LINKING SACRED PLACE PREFERENCES WITH PLACE MEANING: A CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SACRED PLACE MOTIVATIONS AND PLACE ATTACHMENT

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ABSTRACT

Sacred places are described as places of creation, devotion and power with a deep emotional meaning that attract people for many reasons. From the literature review, it is accepted that tourism motivation is multidimensional concept. Tourists seek to satisfy not one single need but a number of distinct needs simultaneously. People are attracted and emotional linked to sacred environments. Sacred places offer a range of psychological, spiritual and personal benefits providing potential affective link with tourists. Place-attachment influences what individuals see, think and feel about the place and therefore includes emotional and symbolic expressions. People develop a sense of belonging, identity, and dependence to certain places that visit or live and so place-attachment is a multidimensional construct that incorporates two dimensions that have recently been applied to tourism area: (1) Place-dependence that represents the functional dimension and is described as visitors' functional attachment to a particular place and their awareness of the uniqueness of a setting; (2) Place-identity which is the symbolic dimension and refers to the connection between a place and one's personal identity and contains both cognitive and affective elements. An extensive literature review focusing on the concept of place-attachment and motivations provide a framework which allows assess the emotional and functional bounds that tourists could have to sacred places. Insights from an empirical study of 300 tourists in Fátima (Portugal), Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and Jerusalem (Israel), indicate that the multi-dimension scale incorporates three motivations dimensions to visit sacred places as tourism destinations: Faith, Identity and Appealing. The focus of this article is to explore the relationship between these motivations with place-attachment, by summarizing, systemizing and discussing these distinct dimensions. The results could have potential practical implications for sacred destination' planning, marketing and management, promoting their own differentiating and unique features that attract tourists and involve emotionally tourists with these settings.

KEY WORDS: tourism, sacred places, motivations, place-attachment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Some places have powerful symbolic qualities with strong influence on tourism destination choice, such as sacred places.

People of many faiths, and also with no specific religion, visit sacred sites all over the world (Nyaupane, Timothy & Poudel, 2015). The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2011) estimates that 330 million people travel annually to religious sites, making the sacred places a popular tourist attraction.

Sacred places are described as places of creation, devotion and power with a deep emotional meaning that attract people because they offer quiet space, a place to pay, someone to talk about or the opportunity to get information about faith (Shackley, 2005), in a sacred atmosphere and closeness to God (Eliade, 1981).

From the literature review, it is accepted that tourism motivation is multidimensional concept. Tourists seek to satisfy not one single need but a number of distinct needs simultaneously.

Places involve meanings and values that facilitate intimate relationships between people and spaces (Tuan, 1980), knowing as place-attachment.

Place-attachment influences what individuals see, think and feel about the place and therefore includes emotional and symbolic expressions. People develop a sense of belonging, identity, and dependence to certain places that visit or live and so place-attachment is a multidimensional construct that incorporates two dimensions that have recently been applied to tourism area: (1) Place-dependence that represents the functional dimension and is described as visitors' functional attachment to a particular place and their awareness of the uniqueness of a setting and (2) Place-identity which is the symbolic dimension and refers to the connection between a place and one's personal identity and contains both cognitive and affective elements.

Despite the importance to tourism literature and sacred destination management, the role of attachment to sacred places and spaces has largely been ignored, minimized or marginalized (Muzamdar & Muzamdar, 2004, p.385).

Place and place characteristics are significant in sacred destinations choice and sacred places attachment (Muzamdar & Muzamdar, 2004). Also, past research suggests that motivation is an important determinant of place-attachment, particularly in the domain of tourism (Kyle et al., 2004). Within this, and based on the insights from an empirical study of 300 tourists in Fátima (Portugal), Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and Jerusalem (Israel), about sacred motivations, the study aims to explore the possible relationship between these motivations with place-attachment, by summarizing, systemizing and discussing these distinct dimensions.

2. MOTIVATIONS

Motivations are the driven forces that lead the human behavior (Iso-Ahola 1982, 1999; Mayo & Jarvis, 1981). Are internal forces that directly encourage and guide individuals' behavior towards satisfaction and pleasure (Murray, 1964; Iso-Ahola, 1982).

In tourism research, motivation is generally considered as the main determinant of tourist behaviour (Hudson, 1999).

Tourism motivations are commonly defined as socio-psychological forces that predispose an individual to travel (Beard & Raghep 1983), and are considered the major significant forces in the destination choice process (Moutinho 1987). Motivation can also be a simple desire of individuals to participate in tourism activities. Participation in tourism experiences can result in a set of individual benefits, including personal satisfaction and development, harmony and social change (Wankle & Berger, 1991).

3. PLACE-ATTACHMENT

Place-attachment points to the connection and desire people have for particular places (Proshansky et al., 1983;

Feldman, 1990; Altman & Low, 1992; Relph, 1976) that individuals have lived in or experienced (Marcus, 1992; Rubinstein & Parmelee, 1992; Rowles, 1983; Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 1999).

The concept of place-attachment is defined as a positive concept (Moore, 2000; Manzo, 2003), assuming that one can be connected to a place is something good and that this psychological condition brings benefits to people and communities (Lewicka, 2005, 2008).

Place-attachment necessarily involves emotion (Stedman 2002; 2003b) and is a multidimensional construct that includes two dimensions that have been related with tourism: place-identity and place-dependence (Kyle, Graefe & Manning, 2005; Yuksel et al., 2010). Place-attachment includes a functional dimension – place-dependence – and an emotional or symbolic dimension – place-identity (Williams et al., 1992, 1995; Kyle et al., 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Moore & Scott, 2003).

3.1. Place-Identity

Place-identity is the cognitive nd affective connection between the self and the setting (Proshansky, 1978).

This place-attachment dimension is used to characterize the role locations play in individuals' identification and in proving their affiliation with certain locations and add a deeper meaning to the quality of life and to the quality of the tourists' visit (Proshansky, 1978; Williams & Kaltenborn, 1999).

Place-identity is an important symbolic connection between a person and a place (Stedman, 2002). It is formed by a set of feelings associated with the physical particularities of a certain space (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983). A tourist destination is a place with a set of appealing features for the tourist (Hu & Ritchie, 1993). However, the connection or bond with a destination needs to go beyond the location attributes, since it is also an entity that people will experience and with which they will identify (Lee, 2001).

3.2. Place-Dependence

Place-dependence is a kind of connection or bond with a certain space that is associated with the potential that this place has to satisfy the needs and goals of a person and with an assessment process that will show how that place, when compared to others, may satisfy the same set of needs and goals (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981).

Place-dependence forms when people show a functional need about the place that can't be transferred to any other place. This location may be important to an individual because of its functional value, that is to say, because of its capacity to create unique resources that will meet the expectations and experiences people were seeking (Stokols & Schumaker, 1981).

4. METHODOLOGY

A conceptual model is proposed based on an extensive literature review on motivations and place-attachment and insights from an empirical study of 300 tourists in Fátima (Portugal), Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and Jerusalem (Israel) about motivations to visit sacred places. These places are to consider sacred cities by many religions, sacred centers where concentrations of religious activities take place and centers of intense personal attachment and experiences.

The motivations variables considered for the survey instrument – the questionnaire – have been developed based on a literature review on motivation, religious tourism and sacred places. Since that motivation is a multidimensional concept and tourists seek to satisfy not one single need but a number of distinct needs simultaneously (Baloglu and Uysal, 1996). Sixty attributes were specifically used to assess tourists' motivations to visit sacred places. A seven-point Likert-type scale was used as the response format for the motivation variables, with assigned values ranging from 1, "Not important at all" to 7, "Extremely important". A pre-test sample of 50 tourists was used in order to refine the questionnaire and to test the reliability of the scales through Cronbach alpha (Cronbach, 1951).

The validation of the scale was achieved through exploratory factor analysis (EFA), aiming at determining the relationship between the observed variables and latent variables. Once defined the variables that represent each factor and the number of factors, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied using full-information maximum likelihood (FIML) estimation procedures in LISREL (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993). In this sense, the analysis and data processing were performed using the programs SPSS and LISREL.

On the other hand, the place-attachment variables considered pre-established dimensions and scales from the tourism literature review (22 studies) regarding with place-identity and place-dependence.

5. SACRED PLACES MOTIVATIONS

The motivations to visit sacred places can be varied and complex (Muzamdar & Muzamdar, 2004).

The SPMotiv scale (see table 1) that measure motivation factors driving the choice of sacred places as tourism destinations, indicate that the main travelling and demanding motivations of sacred places as tourism destinations are supplied with 1) Faith, 2) Identity and 3) Appealing.

Concerning with Faith motivations, tourists are driven to participating in ceremonies or religious activities, need for spiritual enrichment, believing the sacred and religious power of the site, strengthening faith, spirituality and personal beliefs, lighting candles or practicing other religious rituals, seeking spiritual comfort, to ask or supply the conception of something and to live a religious and spiritual experience.

Regarding to Identity motivations, tourists are motivated by identity search, personal development, knowledge, peacefulness and demand for a sense of life and self-learning.

With concern to Appealing motivations, tourists are guided by the sensation of calling and the need to make pilgrimages.

Table 1. The SPMotiv Scale – Constructs, scale items and reliabilities

Question: Indicate the importance of each item in travel to sacred places Answer: 7-point Likert scales from "1– Not important at all" to "7–Extremely important".	
Faith	α=0.84; $\rho_{vc(n)}$ =0.58; ρ=0.95
V1 – To feel spiritually involved	
V2 – To feel emotionally involved	
V3 - To take part in religious ceremonies or activities	
V4 – Because of religious characteristics of the site	
V5 – To pray	
V6 – Because of the sacred mystic of the site	
V7 – To strengthen spiritual beliefs	
V8 – To light candles or practice other religious rituals	
V9 – To search for spiritual or religious comfort	
V10 – To beg or supplicate	
V11 – To meet a sacred icon	
V12 – To live a religious experience	
V13 – To live a spiritual experience	

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Identity	$\alpha=0.79$; $\rho_{vc(n)}=0.56$; $\rho=0.86$
V14 - To have some peacefulness	
V15 - To search of identity and inner knowledge	
V16 - To find a meaning to personal life	
V17 – To learn about yourself	
V18 - Search for personal development	
Appealing	$\alpha=0.77$; $\rho_{vc(n)}=0.62$; $\rho=0.76$
V7 - Felt an urge to visit this site	
V8 - Pilgrimage	
α= Internal reliability (Cronbach, 1951) $\rho_{vc(n)}$ = Variance extracted (Fornell and Larcker 1981); ρ= Composite reliability (Bagozzi, 1980).	

Source: Authors

6. CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The conceptual model proposed considers the three sacred motivations dimensions resulted from the empirical study and two dimensions of place-attachment reviewed on tourism and environment psychology literature.

The hypothesized conceptual model that is suggested is depicted in Fig. 1. This model recommends that each dimension of sacred places motivations will positively predict particular dimension of place attachment, resulting in the following three hypotheses.

Figure 1. Hypothesized Conceptual Model: Sacred Places: Motivations and Place-Attachment
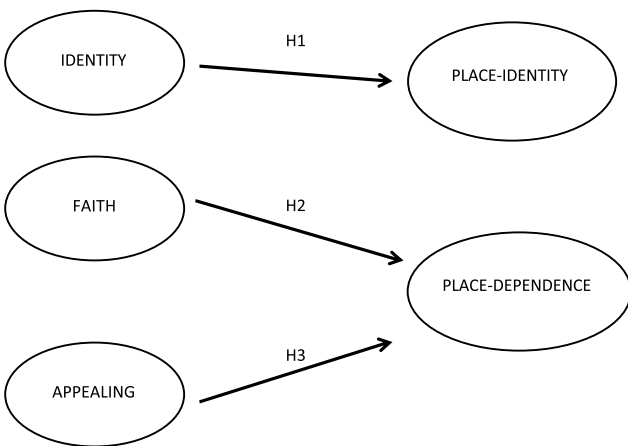
Source: Authors

H1 – *The identity motivations positively influences the affective bond between the tourist and the sacred places*

Within tourism research spheres, identity-related questions such as 'who am I?' and 'where I belong' are becoming increasingly accepted as representing key underlying motivations of individuals seeking out religious tourism or sacred leisure experiences (Bond & Falk, 2013). On the other hand, for the believer, the place itself can be an important part of identity formation (Muzamdar & Muzamdar, 2004). Thus, the identity motivations influence the emotional link that tourists feel about sacred places.

H2 – *The faith motivations positively influence the dependence bond between the tourist and the sacred places*

Sacred places offer a range of personal, psychological and spiritual benefits that make them attractive destinations and reinforce the link between tourists and sacred sites (Perriam, 2015).

Traveller to sacred sites is perceived as a quest motivated by faith (McGettigan & Griffin, 2012). Tourists are motivate by a desire to live a tangible sacred experience and connect personally with the sacred place visited (Metti, 2011), which requires involvement with the unique resources and sacred atmosphere of the place. Thus, The faith motivations positively influence the dependence bond between the tourist and the sacred places.

H3 – *The motivations of appealing positively influence the dependence bond between the tourist and the sacred places*

For believer tourists, visit sacred places evoke strong feelings of religious fervor (Nyaupane, Timothy & Poudel, 2015) and implies pilgrimage as a spiritual quest – a guiding force unifying divinity and humanity; a search for wholeness (Singh, 2006, p.221). These facts make stronger the dependence that tourists have with sacred spaces. So, the appealing motivations, such as an urge feeling to visit the site and the pilgrimage need, positively influence the dependence link between the tourist and the sacred places.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The presented study provides a conceptual framework that links sacred place preferences with sacred places meaning and attachment.

The tourist believer visits sacred places for individual reasons ranging from faith to identity and appealing.

Sacred places are places of prayer and veneration where rituals of faith are an important part of the tourist experience. Can be conceived also as places where Gods and spirits reside (Bowen, 2002) and where individuals are attracted to feel more closeness to them. On the other hand for the believer tourist, sacred places help in learning of identity and the self (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004).

Human behavior is driven by the prospect of personal benefit (Kyle et al., 2004) and due the characteristics of sacred places, tourists tend to be involved and emotional connected with them.

The results could have potential practical implications for sacred destination' planning, marketing and management, promoting their own differentiating and unique features that attract tourists and involve emotionally tourists with these settings.

The study intends to increase social, cultural and scientific knowledge of motivations and place-attachment to sacred places that allows a deeper understanding of sacred values associated with sacred places.

However, the model has limitations to be considered, eventually omitting and therefore not consider other significant dimensions of sacred motivations or place-attachment.

People create different relations to places, depending on their cultural values, interests, perceptions, individual experiences and living contexts, making them more or less attached to places. So, further research is also required to investigate how these constructs – motivations and place-attachment - are associated with other variables, such as tourists' past travel experience, lifestyle and/or destination image.

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