
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Razaq Raj is a Senior Lecturer in Events Financial and Strategic Management and the Course Leader in MSc Events Management for Leeds Metropolitan University. His research interests include community events, outdoor events, economic impacts, religious tourism, cultural festivals and events, sustainable tourism, cultural diversity in events management and financial management for events. He has published work on special events, financial management in events, information technology, events sponsorship, cultural festivals and events, sustainable tourism and religious tourism. He regularly attends and presents papers at national and international conferences. He also sits on the number of voluntary sector management boards.

Kevin Griffin is the Head of the Tourism Department in the School of Hospitality Management and Tourism at the Dublin Institute of Technology. He is also the Head of the ATLAS Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Research Group. His qualifications include teaching, tourism geography and historical geography and currently his main research interests span sustainability, heritage and religious tourism.

Carlos Fernandes is the Faculty Lead in Tourism Studies at the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo, Portugal. His interests include tourism as a strategy for rural development, heritage and cultural tourism and tourism destination management. In recent years, he has conducted research into tourism and gastronomy, cultural tourism, and religious tourism and pilgrimage. He is the Course Leader of the BA in Tourism Studies (UNWTO Tedqual Certified) at the Polytechnic Institute of Viana do Castelo. He is also involved in educational curricula, having participated in the Tedqual certification process of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO).

Nigel D. Morpeth is a Senior Lecturer at the Tourism, Hospitality and Events School, Leeds Metropolitan University and holds degrees in Government and Politics, Recreation Management and Sustainability and Tourism. He has published work internationally on sustainable tourism policy, communities, cultural events and festivals, tourism development and aspects of special interest tourism. His current research interests are in religious tourism and pilgrimage and in linkages between the creative industries and tourism, specifically in art, artists and tourism. He is Co-Editor with colleague Razaq Raj, of the CABI text *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management: An International Perspective* (2007).

The papers indicate that religious tourism has the potential to grow in future. But one issue that has to be tackled before analysing the market any further is the question of definition. Tourism related to religious sites and festivals, pilgrimage or spirituality is a long established and extremely important sector of the tourism market. For specific sites, such as the major pilgrimage sites of the major world religions, religious tourism may be the primary activity of a city or region. But religious sites provide an important underpinning to the basic tourism product even outside pilgrimage destinations, as cathedrals, churches, mosques and monasteries often generate significant numbers of visitors, including those not travelling directly for religious purposes. One of the main problems of religious tourism, however, reflects the basic problem of most churches and does not provide detail in-depth analysis of other religions. Within this special issue, papers have developed argument on various religions, series of cases on religious travel and pilgrimage to sacred sites. The reason for this seems simple: people are searching for meaning in their increasingly uncertain lives. Many people have not been able to find this through traditional forms of worship, so they are now taking to different forms of experience to find it. This includes the re-discovery of pilgrimage or journeys to sacred places.

These papers connect important insights between religion, pilgrimage and tourism in both Eastern and Western cultural traditions. In particular, the insights on religion and tourism to emerge from different parts of Western and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Central Asia revealing new perspectives on emerging tourist destinations and developments in acts of religious worship. The aim of the special issue is to provide empirical and personal insights into the changing nature of religion in society and to further the debate for both policy makers and academics to consider these policy making challenges within the future development of faith tourism and pilgrimage area.