

Religious Tourism and Globalization

The Search for Identity and
Transformative Experience

Edited by **Darius Liutikas** and **Razaq Raj**



CABI RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND PILGRIMAGE SERIES



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Pilgrimage Research (McIntosh, Haddad and Munro; 2020, Cambridge Scholars); (iv) *Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Pilgrimage* (Warfield; 2023, Peter Lang); and (v) *Food and the Pilgrim* (Munro, Buttigieg and Olsen; 2023, Peter Lang). Smith is co-editor of the volume *Women and Pilgrimage* with E. Moore Quinn (2022, CAB International) and she serves on the Advisory Board of the Sacred Journeys Project.

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1 Introduction to Religious Tourism and Globalization: Challenges of Religious Tourism in a Global World

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Abstract

This introductory chapter embarks on a journey to explore the dynamic interplay of globalization and its effects on religious tourism. It endeavours to uncover both the positive and the negative impacts of this intersection. The chapter delves into the profound significance of the quest for identity and transformative experiences, shedding light on how globalization reshapes notions of personal and social identity, as well as the transformative essence of pilgrimage. The chapter covers a critical reassessment of globalization's influence on religious tourism, spanning shifts in values, the adoption of new rituals and practices among pilgrims, changes in traditions, the embrace of technological innovations, the emergence of innovative business models, and a host of environmental and sociocultural changes. Further, it offers a glimpse into the overarching themes and contemporary case studies covered in the subsequent chapters of this book. It emphasizes the extensive transformation of the pilgrimage experience in response to the novel challenges posed by our globalized world. The aim of the book is to provide valuable insights into the realms of globalization and virtualization, shifts in religiosity, consumerism, cultural assimilation and the evolving global religious landscape.

Introduction

Pilgrimage could be defined as a journey to the particular places or events of searching and expressing a traveller's values and identities (Liutikas, 2021c). Modern perspectives on identity suggest that it is a product of construction, constantly changing and evolving, influenced by both internal factors within the individual and external factors outside the individual. Internal factors may include personality, motivation, self-concept and implicit religiosity. External factors can encompass the sociopolitical climate, culture, role expectations and religious practices.

Since a pilgrimage journey integrates both internal and external constructs, it significantly impacts one's identity. It addresses various effects of the global society on religious tourism and pilgrimage. Do religious tourists need to respond proactively to the challenges of globalization? Is it possible to estimate the transformation of the pilgrimage experience? Griffin and Raj (2015, p. 57) further emphasize the 'societal trends of increasing secularization and decreasing domestic religious travel and wider international consumption trends of globalization and internationalization'.

The book aims to identify both the positive and the negative effects of globalization on religious

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tourism. It highlights the importance of the search for identity and transformative experiences during religious tourism and examines how globalization reshapes the concepts of personal and social identity, as well as the transformative experience of pilgrimage. This book is an essential reassessment of the impact of globalization on religious tourism. Effects of globalization include changes of values, adoption of different new rituals and new pilgrims' values, changes of tradition, acceptance of technologic innovations, development of new business models, and other environmental and sociocultural changes.

Analysis of the values and identities during religious tourism is often based on theoretical models (Raj and Griffin, 2015; Liutikas, 2017, 2021b). This book brings together contributions that address the identity of religious tourists and their transformative experiences in a globalized world. It presents a range of contemporary case studies on the transformations of the pilgrimage experience, in response to new challenges posed by the globalized world, such as artificial intelligence (AI) and virtualization, changes in religiosity, consumerism, cultural assimilation and shifts in the global religious landscape. It is a carefully curated collection of case-based chapters that reflect the contradictory elements of the postmodern globalized society. The primary focus is to provide changing perspectives on religious tourism in the 21st century.

Globalization and Tourism

This book explores the impact of globalization on the experience of religious tourism and pilgrimage. Various political, economic, technological, social, cultural, health, demographic and environmental factors influence religious tourism and pilgrimage in a globalized society. As noted by Timothy (2019), tourism is not only a force for globalization but also a product of it. Sociologist A. Giddens (2002) argued that globalization affects everyday life as significantly as it does global events. Meethan (2001) drew attention to the increasing interconnectivity, growing economic 'depth' and the extension of commodity relations. These interconnections create global mobility for people, whether for tourism or migration (Shaw and Williams, 2004).

The benefits of globalization include increased connectedness, cultural activities, the diffusion of ideas and practices, the adoption of technological improvements, the development of the knowledge economy, and increased revenues (Reisinger, 2009). Acknowledgement of cultural diversity, the spread of democracy and the global market also impact tourism development. However, Giddens (2002) emphasized the challenges of globalization, such as new risks and uncertainties (e.g. global climate change, the global electronic economy and fundamentalism). Globalization can also lead to increased polarization in the world, a negative impact on local communities and environmental degradation (Reisinger, 2009).

In contemporary times, globalization refers to both the compression of the world and the intensification of global consciousness (Robertson, 1992, 2000). The increasing sociocultural density leads to the relativization or challenge of coexisting vastly diverse cultures.

The concept of a shrinking world, as described by Dicken (2007), can be illustrated through innovations in transportation technologies. In the past, travel primarily relied on animals such as horses, donkeys, oxen, camels and elephants. People either rode these animals directly or used carriages and coaches on land, as well as various boats and sailing ships on lakes, rivers and seas during the 16th–19th centuries. The mid-19th century saw a significant transformation in transportation with the advent of steam locomotives and steamships. This was followed by the emergence of motorized cars and buses at the end of the 19th century and the early 20th century.

However, it was after World War II that air transport experienced rapid growth and mass utilization. Propeller aircraft operated in the 1930s and 1940s, while the 1950s witnessed the widespread use of jet passenger aircraft, revolutionizing long-distance air travel. In the 21st century, low-cost airlines have become a defining characteristic of air travel. These developments in transportation technology have played a pivotal role in making travel more accessible and the world more interconnected, effectively reducing the perceived distances between various parts of the globe.

New forms of political, economic, social and cultural organization are emerging, and the

production of tourist space involves both physical space and socio-economic context. The growth of mass tourism has led to the standardization of tourist experiences. Well-known elements of this trend include 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1996), which involves the spread of fast-food chains and international cuisine at restaurants, the development of international hotel chains, and the global distribution and service systems such as Booking.com, Expedia, Airbnb and TripAdvisor. This standardization raises the important question of what kind of influence global society has on religious tourism experiences. Can religious tourism experiences be homogenized and quantified? According to Beyer (1994, p. 9), the answer is yes, but global culture will only fully emerge after two or three centuries from now. Friedman (1994) highlighted that social reproduction goes beyond the confines of individual societies. Since social cycles are intrinsically linked to time, they offer a comprehensive framework for understanding cumulative social processes and transformations occurring over time (Friedman, 1994, p. 7). However, Beyer (1994) also emphasized that globalization alters the context within which specific cultures exist, indicating a process of transformation rather than the disappearance of distinct and identifiable identities.

Globalization has created new opportunities for advancements in the tourism sector. It has fundamentally altered the dynamics of competition for competitive advantage, not only among firms and destinations but also within countries and regions. Globalization has led to reduced air-travel expenses and enhanced accessibility to various destinations. Reisinger (2009, p. 11) suggests that a new tourist in the global world 'demands new products, variety, flexibility, and personalization' and 'develops new values and worldviews that stress the importance of family and ecology'.

The distinct feature of contemporary globalization lies in the interconnectedness, multiplexity and hybridization of social life at various levels, including social networking, the organization of work and leisure time, and spatial dimensions.

The positive aspects of globalization on tourism include concerns about global climate change and the safeguarding of natural resources, valuing social relations and diversity, acquiring knowledge and enhancing the overall

quality of experiences. Increasingly, tourists are seeking to manifest their identity or express themselves through cultural exploration (Fig. 1.1). They recognize the significance of physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual well-being. Current travel trends include sustainable, responsible, eco-friendly, green, experience-oriented and transformative tourism. Tourism is moving towards achieving a sense of well-being and mindfulness (Stankov *et al.*, 2020) in a post-coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) world. Raj and Griffin (2020) further highlight that COVID-19 has had notable implications for religious travellers.

Viewing the global as dominant flows of transformation, the chapters in this book take an overview of the crucial interactions of identity formation and the accelerated pace of covariation in relevant tourism activities.

Impact of Globalization on Religion

Globalization significantly impacts the religious and spiritual aspects of people's lives, including religious tourism and pilgrimages. The impact of globalization on religion is multifaceted and complex (Robertson, 2000; Juergensmeyer, 2005; Woodhead *et al.*, 2021). This impact varies across different regions and contexts and includes religious pluralism, the growth of global religious movements, secularization and the revival of religiosity, religious conflicts, or even religiously motivated violence and the exchange of cultural and religious practices, beliefs and traditions.

None the less, it is important to recognize that globalization should be viewed as an evolving phenomenon that results from a combination of economic, political, sociocultural, environmental and technological processes operating at various levels. Globalization is both shaped by existing structures and influences the formation of new structures. Beyer (1994, p. 9) discusses the 'creation of a new global culture with its attendant social structures', the nature of which depends critically on sub-global processes (Jessop, 1999).

Sociologist G. Davie (2007) raised questions about the role of secularization in the modernization process. Her answer is that secularization is extrinsic to modernization because it is possible to be both fully modern and fully religious (Davie,



Fig. 1.1. Religious tourists in Assisi, Italy. Photo taken by D. Liutikas.

2007, p. 247). The argument put forth by Stark and Bainbridge (1985) regarding secularization as a significant concept in modern times, generating two opposing processes – religious revival and religious innovation – remains highly relevant today. Research areas such as the revitalization of religion (Wuthnow, 1992) or the return of religion (Robertson, 2007) have highlighted the deficiencies of secularization theory. The ‘un-secularization’ of the world is related to the emergence of new religious movements and the revival and renewal of traditional religions (Adams, 1997). Is there actually a rise of traditional religions? Are we living in a post-secular era? Gorski and Altinordu (2008) suggest that in the transition from the 20th century to the 21st century, religion was rediscovered. Bauman (1992, p. x) attributed modernity as disenchantment and despiritualization and postmodernity as re-enchantment.

From an individual’s perspective, beliefs have become fragmented, leading scholars to use terms such as ‘privatisation of religion’ (Beyer, 1994, pp. 86–94) and ‘commodification of religion’

(Robertson, 2000, p. 65). In the context of globalization and in the era of neoliberalism, religion has transformed into a commodity that exists alongside other goods and services (Gauthier, 2020). Various religious ideas, traditions, groups and movements, along with religious institutions, engage in competition within the religious marketplace. The religious entities that have successfully adapted to these conditions emerge as significant beneficiaries of globalization. Gauthier (2020) claimed that non-institutionalized, entrepreneurial, transnational and media-savvy religious movements, based on emotional, healing-oriented and charismatic qualities, are on the rise.

The diversification of religious practices within globalization leads to a fragmentation of beliefs. The proximity of diverse truths coexisting side by side inevitably results in the relativization of religious claims asserting absolute truths (Robertson, 2000, p. 60). As cultures come into closer contact and societies become more interconnected and exposed to a range of religious ideas and practices, there is a greater likelihood of encountering diverse interpretations

and perspectives within religious communities. This diversification of beliefs can contribute to a sense of uncertainty and a perceived threat to traditional religious doctrines and practices. Some individuals or groups may adopt a more rigid and exclusive approach, emphasizing strict adherence to specific interpretations of religious texts or traditions. This phenomenon, known as religious fundamentalism, often seeks to preserve traditional beliefs and resist external influences (Bruce, 2008; Herriot, 2009).

Religious fundamentalism, while driven by a desire to safeguard core religious principles, can also lead to tensions and conflicts, both within religious communities and with the broader society. It may manifest as resistance to cultural changes, social integration or engagement with differing belief systems. Addressing the challenges posed by globalization on religion and the potential for religious fundamentalism requires thoughtful dialogue, interfaith understanding, and respect for diverse perspectives.

Globalization not only has an indirect impact on religion (for instance, through its social effects) but also has direct implications for the way people live their religious lives. Globalization affects various aspects of society, including communication, the dissemination of innovations, the exchange of cultural and religious practices, beliefs, and traditions, and the construction of social values. Certainly, transnational corporations and global lending institutions often embody and promote values that can be in opposition to religious values. These values commonly include consumerism, individualism, materialism, competitiveness, indebtedness and a profit-oriented mentality. Thus, the impact of globalization on the religious or spiritual lives of people is very real.

The exchange of cultural and religious practices, beliefs or traditions is related to interconnection and cultural hybridization (Meethan, 2001). An example of the adoption of diverse cultural and religious traditions within Christianity can be seen in various ecumenical movements and the spread of hymns, such as Taizé, Hillsong or Gospel music. Hartje-Döll (2016) noticed that popular Christian praise and worship music genres move among churches 'in a steady stream'. Other examples illustrate how cultural and religious traditions can transcend geographical boundaries, assimilate into new contexts, and become shared practices related to the

spread of cultural feasts (e.g. Christmas, Chinese New Year, Diwali), physical practices (yoga, Tai-Chi), and religious-based culinary traditions (Halal and Kosher food, Indian desserts). In general, it is essential to recognize that globalization is both an external force acting upon individuals and something that individuals are aware of and conscious about (Fig. 1.2).

Technological Aspects of Globalization: AI and ChatGPT

Various aspects of globalization, such as the speed of information transmission, the development of digital technologies and technological innovations, also impact religious tourism. According to Dicken (2007), technology should primarily be understood as a catalyst or facilitator that enables and empowers various developments. It plays a crucial role in enabling the creation of new structures, organizational and geographical arrangements of economic activities, as well as innovative products and processes. However, it is important to note that technology alone does not determine specific outcomes or results. It provides possibilities and potentials, but the actual result depends on human decisions.

As Liutikas (2023) pointed out, the impact of technological innovation on tourism has become a new social and economic reality. Technological innovations, including AI, automation, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR), have significantly impacted the tourism sector by introducing new services and business models. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated the adoption of information and communication technologies in tourism. Smartphones and mobile devices have become essential tools for tourists, enabling them to access relevant information, navigate to destinations and capture their experiences. Social innovations in tourism, such as sharing economy platforms (couch surfing, co-living and co-working) and temporary communities (social networks of people visiting the same places), often integrate with various types of information technology (IT).

Amaro *et al.* (2022) provided an overview of the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in religious tourism. The main types of ICTs used for religious tourism



Fig. 1.2. Replica of the Lourdes Grotto in Hue, Vietnam, decorated for the New Year celebration. Photo taken by D. Liutikas.

purposes were identified, including webpages, social media, AR and VR, and mobile devices and applications. The authors conclude that ICTs can have an impact on enhancing tourists' experiences, promoting religious tourism, facilitating accessible tourism, ensuring sustainable tourism, providing safety and advancing religious tourism research (Amaro *et al.*, 2022).

Digital technology and VR proved to be particularly valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic (Liutikas, 2021a). AR provides enriched experiences for pilgrims by offering interactive and digitally enhanced information about their surroundings. Virtual pilgrimages to sacred and valueistic places are possible, allowing individuals to form virtual groups and visit famous pilgrimage sites and events for spiritual or cognitive purposes. Virtual route trips and the replication of rituals, such as virtual repentance, enable travellers to follow in the footsteps of medieval pilgrims. Pilgrim centres invite Internet users to explore their websites and virtually experience the sanctuaries. Virtual pilgrims can communicate

and share impressions on virtual chat sites. The combination of physical activity and virtual travel can be achieved through indoor cycling systems, allowing pilgrims to cycle to destinations like Santiago de Compostela or Fátima from the comfort of their homes (Liutikas, 2021a, p. 242). Additionally, new virtual products, such as VR tours of holy sites, have emerged, enhancing the ability of pilgrims to practise religion and find meaning in everyday life.

Virtual visits to ancestral graves in Japan are now possible, offering a unique experience for users of such services. Specialized agencies provide online platforms where visitors can access the gravesites of their family ancestors. Upon clicking on the picture of a grave, the virtual tomb is adorned with digital flowers, and the sacred sutras can be heard. To authenticate their visit, visitors have the option to register and leave messages in the virtual guestbook (Inoue, 2000).

According to authors (MacWilliams, 2004; Helland, 2013), establishing a virtual connection with a physical place can provide individuals

with a means to enter a liminal space where they experience an authentic connection to the sacred site. VR can act as a symbolic substitute, enabling the facilitation of religious tourism. Furthermore, social networks and software offer novel avenues for expressing values and identities in the digital realm.

The newest global product, ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2023), was launched in November 2022. It is a natural language-processing tool driven by AI technology. It allows people to have human-like conversations and obtain different answers to various questions, both complex and simple. ChatGPT is more advanced than a usual chatbot and assists you with tasks such as text editing, composing e-mails, essays and code.

However, the use of ChatGPT raises various moral and ethical issues regarding the integration of AI-generated texts in scientific research. For example, when asked to highlight the main

aspects of religious tourism and globalization, the free version of ChatGPT-4 generated the text shown in Box 1.1 in 3 seconds.

ChatGPT can answer or lead you on the path to finding answers to pure spiritual or theological questions. However, the most important challenge is that various AI and VR or AR possibilities can replace interpersonal contacts. So, automation, in particular, raises questions about the extent to which religious tourists are willing to embrace technological advancements that replace human interactions.

The Search for Identity and Transformative Experience

Bauman (1997) presented a distinction between the pilgrim and the tourist as metaphors for

Box 1.1. Text produced by ChatGPT-4 on 23 June 2023 when asked to highlight the main aspects of religious tourism and globalization (italics added). From ChatGPT, 2023.

When examining the intersection of globalisation and religious tourism, several main aspects can be considered:

Cultural exchange: Globalisation has facilitated increased cultural exchange through religious tourism. People from various parts of the world visit religious sites, such as pilgrimage destinations, allowing for the sharing of beliefs, practices, and traditions. This exchange can foster understanding, dialogue, and tolerance among diverse religious communities.

Economic impact: Religious tourism has become a significant contributor to local and national economies. Globalisation has made it easier for travellers to reach religious sites, leading to increased visitor numbers and tourism-related businesses. The economic benefits derived from religious tourism can have positive effects on infrastructure development, employment, and local communities.

Religious revival: Globalisation has played a role in the revival and spread of religious practices. Through religious tourism, individuals often can reconnect with their faith, experience spiritual growth, and deepen their religious commitment. This revival can be observed both in traditional pilgrimage sites and the emergence of new religious tourism destinations.

Conflict and controversy: Globalisation and religious tourism can also be accompanied by conflicts and controversies. The influx of tourists to sacred sites can lead to tensions between commercialization and the sanctity of religious spaces. Additionally, cultural clashes may arise when visitors from different religious backgrounds encounter unfamiliar practices or beliefs.

Technological advances: Globalisation has enabled technological advancements that impact religious tourism. The availability of online resources, virtual tours, and travel platforms facilitates planning and information sharing. These technological tools can enhance the religious tourism experience and enable individuals to explore religious sites remotely.

Environmental impact: The growth of religious tourism can have environmental implications. Increased visitor numbers can strain local ecosystems, infrastructure, and resources. Sustainable tourism practices and responsible management of religious sites are crucial to mitigate these environmental impacts.

Overall, the main aspects of the intersection between globalisation and religious tourism encompass cultural exchange, economic impact, religious revival, conflict and controversy, technological advances, and environmental considerations.

modern and postmodern life strategies. The concept of a destination and achieving a purpose is most important for the pilgrim, while they 'wander the land with no destination'. Life as a pilgrimage 'gives form to the formless' and involves 'identity-building' because of the distance between the goal (always in the future) and the present moment (Bauman, 1997, p. 22). In contrast, the tourist, like the vagabond, is on the move, 'everywhere he goes in but nowhere of the place he is in'. However, 'the tourist is a conscious and systematic seeker of experience' (Bauman, 1997, p. 29) until it finally becomes unclear which one of the visiting places is home.

According to Yamin (2008), social and personal identity can be understood as both our own consciousness of ourselves and how others perceive our individuality. While it is acknowledged that people from various backgrounds and historical periods may attribute different values to specific behaviours, it is incorrect to suggest that the acceptability of any behaviour is solely dependent on an individual's perspective. Religion is related to individual and social identity, belonging to a larger group. Tajfel (1981) emphasized that our sense of self is closely tied to our identification with a group and the emotional significance of belonging to that group. Certain affiliations hold particular importance to our self-concept, providing feelings of self-esteem, stability, security or power. Being part of a group allows individuals to experience a sense of belonging, acceptance and solidarity through shared values and life goals.

Many authors relate pilgrimage to the manifestation of values and identity (Morinis, 1992; Norman, 2011, 2020; Liutikas, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2021b, c; Olsen, 2012, 2019; Griffin and Raj, 2015) or transformative experience (Turner and Turner, 1978; Morinis, 1984; Winkelman and Dubisch, 2005; Ozorak, 2006; Warfield and Hetherington, 2019). The concept of valuistic journeys, proposed by Liutikas (2012, 2021b, c), encompasses the expression of valuistic ideals and the confirmation and demonstration of identity throughout the journeys. The driving force behind choosing a pilgrim journey lies in social and personal identity, as well as various value orientations associated with religion, culture, sport, nation or personal experience. This concept comprises three key components: (i) identity; (ii) values; and (iii) their expression or

demonstration. Griffin and Raj (2017) state that choosing the religious journey is linked to a vision, for the motives of the travel have remained important for travellers.

Warfield and Hetherington (2019) observed that pilgrimage can involve transformative processes that encompass transitions from illness to well-being, from grief to closure, and from fractured to integrated. Pilgrimage includes possibilities for self-transformation, particularly in relation to the transformation of identity. Pilgrimage is transformational (Winkelman and Dubisch, 2005) because it relates to belief in the impact of holy places, the power of rituals and faith. The idea of transformation was connected to the indulgence (forgiveness of sins), which was one of the main reasons for pilgrimage in medieval Christian Europe.

Identity is a fundamental concept in sociology and holds significant importance in understanding the motivations and behaviour of pilgrims and religious tourists. It is important to note that identity is not a static category but rather a dynamic aspect that can cause travellers to move between diverse types of motivation. Religious tourism and pilgrimage are connected to the demonstration, expression, development or affirmation of one's values and identity. The primary distinction between a recreational journey and a values-rich journey lies in the traveller's motivation and inner disposition (Liutikas, 2012). In a religious pilgrimage, spiritual and religious motives take precedence, while in a secular pilgrimage, cultural, national, community-based and personal motives are more prominent. A values-rich journey involves reaching the destination while simultaneously expressing one's personal or social identity and values, thereby defining the unique characteristics of the self.

Religious behaviour is influenced by factors such as social learning, social identity or social rituals. Socialization plays a vital role in shaping our social identity, as it involves learning societal norms, cultural practices and religious beliefs. Various rituals, feasts and festivals, as well as lectures and sermons, contribute to the process of socialization and re-socialization, providing strong guidelines for our values and behaviours (Fig. 1.3).

Pilgrims engage in diverse types of rites, rituals and behaviours, including internal and



Fig. 1.3. Thousands of pilgrims every year visit Medjugorje, Bosnia and Herzegovina, known for the apparitions of the Virgin Mary, in search of transformative experiences. Photo taken by D. Liutikas.

external actions, external physical actions, the use of attributes, complex actions, and actions to memorialize the journey (Liutikas, 2021b). Rituals play a significant role in pilgrimage, serving as motives for the journey, part of the travel experience and means of socialization. For example, Catholic pilgrimage traditions involve practices like praying the rosary, participating in the Holy Mass, confession, lighting candles and participating in processions. Sacrifice, hardships and restrictions are often seen as acts of purification and devotion. Pilgrims also use external markers of identity, such as clothing, scarves, medallions and symbols. It is worth mentioning that VR and AR have the potential to enhance the pilgrim's experience.

Different travel conceptions can be identified, including those based on religious values and identity, partly religious or non-religious motivation, and instrumental motivation. Understanding the behaviour of religious tourists and their identity manifestation requires considering their religiosity, religious practices, rituals and motivations. Liutikas (2021b) identified 12 types of religious-oriented travellers based on religious to secular motivation and from a low level of religious identity and involvement to a prominent level of religious identity and involvement (Fig. 1.4). This model is based on empirical research conducted in Lithuania, with the aim of identifying recognizable and measurable groups of religious travellers.

Overall, comprehending the interplay between identity and its transformation can offer valuable insights into the nature of pilgrimages and their significance to individuals (Liutikas, 2022).

Overview of the Chapters

In Chapter 2, Elzbieta Bilaska-Wodecka provides an analysis of the phenomenon of copying sanctuaries in the Roman Catholic Church. The prevalence of sanctuary replicas and advancements in the IT sector indicate that nowadays, it is the shrine that comes to the pilgrim, rather than the pilgrim embarking on a journey to the shrine. Countless examples of global Catholic pilgrimage sites and their replicas are presented. Replicas can serve as a powerful means to promote the original sanctuary, inspiring a desire to visit it.

In Chapter 3, Dino Bozonelos focuses on geopolitical considerations concerning the future of religious tourism and pilgrimage. The analysis highlights three potential developments: (i) border securitization and its potential impact on global mobility; (ii) changes in information flow due to technological decoupling; and (iii) the resurgence of nationalism, potentially influencing preferences for religious travel within one's country's sphere of influence. The author addresses the phenomenon of

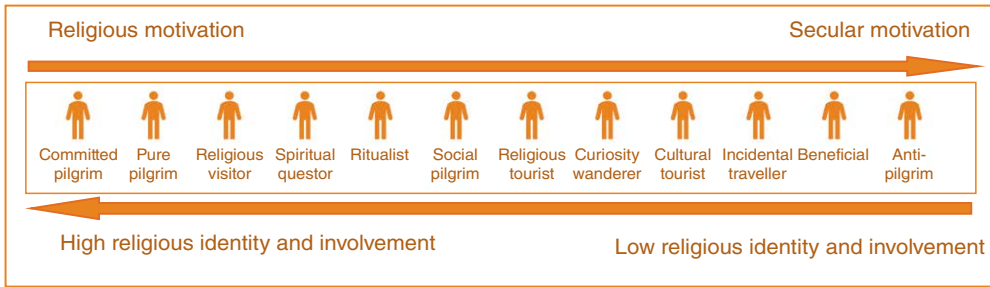


Fig. 1.4. Types of religious-related travellers. From Liutikas, 2021b.

deglobalization, defined as the process of reducing interdependencies among nations. The author suggests that geopolitical considerations will influence religious travel. Rising geopolitical tensions may deter tourists from visiting specific countries or regions.

In Chapter 4, Vitor Ambrosio and Isilda Leitão analyse and categorize the most popular books of the last four decades on the Saint James Way. The authors group published books into seven categories according to their similar characteristics and those who wrote them, including books by: (i) bloggers; (ii) celebrities; (iii) clerics; (iv) guidebook authors; (v) renowned writers; (vi) writers sharing family relationships; and (vii) writers sharing transformative experiences. Typically, all novels refer to a transformative experience of the Camino. Authors point out that even in novels where the Camino is not the main theme, it can still capture readers' attention. Two novels, Paulo Coelho's *The Diary of a Magus* and David Lodge's *Therapy*, are analysed in greater detail.

In Chapter 5, Silvia Aulet explores the transformational potential of visiting sacred sites. Understanding the concept of sacred sites enhances our grasp of their transformative potential. The author presents the potential for transformation in sacred sites or during travel to them from three primary perspectives: (i) personal; (ii) social; and (iii) environmental. The author concludes that religious travel and pilgrimages should serve as transformative and holistic experiences that encourage more conscious modes of travel and living.

In Chapter 6, Stephen Haller discusses pilgrimage as a method of personal and political integration. He examines the perspectives of several philosophers regarding how individuals'

responses to crises often lead to a division within themselves, where their personal values do not align with their communal behaviour. The author suggests that modern-day pilgrimage serves as a suitable method for inner transformation. The author concludes that change from within is a personal response to uncertain times and should not be dismissed solely based on its perceived ineffectiveness in consequentialist terms.

In Chapter 7, Mujde Bideci and Caglar Bideci provide a thorough examination of the complexities of immersive IT. Immersive technologies, such as mixed reality (MR), AR and VR, have emerged as tools for enriching the visitor experience by allowing the visitor to engage with pilgrim destinations in innovative ways, bridging the gap between physical and virtual environments. While modern technologies simulate the sights, sounds and even emotions connected to the sacred sites, additional research is required to investigate the precise impact of immersive technologies in creating memorable pilgrimage experiences. However, the immersive technologies in pilgrimage must be considered as a supplement (except for those who may be unable to physically travel to pilgrimage destinations due to health or financial constraints) or support to an actual pilgrimage journey, not a replacement over reality.

In Chapter 8, Eleanor O'Keeffe focuses on virtual pilgrimage in the UK during the COVID-19 pandemic. This chapter synthesizes various social media and media data to provide a macro-level analysis of virtual pilgrimage developments in 2020. The presented evidence indicates the convergence of pandemic-era virtual pilgrimage production with institutional and cultural digital infrastructures. The author challenges the notion that virtual pilgrimage inherently acted

as a globalizing or inclusive social force during the pandemic. According to research, virtual pilgrimage demonstrates its entanglement in state–society relations and the complex, at times divisive, politics it contributed to.

In Chapter 9, Nour Farra-Haddad presents the phenomenon of gigantic Christian religious statues and religious monuments in Lebanon. The building of such monuments related to pilgrimage projects, social identity and the tourism development of local communities. However, such monuments as the markers of religious identity can raise sociopolitical divisions and conflicts. The various interests and motivations of the building-project promoters, tourism stakeholders and local religious communities are discussed.

In Chapter 10, Ricardo Nicolas Prozano delves into the globalization of sacred sites in regional areas, using Kōyasan, a Shingon Buddhism site situated in Wakayama Prefecture, Japan, as a case study. He noticed that sacred sites in rural areas may choose to enter the global spotlight and cater to international tourism, illustrating the connection between rural regions and globalization. While concerns about the commodification of temples exist, religious institutions have broader objectives beyond visitor growth. This interplay between religion and consumerism forms a crucial aspect of contemporary religious tourism.

In Chapter 11, Polyxeni Moira, Spyridon Parthenis and Dimitrios Mylonopoulos analyse the visitors' experience on Mount Athos, Greece. The authors affirm previous research findings that people often go on pilgrimages with twofold objectives, seeking to satisfy both their spiritual and their material needs. The authors explore the spiritual, cultural, educational, gastronomic, social and environmental experiences associated with visiting Mount Athos.

In Chapter 12, Dimitrios Mylonopoulos, Polyxeni Moira and Spyridon Parthenis present the phenomenon of Passion Plays. Case studies from Oberammergau (Germany), Škofja Loka (Slovenia) and Paros (Greece) are analysed, religious events that serve as attractions for both believers (such as pilgrims and those seeking a spiritual experience) and religious tourists. The authors have observed that throughout the history of the Passion Play, it becomes evident that the re-enactments progressively shed their purely

religious character and evolve into more festive events, incorporating secular elements. Those responsible for maintaining this tradition must also consider its tourism-related aspects.

In Chapter 13, Jaffer Idris analyses the Hajj pilgrimage as a tool for seeking identity and transformation. For Muslims, the Hajj pilgrimage is a transformative experience that deepens their connection to their faith. The sense of unity and brotherhood and sisterhood has a profound impact on pilgrims. The most important aspects of a pilgrim's identity after the Hajj is the achievement of the sense of spiritual fulfilment and rejuvenation. The Hajj is also regarded as a transformative experience that extends beyond the spiritual realm, encompassing social and emotional dimensions, and fostering increased compassion, empathy and a heightened sense of social responsibility.

In Chapter 14, Antonietta Ivona and Donatella Privitera explore religious symbols and their commercialization. The authors delve into the transformation of Saint Nicholas into Santa Claus, illustrating the commercialization of a religious symbol that gained widespread recognition for secular festivities. They argue that certain images have ceased to be considered sacred and no longer necessitate religious context for a sacred experience, as they have taken on a secular dimension that sometimes supersedes their original religious significance. While globalization has created new opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and mutual understanding, it has also presented risks to the authenticity and integrity of religious symbols.

In the final chapter, Chapter 15, Alison T. Smith discusses questions of identity and transformation with her students using analysis of non-fiction readings including Ben Montgomery's (2014) *Grandma Gatewood's Walk* and Cheryl Strayed's (2012) *Wild*, the film *The Way* by Emilio Estevez (2010), and the novel *The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry* by Rachel Joyce (2013). As a model for the kinds of microjourneys the students would undertake for their final course project, the author presents Clint Smith's (2021) *How the Word is Passed: a Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America*. Her students read about transformative travel and pilgrimage experiences with the aim of crafting their own microjourney. The students also delve into how travel and pilgrimage can aid individuals in

confronting personal and collective traumas, thereby fostering a deeper comprehension of their role in the world and their own identity. While these microjourneys may not strictly qualify as pilgrimages, many of them do share elements commonly associated with pilgrimage.

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