



Motivations of the Russian and German tourists visiting pilgrimage site of Saint Nicholas Church



Müjde Bideci*, Tahir Albayrak

Akdeniz University, Tourism Faculty, Campus, Antalya, Turkey

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 18 November 2015

Received in revised form 18 December 2015

Accepted 30 December 2015

Keywords:

Pilgrimage tourism

Religious tourism motivation

Saint Nicholas Church

ABSTRACT

Traditional holiday destinations with pilgrimage sites may be more competitive by taking advantage of their ability to attract religious travellers as well as those who are keen to visit such locations because of a cultural interest. In order to be more competitive, host authorities should identify the motivations of tourists who visit pilgrimage sites. In this study, the motivations of the Russian and German tourists visiting Saint Nicholas Church in Antalya were investigated. By using a scale obtained from previous literature, the importance of each motivation was clarified depending on nationality. The results show that 'the history of the church' is the most important motivation for both groups. There are also significant differences in motivations of the Russian and German tourists according to demographic characteristics such as gender and age. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings and some managerial implications.

© 2016 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

The demand for tourism with the purpose of pilgrimage shows a considerable increase in the World. In parallel to increased demand, economic contribution of pilgrimage tourism has become more important for the host countries. As a tourism and travel type, pilgrimage has reached a total trade value of €13 billion in 2010 (National Geographic, 2011). Countries that contain religious buildings or sites have the potential to become popular pilgrimage tourism destinations. In Anatolia, Christian sites such as places where Jesus' followers lived are attractive pilgrimage destinations. One of the most visited Christian religious sites is Saint Nicholas Church, located in Antalya. In 2014, 530,995 tourists visited Myra Ancient City where Saint Nicholas Church stands, both with touristic and religious purposes.

Although a considerable number of tourists participate in pilgrimage tourism and it represents a significant market segment, limited research has been conducted on tourists visiting pilgrimage sites. Identification of tourist motivations for visiting a pilgrimage site is important, since motivation is a determinant of behaviour. Within the authors' knowledge, there is no study that specifically investigates tourist motivations for visiting Saint Nicholas Church. Therefore, this study aims to explore the main motivations of the Russian and German tourists visiting this site. Since the Russian Federation and Germany represent the two most important tourism markets for Antalya, the study sample consists of tourists coming from these countries. In addition, determining

whether demographic characteristics influence tourist motivation is another aim of this study. In the next section, the concept of pilgrimage and its relationship with religious tourism are presented. Following that, the concept of motivation and its role in pilgrimage tourism are explained. After the method section, results of the analyses are given. The study concludes with a discussion of the findings and managerial implications.

2. The concept of pilgrimage and its relationship with religious tourism

Travels with religious purpose are the oldest and most extensive movements in human history (Kaelber, 2006). The aims of these travels are to see destinations where miraculous events occurred or could occur, to redeem sins, to improve health and to pray (Timothy & Boyd, 2003). Pilgrimage, a kind of religious travel, is defined as a journey that is carried out with religious reasons and by following certain religious rituals. People joining these trips are called pilgrims. These trips are not only for religious people, as others who do not have a specific faith or do not wish to fulfil a specific ritual can also follow the traditional routes and visit sacred pilgrimage centres.

In the tourism and travel literature, travels with religious purpose are conceptualised as religious tourism and pilgrimage travels are categorised as pilgrimage tourism. However, in the related literature, religious and pilgrimage tourism are often used interchangeably. In fact, each of these two concepts has distinct characteristics. Basically, religious tourism has a more comprehensive meaning than pilgrimage tourism (Rinschede, 1992). Pilgrimage tourists must fulfil certain rituals in the sacred places they visit. However, in the religious tourism, there is

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: mujdebideci@akdeniz.edu.tr (M. Bideci), tahirbayrak@akdeniz.edu.tr (T. Albayrak).

no obligation to fulfil these rituals, thereby accounting for tourists who may only want to visit a destination out of curiosity or admiration. Another distinctive characteristic between religious and pilgrimage tourism is the allowance for additional activities and conveniences for religious tourists, such as tours, recreation activities, and spa treatments. In contrast, pilgrimage tourism does not include such a wide range of services. In the days not involving travel, pilgrims can only take time to pray and worship in sacred places. This aspect brings a unique structure to pilgrimage tourism when compared to religious tourism. In addition, pilgrimage destinations are where miraculous events have occurred (Vukonic, 1996), while religious tourists usually visit shrines or temples. Shackley (2003) states that artificial structures are necessary for religious tourism, however in pilgrimage tourism a place which has a legend associated with it, is suitable. In the scope of pilgrimage tourism, visits to a sanctuary are also very important. For example, annually almost 30 million people travel to India, 20 million to Mexico and 3 million to Mecca for pilgrimage purposes (Alliance of Religions and Conservation, 2015).

3. Motivation and its role in pilgrimage tourism

Motivation is conceptualised as a process that influences orientation and the intensity of individual efforts to accomplish a goal (Robbins, 2003). Concurrently, needs and wills lead people to act (Fındıkcı, 2009). In efforts to understand human behaviour, the concept of motivation has been intensively investigated by researchers, and many theories have been developed about it.

Motivation theories may be divided into two categories, as the scope theories and process theories. Among the scope theories, Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs is the most referenced and better known. In this hierarchy, it is stated that humans must satisfy each need in turn, starting with the first, which deals with the most obvious needs for survival itself (physical needs, security, belonging, acceptance, and self-actualisation). Process theories focus on the cognitive processes that convert motives into behaviours. Therefore, process theories that give emphasis to events affecting the strength of motives are focused on the mental processes that convert motives to a particular pattern of behaviour (Rollinson & Broadfield, 2002).

In tourism and travel literature, motivation is frequently used to understand tourist behaviour such as destination and activity selection. Differing needs and expectations of tourists lead to dramatic variations in demand in the tourism sector. Thus, motivation theories in the field of tourism are used as a tool for the identification of tourist needs as well. For example, Burkart and Medlik (1981) grouped tourist motivations for travelling into two categories: 'willingness to see unknown and different cultures' and 'desire to travel for better conditions'. Dann (1977) proposed the push and pull factors that motivate people to travel. While push factors are the inner impulses that lead people to travel, pull factors are destination features that meet their needs and expectations.

Although tourist motivation has been investigated in many studies, there is limited research about pilgrimage tourists' motivations (Collins-Kreiner, 2000; Fleischer, 2000; Poria et al., 2000; Poria, 2010). In one study, Poria (2003) assessed the motivations of tourists who visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem. His research results showed that non-religious people visit the Western Wall in addition to those who are identified themselves as religious. The most widespread motivations were identified as 'praying', 'sense of belonging', and 'curiosity'. Contrary to non-religious tourists, religious visitors were more motivated by 'destination culture' and they felt more emotionally involved.

4. Research site: Saint Nicholas Church

This study is based on a field research conducted at Saint Nicholas Church in Myra, Antalya, which is visited by Christian tourists as a pilgrimage site. Saint Nicholas, also known as Santa Claus, was a cleric and lived in Anatolia. Saint Nicholas is also known as the saint of

New York City in the USA, Freiburg in Germany and Italian island of Sicily, Naples, and Bari. He was born in Patara and was the Bishop of Myra. Although the date of Saint Nicholas' death is not exactly known, it has been widely accepted by Christians as 6th of December. Traditionally, commemorations are held at Saint Nicholas Church in Myra, Antalya on the 6th of December each year (Demre Municipality, 2015). After the original church—built when Saint Nicholas died—collapsed in an earthquake in 529, a larger Church was built in its place.

Myra has become an important destination for Christians who want to go on pilgrimage. The number of visitors is an indicator of its popularity; a total of 530,995 people visited Saint Nicholas Church in 2014 (Antalya Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate, 2013). Visitors often come to the region on day tours.

5. Method

The questionnaire used in the study consists of three parts. In the first part there were 10 questions that measure the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The 16 items in the second part which measure respondents' motivations were taken from Poria's (2003) study. Russian and German tourists were selected as the target sample as these countries send the majority of tourists to Antalya (Antalya Provincial Culture and Tourism Directorate, 2013).

The questionnaire was prepared in English and then translated into Russian and German by professional translators. A pilot test with 50 tourists who visited Myra was undertaken before the official survey. In the final survey, a total of 622 questionnaires were obtained from the Russian and German tourists. Data were collected between June and September, 2012 by convenience sampling method. After the elimination of incomplete questionnaires, 600 usable questionnaires were included in the analyses.

6. Results

To achieve the objectives of this study, firstly demographic characteristics of the Russian and German participants were analysed. Secondly, motivations of German participants were ranked from the most important to the least important. Thirdly, t-test and variance analyses were conducted to understand whether the motivations of German participants differed according to demographics. Then, the same process was followed for the Russian participants.

6.1. Demographic characteristics

Demographic characteristics of the participants are shown in Table 1. In both nationalities there were more female participants than males (Russian: 62.4%, German: 56.7%). Majority of the Russian participants were 21–40 years old (59.5%), while majority of German participants were aged 61 years or older (61.2%). Most of German participants (52.6%) were retired. Majority of participants from both nationalities had a university level of education. In addition, most of the Russian (66.9%) and German (78.5%) participants were married.

Regarding the frequency of their travels in the area, for the most (92.3%) of the Russian participants this was their first time in Myra and for many (57.9%) it was also their first time in Turkey. However, this was different for German participants. While 68.9% of German participants had visited Turkey more than once before, for 91.3% it was their first visit to Myra.

The Russian and German participants' sects and levels of belief are presented in Table 2. The majority of the Russian participants were Orthodox (76.8%), while most of German participants were Catholic (41.5%). Of Germans, 46% described themselves as religious, while for the Russian participants this was 33.6%.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1013578>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1013578>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)