

2018-10

Catering to Diverse Visitor Requirements at Ecclesiastical Heritages: Challenges for Upholding Spiritual Values, Site Authenticity, Integrity and Identity

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Recommended Citation

Enongene, V. (2018). Catering to Diverse Visitor Requirements at Ecclesiastical Heritages: Challenges for Upholding Spiritual Values, Site Authenticity, Integrity and Identity. *Future for Religious Heritages: Europe's Legacy for the Future FRH Biennial Conference at UNESCO Paris, France, October 2018* doi.org/10.21427/4676-t610

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Catering to Diverse Visitor Requirements at Ecclesiastical Heritages: Challenges for Upholding Spiritual Values, Site Authenticity, Integrity and Identity



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Background

The exponential growth of tourism to sacred sites, and its double digit growth projection come 2020 and managerial issues (UNWTO, 2014 & Tourism & More, 2014). As well as the changing nature, demand and expectations of contemporary sacred site visitors, to include the typical faith-based visitor (Kartal *et al.*, 2015). Whose demand for renewed spiritual services and 'entertaining' experiences poses operational challenges for these custodians who might not be conversant with the operational complexities of catering to these diversity of needs and expectations.

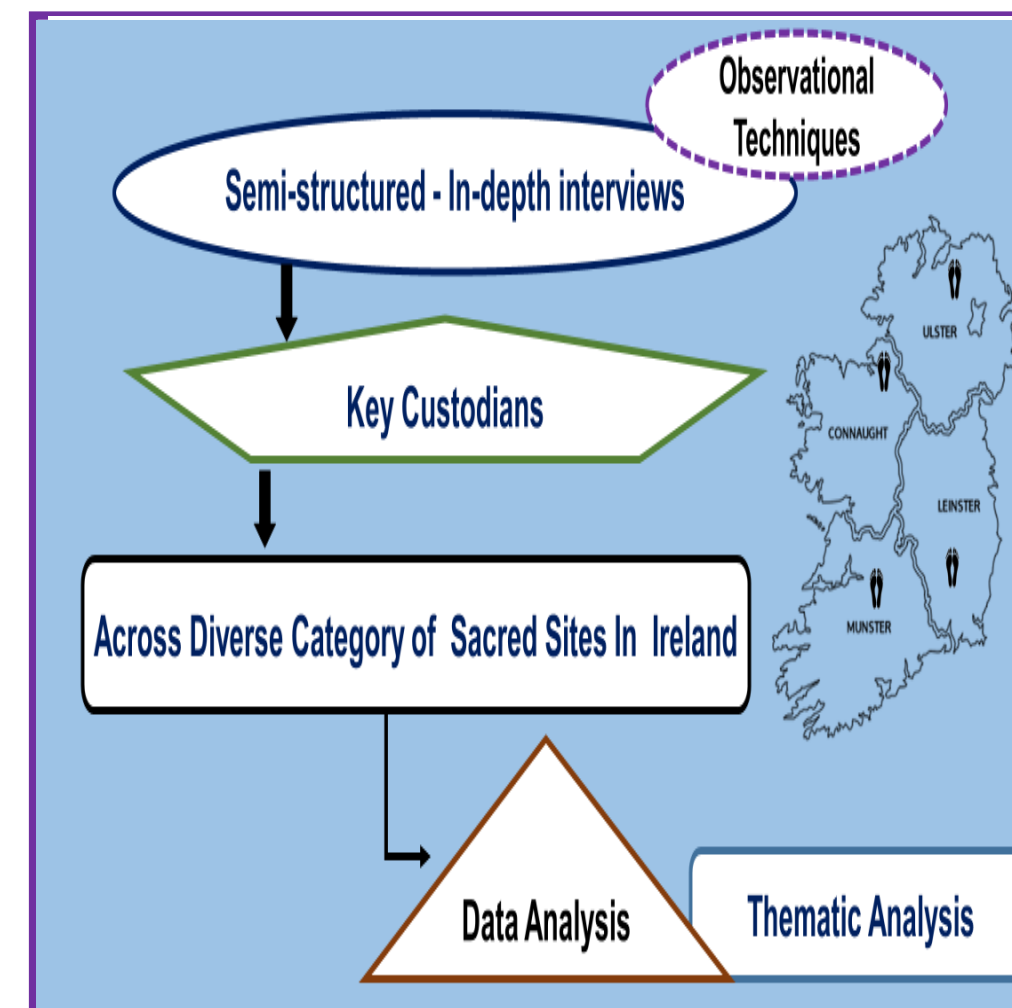
Knowledge Gap

A review and critique of extant literature in the religious tourism and pilgrimage scholarship revealed a paucity of empirical exploration into the management of visitors diverse requirements and the implications for upholding traditional spiritual values from a managerial perspective globally and in the Irish context.

Research Question

How do Irish Sacred Sites cater to their diverse visitor requirements? and what are the challenges and approaches in catering to these needs and the implications for upholding traditional spiritual values?

Methodology



Research Findings

Findings revealed how the pressure of catering to a multiplicity of visitor's needs seems to be;

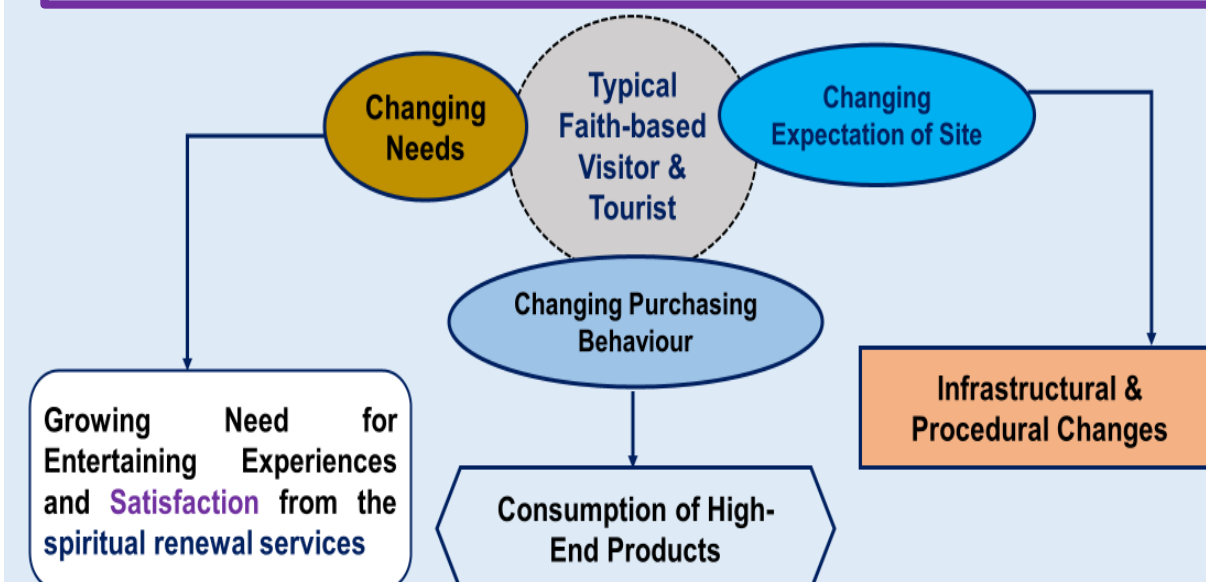
- Detracting custodians from their original spiritual focus.
- While extensive structural and procedural changes and the act of operating too rigidly two identities are posing significant challenges for upholding traditional spiritual values, site authenticity, integrity, identity and representativeness.

References

- ❖ Alen, B. (2012). Number of Tourist Visiting Holy Places Rising. *Tourism Review New: respected voice of tourism*
- ❖ Enongene, V., & Griffin, K. (2017) Christianity-Contemporary Christian Pilgrimage and Traditional Management Practices at Sacred Sites, in Leppakari, M and Griffin, K. Eds. *Pilgrimage and Tourism to Holy Cities: Ideological and Management Perspectives*, CABI, Wallingford, 25-44.
- ❖ Kartal, B., Tepeci, M., & Atli, H. (2015). Examining the Religious Tourism Potential of Manisa, Turkey with a Marketing Perspective
- ❖ (UNWTO, 2014 and Tourism & More, 2014). Tourism can Protect and Promote Religious Heritage. <http://media.unwto.org/press-release/2014-12-10/tour>

Research Implications

The study has significant implications for the future of religious heritages and their sustainability for future generational consumption, given the prevailing circumstances.



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