

2017

## The Spirituality of the Leader and its influence on Visitor Experience Management at Sacred Sites in the Island of Ireland: Insights and Implications

Vreny Enongene

Technological University Dublin, vreny.enongene1@mydit.ie

Kevin Griffin

Technological University Dublin, kevin.griffin@tudublin.ie

Follow this and additional works at: <https://arrow.tudublin.ie/tfschhmtcon>



Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Enongene, V & Griffin, K. (2017). The Spirituality of the Leader and its influence on Visitor Experience Management at Sacred Sites in the Island of Ireland: Insights and implications, *The 9th annual international Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Conference*, Armeno, Orta Lake, Italy.

This Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Tourism & Hospitality Management at ARROW@TU Dublin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Other resources by an authorized administrator of ARROW@TU Dublin. For more information, please contact [arrow.admin@tudublin.ie](mailto:arrow.admin@tudublin.ie), [aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie](mailto:aisling.coyne@tudublin.ie), [gerard.connolly@tudublin.ie](mailto:gerard.connolly@tudublin.ie), [vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie](mailto:vera.kilshaw@tudublin.ie).

# The Spirituality of The Leader and its Influence on Visitor Experience Management at Sacred Sites in the Island of Ireland: Insights and Implications

**Vreny Enongene, Ph.D. Candidate & Dr Kevin Griffin**

Dublin Institute of Technology,  
College of Arts and Tourism  
School of Hospitality Management and Tourism,

**The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual International Religious Tourism & Pilgrimage Conference**  
**Armeno, Orta Lake, Italy**

**28<sup>th</sup> of June to 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 2017**

## Rationale & Problem Statement

**Paucity** of Scholarly Investigations into Sacred Site Visitor experience Management from **Managerial Perspective** & the **Dearth** in Research in **Pilgrimage Tourism Management** in general (**Griffin & Raj, 2012 & Geography of Leisure and Tourism Research Group 2014**)

The **Role Leaders Play** in Visitor Experience Management at Sacred sites Religious (**The Researchers, 2016**)

**Spirituality  
(Beliefs)**

**Role Socio-Psychological Characteristics of Leaders Play in Sacred Site Visitor Experience Management**

Wiltshier (2014) on the role of Volunteers highlighted the **propensity** of their **spirituality** to influence the delivery of the visitor experience

**No** Exploration of the Phenomenon Globally Till Date & In the **Irish Context**

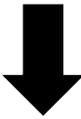
**Seldom** Acknowledged in the Religious & Pilgrimage Tourism Scholarship

Olsen (2008) Cautioned RPT Scholars to take **religious culture** seriously & How **Leaders** view Tourism & its **influence** on Management of these places

The socio-psychological characteristics of leaders and their influence of visitor experience management



Religious Affiliation / Society  
**Social**



Beliefs, Feelings , Actions  
**Psychology**



Determine / Influence decisions  
**Marketing, management**



Determine / Influence visitor  
**Satisfaction & Return Visits**

- ❖ Regarding strategy development and Implementation
- ❖ The sort of products and service offerings/delivery
- ❖ The interpretation of artefacts
- ❖ Guided tour narratives

Our Interest

## Research Aim / Question & Objectives

To Explore with a sample of Irish Sacred Site Leaders so as to determine in what ways their Spirituality Influences Visitor Experience Management at these Holy Places

How Does the Spirituality of Sacred Site Leaders Influence Visitor Experience Strategy Development and Implementation?

### Objectives

To **Advance** theoretical knowledge on sacred site visitor experience management from the managerial perspective

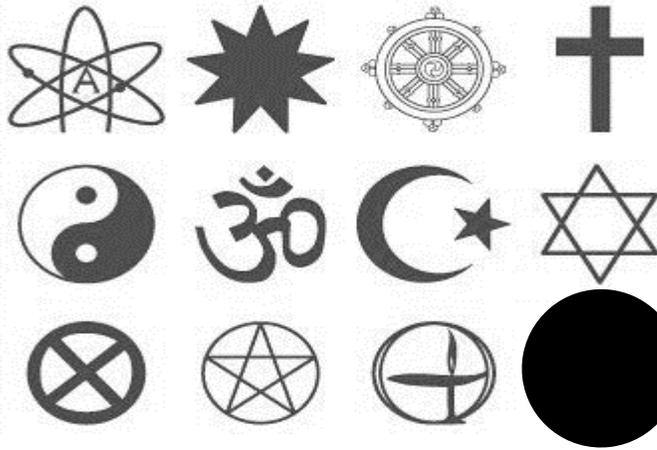
To **Explore** how the spirituality of leaders at different levels in the organisation influences and determines product and service development and delivery strategies

To **Examine** the extent to which leaders spirituality- based- actions, attitudes and behaviours impacts on the visitor's experience at these sites

To **Evaluate** the **implications** of their **spirituality- based -actions** in effectively catering to a diverse visitor requirement



# Towards a Definition of Spirituality & of a Leader



Definitions & Perspectives on Spirituality Differ

Spirituality is more of an **individual practice**, it also relates with the process of **developing beliefs** around the **meaning of life & Connection** with others

Christians Views & Perspectives

The inability to separate the term spirituality from its religiousness

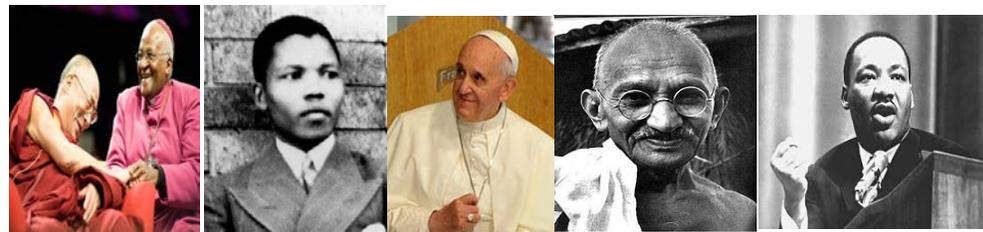
Spirituality is a process by which individuals recognise the importance of Orienting their lives to something non-material that is beyond or greater than themselves so that there is an acknowledgement of and at least some dependence upon a higher power which is invisible or spirit

( Martin & Carlson, 1999)

**Pattison (2001, p.34)** contests that if the word is removed from this association then it  
*“ is lost in the interest of providing bespoke meta-physical marshmallow that is non-specific, unlocated, thin, uncritical, dull and un-nutritious”*

Spirituality has been defined as our inner consciousness a specific form of work feeling that energises action, sometimes a world view plus a path”  
(Cavanagh et al., 2001 & Guillory )

A **Leader** is defined as a person or thing that holds a dominant or superior position within a field, and is able to exercise a high degree of control or influence over others & Cause others to follow some course of action or line of thought  
(Business Dictionary)



## Spirituality From an Organisational Management Standpoint

Research conducted by McCormick (1994) on American managers and their Spirituality at work revealed that :

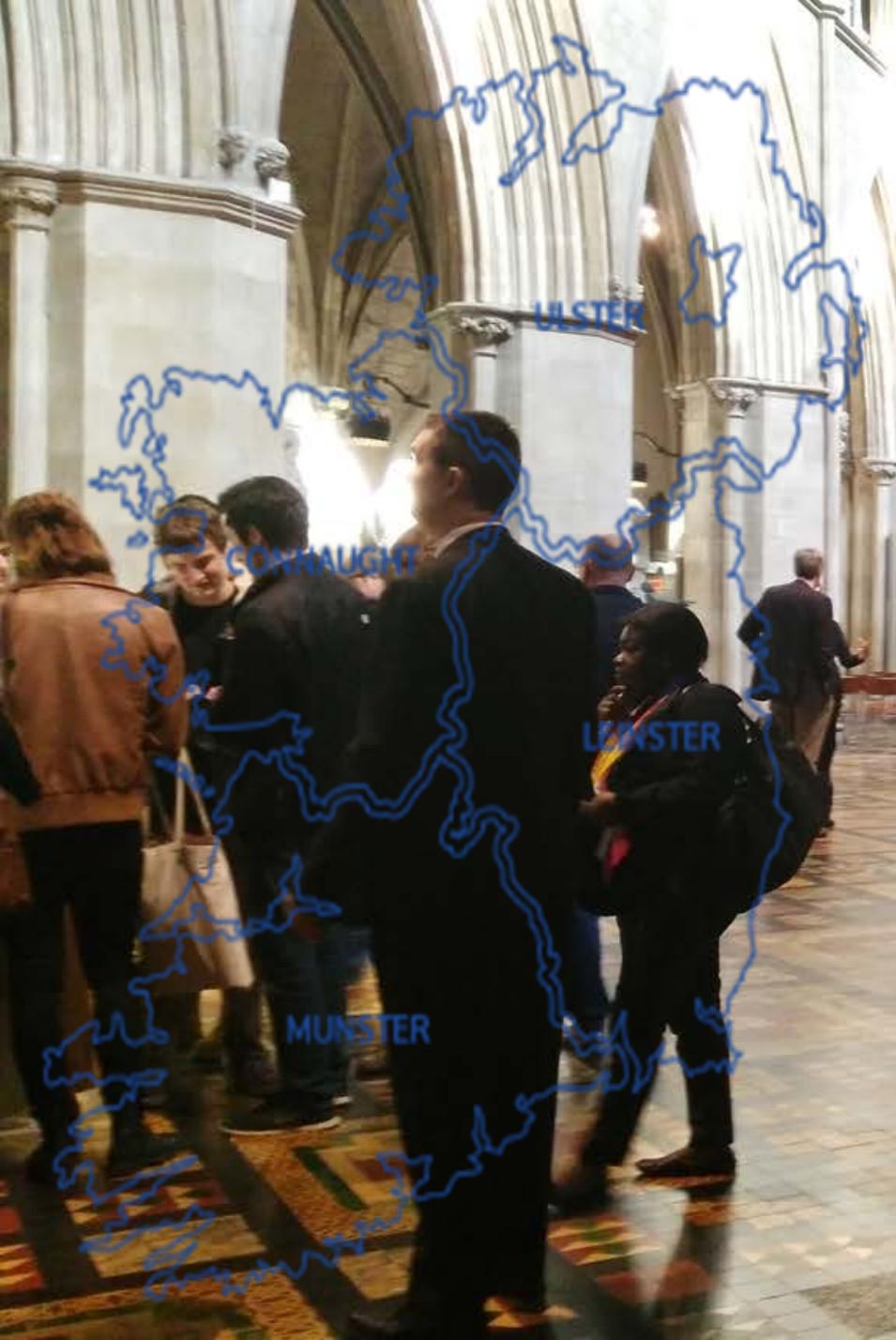
**Managers** bring their **deepest spiritual values** to bear on their work

Many **Believing managers** say that their **relationship** with **God Influences** their **work lives more than any other factor**

Understanding the Role of Spirituality in the Management of the visitor experience at sacred sites

1. **'Lived Spiritualities'** i.e. the way spirituality is acted out in everyday life
2. **'Reflective Spiritualities'** which is an interpretation and the way of communication of this experience

(Sharma & Bharti, 2014)



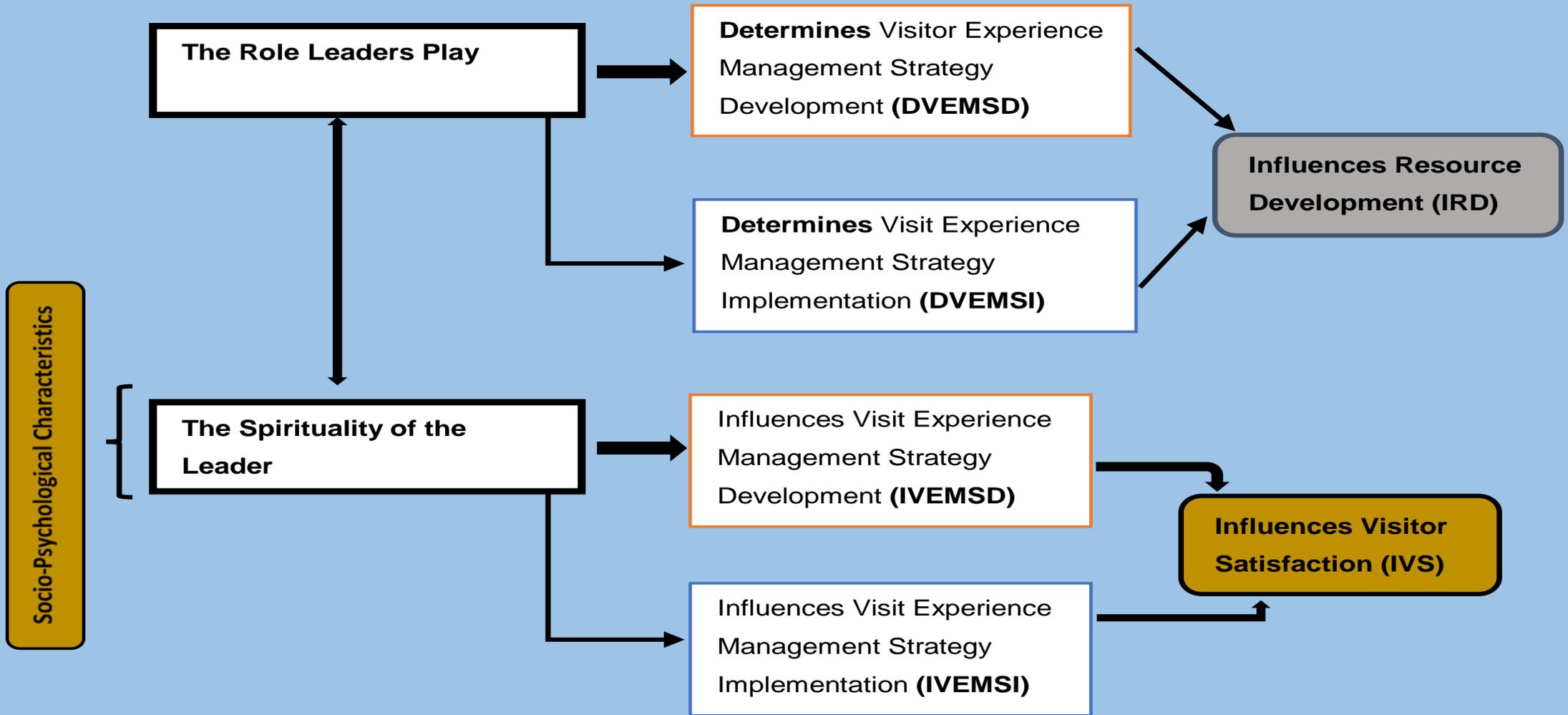
<b>Research Approach &amp; Methods Employed</b>	
<b>Research Tools</b>	Interviews ( in-depth ) / semi-focus groups
<b>Research Participants</b>	Managers, Tour Guides, Administrators, Rectors, Priests
<b>Sampling Frame</b>	Irish sacred sites / Diverse category/ (Shrine, Island, Monasteries, Cathedrals, Mountain & Churches)
<b>Response Rate</b>	23 Interviews <b>11 sacred sites</b>
<b>Data Analysis Technique</b>	Data Manually Transcribed



## [ Research Outcome ]

- ❖ Findings revealed that the spirituality of the leader, either based on religion or upon secular influences to a **greater extent** the sort of experience visitors get at these sacred sites.
- ❖ It revealed that the **more spiritual** the leader the more **inclined** they were to visitor experience management **strategies** and their **implementations** that catered to the religiously / spiritually – motivated visitor, and vice versa,
- ❖ Tour Leaders **wielded absolute power** to deliver the tours in ways that best suited them, those who considered themselves **more spiritual** tended to direct their narratives to include more religious aspect of the site
- ❖ While the **less spiritual**, focused their **narrative** towards the historical and archaeological aspect of the site.

Perspectives of Spirituality and its influence in the Management of the Visitor Experience at Sacred Sites



Source: The Authors

## Implications

Questions to what **extent** visitors diverse needs and expectations are effectively catered for & visitor satisfaction with their experiences

While highlighting the **complexities** involved in effectively catering to a multiplicity of visitors needs at sacred sites.

## Conclusions / Summary

❖ The spirituality of the leader plays a significant role in shaping the sort of experiences visitors get at sacred sites

❖ Thus, the findings of the study reveal that the spirituality of the leader implicitly and explicitly influences visitor experiences management at a diverse category of sacred sites in the Island of Ireland.

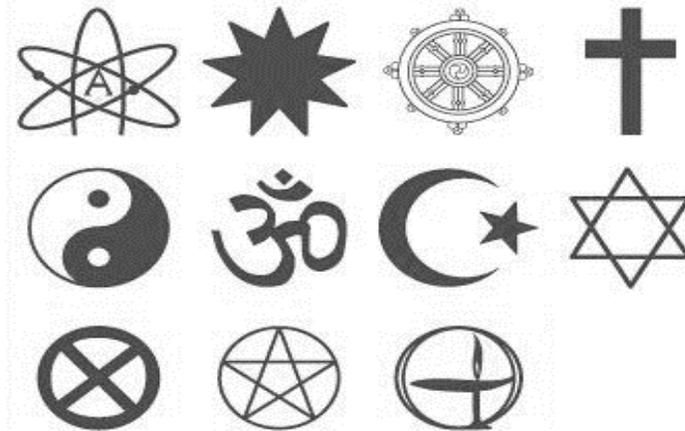
❖ Leaders perception / view on tourism at these ecclesiastical sites, significantly influences the typology of product and service development and delivery strategies and their implementations

# Future Research

❖ The Research **opens avenue** for more investigations into those factors that might play a vital role in influencing visitor experience management at sacred sites.

❖ Such as the **demographic characteristics** (age, gender etc.), crucial in that most of the sacred sites are male dominated organisations.

❖ It could also be explored from different religious and spiritual backgrounds, i.e. **Muslims, Buddhist, Hindu, etc**



# Thank You for Your Attention!!!

Any Questions

