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## Motivations to Visit Jerusalem, Santiago De Compostela And Fatima As Sacred Destinations: A Generational Approach

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# Motivations to Visit Jerusalem, Santiago De Compostela And Fatima As Sacred Destinations: A Generational Approach

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# Motivations to Visit Jerusalem, Santiago De Compostela and Fatima as Sacred Destinations: A generational approach

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The present study analyses in a holistic and multidisciplinary approach the motivations that tourists have to visit sacred places. The goal is to find out what are the key motivational factors that determine their choice. It supplies an extensive literature review focusing on the concept of motivations, which allows us to identify the main reasons that draw people to sites.

The fieldwork of this study includes pilgrims and or tourists at three sacred sites: Fátima (Portugal), Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and Jerusalem (Israel). Fieldwork includes surveys of 633 tourists from different religions visiting these symbolic places who belong to generations of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials.

The results show the existence of a multidimensional scale that incorporates three dimensions of motivation to visit sacred places as tourist destinations: (1) Faith, (2) Personal enrichment and (3) Calling. However, due to the differences of generations - Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennials - the importance and significance of each of those motivations for the tourists who visit these sacred places is different.

The present study has important implications for the marketing and planning of sacred destinations, particularly in the development of strategies of segmentation, targeting and positioning, through the disclosure of the differentiated characteristics valued by each age group of tourists.

**Key Words:** religious tourism, sacred places, motivations, generations

## Introduction

People travel for various reasons (Collins-Kreiner, 2010; Digance, 2006; Maoz & Beckerman, 2010). In fact, tourism can meet different needs of tourists, and in this way, motivation is a multidimensional concept in the tourist literature (McCabe, 2000).

Most tourists travel to the same destinations, but their individual quest may be different (Norman, 2012; Timothy & Olsen, 2006; Smith & Puczo, 2009), particularly when considering religious and sacred

destinations, described as powerful places of worship with profound emotional meaning to those who visit them (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2004).

UNWTO estimates that around 300-330 million tourists visit the world's major religious sites each year (UNWTO, 2017) and such travel is a global industry of

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\$18 billion (Griffin & Raj, 2017). Despite the active growth of this sector, religious tourism is not a new form of tourism (Olsen & Timothy, 2006). It is one of the oldest forms of travel (Blackwell, 2007). Still, the motivations for visiting sacred places are part of the need to reevaluate personal life issues, like respond to the questions ‘who am I?’, ‘Where do I belong?’, ‘what do I believe?’ Questions that look to improve people’s spiritual sense.

Today, tourists are looking for new, authentic, and unique travel and tourism experiences outside the home (McGettigan, 2016). The reasons for traveling are becoming increasingly personal and significant (Cohen, 2010), especially when it comes to visiting holy and sacred sites. However, contemporary religious tourists may be motivated by several other factors than religious motivations (Albayrak, Herstein, Caber, Drori, Bideci & Berger, 2018), particularly when they belong to different generations.

Within the tourism and hospitality literature, generational differences have been the focus of increasing attention (Tsaor & Yen, 2018). A generation is a social group in which people were born at a specific time, sharing a common culture system. Baby Boomers are the group that includes individuals born between 1941 and 1960, Generation X from 1961 to 1980 and the Millennials, those people born between 1981 and 2000 (Lu & Gursoy, 2016). Because of their generational characteristics and consequent life experiences, values and attitudes, consumer behavior of each group tends to be different (Tsaor & Yen, 2018). Consequently, distinct generational characteristics can cause differences in how individuals deal with all aspects of life, but in particular, issues such as religion.

Considering the importance of tourism motivations for religious tourism, and the lack of research on these motivations within generations, this study intends to measure the motivations related to the Fatima holy site in Portugal, Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and Jerusalem in Israel, through the different generations.

## Methodology and Data Analysis

To find the main motivations for visiting Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela, and Fatima as sacred places, among different generations, a quantitative approach was employed, and undertaken via a research instrument.

Research items that measure motivations were adapted

from an extensive literature review on motivations, religious tourism, and sacred sites. Sixty attributes were used to specifically assess the motivations of tourists to visit sacred places and all these items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale (from 1 for ‘No matter at all’, to 7, ‘Extremely important’). A pre-test sample of 50 tourists from the three generations considered was used to refine the questionnaire and test the reliability of the scales using Cronbach’s alpha (Cronbach, 1951). Based on their suggestions, improvements were made to the questionnaire.

The development of a conceptual model based on literature review resulted in the identification of nine dimensions of motivation to visit sacred sites as tourist destinations: (1) Historical-Cultural, (2) Social and Leisure, (3) Prestige, (4) ???, (5) Adventure, (6) Personal Enrichment, (7) Call, (8) Educational and, (9) Commercial.

Although not all religious sites are considered sacred (Rivera, Shani & Severt, 2009), the study was conducted in three religious and spiritual tourist destinations which are considered to be sacred sites: Fatima (Portugal), Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and Jerusalem (Israel). The reason why the research focused on these places of spirituality is because they are popular destinations of contemporary pilgrimage (Terzidou, Scarles & Saunders, 2017), and are among the most important sacred destinations in the world. Fatima is known as the world’s altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary, being one of the most recognised religious sanctuaries in the world, with over 5 million visitors in 2016. Santiago de Compostela has become a popular destination for contemporary pilgrimage (Terzidou, Scarles & Saunders, 2017) with 262,000 pilgrims in 2015 (Lucarno, 2016). And Jerusalem was visited in 2016 by 2.8 million tourists and is the global meeting point for religious tourists of various denominations (Albayrak *et al.*, 2018).

The sample profile includes tourists of the Millennial Generation, Generation X and Baby Boomers, corresponding to 59.1%, 31.9% and 9.0% of respondents, respectively.

- The Millennials group consisted of more women (51.7%) than men (42.3%). The average number of years of study is 13.7 years (s.d. 3.4), which corresponds to a high education level. The average individual income is mostly up to 1000 euros per month (70.7%).

- The Generation X group has a similar number of men (50.2%) and women (49.8%), with 10.4 years being the average number of years of education (s.d. 5). The monthly average individual income is up to 1000 euros (57.4%) and between 1001 and 2000 euros (26.7%).
- A similar pattern occurs in the generation of Baby Boomers, with similar ratio of women (50.9%) and men (49.1%), 7.5 years of schooling on average (s.d. 5), and income of up to 1,000 euros (64.9%) and between 1001 and 2000 euros (27.9%).

Regarding analysis of the data, this was performed using SPSS.24 statistical software, and in a first phase, the validation of the proposed conceptual motivation model was performed through exploratory factorial analysis (AFE), aiming to determine the relationship between the observed and latent variables. To analyse the possible associations between motivations and generations, the Kruskal-Wallis tests were performed in a second phase.

## Findings

The results support the idea that the motivations for visiting holy and sacred sites are diverse and multifaceted (Muzamdar & Muzamdar, 2004). The three factors found are: 1) Faith, 2) Personal Enrichment and 3) Calling. This means that the motivations for visiting Jerusalem, Fatima, and Santiago de Compostela are more religious and sacred than secular, as shown in Table 1.

The analyses have a satisfactory Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sample Adequacy Measure (KMO). Also, the variables are significantly correlated as described in Bartlett's sphericity test (P value <0.001), also showing that the use of factorial analysis is adequate (Sharma, 1996). The three factors that appeared from the literature explain at least 60% of the information in the sample. Table 1 presents the three factors with the respective factor loads, commonality, variance explained, and the respective Cronbach alphas (Cronbach, 1951).

**Table 1: Factor loadings, variance and Cronbach Alpha of motivations' dimensions to visit sacred places**

Dimensions	Variables	Factor loadings	Communalities	% total variance	Cronbach Alpha
Faith-related Motivations	To feel spiritually involved	0.771	0.595	60.0%	0.944
	To feel emotionally involved	0.784	0.615		
	To participate in religious ceremonies or activities and services	0.810	0.655		
	Because of religious characteristics of the site	0.789	0.622		
	To pray for various needs	0.843	0.710		
	Because of the sacred mystic of the site	0.786	0.618		
	To strengthen faith and spiritual beliefs	0.848	0.718		
	To light candles or practice other religious rituals	0.769	0.591		
	To search for spiritual or religious comfort	0.817	0.668		
	To beg or supplicate	0.670	0.449		
	To meet a sacred icon	0.633	0.401		
	To live a religious experience	0.786	0.618		
	To live a spiritual experience	0.736	0.542		
Personal Enrichment	To find inner peace	0.683	0.466	63.0%	0.851
	To search of identity and inner knowledge	0.088	0.654		
	To find a meaning to personal life	0.845	0.715		
	To learn about myself	0.809	0.655		
	Search for personal development	0.814	0.663		
Calling	Felt an urge to visit this site	0.897	0.805	80.5%	0.757
	For pilgrimage	0.897	0.805		

Visiting sacred places is perceived as a quest driven by faith (McGettigan & Griffin, 2012). Concerning faith-related motivations, the results indicate that travellers are motivated by participation in religious ceremonies or related activities and services, belief in the sacred, mystic and religious power of the site, strengthening faith, spirituality and personal beliefs, lighting candles or being involved in other religious rituals, seeking spiritual comfort, to pray for various needs, to beg or supplicate and, to live a religious and spiritual experience.

Contemporary religious tourism is associated with a search for personal meaningful experiences (Kujawa, 2017). Visitors want to live a journey that modifies them through a profound and life changing experience. Residents of modern, urban societies often feel alienated from their authentic selves. And if someone's authentic self is away from home, tourists feel the need to find it among strangers and most often far from home and within a sacred atmosphere (Shepherd, 2018). Within this, the motivations for personal enrichment are the driving forces for pursuing personal identity, personal development, inner knowledge, peacefulness and sense of life and self-learning.

On the other hand, visits to sacred places evoke powerful feelings of religious inspiration (Shtudiner, Klein & Kantor, 2018), reinforcing the motivations related with the sense of vocation and the need to make pilgrimages.

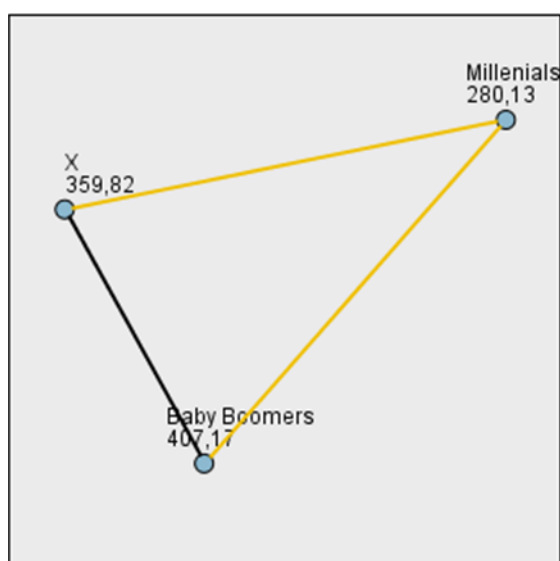
By crossing these motivations with generations, and through using the Kruskal-Wallis test, the results indicate that there are no significant differences between the generational groups regarding Personal Enrichment motivations ( $p = 0.304$ ). Concerning Faith-related motivations ( $p=0.000$ ) and Calling ones ( $p=0.003$ ), there are significant differences between generations.

With reference to faith-related motivations, there are differences between Millennials and the other generations ( $p=0.000$  for both), as can be observed in Figure 1. Faith is a minor motivation for Millennials. On the other hand, regarding the Calling motivations, there are differences between Generation X and the Millennials ( $p=0.007$ ), as displayed in Figure 2., whereby Calling is significantly higher as a motivation for the Generation X than for the Millennials.

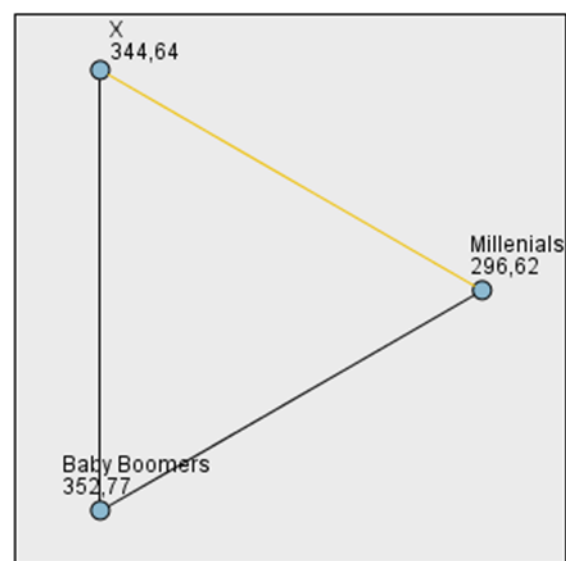
## Conclusions

Understanding the motivations of travellers to visit sacred sites is an important tool for all of the organisations that run or are located in these places. The motivations largely explain the behaviour of visitors. Generational differences, on the other hand, provide, as has been demonstrated, an understanding of the reasons why tourists seek out sacred sites. Despite the importance of this and the existence of a considerable amount of research on motivations, there have recently been calls for further research on this topic (Caber & Albayrak, 2016),

**Figure 1. Faith-related Motivations - Kruskal-Wallis test: pairwise comparisons**



**Figure 2. Calling Motivations - Kruskal-Wallis test: pairwise comparisons**





This paper provides a set of theoretical contributions based on the literature that provides an explanation for tourist motivations to visit sacred places according to the different generations of tourists.

First of all, is possible to observe that the main motivations to visit sacred places as tourism destinations are the dimensions of Faith-related, Personal Enrichment, and Calling motivations, which are mainly related to religious motives. Maybe because the research settings are, besides sacred places, recognised as strong world religious places. Those findings are in line with previous tourism literature of Shackley (2005) and Shepherd (2018), that assume that in religious and sacred places people wish contemplation, want to pray and travel along a pre-determined route selecting a particular place to do it. Also, the study confirms the findings of Lucarno (2016) that in religious destinations people want to be seen to pray, feel a sense of belonging to the place and to the concept of the ideal.

There are differences when analysing the motivations to visit sacred places through a generational approach. Concerning faith-related motivations there are significant differences between the Millennials and the others generations. This occurs because in contrast to older generations that remain loyal to institutional and doctrinal beliefs, the Millennials are less affiliated with religious tradition (Possamai, 2009). However, there are no significant differences between the generations regarding Personal Enrichment motivations. This occurs probably because the real quest of personal enrichment is to find a meaning for life, inner knowledge and personal development. These are existential and spiritual quests that all persons want to answer, and this goes beyond their generation: who am I?, where do I belong?, how can I be a better person? These are in line with Bond and Falk (2013), who assume that these questions represent the key motivations of individuals seeking out religious tourism and sacred leisure experiences. Considering

the Calling motivations, there are only significant differences between Generation X and the Millennials. Generation X is more motivated by the sensation of calling and the need to make pilgrimages. This happens probably because Generation X is more driven by the religious call than the Millennials cohorts.

Knowing the motivations that lead millions of people, of all generations, to travel to sacred places is a crucial condition for understanding the tourist consumer behaviour in religious and sacred destinations. Therefore, the development of this measurement instrument may contribute to an improved understanding of tourists' motivations, decision-making processes and consumer behaviour, by generation. In particular, these results could be important for destination management, to implement effective positioning, market segmentation strategies, and sustainable policies in order to meet the needs of the faithful, personal enrichment, and calling of people involved in this kind of tourist travel experience.

This study has some limitations. The research might have omitted and therefore not consider other specific and possibly significant motivation dimensions. Despite the advantages of flexibility and facility of use and codification of structured techniques, there is the risk of omitting important dimensions and of using others that are not the most important to respondents. It should therefore be useful to apply additional methodologies, particularly of a non-structured nature, that may permit the collection of richer motivation data sets.

It could be interesting to develop an analysis of the relation between motivations and a sense of place or 'place-attachment' as designated in the environmental psychology literature (see for example the work of Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2004). Another interesting line of future research could be to develop studies about the relationship of the image of sacred places according to each of the generations.

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