



The sacred and the profane: Identifying pilgrim traveler value orientations using means-end theory



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HIGHLIGHTS

- Goal-oriented walking pilgrimage surfaces as a form of experiential tourism.
- The hierarchical relationship between pilgrimage attributes, the benefits and the personal values as ends are analyzed.
- Pilgrims perceive their values as being multidimensional aspects.
- Novel insights into the profane and sacred dimensions of the pilgrimage experience are discussed. Goal-oriented walking pilgrimage surfaces as a form of experiential tourism.

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the values exhibited by travelers along the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage route in Spain. Drawing upon data that were collected en route, pilgrim value systems are identified and explored using the hard laddering method and applying means-end chain (MEC) theory. The researchers examine the hierarchical relationship between pilgrimage attributes, the benefits that pilgrims subsequently acquire and the fulfillment of personal values as ends. The strongest associations are found between attributes, consequences, and values with social bonds that are acquired by socializing with peer pilgrims, followed by the search for happiness through an appreciation of natural beauty and the pursuit of contemplation during the pilgrimage walk. These findings provide novel insights into the profane and sacred dimensions of the pilgrimage experience.

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1. Introduction

Pilgrimage is a long established form of religious mobility (Collins-Kreiner, 2010a; Jackowski & Smith, 1992; Smith, 2003). As one of the oldest manifestations of religious expression, pilgrimage has shown the capacity to address participant spiritual needs and associated values. Pilgrimage experiences may be positive and life-changing (Digance, 2003; Smith, 1992). The recent revival in popularity for pilgrimage manifests postmodern features (Courtney, 2013; Reader, 2007). At the United Nations' inaugural

International Congress on Tourism and Pilgrimage in Spain (UNWTO, 2014), speakers noted the potential contributions of pilgrimage tourism to inner fulfillment and satisfaction through psychological and physical enhancement. This is symptomatic of an emerging view that pilgrim movements impact favorably on societies and may contribute to the development of sustainable forms of tourism.

Scholars have approached the study of pilgrimage travel from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. These have included anthropology (Belhassen, Caton, & Stewart, 2008; Cohen, 1992; Graburn, 1983; Turner & Turner, 1978), geography (Collins-Kreiner, 2010b; Collins-Kreiner & Wall, 2015), sociology (Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1976), and religious studies (Gesler, 1996; Reader, 2007; Vilaça, 2010). Much of the attention evident in the tourism

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literature has involved identifying the dichotomy between sacred and secular pilgrim motivations (Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006; Damari & Mansfeld, 2014; Devereux & Carnegie, 2006; Hudman & Jackson, 1992; Jackowski & Smith, 1992; Singh, 2005; Svoboda, Šalgovičová, & Polakovič, 2013; Vukonić, 1992). In this context it is notable that pilgrimage has been characterized as a sacred journey and as a spiritually and religiously motivated ritual that leads participants towards a center (Cohen, 1992; Pfaffenberger, 1983).

The increasingly secular manifestations of postmodern societies do not appear to have impeded the recent revival of pilgrimage (Collins-Kreiner, 2010a; Reader, 2007). The resurfacing of pilgrimage as an identifiable form of tourism aligns with various contemporary social practices. The motives that are propelling the growing number of modern pilgrims differ from traditional pilgrimage practices (Blackwell, 2014). Despite the evident merit of understanding the revival of an established tourism form in its modern setting, little empirically rigorous research has explored the experiential aspects of modern pilgrimage. This includes the fundamental goals that accompany pilgrims through the course of their travels. Previous studies have been particularly lacking in any consideration of the personal value systems that travelers bring to the pilgrimage experience.

The present study draws upon pilgrimage experiences acquired along the Camino de Santiago to undertake an empirical investigation of values, both constant and changing. A reliable analysis technique—means-end chain (MEC) theory—is applied to identify multidimensional values. MEC theory adopts attributes, consequences, and values as the basic components of perceptions that are stored in memory (Chiu, 2005; Reynolds, Gengler, & Howard, 1995). In this approach values are considered to be the highest level of outcome and as the original source of choice criteria that drive behaviors. It is understood that attributes contribute to the acquisition of values through the consequences or benefits of experience. More specifically, the theory conceptualizes how product attributes address desired personal values by conveying benefits to those who use or experience them (Grunert, 1995; Gutman, 1982; Le Page, Cox, Russell, & Leppard, 2005). MEC theory provides a helpful cognitive structure for decision-making at multiple levels (Pitts, Wong, & Whalen, 1991).

The study has two primary objectives. Firstly, the researchers investigate the specific attributes of participant experiences when on pilgrimage, any subsequent consequences, and participant personal values, whether aspirational or acquired. Second, hierarchical networks are examined to explain the relationship between attributes, consequences, and fundamental values. Understanding the value orientation of pilgrims provides prospective insights into the attainment of ultimate desires through inner experience and about the development of pilgrimage tourism as a measurable market segment. Consistent with the growing interest in pilgrimage amongst researchers, this study will shed new light on pilgrim values with a view to stimulating active engagement in the pilgrimage journey phenomenon by relevant local communities, religious organizations, local government, and industry players.

2. Literature review

2.1. Means-end chain (MEC) theory

For the purposes of the present study MEC theory was selected as a foundation to identify ultimate pilgrim values. The MEC approach was first deployed by Reynolds and Gutman in the 1980s and adopted a marketing perspective on decision making and the identification of values (McIntosh & Thyne, 2005). The theory assumes that customers do not purchase a product for its own sake,

but for the benefits that accrue (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2009; Ter Hofstede, Audenaert, Steenkamp, & Wedel, 1998). Values are pivotal beliefs that reflect the individual and his/her behaviors (Gutman, 1990; Hofstede, 1980; Kahle, 1983; Mitchell, 1983; Pizam & Calantone, 1987; Rokeach, 1973; Watkins & Gnoth, 2011).

MEC encompasses three elements. These indicate features or aspects of a product or service (physical or abstract), secondly consequences (benefits accruing to users when they experience the product or service whether functional or psychosocial) and finally value. A value is the highest level of end, and the most fundamental goal, whether instrumental or terminal. Particular attributes acquire importance because they satisfy consequences. The consequences acquire importance because they satisfy personal values.

The most commonly adopted method that is associated with MEC is a qualitative research technique known as laddering which was developed by Hinkle in 1965 (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2009; Olson & Reynolds, 2001). A laddering method is helpful for probing higher order meanings through a process of abstraction. It begins by identifying concrete meanings at the attribute level and ends with obtaining more abstract meanings at the level of consequences and values (Watkins & Gnoth, 2011). Its ultimate aim is to elicit respondent attribute-consequence-value (A-C-V) associations through face-to-face, individual, in-depth, or semi-structured interviews (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). In practice, a sequence of in-depth examinations tracks the network of associations located in the memory, leading ultimately to personal values. It uncovers the structural aspects of human experience along the process of the means-end chain; from attributes to consequences, and finally to values (Valette-Florence, 1998).

To enhance validity and achieve an adequate sample size, it is recommended that a minimum of 40 reliable responses is obtained through the administration of a structured questionnaire using the paper and pencil method (Barrena & Sánchez, 2009; Russell et al., 2004; Ter Hofstede et al., 1998). It is worth noting that some studies have applied the hard laddering method using samples of as few as 30 participants (Kuisma, Laukkanen, & Hiltunen, 2007; Vriens & Ter Hofstede, 2000).

2.2. Pilgrimage experiences according to the MEC method

Pilgrimage is a human mobility phenomenon that involves pursuing sanctuary at a sacred place, holy site, or shrine through the activation of religious motives and spiritual fulfillment (Collins-Kreiner, 2010a; Digance, 2003; Reader, 2007; Travis, 2011). Long associated with religion, pilgrimage is one of the oldest forms of expressing worship and penitence for sins, of seeking a cure in the face of illness and problems, and of pursuing religious enlightenment by reforming one's ways (Digance, 2003; Jackowski & Smith, 1992; Smith, 1992; Vukonić, 1996). Anthropologists have noted that the practice of pilgrimage was a nascent manifestation of tourism and may even be considered as its original form (Cohen, 1979, 1992, 1998; MacCannell, 1973; Smith, 1992; Turner & Turner, 1978).

Most of the studies on pilgrimage that have been published within the tourism literature have characterized pilgrims and tourists as interchangeable at religious destinations, depending on the sacredness or secularity of their motives (Smith, 1992). Within the growing research insights on individual pilgrims and their personal experiences (Cohen, 1992; Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006; Fleischer, 2000; Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2004; Smith, 1992), three prevalent streams of thought are apparent: attributes affecting pilgrim experiences, pilgrim motives and benefits, and ultimate attainments.

The first stream deals with attributes that affect pilgrim experiences. Collins-Kreiner and Kliot (2000) pointed out that pilgrims are not only exposed to holy Christian sites, but also to other

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