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It is a great pleasure and honour to introduce the *Global Perspectives on Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* book to academic societies and scholars in the field. The book endeavours to extend the quality of research in the field of Religious Tourism. Although it was a huge challenge to introduce such a new book to the world, the book has a great potential and will help in adding to the limited accumulated knowledge in the field of religious tourism. As a result, the book will help researchers and scholars in the field of religious tourism to have a clearer view towards this concept that in turn will contribute to the related accumulated knowledge in the field.

Indeed, Religious studies and research have gained a lot of interest and considerable attention from researchers, policy makers, and practitioners during the last few years as a result of the demanding desire to know more about religions (such as: Islam) as well as religiosity. However, regardless of the dominant position held by religious studies in today's research world, religious tourism is still very much underrepresented in the literature. In fact, it is distressing to find that not much is known about the activities of religious tourism in most countries (both in developed and developing economies).

Religion is an important cultural factor to study because it is one of the most widespread and influential social institutions and has a significant influence on people's attitudes, values and behaviours at the level of both the individual and society. Furthermore, religiosity is known as one of the most important cultural forces and key influences on behaviour. For example, religiosity affects the adoption of new products by Muslim consumers through influencing their beliefs about what products they should adopt. Further, religiosity plays a full moderating role in the relationship between contextual variables and the purchasing behaviour of Muslim consumers.

Meanwhile, religiosity is distinct from religion. The latter is conceptualised as a continuum of commitment that represents a particular faith or creed (such as Islam and Christianity), whereas the former portrays the focus of religion in directing a person's life in accordance with religious role expectations. Religiosity defines the ideas about the way to live which are reflected in the values and attitudes of societies

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and individuals. Such values and attitudes shape the behaviour and practices of institutions and people.

Religiosity has long been acknowledged as an important social force that influences human behaviour, but in a secular society its influence on consumer behaviour appears to be underestimated. Previous studies have indicated that religiosity can be a significant factor in regard to consumption patterns, innovativeness, advertising, family decision-making, purchase risk aversion, and selected store patronage behaviour.

Meanwhile, tourism and tourism organisations do play a major role in the world economy, and they are recognised as one of the main contributors to economic development and employment growth. As a result, tourism is one of the most important sources for any country national Gross Domestic Production (GDP) and are considered as a vital part of the economic and social life of any country. They play an important role in today's business world and a healthy tourism sector supports and provides a major contribution to the economic growth of any country. Tourism organisations are socially and economically important since they have always significantly contributed in providing possibilities for employment, self-fulfillment and economic growth.

The close relationship between tourism and religion has been addressed in the literature on tourism. However, previous research on perspectives on religious tourism is limited as religion is a relatively under-researched topic in tourism. Religion has long been a strong motivating factor in people's travel. Moreover, given that the tourism and hospitality industry is a social and cultural institution, hospitality and tourism should then closely represent the dimensions of ethnicity and religion. In responding to these developments, the tourism industry is progressively moving away from mass marketing and is instead pursuing more sophisticated approaches to segmenting tourist markets in order to address the distinct consumer psychology of a particular target market.

Although some aspects of religious tourism (e.g., Islamic tourism) seems to be a new concept for most of the researchers and practitioners in the field of tourism, this is not true as the concept is very old rooted in Islamic Shariah and can be traced to the early days of the Islamic civilisation and the Abbasid times. Since the early days of the Islamic history, all Muslims are demanded to conduct tourism activities as a requirement of Islamic Shariah. Moreover, in the early days of the Islamic history, where the Islamic empire covered vast geographical areas of Asia, Africa and parts of Europe, Muslims got the chance of travel across the three continents safely and without any constraints such as passports, borders or even security investigations. Moreover, these early days of Islamic history witnessed the existence of many famous Muslim travellers.

Islamic tourism is deeply rooted with the Islamic Shariah where every Muslim is demanded to visit the holy cities of Makah and El-Madina (in Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia) to conduct Hajj (if he/she can afford to do that financially and physically). Accordingly, any Muslim that does not actually live in these two holy cities (Makah and/or El-Madana), needs to conduct tourism activities to fulfil his Shariah requirements. Furthermore, millions of Muslims travel to the holy cities of Makah and El-Madana every year to perform Umrah. As a result, according to the latest information provided by the National Statistical Office of Saudi Arabia, during 2008 14.757 million tourists visited the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Almost all these millions visited the KSA for conducting Islamic tourism.

Moreover, Islamic Shariah has a great impact on travelling and encouraging tourism. When looking at Shariah and Islamic religious principles generated from the Quran and Sunnah (teachings, guidance and practices of Prophet Mohammad) it is found that travellers are considered to be closer to God and their Doaa (asking God for something) and prayers are more responded to while travelling. Furthermore, the religious responsibilities for travellers are less as traveller can pray shorter prayers, can postpone prayers and can postpone his/her fasting during the holy month of Ramadan.

To help in achieving a better understanding of religious tourism, this book aim to add to the limited accumulated knowledge in the field of religious tourism through providing readers with information on the international perspectives as well as the most current religious tourism practices used in both developed and developing countries. The book will also raise the level of awareness on the main studies carried out in the field of religious tourism and their corresponding findings. As a result, the book will help researchers and scholars in the field of religious tourism to have a clearer view towards this concept that in turn will contribute to the related accumulated knowledge in the field. The book aims to cover all related international perspectives on religious tourism (to include perspectives on Islamic Tourism as well as Christian Tourism, Hindu Tourism, Buddhist Tourism, Jewish Tourism, etc.).

The potential audience of this book is well distributed among academic and research societies interested in and related to religious tourism (Islamic Tourism as well as Christian Tourism, Hindu Tourism, Buddhist Tourism, Jewish Tourism, etc.) from one side and tourism managers, entrepreneurs, policy makers, students, practitioners, and educators from the other side. As this book provides a clearer view and deeper understanding of all aspects related to international perspectives on religious tourism as well as its activities and practices in developed and developing countries, it will be particularly interesting to these parties. Undoubtedly, such understanding of international perspectives on religious tourism activities and practices will have a great positive impact on all the potential audiences of this book.

The book provides broad and deep international coverage of subjects, issues and current trends relating to all areas of religious tourism. Emphasis was highly placed on the publishing chapters that seek to connect theory with application aiming to identify

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good practices in the fields of religious tourism. The book provides a complete deep and wide coverage of the opportunities, challenges, and current trends encountered by researchers as well as practitioners in the field. The book offers not only an important but also a critical platform for researchers, practitioners, entrepreneurs, policy makers, and educators to present their experiences and perspectives on all the important issues and current trends related to religious tourism.

This book includes 11 chapters distributed among two sections. While Section 1 of the book present chapters investigating “Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage,” Section 2 presents chapters investigating “Global Perspectives on Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage.”

Section 1 contains four chapters and starts with the chapter of Maximiliano Emanuel Korstanje (of University of Palermo, Argentina). The lead chapter discusses and attempts to understand why academicians have advanced a lot in the study of tourism, while they failed to construct an epistemological root of the discipline, which ushered their studies into a climate of indiscipline and conceptual dispersion. As some scholars in the field called the attention to the rise of a new knowledge-based platform in tourism fields (where any individual interpretation would set the pace to more objective evaluations not only based on empiricism, but in blazing the trail of other tourism-related researchers in the years to come) the chapter redirects the debate confronting not only already-established literature but also giving new fresh alternative to understand tourism as a rite of passage, which is based in the subject as myth-producer.

The second chapter, written by Monica Gilli (University of Turin, Italy) tries to analyse two Tibetan Buddhist Centers in Italy, with particular reference to authenticity (which is a widely popular theme in the Sociology of tourism emerged in the Sixties of the last century). As the literature on Buddhist tourism is not particularly rich although many Asian Buddhist sites are popular tourist destinations, and Centers dedicated to the Buddhist practice are emerging anywhere in the world, the chapter provide a study of Buddhist Centers outside Asia (as in Italy) which represents therefore a new point of view. Based on 21 individual in-depth interviews to visitors of two Tibetan Buddhist Centers in Piedmont (the writer’s Region), Gilli investigated the complex notion of authenticity, as it appears in the tourist literature.

The intention of the chapter of Andrew P. Lynch (of University of Sydney, Australia) was to explore and argue the revival and popularity of the Chartres pilgrimage as an example to provide an authentic religious and spiritual experience amidst capitalist consumerism in a time of increased secularism. The chapter focuses on the organisational structure of the pilgrimage and its operations, rather than the subjective experience of those who undertake it. Lynch illustrated how the modern Chartres pilgrimage is organised and run, and examined objectively the methods and strategies that its organisers employ to offer pilgrims an event that purports

to be more authentic than packaged pilgrimages and off-the-shelf religious travel. Furthermore, chapter four, written by Maximiliano Emanuel Korstanje (of University of Palermo, Argentina) provides a detailed discussion on mythical geographies: discussing the metaphor of lost paradise.

Section 2 of the book looks at “Global Perspectives on Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage” and contains seven chapters. The lead chapter in this part, Chapter 5, written by Michele Carboni and Carlo Perelli (of Centre for North South Economic Research, Italy), is trying to analyse the relationship between religion and tourism, taking Fez, the spiritual capital of Morocco as a case study. Hosting the shrine of Ahmad al-Tidjani, the founder of the Tidjaniyya order (a Sufi order founded in the 18th century), the Moroccan town has been attracting West African followers since pre-colonial time. The chapter investigates the relationship between tourism and religion, focusing on the Festival of Sufi Culture (under-researched compared to the Festival of World Sacred Music) and on the project on the restoration of a Sufi mosque (the Mosque Ain Al-Khail). The authors attended the 2014 edition of the Festival of Sufi Culture and conducted several informal conversational interviews on that occasion with a wide range of stakeholders and festival participants (e.g. national and international tourists, festival guests and local entrepreneurs). The chapter tried to explore some synergies created by the interaction between tourism and religion, showing how both religion and religiosity can co-habit with tourism, shape it and become the core of the tourism offer.

As pilgrimage and religious tourism is an important area of scientific discussions and the fact that most developed pilgrimage routes in Europe are related with Catholic tradition, the following chapter of Darius Liutikas (of Lithuanian Social Research Centre, Lithuania) investigates Catholic pilgrimage in Europe illustrating its contemporary issues, traditions and challenges.

The main intention of the chapter of Unathi Sonwabile Henama and Portia Pearl Siyanda Sifolo (of Tshwane University of Technology, South Africa) is to investigate the different religious tourism challenges, prospects and opportunities in South Africa. According to Henama and Sifolo religious archaeology plays a fundamental role in the process of the creation and development of religious tourism activities. In addition, the existence of religious heritage can be supported through the development of man-made support infrastructure that can increase arrivals to the site once the site is commodified and commercialised. Furthermore, chapter eight, written by Maximiliano Emanuel Korstanje (of University of Palermo, Argentina) provides a detailed discussion on the concept of lost paradise and the religious nature of tourism.

The chapter of Noha El-Bassiouny (of The German University in Cairo, Egypt) aimed at exploring the status of halal products between the East and West through a qualitative introspect from the view point of a Muslim traveler. El-Bassiouny

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research takes an exploratory interpretivist approach by employing a comparative study utilising observation and content analysis of visuals related to halal brands in one Eastern and one Western country with considerable Muslim populations; namely Singapore and Germany.

Chapter 10 of Abla Abdul Hameed Bokhari (of King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia), focuses on two important economic sources in the Saudi economy which are: oil and pilgrimage. The chapter highlights the directions and challenges of development plans in the Saudi kingdom, mentioning the major economic indicators through the past seven development plans. Concerning pilgrimage (Hajj and Umrah) as the main source of tourism in Saudi Arabia, this chapter concentrates on religious tourism and demonstrates the economics of tourism within KSA from both supply and demand aspects.

Lastly, Chapter 11 of Aysu Altaş (of Aksaray University, Turkey) addresses dietary matters to which tourists with religious sensitivity pay attention to during their vacation. The chapter examines primarily prominent dietary commandments and prohibitions of religions, secondly the problems concerning nutrition that tourists with religious sensitivity might face with during their vacation and lastly explain several points that should be watched out in order not to have those problems.

Finally, the editors would like to thank all the authors for submitting their high quality chapters and research work to this book and very much appreciate the editorial board support and commitment as we endeavour to make this book one of the most valued books in the field of religious tourism.

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