SUSTAINABILITY, STAKEHOLDERS AND HERITAGES

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The challenges of developing religious tourism are many and varied. They can be focussed in an attempt to develop the niche market in sustainable way. It has long been recognised that sustainability involves economic, socio-cultural and environmental elements. In a stakeholder approach, we are looking to identify those who can affect and are affected by developments. In this context we must ensure that those we recognise as stakeholders represent all the heritages found in the destinations we are working with.

It is important to ensure that heritages are treated sensitively and are not over exploited. Development needs to appreciate the delicacy involved in working with both tangible and intangible heritages.

Partnerships can be seen as a necessary and essential way of working, especially in a complex construct such as religious tourism. Religious tourism draws on not only the religious tourism attractions but also the amenities, accommodation and transport. No matter how devout your tourists, they will need to be able to access your offer, stay over to enjoy it and relax with food and drinks.

The keys to successful partnership development have been identified in the research as:

- Mission cultures – long term vision
- Trust
- Identifying a champion
- Achievement

These should be secured by the engagement of the stakeholders throughout the development and implementation processes.