

Book Review

Tourism and Religion: Issues and Implications (Aspects of Tourism)

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320 pp.

\$8.00

ISBN 9781845416447

Tourism worldwide has become an economic factor. In fact, many countries are now aggressively pursuing tourism as a source of revenue stream for governments' revenues. In economics, tourism causes imported inflation for the home country of the travelers. In other words, money spent by tourists in foreign countries works as an economic multiplier for the host countries, and it hardly returns to the home country in the same way.

The purpose of this book, however, was to provide an overview of tourism and religion which is a growing field within the various segments of tourism. It is becoming evident that scholars and practitioners are increasingly engaging in the pursuit to explore and exploit opportunities to expand the research in this vast area.

Religious Tourism or often referred to Faith tourism spans across all religions and it has been the catalyst to an enormous economic and socio-political relevance of the topic. Yet, religious tourism is under-researched, and frequently its full potential is under-estimated.

This book studies and sheds light on the interactions and interconnection amongst tourism, culture, tradition, and faith in more depth. Such interactions create complexity in the way people are nowadays looking at religious tourism. The multiple dimensional perspectives of believers or seculars became like a mosaic representing respect for all humans and beliefs. If we go back to Adam and track all religions until these days,

we will find that traveling for religious purposes or understanding other cultures was always prominent. Spiritual traveling has changed a lot from how it was and for which incentive it was driven from the ancient days until today. Moreover, the means of transportation and how more convenient traveling became participated in increasing tourism and attracting many people from different cultures to come from almost the far end of the world is getting easier and cheaper now and then.

This book covers fields such as culture, geopolitics, globalization, economics, and religion, which are interconnected and interacted amongst themselves. Such interaction adds a varied landscape of complexity and uniqueness that drive researchers and readers to explore more the powers that ignite people's motives to visit religious places. Many philosophers, politicians, economists, and religious people have tried all their efforts to either encourage the religious tourism or to be selective by affecting tourists' choices and redirect them to other destinations to serve their goals.

This book explores different reasons both religious and secular people choose to travel and visit faith destination. Travelling, in general, gives travelers mental power and excitement to change their daily routine and to explore new adventures or meeting new people. Sightseeing is one of the most successful businesses in all cities that attract tourists to visit historical ruins, places or landscapes. The religious tourism is a double dip for tourists, especially when they get the spiritual relief and energy from the places they have a connection with. Many top deals for tourists to visit hundreds of religious destinations are being offered online to tourists, which are packaged with touring other attractions to provide tourists with the experience they are looking for and paying for. This book also sheds light on the impact of technology, geopolitics and political landscape on tourism. Using technology provides clients with tools to explore all destinations and watch videos about them and even read reviews of previous visitors.

Butler and Suntikul present a rainbow of faiths covering from indigenous and the ancient journeys moving through Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and all over until Shintoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, while debating the nexus of culture, geopolitics, globalization, economics, and religion. Tourism became noticeable with globalization, which started ages ago and historians were always discussing when it began. However, when people began to travel for trade via land or the sea, more exposure to different religions and cultures became irrevocable.

Religious tourism created many businesses worldwide, especially the ones are incorporated in tourism; starting from airport services, reception, international, domestic and local means of transportation, travel agents, hotels, tour guiding, translators, visa agents, medical centers, money exchange shops, textile and ending in arts and craft businesses to name but a few. Most of the recent demand for vocational hospitality training demand stemmed from the high desire for religious tourism with top competition amongst the providers to attract more clients.

This text has been well-received and makes a significant contribution to previously published works in the areas of religion and tourism. It is interesting to see how Butler and Suntikul talk about political landscape using tourism as a more powerful tool

than the traditional religious approach to attract followers. This book is a must-read not only for spiritual travelers, or researchers in the hospitality field but also to those who have interest in exploring different cultures and want to see all the pieces of a religious tourism puzzle in one mosaic reference.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Richard Butler is Emeritus Professor of Tourism, University of Strathclyde, Scotland and Visiting Professor, NHTV University, The Netherlands. His research interests include tourism destination development, tourism in remote and insular areas, resilience and sustainability in tourism and tourism and politics. Wantanee Suntikul is Assistant Professor at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong. Her research interests include heritage and tourism, politics and tourism, gastrodiploamacy and tourism and religion and tourism.

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