

# Religious Ritual Commercialization Effect on Tourists Religiosity – A Systematic Review of the Literature From the Last Two Decades (2000-2020)

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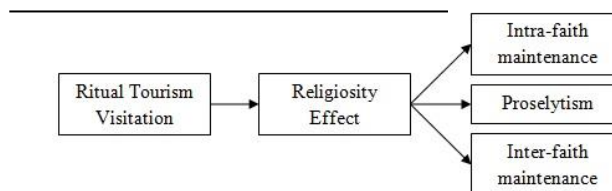
## Abstract

This paper presents the results of a systematic review of research that have studied the links between religious ritual commercialization and religiosity of tourists from 2000 to 2020. The results only found eight research representing only four religious ritual destination, one of them determined by the researcher. The findings suggest that the existing knowledge of the impact of the religious ritual commercialization and tourists religiosity has some limited views. Further tourism studies need to be undertaken in the following areas: quantitative research on the relationships between multiple form of religious tourist (pilgrim vs usual tourist) and religiosity; effects of ritual participation; effects of pilgrim vs non-pilgrimage ritual on religiosity, Islamic rituals effects on religiosity of the tourists/pilgrims, effects of rites tourism on proselytation of tourists, effects of rites tourism on different faiths of tourists, and effects of rituals on tourist religiosity based on their initial motives.

## 1. Introduction

Many studies in the literature analyze various fields of religion intending to discuss tourist profiles and potential destinations. Nevertheless, religious tourism research views that general religiosity is a determinant for religious tourism visits, not vice versa. In fact, the religious life system consists of many components and provides many functions for adherents, including the function of proselytism or adding to increase the faith of tourists both in the same religion and different religions. Therefore, it is necessary to visit whether the activity of religious visits can provide the effect of religiosity for tourists. While research is focused on religious rituals and tourist religiosity, this research can be carried out on general tourism religious research.

Figure 1 shows the relationship that forms the framework for this study. In line with this, the present study aims to review the links between religious rituals of commercialization and religiosity of tourists from 2000 to 2020. We focus on three effects: treatment of tourist religiosity of the same religion, conversion of religion (proselytism), and treatment of tourist religiosity from religion different.



**Fig 1.** Commercialization of rituals and the impact of religiosity

## 2. Materials and Methods

Commercialization is the process of changing an object that has no economic value in having a beneficial economic value [1]. In the context of religion, commercialization can be done on anything, whether it is sacred objects, places of worship, or religious rituals [2]. There is a debate in scientific circles about the impact of commercialization on the original values of objects. Commodification theory holds that commercialization will lead to a loss of authenticity and ultimately to reduce the value of tourism products [3]. In the religious context, critics argue that commercialization has an impact on the loss of the sacred sense [4], damaging the religious landscape and disrupting ritual schedules [5], and encouraging secularisation [6], and even encouraging religious conflict [3].

On the other hand, sustainability theory views commercialization as beneficial because it can improve the viability of destinations, appreciation of diversity [3], empowerment of local communities [7], improvement of local economic prosperity [8], and increase the confidence of marginalized communities [3]. In the religious context, commercialization is believed to increase religious identification [9], increase the income of religious communities [3], and increase the capacity of religious institutions [10]. The point is that the effects of the commercialization of religious rituals are complex and the balance between the ability to increase positive impacts and reduce negative impacts is a universal challenge for religious destinations [10].

The questions used to achieve this goal and the metrics used to answer the questions are drawn from the framework in Figure 1. The main purpose of conducting this literature review is to identify literature from 2000-2020 that links between the commercialization of rituals and tourist religiosity. To understand this whole relationship, the three versions that makeup tourist religiosity are determined and analyzed separately then as a whole. These three versions of religiosity are a logical combination of the fact that not all visitors to a particular religious destination are followers of the religion in question. As a result, there are two possibilities: tourists of the same religion and tourists of different religions. There is a third possibility, namely proselytism, where tourists experience an intention or experience a change of religion after a visit. Therefore, the research questions are:

RQ1: How does the commercialization of religious rituals affect the religious religiosity of tourists of the same religion?

RQ2: How does the commercialization of religious rituals affect tourist proselytism?

RQ3: What effect does the commercialization of religious rituals have on religious religiosity of tourists of different faiths?

The Google Scholar online database is used to look for previous research. The following keyword strings are used to search in the database: ("rites" OR "religious rites") AND ("religious tourism" OR "tourism") AND ("religiosity" OR "proselytism"). The combination of these keywords results in eight combinations of keyword pairs.

Data is sought in the early 2000s and the last year 2020. One hundred of the most relevant studies were selected and reviewed so that a total of eight keyword combinations have the potential to produce a maximum of 800 initial literature. Research that only contains abstracts is excluded if full text cannot be obtained and the contents of the abstract cannot be used to conclude the research questions. Other exclusion criteria include: research is not about ritual tourism, research does not discuss effects on tourist religiosity, is not in English, and is not a chapter in books, dissertations, scientific journals, or conference proceedings. Inclusion criteria include: research on ritual tourism, research on the effects on tourist religiosity, theoretical articles on the relationship between ritual tourism and tourist religiosity, and research on review using secondary data in the area of ritual tourism and tourist religiosity.

The results of preliminary reviews indicate that much of the literature found more views religiosity as a cause, not a result, of ritual tourism. As a result, the construct of travel satisfaction becomes more dominant in the literature. Even so, we managed to obtain some literature that explicitly states that there was an increase in religiosity after visiting and / or engaging in religious rituals.

**Table 1.** Previous Research Regarding the Effect of Destination Rituals on Tourist Religiosity

No	Reference	Relevance
1	[11]	The influence of the pilgrimage ritual of Road to Santiago, France-Spain, on vertical self-transcendence, horizontal self-transcendence, and self-actualization four months after performing the ritual
2	[12]	Involvement in rituals and active participation in Yoga in Rishikesh, India, makes foreign tourists realize a kind of spirituality
3	[6]	Participation in Hindu rituals creates tolerance between religious beliefs
4	[13]	Participation in the Road to Santiago ritual, France-Spain, creates an increase in a sense of spirituality
5	[14]	Travel and participation in Greek Orthodox pilgrimage rituals internalize religious doctrines

From the perspective of the belief examined, there is a large imbalance in Islam. Most studies use a Hindu or Christian background. This is unfortunate because Islam has the potential to become the largest religion in the world in 2050 when viewed from the perspective of the number of adherents [15]. For this reason, researchers further focus on the Islamic religion and try to review local research from Indonesia. The results obtained three additional studies on the effect of the pilgrimage ritual, a form of pilgrimage tourism, on pilgrims (pilgrim tourists). The following table shows the three works of literature.

**Table 2.** Previous Research Regarding the Influence of Hajj on Congregational Religiosity

No	Reference	Relevance
1	[16]	The religious experience felt by people after the pilgrimage is different. Some have attended the Hajj eight times but have not had a spiritual experience, but there have been only two that have had a spiritual experience. Some people want to attend the pilgrimage and see the departure of others to the pilgrimage has caused high emotional feelings.
2	[17]	Most people who come home from performing the hajj from Bangladesh try to isolate themselves from life and make the worship more solemn 'and intense because they see that the pilgrimage is a preparation for death.
3	[18]	Interviews of four people who had performed the pilgrimage revealed that the increase in ritual worship was one of the effects of following the pilgrimage.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The literature collection results reveal that the literature that highlights the impact of religious tourism on tourist religiosity is very limited. This is apparently because religiosity is assumed as a determinant for religious tourism visits, rather than vice versa. That is, tourists are considered to come to a ritual to get religious and spiritual experience which from the beginning has become a basic requirement [19]. Other studies suggest an increase in religiosity but this is only measured when tourists attend rituals (for example [20]), not after some time when tourists return to their home regions.

In line with this, no literature develops a theoretical framework regarding the impact of religious tourism on religiosity. Almost all research is a qualitative research which is ideal for developing theory. Even so, the development of the theory of the impact of religious tourism on religiosity seems not done.

In the research that was successfully selected, it appears that the main characteristic of the ritual that produces an effect on tourists is a ritual that is a pilgrimage. There is debate as to whether pilgrimage is a form of tourism or not [19]. In the modes of tourism developed by Cohen [21], pilgrims can be seen as a form of tourist. Cohen divides tourism modes into five types: experimental, existential, diversionary, recreational, and experimental. Pilgrims are existential tourists, tourists who travel to external and elective spiritual locations outside the natural experience of tourists in general. Pilgrims can also be seen as experiential tourists, tourists who seek to seek authenticity beyond the space and time of their daily lives. More than that, pilgrims can also be seen as diversionary tourists who try to escape from everyday habits, recreational tourists who only try to relax, or experimental tourists who try to get something unique and alternative.

Indeed, pilgrimage tours don't have to be without tourists who just look around. In the case of the Baha'i temples in Israel, there are two categories of visitors, pilgrims, and tourists. Pilgrims follow the ritual in depth while tourists watch from a special place [20]. In this case, the perspective of tourists and pilgrims' perspectives can be different and the impact they have on their religiosity can also be different.

Studies with the commodification theory paradigm have no conclusions about the impact of religious tourism on tourist religiosity. These studies highlight the negative impact of religious tourism on the religiosity of local residents. Even so, it appears that this study only focuses on material tourism such as visits to temples or caves [22][23]. Nobody refers to the negative impact of the commodification of rituals.

The lack of focus on the negative effect of ritual commodification on religiosity, both tourists and the local community, seems to be due to the different ritual nature of the material aspects of religious tourism. Rituals are experiential, where tourists do not merely watch but are involved in rituals.

Many studies show the characteristics of multi-faith. This shows that the commodified ritual, to some degree, is not the dominance of a particular religion. Literature shows that Hindu rituals can be followed by Christian tourists and Christian rituals can be followed by atheist tourists. The existence of several multi-faith studies provides an opportunity for current research to review the impact of ritual on non-adherent religiosity and proselytism.

### 3.1 Increasing Religiosity of Religious Tourists are Same

Research collected in general shows that tourist religiosity increases in various dimensions. The study found that participation in the pilgrimage to Santiago, a Christian ritual in Spain, increased the religiosity of participants [11], [13], although in their motives, individual participants had various motives that sometimes contradicted [13]. This diversity of motives makes the rituals that are followed cannot be seen as revivalism nor can they be interpreted as a post-secularism trend. Schnell and Pali's research [11] found that tourists in part had a crisis of meaning in their lives before attending rituals and experienced clarity of meaning in life after attending rituals. The same thing happened in Hindu rituals in India [6], [12] as well as the pilgrimage rituals in Mecca [16]–[18]. However, this increase in religiosity is not further elaborated by these studies more than just general statements.

Greek Orthodox pilgrimage ritual research differs from the above studies because the researchers made explicit the effects of religiosity. The researchers stated that the pilgrimage ritual made the participants able to internalize religious doctrine more deeply [14]. The participants became more aware of how to carry out religious rituals and were more involved in it after attending the pilgrimage.

But a more systematic study is the Schnell and Pali research [11]. This study measured the effect of ritual on religiosity four months after the respondents took part in the ritual. This study shows how ideally the study was conducted to determine the impact of ritual on participant religiosity.

### 3.2 The Phenomenon of Proselytism

The literature does not indicate the effect of proselytism on ritual tourism on tourists. Even so, interesting facts are found that proselytism can be one part of the attraction of ritual tourism. At the evangelical pilgrimage tour program in Nazareth, tourists are invited together with the local community to make donations for children who are invited to convert to Christianity [24].

The theme of proselytism is also present in the tourist attractions of rituals, such as the pilgrimage in Yucatan, Mexico [25] and the matsuri ritual at the Shinto shrine in Hawai'i [26]. In both cases, managers have the intention to invite tourists to embrace their religion by participating in rituals. This shows that proselytism is not only a theme of destination objects such as sacred and historical locations such as Mahayana Buddhist temples in developed countries [27] or Christian sacred and historical locations [28], [29] but also on certain rituals. In these destinations, the proselytization effort can be carried out in an organized manner if the manager considers that the non-adherent visitors are potential future followers of his religion [30]. This shows that tourism can be a vehicle for the religious missionary. This tendency to see proselytism as a motivation, indeed, is not matched by studies that measure whether proselytism occurs after a visit to a religious destination.

### 3.3 Increasing Religiosity of Religious Tourists are Different

Research that does not measure the religiosity of different religious tourists shows that there is a conceptual issue between spirituality and religiosity. In the case of migration to Vrindavan, India, pilgrims from Russia declared themselves not Hindus but were deeply involved in rituals on the grounds of spirituality, not religiosity [31]. Even so, this has to do with the proselytism efforts undertaken by global Hindu organizations that popularized Krishna's beliefs [32].

Meanwhile, research that concludes the influence of ritual on the religiosity of tourists of different religions generally occurs in contexts where there are issues of difference between spirituality and religiosity. Adherents of different religions feel that they become more spiritual after attending different religious rituals. Spirituality has nothing to do with religiosity for them. This explains why atheists and agnostics and secular groups participate in rituals such as the Santiago pilgrimage [13] or Hindu rituals [6]. In the case of the Santiago pilgrimage ritual, out of 470 pilgrims, 22.6% were atheists and 11.4% were not Christians [13]. Indeed, the very

religious group in this ritual has the same motive between religious and spiritual motives. Whereas the group experiences a crisis of meaning in life following a ritual for clarification [11].

In literature, religiosity is doctrinal, authoritative, and institutional aspects of belief while spirituality is aspects of belief that are individual, free, and subjective [33]. The concept of spirituality is a concept that began to gain popularity in the literature and began to make the concept of religiosity increasingly marginalized and experience excitement. This is mainly due to the modernist views and individualistic Western societies that place spirituality as something more valuable than collective religiosity. Both of them complement each other because they are sufficient for humans as individual creatures as well as social beings.

#### 4. Conclusion

The literature review generally summarizes the current conditions in the scientific literature in a particular field to guide future research. Since the topic of religious tourism became part of the tourism literature, researchers began to be interested in examining the impact of religious tourism on local communities and aspects that attracted tourist visits to the destination. This study seeks to review aspects that are rarely examined, namely how the influence of ritual-based religious destinations on tourist religiosity. As expected, these studies are rarely conducted and are still very early in studying this aspect. There is a problem regarding the clarification between the differences in pilgrimage and tourism, between spirituality and religiosity, and between religiosity as the cause or effect of religious tourism. In addition, there is plenty of room open for further research. There is almost no, if any, research into the impact of ritual tourism on tourist religiosity in the context of Islam. In fact, Islam also has significant ritual tourism such as Hajj and Umrah. Future studies need to focus more on Islamic religion to dig deeper into the effects of ritual tourism on tourist religiosity. Further research also needs to be quantitative and longitudinal in order to be able to measure exactly the impact on tourists. One of the ideas that can be raised is a longitudinal study that tracks the changes in the religiosity of the pilgrims by comparing between religiosity before and after performing the pilgrimage.

Furthermore, further research can also study the relationship between various types of religious tourists (pilgrims vs. non-pilgrims) and religiosity; the effect of participation in rituals on religiosity, the influence of rituals on pilgrimage vs. non-pilgrimage on religiosity, the effect of rituals on tourists in the context of Islamic religion, the effect of rituals on tourist proselytation, the influence of ritual tourism on various types of tourist beliefs, including atheists and secular tourists, and the influence of rituals on tourist religiosity seen from the initial motive in attending the ritual.

Practically, the results of this study confirm the importance of developing ritual-based religious tourism. This development can be done for example in the form of joint rituals in historic mosques, natural tafakur, and so on. Destination-based religious tourism currently can be packaged with ritual packages that can be followed by tourists so that they are better able to internalize religious doctrines or experience an increase in spirituality. Research now has a number of limitations. First, this research uses general keywords. The use of different and specific keywords in certain rituals or religions might get better results from current research. Second, this research assumes all religions are the same and all rituals are the same. The influence of certain rituals of certain religions on tourist religiosity can differ in strength and direction of influence. Third, the literature found only focuses on three locations: Spain, India, and Greece. The expansion effort uses a specific location, namely Saudi Arabia, in its relations with Bangladesh and Indonesia. This is still not representative, although a broader literature review on the discussion has covered many religions, surpassing the major world religions. Further research also needs to expand geography so as to get a more global picture of ritual tourism in the world.

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