-35)	Participant 5: Female (age 26-35)
Participant 3: Male (age 26-35)	Participant 6: Female (age 20-25)
Focus Group Two (Less Experienced Religious Travellers)	
Participant 1: Male (age 20-25)	Participant 4: Female (age 20-25)
Participant 2: Male (age 26-35)	Participant 5: Female (age 26-35)
Participant 3: Male (age 20-25)	Participant 6: Female (age 26-35)
Focus Group Three (Experienced Religious Travellers)	
Participant 1: Male (age 20-25)	Participant 4: Female (age 20-25)
Participant 2: Male (age 26-35)	Participant 5: Female (age 26-35)
Participant 3: Male (age 20-25)	Participant 6: Female (age 26-35)

Figure 2
THE INTERVIEW AS A JOURNEY



Sampling

The population for this study consisted of young Christians living in the South-East England (UK) where the mainstream of Christianity is the Church of England. This project utilized the 'snowball' sampling: relying on referrals from known contacts (Mason 2002). With the introductions and recommendations of evangelical priests and evangelical Christians, initial contact was by e-mails that were sent to 90 young evangelical Christians near London and Guildford. Out of the 70 responses received, 18 suitable interviewees were chosen and confirmed by telephone for three focus group discussions.

The analysis process was conducted as follows: 1) Preparation of the data for analysis by transcribing and reducing, 2) Familiarization with the data, 3) Identifying themes and categories, 4) Displaying and describing, 5) Interpreting and comparing findings across categories (Miles and Huberman 1994; Denscombe 1998).

FINDINGS

The key finding is that the travel motivation for religious vacation is changing from a religious perspective to a holistic spiritual one. All the key motivations of religious travel interact between *self*, *the Other* and *God*. The key influential factor is not a religious place but those sacred spaces in which 'people', 'culture' and 'nature' are encountered on the journey.

Furthermore, demand for more complex religious travel opportunities in the future was evident (i.e. a type of religious travel career ladder emerging). In other words, the young Christians as the modern day pilgrims are becoming more open, active and creative.

Motivations for religious travel

Throughout the three focus group discussions, there was no significant difference regarding their motivation for religious travel in terms of gender and age.

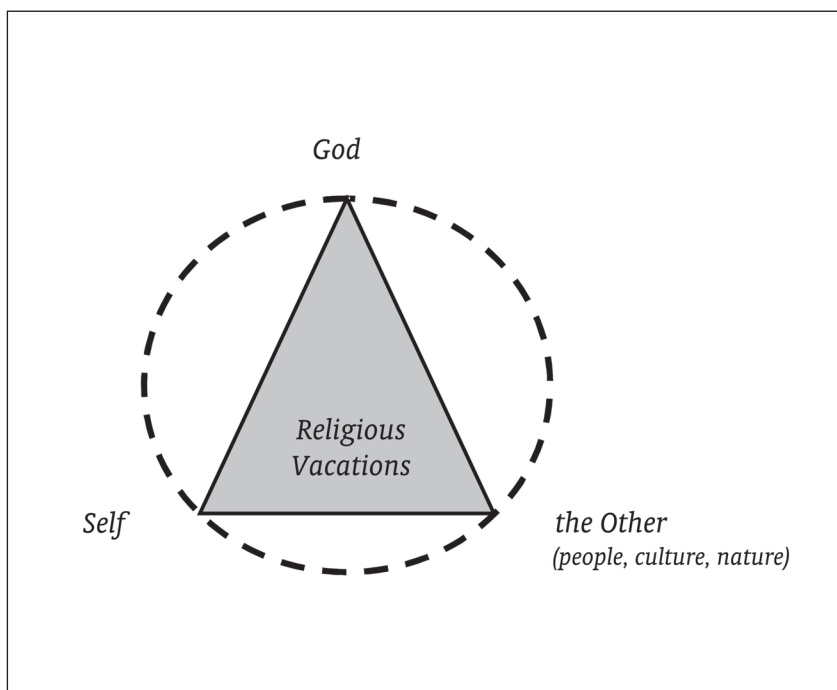
Group One placed emphasis on "to explore and learn something new (culture, people and nature)", "to be close to the truth", and "to have fellowship with others of similar beliefs". Group Two identified their motivations as "to encounter and learn something new (culture, people and nature)", "to share faith with others", and "to have physical and spiritual renewal". Similarly, Group Three showed interest in "to have personal communion with God", "to gain inner peace and outer harmony", and "to have spiritual renewal".

To summarise, the motivations could be generally classified as: seeking *educational improvement*, *relationship development* and *spiritual renewal*. These three key motivations all have three dimensions, as exemplified in Figure 3.

in the "personal communion with God"; *the Other* in "fellowship with others of similar belief"; and *self* in "inner peace and outer harmony" etc. As Figure 3 demonstrates, all of these three dimensions interact as a circular process, and co-exist in the above motivations on religious vacations.

It should be noted that the "educational improvement" was identified as the most important one by two groups (Groups One and Two). Learning something new was highly emphasized by contacting other cultures and meeting different people. However, seeking religious or spiritual knowledge was still one of the main reasons for religious vacations (i.e. "to be close to the truth", "to share faith with others", "to have personal communion with God" etc).

Figure 3
THREE DIMENSIONS OF RELIGIOUS VACATIONS' MOTIVATIONS



In Figure 3, the three dimensions are: a *God-directed* dimension, a *self-directed* dimension, and *the Other-directed* dimension (ie, people, culture and nature). For example, in terms of educational improvement, interest is shown in *the Other* (culture, people and natural beauty), in *self* (self-existential meaning), in *God* (understanding God's words). And for relationship development, the relationship with *God* could be found

In terms of age and experience, there was only a slight difference for "educational improvement". Participants under twenty-six placed more emphasis on interactive experience with others, whereas some older travellers tended to seek more individualised experiences. It seems that the younger people are eager to learn through others, whereas the older ones like to educate themselves through personal space.

For "relationship development", women emphasized the internal relationship (friendship, partnership, fellowship) on the travel more than men did, whereas men indicated a greater interest in external relationships (relationships with local people). However, both men and women believed that relationship with God could be strengthened through friendship, partnership and fellowship on the travel. For "spiritual renewal", all respondents agreed that the beauty of nature, people and culture were all key factors for them.

Influential factors of destination decision

Regarding the factors of greatest influence when choosing a vacation destination, besides the above motivators, there were several ones mentioned from internal and external aspects. There were no significant difference in terms of respondents' age and gender. Externally, the factors could be summarized as culture, people and natural scenic beauty, 'recommendations' (from friends or families), the seasonal weather and inter-destination distances. Unlike the traditional religious travel the participants' primary concern is the 'other people' who would be encountered on the journey. The 'other people' here refer to a travel companion, the community, the group guide, and local people. However, most participants mentioned that they preferred to travel with people who shared the same or similar beliefs or who had interest in the faith they had accepted. The apparent preference for going on vacations in groups may be linked to a combination of both the social nature of the group as well as the perceived safety and belonging that it offers. Yet, personal space still was important to them on the vacation. With regards to gender, women preferred to travel with people with whom they had a closer relationship such as good friends, a partner or even a knowledgeable tour guide.

However, men showed no specific interest in closer relationships on the travel, but the communication with tour guide, other travel companion and local people were emphasized. The experienced travellers were comfortable in both travelling alone as well as with a small private group, but contact with local people was emphasized.

The talented, passionate, and knowledgeable group leaders and tour guides on the vacation were also

highly appreciated. This reflects the motivation for educational improvement, and in this context a guide can also be perceived as a 'teacher'. The guide was referred to variously as a resource person, interpreter, or leader. As Cohen (1985) states, the tour guides can be the out-directed 'pathfinders' and inter-directed 'mentors'. The most participants also mentioned that they wanted to learn but preferred not to be forced to follow. For local people, the real side of daily life was emphasized and the authentic local life was sought for. Regarding culture and nature, there was no big difference between the three groups in terms of age but slight differences in experience and gender aspects. The inexperienced travellers relied more on familiar cultures at destinations such as other European countries. The experienced travellers preferred unfamiliar or exotic cultures at destinations such as Asia and Africa (another expression of the travel career ladder progression). Moreover, women showed more interest in some symbolic religious features of destinations especially when those had a historical connection with a holy person. For women, such connection was assumed to stimulate their feeling of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Physical objectives such as religious rituals, religious relics, shrines and even buildings could be regarded as important catalysts for women to connect themselves with God. For most participants, following Jesus Christ's travel routines was regarded as an exciting travel experience. Considering this, the sacred space such as traditional pilgrimage sites, where an individual finds access to God or the divine figure, were still utilised and recognized by the young Christian respondents of this study.

For information gathering, the three groups relied heavily on the Internet, and friends' recommendations as well as brochures and other publicity. There were also slight differences between genders: women preferred autobiographical literature and enjoyed the stories about the destinations. However, both men and women agreed that visiting historic, cultural and Biblical sites enabled them to connect more easily with the historic figures. Those connections made them feel the presence and authenticity of the Holy Spirit and a kind of spiritual charge was produced.

Internally, the factors pertained to personal hobbies or interests, past experiences, existing knowledge, availability of time and finance. Interestingly, 'faith' was not particularly mentioned by most respondents. Some of the respondents even suggested that 'faith' was not

necessarily an influence on where they wanted to travel, as God creates the whole world. Yet, personal interests and hobbies were emphasized by all three groups. And these were reflected from cultural, educational, physical, social and spiritual dimensions. From cultural dimensions, the most popular activities were visiting historic sites and monuments (i.e. Egypt's Pyramids, the Jordan River, Chinese Terra Cotta Museum, Machu Picchu, etc.). From physical dimensions, walking and trekking and more leisurely pursuits such as sitting in cafes/pubs were frequently given a high priority mention. In terms of gender, walking/trekking and cultural events were the most popular among female respondents, whereas male respondents tended to participate more in sports activities. It seems that women prefer to have a more leisurely or artistic way to develop relationships while men prefer to make friends through more competitive, exciting ways such as skiing, football etc.

From an educational dimension, learning something to improve a particular skill or ability was highly appreciated by all groups. Learning a foreign European language was interesting for some inexperienced and less experienced participants. This was regarded as helpful in understanding local culture and history, while communicating with people sharing a similar cultural background. Learning some skills in the arts such as painting, dancing, even cooking was emphasized by some women as a way to understand local culture. From spiritual aspects, gaining some spiritual knowledge was amazing for some experienced travellers: going to the religious retreats (i.e. Taizé community in France) or conference centres to be challenged, inspired and enlightened. It seems that the less experienced love to learn through familiarity whereas the more experienced love to learn more through more exotic scenarios or unfamiliarity.

In short, the theme of activities was chosen and undertaken for learning, social cultural contact, and spiritual experience. In conclusion, the young people indicated that they desire to learn through *the Other*. They also enjoyed a very wide range of activities during their trip, which fits in with their novelty and experience-seeking motives. More experienced respondents preferred fewer activities but more private space in which to have simple activities. Clearly, despite the argument that religious travellers are keen to distinguish themselves from other types of tourists, their activities tend to be fairly similar to tourists in general.

APPLICATION

By identifying the key trends in the travel motivations of the young Christian travellers, the recommendations for industry practitioners are as follows: firstly, although religious tourism is a niche market, it is still necessary to clarify the sub-segments to compete effectively in the market place. Suggested themes for these sub-segments are "educational improvement", "relationship development" and "spiritual renewal".

Secondly, the travel career progression exhibited here would create demand for increasingly challenging destinations and ways of exploring spirituality. For example, in terms of "educational improvement", the personal special interests should be noted, and the programs for music, arts or other special skills could be integrated in the holiday packages. For "relationship development", dealing with existential angst could be addressed as well as relationships with friends, family, partners, or fellowship with God. The "spiritual renewal" packages could be themed around tranquil locations, meditation, calming down and an opportunity to concentrate on personal communion with God.

Thirdly, the importance of authenticity of the multi-dimensional factors should also be emphasized in terms of experience quality. Here both private and independent space is as important for the quality of the experience, as the exotic natural beauty is pointed out as a key motivator. Moreover, the participation and involvement with people whom the travellers encounter while is found to be very influential upon the destination decision. Finally, the travel guide's role is suggested as being vital in the satisfaction of the whole journey experience.

With the above discussion, from the Christianity aspect, religious tourism could be defined as: *a period of time away from one's normal life in order to nurture one's personal spiritual journey*. Such a spiritual journey could be illustrated as worshipping God, developing relationships, understanding self-existence by interacting with other people, cultures, and nature.

CONCLUSIONS

The research findings presented here offer new insight into a relatively new phenomenon. While for many nowadays, holidays are simply for pleasure, incre-

asingly, travel is undertaken for religious purposes as well. Holidays are, again, becoming holy-days. As Vukonić (1996) states, religious experience is more complex than is commonly believed, and religious tourism is relatively immaturely defined. According to Jackowski and Smith (1992), religious tourism is travel that is strongly motivated by a search for spiritual knowledge. Generally speaking, religious tourism appears most often in three forms (Vukonić 1996: 75): 1) as a pilgrimage, a continuous group and individual visit to religious shrines; 2) as large-scale gatherings for the occasion of significant religious dates and anniversaries; 3) as a tour of and visit to important religious places and buildings within the framework of a touristic itinerary and regardless of the time of the tour; and adding a new category, 4) religion motivated travel with a goal of self improvement but not necessarily including overt religious activities. However, the desire to know is always bound up with the question of identity- of 'who am I in relation to others, to the World, and to God'. In other words, it is a desire to know with self-certainty. The identity is constructed through a dynamic relationship between the external world and the inner self in which one stimulated the other (Galani-Moutafi 2000). Speaking in psychoanalytic terms, the *self* is constructed through the image of *the Other* (Laclau 1990). Moreover, only in the context of the relation with *the Other*- concerning what it is not or what it precisely lacks- can 'identity' be produced and conceptualized (Butler 1993; Derrida 1981; Laclau 1990).

In this study, *the Other* refers to the otherness of people, culture and nature (or the beauty of nature) that are encountered on the travel. The interest in other people, other cultures and other natural sites were clearly expressed by the respondents in the three focus groups through the ensuing discussions. As Craik (1997: 114) states, "Tourists revel in the otherness of destinations, people, and activities because they offer the illusion or fantasy of otherness, of difference and counterpoint to the everyday".

Nonetheless, the interest in *the Other* is a reflection of the interest of self-discovery and self-identity. It is argued by Sarup (1996) that, the experience of travel allows people simultaneously to experience and enjoy the exoticism (or exotic nature) of *the Other* whilst discovering their own identity. While travel is seen as a resource in the endeavour of self-development, interaction with other people, culture and nature is considered to "confirm one's own view of the world rather than transforming it" (Rojek 1993: 175).

Implication on motivation theories

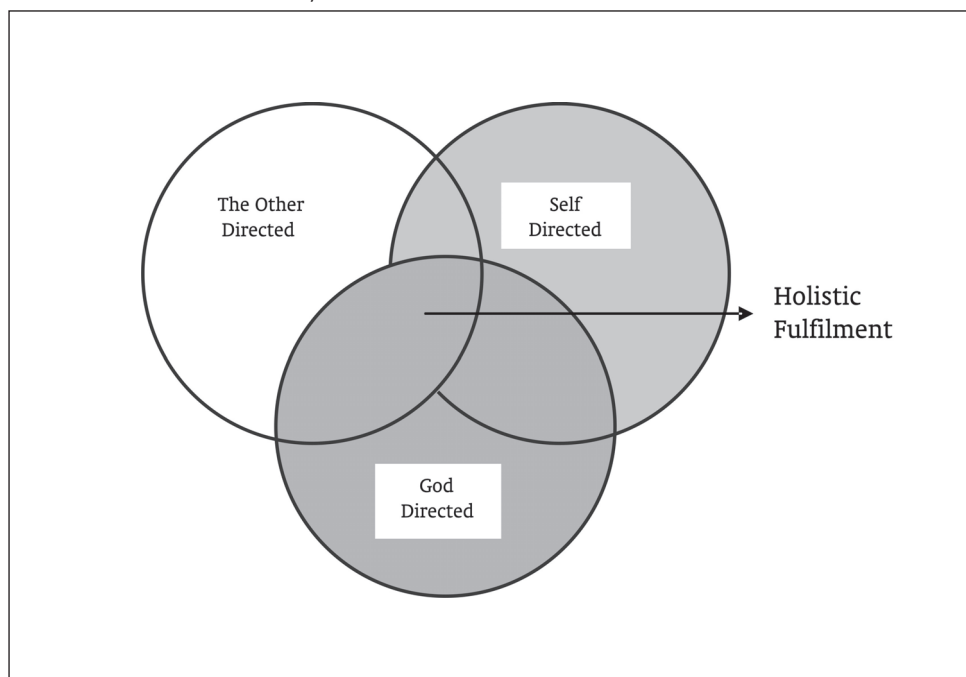
Under such circumstances, *the self-directed* and *the Other-directed* motivations interact on the decisions pertaining to religious vacations. And the relationship with friends, a partner, community, guide, and local people were emphasized while the respondents expressed their motivation for learning and spiritual renewal. Such personal and interpersonal interactions correspond to Iso-Ahola's (1989) escaping and seeking theories, in which two extremes of personal awards and interpersonal rewards are clarified. In order to escape from their personal and interpersonal problems in daily life, people are motivated to travel to seek for self as well as social contact.

It is argued that such travel motivation is optimized as a process for obtaining personal and interpersonal intrinsic rewards. These personal rewards exist mainly in the sense of self-determination, challenge, learning, exploration and relaxation; whereas the interpersonal rewards arise from social interaction. In this optimizing process, personal and interpersonal contacts are balanced to reach the desired (optimal) level and type of social interaction. People try to be stimulated at different levels but, at the same time, they also try to avoid either over stimulation or boredom. It was expressed by most respondents that the personal space and freedom were still needed on the religious journey. While enjoying the companionship and communication with other people, the religious travellers still desire personal contact with God and the world.

As illustrated in Figure 4, the central core motivation for religious vacations is discovered to be a holistic personal fulfilment. While *Self*, *the Other* and *God* are intertwining with each other, oneself can be recognized through understanding other people, other culture and nature, and enjoying God's world. And *the Other* can be valued from discovering oneself and seeking God's truth. Furthermore, God is praised by the improvement of *oneself* and the appreciation of other people, culture and nature. In short, the interaction among *Self*, *the Other* and *God* formulates the central motivation of religious vacation.

These elements should be understood as separate but as being in a dynamic interaction or tension. The *Self* is understood in relation to the *Other* and to *God*, the *Other* in relation to the *Self* and to *God* and *God* in relation to the *Self* and the *Other*.

Figure 4
INTERACTION AMONG SELF, THE OTHER AND GOD



Besides the authenticity of the above factors, more attention should be paid to the authenticity of the activities undertaken on a travel. In terms of activities, personal interests especially hobbies were mentioned and emphasized by the respondents. A multi-dimension of activities was defined as physical, emotional, social, educational and spiritual. Some respondents also stated that the existing music and art stimulated their interest although traditional rituals were not attractive to them. This corresponded to Swarbrooke and Horner's (1999) theory of different types of motivators as well as Vukonić's (1996) designation of religious tourism motivation.

However, despite the diversified special interests, the involvement and participation in specific activities was emphasized by most respondents. For example, the men interviewed loved to develop some sport skills on holiday (e.g. skiing, football, water sports) with other Christians. Men expressed that such kinds of competition were only for fun and excitement. For women, it was discovered, that walking and chatting with friends was much preferred. For some arts-seekers, playing music or dancing with other people was more stimulating and enjoyable. Thus it could be argued that the journey itself is a metaphor for the inner spiritual life.

Considering the above discussions, it could be argued that the religious travel motivation is changing from more passive activities to more active learning, to seeking new experiences and being creative. Perhaps this

trend can be attributed to the rise of 'new' religious travellers, corresponding to Poon's 'new' tourists (1993). It appears that the 'new' religious travellers are educated, culturally and environmentally aware, seeking not only knowledge of their religion, but also self-knowledge and world-knowledge, combined with more active/hobby based participation. In other words, the growing trend in religious vacation is the focus towards involvement and participation. Ritchie (2003) named this as 'active vacation'. Furthermore, education and interaction between people are becoming important parts of motivation for religious travel. Through education-improvement and relationship-development, the spiritual fulfilment could be achieved with more understanding and appreciation.

Emerging from this survey, the picture of the young Christian travellers is of experience-seekers, exploring novelty and seeking contact with *Self*, *the Other* and *God*. Certainly, previous travel experience is a major factor in determining travel styles and destinations. They take short or long duration trips, which they pack with a range of activities combined with personal hobbies. Their trips tend to be sophisticated, and carefully planned, and result in having a lasting impact on their personal and professional lives. In short, they are 'new' pilgrims and 'active vacationers', who are better educated, culturally and environmentally concerned, and spiritually involved.

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