

Pilgrims as tourists or tourists as pilgrims: The case of Anatolia

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Abstract

Any travel that is motivated by religion or has sacred sites amongst its destinations is religious tourism, or a faith tour. Pilgrimages to ancient sacred sites are considered by many authors as the beginning of the tourism phenomenon. Pilgrimage can be described as a form of travel that is motivated by religion, spirituality or personal issues. Pilgrimage makes up an essential part of today's tourism market. It is also one of the oldest forms of it. Faith tours can be regarded as modern pilgrimages which visit such sacred sites. The Largest number of faith tours to Turkey (conducted mostly in Anatolia) is organized by Christian groups. This paper investigates the similarities and differences between pilgrims (as tourists) and tourists (as pilgrims) and compares the modern faith tours conducted in Anatolia today with the Medieval Christian pilgrimages undertaken in Anatolia in the past. The research methodology consists of a literature review and the review of secondary data.

Keywords: Religious Tourism, Pilgrimage, Pilgrims, Faith Tours, Anatolia.

1. Introduction

"A tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist" (Turner and Turner, 1978, p.20)

Any travel that is motivated by religion or has sacred sites amongst its destinations is religious tourism, or a faith tour. Religious tourism is a subcategory of cultural tourism and it is closely linked to the sustainability and the preservation of cultural and natural resources. Religion and spirituality have always stimulated travel. Religious tourism, which has evolved from the ancient relationship between human migration and religion and which is motivated partly or exclusively by religious or spiritual factors, is considered to be the oldest form of travel (Vukonic, 1996, p.9). Pilgrimages to ancient sacred sites are considered by many authors as the beginning of the tourism phenomenon. Many tourism destinations have developed largely as a result of their connection to

religious ceremonies, conferences, events and as local, regional, national, and international religious centers and shrines.

Today, travelling with religious motives is one of the fastest growing tourism activities (Duda, 2014, p.37). Religious tourism (or faith tours) is regarded as a new kind of travel. Religious tourism includes all forms of tourism, which are motivated by a religious or spiritual set of beliefs (Buck and Conrady, 2011, p.203). Religious tourism does not have any clear origins, but it is mostly associated with the religious pilgrimage to sacred destinations (Raj and Morpeth, 2007, p.15). Pilgrimage is one of the best known phenomena of human culture and religion and it is at the roots of modern tourism (Collins-Kreiner, 2009, p.440).

Pilgrimage is one type of religious tourism which is mostly long term. Pilgrimage is a departure from the daily life on a journey in search of spiritual well-being. It can be done alone or with a group (Bradley, 2009, p.11). Pilgrimage is a passage and an arrival, a line and a node, a vector and a raster. It warns us that we are going to die and reminds us of the somatic joy of living. It teaches us that time is short and eternity is timeless. Pilgrimage is about myth, not as something false, but as a process beyond proof. It is an unfalsifiable kinetic act built of legend and bone, superstition and soil (Wright, 2014, p.32). Pilgrimage focuses on the spirituality and the religious background of a journey. Pilgrimages are not particular to a single religion or group of religions. Rather, the practice of pilgrimage is a central feature of all major faiths (Raj and Morpeth, 2007, p.46). Pilgrimage can be described as a form of travel that is motivated by religion, spirituality or personal issues. Every pilgrimage has a special intent and is sustainable. Pilgrimages have a big impact on local communities and on destinations. In modern times, sacred sites attract a broad spectrum of pilgrims. Pilgrimage makes up an essential part of today's tourism market. It is also one of the oldest forms of it (Rotherham, 2007, p.64).

Religion is a cultural product, with economic outcomes. Pilgrimage, an economic activity, has an impact not only on the spiritual and cultural domains but also on the economic as well. Through ages, various pilgrimage practices have had a comprehensive impact on politics, economy, and society and even on global health and trade (Collins-Kreiner, 2009, p.441). Some of the most notable religious tourism sites have been generated through this early form of travel (Lück and et al., 2013, p.249). Today, through faith tourism, sacred sites and places are being established as popular tourism-pilgrimage destinations and are being introduced to the general tourism market. The relationship between religion and tourism is very complex. Carlos Alberto Streil (Streil, as cited in Stausberg, 2011, p.10) makes a clear distinction between pilgrimages and touristic religious events. Streil refers to the latter as "less sacred experiences" and introduces the term "religious tourism" based on this description. Other experts have developed a rather culture-focused approach, which emphasizes the importance of cultural heritage and religious facts and rituals and the tendency of being attracted to spectacles, regardless of being a tourist or a pilgrim (Stausberg, 2011, p.11).

This paper investigates the similarities and differences between pilgrims (as tourists) and tourists (as pilgrims) and compares the modern faith tours conducted in Anatolia today with the Medieval Christian pilgrimages undertaken in Anatolia in the past. The research methodology consists of a literature review and the review of secondary data.

2. Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism

Religious tourism has been the focus of various academic disciplines for several years and the supply of research is considerable (Margry, 2008, p.13). However, academics have only recently started to bring the subjective experience of the pilgrims into focus (Collins-Kreiner, 2009, p.441). Pilgrimage is a spiritual journey that is undertaken for religious reasons. It focuses exclusively on participation in religious ceremonies and

events and on the visitation of centers and shrines, which enable a pilgrim to intensify the understanding of his or her own faith (Collins, et al., 2006, p.1). Defined as a journey to a sacred place or distinctive shrine (Griffin, 2007, p.16) nowadays the term pilgrimage covers a broad field ranging from religious tourism to secular journeys for other than religious purposes. Therefore, a clear definition and delineation of the term is lacking.

Religion is a human phenomenon that affects the individual as well as society and has a great impact on culture in general (Duda, 2014, p.36). Tourism and religion are not to be seen as two independent subjects, but rather as two frameworks which are linked to each other mainly through cultural and social interaction (Stausberg, 2011, p.8). Terms such as religious, faith, and spiritual tourism are used interchangeably in order to describe pilgrimage tourism (Smith and et al., 2010, p.140). Religious tourism is often used as a synonym to pilgrimage. Blackwell (2007, p.46) states however that although they share similar features, religious tourism and pilgrimage are different. Distinctive elements of pilgrimage are the journey itself, austerity both, on the route and at the destination and mediation. Religious tourism is motivated by religion and the destinations are religious sites. But with religious tourism, the travel to the site is not a religious practice, even though travel is an integral part of the experience, as tourists need to travel to religious sites using the available means of transport.

The most visible connection between religion and tourism are the many sacred objects and buildings that are of great interest to tourists. With all faiths, one of the strongest motivators for long-distance travel is to visit religion-related pilgrimage sites and religious centres (Hudman and Jackson, 2003, p.31). The development of a secular and multicultural society has provided a tremendous opportunity for religious institutions, such as churches, shrines, and other religious sites to attract in rising numbers secular visitors who are open to spiritual or transcendent experiences, through which they can discover or rediscover their faith (Roterham, 2007, p.69). However, rather than their religious meanings, the historical and cultural components of religious objects and buildings often attract visitors. Sacred objects are primarily kept for their artistic, cultural and historical value and the sacred buildings where believers satisfy their religious needs, provide attractive visiting points for the more secular visitors (Vukonic, 1996, p.61).

The connection between religion and tourism is manifest not only in the multiple linkages between shared sacred and secular spaces on a global stage, but also through social movements, which offer a complexity of structures and functions that pervade culture and traditions (Raj and Morpeth, 2007, p.1). Faith (religious) tourism specifically encompasses all kinds of travel that is motivated partly or exclusively by religion (Blackwell, 2007, p.46). Yet, faith (religious) tourism is not to be seen as a clearly definable segment, as it is a cross-section topic, closely connected with culture, education, nature, and event tourism. The depth of the topic depends on the individual understanding of spirituality and religion. Faith (religious) tourism represents a new means of consumption, with tourist attractions offering a religious character for their visitors, by taking on symbolic value and meaning (Buck and Conrady, 2011, p.204). Pilgrimage experiences bear physical and mental circumstances in which people experience an existential sense of being authentic to themselves – a sense activated by the actions of the pilgrims (Wang, 1999, p.349). During the journey, individuals experience behavioral changes and become distinctively sociable and pleasant. This sense of companionship called *communitas*, is explained by the liminal conditions that pilgrims experience during the sacred journeys (Belhassen, 2008, p.674).

2.1 The Pilgrims and the Tourists

The pilgrims share transportation, services, and infrastructure with other tourists. Pilgrims also tend to participate in typical tourist activities, such as travelling, sightseeing, and the purchase of local handicrafts.

Therefore, it is hard to differentiate the pilgrims from other tourists (Olsen, 2006, p.7). Most researchers today do not distinguish between pilgrims and tourists. Rather, they focus on examining pilgrimage as a form of tourism. The pilgrims usually travel a long distance to a sacred place in search for a deeper spirituality. The journey is a quest for physical and psychological healing that is mixed with a sense of adventure. The pilgrims desire to escape the routine, to broaden their horizons and to enjoy new and different experiences and challenges (Raj and Morpeth, 2007, p.46). The physical journey undertaken by the pilgrims, which is an important part of pilgrimage, can also have metaphorical resonances at many levels (Coleman and Elsner, 1995, p.6). One dimension of the escapist experiences is the connection with the environment, which occupies the attention of a person by bringing the experience to the mind, with the pilgrim physically becoming a part of the experience itself (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, p.31).

Pilgrimages are still made with a penitential purpose, to try to re-orientate lives away from selfishness and to make a new beginning, to face challenges and to experience simpler and less comfortable lifestyles. There is the sense of shared community in taking part in a pilgrimage that is very welcome for many people who are unhappy with our increasingly modern and automated culture (Bradley, 2009, p.16). Slowing down the pace of a holiday provides opportunities of interaction and connection with the local people and enables the engagement of the tourists with the destination, landscape and the local environment (Heitmann and et al., 2011, p.118).

Religious organizations tend to focus more on the motivation that is behind a pilgrim's journey, rather than on the activities and travel patterns. Hence, from a religious institutional perspective, the tourist is a vacationer travelling away from his center of life to a more pleasurable and fulfilling destination. The tourist will be demanding of and insensitive to the host culture. The pilgrims on the other hand will be devoted and humble on the way to their new center of life. The pilgrim will be appreciative towards the host culture (Olsen, 2006, p.7). A pilgrim in that sense is not a tourist, but rather an observer, who keeps walking and pays attention to the footprints, and his trip becomes a form of meditation. The main difference between the pilgrims and the tourists is the journey. The main reason for the tourists to travel is the stay and the activities at the destination. For a pilgrim, on the other hand, the journey through time and space to the destination is the main reason to travel (Coleman and Elsner, 1995, p.6).

Together with trade, military and administrative activities, religious festivals and pilgrimage provided the motivations for early travel. Travel for pilgrimage is evident in many Asian countries from an early period when people journeyed to the mountains and rivers to visit ancestral gods and spirits. Indeed, since around 3000 BC, pilgrimages and festivals have taken travelers across borders. Pilgrimages continued across Europe during the medieval period with travelers crossing regions to visit religious sites. As the main providers of lodging services on the road, churches and monasteries became the early sources of hospitality (Cooper, 2012, p.7).

Around 1000 AD pilgrimage practice, which had evolved since the third and fourth centuries, burgeoned into a mass movement. The classical ideal of venerable monuments was thereby transformed into the creation of attractions, prefiguring many modern governments' construction of tourism icons like London's Millennium Dome. Rivalries between the bishops and abbots of competing shrines were the forerunners of the competition observed between modern tourism destinations today. The pilgrims even wore insignia associated with journeys - palms for the Holy Land, St. Peter's keys for Rome – forerunners of modern souvenirs, mementos of passages of life, once mystical, today secularized (Douglas, et al., 2001, p.196).

In the Bible, Abraham is told to leave his native country and to go to the land that God will show him. In a broader sense this story reflects the deeper meaning of a Christian pilgrimage: leaving the normal environment behind and taking a journey together with God. Trusting and obeying God then, is a must for a pilgrim

(Bradley, 2009, p.23). Since the second and third centuries, Christians have traced the stories of the Bible, including the footsteps and the life of Jesus Christ himself. Leaving the Jewish traditions behind, Christians viewed themselves as the inheritors of God's promises to the Jews. A new sacred place emerged in Jerusalem, and believers from all around the world began to undertake pilgrimages to this new and distinctive center of Christian pilgrimage. By the fourth century, pilgrimage had become a recognized expression of Christian piety. Pilgrimage was regarded as an obligation and a trial of faith (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2011).

3. Medieval Pilgrimages in Anatolia

All religions designate certain places as sacred and these places become the foci of religious activity and destinations for pilgrims (Rountree 2006, p.95). Faith tours can be regarded as modern pilgrimages which visit such sacred sites. The Largest number of faith tours to Turkey (conducted mostly in Anatolia, Asian part of Turkey) is organized by Christian groups. Even though it is not explicitly stated, the untold assumption with Christian faith tours is that these tours are based on ancient traditions. Medieval Christian pilgrimages are regarded as predecessors of modern Christian faith tours. Yet, a comparison of modern faith tours with Medieval Christian pilgrimages to Anatolia shows that there are great variations between both the routes taken and the attitudes and expectations of medieval pilgrims and modern faith tourists. Far from being based on unchanging and universal traditions, it is more likely that contemporary faith tours are largely modern inventions.

Eight sites, Ephesus, Chonai, Nicaea, Myra, Mount Olympos, Caesarea, Euchania and Euchaita (last two were both in Pontus) appear to have been the most important in medieval Asia Minor, possessing renowned spiritual capital that drew pilgrims from long distances (Foss, 2003, p.132).

Ephesus was by far the richest center in churches, tombs, relics, sacred sites and miracles and therefore one of the greatest goals of Christian Medieval pilgrimage in Anatolia. The city contained one of the most holy sites of Christendom, the church and tomb of St. John the Evangelist, so important that the medieval town was usually known simply as Theologos, the title of the Evangelist. Second in fame was the tomb of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus whose miraculous awakening took place in the fifth century.

The fame of Myra was based on one saint, St. Nicholas, a renowned miracle worker who attracted pilgrims from home and abroad in all periods. They included pilgrims from England and Russia, a priest from Mytilene who regularly attended the saint's festival, and many locals. Most of the other Middle Ages Christian pilgrimage sites were associated with a single saint. At Chonai, the Archangel Michael had performed a great miracle which was powerful enough to alter the landscape (modern Honaz, near Denizli).

The greatest goals of medieval pilgrims involved miracles. Caves, trees, rocks, and springs all were witnesses of miracles in the distant past, but many sites also offered continuous miracles, repeated annually, that attested to their sanctity and to the active presence of the divine. Most often, these took the form of a miraculous dust or oil that had curative powers. The best known miracles were those which took place at Ephesus. These aspects—the miracle, the dust, the cure, and the distribution—were the features of the greatest miracle a pilgrim could see in medieval Byzantium. Miracles often had a practical aspect: the dust of Ephesus and the spiritual presence of St. Tryphon had the power to cure disease. In fact, seeking medical help was always a major factor in pilgrimage, especially pilgrimage to local shrines and holy men (Foss, 2003, p.140).

Many cures, of course, were successful and many blessings efficient. Hence, gratitude was also a factor - though far less well attested than need - that brought people to shrines. Most of this no doubt was local and on a humble scale. In 753, a grateful Paphlagonian peasant brought a cow as an offering to St. Theodore during the spring festival. Since he arrived just at the time of an Arab attack, he found the church, and the whole city surprisingly deserted. Not willing to leave without honoring the saint, he tied the cow to the chancel screen and went away. On another occasion, a poor woman was saving a chicken for the saint when it was stolen, while a soldier returning victorious from the wars dedicated his sword. Likewise, locals brought wagonloads of grain and offerings of sheep, meat, and wine to the shrine of St. Nicholas of Myra. One rich couple outdid their neighbors by offering 100 gold pieces every year. Offerings also came in from long distances. Chonai was the goal of a young man named Manuel who was entrusted with the offerings of the village of Didia near Gangra in Paphlagonia, which amounted to a whole pound of gold. He came on foot and was almost murdered for his money. St. George rescued him, though, and the Archangel received the gold (Foss, 2003, p. 145).

Money was closely involved with pilgrimage in another important way, for the great pilgrimage shrines were also the site of fairs which brought buyers and sellers from whole regions. The most important was probably that of Ephesus, held to coincide with the miracle of the manna. It generated a great deal of business, for the emperor Constantine VI, when he visited the church in 795, remitted the customs duty that the fair generated, a total of 100 pounds of gold according to the chronicler. Euchaita and Myra appear also to have been the site of fairs, an important phenomenon that continued through the Byzantine period. In the late twelfth century, the fair at Chonai was attracting huge crowds from all the neighboring cities and provinces and even from the “barbarian Ikonians” - the Seljuk Turks of Konya - who came to buy and sell (Foss, 2003, p.145).

3.1 Modern Faith Tours in Anatolia

A comparison of the modern faith tours conducted in Anatolia today with the Medieval Christian pilgrimages undertaken in Anatolia in the past shows that there are great variations in the routes taken and in the attitudes and expectations of the participants. Far from being based on unchanging and universal traditions, contemporary faith tours are more likely to be mostly modern inventions. Not only the routes but the significance attached to various sites on the routes has also changed.

Current Christian faith tours differ from the medieval Christian pilgrimages in a number of ways. Firstly, the route followed by current Christian tours is markedly different from the route taken by medieval pilgrims. Of the eight cities which formed the backbone of medieval pilgrimage (Ephesus, Chonai, Euchaita, Nicaea, Myra, Mount Olympos, Euchania and Caesarea) only four are still on the routes of modern Christian pilgrimage in Turkey. Modern faith tours visit the Seven Churches (Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardes, Philadelphia, Laodicea), stop at Colossae (because of the epistle sent to Colossians) and Hierapolis (St. Philip’s Martyrium) and trace the footsteps of Paul, stopping at and Antioch ad Orentes, Perge, Attalia, Myra, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Ephesus, Miletus, Alexandria Troas, Assos, Lesbos (island on the Turkish coast, in Greece) and Miletus. Sites sacred to John, Ephesus and Patmos (island off the Turkish shore, in Greece) are also visited. Nicaea is visited because of the council meeting and Antioch is known as the town where Christians were first known as Christians where they started to meet regularly at the St. Peter’s Grotto.

Not only the route of modern Christian faith tourists differ from those of Christian pilgrims of Middle Ages, but the significance attached to various sites on the route has also changed. The tomb of Mary Magdalene is no longer at Ephesus but the House of Mary is, tombs of St. Timothy, and St. Hermione, daughter of the apostle Philip is no longer at Ephesus but the tomb of Luke may be. None of the Mediaeval pilgrims whose experiences are recorded are aware of some traditions which the modern pilgrims believe are very ancient, such as the

Grotto of Saint Peter in Antioch and the House of Mary in Ephesus. Some destinations, which are in modern times believed to be pilgrimage destinations were apparently not in the past. For example, it seems that monastic centers as such did not necessarily attract pilgrims. Most striking, because of its modern fame as a center of tourism, is the great complex of rock-cut churches in Cappadocia. They apparently produced no noteworthy local saints and were not the object of any pilgrimage that can be discovered (Foss, 2003, p.136).

Modern faith tourism differs from past pilgrimages also in terms of the objectives of those participating. Unlike medieval pilgrims modern faith tourists are no longer pursuing miracles or cures. Most modern pilgrims (with some exceptions, like those visiting the House of Mary in Ephesus) do not request some favor from God, in return for simply having made the journey or for engaging in ancillary devotional exercises (Eade and Sallnow, 1991, p.24). A market ideology, whereby physical suffering and penance are exchanged for material or spiritual favors is not part of the ideology of modern faith tours (Rountree, 2002, p.493). In any case, modern faith tours hardly involve any physical suffering. Rather, the tour conditions are very comfortable and enjoyable.

Pilgrimage is a sacred journey to a sacred place with a sacred purpose (Rountree, 2002, p.482). A pilgrim, for the Oxford English Dictionary, is one who journeys to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion, while a pilgrimage is a pilgrim's journey. Sacred, for this source, means "consecrated or held dear to a deity . . . dedicated or reserved or appropriated to some person or purpose; made holy by religious association" (Turner, 1973, p.197). It has been proposed that the pilgrim can be distinguished from the tourist in that the pilgrim traditionally hopes to experience religious rapture, whereas the tourist seeks "mere pleasure and enjoyment" (Rountree, 2002, p.481). Yet it has become also in this respect more difficult to distinguish a "mere" tourist from a faith tourist or a pilgrim. As Rountree points out, the so called "tourist sites" may embody other valued cultural ideals for travelers normally classed as 'tourists' - the Parthenon and Ephesus, for example, may be valued as magnificent achievements in the early history of Western civilization and evoke in some Western tourists awe, admiration and pride (Rountree, 2002, p.483). Such visitors to these places could thus be seen as secular pilgrims. The difficult, often impossible (and perhaps pointless), line to draw is between secular pilgrims and 'mere' tourists. How does one identify the sacred purpose of the secular pilgrim, or the line between passionate curiosity and devotion? It should also be noted that a traveler may shift between different modes of travel in the course of a particular journey, for example, from pilgrim to tourist/holiday maker to business person (Rountree, 2002, p.484).

Another definition of pilgrimage is a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal (Morinis, 1992, p.4). The valued ideal enshrined at the pilgrimage site may be associated with a deity, saint, or prophet (as at Mecca, Lourdes, Jerusalem, and Banaras), or the site may embody national, cultural or some other form of collective ideals (for example, Lenin's tomb, Mao's Mausoleum, Elvis's shrine at Graceland, Mt Rushmore, war memorials, Anzac Cove and important historic sites), or the valued ideal of the quest may be unique to a single individual (Rountree, 2002, p.483). Over the centuries pilgrimage has resulted in a well-developed network of pilgrimage trails which comprises some of the most popular cultural paths in the world (Duda, 2014. p.37).

4. Conclusions

Religious tourism is considered as a new tourism movement, even though pilgrimages to ancient sacred sites are considered by many authors as origins of the tourism phenomenon. This form of tourism encompasses any travel that is motivated by religion or has a sacred destination or shrines as a travel destination. Those who are trying to change their ordinary lives with the hope of spiritual and bodily regeneration search for authentic and exciting experiences. Travel with spiritual and religious characteristics can have appeal for such individuals.

Religious tourism can be classified as a subcategory within the cultural tourism industry and it is closely linked to the sustainability and the prevention of the cultural and natural resources. Pilgrimage can be described as a form of travel that is motivated by religion, spirituality or personal issues and has a special intent and is sustainable. Pilgrimage tourism has a big impact on local communities and on the destination itself. Religious tourism fosters the preservation of the heritage and the cultural resources of a country. Furthermore, it provides support for the maintenance of buildings, monuments and the religious communities. It provides long-term benefits to regions and locals and leads to the enhancement of cultural and artistic facilities.

Religious tourism supports sustainable development and for this reason it has a positive impact on the quality of life of locals. Jobs are created through different projects related to religious tourism. Destinations become more and more dependent on cultural and heritage resources as they seek more religiously motivated travelers. Pilgrimage is a special-interest event, which has a strong impact on the local communities at the visited destinations. Through interaction among pilgrims and residents, relationships, value systems, attitudes and behavioral patterns as well as cultural values are exchanged. Today, religious motivation continues to be one of the principal reasons for travel. An enormous amount of tourism suppliers are involved in the religious travel market: tour operators, travel agents, incoming operators, destinations, airlines, cruise lines, accommodations, catering services, convention and visitor bureaus, guides, natural and cultural resources, event services, service providers, and many more (Gil and Curiel, 2008, p.420). The commodification of religious sites does not always suggest a destruction or overconsumption of the concerned site. Nevertheless, awareness should be created in order to prevent such occurrences (Schott, 2008, p.7).

Every year, religious destinations welcome millions of people. Destinations such as Rome, Mecca, Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela owe a huge part of their touristic success to the religious practice. Within the Christian world there is an enormous interest in rituals and symbols, which illustrates the growing interest of people in the historical, regional and social contexts of their religion. With the development of air travel, which enables the mass transportation of believers, holy pilgrimages to Mecca, Vatican and Jerusalem have become great symbolic events, which contribute positively not only to religious organizations, but also to the host countries.

As pilgrimage routes often stretch over several regions and provinces, cooperation represents the key to a harmonious maintenance of the pilgrimage routes. The destination managers at these destinations should be encouraged to keep the religious and touristic aspects balanced. Pilgrimage experts should live up to the challenge and create a network of solidarity that serves as a role model for tourism worldwide.

Religious tourism has been transformed into a marketable economic product, which can serve as a development tool and holds an enormous potential for the industry, provided that, it is correctly conceived and used. Most tourists are pilgrims, visiting selected sites, which embody their own individual ideals, or the ideals of a group they belong to. Faith tours are a subgroup of this larger body of tourists. One can argue that mere tourists visit destinations of their choice whereas faith tourists follow predetermined divine routes. Yet, as we have discussed above, the itineraries and routes associated with faith tours are also based on choice and invention, as is the case with most other cultural tours. More and more faith tours are including in their itineraries stops, which are on the routes of mere tours, some associated with other faiths, further blurring the distinction between faith tours and mere tours.

Modern pilgrims have become more like tourists and tourists more like pilgrims. The gradual disappearance of the differences between faith tourists and mere tourists may be desirable as it implies greater understanding and empathy between the members of different faiths and between those with faith and with no faith. Nevertheless,

organizers of faith tours may feel the need to differentiate faith tours more clearly from “mere” tours. While it is essential to maintain traditions, there is nothing wrong with being a little imaginative as well. After all, modern faith tours are more inventions than traditions.

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